

Transcript of the *Shoah* Interview with Benjamin Muremelstein, Part II

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Boite 13 (51-52)

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A: Do you know the story of the donkey who is kept walking by being lured with a bale of hay in front of his nose, which he always attempts to reach, but never can. This was the tragedy of the Jewish elders, the Jewish officials. One always followed the mirage, hoping to salvage something. Looking back, I can say that I caught a few pieces of straw, of hay, but there were few. One was in the tragically comical situation to run after a bale of straw. And here I will also answer your question about the Jupos. Actually, when Eichmann turned over the cards he said: yes, the old people will not be taken to the East, they will get to an old people's home in Theresienstadt. Old people who were already in concentration camps were segregated out from the transports to the East. The Jupos who found out about this from the SS people, took advantage of the story and went to the old people and said: If you give me money, you will be taken out of the old people's camp.

Q: Jupos?

A: The Jupos. If you give me money, you will get out of the camp. Right? They knew that these people will get out anyway, but the people did not know it. In this manner they took from the people their last pennies. Then the people got out. Once they were out, it transpired that this was an automatic event. I found out about it. I had their statements confirmed and said: "So, now the Jupos will be reported on." And I made this report to Brunner and said if he counts on the Jewish community to administratively take care of the camps – and we took care, administratively, of the camps – we gave the people food,

we carried their luggage, everything possible – it is not possible to remain silent about these things. Now imagine, how one was under observation. The report was not even finished when I was called to the Gestapo because all the corrupt affairs, the Jewish ones, were done jointly with the Gestapo. And, excuse me, I know more about this, but I want to exclude it, let it remain with these hints. Well... I was called to the Gestapo and they said to me: “Say, you are composing a report to Brunner about such and such a matter.” “Yes.” “You know what is going to happen to these people?” “I don’t know what the “Hauptsturmführer” [Captain] will decide. This is his business. But I don’t know anything about this. I only have the duty to report them.” “He will send them away.” “Unfortunately a lot of Jews have gone away.” “You want to stain yourself with the responsibility that Jews were sent away because of you?” “And you say that to me?” He was throwing a fit. I said to him: “Look, do you know where the report is? The report is at the Central Office. When you called me to come to you with the report, I came to you with a copy of the report. The other copy is on the desk of Brunner. You can do what you want.” And I left. I did not even wait, because I knew that I would have gone to the Concentration Camp with him, because he was part of those taking the money. He wanted to share. He was silent. The people left with the next transport to the East. Unfortunately, unfortunately, the Jupo reemerged, just like the Phoenix from the ashes. And when I was to be deported, I had the honor to be escorted by a Jupo man. This means when I was finally sent home from the Central Office to get my wife and my child and the luggage, a Jupo man was my escort. So, this fact alone should prove to you that the Jupo was not under the auspices of the Jewish Community. Otherwise I would not

have been accompanied by a Juppo man.

[Gap in the image/tape, translated from transcript]

This means, when I was finally let go to go home from the Central Office, to get my wife and child and luggage, a Juppo man escorted me. This fact alone should prove to you that the Juppo is not understood with the Jewish Community. Otherwise I would not have been escorted by a Juppo man

[back to the image/tape]

So, yes he was right, the Nazis were demonic not banal. The Germans are being placated by the representation that these were accountants gone mad, who suddenly got mad.

Q: You don't say that, no?

A: See, everything is banal. The man who sells candy to the children in kindergarten is banal. There is nothing more banal, right? But if he spreads poison on the candy, it is no longer banal. [On the image/tape, Murelstein is silent, but the voice continues.]

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A: See, I am sure that there are in Vienna or in other archives some copies of the weekly reports of the Jewish community in Vienna. All of them were written by me. And, for years, they were done in two parts: Actions and situation reports. Eichmann requested it this way. The situation report was supposed to deal with a general question. And I always used the situation report, which were not censored, to write extensively about the Jewish

question. During the years 41, 42 you will find that in the situation reports there are always protests against the transports to the East, and the request is made that, if there is no other possibility, to accommodate the Jews separately in Vienna, while pointing out that Jews had previously emigrated, that the old ones were dying off and that they should be left in peace, and that they should be put into a ghetto in Vienna. However, this was countered by a decree which prohibited the establishment of ghettos in the area of the Reich. Simultaneously, steps were taken in Prague to prevent transports to the East for the same reasons, and the request was made, by Edelstein, to establish a ghetto in the protectorate. There the decree did not apply. It was permitted there. There were two towns that were under consideration. Theresienstadt won out because it was a fortress, surrounded by moats and walls, could be closed off. And in addition, the population consisted to a large extent of soldiers who could be commanded, the few Czechs could easily be dealt with. In addition, it was well situated geographically along the border of the Sudetenland, so that, if needed – should the Jews do stupid things – there was always a reliable backup of a German population. And, finally, there was the so-called police prison Theresienstadt, in the small fortress – not to be confused with the ghetto. There was speculation on many sides about the confusion. This was an absolute extermination camp with an SS staff of the worst kind one can imagine. The small fortress. If needed, they also could intervene. For this reason they dared to concentrate Jews there. All this spoke for concentrating Jews in Theresienstadt. Naturally, they promised Edelstein that the Jews from Czechoslovakia would remain in Theresienstadt, that they could make “hachshara” [preparation] there in order to emigrate after the war. In his excitement,

Edelstein did not hesitate to invite technicians that he needed to collaborate in the big promotion, even when they were protected due to Aryan origin. They volunteered and were taken to Theresienstadt. This question had its effect on the history of the ghetto because Edelstein – when it came out that this was just a trap and that he had been duped – was put under pressure by the people who said: you lured us into a trap. They then had to go to Auschwitz. And many of the mistakes he made can only be explained by this predicament. Well, for Eichmann Theresienstadt represented another link in the chain Madagascar-Nisko-Madagascar. You know, if I think about it, there are so-called sandbox exercises. A general staff for whom it is too expensive to organize maneuvers, arranges for certain exercises in the sandbox where the troop movement are just simulated. Theresienstadt was a sandbox for Eichmann where the maneuver Madagascar, which had been calculated for 360,000 square kilometers was tried out in an area that measured less than 1 square kilometer. So, this was a sandbox. Naturally, he was clever enough to figure out that this also could be used for propaganda. In a release to the Gestapo, he writes that Theresienstadt has to be done in order to save face. That are his words. To save face. There are people who speak for the Germans and I am not a friend of the attitude of the Germans and am not enthusiastic about the action by those gentlemen who sped to the Germans, after 1945, to solemnly forgive them for something which you cannot forgive, etc. But factually it has to be said that it can be clearly seen in the documents how strong the contrast and the resistance of the Germans was towards the final solution. All of Theresienstadt is in part a result of this resistance which they wanted to overcome, to bridge. And there is nothing more sad than the decisions of the Wannsee

Conference. And it is exactly in the decisions of the Wannsee Conference that one can read of the intervention of the Germans for the Jews, which increased in such a manner that something had to be done, which must not be suppressed by force, but something has to be done... [voices trailing out]

Boite 14 (53-54)

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A: Well, we were talking about that it was just the Wannsee program where Theresienstadt was used as an excuse, as a cover for the final solution, in order to....

Q: But cover only for a certain category.

A: For certain categories. See, there is a letter by a German resistance fighter, a certain Moltke, who wrote in 43 from Stockholm to England as follows: “the people do really not know that we are killing hundreds of thousands of Jews. They believe that the Jews live just a little worse, but in exchange are protected from air raids.” You see, he confirms by this that Theresienstadt fulfilled its tasks to the full extent. When the Slovak government suddenly demanded to see where their Jews had gone, they were invited to Theresienstadt. When the Yugoslav German press – which had arisen in Yugoslavia, the press of the regime – asked, they were taken to Theresienstadt and shown the stores, cafés, etc. and they liked it very much and they wrote: This is the way the Jews live in Lublin. But Theresienstadt was the cover for Lublin, but also the cover for Auschwitz. Was the cover for Auschwitz. And that was what it was supposed to be. You know that

there are protocols about the preparatory meetings presided over by Heydrich, where it was discussed that the Jews should burrow their apartments in Theresienstadt into the ground in order to find space. And it was also discussed that they should not suffer, they should establish the city so that Germans could be settled there. The city was supposed to be simply annexed to Leitmeritz. The Jews were supposed to live, work, erect, then go away again and the city handed over to Germans. This was the lie, this was the lie about Theresienstadt. And that is where I arrived in 1943, as I told you.

Q: In January 43.

A: In January 43. Why? January 43; please excuse me; you reproach me that I keep side-tracking, but these things can only be understood in their context. In January 43 was Stalingrad, in January 43 was the landing by the allies in North Africa, the Führer had more or less his “Zores” [worries], as you might say. Now, for the tenth anniversary of his taking over power, they wanted to present him with a special favor. They wanted to present the “dejewification” of German on a platter to him. How could one present the jewification of Germany symbolically? By removing the prominent Jews, the last ones, to Theresienstadt. In this manner – it naturally was a lie, because in Vienna alone, 500,000 Jews remained – but officially the Jews were gone. This is in a way... it reminds me of the excuse by the orthodox Jew who sells his Chometz on Erev Pessach. The Chometz remains where it is, but it has been sold. He does not own it anymore. In this manner the Chometz has been sold. The Jews the prominent Jews have gone away. I, poor dog, have to thank these circumstances that I was declared prominent. Because only prominent people were sent away. As I had to go, I was prominent. I was declared

prominent A of category A, together with all the great university professors, generals, ministers, etc. Thus I was put into a category to which I actually did not belong, only because I had to be, as you might say, prominent, and thus we were sent to Theresienstadt.

Q: You were “A”?

A: Category A. There was no reason to be proud to be category A, the large number of prominent people also were...

Q: How many categories were there? Prominents?

A: There was a category A, and then Löwenherz... Epstein pushed through a category B for German officials, for Jewish Reichs-German officials from Reich-organizations in the provinces. This a little “Koved” [honor], just like in Temple when calling up to the Torah there is Koved assigned. Thus, category B really did not lead to anything, it was just a title. But category A had earned these rights. One was protected from transports and was not obligated to work. And I don’t understand why it was possible today to say that Beck, who was 70 years old, was...

Q: Leo Beck.

A: Leo Beck, who was 70 years old when he came to Theresienstadt, and was category A prominent, that he was neither more or less.... working at street cleaning and pushing the manure cart.

Q: It is not true?

A: There was a book by Friedländer about Leo Beck. It is an excellent book, but the chapters about Theresienstadt are all through and through lies. I would say that this is the curse of

maliciousness, as one would say. Where it starts with Theresienstadt, the lies are beginning. He even provides for Beck a transport number which is wrong. He booklet which I gave you this morning, which is a copy of it.... there you can find the correct transport number for Beck. And when you compare it with the book by Friedländer you will see that it has been falsified. And that was not without intent. The number in front of the number is the number for Auschwitz.

Q: Excuse me, was it Saul or Henry?

A: I don't know the name.... I can show you the book. And you can see there that he falsifies the numbers, and gives him a transport number, not the number according to the model Theresienstadt, but according to the model of Auschwitz. Everything there was supposed to be serious and tragic. But for Beck it was anything but tragic in Theresienstadt. Right? He was category A, had two rooms for himself and his housekeeper, Mrs. Schabski. Yes, Mrs. Schabski. He was [not understandable] and needed to be taken care of.

Q: Grete Schabski?

A: What? I don't know if her name was Grete or else. I was not that close to her. We did not call each other by first names. And, he received packages; he himself gloated about it that Aryans from the Reich sent him packages.... because he was one of the few who received packages from Aryans from the Reich. He received packages from Lisbon, from Constantinople, he received extra rations as elder council, and he certainly did not have to work. But everything is shown this way, that a chapter is written in which he and Dr. Maximilian Adler, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Prague, discuss a philosophical problem while pushing the garbage cart; this is silly. Professor Adler

actually was not one of the prominent people, but he worked in the library, which was in accord with his rank and his degree of education. This just shows how the lies by Eichmann infected the Jews. And to the current time, where Theresienstadt starts, the lies are starting. The people cannot get away from the lies. If one...

Q: Why?

A: This is a curse. The whole city is built as a curse. The Jew did not live. That was no life. The Jew did not dwell. That was no dwelling. He imagined that he lived somewhere and had a straw mat on the fourth level of a wooden pallet. He imagined that he was working, and he did not work. He imagined that in the morning he got coffee to drink, but it was a black colored water. He imagined that he received meat, but there was no meat in it. Everything was a lie. He imagined that he was in Theresienstadt and was sent away to Auschwitz. Everything was a lie – from head to toe. A smart cabaret artist once wrote a popular song “Die Stadt als ob” [The town as if] – The town as if – There is a known philosophical system “as if.” The town as if. One is acting as if. As if there was a Café, as if there was dinner, as if there was work. One did not eat, one did not work and nothing was done. There was an “as if” old people’s home, there was no old people’s home, all was lies. The tragedy is that the lies, the falsifications, the hypocrisy has not stopped to this day. It keeps on going. For example: I am just reading about the 30-year liberation celebration where a Jewish group in Israel claims to have been prepared to offer resistance. And only the Jewish elders kept them from doing it. Now tell me, are these people totally crazy? A group that plans to fight against the tanks of the Germans, is stopped by the Jewish elders? The Jewish elder should have been the first one that they

should have eliminated. Now, this silly Jewish elder with his two empty hands held them back? They were afraid of him, but they were not afraid of the German tanks. And this is printed, this is written in newspapers and that is believed. I have to tell you that this reminds me of my Eastern Jewish home where it was told that when the Messiah comes, all the sick people will be healed, but the Jews cannot be healed. Eichmann wanted to make a [unclear word] and now they want to make a center of resistance out of Theresienstadt. And they collaborate with that. And when the Germans sent Jews away from Theresienstadt that was unjustified and they persecuted the people. This was an unjustified measure of persecution which cannot be wiped off with a lie when they say: yes, the Jews were armed, they had radio stations, they were armed, and then... any decent German has to ask himself: well, the Jews actually posed a danger along the front. They themselves say that they had weapons. Thus it cannot be condemned that they were sent away. There were fighter with experience. There were young people with enthusiasm. There could possibly have been.....

A: It is unjustified that they were gassed, perhaps. But they did present a danger. It was war. Is it not much more correct if I say: it is not true....

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A: This is for the German a real alibi. A normal person has do say to himself: it is certainly gruesome, those acts in Auschwitz, there is no doubt about it. But on the other side, they were armed, these Jews, they were in contact with the enemy, and they say themselves that they were armed and brag about their radio stations and connections to the enemy.

That posed a danger. I have to say that with this the transports to the East from Theresienstadt are given a semblance of justification, of authorization. And I can only tell you one thing: Now, everybody is talking of hidden weapons. But in 45, when the SS had left, which would have been the time that these weapons would have been found, there was in Theresienstadt not even a rusty child's pistol.

Q: There were no weapons?

A: There were no weapons.

Q: This is a myth?

A: The myths only arose months later when it became clear that there was no resistance. Suddenly, people who always kowtowed to Berger and blackmailed that they wanted a new uniform, they wanted special rations, Obersturmführer [1st Lieutenant] Berger had ordered it. I was very surprised to suddenly read that they had actually been resistance fighters. I only knew that they put up resistance to the Jewish elder, supported by 1st Lieutenant Berger. Suddenly I learned that even the clock maker who once a week went to the church – which was always locked – escorted by armed guard, to wind up the steeple clock, and then told that he had an illegal radio station there.

Q: [not understandable]

A: But all this was believed. Everything is believed, all this is written etc. But, in the end, I have read that I was given a life sentence. I have read that Rahm was brought by the Red Cross to Switzerland. I mean, nothing surprises me anymore if I read something about Theresienstadt.

Q: And what do you think about the Jews who wanted resistance? In principle.

A: See, I would like to tell you something; the symbol of resistance is Warsaw. Yes? And I want you to think about one thing. In the year... in the year... I mean the symbol. I said the symbol. In 1944 Aryan Warsaw resisted in unison to the Germans. In 1944. In 1943 when the ghetto resisted against the Germans, in the Aryan part of the city the street cars were running, the stores were open, nobody was concerned about the Jews, not even a dog. Right? Ergo: a Jewish ghetto cannot rely on the environment. Resistance is attempted suicide. And one has to calculate if the problem really has reached the final point, if it is really the time to commit suicide. The Warsaw ghetto had reached such a point. In Theresienstadt it always appeared that this point has not yet been reached. It always appeared that a small remnant would be able to save themselves. Perhaps the final events did confirm this opinion. But, the Poles did really put up resistance. Did the Czech offer resistance? Don't forget that the national hero of the Czech is not Kafka, but Hashik.

Q: But in principle [continues question in French, not understandable as is the translation by the interpreter]

A: Well, I can only say one thing in this respect. I have... it is necessary... it is possible that oneself becomes a martyr. It is not possible to make others martyrs without their agreement. Do you understand? This means, Epstein was in a way convicted in my presence and when we were alone he told me: "just today, when I was surprisingly picked up, was I unable to bring my poison pill." Because he was arrested on his way to a barracks, in a magazine....

Q: Did he say that?

A: Yes. I have written it in my book. "I don't have my poison pill with me." Since then, I have not taken my poison pill out of my pocket. I have it....

Q: You?

A: Yes.

Q: You had your....

A: I had a trusted friend who was working in the medicine depot, for whom I was responsible that he stayed in Theresienstadt, who was responsible for the medicine depot, make a very innocent looking vial and in this vial.... he assured me that the vial would act rapidly and painlessly. I gave it back to him when the Czechs arrested me. During the first weeks I was still in honor imprisonment... Do you know what honor imprisonment is? It means that I could move around freely, could receive visitors. I had him come to me and told him: for the Germans I don't need it anymore, I don't want it anymore. I don't want to succumb to temptation. Here, destroy it. So, why am I telling you this? In order to say that at the last moment the Jewish elder may possibly have the duty to draw the consequences for himself, if the situation demanded it. To make the others martyrs without their consent or even against their will, he did not have the right to do. This is my point of view. Please, I may be wrong, but I told you already, there was no time to think. Thinking, philosophizing, that comes.....

Q: [not understandable]

A: Reached the final point? I would not have lost much.

Q: What is the final point?

A: What?

Q: What is the final the last point?

A: Well, the final point, for example, would have been if the gas chambers in Theresienstadt had actually been built. That would have been the final point. Theresienstadt's conversion into an extermination camp, as it looked for a time. That would have been the final point. The final point would have been if Hitler's edict to clear out Theresienstadt by means of a death march of its people, had been realized. Then I would have given up. As long as I still had the chance to effect city beautification on my own orders, without the orders of the Nazis or even against their orders, and to hitch them to my wagon, the last moment had not arrived in my opinion. But – I will give you two instances which seem to me to be such: gas chambers, about which I already spoke and the order to liquidate the city by means of a death march. They would have organized that, without me. Because then everything would have collapsed. Right? But it did not come to that. I don't know I don't know if it was good for me or not good. For the ghetto it was good that it did not come to that. So, see, we have....

Q: Well, can you now talk about this beautification?

A: That was a lie, but it was a lie that could be exploited. The beautification came into being with the Danish transport. The Danes came. First Theresienstadt was supposed to be a tourist center. It went through various phases: Theresienstadt as old people's home of the Reich, which was then liquidated; Theresienstadt as youth home of the Reich – children came from Bialystok, children from everywhere are supposed to come; then this attempt fails and it is liquidated and it becomes a tourist center. The Dutch come, the Danes and they may have waited for the English Jews, what do I know? And when the Danes started

to show interest in their Jews, the order was given to beautify Theresienstadt in such a manner that visitors from Denmark could be received in Theresienstadt. This task was assigned to me.

Q: The beautification?

A: The beautification. Why? Because at the time I was, as you might say, the inconvenient third person in the triumvirate, and the city beautification....

Q: Why, why inconvenient? What does that mean?

A: See, I had disagreements with Edelstein because of spaces in a Palestine transport which I took away from him. See, I was not a gentleman; we had Jews to send away. He released some spaces and then wanted them back, he wanted to force me to give them back and I defended myself and did not give him the spaces back. Then he inserted Eichmann into the matter in order to get the spaces back. I was unable to tell people from Vienna who had already been assigned, with his consent: you may not go, because Mr. Edelstein from Prague has changed his mind. He made mistakes in his calculations. I calculated better....

Boite 15 (55)

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Q: Well, what did you know about Theresienstadt?

A: When I got to Theresienstadt I was already well informed about Theresienstadt, and that from the best source: it was Eichmann who had repeatedly talked to me as well as to

Löwenherz about Theresienstadt. With me, I think I already mentioned the talk on Yom Kippur 44...

Q: 44?

A: Yes, Yom Kippur....42, excuse me. Should I show you my birth certificate? Birth certificates are an excuse for everything. Well, 42, when he told me, explained to me why he needed Löwenherz in Theresienstadt, and why I should stay in Vienna. It was his disappointment that the Reichs-old people's home was liquidated. With Löwenherz he spoke often about Theresienstadt and, considering the relationship between me and Löwenherz, he always told me about it openly and honestly. And it was in indication, you know, that I got to Theresienstadt and knew all of Eichmann's plans. Because I knew not only what he told me, but from what he told me, I also reconstructed what he did not tell me and I could act accordingly. Right? So, for example, I knew about the executions, because Eichmann told Löwenherz about it, considered it a mistake by Edelstein and Seidl, that they let it come to that and said: "This is your fault; if you had obeyed me and had gone to Theresienstadt, it would not have come to this. Because I did not want this, these executions; I did not want this" he said.

Q: Eichmann said that?

A: Yes, Eichmann said that. I wrote it in my book...

Q: Execution of Jews?

A: What? The executions... that was in Theresienstadt.... it did not fit into his plans. "I did not want this" he said, "if you had gone there this could have been avoided." He wanted this to convince him to go there. Right?

Q: Why you and not Edelstein?

A: Why him.... he trusted Löwenherz more. See, he trusted those people more who occasionally said no. This is not.... this can be explained psychologically. Right?

Löwenherz often said no to him, I even more often. Through this he knew that if we say

yes, it means yes. People were often afraid that they would be taken advantage of. He

trusted the organizational talent of Löwenherz more. And I informed myself about the

attitude of Eichmann with regard to Theresienstadt. At the last moment, when we were

arrested, in order to – as you might say – be a present on the birthday table of the

ascension to power, Löwenherz was supposed to go to Theresienstadt as first deputy to

Epstein. And I, if you read the file entries in the concealed truth, as simple Prominent A.

I already explained to you why one had to be a prominent person. And then, at the last

moment, the Gestapo intervened and did.... apparently there was a power struggle...

Brunner presumably wanted to keep me, the Gestapo wanted to keep Löwenherz. Each of

them wanted to keep the Jew to whom they related better.

Q: His Jew.

A: you might say, his Jew. Brunner was directed towards the work that I had done, the

Gestapo could not see me....

Q: You came to Theresienstadt....

A: Well, one moment, I came to Theresienstadt as deputy Jewish elder, and the director

knew nothing about it. I have to explain this to you. At the last moment, everything was

turned upside down. At the last moment, at the central office where I was kept prisoner, I

was called to the telephone. At the phone is Brunner, who was in Vienna and who had

carefully avoided to be present when Murrelstein was arrested. He did not want to look into my face. Now he reappeared when I was supposed to go to Theresienstadt as deputy Jewish elder. He gave me this piece of important news on the telephone. But I told him: “for this it was not necessary to have me arrested, an order would have been sufficient, and I would have traveled there.” Two or three times I voluntarily offered to go to Theresienstadt. He responded: “Yes, but it was not possible to give an order.”

Q: How long were you under arrest?

A: Two days. And then I go as deputy Jewish elder and Löwenherz remains in Vienna. Then, we left in a 4th class train car and, well, let’s leave out the details.

Q: Details? This was a promotion for you?

A: What?

Q: Deputy Jewish elder in...

A: I was that already in Vienna. This was no promotion because in Vienna I worked together with Löwenherz with whom I was, you might say, soul and heart, and in Theresienstadt I got to two people who – if you read now the file notices – did everything to prepare for my transport to Auschwitz. Just look and you will see how they worked for my transport to Auschwitz; as the camp director was told that I was an unruly element, that I would be dangerous to the peace and order in the camp, etc. Just read it and you will see. And the camp director said: “If people such as Murrelstein, unruly elements disturb the order in the camp, I will intervene personally.” Right? Such statement are attributed to me and set down as file entries. All this was in preparation for the transport to Auschwitz, for liquidation.

Q: Well, you travel....

A: I arrive late one evening in Theresienstadt...

Q: Where, in Borumslovice?

A: In Borumslovice. At the train station we were greeted by a youth group which was very well dressed, in leather jackets, strutting around like the SS. We did not know if they were Jews or if they were not Jews. My wife also said that one said that they were starving, but these were people who ate well. The Czechs who were working with the transports, always took out of the luggage whatever they were able to take. They could not complain. And Seidl was there, who was primed against me – I saw that immediately – as he received me with a welcome speech which, under normal circumstances, I would not have let pass, but there he might have hit me. But, after this deportation and all this travel I was tired, hungry, not rested, depressed, you see. We were led, our luggage was confiscated. I was the only prominent person A for whom the luggage was confiscated. For all others, the luggage passed. My luggage was searched, confiscated and searched. This was the special treatment that I was subjected to. Right? We got into a dormitory, 20 persons in one room. This was against the rules for a prominent A person. But they did all that in order to treat me in this manner. The next day came the order from Seidl: Löwenherz should report to him. That was the bursting point! Löwenherz is not here and I came in place of Löwenherz, not as anonymous prominent A person, but as deputy Jewish elder. Now Seidl was in an awkward position and my two colleagues also did not know what to do. There were the old disputes: Palestine transports with Edelstein, camp transports with Epstein, the money from Charbin with Epstein. Now they wanted to settle

accounts with me and could not because I was really deputy Jewish elder. The only thing they could do was advise Seidl to not speak to me. So, as soon as he heard that Löwenherz did not come, but just I, he rescinded the invitation; he did not want to see me. Then the distribution of the departments was renewed. I was assigned two departments for which it was known that I cannot do anything. I am locked in: the technical department and health department. They said to themselves: health department – he is no doctor, technical department – he no engineer. In addition, some of the heads of other departments were stirred up against me that it was not possible to work together with me, and he believed that he had put me on ice. They were convinced. Now. The first few weeks I had no idea what to do. Afterwards – I will only give you one example to show how it is possible to create political problems even with the health department and the technical department. Vienna and Cologne had brought lice to Theresienstadt. Why? Because this were transports that had been kept for months in camps before being sent away. They brought lice. Now, this was as follows: If someone got lice, he was sent to the worst barracks, old barracks where he would be with people to croak. So, I summoned a certain Dr. Pick who was an expert for delousing. First he did not know if he should come to me or not, but after a short time he got to understand that I was not joking. He came and I said to him: “See, you are the expert for delousing and here delousing is dealt with by letting the people croak. Is it not possible to create a decent delousing station?” He said: “Yes”. I responded: “If you are not able to do so, I shall find someone who will.” “No, I am able to do so.” “Fine, why don’t you do it.”

