

Transcript of the *Shoah* Interview with Hans Prause
Translation by Uta Allers - Volunteer – Visitor Services – March-April 2011

Germany Filming
German Cassette 6 / Side A

Bob. 67 - Interview with Mr. Prause

Prause 1

L Mr. Prause, you said that in '33 you went to the Federal Railway... for training...

Prause 2

L Mr. Prause, in 1933 you became a member of the Federal Railway.

P At the end of '32, I took my State Exam at the Technical University in Berlin.

L You are an engineer?

P An engineer!

L Engineer.

P and then in January... no... then in '33, middle of '33, I went for the training with the Railway.

L Yes.

P Then I spent three years as a Government Construction Site Manager, later the "Reichs" Railroad Construction Site Manager... eh, and then I took a second State Exam in 1937, and then in January 1938, I was hired permanently by the Railway as a Reich Railroad Construction Site Foreman, back then...

L&P Reich Railroad Construction Site Foreman

P ... and that was in Hamburg. I had done the training in Berlin – now I was in Hamburg; was then in Hamburg; then at the beginning of the war, I was on the Business Management Board in Lüneburg... from there, I went to the East...

L Yes

P Poland had been conquered, and we were needed to expand the railway system.

L Yes

- P The structure of the German Reich Railway here domestically consisted of – was similar to the Federal Railway – consisted of the Reich Railway Management, at the top of which was a president... and... eh, this structure was pretty much taken over for the Eastern Railway; the Eastern Railway which... which continually grew toward the East, depending on how the war was going; and it... eh, the Eastern Railway... had administrative offices in Poland...
- L Yes
- P ... and under this management were departments, which were also (*run by*) Germans – the Director was a German there... and one or two other Germans; the rest were Poles, and the entire operation was essentially run by the Polish train personnel...
- L Yes
- P ... so, the top positions were held by Germans... but, for instance, we took over Station Masters and such, not as Station Masters, but later to work. The relations were very collegial.
- L Yes, was it that way everywhere?
- P ... everywhere... the, the train people are a group unto themselves, yes, I think in every country...
- L yes, it's that way everywhere...
- P ... and it was so friendly there, I have to say, that... the war couldn't have been waged without the Polish train people.
- L ... yes, without the Polish train people...
- P ... it wouldn't have worked... and the Polish train driver stayed in the train – and if it couldn't continue for some reason – because of partisan actions or... or simply because there were some problems in the East – later in Russia – then he just stood there... with his engine... eh, 8 or 10 hours... slept standing or sitting... when it was possible to continue, he drove on. You couldn't have done that with a German train driver or conductor.
- L Yes
- P ... yes and for that reason...
- L ... why, why?

P Yes, because, because we're not used to that kind of thing; the Poles were used to it – they had two men responsible for heating the engine – 2 Polish heating men and a Polish train driver...

L ... train driver?

P ... train driver!

L The train driver was always a Pole?

P ...for the most part, yes, except for a very few trains when the Führer was riding around the area, or other high-ranking people – then there was a German train driver.

L ... yes

P ... and then, then... the engine led the way...eh, but otherwise... everywhere the Station Masters, they were all Poles, except for the transfer stations.

L yes

P ... and we worked very well together...

L There was a good collaboration between...

P ... yes, it was an exceptionally good work (*climate*); the Polish train drivers, if it's permissible to say so, was closer to the German train driver... than the German civil servant, who was sent out there.

L ... ah, yes

P The collaboration was much closer; I've already stated at the trial, when they (*the Poles*) had nothing to eat, we went to them and we cleared all the unused areas that are on the railway yards for small garden colonies, and we supplied our train drivers with potatoes... of course, in violation of the rules.

L ... yes

P ... because that was not allowed.

L ... but the...

P ... they shouldn't be starving; I can't expect a person who's starving to be a conscientious worker.

L Yes, I understand. Yes, but the railway system in Poland was very well developed, wasn't it?

