

MR WIENER'S INTERVIEW RE LIBAU

This is a transcription of a video tape concerning the shooting of Jews in Liepaja/Libau, Latvia.

Please note: some names of people and places are spelt phonetically.

Date: March 1992.

The tape has segments of film, about 2 minutes, showing execution of Jews. The other part of the tape is an interview with the man who actually shot the film.

Present in the interview room:

Reinhard Wiener, the person who shot the film.

An interviewer/interpreter (German/Hebrew, Hebrew/German).

Ester Hagar, Research assistant to Dr Dov Levin.

The interview was held at - Beit-Berl [TN: I think it is in Tel Aviv], Israel on 27 September 1981.

This tape was sent to Yad-Vashem in Jerusalem in 1974,

This film was brought to the Unit by Brian Thompson in February 1992.

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The tape begins with a very short film, filmed during World War II, by a German Marine Soldier - Reinhard Wiener.

The film shows people being brought on trucks (later from the interview the viewer knows that those persons were Jews). Then the Jewish men are taken, or told to get off the truck (there is no sound), and shown in which direction to run. They run in the direction of pits/trenches/graves, they are wearing patches on their clothes. They step inside the pit (a long one), then are shot - the viewer can see them fall down at once. Some people above the grave throw what looks to be sand into the grave. Then another group repeats the same. From the interview we get a clearer picture what this whole "exercise" was all about.

After the film is shown at the beginning, the interviewer introduces Reinhard Wiener.

[Please note: The film is about 2 minutes long and has no sound.]

[TN: The interviewer/interpreter introduces Wiener both in Hebrew and German, the introduction is not congruent/identical, but it is close.]

Introduction:

A testimony from the German, Reinhard Wiener, which was taken in Beit-Berl on 27 September 1981. The testimony concerns the annihilation of the Jews in Liepaja/Libau in Latvia. The testimony was taken by Dr

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Herbert Rosenkranz who is a researcher and an archivist, he is also head of the section/department for researching/investigating Nazi War Crimes in Yad-Vashem. [TN: in German, the interpreter/interviewer says: assistant to the archive director.] Present is also Mrs Ester Hagar, Dr Dov Levin's research assistant - researching the Holocaust of the Latvian Jewry, for the Ledger of the Latvian Communities [TN: in Hebrew: Pinkass Kehilot Latvia]. She concentrates on investigating the destruction of the Jews of Latvia/Libau.

The testimony follows a film about the annihilation/destruction of Jews in Liepaja/Libau, Latvia which the witness filmed in Autumn of 1941. It is an amateur's film [TN: it becomes clear later from the rest of the interview that Wiener was not a professional photographer but it was his hobby] and this film is the only filmed record/document which was kept/preserved of/about the annihilation of the Jews by shooting.

The aims of the film will be both/it will have two directions, the narrative one and a documentary one; in order to complete our knowledge/information as much as possible, with details which are not known to us as yet.

[TN: Some more personal details about Wiener are added in German.]  
Mr Wiener resides in Germany as a pensioner in Affalterbach, Birkau near Ludwigsburg.

He was Feld Weibel/Sergeant in the German Kriegs Marine/Navy in 1941, he served in Libau. He was discharged from the army as a Master-Sergeant, Oberfeldweibel - (Heeresdienst).

He filmed his film in August of 1941 and it is about the shooting action against the Jews in Liepaja/Libau, Latvia. It is the only film document to have survived concerning the shooting of Jews.

We received the film in Yad-Vashem in 1974, and already then, Mr Wiener expressed his intention to report details about the film which were supposed to come together with the film.

[TN: in the German introduction - some more details are added about Dr Rosenkranz. The interview is recorded by Dr Herbert Rosenkranz, the assistant to the director of the archive of Yad-Vashem who is himself in charge of the department for the investigation of war crimes. He is an historian, specialising in Austrian Jewry and is in charge of the Jewish Community/ies book - Austria.] To the right is Mrs Ester Hagar, Dr Dov

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Levin's research assistant - researching the Holocaust of the Latvian Jewry, for the Ledger of the Latvian Communities [TN: in Hebrew: Pinkass Kehilot Latvia]. She concentrates on investigating the destruction of the Jews of Latvia/Libau.