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A: Well, this Dr. Pick explained to me that the difficulties were that there was no housing for delousing, a suitable sanitary housing. The people catch lice again. So, I went to the technical department, my other department and said: "See, what are we doing with the attics?" – "Well, the attics are left vacant for attic housing for preferred accommodations." I said: "As of today you will not renovate a preferred apartment for anybody without my permission. And if you do it, Edelstein or no Edelstein, I will throw you out from your desk by the nape of your neck. You will never return. You may not authorize without my signature; nobody may work for the technical department for preferred apartments." "So, what is supposed to happen with the attics?" "I shall tell you. If you don't like it, resign. I am the responsible head here." I then explained to him that the attics were to be renovated into old people's homes, and then we brought the people...

Q: Were there many old people?

A: Still, there were several thousand old people. And then, after the old people were deloused, we started to bring them to the attics, which had been renovated, where they were sleeping on clean beds, where we sent nurses. And suddenly it became clear that the technical department and the health department were immensely political areas. And the delousing facility in the "Jägerkaserne" functioned perfectly, because the man finally wanted to show what he can do, because in Theresienstadt it was necessary to be indispensable, otherwise one was in danger. As I had a bad reputation, that I was a screamer, that I was bad, that it was necessary to work. He wanted to convince me that he was capable, and he was. He knew a lot. He was an expert, installed a model delousing

facility. It worked. It went well. But I made my first enemies. Already those who were supposed to get attic apartments and then did not get them, went around and denounced me. That was also the “Machloike” – excuse me if I use the Yiddish expression – with Epstein. He had authorized from the space allocation the attic apartments, but I did not let them be built, because I confiscated the space for the aged. And that was lustily smeared about, but the aged were deloused, did no longer lie on the floor, used decent beds with clean sheets and were cared for by nurses. It then happened that the health department became highly political, highly political. A typhoid epidemic arose. Then, Eichmann came running to Theresienstadt. But he did not ask for me....

Q: Eichmann?

A: No, because the two colleagues took care that the health department was under me, if anything had to be represented, I would have had to give my head if something had happened, but the “Koved” to talk to Eichmann, they claimed for themselves. They also did not want Eichmann to get together with me, because they were afraid that if I get together with Eichmann – based on our old acquaintance – I would complain about them.

Q: What do you mean, old acquaintance?

A: Old acquaintance. This means, that I would complain about them. They were wrong, I never needed to call Eichmann in order to deal with Jews. That is what I had long decided. So, they went and came back and told me as order from Eichmann..

Q: Where, you Edelstein...

A: and Epstein. They went together. One always watched the other so that they can be their witness. For the day on which the war would come to an end, they always lived under the

pressure, under the nightmare, that the war would come to an end and the Jewish elder would have to own up what he did and did not do, what he said and did not say. They always went together so that they could be witness to each other. I went alone because I did not think of that day. I thought that today something has to happen. What will be then, no...

Q: Yes, yes, that is really surprising. Only today.

A: Just today. Because what will be then, can only happen to me. Now I had to deal with the community, this is more important. What will happen to me we will see. They only thought about how to accomplish this. Well, they went together and came back. They told me, Eichmann sends you the message, if the typhoid epidemic does not end, the whole ghetto will be burned. And you are personally responsible. Because near by are Aryans and if the ghetto presents a danger, it will be burnt. You are responsible, he said.

Q: [inaudible]

A: Then I had Munk come to me, he was the head of the health system and told him: "Did you hear that?" "Yes". I said: "see, up until now you did not come to me because you had orders not to work together with me, but I am warning you: If I am hanged, or sent to Auschwitz – at that time one said Birkenau, one did not know of Auschwitz – because of the typhoid epidemic, you will always be two days ahead. I am warning you." He says: "Well, it would be necessary to do a vaccination action, but the people will not let themselves be vaccinated; they are undisciplined." I said: "undisciplined; let me think about it, come back this afternoon or evening, I shall tell you how to do it." He came back: "Well what can you do? It is not so simple, they are afraid of the vaccination."

Well I told him, hear now, we talked again and also called on a docent for hygiene who was there. And we decided on a very simple matter. The people had meal cards and each day one coupon was taken off. They got the meal card every month with a coupon for each day. So I said: “those who don’t have a stamp that they had been vaccinated, will not get to eat.”

Q: You have decided that?

A: We jointly came up with the idea and I approved it. I was called and told that I wanted to let the people starve. No, just not croak from typhoid fever. Typhoid fever has to disappear. As of tomorrow there will no longer be any cases of typhoid fever in the health department, as of tomorrow there will only be diarrhea. I did away with the reports of typhoid fever. Diarrhea.

Q: Diarrhea.

A: There was diarrhea.

Q: This was progress?

A: This was progress. Only diarrhea was reported. Typhoid fever had disappeared from the world. In the end it is necessary to beat the enemy with his own weapons. Lies in Theresienstadt are better than here. Right? And people had to see that I stood behind it. I visited the kitchens and observed, right? The cooks always were big men, but when a cook saw that someone dared to chew him out, to tell him off in front of the people, he became very small. If he was told that tomorrow you will be fired from your job where he had plenty to eat, where he had standing, he became afraid. And in this manner, people

had to have themselves vaccinated. And, as I said, after three weeks the epidemic began to subside. Then we found the germ spewer, by coincidence he was a cook. And the epidemic disappeared. But I had the reputation that I was a screamer, I was not giving the people to eat. Right? I already was at work, sanitation, health department, you see. Then the people no longer took note of what Edelstein told them: boycott him. They saw that it is possible to work with me. Right? And there I want to answer another question: You said that Löwenherz writes that I was ambitious, if that is true. Now, see, if I would say that I was a modest, innocent being, I would exaggerate, let's say. But, as Lederer means when he sees the development: I arrive, am pressed against the wall and after a short time I have command of the whole apparatus and the others are pressed against the wall. Then he thinks, how ambitious this man is. No, this was a very simple matter. After the accident with Edelstein, Epstein requested of all department heads a declaration that they assume responsibility to correctly execute the orders of the SS leadership and, as the case may be, are personally responsible. People were afraid of him, were trembling before him. On the other hand, the reputation preceded me that I scream, that I punish, that I fire, but it was known that I am responsible to the SS. It was known that my secretariat has remained in Vienna, that I had been deported, but I was the only one – it was Prochnik who stated this – people knew that it was true. Right? That my secretariat remained 100% in Vienna. That were 7 persons. People were fighting to work with me. A department head comes to me with a project and asks what shall I do with this? That does not concern me. With this you have to go to Epstein. But this is city beautification. This has nothing to do with city beautification. Then he wants to prove to me that it is city

beautification. – But no, you have to go to Epstein. He says: “Sir, do me the favor, I am afraid of Epstein. If something happens, he will sacrifice me immediately.” He told me that just like that, he spilled the secret to me and since then I did not send there anyone who came to me . The people wanted to have a cover. And if you wanted to do something good for these people without endangering yourself – I endangered myself anyway, even without him.

Q: Well, and were you happy about this large... this large... apparatus?

A: Well, see, my nature is to be active, I mean working. And you know, city beautification was such....

Q: No, but I mean against the typhoid fever?

A: Do you mean to say that I was angry that the typhoid fever disappeared? I don't understand that. You are asking if this gave me satisfaction? Yes, there was some personal satisfaction. Then, the following happened:

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Q: It is clear to me: you love power.

A: No, You want to make me angry. This is not about power. You have to understand the following. There was one rule for the existence of the Jewish elder: as long as he was needed, his existence was secure. And as soon as he became unnecessary, he was done for. If one....

Q: This was a fight for your own existence?

A: In part, yes, together with the usefulness for the others.

Q: This means.... this means....

A: This was reciprocal. The story is actually as follows. Right? I already told you that I, as health director, was excluded from the discussion about typhoid fever. But, when a very astute SS doctor came from Berlin to check on the health situation in the ghetto, it happened that Munk, the head of the health services, was ill with jaundice. This was one of the rampant illnesses. And there it was not said that Epstein always represents the ghetto towards the outside as Jewish elder. But it was said: You are the representative of the health department. You will go. And so, I had to go there and submit for an hour to questions about the health conditions. Only at the end did I become aware, considering the questions I had been asked – which I am sure were discussed with Edelstein – that he had not been told that he was not talking to a doctor. To the end he was convinced that he had been talking to a doctor. This SS....

Q: He was not a doctor?

A: He was a doctor and he was convinced that he was talking to a doctor. It was wanted.... There is a difference if one talks with a department head and with a political department head, and something else if one talks to a specialist. I was expected to disgrace myself and make this thing impossible. That was the idea. Right? To the end, the man was convinced that he was talking to a doctor. He may have been perplexed about many things, but he did not say anything.

Q: Yes, but everyone, everyone writes...

A: Yes

Q: Lederer or Adler, that you were very ambitious.

A: Did I not explain it to you, why they come to that conclusion? Let's say, basically, that I can not be held responsible for all the nonsense that is written about me. You have to [not understandable] the gentlemen themselves, otherwise I would have to ask you when the gentlemen saw that I was employed by the Vatican. This nonsense is printed even in the latest encyclopedia, the Encyclopedia Judaica. The truth is that I visit the Library of the Biblical Institute just for scientific purposes, just as the members of the Roman Rabbinate do, because this is the only genuine specialty library in Rome. I have a reader's card also for the German Archeological Institute, for the American Archeological Institute and others. (Listed). I am scientifically active to the extent that my circumstances permit. But the fact that I have gone to the Biblical Library more often than to others, that is clear. That they draw from this the conclusion that I have a connection to the Vatican... I am not even talking about the idiocy that I had myself baptized. This is also stated, I can show it to you, even in writing; it is in the photocopy of an article which appeared in a German language newspaper in Jerusalem. Here in Rome this is a psychosis because at one time a rabbi – in order to get some satisfaction for himself and his congregation – did some nonsense. But I am in a position to anger others even without doing something silly.

Q: Well, fine.

A: I say.... I was not.... when you consider the development one gets the impression that I pulled everything to me. The people came running to me, because they felt themselves protected with me. That's what I did. With me they were protected from the SS. The fact is, none of my colleagues from Vienna was sent to Theresienstadt with the exception of

Prochnik; and Prochnik came only because the Gestapo corralled him because of some nonsense his father had done, and they wanted to send him to the KZ [concentration camp]. And I was able to get him out under the condition that he would go to Theresienstadt. Just like that... that is the reason he came to Theresienstadt, otherwise he too would have stayed in Vienna. It was his father's fault that he got to Theresienstadt.

Q: But you were also hated?

A: Well, see, hated, may I

Q: It has been written.

A: Yes, Adler writes it, Adler writes it. See, let's.... hatred and love are abstract terms. Let me tell you about a case so that you know what I think it means to be hated. From Prague a transport left – after the Heydrich attack, because of the Heydrich attack – directly for Auschwitz. One thousand women were sent directly to Auschwitz. The women.....

Q: From where?

A: From Prague. The men were in Theresienstadt. Obviously, the men did everything possible to make contact with the women. One day, a member of the ghetto guard came to me and explains everything to me and states that he would like to be sent to the city commandant, the commandant of the ghetto, to plead with him to search for his wife; he would like to at least get in touch with her by letter. Keep in mind, I knew nothing about Birkenau, nothing of Auschwitz. I knew about Nisko and that was sufficient. I knew that it was impossible to find the wife, who knows where she ended up, and how she ended up.

Q: The east.

A: She was in the East. I then counseled him to forget about it. He came back, I again advised him to leave it in peace. Finally, he became pushy, and I also became sterner. I could not deal with the case, I was busy. He then went to Epstein, complained about me and presented the case to him. Epstein said to me: "You treated a ghetto guard badly." I said to him: "Excuse me, if you tell me that I treated a Jew badly, I am ready to discuss this. That I treated a ghetto guard badly, that I do not discuss. Because, what is a ghetto guard? A Jew like any other. This is no problem for me – a ghetto guard." This was the mentality of Löwenstein, this was the mentality of the Eastern European ghetto, where a Jew was executed in Warsaw in February of 1941 because he talked back to a ghetto guard. He was officially executed in the building of the Elder Council. That was the mentality: the ghetto guard is something special. The ghetto guard is... I did not know it then, but I know it now. But already then, the ghetto guard was nothing to me. Right? There is an article by Klank (*handwritten: Klank? Kranik? Heinrich Klank*) in a Swiss journal in which he writes about the legal setup in Theresienstadt, listing, among other things – offending the ghetto. This was a paragraph. Can you imagine to be sentenced for offending the ghetto. The sentence was forwarded to the commander. And in the next transport all the people were there going to Auschwitz. All that for offending the ghetto – the death sentence. And that was democracy. With me he was shouted at and then went home. I was the bad one because with me people were shouted at. The others were polite, let him be sentenced, democratically, by the ghetto tribunal, and very democratically sent to Auschwitz. I shouted because there has to be order. See, you have no idea of the situation in which the Jewish elder found himself. Permit me to describe to you one

evening pulled out from the chronological order.

We are in December 33, in the “Jägerkaserne” [hunter’s barracks], which at that time was no longer functioning as delousing station as there were no lice in Theresienstadt. There are lice in Leitmeritz, but not in Theresienstadt. And.... a transport arrives of Slovak women. They arrive, get off the train and start to cry, because up to then they believed that their husbands were on the same train in other carriages. In the meantime they discovered that those carriages had been decoupled – and the men taken to another camp. The women arrived in Theresienstadt. I am standing there with women who cry and are desperate. I am standing with three or four SS people who had been fetched from a dinging party to receive the transport, very drunk. One of them, Heindl, becomes violent with the women while very drunk. I had to take him by the hand and lead him to a corner and say: “You sit here – you – and don’t move!”

Q: You [Du = familiar term]

A: Yes, you sit here and don’t move. One moment! At the same time another master sergeant [Hauptscharführer] comes up to me – I’ll remember his name presently – who was the manager, gives me a silly grin and says: “I am a drunken pig.” I am stunned, yes he said: “I am a drunken pig.” He was a decent person and here his complexes just came out. He was released by the people’s court Leitmeritz after a testimony by me. But at that time he was drunk. A few meters away the boys picked up an SS man who had rolled around in the snow, started to clean the snow from his coat, and, while doing so, beat him to a pulp. I could not believe what I saw: an SS man is beaten in the ghetto. What would be the reaction? Fortunately, he was dead drunk. Imagine the situation. I was standing there

alone with a ghetto guard that was composed of women. Now I ask you why was I hated and feared? You tell me what a loved ghetto elder would have been able to do? I shouted at Heindl and [interruption on tape] The.... agreed with Beck that it was dangerous. As I left, Beck assumed the leadership of the ghetto within 24 hours and then they sent him away because there was a danger to his life.

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He took the telephone and spoke into the receiver, microphone at his ear. That is how senile he was. Yes he was that senile. They sent him away. He absolutely wanted to play a role. That was life-threatening. This was no joke. This was no call-up to give out honorary titles in order to satisfy people. This was life and death.

Q: Adler was a.....?

A: What?

Q: Adler was a....

A: I was afraid, but he was..... if I don't please him. I think this is silly, I think, really. One can heal the Messiah, would you say? Can it be healed by the Messiah? Not really. It is not possible to heal idiots. But Adler is no idiot. Adler is a good-for-nothing. That you can note. A good-for-nothing. A bad apple.

Q: A bad apple.

A: Bad apple

Q: Good you finished the

A: Yes, you...

Q: yes, yes, yes. You can.

A: Now, see, you are asking why I was hated. I permit me the counter question: [not understandable banter] yes, one moment, I'll get to it. You are asking why I was hated, right? I permit myself the counter question: imagine the situation which I presented to you. But keep in mind that I had no ghetto guard at my disposal. When I saw that each member of the ghetto guard that was recruited was sent to the east, because they were afraid of the Jews, I made the ghetto guard female. I hired women, young women as ghetto guards. And I can remember when I once walk in the place at 1 am and hear someone crying. I was scared; who is crying? I followed the voice and see a woman, a young woman, all alone in the large empty Hamburg barracks, watching over the potatoes which were piled up in the courtyard, and she was afraid there in the dark. This was my ghetto guard. I had to console her and then ordered that at night women should be sent as pairs, so that they can tell stories to each other and are not afraid. Right? But that... concerning the question how... I get back to the evening and ask: what would a Jewish elder who was not feared done in that situation? It would have been possible for riots to occur, that was the greatest danger. Crying, desperate women, drunk SS men, Jewish boys who beat an SS man. All that has to be dealt with only with shouting, running back and forth, threats to the SS as well as the Jews, to restore order. For that one has to be feared. There was no other possibility. Now, hated. I started – and was interrupted – with the story about the ghetto guard when Epstein rebuked me because of the ghetto guard. Permit me that I explain this to you. Epstein said: “I will show you that I will help this man.” He

then comes back and says: “I talked to Möss. He promised me that he will establish the mail connection.”

Q: Möss was SS?

A: Yes. He said: “Möss has the department for mail connection to the camps and he told me to give him a list of all the people and all the women, and he will establish a mail connection.” See, the people are still alive, many of them, whom I held back from registering themselves. What evil is needed to tell the people. The Jewish elder issues the announcement during the daily report: people who have their wives in the East should register. Mail connection will be established. And I tell you, don’t register. This is real danger because the people were angry and I sabotaged an order. When, in 45 – I was a Jewish elder out of work – I was walking around, a former Auschwitz inmate comes up to me – they were at that time recognizable by their clothing and the shaved head –

Q: The transports which...

A: ... which came back. I even thought that he will shout at me and ask if I had sent him there. Well, he came up to me and I recognize him as an engineer from the technical department. He says: “Sir (Herr Doktor), how are you?” “Well, out of work” “I wanted to thank you.” “For what?” “You know, at one time you held me back to register for the list. Because all of those who were on the list were later informed that there was no mail connection. The men would come to the women. All of them were sent east.” And then he told me that this whole transport was gassed. He said: “I was going on the last transport and was saved. If I had registered at that time, I would now be dead.” That was the purpose of evil. To say no to the people. See, the difference between good and bad is the

following. There is a book “In the shadow of death” [Im Schatten des Todes] by a certain Neumann who was a Jewish elder in Sered and in Bratislava. Do you know this book? In the Shadow of Death? There he tells that he was there when I ordered “Spanish riders.” You know what Spanish Riders are? Wire enclosures, barbed wire enclosures. He was with me, I received him as a former official, but continued to work in his presence. And I instructed the engineer – an engineer happened to come at that time – who had to get back to his job. I worked out with him the plans for the Spanish Riders. Thus he says in his book that I wanted to barricade the Hamburg, no Magdeburg barracks, the headquarters of the elder council, against an attack by the population, in order to protect myself against the anger of the Theresienstadt population. This was obviously idiotic, because he was there and saw for what it was used. Theresienstadt got, together with the people from Auschwitz, typhoid fever. I had no medicine, no inoculations. What could I do? Doctors, nurses and food distributors had been inoculated. The others were told that they had to stay inside. However they were very undisciplined. They considered themselves the aristocracy of the camp because they had been in Auschwitz and said, they will not stay inside. Subsequently I had the barracks blocked off by barbed wire.

Q: With what?

A: With barbed wire, with Spanish Riders. I posted worker guards with batons, because by then... more recently I already had organized a worker guard, which was no longer called ghetto guard. They were told: whoever comes out, beat them. They have to stay in. And I can show you in the documents that I gave you, there is a listing of the sick people in the ghetto... of typhoid fever, and you will see that until the 16. Or 17. there are very few

cases. On the 17. there was a sudden flare-up, 700 new cases. Why? Because I resigned on the 5th, and the first thing the good people did, who had earlier preached to me that barbed wire did not belong into Theresienstadt, and could not be used against Jews.... by they can die from typhoid fever.

Q: That was at the end?

A: Yes. But from typhoid fever.... I only want to show you the difference, be it at the beginning or at the end, the problems are the same, one had to be hated. I said that Jews were allowed to die from typhoid fever ... and I was unable to do anything. You can see, look at the tables. Exact incubation time starting on the 5th. Because the first thing they did was remove the wire enclosures. The Jews were given their freedom, as were the lice carrying typhoid fever. And then, the good people traveled abroad, collect the praise and recognition for the good deeds they performed, first to remove the wire enclosures in Theresienstadt. And 500 people died from typhoid fever.

Q: Yes this is... this is...

A: Now, you are asking me if one should be good. It was certainly not possible to be good. Imagine a surgeon who cannot stand blood, who is so good-hearted that he starts crying during an operation. Can you imagine that. He would kill the patient. He is hard-hearted, yes, in order to save the patient. It was necessary to use barbed wire in order to hold the people in. It was the only thing one could do. If on May 5, 45 – instead of stupidly removing the barbed wire – they would have waited another three days until the Russian army arrived with plenty of vaccine, it would have been possible to save a few hundred people. Here it concerns.... one talks around the problems, millions here and millions

there. But if everyone had just done his duty, just to save a few hundred. A few hundred here and a few hundred there, this would have amounted to something. But, well.

Q: Good.

A: I hope to have answered your question.

Q: October 44 – Epstein.

A: Yes, Epstein. You want me to explain the liquidation of Epstein?

Q: Yes, of Epstein, and you... you the Jewish elder.

A: No. Shall I tell you about the liquidation of Epstein.

Q: Yes.

A: See, the liquidation of Epstein, I wrote about it in my book, in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung.

The explanation that I will give you now is new. Because I have ... the matter.

Q: One moment please.

A: What?

Q: which I give you now is new. You did not read about it. No, what I tell you now, you have not been able to read it, it has not been published. You know.... What is this? An interruption?

Boite 18 (59-60)

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A: See, in principle I have to tell you that we were cut off from the outside world in the ghetto. However, certain phenomena which I can see now had an effect on the ghetto. You know the mission of Joel Brandt who was sent to Constantinople with the famous order

from Eichmann. This had an effect in Theresienstadt in the fact that Epstein was called in one nice day and was asked if he would be ready to travel to Lisbon to the Joint.

Q: You.

A: No, Epstein. From Theresienstadt. He came to me quite proud and I told him to decline. If you agree, you will get an order with which you will not be happy. But, he said, once I am outside, I will know what I have to do. Decline. During the same week I was called to the commander, Günther from Prague, Hans Günther. He asked me to come and looks at me very friendly and says: In consideration of your work, you have been granted departure for Palestine. In 1944.

Q: 44?

A: 44 or 43. At any rate, I was in Theresienstadt. 43 or 44, no 44, 44. I was given the permission to go to Palestine. I looked at him and said: Major (Herr Sturmbannführer), I have work to do here, I would like to ask for permission to remain in Theresienstadt. He said: I don't understand, you are getting the order, the possibility to travel to Palestine and you want to remain in Theresienstadt. It depends on what kind of work one has. If I had said that I was ready, the next thing would have been: well, but your wife and son will stay here. That would have been followed by an order which would have made me sweat blood not to execute it. He would have known what I could not have been able to do in good conscience with my Jewish beliefs. And today I can see that this was about the same time as when Joel Brandt was outside. Joel Brandt never came back, and so they thought why not try to send one or the other, lets try via Lisbon, or Palestine. I only want to tell you that as an example. Let's get back to Epstein. If you want to solve the puzzle of

Epstein we have to get back to the famous speech by Adler on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah 44. Adler, correctly analyzed it and says that Theresienstadt is like a ship. People from the shore wave to it, give signals. And he invites people to not pay attention to these signals, they should trust him, to not let themselves be misguided, etc. I am quoting Adler because I was present, I remember it, but I prefer to cite a source which can be checked, right? You can read it in Adler. Well, this is one side, however, on the other side...

Q: Was that an assembly?

A: No, an assembly, Rosh-Hashanah assembly.

Q: Was that the whole community.

A: Not the whole community. A call-up by the Jewish elder who, on the occasion of the New Year Holiday, what you might say – like the President of the United States – releases a message to his subjects. Right? And he speaks of such things. Adler writes – and he is not wrong – that he assumes that this was a trap by the SS. This brought me to a track. Because, simultaneously with the liquidation of Theresienstadt, almost at the same time was the liquidation of the ghetto Litzmannstadt. Put that together with the fact that at that time there was a lot of talk with Epstein because he brought his reports to the command office, and he was alone at that time at the command office, where they feared that agents, enemy agents would parachute and hide in the ghetto. If you think about it, it was the time when Hannah Senesz with two male colleagues parachuted in Yugoslavia and Haviva Reich with two male colleagues in Slovakia...