P It was... yes, but very different from ours; and then we did something that was perhaps not right.

L Why?

P ... but it worked. We transferred our standards there... with the few transfer stations which the Poles had... crossing signals which they didn't know... eh, we brought them in so it would go faster – and introduced German signals which were unfamiliar to them...

L ... signals...

P ... which were inconvenient and expensive, but which somehow paid for themselves.

L ... hm, hm

P ... since the railway lines behind those (*going east*) were critical for us; they had 2000 kilometers of tracks to the East, in the direction of Stalingrad, I'd say – yes, Rostorf to be exact... we had 2000 km of tracks – 2000 km with few tracks for passing ... and that was difficult, of course, when they were in active use. Then there were breaks here and there, and that's where the General Government was the buffer.

L ... yes...

P Sometimes just outside of Brestlitovsk, we had 30 or 40 trains standing there that couldn't continue.

L But you yourself, did you get to Russia?

P Only to... I person... personally I got only to Brest-Litovsk; that was the beginning of Russia for us.

L No further?

P No, not me. I was only in Poland, and only from March 1, 1941 to the beginning of July 1943.

L ... so late.

P ... yes...

L ... not before...

P Not before!

L Before that, you were in Germany?

P ... I was in Germany, in Lüneburg.

L ... and in May 1941 – where were you?

P ... that's when I went to Warsaw...

L ... yes...

P ... to a specific "Bauprogramm".

L ... Bauprogramm – that's construction?

P No, no... a Bauprogramm... for the... for the military build-up against Russia, the railways had to be repaired; we needed engine transformer stations and such; and for instance, we... in Sochathev, I...

L ... yes...

P Sochatchev... eh... I had to build an engine transformer station... on an open field

L ... meaning, it was in preparation for Barbarossa?

P The expression “Barbarossa”, I didn’t know it... I only heard of it afterwards.

L ... yes...

P So, the military build-up again... against Russia had to be made at the proper time...eh, the plan... eh, and the plan to manage that and... eh, we built, for instance the little train station Sochatchev, which would be an engine changing train station in Poland...

L ... an engine changing train station...

P ... now it wasn’t possible to build a turn-around and such, so a triangle was built on an open field. So the engine drove into the triangle, turned at one corner – yes – and came back to us turned around; the engines coming to us came from Kutov, as far as I know – or from Posen and... eh, was changed in Sochatchev – and then drove past Warsaw toward the East.

L ... where is Sochatchev?

P ... Sochatchev...

L ... is it between Kutnov and Warsaw?

P No, that’s not where it is – it’s on the stretch to... eh... to Radom-Deblin, as far as I know...

L ... Radom-Deblin...

P ... Deblin... spelled Deblin... yes...

L ...yes...

P ... in that area, and then it continued to Lukov... eh... Terispulva, our last station across from Brestlitovsk...

L ... yes, yes, but during this period of the fall 41, while you were doing this work, did you have an inkling of the objectives, what purpose...

P ... well, that’s a – that’s a – we weren’t told in detail; but purpose... we didn’t know when it was supposed to start or what was in store; we thought it was a security measure for... eh... certain situations, just in case...

L ... just in case...

- P ... that it suddenly got serious, I learned that only much later. Suddenly I got an assignment... to get to the border and to the Polish railway telegraphers at the border railway stations...
- L ... "Grenzbahnhöfe" [border railway stations] what is that?
- P ... the... the stations... that is, Poland was... there was a border in Poland between Russia, the Russian-occupied Poland...
- L ... yes, yes, of course...
- P ... and the German-occupied Poland.
- L ... yes...
- P The Russians, after all, had occupied half of Poland during the war. This agreement, which at that time... I don't know politically who came up with it... that... eh...