Q: Mr Wiener, could you please describe to us briefly what was your motivation in making this film, this amateur film? What led you to it? Your family background, your education, the direction you received and your aims? And could you please tell us what you intended to do as an accompaniment to your documentary film?

A: I was born in March 1914, in Grossgraben Oesen district in Silesia, till the age of 22 I lived at home with my parents. I went to school in Cottbus. I attended high school, the revised high school and then the economic continuation school. I did a lot of sport, especially sailing and athletics, field and track. I was at the Spiluch Lake with my sailing club. In 1935 the Naval SA settled in next to us, next to our boats and they did a lot of Marine Sports like sailing etc, they had a big sailing boat. We had received an invitation to participate/take part with the Naval SA because they hoped that some of us would become SA men. As I already intended to join the Navy and had already applied for it, I decided to join them as it would be useful for me and so I went there over one summer to the Marine SA and received preliminary military training.

Q: Excuse me please - an interim question.

A: Yes.

Q: In our preliminary discussions you told me that your father was in the SPD (Socialist Party of Germany), and that he was anti-Nazi. What compelled you to join the Navy as early as 1935?

A: The SPD and the platform of the SPD were not against the Navy and the Wehrmacht [TN: Armed Forces], a lot of people in the SPD were actually members of the Wehrmacht. For that reason my father did not object that I volunteered to the Navy. Because I intended to serve for twelve years with the Navy and then join the public service with a Zivilversorgungsschein [TN: civilian entitlement certificate] and an Abschlußlehrgang [TN: final course] which would allow me to take up a career as an inspector. This was my aim.

Q: In what way was your father an anti-Nazi?

A: Yes, well by belonging to the party and to the union.

Q: But he wasn't actively so?

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- A: Not actively, no.  
Yes and so I was then conscripted into the Navy after the ¼ or ½ a year of the summer of 1935 had passed, and I joined on the 1.4.1936.
- Q: Did you remain with the Marine SA? [TN: naval storm trooper detachment of the Nazi party]?
- A: No, the moment I belonged to the Wehrmacht [TN: Armed Forces] I automatically dropped out. I did not belong to the party nor to any other organisation. When I came to the navy on 1.4.1936 I did my training, the training of the navy was apolitical and was only concerned with sailing [TN: Seemannschaft] and afterwards we were trained in the individual career groups which we had been assigned to.
- Q: Would you mind getting to Libau?
- A: Yes, before I even got to Libau I was a member of the fleet command. The fleet command was the staff of the Commander-in-chief of the navy stationed on the battle ship Gneisenau which was the flagship of the fleet. So I went with the fleet command, that is to say with the Commander-in-chief of the fleet and the voyage lasted from 1939-1941 until I came to Libau. When I was with the fleet command I had the opportunity to get the permission to film in the whole area of the fleet. That was easy to do all I had to do was submit a prepared permit to the Commander-in-chief of the naval staff which he then signed, of course he knew me and knew that I was a film amateur, and so I had it signed and stamped and so I had a film permit for the whole area of the fleet.
- Q: Does that mean that made you exempt from Himmler's ban on filming?
- A: Himmler's ban only came out at the end of 1941.
- Q: So you could film freely and without restrictions?
- A: Yes, within the whole area of the fleet, that was the beginning within the Armed Forces [TN: Wehrmacht] so that one received a permission to film from the battalion commander or division commander; it was the Commander-in-chief of the navy with us who was responsible for the armed forces above water [TN: Überwasserstreitkräfte] Later on -
- Q: Excuse me Mrs Ester has a question.

HEBREW Q:

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Were there demands on soldiers to hand over photos/pictures which they took; things such as the murdering of Jews? Or was there also some sort of order forbidding the distribution of those photos/pictures? What does he remember about the order? Not only that it was forbidden to take photos, but also in regard to the material which was already photographed.

Q: Before the ban at the end of 1941 and especially after the ban was enforced at the end of 1941, were you obliged to hand in your photographs or films or hand in a copy and was there a limitation in regard to the filming of your films?

A: No.

Q: Before and after the end of 1941?