Q: From Palestine

A: From Palestine and they were.... And if you read Hilberg you will – I have read it in Hilberg – you will see that there is literature that states that these heroic feats – and they were heroic feats – went well from the point of view of those doing them. I do not understand what those giving the orders had in mind. They must have had their reasons. But I understand now.... in spite of this, I would like to say that someone should explain to me what they imagined.... They wanted to rescue the Hungarian Jews. And what could Hannah Senesz have done? If Hannah Senesz would have appeared with two colleagues, Eichmann would have retreated? What would have happened? What did they think of? Would Eichmann be.... by this heroic gesture.... Eichmann would not have been impressed. Neither Horthy nor the Vatican, nor the whole Hungarian aristocracy were able to deter him from the deportation. Would he have been deterred by a Jewish heroin? They wanted to do something at all costs, they wanted to make a gesture. And what was attained? The parachutists were executed. Hannah Senesz was not even treated as prisoner of war, because women are not soldiers. She was executed as a spy. And, you read in Hilberg that the Gestapo was on their trail from the first moment on. They did not succeed to fool anyone. But simultaneously, something else happened. That consisted of the following: you know that the only ghettos left, Litzmannstadt and Theresienstadt were the only ones left, were suspected that it was said: if tomorrow enemy agents parachute into Litzmannstadt and hide there, they will not be found alive. The same applies to Theresienstadt. What is happening now? Litzmannstadt is liquidated in August. The liquidation of Theresienstadt is postponed because they want to finish the film. It was only the film which postponed the liquidation of Theresienstadt, because for political purposes

they wanted to maintain the illusion. Until now, the real Theresienstadt was there as an illusion, now they were already satisfied with a film to maintain the illusion of Theresienstadt on celluloid. But to finish it, the liquidation was postponed. But Theresienstadt was scheduled to be liquidated. In order to avoid the danger that paratroopers, or rather parachuting agents, would hide in the ghetto. That was attained with this gesture, nothing else. And Epstein trusted no-one. Unfortunately, he trusted Möss more than his Jewish colleagues. That was, unfortunately, his policy.

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A: I am convinced that the text had been agreed upon with Möss. Whereby – as Adler writes correctly – Möss set a trap for Epstein, because Epstein's time had expired. Epstein was a representative personality; the big Theresienstadt was scheduled to be terminated. He was no longer needed. And a Jewish elder who was no longer needed was finished. For this they set a trap for him. He was supposed to warn the people to not pay any attention to the signals and messages brought by agents and elements from the enemy agents. And the text was prescribed to him. Adler says so too....

Q: You think that this text....

A: The text was given to him; it was agreed upon with Möss. This was the trap and he was then eliminated when he was asked to confirm in writing that there was a danger that parachute agents were hiding in the ghetto. He was supposed to explain his speech. You have given a speech; what did you mean with this speech? And with that he would have in some way signed the death warrant of the ghetto. He refused and then he was eliminated.

That comes out when you read Adler where he writes about the speech. If you know that Beck had warned him and when I am telling you now that I warned him not to give this speech, you understand? He insisted that he could not retreat; presumably that was agreed upon with Möss; he did not tell me that. And the reason must have been that he was asked to confirm why he said that. They wanted the confirmation by the Jewish elder to be justified in liquidating Theresienstadt. Well, let's leave that.

Q: Were you sorry for Epstein?

A: Well, see, these hours.... the quarter hour or half hour that I spent with him, he has.... I was called so that I knew what this was about. Ordinarily I was at that time never called to the command office, and then Epstein was there and he was told: hand over to Murrelstein your briefcase, you are under arrest, you wanted to escape. Right? You take over the matter and then we were left alone. I am convinced that there was a bugging device. They left us alone so that we could talk. For this reason, I did not talk. But Epstein told me that unfortunately, he did not have his poison with him. Right, that was all.

Q: Did you know at that moment that Epstein would be killed?

A: No! Because I said the following to his wife. Because for weeks food was sent to the arrested Epstein. And his wife also sent clothes. I asked her... there was an order to send food. The man had been shot the same day. But I pleaded with his wife: Don't send him clean clothes. There is no order to send clean clothes. Don't send him clean clothes. See, again a reason – bad. I don't want that Epstein is sent clean clothes. Why? Because I wanted to know what was behind this. If there was still an Epstein, he would have asked for clean clothes. Food had to be sent, this was an order. Clean laundry was not ordered, I

don't send clean clothes. If there still was an Epstein, he would ask for clean clothes after three or four days. He did not. She did not send clean clothes, because I forbid her, there was no answer. Then I knew what happened. I could not tell her. But this was again a situation in which one is considered by the people to be bad, to be crazy, but one has one's reasons. Well, the first 5 transports left. The first transports with 5000 people left.

Q: One moment [French]

A: My feeling is: as long as I am needed, I am here, and until.... if I am not needed at some point, then, well I am not there. One situation I described in my book, when that time came.

Q: [Lanzmann asks question in French and interpreter translates into German – not understandable]

A: For me... For me it was later. There were weeks when I was told: for the time being you will stay here. There was never talk about liquidation, only of another ghetto). For the time being you stay here. On March 5, Eichmann, for example..... you keep provoking me to jump ahead and then you rebuke me for it. But, please, it does not matter. Well, on March 5 Eichmann was in Theresienstadt. Right?

Q: 44

A: 44. The ghetto was absolutely in order. He even said: what did you make out of this Theresienstadt.... out of my Theresienstadt?

Q: My Theresienstadt?

A: My Theresienstadt.... that's what he said: my Theresienstadt.... Marmelstein. And what happens? Now, a debate ensues among the SS people, in my presence. This means, I am

stepping away, but I am listening. If it would be possible to receive the Red Cross without me or not. One of them, Günther, thinks that I was no longer needed, the ghetto is in good order. Rahm and Möss state: If I am taken away, something will happen at the last moment. So, Eichmann first sides with Günther. He calls me over and says: Listen, Murrelstein, you know that Epstein is in another ghetto. Now, he is supposed to come back and you can take over his work in the other ghetto. Naturally...

Q: Eichmann?

A: Eichmann told me that. Naturally, I understood what this was about, right?

Q: But you knew that...

A: This is logical... I did tell you the story with the clean laundry, right? And, says he... I understood. "The moor has done his duty; the moor can leave." And behind me come Möss and Rahm, and get into this. Not for my sake, but they were responsible there and felt secure with me. And both said: no, Murrelstein must not go away, he has to stay here until the visit of the International Red Cross. Murrelstein is needed. And Rahm looks at Günther. For some reason, he liked it that they came into this and he says: well, Murrelstein will stay here for the time being. He stressed "for the time being" in order to pacify Günther. In this manner I stayed for the time being. After the visit by the Red Cross the situation had changed. Well, now, after the death....

Q: [not understandable]

A: No, I am not yet Jewish elder, I was appointed only later. You could say that I took over the store to run it, as the gentlemen meant it. But, as I already had been running the store, nothing really changed except that I had to dispatch the transports. Epstein had already

arranged for them. When Epstein was arrested, the 5000 people were already ready for the transport in the Hamburg barracks.

Q: [not understandable]

A: One thing happened by which it was clear that something had changed. And that.... this is what I would like to talk about and this will also explain the matter about Edelstein. For the first time a Jew was missing from the transport. This means, Auschwitz has complained that one Jew less arrived. Well, Rahm called for me....

Q: What?

A: One Jew too little.

Q: One, only?

A: One. Because they had been used – permit me that I say this, because this will explain the problem of Edelstein – that from Theresienstadt always a few more Jews would arrive. One more, one less. Because that were the good people. They saved, they sat by at the dispatch of the transports and each saved as he could. And at the end nobody knew anymore how many people were taken out. What was one to do? Because it was not possible to deal with the SS, right? What did they..... The numbers had to add up. Thus, people were taken from the reserves, people who were not assigned, who were only kept there for an emergency, and they were pushed in. However, one did not know how they were missing. For this reason it was preferred to push in more than less in order to be sure. And now you will know, when you read the numbers from Theresienstadt you will find: 5007. What does 5007 mean? 5000 was the number. 5007 arrived because 7 people were sent in excess. And I am saying: these victims were an indictment against the good people

who saved. Because these Jews were sent in addition, those which the SS did not want to send. But within their work they mounted a savings action, right, during which they saved and many good people and condemned the others. Afterwards, in order to be safe – because they were not that good, that they did not want to put themselves in danger – they pushed in more, rather more than fewer. And this was the reason for Edelstein's downfall. Because, in October 42, with transport BY – I am giving you the exact designation of the transport – so many extra people arrived that it was impossible to know how many people remained in Theresienstadt. A census was taken, which did not add up. 22 people were missing. Now, Edelstein should have gone to Seidl and told him: Mr. Commandant, 22 people are missing. Nothing would have happened. At that time he was still needed. Seidl would have screamed at him, but he also bore responsibility. Together with Edelstein he would have smoothed this over. But Edelstein did not want to be screamed at. So, what did he do? He simply falsified the status of the Dresden barracks. He simply added 22 people to the status of the Dresden barracks. And then everything added up. That worked until, in September 43, the man who falsified the status got into the transport. Naturally, he did not accept that and said: I don't want to put myself into danger. I falsify the status.....

Boite 18 (61-62)

61

A: Thus, Edelstein tried to hide it, to plug the hole with a wrong statistic. The man covered that. When he was supposed to get into the transport, he divulged the matter. I have

suspected that Edelstein gave the information in order to cover himself. I may be doing injustice to him, but when something was discussed in the ghetto, Epstein had to report. Burg had his people who told him everything. Edelstein was arrested and what followed is known. For me it was important to determine why he was arrested. He was arrested because he did not have the courage to say no. It was necessary to say no; we do not allocate, we do not remove. This has to be the Jewish principle. You want to send Jews away; we cannot prevent that, but you do the allocation. The Jewish elders had decided to do the matter in this manner, allocate and remove. This eased their conscience. Certainly, the matter degenerated, lead to corruption. There was relief for friendship, for family reasons, for money, for sexual needs; for all possible reasons. Everything was there.

Q: Even sexual?

A: Yes, there was everything. See, there is a book by Bashevis Singer, a novel "The Friends." In it he writes that if it will be said in 100 years that all the inmates of the ghettos were saints, there would never have been a bigger lie. Because, and I add this, they were martyrs, but not every martyr is a saint. They were martyrs, but no saints. So, Edelstein has, as you understand, worked in excess for relief and, in so doing, got himself friends and followers. One said yes to him. After all, if one did not follow up, the man went away and nobody was concerned about it.

Q: And he composed the transports to the East?

A: Yes.

Q: The people did not know?

A: The people only knew about a family ghetto in Birkenau; this is what they were told. You

know perhaps.....

Q: Czech families....

A: Czech family ghetto in Birkenau. You know that people from the September transport were kept 6 months, only so that they could write cards, tell stories about an organization similar to Theresienstadt. That all kinds.....

Q: [inaudible]

A: With Freddy Hirsch, with Janowitz, only to create the impression in Theresienstadt that Birkenau is just like a branch of Theresienstadt. So...now I wanted to

Q: Yes, but just one moment; the people did not know what Birkenau was?

A: No.

Q: But the people were all afraid that they might be annihilated?

A: It was known that...

Q: It was the East...

A: It was the East. That much was known. And that the East... It was known that Theresienstadt was bad, but that it was even worse in the East. That was known. But I mean, all these stories which were told later. All those who were so smart to know everything and all that was done, more or less learned it in a romantic manner. We have, and I take responsibility for saying that, learned the truth about Theresienstadt... about Auschwitz from the Slovaks. Because in 44, in the Summer of 44, refugees from Auschwitz came to Slovakia, to freedom. And we have all.... Please, you have the names. They reported everything. And when the Slovaks then came to Theresienstadt, they told it. They were more or less believed, because the stuff was so awful that one refused to

believe it. One was finally convinced in April, when people who survived came back from Auschwitz. But one had.... there is the volume here, you have it, about Theresienstadt, containing the report by Lederer where he himself says that he tried to tell about Auschwitz and was chased away and told: "you are killing us, we don't want to know about this." One did not want to know.

Q: Beck, with Leo Beck.

A: No, he talks.... he says with whom he spoke. He did not speak with Leo Beck. You have his report here, he did not speak with Leo Beck, he did not mention Leo Beck. The story that Leo Beck talked to someone is reported in three different sources with various details. Dear God, I don't want to comment on this, especially with consideration for the personality of Leo Beck. But it remains a mystery to me. Well, he spoke neither with Epstein nor with me about this. We were political enemies. He let us... But let us say, he disagreed with our political actions. But that there was not a single trustworthy person in Theresienstadt, with whom he could have exchanged views, is hard to imagine. That, after the war, when it was possible to speak freely, he stayed for a month in Theresienstadt and again did not talk about this with anyone, the this inspiration only came to him in America, on American soil, that seems peculiar to me. I stay with it; I said so from the start, before the Russian secret police, and before the Czechs, and I was not refuted, because it is the truth. The people learned it from....only God knows what they suspected, right. There were signs, but they did not understand them because they did not want to understand them. The children from Bialystok, when they saw the shower installations, started to scream "gas."

Q: Who?

A: The children from Bialystok.

Q: But, yes....

A: Well, I only want to say, it was a signal. Then, for example...

Q: The children from Bialystok?

A: No, not yet, not yet. I only mentioned it. The Danes came into a barrack which had been disinfected, it reeked of gas. When they, the Danish Jews – they had already heard some things in Denmark – in 1943. When they came they were led into a barracks which was newly prepared, in haste, without time limit, etc. Even the barracks still reeked of gas. This was an alarm signal; they started to scream that they were going to be gassed. The Danish Jews. This should have alarmed us, but we did not take it seriously. And when you read the Treblinka book by Steiner, when you read the book by Adler about the final solution and other sources, there is a what's the name of the book about.... the story about the Third Reich and its Jews by Wolf..and ...

Q: Oh, Wulf and Poliakov.

A: Wulf and Poliakov, excuse me, Wulf and Poliakov. There he tells about a young man who came to Lunsk in Galicia and told what was done in Horodenka. And he asks, he tells: in Horodenka they would not believe us, though, he says, Horodenka is only 30 km from Lunsk. So, now you wonder that we knew nothing, and did not want to believe. It is strange that we did not know...

Q: But you had a premonition.

A: No, I can tell you, my premonition from Nisko was bad enough. Nisko served me as an

experience. I have... My experience from Nisko is... that children and old people are sent away because they were children and old people.... had to be sent directly to their death on the transports. Why did they need gas chambers? And, unfortunately, children and old people were in the worst positions. Because they are no customers who break down the door to the office, they are not able to exert political pressure. There is no need to do with them.....

Q: [French not understandable]

A: Up to the point where I was not responsible, I was not able to do anything because the people were not interested in it. Don't forget that this was not democratic leadership where it was voted upon... everyone took care of his own interests. Everyone had his own personal protection list, right. For each child that went away, one stayed that was on the protection list of the Elder Council. Right? And I was not able... to the point that I was not in a leading position, when I was the evil man, right, the bad man, the hated one, I could do nothing. The only thing that I could do was, that the people who hated and feared me, during the dispatch of the first 5000 people, in October, did not dare to make difficulties, I let them come and told them that those who remove someone will go themselves as replacement. You may not take anyone out, otherwise you yourself will go in. Otherwise there is no removal, only if you yourself get in. Love your neighbor did not get that far! The result was that Eichmann, oh excuse me, Rahm called me in and said: There is a complaint from Auschwitz that only 4999 Jews arrived. I liked that very much, because if they say that too few came, there were at least not more. I answered that they must have miscounted. There was no big deal about this, and he also did not make a big deal of it.

And since then, if you check the transports, you will find that the numbers agree. The numbers do not agree on October 23, when instead of 1750, only 1715 went.

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A: Yes, nobody accused me of dirty hands. Well, now. There were no even numbers. On October 23 there were 1715 instead of 1750, and on October 28 there were 2032 instead of 2500. But no replacements were provided. I disrupted the principle on October 23 by coming without transport lists. Rahm says: where is the transport list. I say, I cannot make one. Why? Because you have allocated the mothers of the girls who write the transport lists. The girls went home to pack; they will go away with their mothers. So, you provide replacements and the mothers will stay here. I cannot provide replacements. Subsequently, the mothers stayed and I used the occasion to put in claims for other people and then there were only 1715. With the 2038 this was already much more difficult. Eichmann had to... in Berlin or Budapest; I cannot say which, at any rate he was not in... at that time in Theresienstadt. I am stressing this, because it was claimed in Jerusalem, and witnesses declared to have seen him, he was not.

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

A: Yes, well. You know this, right? And the people were arranged in the barracks and I put in my claims in the presence of everybody. I had... I did not have anything to hide. No protection. Doctors, engineers, skilled workers, etc., those who were needed for the ghetto. And families. The result was.... I already had my plan of what I wanted to do with Theresienstadt, and selected the people according to this criterion. And then 2032 people

went away. This was naturally heartless, because the people had been used to go to the Jewish elder who said yes, said yes on principle. Because he was able to help and did help and another poor devil was sent away, and he was the big man. If he did not help, the man who pleaded went away and nobody missed him. Thus, it was easy to be a good man. And the people could not understand the difference, that I was not able to remove anyone. I had to be heartless. Even children now the rules: if you don't put something in, you cannot take anything out. I did not allocate anyone and thus was unable to remove anyone. I did not allocate him. On Sep.... October 5 Rahm indicated to me the end of the transport period, after the departure of 5000 people, normal operation can resume. Two hours later I was called again, Möss was there again, the transports will continue. Today I know it, I always was trying to figure out what had happened. I will reveal it to you, because you are so nice to me. Around that time, during the first days of October, Himmler received Jean-Marie Musy and promised him to dissolve Auschwitz.

Q: Tell me, who was Musy?

A: He was a former President of the Swiss Republic and a man who cared very much about the German Jews. And he received him and promised to dissolve Auschwitz by the end of October. And, at that time.... I know now, at that time I only knew that suddenly there were more transports, and that it was not possible to slow down the tempo. When I asked for a slow-down, Rahm told me: you know that I bloodied Epstein. I can also bloody you. Because I went to Möss behind his back. Because I said that we cannot maintain this tempo. It would be necessary to slow down, there was a need to gain time. At any rate, I refused to arrange the transports. See, this is a matter which the Jewish organizations and

newspapers do not want to acknowledge, that there was a Jewish elder who refused to arrange for the transports, who said: no. The fact as such remains that Rahm, who threatened me and said: there is no negotiating here. We are no Jews. There is no negotiating, admitted in his trial that he did not want to arrange the transports. I yelled at him. That is true. Right? And I don't know if it would be shameful for Judaism if they had admitted that there was someone who said no, I will not do this. Rahm took it to himself and he even got a greater sentence for it. The judgment, of which I will give you a copy, counts this as an aggravating item, he knew that, but still admitted this fact. Is there a need for further proof? And the fact that everybody knew. Because from then on everybody had to appear in the command office, were inspected by Rahm and Möss and allocated to the transport. People had to see that, this was the difference. The self-government did not arrange the transports. And for this reason, the self-government was also unable to intervene. Only in exceptional cases was I able to try something. But I was not the Jewish elder who could say: good, I let my expert come and say: allocate someone else. Because allocating someone else is irresponsibility. This is capriciousness. To allocate someone else, right? And in order to fill the holes, children were allocated, old people were allocated, who could not defend themselves, in order to be left alone by those one wanted to take into consideration. And that also led to the tragic end of Edelstein, as I have explained to you. I had to be the heartless one where... see, even Adler who himself left on a transport, he knows exactly that he was called to the command office and allotted there. Because he indicates when he left, and this transport was arranged in the command office. He does not have the courage of the willingness to point this out.

Q: Yes.

A: So, with this the question regarding the liquidation of Epstein, the liquidation of Edelstein, as well as the question about the transports and the question regarding my heartlessness should be pretty much answered.

Q: Do you know this? This.... I will read it:

A: Please.

Q: “It is true that our hands are smeared with the blood of our brothers, but we were forced to assume this awful task.”

A: Who said this?

Q: “In the view of history we are innocent.”

A: Who said this?

Q: Jacob Gens, Jewish elder of Vilna.

A: See, I will....

Q: “We will....

A: I know this excerpt.

Q: “.... make every effort to retain the remaining ones. Who knows if sacrifices will not be demanded (in Vilna) as they were there (Auschwitz). We will only give the old and the sick. We will not give the children. They are our future. We will not give any young women. We have been requested to deliver workers. My response was: we will not give them up, because we need them for ourselves.”

A: See, Vilna, I cannot

Q: There is a difference.

A: difference in the whole situation. The difference.... Vilna was no old peoples' home of the Reich. By the way, do you know the story – excuse me if I ask you – of the so-called “home purchase contracts” [Heimeinkaufsverträge]? Do you know or have you ever been aware of the fact, that they were not cooperating with this swindle in Vienna? Why is it not emphasized that while in the whole Reich, people were swindled, the Jewish organizations had people come to them, took their money for Eichmann, rented them rooms in Theresienstadt with bath, with view of the lake, with all possible idiotic things, with sunny side, all possible things, fakery, but in Vienna this was not done. Nobody has emphasized that. The Viennese are clobbered because we rejected all these fantasies. You want to have transports, put them together, call the people to the central office, allot them. When the people did not show up, he had to send his SS people out to catch them. Because we did not lend ourselves to that. Think of the statement by Beck which is pointed out by Reitlinger, which gets Arendt foaming when she talks about it, the statement by Beck that it would be good if the catching of the Jews would be assigned to Jewish orderlies. This would be just like chocolate around the pill. Right? There is also a compendium, the “Kontroverse” in which all possible explanations are tried in order to somehow explain this statement, to make it humanly acceptable. See, there is this book: “Der Verwaltete Mensch” [the administered person], some 1030 or 1100 pages written about the deportations. He does not know this statement by Beck. Suddenly, Beck is for him an unimportant person whom he deals with in short order, that he was discharged and has... with this he relieves him of all responsibility. And this statement, which occupies so many people, is unknown to Adler. Ergo, what did we do? You have to send your SS

people. I then will not send my people, so that the collision between the Jews and the SS will be somehow stopped. So that it will not get to some hard feelings which were really unnecessary, so that it was possible to intervene in case it became necessary. Because my people had orders to phone, and that was not misunderstood in Vienna. It was then... One of these people became president of the Jewish Community after the war. That should tell you everything.

Boite 19 (63-65)

63

A: See, in Vienna there was no trace of “home purchase contracts.” We did not participate in this fraud. Do you think that Eichmann did not put pressure on Löwenherz in this regard? On the other hand, he took him much too much into his confidence and told him the truth about Theresienstadt. This made it easy for Löwenherz to say: I am not going to participate in this. But I have one question: if one had just arranged things this way and, as stated, they did not make up any transports in Vienna. The SS had to bring on their own people. When people refused to appear, the SS had to step in to collect them in their apartments. This is the best proof that the Jewish Community did not cooperate. The stewards, of whom Beck demanded that they organize the people in order to prevent hardships – this were his words – only went along with the SS in order to prevent hardships. This was actually the solution. And these people were not regarded badly by the Jewish public; the best proof of this is that one of them, who often participated in these matters, became president of the Jewish Community after the war. Ergo... It would have

been possible to say that Marmelstein was in Vienna, and – as you can see – there is no damage in Vienna, Vienna makes no propaganda for German goods, Vienna arranges emigration, which is regarded as prime example by all organizations abroad. Vienna does not arrange for transports, Vienna does not arrange for home purchase contract propaganda, and well, 500 religious Jews remain in Vienna. And see, the regulations which appear in the Vienna “Nachrichtenblatt” are always somehow toned down in comparison to those appearing in the Berlin “Nachrichtenblatt.” The same regulations. Then Marmelstein goes to Theresienstadt. And see.... he even refuses in Theresienstadt to arrange transports and the responsible SS Commandant has to admit this, he cannot deny it. He will be punished for having shouted at him, that he threatened him because of it, but he admits that he threatened him with beatings, that he refused, that he defended himself. Many thousands of people were presented at the command office had have seen that it was not the Jewish Council who allocated them, but that it was the SS. And – see – Theresienstadt is the only ghetto that remained, that was not liquidated. And again, Marmelstein was there. Thus, a normal brain should have said that in some way all this was hanging together with Marmelstein, there should be something to this, there should be an explanation. They found the solution. This was the devil. All this is diabolical.

Q: Yes, this is a very interesting question.

A: All this is diabolical. Yes.... but deserved.... Did I deserve....

Q: You deserve it and you must now....

A: Now I am going home. Just one more thing. When are we meeting on Sunday? Should I wait for another phone call? What? No. On Sunday you want to film at Titus’ Arch.

Q: Yes, naturally.

A: Well, I propose that all....

Q: Cut...

No 64

65 In front of Titus' Arch

Q: Doctor, we are in front of the Arch of Titus, and this was your idea. What gave you the idea to be filmed especially under this Arch of Titus? I would like to understand this. What is the symbolism?

A: Well, this is what it is. You asked me why I assume that Lederer wrote about me and called me the second Josefus Flavius. And then I remembered that the Arch of Titus was on the cover of an issue of Josefus, about 40 years ago, which I published in 36 or 37. And this is the explanation why Lederer got this idea. Because I wrote in this edition about the personage of Josefus Flavius and described the conflict that this man had, as a Jew and as a person who recognized the enormity of the idea of the Roman Empire. However, he was not alone with this idea. Even the Talmud... a Talmudic teacher, Rabbi Jochanan Ben-Zakai, recognized the Roman Emperor as the person of the Messiah. Thus it is not so surprising that Josefus saw in the Roman Emperor, in the Pax Romana, the... a realization of the prophet in that situation.

Q: Yes, yes.

A: I have presented this in my speech in Theresienstadt. Unfortunately, the Jewish elder was always suspect, and, while I spoke seriously about the tragedy of this man, who was split

between his Jewishness and his Humanity, the people saw in me only the Jewish elder or the deputy Jewish elder – depending on when the lecture took place – who was in touch with the SS. And the idea was quite obvious. Yes. Josefus Flavius collaborated with the Romans, Murrelstein glorifies the idea of Flavius because he is close to the idea of collaboration.

Q: Murrelstein collaborated with the Germans?