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Prause 3

- P So I was... when was that... I can still have that precisely in my head. The war with Russia started on the 23rd of June, I think...
- L ... 22nd
- P 22nd of June, so seven days before that I got a special assignment... was sent to the so-called border railway stations... that is, not every crossing from the previous Polish railway was a border station – just a few stations across which supplies were exchanged; we had an exchange of goods with the Russians... during the time when we... each occupied half of Poland... The Russians delivered wood to the Germans and we... all manner of things the Russians wanted. A little... there were no regular trains... a little...eh... freight train...
- L Freight trains!
- P ... small freight trains... went from us over to the Russians and from the Russians to us; and on the Morse code equipment with which the arrival of the trains was announced and approved, that's where the Poles sat on our side.
- L ... yes...
- P ... and... eh... I suddenly got the assignment

- P ... to go to the stations one after another and wherever possible to staff them with German telegraphers, because the higher-ups were afraid, that the Poles would tell that there's something happening on our side... and when I got this assignment, I learned that the war with the Russians was to start in 8 days... of course, I wasn't allowed to tell that to a single colleague – that was a top secret matter. I was...
- L ... you found out – 8 days before...
- P ... I knew about it 8 days before and was now supposed to switch out the Polish telegraphers with German soldiers – since we didn't have any; and discovered right at the first station, that it's probably nonsense... even the exchange of telegraphers... and the soldiers didn't know the railway Morse code... that is... yes, a soldier is used to hearing the code, the railway person reads it, so it can be proven that the train was announced and approved... so that is the difference – and – I quickly noticed that that's wrong. But I couldn't convince (*anyone*) with these... my suggestions... and so I (*switched out*) all the stations between... Maukinia... written Malkinia with a slash (*through the Polish letter l*)...
- L ... yes, I know about that...
- P ... Maukinia and... SCHELZE... no, not Schelze... eh... Terespol... the stations between them... had to go to them one after the other and replace... and I knew when it would start... and was there for the first shot... in Maukinia... at the big triangle track... I was there and saw the German artillery standing there... and understood then...
- L ... was the border in Malkinia?
- P ... Malkin... between Malk... Malkinia and Bladistock there was a border – that was my most northerly...
- L ... how far from Malkinia?
- P ... eh, between both... I don't know how many kilometers...
- L ... not far?
- P ... not very far... and standing there was field artillery and was shooting... when I got there... that was my last stop...

L ... yes, but Malkinia is and was a big...

P ... from there, it goes up to Ostrolenka and down... eh... south to... not Brestlitovak...

L ... Celce...

P ... no, not Celce... a small station before that... can't think of the name now... and ... so I went up the whole line... was greeted along the way by a few Russian soldiers... who... who... none of them knew anything, you know... I greeted them along the way... we chatted... in broken (*Russian and German*)... something pleasant... after all, I had no reason... and eh, I... got to Maukinia – saw that – and in Maukinia I got a field telephone from the Wehrmacht ... and called my colleagues in Warsaw... my... we had shared housing...

L ... yes...

P ... I called them and said, “do you hear anything”...a.d.a.d... “The line has static”, they said... “there constant noise”... I said, “there are 21 field howitzers shooting”... “at whom?”... “at the Russians”... so you can see how well the secret had been kept...

L ... yes...

P We stayed there and saw many German troops arriving from France...

L ... you saw that?

P Yes, before ... we all went through that and said, “Aha, now they should have a ... quiet time for a change... and other troops will go to France”... that was the thinking... and for us it was so good – they brought massive amounts of... of champagne and other things...

L ... from France?

P ... what they couldn't take with them and sold it there...

L ... yes...

P ... and that, that was to our benefit – suddenly the Poles were drinking champagne...

L ... drinking champagne...

P ... which wasn't bad...

L ... suddenly...

P ... yes, so my colleagues were surprised... and ... I was there at the start at a particular spot in Maukinia and saw this field artillery – saw railway artillery shooting – great to see – didn't do much damage – because the Russians... were spread out – they didn't consider the border as serious duty – there wasn't much going on; and then I saw two Russian soldiers sitting on the station curb as prisoners...