A: During the whole time that I belonged to the Navy I was never obliged to hand in film stock. However, I once did so for security reasons after a battle operation which I had filmed privately with my own film stock and my own camera regarding the sinking of the aircraft carrier Glorious an English ship up in the North Sea. This was the only engagement which was filmed privately by me, i.e. as an amateur with my own film stock due to the permit I had from the fleet command I filmed it from the admiral's bridge while I was carrying out my own tasks.

Q: Yes, and you were allowed to keep the film?

A: Yes, I was allowed to keep it. However, I did put the film in the safe belonging to the fleet command once it had been developed for security reasons.

Q: But it was at your disposal?

A: I was able to take it out any time.

Q: Yes. So the ban which was put in place at the end of 1941 did not oblige or bind you?

A: One moment please, it wasn't quite like that. The ban did not bind me within the naval sector. I was allowed to take pictures there. Himmler's ban was restricted to the shooting of Jews and other compulsory measures which were carried out in the eastern block.

Q: Oh, so you wouldn't have been allowed to film such a scene once the ban was made known?

A: No, I wouldn't have been allowed to.

Q: But what you filmed before wasn't taken from you?

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- A: No, it wasn't. No ...  
In 1941, i.e. in July, in the middle of July 1941 I came to Latvia, i.e. to Libau with the naval anti-aircraft battalion [TN: 'Marineflakabteilung']. Since we were busy with constructing the batteries/the anti-aircraft batteries and while we were busy doing this we did not have an opportunity to go on land. We were quartered in the naval grounds [TN: 'Marinegelände'] of Libau, north of Libau itself between the cathedral and a former Russian school, those were all former Russian military camps there.
- Q: Were the actions against Jews which took place in the winter of 1941 between the cathedral and the bank and which you mention in your report, also south of the lighthouse?
- A: No. South of the lighthouse, the lighthouse, ... it was really a mole, was approximately to the West, ... well how shall I say on the coast on the height of the town of Libau itself, you could go there, but not from the naval grounds. You had to go from North to South, you could go there by tram to Libau, it took approximately 20 minutes with the tram, and then you could walk through a park [TN: Anlagen] down to the beach. And on the beach a bit to the north there was this mole, this southern mole.
- Q: So the southern mole was north of ...?
- A: South of the naval grounds.
- Q: South of the naval grounds. And is this the place where the night-time executions took place in December 1941?
- A: No! They began, the executions began as far as I heard and as far as I became aware they began firstly near the beach of Libau/of the town Libau that is near the mole and later, that was in summer/in August, when I also made this film, and only later after I had taken this film on the beach, I went on leave in December and came back ... On my way back I had a serious accident and was taken to hospital where I was for four months and afterwards I came back to Libau. That was in January 1942.
- Q: Yes, well can you tell us approximately the exact date of the filming?
- A: Well, that is hard to say. I didn't write it down and I can't recall it anymore either ... in July/August, approximately in August.
- Q: Yes, but in the first or second half?

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A: In the first half of August.

Q: In the first half of August? I ask you because we do not have so much information about executions in the first half of August and we know that they were concentrated more at the end of July and in the second half of August. So do you know that larger-scale and smaller-scale executions were also carried out constantly before against Jews?

A: I cannot say for sure. I only found out about this execution by coincidence, because I went to Libau with a comrade of mine, 'Hauptfeldwebel' [TN: first sergeant] Weizel whom I also mentioned (yes), we went to Libau for a walk.

Q: You were stationed in Libau, weren't you?

A: Yes, well we went to the town of Libau. We were actually stationed north of there in the naval grounds. And in Libau we went for a walk in the park between the town and the beach. And a soldier came running towards us there, we shouldn't continue because it was awful, terrible further back on the beach. We asked him why. And he said "Well they're killing Jews there."

Q: And you had your film camera with you?

A: Yes, I had it with me at all times -

Q: Oh, I see.

A: - and there was always a film in it; if I went for a walk or did something else and even when I used to be on board I usually had my film camera with me because something can happen suddenly which you can't later put on film as a record. And so I actually wanted to take a film of Libau in summer when we went to town for the first time. After the soldier had told us not to go there, I had decided to go there after all because I wanted to film it. Because I had already heard from Jews who worked for us that family members did not come home at night. They are caught at the market in Libau by the Latvian 'Heimwehr' [TN: local defence unit] or by the SS when they are being brought back from work by the German soldiers. And then I said to myself well I don't know, I want to find out for myself, if what they say to me is true and their men don't come home and are killed.