A: They have... oh, dear God, the suspicion was always suggested. You know, I was in prison for 18 months under suspicion of collaboration. Thus, the people always saw a suspicious person in the Jewish elder. They said: Josefus was a Jew who worked with the Romans.

Murrelstein is a Jew who is in touch with the Germans. It is no surprise that he (admires) the person of Josefus... For example, they had forgotten that Murrelstein, during another historic lecture, talked very differently about the much maligned personage of King Herod. They have I showed that Herod, who is maligned and presented as a wild tyrant, was actually one of the greatest kings in our history.

Q: Well, this is a major discussion.

A: No, today, in Israel, books are published in which they speak about Herod in this manner. Because it is interesting: we have in our history two kings who were imperialists, and both were not of Jewish blood: Herod and [not understandable]. Today, if one speaks about Jews, they are imperialists. But two kings, who really created empires, or tried to do so, were both not of Jewish blood.

Q: Yes, but you are of Jewish blood.

A: But I am not an imperialist.

Q: Yes, but this is very surprising, because Lederer writes that you, you wrote already before the war about Flavius antiquity?

A: Yes, this was an anthology, an anthology from..... I cannot quite remember, it was either 36 or 37.

Q: that you identify...

A: No., the.

Q: And with Herod.

A: No.

Q: He wrote this.

A: No., But see, I have to say that. I cannot remember exactly. I would have to respond to you. I already told you before: I am not responsible for all the nonsense that is written about me, because it has been written that I was hanged. It was written that I had myself baptized. It was written...

Q: You have a sort of sympathy with Flavius.

A: Yes, just as with Herod.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, this is not sympathy. I understand him in a different way as he is generally understood. I understand.... I see the tragedy, the life of this person. Right? But, but... please excuse me, I already told you that Flavius..... the teacher Rabbi Jochanan Ben-Zakai, one of the greatest Talmud teachers, went much further than Josefus, and nobody rebuked him for it. Josefus is different. Josefus has his history with defense, with suicide etc. From this you can see, you can find a different matter. This means.... this is the view if

one should commit suicide or not. Josefus circumvented suicide. He said that it was God's will. I don't know if he assisted fate. In this regard I would not agree with him. I also don't know if the Masada idea is the only correct one. If the Masada idea did not have the effect that there should now be no more Jews at all in the world. I don't know that either. But please, we don't want to quarrel about this. I have told you... I have answered your question why I got the idea of the Arch of Titus. When you asked me – Josefus– I thought back on my Josefus publication. On the cover is the Arch of Titus, and I remembered the talk which Lederer misunderstood.

Q: Yes, this is very interesting and it is not an accident that you wrote about Josefus already before the war.

A: Well, excuse me, he is the only one.... It is a pity that you did not give me an indication during the process against me. I mean, I am not the only one who wrote about Josefus before the war. There is a whole literature about Josefus. By the way, I can tell you that Josefus and the History of the Jews, which were published in 36 or 37 are two youthful sins of mine. These are two "Konfektionsbücher" [serial books]. Do you know what "Konfektionsbücher" are? They are no scientifically researched books. They are books which I wrote to make money.

Q: Yes.

A: Do you understand?

Q: Yes.

A: If you look at them, if you can find them somewhere in a library, you will see. These are books that were written in order to make money, to replenish my cash. Because as Rabbi I

did not accept any compensations. You understand me? No tips for weddings, Bar-Mitzvahs, etc. On the other hand this was the school of Mitzvoth... don't take anything from the people, remain independent. But, on the other hand, money was needed. And there I found it much more dignified to write two books on the request of a publisher who made money from these books and I pocketed a few thousand shillings. Right? Thus, to cling to this Josefus today, I find a little exaggerated.

Q: Yes, but why did Josefus write about the antiquities, Jewish antiquities?

A: That was an apologetic writing about Judaism. An apologetic writing about Judaism. It was wanted..... he wanted to prove the right to exist of Judaism in the Old World. He wanted to assure the Jews a place among the falsifications of the Antiquities.

Q: Yes. cut, cut, cut.

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A: Let's get up and go.

Q: OK, let's go.

A: Well, you are asking me what gave me the idea to do a scene at the Arch of Titus as part of the filming. The question you are posing me is the one like Lederer arrived on the idea to compare me to Josefus Flavius. And then, at that moment, I remembered....

Q: He writes that you identify....

A: Well, that is an exaggeration, that is exaggerated. I already told you that I cannot be held responsible for everything that has been written about me. But there is an explanation, because Lederer is one of the [not understandable word], who has written about me seriously and nicely. There is an explanation. Because you reminded me of my

publication... a publication of the writings of Flavius Josefus, which appeared in 36 or 37, thus barely 40 years ago. And there, the Arch of Titus is on the cover.

Q: Yes, but excuse me, I would like to read (to you) but in English – that should not matter – what he wrote: “It is certainly more than a mere coincidence that his favorite characters” – yours – “were Herodes and Flavius...”

A: But that is....

Q: “...history has hitherto failed to pass a final verdict on the careers, equally, no final verdict is possible on Dr. Mummelstein’s conduct as Elder of Jews. It appears that he is so incensed by.....Flavius Josefus, and undeterred by the...[not understandable]”

A: Fine, but I have an explanation. From time to time I gave History Lectures. And I tried to provide the people with a non-conformist idea about Jewish history. It was my impression that Herod and Josefus Flavius are two personalities that are usually misunderstood: Herod as tyrant and Josefus as apostate...

Q:

A: As traitor. Josefus was no traitor, because he was just a person who had gotten into a tragic conflict between his position as a Jew and....who was fought against by the Romans, a member of a people which was fought against by the Romans and his view as a human being who could not ignore the fact that the Imperium Romanum, or the Pax Romana was a reality.... represented the reality of a condition which could be (regarded) as prophetic...

Q: But....

A: regarded (as prophetic).

Q: Did you believe in a Pax.... German Pax?

- A: No, a..... this is the difference.... a Pax Hitleriana does not exist. There is no Pax Hitleriana. That is the difference.
- Q: A Hitleriana victory?
- A: Also did not exist. Thank goodness. But see. The view of Josefus is.... [rest of sentence is not understandable because of wind]. Thus, in this sense nothing derisive can be seen in Josefus. Where Herod is concerned, I see in Herod also....
- Q: Yes, yes, yes...
- A: as a tragic personage, and not as a bloodthirsty tyrant. Herod's tragedy was that the people did not trust him, did not follow him in his plans. Herod wanted to create a Mediterranean realm, and against the Romans, and had to rely on the Romans because the people were against him. This is what I presented to the people. They saw in me not the history lecturer but the tyrant, the Herod, the crazy one. They saw in me the Josefus who was in cahoots with the Romans, or with the Nazis. And in this way, Lederer I think to use a nice, stylish formulation, imputed something to me, which I have to resolutely reject. I see in myself neither a second Josefus, Herod... my God....
- Q: Yes, yes, yes. But there is.... I think that there is really a possibility to compare, because, for example, why did Josefus the antiquities....
- A: Oh, you are referring to the story I told you about my activity before the deportation of the Jews from Vienna, to instruct a core of national-socialist scientists to take care of the remaining Jewish ideas, in order for them not to perish. You know, ... Josefus in his Antiquitat, wrote it actually for a similar reason. He wanted the Jews....
- Q: Yes, but what did he intend? To mitigate the....

A: He wanted.....

Q: the anti-Jewish hatred?

A: He wanted to... it was a apologetic document. He wanted to show the Jewish values in a light which could be compared to the classic paganism. He presented all of it in a way that classical paganism should also respect Jewish values. If you want to see similarities between me and Josefus, remember the story we talked about, with the Talith, which I...

Q: No, no, no. I don't know this story. What is the story?

A: Oh, yes, we talked about it.

Q: No.

A: See, at one time, in order to explain the art objects, I gave a course...

Q: When was that?

A: In 42.

Q: Where? In Vienna?

A: In Vienna. In a course to which the Dean of the Department of Philosophy, the Professor for Arabic and the President of the Oriental Institute of the University....

Q: But Jews?

A: No. National-socialists.... and professors of....

Q: You held a speech about Judaism?....

A: For them.... there were about 8 or 10 gentlemen, let's say, because Jews were no gentlemen.

Q: Gentlemen.

A: with the authorization of the "Reichssicherheitshauptamt" [Main Security Office of the

Reich], I presented them a course, two hours per week at the Jewish Community...

Q: weekly?

A: Weekly for two hours.... about the values of the history and literature and values of Judaism. We read texts, and I explained the Jewish religious objects. So, at one time I showed them a Talith, right, and

Q: A Talith.

A: A Talith, if you say so. And I explained to them the Zizith with an explanation that I found in Bialik. He said: Zizith are the only Jewish garment in which cotton, a shepherd's product (sic), a plant product, and wool, an animal product may be combined. Otherwise that cannot be done in any fabric. And they are knotted according to a formula. He then stated that the oldest wars of humanity were fought between shepherd tribes and farming tribes, because the herds destroy the plantings of the farmers. And then, peace is made. And in this manner the formula for the knotting is made. The formula is called, let's say "shalom" – peace – pace – pax. And the products of the shepherds and the farmers are united. And for him, the Zizith were thus a symbol of peace.

Q: You explained that...

A: I have that...

Q: to these Nazis?

A: I explained that to them and I am afraid.... I hesitate to say that... I think I saw tears in one of them.

Q: And what did you expect to attain?

A: Nothing. I only wanted to show them what values they were destroying, because the Talith

was not damaged accidentally. And I told them: You have to excuse, but the Talith is damaged. It was at the Temple in the Seitenstättengasse on November 10.

Q: November 10, 38?

A: November 10, 38, Crystal Night. Right. So, let's say, if Josefus pursued similar ends with his Antiquitatis? If you want to draw a parallel between me and Josefus; I don't think that Lederer went this far. He simply.... You are digging much deeper... you are digging much deeper into history. Lederer simply stated: Josefus – Romans; Marmelstein – Germans. Right? Ergo, here was a parallel. Right? Herod – Tyrant, Marmelstein in leadership, Marmelstein screams. Marmelstein - Tyrant. Marmelstein – Herod. By the way, there was a doll of me by Peter Kien, where I was represented as Nero. He gave it to me. Unfortunately, I don't have it any more. Thus, not just to Herod, but also to Nero ... not Caligula.

Q: Not Caligula?

A: Not Caligula, nobody got that idea.

Q: Yes, but do you accept this parallel?

A: Yes, I accept... I already told you: of those things that were written about me, before, and said before and after, I accept none of it. Because nobody is called to judge the Jewish elders; to condemn – yes. What means condemn – yes? There is a difference. Condemn yes. Condemn in the sense that I have to admit that Jewish elders... that I as Jewish elder, or as ex-Jewish elder, am not in the right place as survivor. The fate of the Jewish elder was to be shot. He had to be shot. The fact that I survived thwarted the Germans as well as the Jews.

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A: A Jewish elder can be condemned, he really should be condemned. But he cannot be judged, because nobody can put himself in his shoes. Condemn— yes. Because a Jewish elder should be shot, if he does not poison himself. A Jewish elder after the war is like a dinosaur on the super highway. Imagine a dinosaur on a modern super highway. All the light signals, all traffic regulations are mixed up. This is a Jewish elder after the war. He collides with everything. With the Germans, with the Jews. The Germans have destroyed all the documents which had any indications of their guilt. The Jewish elder knew more than all the documents combined. And when one of them remains.....

Q: Yes, but you are the only Jewish elder who survived. Do you see a deeper sense in this, a....

A: A nonsense.

Q: A nonsense?

A: A nonsense.

Q: Can you please explain this.

A: A nonsense. I have.... I don't know...

Q: All dies, Rumkowski, Gens, Merin....

A: See, don't make parallels with persons from Eastern Europe, who worked under totally different circumstances. But you can cite Edelstein, Epstein, etc. Yes, see, I already told you: Shehe....

Q: This is nonsense.

A: Sheherzade... but this not the meaning, this is only the way it happened. Sheherezade survived because she told a new story every night. A story was expected of her. And that is how the stories of “A Thousand and One Night” came into being. I had the task to tell the story of the Jewish paradise. And it was always expected of me, the chance would come when I would tell the story of the Jewish paradise, the city which the Führer presented to the Jews. And in this manner I slipped through. But, from the point of view of the Germans, this was a trick. There was no deeper meaning to this. You see, the nonsense, of which I spoke to you. Because the Jewish elder is awkward for the Germans, it bothers the Jewish circles etc. As I said: the dinosaur on the super highway.

Q:and there is a myth, because there are many people who think that you have already died, and....

A: No, this is wishful thinking.

Q: But yes...

A: Wishful thinking. This is the fact. I saw many people in delicate situations which they would like to forget now. And they want to put aside a past which is unpleasant. And they believe that if the only witness who saw it, who knows about it, was no longer there, it would be easier; it would have disappeared, the fact would no longer exist.

Q: Yes, this is a wish.

A: This, this... is just wishful thinking. Right? And this wishful thinking has led to indictments, this wishful thinking led to a report in a Swiss newspaper that I had been hanged, this wishful thinking led to a report in another Swiss newspaper that I should have

been hanged, etc. It is all wishful thinking.

Q: Yes, but please, you yourself wrote in a Swiss newspaper – I read it myself – about yourself with bitter irony that you were the last of the unjust.

A: Yes, because I wanted to use this to explain the status of the Jewish elder. You know, it is like this: if you think back to.... if you read it today, the newspapers from Israel, people pelt each other with insults, one accuses the other that they make “Judenratpolitik” [Jewish council policy]. And I am thinking, for heaven’s sake, don’t these people know what Jewish council policy is? Jewish council policy means sacrifice; Jewish council policy means that if one makes a mistake, one does not come back with all honors and a pension, but one pays with one’s life. That is Jewish council policy. Right? You do not have to read it. I can cite the Haaretz reports of February 43, April 43, of 44, where they reproached the people living in Israel for having celebrated, having carnivals, Chanukah festivals, Purim balls, while here in Europe Jews were dying. But see. The people had to live. But think back to the Bermuda conference. What did the Bermuda conference decide? It had been called in order to help the refugees. It decided: no ships, no visas, no pity was stated immediately in order to not endanger the situation. A session by the General Council would have been appropriate; a meeting for the refugees this was not. Ask yourselves, what did these gentlemen do? We were unable to do anything, we were marionettes. We had to deal with the SS. We were marionettes. We were prisoners. These gentlemen were ministers, were newspaper magnates, were heads of stock exchanges, etc. And they were silent. Then, in October, the Moscow conference convened and enumerated the war crimes of the Germans who were to be condemned. Everything was

brought up: the Dutch, the Belgians, the Czechs, the Norwegians, the Greeks, even the fishermen from Crete were not forgotten. I don't really know what happened there, but they were not forgotten. Nothing was said about the Jews. Now you will tell me: yes, the Jews are really French, the Jews are Frenchmen, the Czech Jews are Czech – no, this is not so. Because the Czech Jews were not persecuted as Czechs, but as Jews. Because there were no Czechs who went into the gas chambers. The Jews did. For this reason the inclusion of the Jews among the others makes no sense. And all this cannot be attributed to Moscow, but to a letter from Churchill, which was addressed top secret to Stalin on October 23, 1943, in which he cited and suggested all this. What did the British and American Jews do against this? And then, in 1945, when everything collapsed, when the piles of bodies were seen, only then the guilt complexes were stirred up, the culprits had to be found. And who were the culprits? That was easy – the Jewish elders. Because to take the guilt onto oneself, that was too difficult. The task was now to create a Jewish state, to fill ministerial posts, to fill Knesset seats, etc.

Q: But is this the reason that you never went to Israel?

A: No, I will explain that to you. So, they started to beat breasts. But not their own breasts; the breasts of the Jewish elders were beaten in remorse. And there was only one Jewish elder who survived and he was pulled through the machine with all possible means.

Right? In this way the scapegoat was found in a way, and they could now safely think again about their own business, about matters of government and parliament, because their duties had been fulfilled. What you say about my not going to Israel, there is another reason. We said earlier, judge and condemn.

Q: Yes, and this is another question: who are your true.... you do you consider your true judges?

A: The Czech People's Tribunal of Leitmeritz which had jurisdiction according to national and international law. This was according to the laws of the Czech state as well as according to the international law for the punishment of war crimes where it was either the tribunal at Nuremberg or – I was only a small fry –

Q: A small fry?

A: A small fry, a fat fish, but a small fish the People's Tribunal of Leitmeritz. But this was no cake walk in the People's Tribunal of Leitmeritz. There were 20 death sentences, 30 life sentences, sentences of several hundred years, etc. Thus, this is.....

Q: But....

A: I always have....

Q: Why were you arrested?

A: See, the reason.... the reason is...

Q: What was the accusation?

A: The accusation – one really did not know. I was the Jewish elder, that was enough of an accusation. Right? I was the Jewish elder, appointed by the Germans, that was enough of an accusation.

Q: Yes, but, yes but.... it was the Czech who arrested you, not the Jews.

A: Yes.

Q: This is a paradox.

A: No, no. There were from the Jewish side, there were certain accusations. But it was in a

way a voluntary arrest, because in April, as well as, before the collapse, on April 21, 1945, I received an invitation by the International Red Cross, by authorization of the then protector Frank, to come to Switzerland. On May 5 I again got the authorization, whereby Mr. Dunant even said that, apart from his car, he will put a truck at my disposal for my luggage. I started to laugh and said: “Mr. Dunant, can you imagine that the Jewish elder has so much luggage; for my stuff I don’t need more space than that in the trunk of a car; I don’t need a truck. But I am not going away. It is necessary to stay to claim responsibility.” I stayed in order to assume responsibility. And then, I walked around free for six weeks, among those from Theresienstadt, among people from Auschwitz who had come back, etc. Nobody had anything against me. In my opinion, the intrigue was spun in Prague, according to certain documents which I got to see – which I was not supposed to see, but I always had friends. Somebody had to be made responsible, it was even said that it was someone else; it was necessary to have a political process about Theresienstadt. But finally, it was decided to arrest me. After 8 months, the prosecuting attorney declared that he could not find anything. And after another 6 months, during the justification of the verdict, which I will present to you as a gift, of the process Rahm, the tribunal got to the question, if I would be a believable witness, and said – yes.

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Q: OK

A: Well, the tribunal has.... the Czech tribunal, in its verdict – which I will present to you as a

present, so that you can pass it on to that Jewish institution of which you believe that it can be justly evaluated; currently, Czech court documents are not accessible, but with the aid of friends I got hold of an original verdict in Czech – in the case of Rahm, where it states: The question has arisen if Murelstein is a creditable witness. The tribunal has concluded that this is so. Because the complaints against him have proven – without exception – to be unfounded, to be the result of hysteria and persecution mania. His only fault was – and there they were right and put their finger on it – that he had a way of speaking and acting which made people angry. He did not know how to make himself liked by the people. Well, one could talk about that for a long time if it would have been possible to make people like him. Now, you are saying, who had jurisdiction. They naturally had jurisdiction, and I submitted to them, they passed judgment. Even before ... even before Rahm....

Q: After the judgment you are free, and....and....

A: One moment please, we are not yet there. I still was not... after the... my judgment I was not free because until the last moment, they tried to get an accusation against me from Rahm. And even before... When he was already sentenced and when he already knew that he had been sentenced based on my statements, a representative of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency made an appointment for an interview. He had gotten permission to do so. And he posed him two questions: did Murelstein betray, and then, did Murelstein accuse someone. Rahm responded no to both questions in spite of the fact that he knew for sure that he had been sentenced based on my statements. Now tell me where this interview had been published? It was not published anywhere, nowhere. And now you are asking, if

Rahm, because of badness, because of malice, because of revenge would have said: yes he betrayed, don't you think this would have been published the same day in all Jewish newspapers? Certainly, sure, thus, years later they deigned to give me a copy, a photocopy – I'll give you the address. The gentleman in question live in Israel now, I wrote down for you the name and how you can reach him....

Q: Horowitz.

A: Yes. And he.... and I would like to know how it can be consistent with the honor of a journalist to suppress such an interview.

Q: Yes, but after the.... after the trial....

A: After the trial....

Q: You are free and have all your rights.

A: Yes?

Q: Why did you end up in Rome, why not, for example, in Israel?

A: Well, see... I...

Q: Why.... why Rome?

A: Yes, this.... I could simply tell you, if I wanted... see, I was more than 40 years old and with my profession ... and at my age, there was not much to do in Israel. You know that a conservative rabbi is nor recognized in Israel. As scholar I was a novice and would have been unable to do much in Rome...ehh Israel. I could also say that to start in a new profession in Israel after 40 is not easy...

Q: There are many people....

A: Yes, but see, I am not giving you these excuses. I am telling you the truth. There is a law

about the punishment of Nazis and their collaborators and in it is a paragraph 9, article A which states: If someone has been acquitted based on an accusation of collaboration in another country, he can be sued again in Israel. And I wanted... I refuse that. Because if I had been told from the beginning that you belong before a Jewish tribunal, you belong before an honors tribunal.... you belong before a Jewish tribunal, you belong before an honors tribunal, I would have understood. First they let me sit in prison in Prague for 18 months, hoping that the Czechs would hang me, and then I was supposed to stand before another tribunal? Whereby I can tell you that the Czechs did a thorough job; they were there, questioned several hundred witnesses, studied mountains of documents. Because I did receive the permission from the judge – after the conclusion – to read the documents. And I saw it. I could not face the possibility to have another repeat trial in Israel. Why?

Q: Yes, why? Why? This is very interesting.

A: Why? Do you believe that the Czech witnesses would have appeared again in Prague? Do you think that the Czech farmer who wrote to the tribunal – I had the letter in my hands – who wrote a letter with about the following content: Are you crazy to accuse this man of collaboration. I was destined to go to the “Kleine Festung” [Small Fortress], but was erroneously sent to the ghetto. I went to him and, instead of surrendering me, he hid me in the stable of the farm and kept me hidden because I told him that, as a partisan, I should be in the “Kleine Festung”. It was an error for me to have gotten into the ghetto. And this man.... are you crazy to convict him as collaborator? I had this letter in my hands. Do you want to tell me that this farmer would have come to Israel to testify. Do you want to tell me that several hundred Czech witnesses would have come to Israel to testify? They did

not value this matter so highly. Right? And I have to tell you, now, after the Eichmann trial, that I have serious doubts that Israel is capable to conduct such a trial. I am sorry that I have to say that. It was not difficult to convict Eichmann but, I mean.... the way the trial was run. You know the book by Arendt, you know about the other critics... and I have.. I don't see why I should have been the guinea pig. I presented myself, nobody moved a finger for me. I presented myself to the tribunal with jurisdiction – I was alone, nobody intervened. They examined everything. They acquitted me. This ended the matter for me. See, just a few days ago was the story of the [not understandable] children. There they went out of their way in Israel to send children from Israel who spoke Hebrew to Berlin. Of all places, Berlin. Why? Because the decree of a foreign court had to be recognized. And, of all things, in my case the judgment of a foreign court was not to be recognized. In order to evade all these things, I did not go to Israel. I came to Rome and tried from here to build for me a new existence, by working. After all, we have learned. In prison I carried flour sacks, unloaded coal. Here too, I worked as door-to-door salesman, etc. I was not too proud. If there was shame, in it for those who brought it to this, who forced me into this situation. I did not have to be ashamed, because I could have had money. Money was thrown at me. I had to throw out people who were bringing me jewels and money. Just as I had to throw out women who stalked me and offered themselves. Right? Through speculation, I could be one of the richest Jews today.

Q: You?

A: Yes, and in spite of this, I am a poor man. And if somebody does not like it, please, it is alright with me. And... although one has to be just. I was accused of everything, but never

that I embezzled money, or that I made financial deals, this I was not accused of. I was particularly hurt by the accusation that I had myself baptized. That affected me most, and do you know why? Because good friend believed it and were confused. Because there was the matter; I was in Rome. In Rome there was once a rabbi who – more or less as revenge to his community – took such a stupid step. And that caused confusion. The well-known leader of WIZO, Erna Papad, came to see me in Rome and said: Sir, what do I hear? She breathed a sigh of relief when I proved to her that this was ridiculous. As commercial agent – as the Jewish Encyclopedia indicates quite correctly – I represented Jewish interests in the first Roman Italian newspaper, I refuted attacks on Judaism, never thought of this. My friend, Jungreitmeir, came to Rome and said: as Catholic... as Protestant theologian I actually should be happy when I read that you have converted. But somehow, this does not fit into my picture that I have of you. I said: the picture is correct; leave your theology away from this. This hurt me. All the rest is nonsense.

Q: Yes, and.... yes.

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Q: Yes, but there are.... there are people who..... in Israel, who.... such as Gerschon Scholem, who have thought and written that Murelstein deserves to be hanged by the Jewish people.

A: See, well, see. A long time ago..... there was a long time ago a letter by Mrs. Arendt in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung. I responded to it in the same Neue Zürcher Zeitung. Do you mean what I comment on it?

Q: Yes....

A: See, I could to you.....

Q: This is the reason that you never went to Israel.

A: No, not that. But see, no, I gave you the reason because I simply do not believe that Israel has jurisdiction for a trial. I would have given Israel jurisdiction if that had been done right from the start. But after I was first sent to the Czechs and then, after the Czechs – they were hoping that I would be hanged – and when the Czechs said that there was nothing to it, to start again from the beginning – thank you. Where Scholem is concerned, see, dear friend – I hope I don't offend you when I say "dear friend" ... this is a manner of speaking...

Q: I hope that it is not just a manner of speaking...

