

ARNON

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A: hen in 1940 the Germans came to...to Holland, I was...I would say, a man of 26. And we had just and I say it as a detail - we had just a day before got our certificates for what was then Palestine. And it was clear to us that we couldn't go. The war in Holland ended in five days. And I would say that on 16th of May the Jewish part of the Dutch population was perhaps for the...for the first time in its existence in a real panic.

Q: Already the 16th?

A: The 16th. When they...when they knew that the... the Dutch had capitulated and the Germans would be master in the country. The mood under the Jews was very bad. There was a number of suicides which which never had been had before. And strange as it may look, it never was afterwards. I think on the...on the...on the night of the 16 and the 17th about 300 suicides were under a Jewish population of 140,000. And...

Q: One night.

A: In one night. The...

Q: This means that they were fully aware of what was at stake?

A: I...I would say that on...on that day perhaps

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they were fully aware. The strange thing is that when nothing happened in the first few months, there was the general feeling that...well things wouldn't be so bad as they thought on the night, on those three days before the capitulation. And <sup>life</sup> began to be normal again. And I...I would say that uptil the end of the deportation, the Jews were never so afraid again - without any reason, I am not saying in hindsight they were wrong. But in the...in the feeling of the Jewish population things became more normal and they couldn't imagine that things will end so badly as they...did in reality.

Q: Let's say immediately, what was the result of these 140,000 Dutch Jews. How many were killed?

A: Well, I think that figures say more than many many other things. 107,000 were dep...deported, and less than 5,000 came back. So more than 100,000 were actually killed by the Germans without taking into account people who were caught when they tried to get to other countries....

Q: This means more than the two thirds.

A: 80%. 80% of the Jews the Germans were after, which in Holland didn't include the mixed marriages.

There were about 10,000 of them. Almost 80% were killed. I think it is the...it is the worst

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percentage in West Europe.

Q: Yes.

A: It...I wouldn't say it is the same percentage as was in Eastern Europe, but...but for the western Europe countries, it was by far the worst. It was...it was about 50% in Belgium, it was about the same percentage in France or even less...

Q: Less in France.

A: Less in France. But.....The...the...the Jews in...in...in Holland...And that's one of the strange things in history. They were so sure that it wouldn't happen to them, that...that... I would almost say, the normal reaction of the... of the Jewish to get away...to defend yourself, was very weak. There were Jews who...until...who until the...in the middle of deportation were still thinking that it couldn't happen to them. They were...they felt themselves for a large part as Dutch. They were very much assimilated. For a large part they were living in Holland...

Q: Coup, il paraît....

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Q: But where were you living?

A: I was living in Amsterdam, In Amsterdam there

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were living, I would say, almost more than half of the Jews, and probably two thirds of the Jews in Holland. It was the Jewish centre, in... in Holland, and I would almost say not only in Holland. More than 10% of the population of Amsterdam was Jewish, and they had a big influence on the... on the... on everything that happened there. And... and they felt very very sure. Holland had a .... a reputation and a tradition of being a good country for... for the Jews. And although I wouldn't say that there wasn't anti-Semitism, there certainly was, but it was of a very mild character. It was socially. It was... it was... I would say almost never a... with force. It was a little bit economic. But if you compare it with... with the other countries, certainly in eastern Europe, but I would say also in Western Europe, it was a very mild kind of anti-Semitism. And a large part of the Jews were... were convinced that... that it would go away and... and that it couldn't... in Holland it wouldn't become violent. A.... I have to say here, and perhaps it will come later on back, that there was perhaps a difference between the Zionists and the non-Zionists. Because the Zionists took into account that the Jewish problem exists everywhere, and that will never go away and that... in any case, in our time it will never go away. And

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they were as a result of it more aware of the...of the very bad results which could happen.

Q: But you were yourself a Zionist?

A: I was a Zionist. I was the President of the...of the...of the Youth Organization. I had been the P...the president of the...of the "Zionist Student Organization. And not connected with what we are talking, I became the president of the...of the Netherlands Zionist Organization after the war. And I said already, I got my certificate because I wanted to go and live in Palestine. So in...in the group I was living in, the awareness of the change was...I would say, much more felt than it was in other parts of the population. And what added to it was that in the first few months of the German occupation, I would say, almost nothing happened. I ...I wouldn't say that people weren't ...were quite that they were feeling secure, but there was a general feeling that if you could let the time pass, life parts would be more unpleasant for the Jews, it would be more difficult. Many people took into account that it would be more difficult than...than...than others, but I would say that after a few weeks nobody ...nobody had any idea what was going to happen. And it took - I would say - almost a year till step after step the Jews became aware that the Germans didn't

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intend to let the Jews in Holland live their own lives, that they intended to stay in Holland, and that they intended to get - and I wouldn't say more than that - that they would like to get the Jews out of...of the Dutch community. That's what the general feeling was in the middle of 1941. I would say it started already in February 1941, It's about 9 - 10 months after the...the Germans came in, when the first razzia was held in Amsterdam, in which 350 young men between 20 and 35 were taken from the streets and brought to an concentration camp, first to Buchenwald and afterwards they were transferred to Markhallen, and when... wehn after a few weeks, after months, we got information that many of them died, the situation changed again.

Q: When was the Jewish Council established?

A: That was established in February 1941, and it was established with the clear intention on the side of the Germans - and today we know that it was the pattern all over the Occupied Europe - to ...to...to have institution through which the Jews would be informed about the measures the Germans were taking against them, just to get them - again - out of the general framework of the...of the ...of the Dutch population. In the beginning, there was a...already a big discussion

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if such an body should be formed. They took as the two chairmen two prominent Jews, prominent Jews in the Jewish community, not prominent Jews in the Dutch community, they were also prominent Jews in the...in the Dutch community...in the...in the general framework. Asscher was an uncle of mine, who was one of the...was the biggest manufacture of diamonds in Amsterdam, and was a member of...of the provincial council. And Cohen was the second one - in reality the first one - was a professor on the Amsterdam University. And both had been active not only in the general Dutch community, but they had been very active also in...in the Jewish community. Asscher was...had been considered really in the Jewish community as the first man. He was the chairman of the...of the Kehilah, he was the chairman of...of the...of the organization which organized the largest part of the Jews, in any case of the Ashkenazi Jews, and...which was the last more than 90% of the Jewish community. So they too two people who had a name of being really the lead of the Jews. And just to prevent any misunderstanding they...they were in principle good people.

Q: They were the natural leaders....

A: They were the natural leaders of....Asscher certainly was, and Cohen one of the leaders. But in the

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...in the Jewish community before the war, Asscher would be considered as number one. And everybody considered him as the man who...who would be the right man to...to be chosen for,...for a job like that.