L ... the first POWs?

P ... the first that I saw... they had surrendered – they had been going about their business without weapons – had been taken by surprise...

L Was it a big surprise?

P It was a surprise attack... and surprising for us employees too...

L ... yes...

P That was the beginning of the Russian campaign... but how did I get to that... I don't know now... the border...

L ... no, no... that's the...

P ... ah yes... it was the East Railway Administration. The East Railway was...

L Excuse me, you were in Warsaw?

P Yes

L I read that you were with the Railway Maintenance Department...

P Yes... just a minute... we have to go back to that – that's not correct... I came for the so-called Otto Program... the preparation of the railway for the military build-up... that's why I came... that lasted...

L Otto Program?

P ... that's what it was called... but I wasn't there very long... and then I was railway maintenance personnel... first in Radom...

L Radom... yes...

P Radom was in the East Administration, and from Radom I went to – when the war started – to Lemberg.

L ... in Worf

P ... in Worf... by far the most beautiful... the most beautiful garrison in which I ever was. Lemberg was a wonderful district.

L Why?

P The countryside...

L The countryside?

P Because of the countryside, a beautiful district... and the people too, they were somehow... hm... for us, more familiar... they had all (*been part of*) the Austrian-Hungary... the older ones had been part of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarch... Monarchy... and their whole way of thinking and such was somehow more familiar.

L You mean the Poles?

P The Poles!

L ... yes...

P ... and the relations were very good... I must say; to that I have to add... I don't even know if one should say that here... the relations between Poles and Jews... were much more adversarial than the relations between Germans and Jews.

L Yes, much more so?

P They... much more... I've told of some incidents – I think during my hearing... eh... the individual Pole had an adversarial attitude by nature – for the Jews were in every village – in contrast to the Jews in Germany, were tradespeople – and the whole village was more or less dependent on these Jews. By and by, they got possession of all the small farms. They had debts – they got no aid whatsoever – and they... the Poles in debt to the Jews, of course, were absolutely fuming at the Jews. While the German soldier was never an enemy of Jews.

L Yes

P I saw incidents in Celce and reported on them, which show... eh... it was a very different relationship. Among us, the avowed Nazi Party members were enemies of the Jews. But soldiers were not enemies of Jews, and... and the railway personnel even less so. Now we made – since that was the question – one thing very clear; we sent every railway employee home, in which case he then, as a rule, had to become a soldier; if he started to take things from people... that is, to conduct himself improperly. He could have the best job, he would be sent home immediately... unfit for East Duty... generally, he then became a soldier.

- P With that we managed to maintain a relatively decent relationship between Poles and us... and that went so far, that... after the war... by which time I had changed residences several times... a Polish woman sent me a so-called “Persilschein” (*Persil* is a German detergent, thus a *Persil* letter is an attest that the recipient did not participate in crimes during the war), which I gave to the denazification proceedings, unfortunately... and never got back... of course, they (*the Persil letters*) were destroyed back then. She sent me... how anyone found me, I don’t know – I’d moved at least 3 or 4 times... here in Germany... sent me a letter to the effect that the relations were exemplary and that we conducted ourselves there, treated them like Germans. And that was...
- L I don’t understand... there was a legal procedure?
- P Yes, every man who was in the Party... every one in the...
- L You were in the Party?
- P I was in the Party... and what our own youth nowadays forgets... whoever wanted a graduation diploma, be it for certification or an academic exam – or wanted to work for an governmental agency, in some way, had to be in the Party.

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Prause 4

- L Mr. Prause, when did you (*join*) the Party, when did you (*become*) a member of the Party...
- P ... I can’t tell you exactly... I was actually never officially a member, but I was a candidate... I was in an NSKK...
- L NSKK...
- P ... in the NSKK...
- L ... meaning, National Socialist...
- P ... Truckdriver Corps
- L ... yes...
- P ... had to join because I had to be in something to be able to finish my education, to take my diploma exam... and after a while, they... transferred me... I learned of it only half a year later... to the Party... but I always remained only a candidate...