A: See, it is as follows: I could answer you by citing what has been published in the Welt, after the Welt printed the article from the Neue Zürcher Zeitung. A woman who was in the Kleine Festung, not in the cozy ghetto Theresienstadt, but in the KZ [concentration camp] Theresienstadt, in the Kleine Festung and lost her husband in another KZ, wrote: "I cannot understand that people who were not there judge and evaluate." And then she continues in her letter to the editor of the Welt: "people who were in Europe, or who were not in Europe, in the occupied Europe, should remain silent." I could tell you that and say: finished. Scholem is finished for me by that. It would be too simple, because I don't have the point of view that a Jew who was not there cannot judge. Because the absence of the European Judaism is not a purely East-European, or European matter. It is not even a purely Jewish question. It is a world question. You know, it is like when you cut down a

forest and 100 km, or even 500 km away there is a change of climate. This is because the forest is missing. In this manner, the whole European climate, the whole world climate of culture has changed because of the missing of the European Jewish people, particularly the East-European Jews, and for that reason, every Jew has the right to speak, to judge, to evaluate, if he was there or not. I could tell you the following: See, Scholem is a great scholar. 40 years ago, I published a history of the Jews. At that time his name was still Gerhard Scholem. I wrote in the introduction that the work by Gerhard Scholem had made possible a totally new view about certain segments of Jewish history. I have not change my view. He is a very great scholar. And I can tell you that I compare him to.... Siegmund Freud. A flattering comparison. Siegmund Freud certainly was an authority, one of the greatest Jews that ever lived. But he of all people, who was so great in the area of medicine and psychoanalysis, had to venture into the area of bible scholarship and write a stupid thing about Moses. And in this way, Gerhard Scholem, who knows so much about kabalah and mysticism, had to write about modern history and stupid stuff about Murelstein. I could also tell you that. But I don't say that. I rather say: Because he was such a big scholar, who had to research scholarly systems and sources. And there are sources regarding Murelstein. The archives of the Red Cross, the Rahm trial, the Murelstein trial. And very obviously, the Eichmann trial. And if you extract the person of Murelstein from these documents, then he would have had to.... had to, let's say, Gerhard Scholem be thinking of the sentence of hanging. Apart from that, I cannot understand: Eichmann, who was sentenced to hang, to death – Scholem was among those who protested against this execution. I, who had been acquitted, there he is for the

execution. The gentleman is a little capricious with the hanging. Don't you think so?

Q: Yes, yes..... But do you think that this film will help these people to....

A: I already told you: people of good intentions...

Q: understand?

A: There is no lack of people of good intentions. I always had friends among the people from Theresienstadt, which have stood by me. They stood by me in the most difficult hours. The best proof is that they were in a position to turn over trial documents to me. But, people who, for whatever reason, e.g., to have to hide something, because with my death a guilt complex would be gotten rid of, there is no helping them, and there your film – to which I wish lots of success – will contribute nothing. I fear.

Q: You fear?

A: But see, on the other hand.....

Q: It will not be...

A: this is...

Q: These people....

A: I am thinking the following: I am 70, and 70 is the biblical age of man's life. Anything beyond is no longer the rule, but counts as an exception. Thus, earlier or later, the problem of the last Jewish elder will be solved and the dinosaur disappears from the surface. The highway will be empty for the machines.

Q: I don't want this. But why did you accept to participate in this film?

A: See, participating in this film? That was not easy. You do know the story of Euridice,

mythology is my area of expertise, after all. The story of Orpheo and Euridice. Euridice has just barely escaped the land of the dead, but finally still remains behind because there is too much talk, she looked back, etc.

Q: Dying?

A: and dies. She remains in the land of the death, this is as much as dying. Well, you know, you are not supposed to speak if you want to live, and you are not supposed to look back. Because, this is dangerous. Now, in the course of our....

Q: Back.... back.

A: Well... we have in the course of our discussion I already told you that I have a bit of adventure spirit in my blood. All my life, I never shrunk back from dangers, particularly those associated with my official functions. And you are the last danger, I hope, which has presented itself to me. I am not afraid of you.

Q: Yes, but you a tiger.

A: Well....

Boite 23 (71-72)

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Q: Yes, tell me what you did when you arrived in Rome in 1947?

A: I worked.

Q: What?

A: Various things with which.... somehow I had to take care of myself. I did all kinds of

things.

Q: You just have to....

A: One thing I did not do, which is what was ascertained that I did, that I was hired by the Papal Biblical Institute, at the Vatican. I always worked as commercial agent.

Q: But what kind of work?

A: First I sold light bulbs, then a

Q: Salesman for light bulbs?

A: Yes for large consumers, hotels, factories, also stores. And...

Q: With a briefcase?

A: Well, yes, with a briefcase, certainly. There is no shame to this. I sold and I made money. And....

Q: Did you speak Italian?

A: Yes, I spoke badly, but I spoke. Then, a manufacturer from the area of Florence, whom I got to know, discovered that I somehow had a gift for organization.

Q: Also gifted in organizing.

A: and he entrusted me with the organization of his sales set-up in Sardinia. And since then I mainly worked in Sardinia for a medium sized furniture factory, until 1973. In 73 I first realized that I was already quite old and, secondly, that the business climate here had gotten worse, so that I preferred to retire with an old-age pension to which I was entitled. And since then I live after a fashion on this old-age pension...

Q: Are you rich?

A: Nooooo, I am not going to be insulted. I live.... I somehow manage. To be rich for me

would be an insult, because in my situation, the money to become rich would have to have been obtained in dishonest ways. That's why I said insult. Not that being rich in itself is an insult, but in my situation it would mean that I got rich in dishonest ways. Because I had no way to get rich without doing something that is not legal.

Q: Yes, but this was very courageous of you, what you did....

A: I had to do something. They wanted to kill me at any cost, and I did not let them. I was boycotted, obstacles were put in my way in every direction, rumors of statements by me were spread by more or less credible sources that nothing by him will be published again, he will not get anymore employment, etc. So, I evaded this. I have been publishing things in Italian, in German, etc. But, what my work is concerned, I made myself independent, I detoured to a siding.

Q: Yes, but what is your connection to Israel? I mean what do you feel, for example, when Israel is threatened by enemies?

A: I reject this question because it is absurd. What does it mean what I feel? Certainly I feel a deep connection to Israel. I reject it, and will not answer. I reject it indignantly. Have no doubt about this!

Q: Fine, fine, fine. When Israel wins a war?

A: I am happy just like anybody else.

Q: You are happy?

A: Yes.

Q: Why?

A: Excuse me, what means why? That is obvious. I reject this question. This is not up to

debate. This is no subject of debate. I reject it. Because it is obvious. This is just the same as when I reject that somebody went to ask Rahm if Murrelstein committed treason. What does that mean? Why should anybody get the idea that Murrelstein committed treason? Why should anybody even get this idea? Why should someone have the idea that Murrelstein is not happy when Israel wins or has some success. For this reason I reject these questions.

Q: This is.... this is an answer.

A: If you are satisfied with this answer, I am satisfied. I am satisfied.

Q: My I try another question?

A: Please, please, please, as you wish.

Q: What do you think of Israel's politics? Israel's policies?

A: I am not entitled to judge that.

Q: No judgment?

A: I am not entitled to judge that.

Q: Why?

A: Because I have convinced myself of how badly people judge when they are not informed. I tried that on my own skin. And for that reason I do not want to criticize as a sideline spectator, without being informed, because one tends to be unjust. I have no right. I have no right. I have the point of view that Israel belongs together with the Jews in the Diaspora, that all Jews have the right to contribute. But only if one is informed. I stand on the sidelines and am not informed and for this reason I can pull for them, but I cannot contribute my opinion.

Q: And you do not want to talk about your feelings?

A: No. What I have to say on this subject, I already told you. There is no doubt about that.

And there is nothing more to talk about. If one starts talking about sympathy, then it is no sympathy any longer, it is pathos. And I hate empty pathos.

Q: Yes, that I already.....

A: I hate empty pathos.

Q: And another – my last pathos question:

A: Yes,

Q: Please?

A: Please, please, please.

Q: Have you ever thought, that with all your skills....

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Q: Have you ever at the time.... no. Have you ever thought that with your skills, talents, you could, for example, prime minister of a free Jewish state...

A: That is teasing.... I respond to serious questions. This is teasing. I will not answer.

Q: This is not a....

A: This is... this is teasing. This is no serious question.

Q: It is!

A: This is teasing, I will not answer to this.

Q: This is a very serious...

A: No, no, I will not answer. I will not answer to this. I never thought about this, and this is

teasing. I reject this question outright.

Q: You do not want to.... this question....

A: No, no. I reject outright. Do not forget: I am no politician, due to a sequence of circumstances I slipped into politics, during difficult times. I tried to do as much as possible. My only endeavor would have been, after the end of the war, to possibly get back to my scholarly career. That did not work out and thus I went a different way. But politics is not my profession.

Q: Yes but for such a question, people would be shot.

A: Then they have earned it. They earned it.

Q: Yes?

A: Yes.

Q: OK

A: That eliminates you.

Q: Another question; back to another question: why, in your opinion, is the Jewish elder hated more by the Jews than the Nazis?

A: Well, this is why: The Jew in the ghetto had no direct contact with the Nazi, the SS commandant. The orders were always transmitted by the Jewish elder. And if the Jew needed something, he turned to the Jewish elder. And it was the Jewish elder who always said "no", because there was no access for him to the commandant. Then there was also a certain psychosis which I cannot explain. One example: A Hebrew teacher from Vienna is assigned to the last transport in October, for the 28th. I have the intention to reclaim this man, but inform him about the danger that he is threatened by, because it is better if one is

not surprised. The next day I reclaimed this man for the book working group, for the Hebrew catalog work. The next day I tell him, I have him come to me, and tell him to report to Dr. Munalis for book catalog work. He then looks at me, angrily, and says: “I know that Rahm wanted to keep me her, You wanted to send me away.” Pure idiocy.

Rahm did not know him, for Rahm he was not even a number. What interest would I have had to send him away; I don't know. Quite the reverse. I like the man, because he was one of the few with whom – when there was free time – it was possible to have a nice, genial conversation.

Q: Why are you saying that?

A: Please?

Q: Why are you saying that?

A: Well, there was not very much of free time. But he was a very jocular, genial person, with whom it was nice to talk. After he relaxed, a few days later, he came to me and apologized. But at that moment he was suffering from a psychosis. Because it was not Rahm who said that he was on the list. It was I who told him. This was my.... You know, in this regard the Jews were actually right. Unfortunately. Because, you know, there were dossier remarks. The Jewish elder, based on his meeting at the commandant's office, brought back a dossier remark which stated that Mr. X, ghetto commandant, or camp commandant, or city commandant orders such and such. Unfortunately this was abused. Things were written which he did not request. You will see, when you read the decision, the Czech one, which I will give you, if you have it translated, you will find things you will not understand. The tribunal stresses that it was determined that Rahm that I had

exactly noted the dossier remarks. What does it mean, exactly noted? Am I a book keeper? No. Rahm stressed that because it occurred to him that I did not hide behind him when there was something difficult to do. This means, when the 70-hour week was introduced, I did not come and say: the SS commandant orders the 70-hour week, but I said: we have to work right now for 70 hours per week. I assumed the responsibility. But my predecessors evaded such things and pushed them onto the SS commandant who tolerated it because it did not matter. The Jews did not know this precisely, but they assumed so. And for that reason, they often suspected the Jewish elder. That was the story with shlepping along, go in pairs to the Jewish commandant, never go alone to the SS commandant. In twos. Why? One watched the other. One wanted to have an alibi, should there be peace one day, that there should not be a reproach that he had made a pact with him. Ergo, you are a witness that I did not make a pact. However, everything was slip-ups. Because when it was necessary to talk to the SS man, one only did so alone. Right. Because....

Q: Yes, but please, excuse me. This idea of a workweek of 70 hours, was that your idea?

A: This was my idea. But....

Q:

A: No. And I stood by it as my idea. I did not hide behind Rahm. That's what I mean. The others would have hidden behind Rahm. That is why I was hated and feared. But Rahm understood and knew that I would not.... For example, I will give you an example. When Epstein was once at a commemoration for a Czech poet, where only Czech was spoken and not also German introduced for his benefit, after a few days appeared a dossier remark: Mr. Office commander Rahm prohibits the Czech. entertainment. Czech

entertainment was discontinued. One of the first things I did when I took over the administration, was that I implored Rahm to permit the Czech language. Because I did not tolerate that one Jewish group should be persecuted. In the ghetto there should be no double ghetto. Subsequently....

Q: In the ghetto?

A: In the ghetto. Then, Rahm looked at me with big eyes and said: I did not prohibit that. He wrote this. Naturally when the Jewish elder wrote that Czech is prohibited, Rahm could not really say: No, I permit Czech. That would have been a political mistake. But as soon as I permitted it, Rahm had no objection. Now you understand why the Jewish elder were more despised than the SS man? That was... And now you understand why Rahm said, when a matter could not really be explained by anyone, he kept the dossier remarks very well. He was a sergeant, he was a Prussian, he kept it very well. No? This means that I...

Q: But you were also a sergeant?

A: No, no. That was not it, I mean. I was not afraid to take things upon myself. 70 hours of work, yes. Because it was necessary, otherwise we would be led away, if we did not keep the ghetto in good order.

Q: Yes, but, for example, why did you introduce the 70-hour work week?

A: This is how it was. After the October transports the ghetto was a heap of rubble.

Q: A what?

A: A heap of rubble. This means, lets say, no light burned in the rooms, there was garbage in the streets, the sick people fell off their beds, from the faucets water kept on running, nobody could shut it off. The people did not care any more. Everything had gotten off

track. At that time I did not know what I know now, that Prince Bernadotte writes that Hitler had given orders to lead away the Jews, the remaining Jews, because the matter was given up as lost, the idea of Theresienstadt. But I sensed it. And I made the decision – I was a tool, as Mr. Hausner writes – but I made the decision to pull the strings, I made the decision to put the ghetto in order, so that interest would be maintained to keep the ghetto. I introduced the 70 hour week, made the people work.

Q: Also the women.

A: Also the women, as ghetto watch. Just imaging, if you go out at 2am to the main square and hear crying. You follow the crying and find a young ghetto woman near the potatoes of the Hamburg barracks who is crying because she is afraid. But there was nothing else to do. The people were.....

Q: What was your policy...

A: This was....

Q: Salvation through.....

A: Salvation through work. To bring the ghetto into order. Because if it is not led in order, it is not...

Q: This was Rumkowski policy, it was Gens policy, et was...

A: No, I was....

Q: It was the general policy of all Jewish elders.

A: No, I don't know that, I don't know the other Jewish elders. I knew that Theresienstadt was a drama, if it can be kept presentable, it can be kept. I know neither the Rumkowski policy, not the Gens policy. I don't know if Lodz had been visited or if Vilna had been

visited, but Theresienstadt had been visited. And Theresienstadt was a propaganda object. And it had to be produced as propaganda object. Right? And for this reason I made people work. It was put in order. I introduced the calorie pay rate. People got to eat.

[next 2 sentences not on image/tape] Right? It was not just the old people who.....

Boite 24 (73-74)

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A: This was a psychosis of the people. I would like to explain it to you. See, the people had lost their will to live. I remember... the trash mounds were burned, because they did not want to cart them away. Once, I went with Rahm through the courtyard of a barracks and there was a man just about to burn a brand new coat. Rahm threw a fit. He wanted to kill the man because this was sabotage. I told him: "No, this is a psychosis. You got the people to the point that they..... the man is working as in a dream. He has no idea that this is a new coat. Right? He does not have a destructive rage. He just has no longer any sense of value. He does no longer know how to live. And these people were supposed to be brought back to life. Thus, I took the responsibility to abolish the walking hour and introduced the new free time. This means, they had the evening free. On my responsibility I permitted that they could go out in the evening, after 8 pm until 10 pm, the whole night. I gave them free time. I took responsibility for the births, thus took the stigma totally out of births. Because I remembered from the time when I went with Epstein to the commandant's office – at a time when it was customary to go in pairs, when witnesses were dragged along – and I saw that the commandant, when asked for permission of

births, always said that he never said it was prohibited, he always said: "It is your responsibility. You know your responsibility." And Epstein always interpreted it that births should not take place. Thus, what should.... at that time this was a whole affair... I finally interrupted the matter by responding to Burger: "Yes Mr. Obersturmführer [1st lieutenant], the births will take place as our responsibility. And now, I made no difficulty for the people. After October 43, there were 13 births in the ghetto. Food was given free.

Q: And these the people who were born in the ghetto.....

A: Yes, the...

Q: Did they survive?

A: The people who were born after October have survived. The people....

Q: October 44.

A: who before... the people who were born before October 44, with permission from the SS, are all gone. Right?

Q: But..... one thing bothers me.

A: Na?

Q: Listening to you speak about Theresienstadt, one does not have the impression that Theresienstadt was a place of disaster, that the people were suffering, that thousands perished and that other thousands were deported to Auschwitz. There is no feeling in your speaking about Theresienstadt.

A: After October....

Q: You are so much into organization....

A: Yes, this was the only thing, the only thing.....

Q: This was terrible Theresienstadt?

A: Yes, well, but the only salvation was organization, to help, to save and.... to let the rest survive. Because crying and wailing...

Q: Yes, but now, perhaps you may....

[Side conversation with third party, inaudible..... C.L. response: What is happening, oh, well, damn.]

Q: Go on....

A: Yes, I mean, this is not the case that I was enthusiastic about Theresienstadt. I am only telling because you have asked me. We started out from the 70-hour work week. I told you how a desperate community that had lost all will to live, pulled itself together, created order and produced a new will to live for itself. They forced their continued existence against the will of the Führer....

Q: Yes.

A: and were saved. If you then.....

Q: I know, I know, but my question is now quite a different one. There were months in Theresienstadt during which 4000 people were dying, right?

A: Yes, but about that time I cannot give you any information. I am not responsible for that.

Q: I know.... I....

A: So, what do you want? Do you want to insinuate that I was excited about the ghetto?

Q: No. I am not saying that. But.....

A: Yes?

Q: But I have the feeling that you did not have any human feelings.

A: Yes. See, I mean.... I want to tell you something, if you go out from that point of view...

Q: No, this is a question.

A: See, I told you already once about the surgeon who, during an operation, starts crying about the patient – he will kill him. With feelings and with speculation you don't get anywhere. For example: you know, for example: There are no worse and more sinister memories than the cleaning out of the crematorium. Not the crematorium, but the cinerarium.

Q: Cinerariums?

A: After the October matter, the transports were....

Q: This was a signal.

A: After the conclusion of the October transports the order arrived to clear away the transports.... the urns from the cinerariums. Right? The people recognized...

Q: What was in these urns?

A: The remains of the dead ones.

Q: Of all those who died?

A: Of all those who died in Theresienstadt, the crematoria, right? Now, this was a bad omen. The people did not know that. However, I knew a saying by Möss: As long as the columbaria – that were the cinerariums, they were called columbaria – exist, there is a Theresienstadt. Now, the columbaria were being cleaned out.

Q: Why, why were these two things connected...

A: See, there is a saying, a Latin one, which states: as long as the coliseum exists, Rome exists. And as long as the columbarium exists, Theresienstadt exists. This means.... this is

logical. Now, when they wanted to liquidate Theresienstadt, the columbarium had to be liquidated first, so that it would not be known how many dead there were. Logical, right?

Q: Was there one urn for each corpse?

A: Each corpse. Now imagine, I had to use old women for this work. And these old women did nothing else than read names, at night, by the light of torches, and each of them was searching for the name of their husband. And one woman....

Q: Who had already died.

A: Who had already died. Because they wanted to put the ashes in a safe place. And one woman....

Q: Rescue the ashes?

A: Rescue. And, imagine, Heinl brings a woman to me who actually had found the urn of her husband. She wanted to get away with it. See, this was a terrible problem. What was to be done in this situation? In this situation I only had to think that the object was to liquidate the ghetto. I had to do everything possible that the ghetto should not be liquidated. At that time I designed the 70-hour work week. I arranged with Prochnik to see to it that the ghetto would again be ready for visits. How was it possible to induce in the people a continued interest in the ghetto? At that moment there was no sense in giving way to displays of feelings.

Q: What happened to these ashes?

A: They were thrown into the Elbe by a section.... by a group of the deportees who were brought for this purpose to the "Kleine Festung" [small fortress]. They were thrown into the Elbe. That was learned only later.

Q: These people were then “liquidated?”

A: Yes, unfortunately. But that was learned only later. From the last transport a group was detached; one did not know for what purpose. They were then taken to the small fortress and had to wait there until the urns arrived. Then they worked all night long to pour the ashes into the Elbe. Right.

Q: But this means that the Nazis first wanted to..... the ashes....

A: destroy them, in order to eradicate the ghetto subsequently.

Q: that the...

A: eradicate the ghetto. This is the answer to your question. During this awful.... I could not cry with the women, I was not allowed to cry with the women. Because if one had collapsed, there would no longer have been any wives. See, it was necessary, but in a certain way I could not identify with the ghetto. Right. I had to save myself in order to save the ghetto, etc. That was more or less equivalent.

Q: Everything was.....

A:Because as long as they were interested in maintaining the ghetto, they were interested in keeping me, because I had to present the ghetto.

Q: But this is a very interesting question. You did that in order to save the ghetto or in order to save yourself?

A: On this..... oh, my God, you really want..... this is not like that. I mean, naturally, to save the ghetto. I mean, there were times when... when I was told that I was going to stay for the time being, and when I knew that.... after the visit, that I would be taken away. That's what it looked like. Still, I did my job. It is not that I just thought for myself, but I don't

want to deny.... I am not presenting myself as the one who was going to be sacrificed, no, I don't want to say that I never thought of that. That would be a lie. No, no, no. I did think about it, that in this manner.... I already told you, you had asked me why I was the only Jewish elder who survived. Like Sheherezade, she had to have a fairy tale to tell. I had to have a fairy tale to tell. Right? The ghetto had to be revived so that the fairy tale could be continued to be told. The thread of the fairy tale had to be knotted together, had to be extinguished....

Q: Another tale.

A: Another tale... had to be torn off.... it was torn off by the October transports. It had to be tied together, had to continue.

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A: See, it is just like with Sheherezade. She remains alive when she tells fairy tales. I could stay alive, as I told you earlier, as the only Jewish elder.

Q: Another story.

A: Tell another story. We tore apart these stories by the October transports, after the first city beautification. It had to be re-knotted and even if it meant to work 70 hours per week. It had to be re-knotted, it was re-knotted, and was told.

Q: Yes, another tale.

A: Second city beautification.

Q: And what is the story about the construction of gas chambers in Theresienstadt?

A: See, the story about the gas chamber in Theresienstadt reminds me of the Jewish anecdote

in the East where it is said: the two Jews who quarrel: You, I lent you a plate, you returned it broken. – First of all, you did not lend me a plate, secondly, I returned it to you whole, and thirdly, it was already broken when I got it. That's how it was with the gas chamber. First of all, there never was a gas chamber. That was a lie by Murlmelstein. He told the tale of the gas chamber to make himself important. Secondly, it was not Murlmelstein who prevented the gas chamber, but Rahm, who, in exchange was brought to Switzerland by the Red Cross, and, thirdly, yes, Murlmelstein spoke with Rahm about the gas chamber, but he was shaking so much, he objected so much, that we had to pull him by the hair to the command office, so that he could talk to Rahm. All this is not true. The story of the gas chamber was highly secret. So secret that Beck.....

Q: Highly secret...

A: after all it was Beck who asked me after the 4th or 5th of May: "Tell me, there is talk about a gas chamber, what is that about this gas chamber?" He knew absolutely nothing about it.

Q: And you were the keeper of the secret?

A: Yes, yes. I was... I was... This is the way it went: In February they started to develop a story in a mine corridor.... to insulate. That did not sound right to us, the insulation... If one had....

Q: February?

A: February 45. Insulation, etc. And then the head of the production section, the carpentry shop, the production section, he was responsible for the carpentry shop, a certain Dr.

Freiberger, came to me and told me: “Look, I got a drawing... actually it was not a drawing, but instruction, on how to make a door that is gas tight. I don’t like this. I am supposed to make a gas tight door.” And then, I went that afternoon to Rahm and told him: “Tell me, something is being built, and there is a rumor in the ghetto, that this is a gas chamber. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that I am responsible for peace and quiet in the ghetto. But under these circumstances I am unable to accept responsibility to maintain peace and quiet. The people will perform acts of desperation. They will escape.” He says: “This is just your job to take care that such a thing does not happen.” – “No, I will be with those who escape.” He then started to scream and I told him: “See, this is nothing. I will go with those who escape. Then there will be shooting. One hundred will be shot, twenty will escape. But butchering in a gas chamber, that we will not tolerate.” He then said: “Who told you this? Erich Kohn?” I said: “I tell you, believe me, that I Erich Kohn.... This was one problem, a typical problem which the Jewish elder had to face. He pointed to the engineer Kohn. He told me, Erich Kohn. And I decided to deceive him. Because if I had told the truth, Freiberger would have been finished. However, Kohn was his pet. I knew that he would not do anything to Kohn. And, please, I have to tell you, believe me, among the questions which you have posed to me so far, one question was missing. And I will supplement this: You never asked if I made no mistakes at all. And I will tell you, I made mistakes. And sometimes I am bothered by the question, thinking back, if this or that was correct. Sometimes one stays awake half a night, thinking back. And this is one of these problems, where one thinks, did I do the right thing or not? In the end, it went like this. The next day Rahm was not there. He had gone to Prague to report

that the Jews were in mutiny. The following day he was back, came to the construction site and slapped Kohn's face – I will show you not to talk – and suspended the work.

There was no further word about a gas chamber. This was the end of the story. See, it was then used against me: I had denounced Kohn. I did not denounce Kohn. I only deceived Rahm. I did not show my hand because....

Q: Yes, but it was only a slap in the face.

A: Nothing more than a slop in the face. See, I will tell you now. A book was published recently by [not understandable]. Now in London. There he proves that the British had the secret code of the German and knew in advance about the bombing of Coventry.

However, they did not evacuate the city. They sacrificed the population in order not to let on to the enemy that they knew their code. In war it is sometimes necessary to deceive the enemy even paying with victims. Here it was only a slap in the face. It could have been worse. I would have been desolate. I had to act in this manner. That is responsibility. One should not.... this was war. I did not denounce anyone, but Freiberg would have been taken to the small fortress.