Q: He was a powerful man? He was a rich man?

A: He was a rich man. He was in any case considered to be a rich man. He belonged to the...to the bourgeoisie just as it should be. He was considered...he was a very good market man. And...

Q: He was your uncle?

A: He was my uncle.

Q: This means the brother of who, of your mother?

A: My mother. It was the brother of my...my mother. And I was not one of the few who really loved him. It was a very lovable man. He was very charming, he...he...he...The story goes that he was chosen to the...to the provincial Council although the...he belonged to an...to an...the Liberal Party by his labourers. He was very popular in...in...in his own factory. And...he knew the people, he was very charming. When I am going to talk about what he did afterwards, and I will probably say...I will probably say some unpleasant things, he...he...he was an...a good man for quiet times...for quiet times. And to present...to present a misunderstanding

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A: I...I would say he was an...personally also courageous man. He wasn't ...he wasn't able to stand in...in difficult times. And I have to say that already in the beginning there was a...a big discussion. There was another committee which was founded a few months before, which the man who had been the president of the high Court in Holland, who was a Jew, was a president, was very much against it. And ..

Q: What was his name?

A: Vissert...Mr. Vissert. He...he...he said that you shouldn't have an organization in which they would have...would be the ...the...speaker of the German. They...they should be careful not to be forced out of the...of the...the Dutch community. And if the Germans had to say something to the...to the Dutchmen who were Jews, they should do it through ...through the Dutch channels and not through the Jewish channels. And...

Q: What was his name? Professor...

A: Vissert...Vissert.

Q: There was a Frieda too. Professor Frieda.

A: Frieda. Frieda was another professor who...who refused to be a member of the...of the Jewish Council.

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Q: On the same grounds.

A: On the same grounds. I...I would say on the same grounds. But he...he wasn't active in the...in the other organization, but Vissert was. And he never...he never became a member of the Jewish Council, and he in a certain sense fought them. In principle. As the Germans wanted the Jewish Council and not a Coordination committee, they stayed on for few months, perhaps half a year, and then they just disappeared. The... the general opinion in the Jewish community was that...that it was a good thing to...to have the Jewish Council in 41...in February 1941.

Q: Asscher and Cohen.....

A: Accepted it willingly. They thought it came to them, they were...they really felt themselves leaders of the...of the Jewish community. And they....

Q: ....no hesitation at all?

A: They...no...no....they had no hesitation. There was much criticism on the first act. Because they were founded a few days before something happened which made a very big impression also on the Germans. And that was the strike, the February strike in...in Amsterdam, where the non Jews went on strike as a protest against what happened

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to the Jews in the...in the razzia.

Q: The first razzia?

A: It was the first razzia, and it was - as far as we know - the first and perhaps the only strike which the non Jewish population organized in f of the Jews. There was another strike later on in Holland, but that was already when the...th Germans attacked the general population. But ...and the non Jewish population went on str with all the dangers connected with it....was very...very important and...important matter. the...

Q: The strike was, I think, the 25 and 26 of Fe

A: ...February 1941. I think so. It is now almo 40 years further...I don't.

Q: Yes.

A: ..remember all the exac...exact dates. But used the Jewish Council...they used Asscher Cohen to break the strike. They told...

Q: How did it happen?

A: They called Asscher and Cohen to the...to Germans and they said then, that if the st goes on, they will consider the Jews being it, and they will act against the Jews. A the Jews went....

Q: I think even that they threatened to...to

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300 hostages....

A: They...they threatened to take hostages. They told all kind of things...they...they...they threatened them, of course. And they went...they went under. They...they...they made an appeal to the Jews to ....to deliver the weapons they had. They didn't have them at all, but...

Q: This was, I think, the first measure.

A: That was the first measure, that the Jews have to deliver their weapons, knives, weapons....They... they had no weapons. The...the...In Holland who would go with weapons? in 1939 or 1940? What was I think the worst was that they....they went to the non Jewish leaders of the...of the strike, and they asked them to stop it. And because the Jews would pay for it. And....

Q: But I think that Cohen and Asscher begged...begged the...the leaders of the strike...

A: ...to...to stop it. To stop it. And...and that's something...that's something...that's something ...that's something that was the beginning. And I wouldn't say that the Jews in general felt that that was so bad, because they had the feeling that they would pay the bill, and if that could be prevented, then everything would go on. And... So I would say that in the first year of the existence of the Council, there were voices

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against them, there were people who said that you shouldn't work together with the Germans, that it is a kind of a collaboration. But I would say that the general feeling in the Jewish population was that if they could keep things on a...on a small fire, if they could prevent, and they thought they could prevent stronger German measures, especially if they could prevent razzias where the people would be taken to concentration camps, that they had a certain task to fulfill. Today, in hindsight this was clear that they should never have started it. But I...I...I wouldn't today be willing to say that I...I don't understand the reason why they did it. And I am willing to say that they did it really with the best intention. They really really thought...At the time they had some reason to think that they were preventing much stronger measures against the Jews. I would say that the thing changed dramatically,...

Q: And quickly.

A: ...and quickly. But I would say it took another year in which they had some...some reason to think that they will be able to prevent other things.

Q: Wh...When do you...do you date the dramatical change?

A: I would say that the dramatical change came when

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they officially decided to deport the Jews to...to the east. And that was only in July...

Q: 1942.

A: July 42, it should have been clear to them that their task was finished, that the Germans started to deport the Jews to...to the east. And although I'm uptoil today convinced that they didn't know about death chambers....

Q: It was said...The Germans said that the Jews would be deported to work in so called labour columns...

A: Labour columns, that they would....that they would have a hard life, but they would be able to survive. And in any case, large proportions should be able to survive. They had no reason to believe them in that, that a large proportion should survive. They had all reasons to be...to....to...understand that the older people would all of them die, and the children wouldn't have a chance, that....I uptoil today think that they had no idea about....

Q: But they had already chosen the way of...

A: That'sl....

Q: ....compliance.

A: That's right. And they thought that they could ....and that was the worst thing of all, that the could find a way in which the less important Jews would go first, and the more important Jews would

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go later. And that if there would be a second front and the Germans would lose the war, that they would be able to save an important part of the Jews. I think that is in...that was behind it. They became worse and worse. The...the circle was diminished. The kind of Jews they wanted to save were a small...smaller...and were their own...it was their own circle, which they...they...

Q: What kind of Jews did they want to save?

A: Well, their own...their own kind. Their own kind. The...It is very hard to say, it was an...If you see the...the...how the council was formed, what kind of people were sitting there. It was for 80%, 85%...were the people of the...of the bourgeois...

Q: Of the upper class.