Q: Excuse me -

HEBREW Q:

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When we are talking about the end of July/early August - does he remember how many Jews worked in the Navy?

Q: Can you remember approximately how many Jews were working in the Navy and what they did?

A: Well, when we came to Libau we requested a labour detachment of 70-80, no 50-80 Jews first from the municipal administration, I think, it didn't matter for what, we said for cleaning up. And we came into a camp, to the quarters where the Russians had hastily left, even the food was still on the tables (see?). And as the soldiers were now deployed for military purposes, they were supposed to bring the batteries into position and lay out everything properly as we needed for our purposes. For these purposes, for this cleaning-up we got these Jews. We fed them while they were with us. However, they had already had had their breakfast when they came to us, they got their lunch with us and in the evening ... they were assigned to us in small labour detachments; they worked in the kitchen, they cleaned up then they worked in the grounds a bit. See? Well, it wasn't hard work. I, myself, had a Jew, a technician, because I was working with films, who made me a filming installation.

Q: What was his name?

A: He was a technician.

Q: But you can't remember his name?

A: No, I can't recall his name any more. We had an academically trained engineer who got me this Jew. This academically trained engineer also had a shop in Libau.

Q: Also a Jew?

A: I think he was a Latvian.

Q: A Latvian.

A: A Latvian. He got the Jew for me. I had had a fire in my films and the filming installation, the cables were charred and the Jew repaired everything again.

HEBREW Q:

Ester says "It is possibly a very technical question. He says that they asked for a labour detachment and they received Jews from the municipality ... So did they ask for it from the German authorities or from the Latvian authorities? - and were they the ones who sent the Jews for/to work"?

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- Q: Who did you turn to with your request for Jews - to the Latvian authorities or to the German Heeresabteilung [TN: army section] and who assigned them to you?
- A: You've got me there. I presume we turned to the municipal administration -
- Q: The Latvian municipal administration.
- A: Yes, I didn't do it anyway.
- Q: Did you just talk to your technician or to other Jews and how was the contact between the naval soldiers and the Jews anyway?
- A: Well, I'd like to say that the contact was good between the soldiers and the Jews. Because the Jews enjoyed coming to us and they enjoyed working for us, even for longer. When I ... approximately in the month of ... at the beginning of September '41, that was when we had to take away the personal identification papers, the work permits we had issued to the Jews on orders from the commander of the military area [TN: 'Festungskommandant'] who himself received his orders from the political leadership the SS or SA or the Gestapo. So they weren't allowed to work for us anymore, they were allowed to come but we weren't allowed to occupy them no-one brought them.
- Q: They couldn't come inside any more anyway, could they?
- A: No they couldn't come to us any more.
- Q: That was the Commander of the military area Kabelmacher?
- A: Yes, that's right Kabelmacher yes I think it was Kabelmacher, I had forgotten the name, Kabelmacher ... Then our 'Abteilungskommandeur' [TN: commander of the unit] went to Kabelmacher, the commander of the military area, and complained that we hadn't finished with our work yet and we still needed Jews for the work. But he didn't get the permission any more. He couldn't assert himself with the Commander of the military area, because the Commander of the military area also received orders from his superiors.
- Q: Yes, an angry exchange of words.
- A: Yes.
- Q: You talked about attempts by your Commander and especially by the 'Stabsarzt' [TN: captain (med.)] to intervene so that the