Q: Yes, and do you consider yourself a hero?

A: No, see, the matter is as follows: According to the situation, I did things which others would not have done. But that does not make me a hero. I am not crazy. I have... you know, the tightrope walker in the circus has a safety net under him which the public cannot see. I walked a dangerous rope, but there always was a safety net under me. If, on October 5, 44 I said that I would not arrange transports; if you want them, you put them together, I knew exactly....

Q: You did not make the lists.

A: Well, they had to arrange them. I did not make lists. I knew exactly that they could not do anything to me because I was the last one. At that time I still was not yet the last of the unjust, but I was the last of the guard. All of them... they had liquidated Epstein, Edelstein, Zucker. Nobody was there anymore. If they had liquidated me, they would have been unable to do anything with the ghetto. They would not have known where to start. They had to tolerate this, because they were not..... they could not. Certainly there was always a certain amount of risk.

Q: They were not able to do that themselves?

A: No. Do it themselves. They certainly could do it themselves. But this was.... this was Theresienstadt. They would have had to destroy it. But they still had not decided to destroy Theresienstadt. There remained Theresienstadt.... there was still the thread of the story to tell. And that.... I always counted that in. And regarding the ghetto I will disclose a secret to you, but only because it is you. I can't even say not to pass it on, because you are here to pass on the story. A few days earlier I completed a project, the concept of a speech to possibly present during the visit by the International Red Cross. I was told that the text would be presented to Himmler for authorization. Now, imagine, a Jewish elder who was in a way prepared for the visit by the International Red Cross is not killed so soon without consequence. Yes? Certainly, there was a certain risk in this. The job of a Jewish elder was never without danger. But I entered this into my calculation. They always wanted to have two possibilities – gassing or presentation to the Red Cross. They had to make a choice. Either or. They could not have it both ways, either or. They could

not make up their minds and gave up.

Q: That is a good one: between gas chamber and the Red Cross.

A: Between gas chamber and the Red Cross. But please, this is a.....

Q: Theresienstadt's fate.

A: But, please, I will tell you something. Rahm admitted during an interview before his conviction. He was asked and he stated that Murrelstein had been right. This was a gas chamber. Because one was still thinking that the [unclear word] was... that it was not broken. He said, no, Murrelstein was right, it was a gas chamber. And the known SS man Gerstein, who teaches about poison gas, mentions to have received an order for Theresienstadt by Günther, by Rolf Günther. Thus, the story was not at all harmless. Now I want to play my last card: according to my opinion the gas chamber was not destined for the ghetto. In my opinion the gas chamber was destined for the crew of the "Kleine Festung" [Small Fortress].

Q: But the 5000....

A: For the 5.... It was exactly the capacity of the Kleine Festung. It was designed for the liquidation of the Kleine Festung. But we... In no case could we permit that this was done in the ghetto. But please, don't talk about heroism. Calculation, possible, but no heroism. Calculation, sure, more or less. But there is always the story with the thread and the story, with the fairy tale that had to be told.

Q: Yes, can you tell me more about this... this story?

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Q: But you are so anti-democratic; you have a fascist temperament, right?

A: It was said because I always was in the opposition against the first Council of Elders, and the second Council of Elders I composed such that it could not do anything. And for this reason it was said.... And besides that, I ruled out the tribunals, etc. But against the Elders.... those who think that imagine that the Council of Elders was in a way a parliament, against..... a democratic... to be against the Council of Elders means to be anti-democratic. This poses the question: was the Council of Elders a democratic body? No, the Council of Elders had been appointed by the SS. The members of the Council of Elders did not have any responsibility in the sense of that of the Jewish Elder. They protected their privileges, they guarded the privileges jealously. Protective list for transports, friends and relatives, and also people who got onto these lists by devious means.

Q: What were the privileges?

A: The privileges were their own apartments, special allowances, but... but allowances not just for themselves, but also for.... in the same amount for the wives, for the children and... also for the... Someone got 5 allowances when he had three young children, that was one case. And one, who was not married, got an allowance for his girlfriend. That continued....

Q: This was corruption.

A: This was not corruption, this was... You know, it was so.... one talked oneself in to believing that the Command Office desired that it be such, that the people should have

privileges. But, you know, I know now, for example.... I was always against it, but I know now that Rosenberg mentioned in his diary how Hitler joked during lunchtime talks about how the Council of Elders exploited the poor, regular Jews. And how they were happy about the fact that a differentiation was created between the Jewish masses and the Councils of Elders. So, to be against these Councils of Elders was certainly not an anti-democratic position. Because I was not.....

Q: It was an oligarchy?

A: It was.... I was not against it, but it was a.....there were.... you know, there were people who made themselves believe that they were doing something, that they were important, who were not at all important. There is a law by Parkinson which states: a corporation which expands to 22 or 23 has paralyzed itself. You can read that in Parkinson. And the Council of Elders, which started with 12 members, has expanded by means of honorable appointments and expansions for various reasons, because of compromises, of political calculations to 24 or 23 members. Thus it was paralyzed. So and so many Zionists, so many non-Zionists, so many Germans, so many Czechs, and one has to become an honorary member, one has to be a guest of the Council of Elders, and get the allowance even though he is not a member. Etc. This was all nonsense. Right? The Council of Elders or not.... You know what was then done? In order to take a load of the Council of Elders, a decision-making committee was formed – 8 members – in order to at least accomplish something. You know what the subject or discussion was at the last meeting of this reduced committee? With the furnishings for the “Fledermaus.” A performance of the “Fledermaus.” That was the matter under discussion. If the “Fledermaus” performance

cost too much or too little. For this one needed a decision-making committee, which was supposed to attend to urgent matters. But for this the following happened. I understand that a member of the Council of Elders was supposed to live apart from others.

Q: Why?

A: In order to not... to not... Yes, I understand that in the matter of service it was necessary that he would not be constantly under pressure.

Q: But the office....

A: Yes, but no. If he lives, he will always be bothered with pleas etc. That I might even understand. But with the food, that he does not share with his wife like the industrial worker, but gets it for himself, for the wife, for the 3-year old child who also gets the children's diet, the children's allowance. I never could understand that.

Q: That's how it was?

A: It was this way. Example.... It was always this way. For example there was a debate about the need for an allowance for people with pulmonary disease. Yes, children, refrain from getting allowances, confiscate the non-deliverable packages, declare as invalid powers of attorney, then we have enough for the people with pulmonary disease. No. The Kommandatur, within the framework of city embellishment, should authorize a special allowance for people with pulmonary disease. There were long tables, with lists that there were so and so many people with pulmonary disease, to many people with pulmonary disease. As person in charge for the city embellishment, I refused that this should even be included, but nothing could be done. I said: confiscate the packages that cannot be delivered. It was not possible. I then acquired in an unseemly manner – you know, as I

already told you, how it was not possible under Hitler for Jewish officials to have the luxury to act like a gentleman – the list of the carriers of powers of attorney and found that certain persons who were very close to me had arranged among themselves 18 powers of attorney. Now I understood why they were against the dissolution

Q: But these people were also protected from transports?

A: They were protected from transports. Not only they, but also their friends and the friends of their friends, etc. Every member of the Council of Elders was able to protect up to 40 people. To be against this was not anti-democratic. Just imagine when in a transport there were people who dodged it and did not appear. That brought in people who were friends of the members of the Council of Elders, because it was thought that they were in the reserve and thus well situated. Because others dodged the transports, they were all the same selected. That caused great indignation, the people had to go to trial. They were brought to court.

Q: The ghetto court?

A: The ghetto court. The verdict was confirmed by Burger, the people were then sent to the “Kleine Festung.” By the initiative of the Council of Elders. If you call this democratic, I am a fascist. I am happy to be a fascist. I am happy to be a fascist. And who was the honorary president of the Council of Elders who did not open his mouth and did not say anything? You know who that was? You can look that up in Adler, who at that time was the president of the Council of Elders, the honorary president of the Council of Elders. This was democratic. And now let’s get back to the people with pulmonary disease. Do you know what happened to the people with pulmonary disease?

Q: But was....

A: You know what happened with the people with pulmonary disease? The list had a great success. In the next transport they all went away. This solved the problem.

Q: Who did that?

A: What? This was the Commandant.... and with the list.... this was the only use they made of the list, the only use they could make. Too many people with pulmonary disease? Away with them. Finished. These were the successes of the Council of Elders.

Q: But how were these.....

A: See, I want to tell you something. In October, when I... I wrote this in my book, thus I am beyond the reproach that I have invented this now.... when I intervened in October for the last Council of Elders which was supposed to be sent away, because, you know, I was against them, but humanely I still had to fight for them. I was given a sermon in which all the difficulties were enumerated. There I saw that the so-called Command, which authorized all their privileges, also kept book on what they were doing. There was an exact bookkeeping.

Q: [inaudible]

A: It was exactly calculated. I was then told: they are going to another ghetto where they can start anew, where they can prove themselves. Well, this was a lie. But, that is not under discussion now, unfortunately. Important is, that exact records were kept about all this corruption. And now we get to the second Council of Elders. I formed it for the purpose of the city beautification. I selected 5 people, each of them with a known name: Leo Beck, the great Beck, Alfred Meissner, the former Czech justice minister, Friediger, Rabbi,

Chief Rabbi of Copenhagen and a friend of the Danish king, Meyers, legal advisor to the Dutch queen and Klank, the most famous Austrian lawyer, whose commentaries could not even be eliminated during the Third Reich. A really famous jurist. There were five. All represented countries: Danes, Dutch, Germans and Austrians. Why did I select them? Because I saw that Councils of Elders are being liquidated. I selected them in such a way that they were people who could not be liquidated. Minister Meissner could not be made to disappear without a trace. A Meyers, for whom the Dutch government was willing to pay millions to permit him an exit visa, could not be made to disappear without a trace, etc. Naturally they were five poor old dodderers who could not do anything. Beck was still intelligent enough to see that it was a mockery on my part to create this Council of Elders and he could never forgive me, because he would have preferred to develop an action. But that was not possible. The people were like scarecrows, lending their name to the city beautification.

Q: Scarecrows?

A: Yes, yes, they were scarecrows. But I still was not anti-democratic. And now I want to tell you something. Nobody saw it, nobody was aware of anything, but the people were to be protected, not exposed. There was a functioning Council of Elders. At regular intervals, the department heads got together for discussion and decision making. But this was not institutionalized, I did not make that a statute.

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A: No more transports were really expected, but one could never know. After the bitter end

of the first Council of Elders, the young people were no longer in danger, there was also no ghetto guard anymore, but rather a women's guard. Thus, I did not compose another Council of Elders, a real one, but unofficially the department heads did meet, without agenda, unofficially. Prochnik made the invitations by telephone... an invitation, one met, discussed without agenda and made decisions. These were the people who worked, the people who had the responsibility, the people who had to execute. And there was agreement. If that was anti-democratic – possibly. There was Klank, he came to me... for example: it was democratic that a poor soul who stole three packages of margarine was convicted by the ghetto court, the conviction was brought to the commandant and he was taken away with the next transport. This was democratic. If I dealt out a punishment, without the ghetto court, and thus did not deliver it to the commandant, then it was not democratic.

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

A: I was always fighting with Klank, who was a decent person who actually was sympathetic to my point of view, but he could never forgive me that I introduced fascist methods, to incarcerate people without tribunal. It was not possible to incarcerate with tribunal, because behind the court was the commandant, for heaven's sake.

Q: It was more dangerous for the people with the tribunal...

A: than without tribunal. See, if a girl is incarcerated because she stole money from a woman just arrived from Prague, and her fiancé comes to me and offers a bribe for me to release the girl. I have to incarcerate both of them because it is an impudence, outrageous that he offered me money. But I cannot accuse him, because if the commandant hears of it

this means transport, this means “Kleine Festung”, which is concentration camp. What happens? I let the people be incarcerated, without trial, hold them for four weeks and then throw them out. But the only one sentenced is me, because it was said: Nero, Caligula, the crazy one, Herod incarcerated the people without trial and without.... So, what should I have done? What should I have done? There was nothing else to do with these people.

Q: Yes, but another question, because it was the same thing in all the ghettos and do you believe that the Germans deliberately installed privileged people?

A: Yes, all...

Q: in order to incite Jews against each other?

A: I told you already, that Hitler was amused by this. Rosenberg writes this in his diary. This was deliberate. You had to reject this. When I got into the administration, one of the first things I did was eliminate the allowances for the Councils of Elders. The member of the Council of Elders actually got an allowance just as every laborer. Only it was just for him. If he wanted, he could share it with his wife. As far as I was concerned he could eat it up all by himself, he could give it to his wife. Just like the laborer. He could give it to the child if he wanted to, if he was a good father. But that he gets it for himself, for his wife and for the children, and that at a cost to everybody, never in my life. This.... this is corruption. Right? And then the question with the packages. The question about the packages, this was a crazy story. This was dangerous. Because we had with the sardines... The sardines were exported. The whole area up to Leitmeritz, up to Bauchowitz and further out, they ate sardines which had been sent to the ghetto for the Jews. They ate the sardines. They did.... For that they got money, cigarettes, etc. The cigarettes were then

sold again for another deal. And then..... when I came, the story.... and undemocratic way, because if I had let them vote, there could always people be found who had proxies, who would have voted against. One nice day, I stopped the whole mail delivery. And when it was restarted after three days, all packages were confiscated, all powers of attorney were confiscated, and that ended the matter. 2-300,000 boxes of sardines, 300 tons of preserves, there were.....

Q: Who had sent this?

A: it...

Q: Red Cross?

A: Red Cross, Joint, Zionist executive, and others. And then it went... The farmers in Bauschwitz, the Germans in Leitmeritz ate it up. The people made deals, for gold, for money, for cigarettes. And when I had confiscated this – after the first transport to Switzerland took place on February 5, 1945 – they had nothing better to do after arrival in Switzerland, instead of being happy that they had gotten out, they first told about the crazy Jewish Elder in Theresienstadt who took away THEIR packages. And when the Red Cross came in April, their first question to me was, why did you take away the packages we sent to the people? I confiscated the packages sent to the people; no way. I confiscated the packages which the people had stolen. For example, nurses forced dying people to sign powers of attorney before dying. People who were just about to be transported were suckered for a pittance, for a piece of bread, to provide a signature on a power of attorney. And the dying, the old who barely knew what was going on etc. signed powers of attorney... that were THEIR packages? And that were the people who went abroad, who

then painted this picture about the Jewish Elder, which then circulated abroad and in all the world, those who wanted to enrich themselves at the expense of the starving. And against these sardines, these preserves, they created a calorie currency in the ghetto, where everybody was working and was paid, they were really paid and not in worthless ghetto krone, but he was really paid in calories. Where children got allowances, where the aged even could get a small token at each birthday, etc. See, I have something to say..... what is happening? You are asking me, after the many criticisms and opinions etc., the one best describing it, is the testimonial by a nurse in an nursing home. You know, when I resigned on May 5, in the morning – it was a Saturday – the people, the elderly were again given a cold meal. As long as I was there, this was unthinkable, cold food. For the elderly that was real poison. But they did not care about that, they were just fed and that was it. And they were not used to this, because in the last months they always received hot food. And if not... how was at fault. Suddenly, they got cold food. They started to mutiny. In response, the nurse told them: now you have nothing more to say, because he is not here anymore. That was enough for me. This is the best testimonial that I could get, because I please, your film may be flattering or not flattering, or someone writes about me or.... yes or no, I don't care. This testimonial is quite sufficient for me. Now you have nothing more to say, because as long as I was there, they could talk. [pause] Are you finished? [long pause].

Well, let's go home.

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Q: You are very elegant today.

A: Oh, in honor.... because we say good-by today.

Q: For our parting?

A: For our parting.

Q: But I am also elegant.

A: Well, if you think so.... I am known as a polite person. I will not contradict you.

Q: You know, this is very surprising, we have been talking for four days and I think I am quite mad, because I am making a film not about the Shoah, the Holocaust, but about Dr. Marmelstein.

A: Eh.... yes, but beware that it will not be confused with a film about Frankenstein.

Q: I will make money. But why, I would like to know everything about you. Why....

A: What would you like to know?

Q: For example, what was your youth like? Who were your parents?

A: My father was... My father was from.... a business man from an industrial family who left the factory, which was taken over by his brother and founded a business. I spent my youth in a rabbinic school, then high school, graduation exam, mathematics cum laude, because I was....

Q: cum laude?

A: cum laude in mathematics. And... again, I mean, I always was able to figure things out. And then university, theological faculty in Vienna, university for Oriental Languages, Professor Christian for Semitic languages, Professor Geiger, a Jew, with whom I then

collaborated on the “arum....” for Iranian languages.

Q: In Vienna?

A: In Vienna. The university.... The dissertation was still, after 40 years, considered a basic study which was published in the official publication of the university.

Q: Yes, Why did you become a rabbi?

A: See, this is a subject, which I even don't understand. I was actually more interested in the academic side, but I think, academics... I was also not just rabbi, but also a lecturer at the theological faculty of the university. By type, I was not really ideal as pastor. I readily grant this. But the fact is, I did it. I even was not among the worst, particularly in the area of youth pastoring. The reforms that I introduced in the youth service of my congregation were copied in other synagogues. Well, I think, I did not too badly. And from this office the thread leads to later activities; a chain which just continued.

Q: And what would have been your fate without war and without Nazism?

A: Well, most likely.... I would be today either a professor, or had been, or a rabbi. I don't know. I don't know.

Q: You don't know?

A: I don't know. You mean....

Q: But could you....

A: This, such a thing... this can... I mean... this is so delicate, I cannot think back now. This is difficult. This is difficult. You made me think back very much, but so far.... so many stages, I cannot.

Q: Yes..... cut, William.

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A: That the development of my career has been decidedly influenced by the radical changes in Vienna is beyond doubt. But I see all of this as a chain of chance happenings, a chain of chance happenings. I was planned to be youth administrator for Jewish matters and this has a reason to it. The appointment was only delayed – fortunately. When the Jewish Community then disclosed it, I got the order to compose an appeal to the young people. The main appeal to the population was supposed to be composed by someone else, who was unable to do so. And thus, I was asked to also compose the second, the big appeal. And it worked. They discovered that I had the ability to write with style. I was asked to come and write the reports to the authorities. The aim was that they would not be to servile, but showed a certain dignity, but also had to be such that something could be attained by them. And it was thought that I would be able to do that. In order to lure me, I was transferred from the district synagogue in the twentieth district to the largest synagogue in Vienna at the Tempelgasse.

Q: But you were very young?

A: Yes, but don't forget that Napoleon said that if someone becomes a general at 30, he will be shot. And, then it just happened. From my composing the reports, the remote instruction to Eichmann, the contact with Eichmann, my aiding with the Columbia action in the emigration department and shortly afterwards I headed the emigration department. Right? The letters.... I had written the reports to the foreign organizations about our activities; at first I just wrote them, then I influenced their content, then I did the

negotiating, in writing; the personal ones were done abroad by Löwenherz...

Q: Yes, this was a good occasion to show your qualities.....

A: Believe me, this was no consideration in that situation. See, if.... your door is besieged by a group of 150, 200, 300 shorn KZ people, who have identification and who wait for you to get to the camp, you don't have time to think about showing your ability or not. You are thinking quite differently.

Q: Yes.

A: All this simply happens, you know, everything is so mixed up, it happens by itself. I mean, I want to stress what I have told you earlier. I only became prominent by the grace of Eichmann, but only because it was necessary to present a prominent person to be deported to the Führer in honor of the 10th anniversary of seizing power. But only for that purpose, otherwise I was not prominent and still am not today. Perhaps I represent a curiosity as the last Jewish elder, but no prominence.

Q: Yes, but you have a desire for power, right?

A: Oh, no. You are..., I mean.... You keep coming back to these subject which we already talked about. In this manner we will never finish. This is no desire, this is no desire for power. You repeat something – please forgive me – you repeat an unimportant statement in the Encyclopedia Judaica, which states that I had much power in Vienna and had allegedly abused it. Yes, I abused it for the emigration of 130,000 Jews. I abused it. They were gone.

Q: Yes, but there is something else. These Nazi.....

A: Yes?

Q: were they not dumb? Right?

A: That depends. That depends. There were dumb ones, and bright ones and clever ones, depending. Right? Eichmann was not at all dumb. Not at all banal, and not at all dumb. And Brunner not either. These are the people with whom I had to deal.

Q: But I think I mean you are too intelligent to recognize the Nazis as individuals. But possibly you were impressed by their power.

A: I?

Q: Yes.

A: By my power?

Q: No, Nazi power.

A: No.

Q: Never?

A: Impressed.... I mean, impressed....there was always the question: out, out, out. And in Theresienstadt there were again other problems. The object was: endure, endure, endure. To somehow anchor the ghetto in such a way that it will not disappear. There was always the danger that the ghetto would disappear over night. Right? And then there was the anchor of the city beautification. I mean, power, I would totally eliminate power problems.

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A: I mean, that was not a problem of power, it was more a problem of powerlessness, much more than a problem of power.

Q: Yes, but this is an interesting question. It was power without power.

A: Yes, it was necessary....

Q: Power was a...

A: Power of powerlessness. It was necessary to attain something from the situation of powerlessness. That was it. But question of power.... Only an outsider saw the Jewish elder as a power factor because he believed that he can do something. He was jealous because he was allowed to go to the commandant office every day, perhaps. Right? That was a pleasure.

Q: Yes. But I would like to feel. Can you describe your relationship, your connection with, for example, the ghetto commandant.

A: See....

Q: Rahm...

A: With Rahm....

Q: You were

A: See, I will tell you the truth. I will tell you something, but you have to let me speak. I will tell you, I have with... See, I was almost the only Jew, almost the only one, there was a second one whom I do not want to name, but there was... who was allowed to sit in the presence of Eichmann. Now you will tell me: Stop, so, you were a traitor, a collaborator. What relationship did you have to Eichmann? This is a purely technical question. This was not a question of distinction. Eichmann received reports from me which I had to explain to him because he had forced me to give him remote instructions. And next to his desk there was no chair, because the Jew had to stand. He was seated, the Jew was

standing. The result was that I was standing..... and thus looking down on him. Now he stood up. And then the situation came up that he had to stand for a long time. And finally he found it appropriate to have a chair brought in. There was a door guard who was staff sergeant [Scharführer] Rahm... that was his name. He was...

Q: Staff sergeant Rahm.

A: Staff sergeant Rahm. That was his name. He said: bring a chair for Murrelstein, Mr. Rahm.

Q: Bring a chair for

A: ...Murrelstein, Mr. Rahm. Years went by. That was in 38-39. In 1944 Mr. Rahm was first lieutenant [Obersturmführer], and Murrelstein was deputy Jewish elder entrusted with city beautification in Theresienstadt. However, unfortunately, he never could overcome the complex about having brought me the chair.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: He never got over it. Somehow that always remained a barrier between us.

Q: Chair complex.

A: No, seating complex. Well, the relationship became such that it was possible to talk fairly quietly just between the two of us, at least mostly. The Jewish elders usually tried to have witnesses. But this was not just for pure egoism, just in case, when it would get to this point after the war, if someone would be there saying, that they did not collaborate. But they worked together, probably.

Q: This was on purpose.

A: This was on purpose. I went alone from the start, because the idea was to get something

done. And to get something done, it was necessary to speak between the two of us.

Because the things one could say between the two of us, one could not dare saying in front of witnesses. Right? And what would be then, that did not interest me. I knew that it would be bad. But I was not interested in that. And it went generally well with Rahm. He had his bad times, particularly in October. Then he was furious, he was crazy. He even threatened to beat me. Yes....

Q: To beat you?

A: To beat me because....

Q: Where?

A: Where? I did not ask him where he wanted to beat someone. He had the power to beat. Because I tried to reduce the speed of the transports. Because I went to Höss behind his back, he told me: "You know that I beat Epstein, I will also beat you." And nothing could be done. He shouted at me when I.... while Höss remained quite calm, when I refused to compose the lists for the transport, he shouted at me, threatened me, etc. Once more.... afterwards.... there were two other occasions when he got furious. Only on two occasions. Once was a cigarette smuggling matter. There he seized the chance to cancel all the achievements which I quietly had created for the ghetto, after October – eliminate the prohibition to go out, all the freedoms, etc. Prohibition of allowances, light blockade, home blockade, prohibition to go out, etc, etc. And he told me: "you put everything together, the new camp order and send it to me for signature. I no longer trust you. You will falsify it, I know you." They knew that I always tried to make things a little easier.

Q: "I know you"

A: "I know you." I then came and brought it to him. He said: "I told you to send it, and not to bring it." "I have brought also something else." I gave it to him. He signed it. Then he said: "What else did you bring?" – "A request to be released from the office of Jewish elder." "Are you crazy? For that you can be shot. This is disobedience." "Mr. Obersturmführer [1st Lieutenant], I was prepared to be the head of a Jewish self-administration, not the 'Kapo' of a concentration camp." And.....

Q: In your opinion was there.... what was the difference between the situation of a Kapo in a concentration camp and the situation of a Jewish elder?

A: Well, the Jewish elder could, if he wanted, make policy. The Kapo was just a tool. The Jewish elder could make policy, and had to make policy.

Q: Do you believe that?

A: He has... yes. I have... Edelstein did it, and contrary to Eichmann. He has... Edelstein has, for his Czech attitude in order to maintain his obligations to the Czech young people, he made the idea of Eichmann regarding the Reich-senior home invalid...

Q: Yes, but it was a hopeless policy.

A: Yes, but this is not a Kapo, you cannot call this Kapo. This was a political concept of Edelstein. And this... and if I, let's say, was able to get the revocation of the order to evacuate Theresienstadt, you cannot call this Kapo policy. Kapo means to plan for 24 hours. Jewish elder means to have a political concept for the solution of certain problems.

Q: Yes.