A: Of the upper class, of the people who had a name there. There was one representative of the...of the trade union who...who

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Q: Do you...do you remember the...the case of the...the Jews of the province?...who had to come to Amsterdam; to leave their places and to...and who were herded in...yes...and they had to be located in Jewish houses? And what

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is very interesting is that, I think, it is the first time, where the Jewish council, the Joodsera Judenrat asked to the Germans for power, for compulsory power. This means that they...they didn't wait to ...to be asked, they were the first to ask for compulsory power against the Jewish population.

A: I don't...I don't remember. I wasn't very much at that time connected with the actions of the Jewish Council, and I know that the Germans decided to make first the rest of Holland Judenrein, and wanted to concentrate all the Jews in Amsterdam. And in reality they did it. And for all practical purposes, in the eastern part of Amsterdam a kind of ghetto was really formed. But I don't know how far the...the Jewish Council interfered actively in this thing. I've read about it. But I don't know much from my own experience about...about that. This fear that...that from everything which happened, the Jewish Council wanted to see itself as...I would almost say, the government of the Jewish community. And for that they wanted also executive power. But how far they did it and what cases they did it, I, from my own experience I'm almost not aware. We all knew that that's the way they wanted to see themselves, they saw themselves, and they wanted the Jews to see them-

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selves.

Q: But do you remember for instance the...the Jewish Weekly, the newspaper?

A: Oh yes, of course. Everybody read it. We had to read it, because otherwise you didn't know what you were allowed to do or you weren't. But it was never clear from that paper what was their initiative of the Germans or what was the initiative of the Jews themselves. And that was the purpose of the...of the whole...

Q: This is a very interesting point. Could you elaborate on this? It's very important.

A: The...the...the way the...the paper was written, was to give the Jews the...the...the feeling that they got their information from...from a source which was officially acknowledged as a source who could give the good directions. But they never...they never...they almost never said...There were cases in which it was clear that it was a German directive. But generally they would put it in such a way that you didn't know if it was something the Jews thought...what the Jewish leaders thought which would be good for the Jews, or what the Germans thought would be the right policy to...to act towards the Jews. And it was clear that if the Jews knew that it was a German directive, they were very suspicious. When they

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thought that their own idea certain sense, their own leaders thought that that's the way to act, they generally acted that way. And it was one of the most right things which we had against the Jewish Council, that people who were acknowledged leaders of the community before the war were given...were giving directions to the Jews in the service of the Germans. And it was clear to the Jews, to all the Jews, that the Germans meant bad to all the Jews, perhaps...no, I wouldn't even say that the Jewish leaders were convinced of that. They did....

Q: The Jewish leaders were...?

A: Were...I think they were also convinced that the Germans were...had bad purposes. Although they forgot it from time to time. They thought they.. they had personal contact with them and they couldn't always realize that human beings would so bad as they really were. But the...the bad influence of the...of the Jewish weekly was that the...the German measures were brought to the Jews in a way as if it was...if it were Jewish decisions.

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Q: How did it look, the Jewish Weekly?

A: How do you mean, how it looks?

Q: It was... It was a size of a newspaper? This... had how many... how many pages?

Q: It had the same size... the same size as the Jewish Weekly which was published before the war, exactly the same size. It was printed on the same presses. I don't remember if it had 8 pages or 12, but ...and in the end less. But I should say something about the whole development. If you say, how did the Jewish weekly look, or how did the Jewish council act, you should always take into account that there was a development in the... in the...

Q: This is the reason why I ask.

A: Well, the... the... It went from bad to worse. Everything. Everything. I can't say about anything in that situation became better. It was worse. Situation became worse. But it was not only the situation became worse, the attitude of the Jews became worse. The Jewish Weekly became worse. The attitude of the Jewish Council deteriorated first slowly, and then rapidly. And the whole purpose of the exercise which I'm

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convinced that ...

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A: It went everywhere, from bad to worse. And... I would say that the...if you take the Jewish Council, they...they certainly started out with the best intentions for the who...for the who Jewish community. But they...they were...they were not willing or not able to...to think about the whole thing again. And when it became clear that they couldn't do anything for the whole community, they decided to do something for a part of the community, their part. And then th...every time they made a circle, they tried to save smaller. Till the end - to have only the very close friends and the family, which they were thinking they could save, they could protect. And you could see it everywhere. Everywhere. You...you mentioned the Jewish paper. Well, it started out as a paper which...in which articles would be written about Jewish problems, about Jewish culture, . And in the end it was two pages with only instructions through the Jewish Council but from the Germans, how t

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...the Jews should...should act, the only....  
the...the...the things which were forbidden to  
Jews to do, or the things they should do. So that  
he could be caught if he...And that was something  
which, as I say, it was on all...on all fields  
of...of Jewish life. And my main complaint against  
the Jewish authorities of those times is that  
they....they helped...they helped. I don't say  
that they were....I have to make that clear every  
time: the holocaust was made by the Germans, not  
by the Jews. And the Jews never wanted it. Even  
if I say they helped them, they didn't want to  
help them. But they helped them, factually they  
helped them. And the...the...

Q: But I think we should take some precise example  
For instance, I take the....this case....Of course  
many Jews tried to enter in mixed marriages with  
Christian women or with Christian men in order  
to...to escape the general fate. And the Germans  
took notice of this, and forbade. Already in the  
spring of 1942 the...they forbade Jews to con-  
tract marriages or to have sexual relationship  
with non-Jews. And the Jewish Council started  
protest, saying that this decision was not based  
on any existing law, that they could not accept  
responsibility for such a measure, that they

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had no means and that they did not will to apply sanctions, and that no penalty for such a transgression had been stipulated. Okay, this was a first noble stand, we could say. And afterwards because 13 people of this...

A: One week...

Q: Yes...had been arrested by the Germans. It was a means of pressure. The Jewish Council forgot its first noble stand or proud stand, and started to ask for small privileges to alleviate the things. Okay. And at the end it went so: they asked for the release of these people. And its Asscher who approaches Laages, the German SS, and he asked at the end in...in way: Could you not use your great influence and your active benevolence to free those who are still alive now, (among the...the 30 people who had been arrested because one was dead) May I thank you in anticipation for your help. I mean, this is...it's a farce.