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- executions would be halted. Did they go to Kabelmacher or to whom did they go to attempt this?
- A: Yes, that was during the time that Kabelmacher was there.
- Q: Addressed to him?
- A: Yes, I think that it was Kabelmacher for sure. I actually only had dealings with the staff officer with the Staff who sat next to us/me when the battery was officially opened and whom I spoke to in regard to the filming permission of the fleet command. I asked him if I could get the permission to film in the military area [TN: 'Festungsbereich'] which only concerned the naval forces within the naval forces regarding the permission to film, if I could get the permission to film within the military area. He then told me, "If the Commander-in-chief of the fleet has given you the permission to film, then there's no problem. It's just a formality, just come in you don't have to come in to me today, that could be at a later date, because you can definitely make your films".
- Q: Some more technical questions.  
We know that Libau was strongly affected by the war. You said that you went into Libau on the tram - were the roads free for the vehicles? Was the public transport system working regularly? What kinds of signs of destruction did you see in Libau?
- A: In Libau itself, I can only speak of the centre because that is all I know, it was partly destroyed. I know that I lived in the Hotel Petersburgerhof at the beginning, the theatre was intact the town hall was intact.
- Q: The airport?
- A: The airport was destroyed. Yes, destroyed.
- Q: The railway line from Libau to Riga?
- A: The railway line from Libau to Riga, that was intact. I myself went from Memel on the train to Libau and the train went on to Riga.
- Q: It was intact?
- A: Yes.
- Q: Could we get to the scene itself now?
- A: I also went from Memel to Riga by car.
- Q: Yes.

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A: Okay, now to the scene, itself. I already said that it was in July at the end of July or in August when I came to Libau, and then I went to the park to the small wood ... in front of the beach where the soldier came across us. We then continued on to the site of the execution. All around there were German soldiers there as spectators in the middle there was a long pit which we will also see in the film. At first I went and stood in the second row of soldiers in a distance of say fifty metres from the pit and waited to see what would happen. It didn't take long and a truck arrived. It was a truck with a platform and there were people on it, but I didn't know how many, and at first I didn't see them because they were lying down and on all four corners of this platform civilians were standing there with yellow armbands and rifles. They jumped down from the truck straight away after it had stopped near us, they opened, no I don't think they opened the tailgate. Then someone called out, but I couldn't understand it. Then the people jumped up and I saw that they had yellow patches on their chests and on their backs. I did not see any stars of David on them. I would like to stress that I couldn't observe what exactly was going on around me while I was filming, because I was looking through the lens and I could only see that section that I was looking at through the lens. I had a cine-film camera, Kine Kodak 8, that is 8 mm, with a reversal film which was 15 metres in length and after 7½ m I had to stop filming and -

Q: Reverse.

A: - reverse the film that took time and the film camera only drew approximately 1½ metres of film through the camera and then I had to stop again in order to draw through the film. That means that my film does not show the action continuously which took place there are pieces missing in between. After the civilians with yellow armbands, I identified them as Latvian 'Heimwehr' [TN: local defence force] -

HEBREW Q:

What was the colour of the band on the arm? Does he remember? The interviewer replies: He answered. He said yellow.

Please continue:

A: They shouted out again and then the Jews whom I had recognised as such in the meantime, had to jump over the tailgate -

Q: Over the tailgate.

W: \STAFF\POLICY\WIENER.R

A: - over the side of the platform and there were lame people and cripples among them who were then caught in the arms of others. And then they had to stand in a row first of all and were then herded, chased toward the pit. This was done by the SS and the Latvian 'Heimwehr', they did it. They had to jump into the pit and run along the pit until they reached the end. They then had to turn their backs on the execution squad. They knew in the moment that they saw the pit they might have known what was going to happen to them and they probably felt it too because there was already a layer of bodies lying underneath them over which a thin layer of sand had been shovelled, see.

Q: Who shovelled the sand?

A: Well, I don't really know.

Q: Were they civilians?

A: No, they were wearing uniforms.

Q: Uniforms?

A: Yes, uniforms, but I can't really say, they did have uniforms on, summer uniforms.

Q: With SS collar patches?

A: Well, I'm not sure about that either, but the SS was also there. I don't know, I can't say for sure if the execution squad afterwards was made up of SS men, but the supervising detail was made up of SS. You can see that on the film.

Q: With SS uniforms?

A: With SS uniforms. With SS uniforms with the black collar patches but they had their summer uniforms on.

Q: In battle dress?

A: In battle dress, more or less in their summer uniforms they were sort of khaki. So when they had got into the pit, they had to turn around, the execution squad was standing behind them and then the execution squad received orders to come forward and then they received orders to shoot. So they were shot from behind.

Q: A shot in the neck?

A: Yes, I assume so, I didn't see.

Q: With carbines or pistols?

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A: It sounded like rapid fire rifles but it could be the case that there were just so many and if the shots are not fired evenly, see, then it can sound like a submachine gun. It sounded like sub-machine guns to me. When they had fallen over, two men walked along the pit with pistols.