A: That is at least the way it ought to be.

Q: A political concept with... without power. This is a policy...

- A: I already said: there is a policy of powerlessness. It was necessary to work from powerlessness. This is an art.
- Q: And the policy....
- A: Well, there is a policy... a policy of powerlessness.
- Q: Policy of powerlessness.
- A: Policy of powerlessness. You know, I would just like to ask you for one thing. The second time when Rahm became furious was the story of a birth. Because this is of historical importance. It explains the problem. He walked with me through the Magdeburg barracks in order to check if everything was in order before a visit, and finds a baby which was two weeks old in one of the apartments. He says: "who authorized this birth?" "Nobody." "But why, you know your responsibility." Well, Mr. Obersturmführer, the baby was born on my responsibility." Because.... that should have been set down: there was no order, Jewish, that one had to abort, it was just that the Jewish elder was terrorized with his so-called responsibility, that he himself brings the women to have abortions... that was diabolical. And for that one had to have nerves to say: "Yes, my responsibility, the baby is born on my responsibility. Do with it what you want."
- Q: In the other ghettos it was strictly prohibited.
- A: But not in Theresienstadt. Theresienstadt was a different ghetto. It was not prohibited in Theresienstadt. Only the Jewish elder was terrorized, and it became a question of nerves to say: yes, I am responsible. And then I want to say finally.....
- Q: How many children were
- A: Well, see...

Q: born in Theresienstadt?

A: 213, 13 of which after October. The first 200 are all gone. The last 13 are alive.

Q: 230

A: 13

Q: 13.

A: Yes, the first 200 were born. The first 200 are unfortunately all gone, because we... the authorization is...

Q: In 4 years 200...

A: they are.... yes. 213. Yes, and I believe, at least. You see, the statistics.... I am not... I don't have the statistics... I don't have a computer in my brain.

Q: 30 are alive?

A: 13

Q: 13.

A: Thirteen [in English]

Q: yes, yes.

A: See, I also want to tell you when I failed, or believe to have failed. It was the last day. On May 5, 1945 I resigned. Right? After having worked for days with Rahm to have him leave. I got him to.....

80 - 82 [Separate transcription pages 1-32]

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A: With Rahm it was possible..... he had a sense of humor, and when it was abused, if one

played as if one was about to plan a prank, so to say, he was happy to play along. As an example, there was an order from the military authorities to send a barrack.

Q: A.... what?

A: A barrack. Elements of a barrack. Thus it would have been necessary to disassemble a barrack in the ghetto and to send it away. I said: "No, a crown is a crown." Because in Vienna, after the inflation, the rule was: a crown is a crown – a barrack is a barrack. There were French barracks, from the French colonial barracks, decayed, not even for heating, right? "Barrack is barrack." We packed it up and sent the French barrack away, right? And he said quite openly: "By the time it gets there, the Russians will be there. But I don't know anything, if it get's out it is your head, ok?" Then the famous story when he told me that he needed reports about Theresienstadt, but with accusations, not without accusations. But I had to supply them. And there he had the gall or... I cannot explain it any other way, to state that my predecessors had given them to him. "Very good, I like it to, if it has to be." A gave him the reports with accusations against myself. When he read it for the first time, he was startled, looked at me, but said only: "it's ok". And later we laughed about it because he told me that he got compliments from Prague that he has a very good agent who is very well informed about the Jewish elder, knows all about the Jewish elder; we laughed. But at the trial in Prague he was criticized for this and got additional punishment because he forced me to do this. But at the time we laughed about it. For me, it was not a pleasant matter, because he also told me: "You are playing with your life, watch out if you fail. I warned you, but you can do what you want." I said: "I can do what I want? I can, no... I am not doing what I want. You need accusations, I will not accuse anybody else.

With me I can do what I want.”

Q: But you were prisoners together, right?

A: No. When I got out, he got in. I came out, and then he was arrested. We were not together.

Q: He only was arrested in....

A: He only was arrested in.... in early 1947.

Q: And before?

A: Before he was free. It was even stated that he was in Switzerland because he prevented the gas chamber. The greatest merit that Rahm got was on April 18. When the people...

Q: 44?

A: 44 – 45, when it was thought that the war was over and because.... I don't want to expand on this, but I mean, this was a prank. It was possibly planned to still destroy the ghetto at the last moment; people were stirred up, they should..... they expected a riot. When he moved in – I had already sent the people to bed – he still made them assemble, made them line up to select – you know what that means: line up for selection after a riot in a camp. This means: every tenth will get out. He was with his people, all with machine pistols; and the people were made to assemble in lines for selection, this is for decimation, right? I grabbed him by the hand in front of all these people. You will find the description in this volume here, right? I really told him: “You know... considering the situation, do you really want to get yourself involved here?” Somehow, this impressed him. He then gave a speech which started with the word: “Gentlemen,” calmed them down and sent them back to bed. The matter was left to rest there. And then I get back; I started with the day when Dinan came to Theresienstadt, at the end of April. I asked him to leave. Because conflicts had

arisen between us. He threatened me to reinstate Löwenstein, that he no longer trusted me, he will reinstate Löwenstein, and how.....

Q: Do you have...

A: Please?

Q: Did you never feel a kind of complicity between him and....

A: Yes, when we sent the barracks, together, the French city of.... the deteriorated wood, then I was his accomplice. When he sent me the fake reports, I was his accomplice. Sure. But you know, I also worked with him; he should leave. When he started to threaten me to reinstate Löwenstein because he lost trust in me, I told him that Dinan was here, that the Red Cross would take over without him, that it would be better if he left.

Q: Why did you say that?

A: There was tension in the camp. It was difficult to restrain, the people were looking through the fence...

Q: Was it to save Rahm?

A: Not about Rahm. I did not want to have any concerns, if you really want to know – I mean.... there was a situation in which the SS was packing and leaving, the Jews were standing by the fence, screamed, ridiculed, etc., etc. And he called on me and I had no ghetto guard, right? At that time I told him that I had an organization, or.... of which he did not know, I showed him. I said: “If you don’t clear the space near the fence within 15 minutes, I will immediately put in Löwenstein! I then cleared it, then 200 workers arrived immediately. Then he saw that I was organized, that I had thought of everything, right? But... it was not my idea to let it get to fighting no, right? I did not have a good feeling for

this situation. Don't forget that in the second half of April they still organized in Prague a brigade of the "Waffen-SS", the Wallenstein brigade.

Q: Yes.

A: In the second half of April 45, well, I was unable, well, I started... I told him to leave.

Q: Yes. There was at that time a German power.

A: A German power. But I [spoke] with him.... they discussed that they would hand over the ghetto to the Red Cross. I said: "You hand this over. Dinan is here, go away. It is better for you, better for me, there won't be any frictions." Then the following happened: He burst into a meeting of the Council of Elders. The reason for which I convened the Council of Elders, I have forgotten. He burst into the meeting of the Council of Elders and was greeted with a speech which made me see black: "The name of Rahm will live on in our midst for all times, etc, etc." If I...

Q: Who said this?

A: Well, let's leave that alone, who said this.

Q: A member.....

A: A member, a valued member of the Council of Elders, the most famous member of the Council of Elders, let's say.

Q: as you say.

A: Please, you can decide who was the most famous member of the Council of Elders. Search in reports, yourself, of the Council of Elders. And....

Q: This is gone.

A: I don't want to fight with you. If you want to fight, I don't fight, right? And a Jew... as the

Jews say: he made a “Mishaberach” for him. Rahm was beaming and the next day he said to me: “See, did you hear this yesterday?” I then went to Dinan and told him: “This cannot go on.” Because... I did not even.... if even the people of the Council of Elders... I said, excuse me: “The old dopes.” That’s the way I am. “If these old dopes already start to mutiny, I am really unable to do anything.”

Q: Please, who is an old dope?

A: I did not say who is old. I said: “If these old dopes already start to mutiny, I am really unable to do anything.” Then it happened that Dinan sent him my resignation letter – you can see it in this book – and Dinan promised that he would go to Rahm and agree with him that he would leave. “Come somewhat later tomorrow” because I always arrived there at 8am. “Come a little later.” I came at 8.30, and Dinan was already there, came out and said that he would go away. I already had my resignation, my notice, ready for Rahm, gave him my notice, the matter was finished. In the afternoon Rahm called that he would like to speak to a member of the Council of Elders. Then I was called to go to Rahm. I said that I had already resigned. After all, he could not expect.... he could not expect that I would go away. He already had taken over the administration, go there still.” Well, no and no. Suddenly there was nobody there of the gentlemen because they were afraid, right? This was the famous last hours of the Nazis of which one had been so afraid. Then Protchnik phoned me and said: “Please go there!” And I answered: “what does that mean? I am no longer anybody. Should Beck go, or Meissner?”. He said: “Yes, I cannot find these gentlemen.” I said: “Search under the bed.” Finally, the phone rang, it was Rahm himself; he said: “Look, the gentlemen are afraid. But so for you have not been

afraid of me, or do you now want to show that you are afraid?" I said: "No, I'll come." I went and he said: "This is a totally innocent matter: there is money for the ghetto in a savings account in Borkewitz. I am putting it in your name, the power of attorney, to get it."

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. "And you will pass it on to the gentleman who.... because the ghetto needs money. In addition I have here a violin which I borrowed from storage. I am giving it back before I go away." I took it.... and said good-bye. Then he said: "And you have nothing more to say to me?"

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A: "And you have nothing more to say to me?" He expected from me some words of appreciation and thanks, because he saved my life on March 5, when Eichmann wanted to send me to another ghetto, so to say. But I did not only think of March 5, I also thought of October 44 and I was silent.

Q: Yes.

A: See, the closing was necessary. I was not that stupid.

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Q: Yes, but it is very difficult for me to understand. How did you decide to accept the responsibility for the city beautification? No, it was, after all, a farce, in the service of the Nazi propaganda, right?

A: Look.... it really is so, yes, yes. You are right. You are playing the public prosecutor! But

the question.... it was handed to me because they believed, they hoped, that I would be hanged with this story at some time. For this reason, nobody wanted to assume this task, in 1943, when after the Danish transport the problem became acute that Theresienstadt would have to be prepared in some way for a visit. I took it on for two reasons. Because I thought: if we are given wood for beds and closets, and tables, I take it; if we are given glass for the windows, I take it. And I will fix up the things. If it is said that the old people's homes had to be renovated, I will do it. And besides, don't forget one thing. I had an advantage over the other people, but this was not my merit, it was a chain of events as in my case, the case Murrelstein there were always chains of events. Don't forget that.

Q: This was a chain.

A: Don't forget.

Q: A dangerous chain.

A: A dangerous chain. I am still dragging it behind me. Look, don't forget that Eichmann spoke many times with Löwenherz about Theresienstadt. With me too, a few times, but mainly with Löwenherz. And he was very open about Theresienstadt with Löwenherz. Thus, I knew more about the role, about the meaning of Theresienstadt, about Löwenherz than all the others. When I tried to present some of those ideas to the others, I was laughed at, because I was the Falstaff, right? Earlier you read something to me from Adler with Falstaff. I will compare myself rather to another classical figure of classical literature, not with Orlando Furioso and with Fip. But you know with whom? With Sancho Panzo. The realist calculating and who... the others, right? Don Quixote, to a certain extent, with extensive plans, the calculating realist who always remains at the bottom of facts. But this

is only an aside. Well, I mean, if you see Adler, give him my regards, perhaps he can correct it in the third printing. Well.....

Q: Yes, but...

A: Yes.

Q: This was the role of Theresienstadt... there is....

A: Yes.... I just wanted to say.... it was the case... when I tried to tell the people something they did not let themselves be convinced. Because they were absolutely not interested in Theresienstadt; for them there was only one question: "Who will be the first one to get a phone line after the war to call the Joint or the Zionist World Executive?" Because whoever will be the first one to get a phone connection will remain on top. And the others will be imprisoned as collaborators. This was the mentality.

Q: This was the case?

A: This was the mentality. However, my mentality was not like that; I always thought – after Eichmann showed interest in Theresienstadt – what should be done with it: if he can be persuaded to show Theresienstadt to somebody it becomes an anchor. Theresienstadt can no longer disappear. Ergo, this meant that one had to prostitute oneself. One had to play along with the farce to the extent that Theresienstadt will be shown. Once seen, it can no longer disappear; this is a safety factor. Apart from that, I was told at one time: "Yes, one has to... When I started to coordinate the work, I was told: "Yes, the work has to be sabotaged." My people did not want to work. I seized them in order to make them conscious, etc. "No, this has to be sabotaged to show the Nazis, etc." I said: "No, this is laughable, your talk of sabotage because when the Nazi cinema in the SS home is turned

on tomorrow, you will run to compete as each of you wants to show how capable you are, how indispensable. And when it means to make tables for the old people's home, for the old Jews, or beds for the Jewish children, then you want to sabotage. I thank you for such a sabotage." This is all. Apart from this I have to tell you, you know. You have to understand. In the ghetto there was a second part to the city beautification: theater presentations, cinema performances, etc. I was not responsible for that. Epstein was in charge of leisure activities, and he was pleased to play a type of "Serenissimus", a kind of prince of the middle ages who is an angel of the arts and surrounds himself in his court with artists, etc. And I did not interfere with that. But I assumed the matters regarding the work. And even after the first visit by the Danish Red Cross I continued to work on the city beautification and restarted it after October, and I am convinced that the fact that the ghetto remained, let's say, can be attributed primarily to the city beautification.

Q: Yes, but this city beautification was for the Red Cross, the Danish one.

A: First for the Danish and then for the International. See, I have told you that this was a time when in Germany the railroad cars were closed off with boards because there was no glass available; we received 1000 square meters of glass. In 1944, we processed 5000 cubic meters of wood for our things, right? So, we had to furnish the old people's home, youth homes... but I think... such propaganda, I wanted this kind of propaganda. They should show us, they should not be able to hide us. If they can hide us, they can kill us. If they show us, they cannot kill us, this is logical. This was my logic, and I hope that my logic was correct.

Q: Yes, but you wanted to show how good the Jews were.....

A: How well the Jews fared, right? They wanted to show how well the Jews fared, but the Jews... see, I wanted to tell you... I did not lend myself to drama. Not to comedies. See, in the volume is a story about the presentation of “Glühwürmchen” [Glow worm] in Theresienstadt, an opera, a children’s opera. Typically enough, the artist who presented this does not tell about the presentation of “Glühwürmchen” during the city beautification and the visit by the International Red Cross. She does not tell about it because it is deliberate. And she was present when Günther chided me and shouted at me because he demanded that the children who appeared in the opera should first be subjected to quartz lamps so that they would look better.

Q: Yes, but, yes.

A: And I said: I don’t do that to the children, you know. They look good enough.

Q: Yes, but, you have to explain to people who know nothing about the city beautification. Why?

A: Why? Because the Red Cross was supposed to come and if the city beautification had not succeeded, the Red Cross would not have come. Because the Red Cross came, I had the chance to alarm and to say when saying good-bye: “I am worried about the future of Theresienstadt.” The Red Cross understood me. The same day they negotiated with Frank and took on the protection of the camp. All this was the result of the city beautification.

Q: Yes, yes. But can you now explain in detail this city beautification?

A: Oh, explain, what does that mean....?

Q: Barracks, banks, etc.

A: This is.... bank is nonsense. The bank is no city beautification. The bank is a Madagascar

maneuver. The bank accounting department etc., these are institution that were used for the great Jewish masquerade and for which Theresienstadt was just a test place. This has nothing to do with city beautification. City beautification was, e.g., the film “Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt” [The Führer Gives the Jews a City], in 1942. But I was not there at that time. City beautification was the film that was made in 1944. There is even a picture of me together with Epstein. But that.... when I saw the film, this was no longer in it, thank goodness, because Epstein had been killed. They then removed the whole section, right? Well. For that reason I also had an argument with Günther. Günther asked me – he called me after the performance – how I liked the movie. I told him: “not at all. Because it showed Theresienstadt as a singing and hopping city. I did not say that it had to show people dying in the old people’s home. But it could have been showing, at least, how people worked.”

Q: Yes.

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A: Theresienstadt as singing and hopping city... You will not forget that there was the old people’s home where people lay dying. But that would have been against their propaganda. But they could have shown how people worked. It is nonsense to present a camp in which people do nothing all day long but sing and perform theater plays. Nobody will believe that. The next day, when I reported to Rahm, his secretary said: “What did you tell Günther yesterday? He was furious.” I told him – he was a decent man to the extent that an SS man can be decent – I told him. He responded: “You know, he was

responsible for the editing. Even the SS is of the opinion that this was exaggerated.”

Q: Editing of the film?

A: Of the film, yes. Naturally, it was the case that the city beautification had another face. I stressed here the utilitarian side of the matter, old people’s homes, youth homes, etc., tables, apartment furnishings, etc., nice. At the same time, city beautification also meant transports like sending away those with lung disease, so that there would be no more people with lung disease in Theresienstadt, because they disturb the beauty of the city.

Q: That was the price to pay.

A: That was the price. City beautification was a transport in which the disfigured people were sent away, the cripples, right? Ugly people. They spoil the city. This was also city beautification, right? Well, I mean, for these things, I was not responsible. I only assumed the technical side, the construction, the technical work, right? And there I have to say, for that what was done there, I accept full responsibility, even today. And I would like to point out – because, where I was concerned, during the first city beautification, for the first visit, this was made into a theater. The girl sheep herders arrived with the sheep, bread was distributed, with white gloves and similar things.

Q: Yes, this was crazy.

A: Well, this is.... for this direction I am not responsible, I had nothing to do with the direction, this was not my responsibility, right?

Q: Who, who....

A: Who, who... please, you don’t have to search for the names, who was Jewish elder in June

44, who was responsible for everything! I have nothing to do with this.

Q: Epstein?

A: I don't know. Look in Adler. But, as opposed to this, I will tell you. For the visit of the International Red Cross on April 5, 1944 – yes, there is a report by Dinan, with regard to the White Book of the Red Cross, where he writes...

Q: Dinan was the chief of

A: No, the chief was a certain Lehner. But Dinan was his deputy who came to Theresienstadt in order to assume the administration of the ghetto and to transfer it to the Russians. When Dinan said: "When I came and was able to move freely, where there were no more Germans, that, when we were shown on April 5 exactly how the people lived, we were not deceived." You can read this, you will see that Dinan specifically stressed that the people really lived like that and as they were shown, that on April 5, no theater was presented to them.

Q: In April it was no longer theater.

A: 45, No, because I did not make it a theater.

Q: Yes, yes... but it was... in the end.

A: This was at the end... yes... Please, it was at the end, right? It was at the end, but this was so important.

Q: 44 this was difficult.

A: 44 there was much theater. But, God forbid, it was necessary.. I am, people did not differentiate. Once I woke up, I had been up during the night, I got up late – excuse me, it is a small thing, put it has bearing – when I got to the office, Epstein had already returned

from the Command office, as became clear. There was a city poster on which I was mocked with my caricature: Outside fine, Inside filthy,

One has to be clean inside,

Mr. Mummelstein

[*Translator's note: The German rhymes, the English does not.*]

So, he professed his solidarity with me. He already had talked to Rahm about it, that it was necessary to find the perpetrator. I said: "Are you crazy? You told Rahm that there was a secret organization here? They will use this as proof." "But you cannot let them characterize like that." "See, the matter of the propaganda with posters is what you introduced. This is only another one like your posters. But now let's drop it." "No this has to be discovered." An hour later I found out that, based on the typewriter characters, a young man had been discovered -- he was in the security section -- and was being interviewed. I then went there and screamed at the chief, a certain Dr. Rosenthal, took the young man by the hand and led him away. I told him: "go home and don't do anything foolish." No more investigation. I told Rosenthal that if you want to tell something to Epstein, say that I sent the young man away.

Q: But who did this caricature..

A: This young man did it. His youth organization. And the young man typed it and did the technical execution of it, he was the one who drew it.

Q: Was this a resistance organization?

A: Apparently. Something like it, right? Something like it, right? Just imagine! So, Epstein was angry, but he could not do anything. What happened now? Two weeks later was the

May transport, the young man was in the transport.

Q: Who?

A: The young man who did it was in the transport.

Q: I understand, but who was responsible.

A: I don't have.... I don't know this. I only know that I was responsible, I only know that he got out. He said: "The young man do not go away." Because if the young man had gone away they would say that he went because of me. The young man stays.

Q: You have that....

A: Yes. The young man stayed. The young man went away again. But in October, nothing else could be done. But in 1945, when I had been arrested, he came forward and told the story. He told the secret police in Prague how I had protected his organization at that time, so that he would not be caught, that I led him away. Forcefully from the security office, took him away, that I removed him from the transport, etc. This was discovered. This were intrigues of the city beautification, but they were not really nice.

Q: No, no, no.

A: He came forward..... he told it...

Q: Yes, this is difficult to judge.

A: No! For me it is not difficult to judge. This is clear, it had to be done. It was necessary to accommodate the people, to bring them to the point to show Theresienstadt. Once shown, we were on more secure ground, no secure ground, but at least more secure ground. As the Italians say: "The game, the candle is worth as much as the game." The ante pays back. No. It is so. You know that we supported their propaganda, but the game was ours, the

ghetto remained.

Q: Yes, Excuse me, you used the city beautification for improvements.

A: First of all, to improve the living conditions. But before that we intended over all to maintain the ghetto. A ghetto which has been shown does not disappear. Cannot disappear.

Q: Yes.

84

Q: Well, but... was there a resistance movement in Theresienstadt?

A: Moral resistance. I told you that already: there was no armed resistance. Anything that is said about that today is pure invention. There was moral resistance, in the sense, right...

Q: Example.

A: Example: I am telling you, example... As an example I want to say the following. When children's instruction is forbidden, right? As in other ghettos there were Jewish schools, in Czechoslovakia, in Bohemia, Jewish instruction in schools was prohibited, schools in general were prohibited. And when, under the guise of child care, children's occupation, children watching a full school program was developed, illegally, when one went so far to even establish middle school programs, and – within the framework of leisure time programs, even high school exists, a full school system, an illegal one, this is....

Q: Yes, yes.

A: This is moral resistance.

Q: Yes, yes, but this was moral resistance to the Nazis. But was there a resistance movement against the Council of elders?

A: I don't.... of this... of this... my God, there were groups, but I means... but... in the end... no.

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Q: Yes, but this was.... I understand... moral resistance against the Nazis, but.... was there a resistance movement, e.g., against the Council of elders? You said, these posters, caricatures against you, e.g.,.....

A: Well, see, this was not a serious resistance movement. There was Epstein who, following the German example, thought he had to start a propaganda for city beautification. And he made the propaganda following the Nazi propaganda, as it was done in the war. There they invented a Mr. Kohlenfrass, i.e., someone who wasted coal. In this sense he invented Mr. Zwock, a fool. Zwock is against city beautification. This means: those who are against city beautification are fools. The people reacted; as I was the one responsible for the city beautification, they attacked me. But this is no... I did not want to have an investigation of any kind, because I wanted to prevent the impression that there was a secret organization. And if one had been in existence, I did not want it to be discovered, because the young men would have wound up in the "Kleine Festung." There was a group of painters who painted the anger of Theresienstadt, right? Who hid their pictures from the transports, etc. For a time they were even tolerated by the Command office. Then they had to be hidden,

but they were... for this reason, the painters were sent to the “Kleine Festung.” This is also moral resistance, right? This is... this is... moral resistance when but it was totally exaggerated, right? When, during a funeral oration, right, the eulogy is used, the occasion of the eulogy of the deceased – these were mass funeral for twenty bodies who were buried at one time – to give vent to indignation, to protest at that time, this was a dangerous matter because rabbis are careless in this regard. So, Beck composed a prayer and the people, they were prohibited from giving eulogies by the Council of elders.... a German prayer had to be read on those occasions. This also was resistance.

Q: Yes, but I have....

A: A resistance in the mortuary...

Q: Yes, well.

A: If you wish.

Q: Yes.... I am impressed by this....this general passivity, to the end.

A: See, the passivity to the end is only... you know what Mr. Herzl said? “Just as Jesus made sure of the Christians, the Jews made sure of Jesus for themselves.” The passivity was all over Bohemia.

Q: All over Bohemia?

A: All over Bohemia. See, there is a memoir by the secretary of President Benes in London who says that it was the main task of the president to hide, to not let the allies get the idea that the main supplier, the main weapons supplier of the Germans was the Czech industry. I have the book by a certain Hentsch about the history of the Czech Republic and he says there: “Up to May 5, 1945 the Czechs maintained calm, order and discipline.” That later

there was the idea of resistance is fine, but I mean, let's stay with the facts. I mean, what should the Jews have done?

Q: yes...

A: No, this is....

Q: Yes, but, excuse me, Heydrich was murdered, right?

A: But yes, this murder of Heydrich was also a matter which was done most likely, organized from outside, because he was just ready to establish much too good relations to the Czech workers on location.

Q: Yes.

A: He was just ready to establish on location much too good relations with the workers. And for this reason he was murdered by people from the outside, not by people from the inside. They came from the outside.

Q: Yes.... they....

A: Yes, yes, right? But... what should the people have done? Why, in particular.... what should Theresienstadt in particular have started? As then....

Q: The.....

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Q: Yes.... this is.... I would like, right? This is this poster.

A: This is no poster, this is an attachment to a report of the Jewish Community, excuse me,

the Council of Elders, which was done in my absence still, under Edelstein, who made a monthly report of the Council of elders, and this was in 42, just when Eichmann executed...

Q: Yes, there is something, I don't understand, this is, yes, there is a poster here.

A: This is no poster.

Q: But you know, the...

A: This is no poster.

Q: This, yes, this...

A: This is no poster; this is an attachment to a monthly report by the Council of elders under Edelstein which shows how the ghetto is burdened by the transport of old people. Edelstein....

Q: Transport of old people.

A: Transport of old people. It shows the ghetto as a sieve. Transports arrive, he shows, with an average age of 68 years.

Q: These are people who arrive?