A: You are...you are right. But...You are right that...that it is an...an example of...of... of a development which is certainly not very...very pleasant. But I wouldn't...I wouldn't take that as an example of how bad it was. Because in reality, they couldn't do much about it. In reality they didn't do much about

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it. And my...my criticism....my....on their policy has been not so much that they acted, perhaps I should say, dishonourable. I would have forgiven them a lot, if by acting dishonourable they would have saved Jewish lives. MY criticism with regard to...to their actions is that my belief that by making the situation for the Jews as normal as possible, they actually made the chance of the Jews to stay alive smaller. That's the very serious matter, and for that reason I...I'm...I have always been very much less interested in...in all kinds of...of...unpleasant and bad things they did with regard to the...to their personal attitude towards the Germans. If they would have been talking nicely to the Germans and it would have succeeded, I...I would leave it alone, I would even...I would even defend them. But I think that the main thing which made the situation in Holland so bad was a result of the fact that the Jews were lulled into an...an...a psychological attitude that the things would arrange themselves some way or another. And they had very good reason for it, that if their own social leaders - I am not talking about it that the Germans appointed them, but they still had the feeling that Cohen and Asscher....they...they had

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chosen them themselves. If they would say that everybody should be quiet, and that's what was said in the paper almost in every week, that you should behave quietly, they they should go according to the laws. If they would have disappeared, if at a certain moment they would have come to the conclusion that they can't do anything real for the Jews, (I am not talking about the small things). And I am talking especially at the moment that the deportations....

Q: Yes, I would like that we talk about this.

A: At that time, if they would have said: we have tried for a year, more than a year, to...to help the Jews, we have come to the conclusion that it is futile, that we can't do anything about it that the thing is in principle lost for the Jewish community as a whole and the Jews as individuals it would have b...had had an tremendous impact in helping...on the attitude of the Jews. I am not talking about the attitude of the Germans. I wouldn't have worked in the way that the Germans would have said: well, leave it alone. We...If you don't want us to...to deport the Jews, we won't deport them. They would have tried to do it. But the attitude of the Jews of...of compliance with it, to stay at home, not to leave, to...to...to

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go with the...the Jewish....

Q; Star.

A: ...the yellow star. That all would have changed for a number of the Jews. I don't want to make any...to give any illusion; the Ger....In my opinion, the Germans would have gone on, a lot of Jews would have perished, but I think that in the end, we wouldn't have come out with about 15,000 Jews coming out of hiding, but a larger number. And I don't want to say how many. I ... I....I should like to give some...some figures. We know now...as I told you before, more than a hundred thousand Jews were deported, and that less than 5% returned. About 25,000 Jews went into hiding. About a third was caught. That means, two thirds stayed alive. And now you can't...you can't...you can't make a calculation that if all the Jews would have gone into hiding that percentage would have been saved. And I wouldn't say that all the Jews could go into hiding. I ... I have to say here something with regards.

Q: No, but listen, I would

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A: I would say that the crucial point for the Jewish Council - and I am not talking only

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about the two Gharrmen, I am talking about the Jewish Council as a whole - came at the time of the deportation. And....Well, it was founded in such a way that one group was represented there and it were the...generally the more well-to-do Jews, who had achieved social acknowledgement for a large part, and in the Jewish....But always also in the Dutch community. And they stood before the...the choice to...to go on cooperating with the Germans or not. And as far as we know, there have been, I think, two meetings of the Jewish Council in which this was discussed. And...

Q: What was discussed? Whether to comply?

A: They...if they would comply or they wouldn't comply. And they....

Q: ...with the deportation order.

A: If they would comply not only with the deportation order, if they would act...actively help them: typing the...the calls to come to the station. They started out in calling the people to the...to the central stations...

Q: The lists.

A: ....making...making the lists, making the list.. telling what people should go and what people shouldn't go, and sending them....They would send them the....the...the order to come to the centr

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station and to go for work in Germany. That's what they said: work in Germany. And I don't know if at that time they knew...

Q: What was said: work in Germany?

A: Work in Germany, labour services. That's what was said. But everybody knew that it was...that was the start of the deportations...the deportations. I...I would say, not only the Jews knew it, also the people of the Jewish Council knew it, also the chairmen knew it. That was deporting the Jews from Holland. Something... they...they had stated in the beginning that they would never allow. Because they understood that that would be the end of the Jewish community. Now they had a number of reasons, I think all of them false, to...to cooperate. They...they thought they would be able to do it slowly. They...they held negotiations. If they would send...if I am not mistaken, 350 a day or 600 a day. And they would see it as an...as a... as a success, if they would send only 350 a day and not 600. Because already in 42, they already thought that there would be an invasion and perhaps in one or two months the whole thing would...would collapse. The second thing which they thought, and which they did, is that the... if they would make the list, they could see to

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it that the important part of the Jewish community wouldn't be deported at the beginning...

Q: What was the important part?

A: Ah, well what they thought was the important part is, I would say almost their own circle, the...the people who had achievements, who were considered the better part....in their eyes, the better part of the...of the Jewish community. And then...And I would say that...I think that this reason, which in my opinion was a very strong not only with the chairman but with the whole Jewish Council, that that is the main reason why I think that the....they should have gone. I think that nobody...nobody in the world is allowed to make a choice what Jew is going to,,,,,to his....even....I would say to his death. Even if I give them the credit that they were not sure that they would go to their death, they shouldn't have made the choice who should be deported or not be deported. They had no illusions that many of them would go back. They knew that a large number of them would be...would go under in the circumstances in which they had to be. Even if they had no idea really...what really happened.

Q: But what... This is a very important point. What did they say specifically?

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A: Well, they...they...they said specifically that ...

Q: Because there were in the Jewish Council, and they discussed precisely this.

A: They said that...they said that they wanted to keep intact as much as possible the valuable part of the...

Q: Exactly. It was not a question of quantity, it was a question of quality. The....

A: That's right, but in...in Jyl...July 1942 there were still 140,000 Jews in...in Holland. So... they....Perhaps they weren't aware of...of the terrible....I am not sure, but perhaps they weren't sure of the terrible consequences of ...of agreeing to act as an...as a body which would decide who would go and who would...who wouldn't go. This thought that if they would keep in Holland and...and...what they called the valuable part of the Jewish community, they would be able after the war to build it up again. But the truth of the matter is that in July they made, in my opinion, the most fatal decision in their...in their existence. When they didn't decide to...to...refuse to make a difference between Jew and Jew with regard to this thing, and they took upon themselves

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to decide who would go and who wouldn't go, they started out a way which ended in...in September 1943 in which they...they were willing to...to keep it as a secret that the whole community would be taken away under the condition that a very small part, perhaps a hundred Jews of their own family and so on, would stay. And that last promise, even that last promise, the Germans didn't keep. They took them all. But they did in a certain sense, by sending them not to the Vernichtungslager but...but to Theresienstadt and Bergen-Belsen, which was...which was a more or less normal concentration camp, even for concentration camps the camp in which you had a better chance to...to stay alive than in any other place. And if...and if I may say something personal. I told you that one of the...the chairmen of the Jewish Council was my uncle and not only that I worked in his enterprise until '38...

Q: You worked...?