P ... and they never gave me the Party manual... of course, they never caught up with me because I was constantly being transferred...

L Why, why?

P Railway administrators were always transferred a lot and if they, like me, were bachelors, even more so. If it was a matter of moving one of two, then the bachelors were always first because it was too expensive with the others – there's a whole family to consider, and with this standard moving cost issue was responsible for my always being on the move.

L ... yes... but you said, for younger people there was no other choice but to (*join*) the...

P ... whoever wanted to take exams... at that time... he had to be in (*the Party*) in some way.

L Why? There was no chance...?

P Eh... he wouldn't get permission... no admission to the diploma exam... a friend of mine, who refused to join in any way – a philologist – he never took a graduation exam...

L ... yes...

P ... but after the war, he became... because of his good grades...eh... he was suddenly a head teacher in a high school... without ever having taken a graduation exam in philology – back then, he wasn't admitted...

L ... yes...

P ... although we had a classmate, who...eh... was a medical director of the highest standing with Goebbels and... eh... who was an idealist and tried everything to get him in... or... later, the editor of the Tagesspiegel of Berlin... Karsch...

L ... yes...

P ... who was a Communist of high rank... at least he prevented him (*Karsch*) from being fished out and being sent to a concentration camp. He did a lot... but that he couldn't do – to get someone in without an exam... and from that, you can see how hard it was... whoever didn't want to forego the exam... had no other choice...

L ... yes...

P ... and then you went in... and I have to say... this NSKK... eh... this club... certainly the one in Hamburg... was great. There was such good solidarity... except that... it had little to do with the Party...

L ... but that means you were never a real member of the Party?

P Yes, I was – I want to say... it was just the coincidence that I didn't get the Party manual because I wasn't around.

L Yes

P Many of the Party people became members partly out of idealism but partly... the majority... or the larger part only because they had to.

L Yes, but did you personally have a Nazi – a National Socialist ideological conviction?

P Not by any stretch of the imagination and not for most Germans. My father was a... we said a classical "Hitlerfresser" (*someone who'd like to eat Hitler for lunch*).

L Hitlerfresser?

P Yes and his biggest...

L ... meaning that he was against Hitler?

P Yes... his biggest... his biggest heartache was... that I... since I'd waited so long to take the exam...now actually had to join somewhere...and that wasn't so bad for us railway employees; my brother was able to get by with the NSV, but he was in the private sector... NSV was this welfare social agency... and he was in the private sector... there it was okay...he hung a picture of Hitler in his office and said, "that's... with that I've bought my freedom... that's it for me."

L Yes

P ... he could afford to do that... I... I, as a public servant couldn't do that... so I was in... and I must say that the collegiality in the NSKK in Hamburg was excellent. The guys were all decent people...

L ... in Hamburg?

P ... fruit wholesalers and what all... and we did very well... and even in Berlin... it was actually... in the NSKK... we railway employees rarely went, we always had excuses... work... we had to work for a living too and... we wrote letters of excuses for each other that we couldn't come... but in Berlin it came about... I was a student then... this famous... the famous... the 20th of June or such... where so many Nazi leaders were killed...

L ... yes, yes, Röhm...

P ... the Röhm Affair...

L ... yes, Röhm...

P ... and we were... all the people who were involved in such things... SA, SS of course, and NKSS... all had been called up for duty that evening. We were there... the Storm was... pretty decent people... the Storm leader and the leadership itself came from the former bodyguard unit of Adolf Hitler, which was dissolved because of the SS.

L Yes

P ... they had... they didn't like the SS... and now we were in this... on this evening, had to stay... and then the Storm leader suddenly said... "there's nothing going on... that's my excuse... you go home, and make it snappy and don't go out in uniform... that could get you into a heap of trouble... today something is... going on, a terrible outrage..." he said...