A: Who arrive, arrivals.

Q: From Germany?

A: From Germany.

Q: In 1942.

A: In 42. Just when Eichmann wanted to create the Reich-old people's home. And... going away are the transports with the young people, the Czechs, with an average age of 42 years.

Q: Yes.

A: And Edelstein showed with this, you see, that thus the sieve passes the young ones, and remaining, helpless, are the elders. He showed with this that a ghetto remains with only old people, this cannot be maintained, because the young ones who should work, are taken away. And by this, Eichmann was forced to suspend the transport of elders. Or rather, to send the elders on and not keep them in Theresienstadt.

Q: This was Edelstein's policy to....

A: This was Edelstein....

Q: To rescue the young ones who....

A: He had.... Edelstein felt obligated to fulfill the promise which he made to the Czechs in Prague.

Q: This is an awful....

A: He pushed it through that Eichmann sent on the elders who should have stayed in Theresienstadt. In the fall of 42, 20,000 elders were sent on to the East.

Q: Yes.

A: This was certain death. And thus, the Reich-old people's home was liquidated. Here you see also one of the cases in which the Jewish elder a marionette, still made policy, right? Eichmann had one plan, the Jewish elder had another, and was able to push his through.

Q: Policy, this means, he can select who lives and who dies.

A: Then yes, he pushed through his policy.

Q: An awful policy.

A: He has, yes, but Edelstein has paid for his policy with his head, because at this moment he was finished for Eichmann, and this means he had... this means for him he was done as Jewish elder in Theresienstadt; and a Jewish elder who is finished in his office, is also done for. This is a question of....

Q: But your.... your own policy was the opposite? It was to save the elders....

A: My..... my policy was..... see, I was in Nisko, Edelstein was in Nisko, we had seen Nisko. The old can here..... he cannot be helped. The young ones, whom we can help, we help, right?

Q: There were no young ones....any more in your time, when you were elder?

A: Yes, yes, fine, few, very few. It meant to keep the elders living, right, to not let them lose all their rights.

Q: But this is terrible, right? Not?

A: It is terrible, but true, that's the way it is. And after this, see, this means, good. But to protect Edelstein it has to be said to save his honor, this is again the story as in Nisko. It was disorganization when the people, the elder transports, were sent away. It would have been stepwise, if it had not been liquidated, like assault, if not thousands and thousands of sick, old and decrepit people had been sent, but if the ghetto would have been able to absorb them successively in an organized manner, the catastrophe would not have been so bad. Edelstein had to defend himself in a certain way. I have to understand him in this even if I do not agree with his procedure. Just as well, see, we would have.... we are going from one extreme to the other.... After the Reich-old people's home there was also a Reich-youth home. As it was said suddenly: with the one in Theresienstadt this had to be

started absolutely. Thus, children. There was always the matter of children exchange from abroad.

Q: Children exchange...

A: Yes.

[Translator's note: Lanzmann is trying to show pictures in a book.]

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A: Thus in 1943....

Q: [French] This is not working..... cut

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[French] cut

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Q: Yes, there is a poster. I don't really want.....

A: A poster? I don't think a poster, there are no posters here.

Q: Yes, this.

A: This is no poster. This is a drawing.

Q: What is this abyss... the people....

A: This is a drawing which was enclosed with a report by the Council of Elders which

Edelstein presented. I was not yet there, but I know the report. It shows the situation that had developed in the ghetto because of the elder transports. The ghetto is a sieve. Arriving are...

Q: A sieve?

A: A sieve. People arrive who are 68 years old. The average age is 68. They are old and sick.

Q: The old German Jews?

A: The old German Jews who then stay in the ghetto, writes Edelstein. Falling through the cracks, that means to the East, are young people who are able to work, average age 42.

Q: This is in the East, in Auschwitz.

A: Auschwitz East. At that time one spoke of the East.

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

A: Thus....

Q: This means death.

A: This means transport to the East, they never came back.

Q: Youths... the youths...

A: Go away. Remaining in the ghetto are the old and sick and nobody to care for them.

Naturally, Edelstein achieved that in October/November 42, 20,000 elders were sent to the East.

Q: Yes.

A: In order to relieve the ghetto.

Q: Edelstein wanted to save the young people?

A: He wanted to save the young people, but he mainly wanted to live up to the assurances

that he made to the Czech in Prague when he spoke for the ghetto. I mean, it is clear. On the other hand it was also a mistake that so many people were sent at one time. They should have made the transports so that they could have been accepted one at a time.

Q: This was Edelstein propaganda?

A: For elder transports, to send the transports to the East. The elder transports to the East.

Q: To send the old people...

A: to the East. This is an example of the policy....

Q: and to save, and to save the....

A: young people. See, it is as we have talked about: Policy of helplessness. The helpless Jewish Elder sets his policy and wins against the mighty Eichmann. It was about life and death, naturally.

Q: Yes, but is it possible to..... Eichmann? What is this?

A: This is a girl who is registered for the transport and already has the transport number.

Q: She is ready for transport? This means she is ready for Auschwitz. For the East?

A: I don't know if the transport is to Theresienstadt or from Theresienstadt. This is the number on the list, right? One has to..... Certainly, this is humiliating that people were numbered. They had to carry the number around their necks, right? I mean, this is the number on the transport list.

Q: Yes, but this is for...

A: This is for the East.

Q: Yes, this is for the East. This means, in 24 hours this young lady will be gassed.

A: This means she goes to the East. I mean....

Q: Yes, but now we know, right?

A: Today? No one can.... See, we know today. What we know today we cannot project backwards.

Q: We know now.

A: yes, we know now. But today... what we know today we cannot project our knowledge backwards.

Q: Yes, now another question: what.... oh, no. cut

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Q: Yes, and these... these... where is this? This is so beautiful...

A: this is a Czech type. You have there a Czech girl, because....

Q: Yes, but a beauty.

A: Yes.

Q: And this is.... She is ready for transport to Auschwitz?

A: To the East.

Q: To the East. Yes, to the East. Good, but we know today, this is Auschwitz...

A: Yes, we know today.

Q: Yes?

A: We know today.

Q: But... and you knew nothing, nothing about...about...

A: See....

Q: about Chelmno.... about Sobibor...

A: No, regarding Chelmno, Sobibor, nothing at all. Auschwitz – we knew about Birkenau. We knew Birkenau as a family ghetto. I told you that already. You cannot get over that, and anything that is said beyond that has been constructed later. The first.... Please, it is true. When the Bialystok children came in the year...

Q: What is this story?

A: See, this is the opposite of the Reich-old people's home... For this.... as a use of Theresienstadt they found the Reich-youth home. Because.....

Q: Who did....

A: Eichmann. The thing was, that they wanted to exchange Polish children who were supposed to go to Palestine and England, against German ones. If....

Q: For German ones from...

A: From abroad, who were interned.

Q: Prisoners of war?

A: No, no prisoners of war, civil internees. And....

Q: This was a plan?

A: There was such a plan. And because it was not possible to simply send them abroad from Poland, they were supposed to be put into better order in Theresienstadt for a time.

Q: What do you mean – better order?

A: This means: washed, dressed, better nourished, so it would not be so visible from what conditions they were coming. Right? They did not want to send the people from the ghettos in Minsk or Bialystok directly abroad. They first had to.... Theresienstadt was

supposed to be more or less a transit camp for them. Started..... This failed too because of disorganization.

Q: This is the opposite, this is from the East to...

A: the West, yes. And it failed, just as with Nisko or the Reich-old people's home, because of disorganization. The children.... suddenly children arrived. Instead of telling us that this are children, treat them well, we were told....

Q: Excuse me, I would like that, because I know nothing. How many children, from what city, how many times?

A: We were not told anything. This is.... later only did we learn... We only learned later. Because the children were led to the bath, to the....

Q: No, no, no

A: there...

Q: Please tell me exactly what happened.

A: Well, the children arrived, it was not... it was not permitted to tell from where they came. They are....

Q: How many children?

A: I don't know. I cannot give you a number. There were several hundred.

Q: When was that?

A: In 1943. In the summer of 1943. And one was not allowed to say from where... one was not allowed to know from where they came. We found out that they were from Bialystok.

Q: This was a secret?

A: It was a secret. It was found out that they were from Bialystok because one child lost her

identification card which she had in her pocket. This was how we found out that they were from Bialystok. The children were housed in barracks, and then the unfortunate thing started. The guilt in the catastrophe can be ascribed to the inability of the commandant of the time and in part also to the strict position by Epstein. Because Burger, the commandant at the time,.....

Q: What happened?

A: Yes, a contagious disease broke out among the children. What should have been done was that we should have had access to the children to vaccinate them, isolate them, heal them and analyze the matter. Instead, the children were isolated with a doctor and a nurse and nobody could get to them. There was a ghetto watch man. This would have been quite possible to do quietly. But Epstein made sure that the rules made by Burger were strictly observed. Right? And one nice day, what happened? We came to this hospital room, a large room where the sick children were, and there were no children, no doctor, no nurse. They disappeared during the night. They reappeared as coffins in the crematorium.

Q: Coffins...

A: As coffins in the crematorium. This means, they did not say that this was them. But we knew that the same number of coffins appeared in the crematorium. A coffin is a box into which a dead person is placed. Right? This means, during the night they had been liquidated, and in this manner, the....

Q: it was sent?

A: What?

Q: It was sent – where?

A: To the crematorium. They had been killed.

Q: They are in Theresienstadt.....?

A: The children, the sick children, the sick ones, the infection, the sick children, together with the doctor and the nurse, they were killed during the night, disappeared. We were not told anything. During the night they disappeared.

Q: They were killed, how?

A: I don't know. But I know they were dead.

Q: All the children from Bialystok?

A: No, only the sick children.

Q: OK, but, yes, start again...

A: Again....

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Q: with the story about Bialystok.

A: Well, in 1943 there was a project to send Jewish children from Poland to England and Palestine to exchange them for German civil internees. And, searching for a use of Theresienstadt, which had just failed as an old people's home, they started to think of establishing a transit camp in Theresienstadt for these children, where they could be brought into a condition, so-to-say, to send them abroad.

Q: Transit?

A: A transit camp. And thus, in the summer of 43, a group of several hundred children – I cannot give you exact numbers, I was not prepared for this question, arrived. We were not

told who they were, from where they were coming, just that they had to be placed. We could not get in touch with them, they were isolated from the ghetto. A doctor, a nurse, food distributors, they were all isolated from the ghetto. Later, it turned out, that they had to be bathed for hygienic reasons. Thus, with difficulties, bathing permission was obtained. In the course of this, one child lost an identity card, and it was seen that it was Bialystok. And during bathing something happened which can be explained today, but at that time was not taken into account. When the children saw the showers, they cried 'gas.'

Q: Gas?

A: Gas! They cried. This is true. They cried 'gas.' But they have....

Q: These children...

A: The Bialystok children cried 'gas' when they saw the showers in the camp.

Q: This means that they knew in Bialystok.

A: It appears that they knew in Bialystok. But I mean.... please.... you see...

Q: This was in 43?

A: This was in 43. The children were then deloused and brought back into the barracks. A group of the children then became ill with an illness, a contagious illness, of which I don't know to this day what it was. The children were isolated in a hospital ward with a doctor and a nurse. And this was wrong, because the isolation should have been suspended, our doctors should have had access, tests, analysis, etc., should have been done to find out what it was. Instead, a doctor there manipulated things in such a way that I was unable to help. Burger was very strict, Epstein made sure that the instructions by Burger were strictly adhered to, and Burger solved the problem in his way. One nice day, the ward was

empty. No sick children, no nurse, no doctor. The next day, a number of coffins appeared in the crematorium corresponding to the number of the disappeared children. It is very clear what happened there. Burger solved the problem of the contagious disease in his own way.

Q: Yes, in his own way.

A: The children who stayed, the healthy children, it was said, would go abroad. They need escorts. Epstein was not prepared to assign people, he asked for volunteers. Those who volunteered were a youth director from Vienna, Ahron Mencher, and the sister of Kafka.

Q: Yes.

A: The sister of the author Kafka, Otlá Kafka. Otlá volunteered. And they accompanied the children. It was said that the transport would go to the West. Today we know that it did not go to the West, it went to the East. And this is the end of the story. Another....

Q: And the sister.... Otlá.... is with....

A: With the children. Mencher and Otlá Kafka perished with the children. In Auschwitz, yes. We know that now. And this ended another experiment which failed due to the superficiality, due to the disorganization, due to the irresponsibility with which it was carried out.

Q: Yes, but there always was this resolution, the final solution.

A: Yes, this means when everything else failed. Right? The children had barely left when the Danes arrived. It is interesting to note that they were brought into a barracks which had just been disinfected. And when they were led in, there was still the smell of gas from the disinfection, the Danes were also very alarmed. They cried 'gas.' They thought that they

were being led into some..... thus it seems...

Q: The Jews from Denmark?

A: What?

Q: from Denmark.

A: No, they were Danes, the Danish Jews.

Q: Yes, from Denmark.

A: From Denmark. Well, it appears that in 43 they knew something also in Denmark.

Q: Yes, but you have heard that, right, this story?

A: Yes.

Q: And what did you think?

A: See, the same thing as the Warsaw Jews thought when they were told, and the others.

These things were regarded as impossible, one did not.... The matter started to take form in 45 when the Slovaks came, when they started to tell...

Q: Yes, but they had a good experience with the Nazi.

A: This means?

Q: They knew.....

A: Excuse me, I was... you know, I have to know one thing. You are not the first person who interrogates me in every direction: did you know...did you not know.... did you know... did you not know. Here you have a man who tells you openly and honestly – be it true or not, we don't want to investigate this now – I knew and did not tell anybody. And all of them died with respect and in silence, and respect his gestures, he knew and did not tell. Now, what should that mean? One who knew and kept quiet? I could tell you possibly: yes I

knew and kept quiet. But I did not know.

Q: I believe you.

A: Beck said that he knew and kept silent, and all die with respect to his gesture. And I.... if I had known.... as if this were a crime. No, I did not know.

Q: And afterwards? When you knew, what did you think? When the big catastrophe, the destruction

A: Well, see, you don't have to ask me that. The same which all the Jews thought, when I learned about it. Not more and not less.

Q: Not more.

A: Not more and not less. The same which was said by all Jews when they learned what happened. I was not more and not less than any other Jew.

Q: Yes.

A: I was neither more nor less than any other Jew. I has successively been prepared for it by the Slovak Jews, by reports from fugitives who were brought to Slovakia in the summer of 44. The Slovaks brought us that.

Q: And the people who came from Auschwitz?

A: At the end, the people from Auschwitz came. There, everything was known. But, but the question remains: this was not a special experience for Theresienstadt. This was a European experience, a worldwide experience, which was learned at that time. Right? First there were traces, traces, reports, and then one stood there..... one saw the full scope of the catastrophe. And it was no different for us.

Q: Yes. [inaudible conversation] This is quite a story.....

A: No, I only told you this as an example, right? No pleasant story. I told you this a example.... Yes, you wanted to ask me about the documents. Ask, I can give you the answer. If it is possible to write history based on documents.

Q: Yes, is this possible in your opinion? No, this is a difficult question.

A: Well, ask, ask.

Q: Because I knew you only through books and documents. You have a very negative image. Now I know you and know that this is much more complex.

A: Well, see, the story.....

Q: Is it possible to write history only based on documents?

A: Yes, you know, you have to divide this. You speak..... You are posing two questions: You say, is it possible to write history based on documents. My answer to this is: yes. You say: I know you... if I base it on documents which have been published about you, I would have had a negative image. Now that I know you, the matter does not look quite like that. I thank you very much. But, see, these are two different things. History can be written based on documents, based on honest documents. For example, if Adler writes a book about Theresienstadt....

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Q: Yes, this is a complicated question.

A: Have courage!

Q: is it possible to write history based on documents, only based on documents? For example, if I read what people have written about you, my impression of you is quite negative. And if I would not have known you, I would always have retained this image of you.

A: See, I will divide this question. If we say that it is possible to write history based on documents, provided, the documents are genuine, that they have not been manipulated. Because, for example, when Adler writes a history about Theresienstadt and not forgets to mention that Epstein, as Jewish Elder, had brought mineral water for him from the central warehouse, but forgets to stress that I, as Jewish Elder, had to account for my actions and inactions before the people' court in Leitmeritz, and was acquitted, he forgets this bagatelle, the document, in my opinion, has been manipulated. When Mrs. Arendt – in her otherwise good book – stresses that Eichmann had a particular intention for my deportation to Theresienstadt, and with this overlooks the fact that there are references in published documents, which make it clear that originally I was meant to get to Theresienstadt as an ordinary deportee, that no function was planned for me, that it was just an accident that matters were reversed, right, this is wrong. When, for example, Mrs. Anedvichek writes in her book “Three years Theresienstadt” that I was convicted to a life sentence and was sitting in the “Kleine Festung”, and I read the book, sitting on the terrace of a café in Prague, this is not a document.

Q: Yes, yes, yes, yes....

A: You know, that's the way it is, this is not a document.

Q: There are reports which you have written, etc.

A: Please, what does that mean? Reports which I have written?

Q: Yes.

A: Yes, there are documents, yes. But when you read documents based on reports which I have written, or one takes the documents.... documents of the International Red Cross, the protest documents, documents of the Archives of the American Joint Distribution Committee..... there are documents by the Council of British Jewry, etc. then you will get a totally different impression. I hope.

Q: Okay.

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A: You know, Mr. Lanzmann, two years ago, a student in a technical institute in Genoa got a question during his senior exam in which he was asked: what was the technical process used by the Germans to make soap from dead Jews? This was two years ago in Genoa. The technical, chemical process. He was supposed to comment on that. It caused quite an uproar. The Jewish community protested against the cynicism, etc. Do you also have the feeling that this was cynical to pose such a question? You know, I believe that this was cynical to

Q: If the Jew was a student of chemistry....

A: Yes.

Q: it was not cynical, no.

A: Well, I find.... I am.....

Q: Why are you asking this?

A: I would like..... this idea... because I am of the opinion that the industrialization of Jewish

corpses for soap production is terrible and reprehensible. But just as awful is the use for political purposes, for personal career, etc. I wanted to tell you this, nothing more. Right, I wanted to say this.

Q: Why... why are you saying this?

A: No? It has nothing to do with you. I just wanted to make this statement. I am using the occasion to say it through your medium. And, whoever will be touched by it, when he sees or hears it, will take notice.

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A: I want to come back to your question if it is possible to write history based on documents. As it was said in the introduction, this is complicated. You are absolutely right. It really depends on the documents, that was my answer. And I want to give you a few more examples. I gave you a few photocopies; there is an article about people who failed in exams. There is a book by someone who writes about me and slanders me, and dedicates the book to me on the title page with thanks that I saved his life. And then there is another case which explains all psychologically. There was a young person who was very gifted. And he was protected from transports because he worked in the production section. And on the 28th for the transport of October 28, the day before, he meets me and says – he was considered my protégé (he once translated a German article from me into Czech, thus had a personal relationship to me), he come to me and says: “You know, I have learned that I am in the transport. Can you do something?” I responded: “Well, I will see what can be done.” This was the last transport where it was possible to do something without

providing a replacement. I took note of the name and thought to present it the next day with all the other names. The matter did not look bad because he was working in the production section. A few minutes later, the door opened, a beaming head appears in the opening and says: [Czech, then translated]: “Doctor, I am not on the list to be deported, it is “Väterchen” [Daddy]. He said it tenderly.

Q: My father?

A: No, not father, he said it tenderly “Vatineg”, daddy. He said it lovingly. Thus he was very happy about the fact that it was not him, but..... I have to tell you, I admit, the word that I threw at him was not exactly, let’s say, tactful.

Q: What did you say?

A: I cannot remember, and I don’t have to repeat everything that was said at that time. But it was not nice, that I can tell you. When I am asked if the Jews in Theresienstadt were cowards because they did not offer resistance, I say no. They were no cowards. When the children were sent from Bialystok and people volunteered to accompany them, as we talked about earlier about Ahron Menscher, about Otlá Kafka, these were no cowards. When, let’s say, a group of mentally ill people were sent to another ghetto, emotionally and mentally ill people, where I knew exactly what would happen to them. And it was told that a doctor should accompany them, and a doctor volunteered. Was that a coward? No, that was no coward. But when people reported, voluntarily, to parents, in order to not let them go voluntarily, that I considered useless. I prevented voluntary reporting to the extent possible. I was reproached for that. And I prevented, based on my previous experience, because I knew that they would not be able to stay together. This was a

useless sacrifice. But I had to admire the courage, the will to sacrifice. But when someone came and really told me: not I, but my father will be deported, that was the opposite of this.

Q: But.....

A: I offended him. This is true. But see, the man then published a book about Theresienstadt. Yes,..... where he spoke about me..... a document. If you judge me by this document, you have to..... I don't know how you rate me.

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A: This man – after the end of the war – wrote a book about Theresienstadt. And if you take this book as a document, as a basis to judge my person, you will render a terrible judgment, get a bad impression of me, a devilish impression.

Q: He writes about his father in the.....

A: No, no, only about me. Of that he writes nothing. When I got out of prison, was declared innocent, the man called on me. And I received him, in spite of the fact that I already had the book and had read it. And I asked him: “Tell me, how could you write such drivel?” He said: “I hoped that you will not come out.” He was stunned by this, my question, which he answered openly and honestly. “I hoped that you would not come out.” This solved the psychological problem. The man, who is not a bad person, he is a decent person, just failed in this difficult moment. He simply failed. And afterwards.... he then dragged this complex around with him, that in a difficult moment, he actually was happy that it was not him, but his father who would go to the east.... and he somehow wanted to

overcome this complex. And he would have wanted that I would be hanged so that the only witness would disappear. This would have made it easier for him to let this complex disappear. Because this wishful thinking is a constant characteristic of Theresienstadt thinking. One wants an apartment and thinks one has one. One wants a cup of coffee and drinks it – dirty water – and thinks it is coffee. One wants that the Jewish elder be convicted, one writes that he was convicted, describes that he was hanged, writes that he has a life sentence, one writes that he passed on, one writes just about anything. And nothing is true. But that which one wants, one believes in it. And he hopes that in this manner he can overcome his complex. Right? Years later he again was in Rome and enlisted acquaintances etc. He wanted to talk to me, but I did not receive him again. Because I think I am not there to treat his complexes. He had to deal with that himself. He had to deal with that himself.

Q: Yes, I would like to make a trip to Israel together.

A: Oh, see, in your interest, leave that alone.

Q: You are lying.

A: Dear God, I have to accept insults. In the end, what else do you want?

Q: You are lying.

A: No, no. In your own interest, let's drop this. You would..... Up to now you have always been well received in Israel, now you want a bad reception.

Q: I will assure you, after this film you will receive a very good reception.

A: No, no, no, this is not necessary. This is not necessary. I had..... See, there is in Chassidism, in modern Chassidism, there is an expression – permit me to say it in Yiddish

– ‘Guleth ubrechten’, make exile, go into exile. This means, great men of Chassidism who felt guilty without having sinned, but had the feeling to not have lived up to expectations, went into exile. They left their offices, went away and led a modest life elsewhere. Now, don’t think that I have delusion of grandeur; I don’t want to compare myself to these really great men at all, I only think of this principle. I had said that before. You have posed all kinds of questions. One question you did not ask, for which I have already reprimanded you, but you hear it again. If I made mistakes. Yes, I made mistakes. Do you know what it means to sometimes spend half a night thinking about a case, and thinking if I could have saved this person or not. You cannot understand this, this is a specialty that only those who at one time had the responsibility, such as a Jewish elder can imagine. And sometimes one has to admit: possibly I have failed, possibly I failed there, etc. And for these cases there is only one atonement. These are not sins. They are omissions, they are mistakes. Because if one wants to accuse me of being a criminal, I only can laugh about that. If I am told that I made mistakes, I honestly have to say yes. But I also have to ask: would you have made mistakes in my position? But the one who has made mistakes has to atone. ‘Guleth ubrechten’, go into exile. I went into exile. Because I have made mistakes and because the scapegoat is sent into the desert.

Q: [unclear]

A: You know, I consider myself as the last victim of injustice, as scapegoat, the scapegoat that is sent into the desert. If my desert is called Italy, I certainly have no complaint.

Q: Rome is your desert?

A: I am saying: if my desert is called Italy, I have no complaint.

[End of transcript – no more sound on image/tape after 08:47:57]

MU 59 B possibly after page 173, para. 1 [no image/tape]

Woman This is no good picture

Mu No this is from..... This is Fallstaff.

Woman yes, you don't look good.

Woman who

La You

Mu What does it mean: good? Good, no.

Woman Not gentle

La You don't look.... particularly...

Woman Not gentle you look

Mu What

Woman You don't look gentle

La Yes, you don't look gentle

Mu I am no gentle person. In certain situations, gentle persons are poison. The
[illegible] told me: "Good people, they are our enemies." Good girls are more
dangerous than...!

Woman This is quite true.

La Who said this, the [illegible]?

- Mu He said nothing. You were taken in! He said: “Good people, they are our enemies.” I don’t mean our personal enemies. They are enemies of society. They kill us.
- La That is clear.
- Mu This is absolutely true. Good people have denounced out of goodness. Out of goodness they committed stupidity.
- La This picture [in French] this picture was taken shortly before the death of Epstein?
- Mu No, this picture was taken in the summer of 44. In May 44. He was killed in September..., thus three, four months earlier.... at the latest.
- La In May, thus three to four months earlier?
- Mu See, next time when we film in the apartment, I will bring you a caricature of me from Theresienstadt.
- La Yes?
- Mu Yes. You can also film it.
- La Do you have pictures from Theresienstadt in your apartment here?
- Mu No, no.
- La You have nothing?
- Mu No, no, no, Don’t forget, I was robbed. They stole a whole suitcase with all my private things, the Czechs; before they arrested me, a whole suitcase with all documents and papers was stolen because they believed to find proof. And – look – they found nothing!