Q: SS men?

A: I don't know that either.

Q: I see.

A: I assume that it was so and they killed everything that was still moving in the pit with a shot in the neck. A court verdict was not read out to them they just came into there and were shot. I doubt, if they were made aware of one in the prison where they were allegedly kept before or if one existed at all. I was under the impression that they were just shot because they were Jews. And that was known in the navy. It had got about in the navy that Jews were being shot not partisans or other such people.

HEBREW Q:

What was the reaction of the Army personnel which he knows to the phenomenon of the murdering of Jews? Did soldiers argue about it? Were there some who condemned it, were there some who justified it? How did it affect their spirits?

Q: Got around is a pretty neutral phrase, if these shootings were known what were the reactions of the Navy? You only know about the Navy and not about other parts of the Armed Forces. Was it discussed, did people get depressed? We know about the subsequent depression, but at the time that you were there before your leave?

A: Well, at the time the people were too occupied with themselves, the soldiers, it just got around, and because we didn't see it ourselves, didn't experience it for ourselves, no emotional response could be formed. Only when the shootings were carried out in the naval grounds [TN: 'Marinegelände'] at night not far from us, that was at the end of August/the beginning of September the shooting took place every night then it also became noticeable with the soldiers. They were very depressed. The shooting at night - the disturbance at night was a fact that really depressed us.

Q: Because your sleep was disturbed?

A: One moment! The soldiers also went there after the nightly shootings and had a look at what had happened. That is when it happened. The pits had not been closed properly; arms and other

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23

parts of the bodies were showing and there were flies on them. People with us, the soldiers suddenly got eczema. We had a Jewish female doctor in the last period when we still had the labour detachments. The doctor who worked for our unit had employed the Jewish female doctor and she bandaged the soldiers afterwards. This was not allowed to be afterwards due to the order. Oh ... well, when this incident became known to the commander of the military area and to the political leadership an additional order was issued that he was not allowed to do that, that he wasn't allowed to employ a Jewish female doctor because one supposedly couldn't ask German soldiers to be treated by a Jewish female doctor. But once again this order did not come from the Commander of the military area but the political leadership who had nothing to do with us. [yes] I already mentioned that the 'Abteilungskommandeur' [TN: Commander of the unit] went to the Commander of the military area especially because of the shootings, firstly because we weren't allowed to employ any Jews and also because of the shootings in our grounds. It was also intended that elements of the Armed Forces be enlisted for the shootings but this was then rejected by the Armed Forces. Because this is a measure that - how shall I say - has nothing to do with military tasks and as such it was rejected by us.

Q: Well, I've got a special question, a provocative one.

A: Yes?

Q: In 1981, in this year I think, a book was published in England in German about the part the Wehrmacht played in the shootings and cases are proved where the Armed Forces actually took part and it is also mentioned and it is also mentioned in a statement which we know about separately that naval soldiers from the Navy stationed in Libau had to take part in carrying out the shootings on at least one occasion.

A: I don't know about that. I don't know about it. I would like to emphasise that I was only in Libau for about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a year, not quite  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a year. I left Libau on 26 September, I went on leave and then I came back to Libau.

Q: After four months?

A: After 4 months (yes). That was in January 1942. In 1942 I was especially interested in the shootings of Jews because I had recorded it on film and then I was told that the shootings took place until approximately December 1941 then they were halted over

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the Christmas period and started again in January 1942. I can't tell you the exact dates as I didn't enquire about them either. I found this out by coincidence. What I'm talking about here happened while I was away and I only know about it from hearsay.

Q: So it didn't get around in the Navy that - at a certain time - a few soldiers, members of the Navy were assigned to take part in an execution?

A: No, I don't know about that and I didn't hear anything about it either.

Q: Yes, okay, well I think that we have exhausted the subject of the film. Except for a sequel. You told us that you were stationed on Crete and that you were captured by the English allies and that you therefore lost your film stock. So how did you get this film back?

A: Yes, well lost isn't quite right. While I was still in Libau and before I went on leave I sent the film in a butter parcel from Libau to Germany to my mother, who was living in the countryside in what is now the GDR.

Q: Did you say anything about the execution at home?