L ... with the SA...

P ... said the SA... the Storm leader to us ordinary folk.

L ... yes, but you were SA yourself...

P ... no, NSKK

L NSKK

P The man was a former member of the SA bodyguard unit for Adolf Hitler in Munich, but that no longer existed.

L ... no, you yourself were in the...

P ... no, I was in the NSKK

L ... yes, NSKK

P ... and...

L ... but was there a connection with the SA?

P ... that was a form of... I would say... there was a cavalry... there was a cavalry unit, there was a motor unit, that's who we were and there was the SA.

L Yes, yes

P ... eh... every group thought it was the best – the most distinguished was probably the cavalry unit... riding out on Saturday, Sunday... they didn't do much... and we actually didn't do anything either... every now and then we went on an excursion... but... I usually wasn't with them... and whoever could get out of it, did... but the Storm leader was level-headed... the Storm leader sent his people home, so they...

L ... yes, he was level-headed...

P ... so they could get away from the whole outrageous mess; and my Storm leader in Hamburg, he even... since I wasn't on duty, he let me know in the residence... "tomorrow is Kristallnacht"... it had a different name back then... "don't go into town, and especially not in uniform..."

L ... yes, but Kristallnacht is something different, isn't it?

P Excuse me?

L Kristallnacht

P ... that was the...the... that's when the windows of the Jews were smashed...

L Yes

P ... in Hamburg...

L ... that was in 38

P ... something like that... that is... I was in Hamburg then.

L Yes

P ... and... and that's when the Storm leader said, "get out of the streets... make yourselves scarce or you will be accused too"... one could... that's what happened... and that's what is so unacknowledged these days, that there were a lot of people with a conscience in this club, who were decent through and through.

L Yes and what did you, for instance, think of this Kristallnacht?

P It was an unspeakable outrage

L ... outrage?

P ... an unspeakable outrage

L Yes

P That... a good friend of mine, who lives in Hamburg, banged his fist on the table and said... “if one could get out of the Party now...”

L Yes

P ... but that wasn't possible...

L ... yes...

P ... you couldn't risk it...

L ... that was impossible?

P ... yes, that was really dangerous – that was the mark of death... professionally and otherwise.

L Yes, but why were you chosen for this secret...

P ... that... that had to do with the fact that these border stations were in my district. I was the administrator responsible for the eastern part of the General Gouvern... the... the Warsaw Administration...

L Yes, but you took an oath that you...

P ... I was obligated not to tell anyone anything – and I kept my word. I didn't tell anyone anything... the most stupid questions came from the gunners...eh... that is, the telegraphers... who wanted to know why they had to do this and with them I had to practice so that they could type the Morse code on tape... not by ear...

L Yes

P ... I practiced with them and then I went on to the next...that was the part I was responsible for... the eastern part... that is, east of Warsaw... I was the administrator responsible for the Warsaw district.

L When were you in Radom?

P ... in Radom I must have been... the fall of 41....

L ... the fall of 41

P ... fall... maybe a bit sooner... I don't know that anymore...

- L ... but when did you come to Poland?
- P On March 1st, 41 I came for the Otto Program to Warsaw, that's when I became the administrator... well, that could have been earlier, maybe in August... eh... 41... in Radom... and then after the war started... in November, December... administrator in Lemberg...
- L ... and how long did you stay in Lemberg?
- P ... in Lemberg I was... my God, when did I come back... I don't know anymore... then I was in Warsaw again... again as administrator...