A: I worked in his enterprise...

Q: The diamond...?

A: The diamonds enterprise. I was the leader of it...of the booking...book-keeping department there. And not only that, I liked him. I would even say I loved him very much, and which is

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still worse, he liked me very much. And I would even say: he loved me. We were on very good relations until 41. And in 42, in July and in August I had two meetings with him, in which we then broke off all relations...

Q: But can you... can you describe...?

A: Well, I will describe it. I told him that... that in my opinion with the start of the deportations the... the... the... the Germans made clear that they want to finish with the Jewish community in... in Holland, and that no Jew should help with it, and that they should give a sign that... that the case is lost. t...

Q: to the community, you mean?

A: To the community. For the community as a whole the case is lost. And that they should... they should announce that they can't take any responsibility anymore for what will happen with the Jewish community. And I.... I said to him: you don't have to go to the... to the radio. It is enough if you disappear. And I knew that the underground in Holland was willing to help them or to hide or to get away to England. I don't say that there were no dangers there, but I want to stress that it was not fear for his personal physical well-being which... which made it impossible for him to go that way....

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Q: Don't forget. It's very good. You are...you are at the moment very good.

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A: There's no doubt that he had no physical fear, but I would say even if there were...and perhaps coming from where he came and with his lack on capacity to see the situation as it...as it developed, he...he...he still thought that he could do something. That was the reason why I went to ....to talk to him and in the first...the first meeting, which was in July just after the deportation started, we...we had the kind of talk we never had before and I think I have never had it afterwards with anybody in the world. We shouted at each other terribly. And we went away in...I went out...I went to the the factory and we talked in his private office.

Q: He was still running his factory?

A: No, I was...I left in...

Q: No, he.

A: He was still working in his office. He worked in his office, I think, till the last day.

Q: No, the factory, I mean.

A: In his factory, where he had a diamond factory.

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And the diamond factory was in...was an protected industry, so he....In the diamond industry there were no....no people who took over. They...the... the Jews themselves were allowed to run the business because the Germans wanted to keep the diamond industry intact till the last moment, they wanted.

Q: Yes, and the Jews couldn't be replaced?

A: And they knew, the Jew...it was a Jewish in.... In Holland it was a Jewish industry, not only with regard to the...to the bosses, as it was also in Antwerp, but also with regards to the... to the labourers, the...the best labourers, the best workers were...were...were Jews in...It was a Jewish industry. There...There was a Jewish proletariat in the diamond industry, which is quite an...quite an interesting fact in its own. But I won't go into it.

Q: No, it's important.

A: He was in his office, and I came there....

Q: But I think, did his personal condition of living did they...did they change for the worst, like for....

Q: Of course, they had certain...certain were limited in their possibilities how to live. They had to be at home at 8 o'clock, and perhaps Asscher shouldn't be...Or Asscher and Cohen could go out after 8 o'clock, but they had

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nothing to go to. They were not allowed to go to the...to the theatre, they were not allowed to...to drive cars. I think that....that he was allowed to keep his bicycle. Of course they didn't live in the same way as they did before. Not at all. Not at all. They were part of the Jewish community with some privileges they got for...for....for reasons of efficiency of their work. But he was still in his office...

Q: He was...he was running a bicycle?

A: He was running a bicycle. All Dutch are running bicycles. There are no Dutch who can't run a bicycle. The...the normal Jews were not allowed their bicycles any more. In...I think in...in the beginning of 43 they...they...

Q: Ah, they were not allowed to even....

A: No. They had to deliver their bicycles for...to the Germans and they had to go on feet, if they wanted to go anywhere. That was all...that was always in the framework of limiting the possibilities for them to...to go anywhere. They wanted the Jews to be in a place where they could get them, where they could...could pick and could get them and send them away. That was the whole purpose of the exercise. But when we talked in that first meeting I was very much influenced by the fact - I was at that time a teacher in

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t e...in the Jewish school. And my pupils were...  
wore...went away. And I asked him how he could  
take the responsibility of changing the way  
children of 18 and 19, who would go to a place  
where he couldn't guarantee anything at all. Even  
if he thought it would be in Germany, but nobody  
promised him that...or that it will be near to  
Germany as they said. It was unbelievable. The...  
the...And he thought that if he would keep...if  
he would be able to slow it down, that that  
would be worth while to...to stay there. And he  
did it. Perhaps he didn't understand, but in any  
case he didn't want to understand.

Q: What did you tell him, and what did he answer?

A: I'll tell you. I'll tell you.

I said ....

Q: I will shout at you.

A: I ....I shouted in the first meeting, but what  
I said to him in the second meeting without  
shouting was much worse. I decided after four  
weeks to go back to him, because....

Q: But Okay, the first meeting is already finished

A: In the first meeting we...we...talked about...  
we talked and shouted about the attitude with  
regards...which the Jewish leaders should take  
towards the Germans. And...and I told him that  
what he is doing is not only morally not...not

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acceptable for any measure. But that even....that even practically it will only help the Germans. And he said that what I am saying is that we are advising the Jews to try to disappear, to go into hiding, and that he considered an advice like that as very detrimental to the...to what would happen to the Jews, because the Germans would act much more severely than they had uptil now, than they were doing in that time. There would be razzias. And I...I didn't say to him that it wouldn't. But I said that it would be a sign for the Jews that everything is lost. And...and he thought that if he would say to the Jews....if he would keep the same normal, that the Jews would be willing to stay and that things would go on normally. So the...the...the....and I am telling it not only from my point of view, I am giving you also the arguments he had. And we both lost our temper. So I went back after four weeks, and I said to him: Let's try to talk about it again and not shout at each other. But in the second meeting I...I said - and I remember, uptil today the words I said to him - I said: you know, if you are going on, you will be a murderer of the Jews. And he said to me: if you advise the Jews to hide, and that's what you want me to do, you

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will take upon yourself the danger that Jews will be sent to Mauthausen. And Mauthausen was not only a concentration camp, it was in the Jewish community considered as the worst thing that should happen to anybody. And I said that ... that I would aware, but that there would be a fair chance for every Jew to stay alive or to be caught, and that no Jewish leader can be in a position that he will make the decision of who is going to live and who is going to die. Because life and death are the only absolute things in...in...in our human community. And I...I...I...must say that perhaps the worst thing was that he should do it, that he...that by helping the Germans - and I...I'm not saying that...they took a part in factual life in...in...in the deportation they did, but that's not the important part - they gave the Jews a feeling of security, which they should have done everything to destroy. They - and they could do it so easily - ....

Q: I don't understand. What do you mean? You say they succeeded....