A: No, I didn't tell them anything about it. I sent the films about Riga and everything else that I had filmed in Libau while I was there concerning my trip to Riga home to my mother beforehand and she had them developed by Agfa in Wolfen. There was no censorship/film censorship there yet. So I sent the film to my mother in the butter parcel for her to have it sent to be developed by Agfa. You must remember that there was no censorship yet this was at the end of August 1941.

Q: In autumn?

A: Yes. Before I went on leave. And the butter parcel was confiscated on the Libau-Latvian border. It was on a truck. We had bought the butter in a dairy in Libau ourselves and sent the parcels on a recommendation by the Commander of the military area [TN: 'Festungskommandant']. But still the parcel was confiscated and opened by the German military police at the Latvian-Libau/Lithuanian border because there was no permit for it. The driver informed us by telephone and the adjutant drove there straight away but everything had already been torn open. The perishable goods like butter allegedly landed in the hospitals and the goods that weren't perishable came to the 'Festungskommandantur' [TN: military area HQ] in Memel. As I

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already told you I had a serious car accident on the way from Kiel to Libau after I had been on leave - it was between Memel and Libau, no, what's the name of the place?

Q: It doesn't matter.

A: It doesn't matter. Where Elizabeth supposedly scratched this funny comment into a window with a diamond namely "he who has never eaten his bread with tears ..." I can't remember at the moment. Well it was there that I had the serious accident. I was in a hospital in Memel for four months after that. From there I tried to get my film back from the 'Festungskommandantur [TN:-military area HQ]. I sent a nurse there and she came back with the answer that I should pick up the film myself, she had told them that I was confined to my bed and that I couldn't, so the film stayed there in Memel. I was transferred from Memel to Königsberg and was operated on again there and from Königsberg I came to Straßburg in the Elsass and then from Straßburg, Elsass to Stuttgart where I lived with my sister and then I came back to Memel. I wasn't confined to my bed any more, but I sent the nurse there again and she came back again saying that I would have to pick the film up myself. Because so much time had passed, four months, I didn't know if the film had been developed and I didn't dare go there. Then I came back to Libau and packed my suitcases because our staff was transferred to Brest and because a person had already been assigned to replace me in Brest for the four months I was asked where I wanted to go. I said Neustadt in Holstein and then I had to wait for my transfer there and so I came back to Memel and tried it one last time with a nurse and then I gave up and went to Neustadt to the submarine school. And then I requested my film via official channels from Memel from the military area HQ and so it landed on my desk.

Q: Yes, please continue.

A: And so I got the film.

Q: Undeveloped?

A: Yes, undeveloped. Well I sent it from Neustadt to Dessau, yes I think it was Dessau, no it was Wolfen, to Agfa in Wolfen to have it developed. At that time there was no film censorship at Agfa in Wolfen yet, because I got the film back.

Q: That was in '42?

A: '42? Yes! At the beginning of '42 in February or March '42.

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- Q: And there wasn't any film censorship yet?
- A: Approximately two months later the film censorship was introduced. I even have the documents among my files.
- Q: We'd like to have them.
- A: I can photocopy them and can also include the verdicts, yes. And then I firstly looked at the film myself in Neustadt in Holstein. With my colleagues at the submarine school in Neustadt I touched on the Jewish problem once, I actually introduced the subject myself and I told them what had happened up there in the East, but they didn't believe me.

## HEBREW Q:

It is interesting to point out at this point that he talked to his friends about the murdering of (the) Jews - what were their reactions? What did the people say, were there some who justified it or some who criticised it?

- Q: So they didn't believe you? Then you showed it to them - what was the reaction like afterwards?
- A: They were depressed. The first time. I was observing their faces and saw how shocked they were, we had never seen or found out about anything like it in the Navy nor had we experienced anything like that. The same happened to me while I was filming, I was shivering all over I was that agitated.
- Q: Were there discussions about it afterwards? Were there some who justified it?
- A: Yes, well when they saw it for themselves in the film, then they believed me and what I had said and then they said. "Man, that is a delicate subject that's dangerous, don't get caught!"
- Q: And was the reaction: We don't want to know anything about it!?
- A: No not at all, I was often addressed due to the film.
- Q: So it wasn't suppressed?
- A: No. But I had actually only shown it to six comrades I had shown it to them after they had sworn an oath of silence. Because I wasn't allowed to make it publicly known that I had this film in the interests of the film, itself, because I would have otherwise lost it straight away.
- Q: In regard to you and your comrades who were close to you, because you were a group of six and everyone had been sworn to silence, did

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this lead you to look into the policies of the German Reich in regard to the Jews? And to trace the policies of annihilation or did you content yourselves/yourself with this?