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Prause 5

- L When were you in Worf – during this time in Lemberg? Was there a ghetto there already in Worf?
- P ... in... no, that was the strange thing for me... in Warsaw there was a ghetto...
- L ... yes...
- P ... but not in Lemberg... in Lemberg the Jews were walking around the streets freely with an armband...
- L ... yes...
- P ... and now I'll tell you something funny...
- L ... but there was a camp in Worf "Janovska"...
- P ... that was... that must have been much later... as long as I was in Lemberg, there wasn't a... eh... ghetto... the Jews walked about on the streets... and that worked... I...
- L ... with an armband?
- P ... with an armband... something strange happened there... when I was back in Warsaw, I had a visit from Lembergers, Polish railway employees, who had been ordered from Lemberg to take some courses in Warsaw... and they visited me in Warsaw... and eh... I asked them... they'd been there 3 days already... what they liked best there... they said that there are no Jews in the streets... said the Poles from Lemberg to me in Warsaw... in Warsaw, there was a ghetto...
- L ... the Poles said that?

P ... the Poles told me that the best thing about Warsaw is that you don't see any Jews in the streets...

L Polish railway employees?

P Railway employees, male and female...

L ... women...

P Women, yes... they said, that the Jew for the Pole is... I only learned that there... is really a being that he detests... for the average German that was never... on the contrary... and that's the odd thing that the world actually doesn't acknowledge to this day nor want to acknowledge at all, but that's how it is. It was a surprise for me.

L It was a surprise?

P ... for me, a surprise... that they really had this rage... which was expected of us and which no one had.

L Meaning that, according to you, that the Poles agreed with the destruction of the Jews...

P ... yes, young Poles said... "you're making just one mistake; that you don't kill all of them" said the young Poles.

L When?

P During the war, not afterwards... during the war.

L That's the only cases?

P Excuse me?

L That is the only cases?

P Eh... what do you mean?

L That is the cases that they all Jews...

P Yes... yes, they had the attitude that all of them should be done away with... from a German, you would have heard that from a Nazi... not from a normal German... and that's something that, I think... yes, that wasn't... among us, you couldn't even utter it here... these, these facts; and nowadays, I think, you can't say that to any of the Poles... they wouldn't want to believe it; but back then, back then, it was par for the course – one shouldn't deny that – and eh... whereas it shouldn't be excused in any way... because crime is still crime; there's no changing that, but not to go along is not so easy; so I thought about a lowly soldier who refused to take part in a firing squad; during the war, that would have meant he would be shot... who would do that...?

P ... that it's not so... not so easy... but that... we can leave that out; let's stay with the Poles...

L ... no, no... that's very interesting, we can talk about that...

P But there... a lot is written in the report (*points to it*)... you're familiar with it...

L ... no, no... a report is a report and it's very short – that's very difficult... you said in your district – in your area, there were two extermination camps.

P One in... hm.. near Maukinia, there was one... what was the name of that thing...

L Treblinka

P Treblinka... quite right... Treblinka was two stations from Maukinia on the former border...

L ... that's 9 kilometers from Maukinia...

P ... yes, yes... it was the second station... I was never there... eh... after I knew what that was all about...and eh... then in Lublin there was a camp, Sobibor, I think, but I didn't know it personally...

L ... near Worf there was Belzec...

P Belzec, I know it only by name... I didn't know it... during my time, I think there wasn't anything there... I know this...

L Belzec started to... I think, in March 42...

P March 42... not later... as far as I know, I came back to Warsaw in the summer of 42... but then I didn't (*know*) about Belzec...

L Belzec was already...

P ... I knew it only by name but I could... I don't even know where it is...

L It's not far from Worf...

P ... in which direction...

L ... north...

P ... that would be on the...

L ... that's between Lublin and Worf...