A: They succeeded, they gave the Jews again a feeling of...of normalcy. It is true that even when they stayed ....The Jews never...almost

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never came. The percentages of the Jews who came when they were told to come to the Central Station were...were small and became in every deportation...in the beginning, when they started out, they called the Jews and said they should go to the Central Station. And first there came a somewhat higher percentage, and then it went down. Then the Germans changed the...

Q: The quotas not fulfilled?

A: never. Never. Never...it was never fulfilled, if...if the Jews had to come themselves. But when they...when they changed....

Q: Tres bien.

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A: So there was a willingness in the Jews not to go. I...I am not saying that...that the Jews were going willingly. They didn't.

Q: And they were not revolting too? They...

A: They were not revolting. Perhaps here I have to connect about something I said at the beginning that the Jewish community in...in Holland was not accustomed to...to antisemitism that was violent. I...I think no Jew in the world was accustomed to what the Germans did to them, but the...the Jewish community was a settled

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community. They were...they were never aware of ...of...of what could really happen to them, And even less violent form. But to go themselves, that was too much. So the Germans changed the system, and - in my opinion - the Jewish Council helped them in changing the system by giving lists to the...to the...to the Germans. And they went to the homes-at night there was a curfew from 8 o'clock in the morning...8 o'clock in the evening till 6 o'clock in the...in the morning.- and they got them from the homes. They...they ...they went there with lists which were typed in the... in the...with the help of the...of the...of the Jewish Council.

Q: You meant the Germans went to the...to he....

A: The Germans....And...And the Dutch...

Q: The Dutch police.

A: The Dutch police went. We should never...never forget that in 1942 and 1943 severe obedience in...in Holland was very...was very strong. And the Dutch population in...in its large majority was against the Germans, was against the persecution of the Jews, and didn't do anything against it. The...the...I would never say that...that the attitude of the Dutch population was a factor in which antisemitism had a big role, but if I would say that 5% of the Germans...of the...of

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the Dutch were in favour to actively help the Jews, I am giving a high percentage. And I would say that even 5% which would be against the Jews is a high percentage. More than 90% of the Dutch population wanted to be left alone with the problem. they were against it, they weren't willing to do anything about it. And that had its consequences in the...in the government of the...of the Dutch in those days, had it in the police, and had it in the difficulty which existed in 42, much more than in 43 and 44, in finding addresses for...for Jews to...to go into hiding. So the situation was a complicated one, but also here, the form of normalcy, the form of...that everything is going on as it...as it should, was a factor in ....in keeping things as they were. In Holland the Germans, in my opinion, as a result...also as a result of the actions of the Jewish Council succeeded more than in any other ...in any other country to...to deport the Jews quietly...

Q: Yes, but this, what you are saying now about the feeling of security and of normalcy. I think there is a good example, because is it true that the Jewish Council sent even delegate to the...to the Jews...Jewish delegates to the

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Jews in order to convince them one by one, by word of mouth, to...to go?

A: Well I....I really don't know how far they went with this. It is possible that some did it. Without any doubt there were Jews also in the...in the. ....bureaucracy of the...of the Council who didn't do this, who would say, if you would ask them,...in any case wouldn't say: go. I...I don't think that...that it's...that that's the truth of the matter. The official line...the official line was that you should act legally, to act legally was to stay in your home, that's what they wrote in the paper, that's what they let people understand. And they....And I'm not saying it about all of them. I know of people who worked in the...in the bureaucracy of the...of the Jewish Council, who actively helped people to try to get away. It is not true that this...black and white....

Q: I agree.

A: ....with the...with....the people who worked there. But officially the line was that Jews should act legally, without taking into account that the laws which were made, were made to deport them. And I am not saying to kill them. I know, we

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know. But if I am giving the credit...the benefit of the doubt, you say that they didn't know that they would straight kill them or kill them in this proportion. I don't want...I...I really have to stress that again and again....But they know that they wanted to deport them. And in that field, they...they official line which was in their publications and in....partly without doubt also in their general attitude, was that the Jews should behave...behave legally. And I think personally that that had an influence on the Jews and on the Dutch.

Q: This Jewish Council had a huge bureaucracy?

A: Yes, they had it. And they made it bigger and bigger, because that were people they...they could save. They had a system of...of giving people in their...in their identity cards a number which they were at the time being prevented to...to be caught and to be deported. And the whole bureaucracy of the Jewish Council was belonging to the people who wouldn't be deported. And perhaps that's....From an...from a moral point of view, that's the worst which ever happened. Now, they...they knew that it didn't give them an absolute security. There were people from the Jewish Council which were

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caught and sent...deported already in '42, And not only the little officials, even under the higher officials, people who were or members of the Jewish Council or...or had very high offices there were suddenly caught for reason which nobody knew exactly why, and were sent away and killed by the ....by the Germans. But the the...the whole atmosphere, the whole attitude, the whole system was to keep it quiet And to keep it quiet, and to keep it, as I say, as normal as possible,....

Q: yes....

A: ....in my opinion was determinental.

Q: What is worse and worse is that after a time they started to spread false informations about the conditions of living in the east. I mean they...they pictured very idyllic...they gave a very idyllic picture of the conditions. There was not...wa.....There was an internal information bulletin....

A: I...I agree with you. But everything has its own dynamich. Everything has its own dynamics. If you start that way, that's where you are going. You...you want the people to be quiet, so you don't tell them that they...that the situation is very bad. If you tell them that the situation is very bad....

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Q: It goes with your line of normalcy...

A: That is right. They did...they did.... And part perhaps some of them were convinced that it ~~was~~ couldn't be...I....Perhaps I should make some thing clear. The...the magnitude of the...of th ...of the action of the Germans was as large, was so unbelievable, that if I would make a personal statement today, almost 40 years after it happened, if today I...I understand less how it could happen than I understood it at the time that I was in...an common victim of their...of their actions. It is...if you think about it today in hindsight, it is unbelievable...unbelievable, that...that somebody could have taken a decision to...to kill systemati- cally 6 million people....If they would have succeeded, they would have killed 7 million people.

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A: So, within...within that framework of mind, as within their wish to keep everything as normal as possible, they did all...all the things whi today are almost impossible to...to understand when already ten thousands of Jews were deporte

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they made a lot of fuss of letters which came and which should show that the people were working there, that the situation wasn't so bad. They didn't ask under what conditions the people were forced to write those letters, they wouldn't... they wouldn't publish words which were added to the cards, which every normal man would understand, which was that no....

Q: We know today, we must say today that Jews from Holland were shipped to Auschwitz and to Sobibor, where they were immediately killed. But for some of them, before being killed, they had to fill postcards and give insurance....