A: In this respect I did not notice any reaction. But I did notice that the film deeply moved and agitated the people.

Q: So you don't know? And what about you?

A: Well, you can imagine since I experienced it myself.

Q: No, I mean did you follow up the matter in order to collect further information about the execution of Jews and what is behind it. Did you realise at the time that the Jews were to be annihilated completely for racial reasons?

A: It was clear to me afterwards, because when I came back to Libau, in the winter of 1942, it was said that there was an order by Hitler that all the Jews in the East were to be annihilated, that the Jewish problem ...

Q: That was known in 1942?

A: Yes, that was known in 1942.

Q: Publicly?

A: Publicly. At least in the naval circles from the top which were stationed in Libau.

HEBREW Q:

Not official. It was not a secret but it was not official. Yes.

Q: That wasn't a secret but it wasn't official?

A: Yes no secret but official. Yes it was discussed openly but ... By the way a Senior Commander of Latvia had intended to have the Jewish problem "solved" by the end of 1941.

Q: Briefly the film was in your possession. What was the film's fate, but briefly?

A: For one and a half years I was with the submarine school, in Neustadt with the second submarine training battalion, and so I sent the film home in a parcel because I had applied for a position abroad. I had an acquaintance in the office which processed applications in Kiel and he put in a word for me and so I was promised a command in the south, in Greece.

Q: I don't really want to hear about your personal stations, but about the film.

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A: Well, before I went to the South I sent the film home, to the area of Cottbus in what is now the GDR. My mother got it and I had written a letter to her telling her to put the film with the other films, but I didn't tell her what kind of film it was, (yes) to the battle and the other naval films. And she did so.

Q: And that is how the film survived?

A: Cottbus, the area around Cottbus turned into a combat zone at the beginning of 1945 - my mother had to flee. Because she had inherited a farm she put some of the food -

Q: The land -

A: - the things which she couldn't take with her she had to bury and hide them. She still had a cabin trunk from me which I had from the Navy and that is where my naval things were put inside with my films and it was put in the pig sty and dung was put over it.

Q: So it was buried well?

A: Yes, it was buried well, because they had to leave, because it was a combat zone and a grenade went through the roof during the fighting and covered everything. Then refugees came Poles. During the war they used to be called, how should I say, they were called 'Ostarbeiter' [TN: workers from the East]. They came, were accommodated, came through our village, then to our house. They lived everywhere, in the rooms, in the barn, it was too smelly in the pig sty though and it had all been covered.

Q: Alright then, so it was saved?

A: Yes, it was saved.

Q: And after the war you came back and dug it out?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Well, I've got one more question: You talked about the first group of Jews, you talked about approximately twenty-five Jews who were executed (yes), at the time while you were filming, you don't know how many were executed before. That they were chased to the pit in groups of approximately ten each? Well, the first ones didn't know anything but when they had to jump into the pit and had to walk on the bodies then they knew. But those left behind saw what happened!

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A: They didn't stay behind because only one vehicle came at a time. When one group was shot, then it took a few minutes until the next vehicle came.

Q: Aha. So the groups which had to jump into the pit -

A: They were assigned

Q: - were already assigned.

A: The vehicle ...

HEBREW Q:

Does he have any idea how many were murdered on that day? Because he only talks about a group of twenty-five at the end of the day. Has he any idea how many were murdered on that day?

Q: Do you know how many were executed on that day?

A: No, I can't say. I can only say how many were killed during the time that I was there. I saw approximately 3-4 executions. Then we went away. But it continued afterwards.

Q: So it continued like it had already been going on before you came there?

A: Yes.

Q: Mrs Hagar, would you like to ask another question? No. Thank you. Neither would I. Thank you.

27.9.81 [TN: This is on a piece of cardboard]

END OF INTERVIEW

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