A: I...I...you are...you are.... Okay. Now, the... the...I would say that the cards who came.... Well, we know today that part of the people were killed at once. And perhaps it is true that before they were killed, they were forced to send cards, but we know that part of the people were taken out of the...of the transport and were put to work and killed only afterward. And of course they had time to write a letter. But the number of letters which ever came, were...were very small and to make a lot of fuss of 20 letters or 90 letters which came from...from tens of thousands of people who were

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d deported is in itself an...a...something which shouldn't have been done, which...which should have been stressed that there are only so...so little, and not that there are at all. And the...the result of it was that - and that was in my opinion what they wanted to show - that it isn't so bad there. You had...you had a fair chance to...to survive. They would never say it is a...an easy life or it is a good thing to go there, but they would say;: you...you have a fair chance to...to stay alive. And...I can only....

Q: it was not only...There was not only the...the Jewish Weekly, but there was an internal information Bulletin...Bulletin...for the...

A: For the...for the people in the Jewish ....

Q: ...in the Jewish Council, which delivered the most fantastic stories, or about schooling in Poland and saying that the Warsaw Jewish Council - and we know what was the conditions in Warsaw in '42 - mass deportations to Treblinka - that the Warsaw Jewish Council was having some success with the laying out of playing fields in squares in the middle of the city....

A: I...I...I agree....

Q: There is even a picture of Monowitz which is a IG Farben slave camp annex of Auschwitz, a picture which is reading...I read: the food is

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good, with hot lunches, cheese and jam sandwiches in the evenings, We have central heating and sleep under two blankets. There are magnificent shower arrangements with hot and cold water. It ... They published this, your Jewish Council.

A: My Jewish Council published it...Today....

Q: And Theresienstadt.....

A: ....Unbeleivable. It is unbelievable...

Q: Theresienstadt was Acapulco.

A: It is unbelievable. I want to...I want to make something, which perhaps you wouldn't think ... as a statement from me. They made those statements partly because they wanted to believe it. Ah....So, when I am talking about...about those things and I am... I am not defending them. I am not defending them. But I...I...I am gains it in...in seeing them of things for which we know in hindsight that they were absolutely impossible that it...that it would happen, which youx But you should know that the French Jews - and I am not talking only about the Jewish Council - didn't know anything what happened in... in Poland. They didn't know. Yo ....I think that the leaders of the Jewish community....

Q: But they were not afraid of the East?

A: Well, of course they were afraid of the east.

They were afraid of the east because they didn't

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want to go there, they didn't want to leave Holland, they knew that in the east the situation was bad and difficult. But they didn't know exactly what happened there. I...I told you before - and I am saying it again - they didn't know about the gas chambers. They didn't know. They knew that the people would be under difficult situation. I...I....I...I...know that today it is unbelievable that there would be a man who would publish these things in an...an internal information.

Q: Theresienstadt. But they write in the international...internal...the Jewish Council; Theresienstadt is a friendly town with broad streets and lovely gardens and single story houses. The women and children seem to be very well looked after. Okay....

A: Okay. Okay. Okay. But ....but you have to see it in my opinion....

Q: No, no. But it's not an academic discussion.

A: No. I understand. I...No, I understand, I understand that publishing of those things. What I have against those publication - that they all serve the same purpose: to keep the Jews quiet, as quiet as possible. They couldn't keep them quiet. They...they were never...they....the people who remember the...the atmosphere and th

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mood in...of the Jews in 1942 and 1943 in...in Holland, will never say that they...that they lived a normal life or that they even were thinking that they were living a normal life. But they weren't aware of what...what was the real situation. And the Jewish Council helped with all those publications...

Q: This is perfectly right. But they did everything in order to see...in order to blind themselves.

A: They...they did everything...they did everything to blind the...the...the Jews, the general public, and to do that, they had to blind themselves. They...they...Of course there are things in which today we are sure that it is impossible that they themselves believed it. But the worst things which....perhaps you should give the benefit of the doubt, and I want with all the statements I have made about my uncle....He was an...an optimist in...in...an unbelievable optimist. I would say, his optimism and this...

Q: This...this is a Jewish trend.

A: This is a Jewish trend. With him it was absolutely...very very strong in all things, in everything in life. And also with this. And if he...he could find one reason to see some...some light in a very dark situation, he would...he would do it. And...and if a man is so

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conditioned, then to come afterwards to say; how could you publish it? When it is in favour of his general policy. Well, that's an...I would say only an...a detail. It is not...it is not one of the...of the...the most important things. This what happened when you go that way. I am coming back on it. The...you go from bad to worse. You...you start out by...by giving not all the information you got from the Germans. And so it started out. They...they came back from the meetings with the...the Germans, with Aus den Funten and Laages...Aus den Funten and Laages. And they...they would report the...the more pleasant things they said. And if they...you talked to them two hours, there must have been two sentences which is worthwhile. And they wouldn't tell them the...the...worst thing. And partly they would already have forgotten them by going from...from them to the Jewish Council, they would already have forgotten the. And then afterwards, you...you make it a little bit better, and....My criticism is on...on the light....Of course there are many details which...which...which are very ugly....

Q: Okay, I come back to this

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Q: I can... This internal information bulletin was very busy in December 42 with 60th birthday of Prof. Cohen, one of the Presidents of the Judenrat with Asscher. And Cohen was offered an artistically bound ...shut up. Cohen was offered an artistically bound first edition of the Handbook of the Jewish Council, prepared by the Internal Information Bureau, and testifying, I quote: "to the creative genius and great organisational talent of the man whose birthday we celebrate" Prof. Cohen was repeatedly compared to Moses in the speeches held at the celebration and the chief Rabbi Glasberg concluded his speech with a prayer that "Cohen, like Moses, would lead us past Sinai into the promised land." It's beautiful.

A: Well, I remember there was a lot of talk about the 60th birthday and generally the Jews were very angry at....

Q: Excuse me, I would like to...to...to add something. Prof. Cohen was presented with an armchair... armchair... presidential armchair, of course, and an album of photographs of...about the work of the Jewish Council. And one photograph exhibit no. 28 bore the legend: departure of

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one contengon, which shows a motor car parked with rucksacks and other luggage. And one can read the destination: on the luggage: Westerbork, who was a transit camp before Auschwitz.

A: Well, if they comment on it. It was very badly received. I... as I say, in...in the Jewish community, that the Jewish Council was making a kind of festival in the middle of the deportations. But that's not what is important in the whole thing. Important is, that the people who were working there, were convinced that they had a mission in their life, and that what they were doing was the right thing to do. And I would say that without that feeling, they would never have done the work. I think that they...that the the worst thing in the history of mankind has been done by people who believe they had a mission they knew everything and they were the people chosen by...by somebody or by...by some power above us to...to lead their...their people. And you can only see the...the...thing like that within that framework. The...the...In my opinion they were absolutely out of ...of touch with...with reality. They...they...they felt themselves they wanted to be the leaders of the Jews. They felt they were the leaders of the Jews. And the....they were convinced that their work was

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.....a...a work which was done in the...I would almost say, with the will of God. I...It is...unbelievable. It is unbelievable that...that if you today read this, it is unbelievable, But when you see it within the framework of what happened in 42, it gives the...a just picture of their position with regards to the ...the problems which existed, and their p...their place in it. I think that the Chairman of the Council and perhaps the Council as a whole, really saw themselves as...in a certain sense as saviors of...of whatever could be...could be saved. And if...if you ask me about ...an opinion about a thing like that, I can only say that it is within the framework of the ...of the whole...their whole attitude. They knew better, they...they...they were willing to...to send...to make a list of priorities of what Jews should be deported, and that the people working in the Jewish Council really had a kind of affection really for their leaders, that's not...not against it. It is...it is much worse in hindsight, that it was at that time. At that time it was within the framework of the whole attitude. And I...when I criticized them, when I criticize them today or when I criticize them at that time, it was against

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their attitude, against their...their opinion about what happened in the world. Their...their absolute perception of...of reality....the...the ...They were even...they were even from time to time...only from time to time, convinced that they...they would be able to...to...to direct the German policy. Today we know that it isn't true. Perhaps the worst thing was that they were ....that they felt that they were cleverer than the Germans. They were. And today we know that they were not....Today we know that what happened in Holland was a , which...which the Germans did in...in...in the whole world. If I would come to an conclusion from the thing which you read now, and which I knew also in that time, I didn't know that he got a chair, but that day...that he...that he had been kind of pleasant when Chhen....

Q: On behalf of the achievement..... (both speak together)

A: ...They saw they had achieved...Unbelievable that they had a picture of ...of a deportation there. I...I agree with you. The only thing which we...which we said already at that time, that there were two things which were...which was generally accepted and which were proved wrong, and it is: that the Jews were clever

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and that the Germans were courageous. Already at that time wa said: the Jews are not clever, and the Germans are not courageous. I...I don't want to talk about the Germans now. It has no sense. But that the Jews fell into the trap, the Germans put for them, I think there is no doubt. And I'm not saying that in hinsight. I am saying that as I was convinced in '42 and '43, and as I am convinced today, that in a certain sense, without wanting it, the Jews served the...very effidntly the...the plan of the...of the... of the Germans, and this is to deport as many Jews from Holland as possible, as quietly as possible. Because they knew that if it wouldn't be quietly, that also the results would be worse. And I am not saying, I am repeating it again, I am not saying that that's what they wanted, but that's what they did. I would say that...in...

Q: It's a very stupid people, as a matter of fact the Jews.

A: That's what I said. They...the...If I would th...the...One of the two chairmen I knew...I knew best, I would say that he was a brave man he was even, in priniciple, in normal times an honest man, but he was a stupid man. He didn't understand what happened. And rightly, I think

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in the books which have been written on it, the ...the people think that Cohen, the second one, was the...the...the man who was considered to be able to think better, and certainly he had the qualities of...of being able to think better. But they all of them had the illusion de grandeur, that they were the people who...who..who could do it, and without it, they would never have started it, and they would certainly never gone on. They had the absolute wrong feeling about the real connections between them and the Germans.

Q: They...they, both of them, Asscher and Cohen, survived the war.

A: Of course.

Q: Did you...did you see your uncle after the war? Asscher?

A: I...I...I met him once, and...I met him once when...when an aunt of mine was ill. And he came in. And we didn't talk.

Q: He wouldn't talk at all?

A: No. He didn't want, and I didn't want. I didn't make...I didn't make an effort. I don't know if he would have said hello to me, a....I would probably have said hello to him. But after... he once during the war, after those meetings, I met him once in the home of my mother, and

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we didn't talk, and he went away. And....

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A: You asked me about sterilization in...in Holland. We know today that only in Holland it was done. We didn't know that, didn't know that at that time. If you ask my personal opinion, I...I think it was perhaps the most degrading part of the...of the...of the whole...of the whole thing.

Q: It was...

A: It was the most degrading part, not the most...not the worst. It was an...they said it would be voluntary...

Q: No, but first of all it was meant for the Jews who were in mixed marriages.

A: It was...it was only for Jews in...in mixed marriages.

Q: ...who were protected from deportation because they were in mixed marriages.

A: Who were protected "bis auf Weiteres", till...till the time comes. And they never knew that they would be....they weren't taken up till then as a group, but there were already mixed marriages...Jews from mixed marriages, who were sent to...to Poland. But as a group, they were...they hadn't been...victims of deportations. But nobody promised them that they

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wouldn't be. So they said... voluntary they could be enticed, to be... taken out of the... of the general Jewish community, if they would be willing to... to be sterilized and to... to make sure that they wouldn't be able to produce other Jews.

Q: Exact.

A: And that's what I meant when I said it was the most degrading part, because then... you would have to acknowledge that you are not fit to bring children on earth, and that with... with you the... the Jewish side of the... of the population wouldn't continue to... to exist. Now they called it voluntary, and they said: if you don't do it voluntarily, then we will deport you. So, when you say they were not deported, they were not deported up till then, but they were... they were told that if they wouldn't do it, they would... (both speak together...)

Q: .....between to be sterilized or to be deported.

A: ...to be deported. So to say, the voluntary is quite... quite an.... a question. But till then, when they... took Jews, they had already in the power.... in Westerbork, when they made... told those Jews that they would be sterilized and go back to their homes or not, only half of them agreed to... to be sterilized. And I don't want

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to...to say anything about it today. I...I...I have the feeling that only a man who has been in that position, being told that or you will be deported or you will be sterilized, I don't know how anybody of us would have taken that decision. I have never been in a situation like that, and I don't want forty years later to say anything about it. Nothing, nothing. But...When you mention the fact, I...I would say it is almost no...no...almost understandable that they only tried it in Holland. Because the...the...it was a kind of...laboratory of how you can act with Jews without...without anything happening. and I...I must say that at the time, we thought it terrible and I knew...I knew a Jew who I liked very much, who...who told me that he had been sterilized and would...would be going without...without the yellow star from now on. And I never asked him how he felt about it. It is...It is perhaps more unbelievable than anything else what happened. But the worst thing is, they said they wanted to have it done by Jewish doctors and by Dutch doctors and the Germans shouldn't...shouldn't do it at all, which is...unbelievable in another sense. I...I would say that from an...from a personal point it was perhaps the...it happened late in the...in the...in the time that Jews

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were still there. And I would say it was reall  
the last thing snybody could think about. I..  
I must say .....

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