- P Ah yes... we had... Belzec was Lublin for us... Railway District Lublin was Belzec, right... but
- L ... yes, but when exactly did you know what was with the... about the destruction of the Jews?
- P I learned about that... eh... in Maukinia... in the East Railway cafeteria... but by that time, I'd been in the area for quite a while... I was told there and then came a few compelling stories... eh... the Jews... were brought together in camps and were to be driven away... and there were a few decent people like, for example, the cafeteria proprietor in Celce... he was in the East Railway cafeteria in Celce... who fed his pigs and such... he asked to be given 200-300 Jews... so they could work the land... with this cafeteria came a few hundred acres of land on which grain was to be planted, and he took them and housed and fed them... and then when it was clear that they too would be transported and that the time was coming... he gave each one a loaf of bread and other items, and one night... he sent them into the woods...
- L ... into the...?
- P into the woods! There are a lot of woods around Lukov... and that's where he sent them, into the woods... and that became an embarrassing situation later... because... now they were looking for the guilty one... how did the Jews know, etc.... I had to give my opinion on that too and told the brothers... if oranges were to be given to German soldiers in Warsaw... which was a rare thing... and for German civil servants... they were already available in the Warsaw ghetto 3 days before that... for a lot of money... before we... we... ever... got to see them... they were already in the ghetto... and were haggled over, in the ghetto everything was haggled over... and the Jews were not supposed to... get information about when they were to be done in and all take off? That counted later, but before that, there were some very embarrassing inquiries, above all against this cafeteria proprietor... who as a civil servant was a switchyard master... I think, in the station entrance here... and who organized all that (*with the Jews*).

L ... yes...

P Excuse me?

L ... yes, yes, I'm saying yes... but that means you knew?

P Yes, we... we got the news through the... railway police... that it's time now and it would be happening... and because of that, we got 300 Jews out of the ghetto to work in Lobitsch... we had a barracks camp there... and that's where we wanted to bring the Jews...

L Yes, but the so-called resettlement of...

P ... that... that had to do with the trains from the Reich and Holland, etc.... they arrived...

L ... no, I mean for Warsaw Jews, the so-called resettlement started on July 22nd. The Jews...

P Yes, yes, the ghetto burned and what all else...

L ... left for Treblinka...

P ... yes, that's what happened...

L ... gassed...

P ... yes...

L ... and there was a big...

P ... that was fairly late, by that time we knew... we knew something by that time, what was going on...

L You knew before...?

P I knew before the ghetto was emptied, I knew... because the Treblinka was older, there were already... people from Holland had been brought there and what all...

L ... no, no... in Treblinka there was a work camp for Poles in Treblinka...

P Originally, yes...

L yes, originally...

P ... yes...

L ... yes, and Treblinka is totally an extermination camp for Jews...

P ... became that later...

L ... in July – the first transport came from Warsaw to Treblinka on July 22nd...

P ... which year?

L 42

P 42

- L You were already in Warsaw in July 42...
- P ... it's possible that I was back by then, I don't know the date when I went from Lemberg to Warsaw... it doesn't come to mind... I only experienced the... the ghetto war, I experienced that... that must have been the beginning of 43, I'd guess...
- L ... the ghetto war, what do you mean?
- P ... that... that's when the ghetto burned...
- L ... yes, you remember that...
- P ... I remember it...

Bob. 71

Prause 6

- L Tell that fantastical story again...
- P First, where did we stop? Oh, you don't care...
- L ... tell me again...
- P ... yes... you had asked... eh... how it happened...
- L ... you had said, it's very hard to imagine...
- P ... yes... that... that the people back home didn't know...
- L ... yes...
- P ... there is... it's remarkable... I never told my mother; she never found out... and I think, my father would have put a bullet through his head if he's heard about it...
- L ... ah yes...
- P ... he would have never believed it... just like this Doctor Hussbeck said, you know, "no German would do such a thing"...
- L ... tell...
- P ... no, I learned about it through my job... with the camps... and when I was home on leave the first time after that... maybe the end of 42... I went

P ... I went back to Hamburg, as usual... where I had last worked... and I... in Hamburg I visited my president, whom I told nothing about it, of course... although... he had received a Nazi golden merit award for his service to Germany, but... he was the biggest critic imaginable of the Nazis and they couldn't touch him because of his high honors...

L Mr. Hussbeck?

P No, no...my president... Rude was from Hamburg... they couldn't touch him and he, in my presence... gave the, eh... Gauleiter a piece of his mind... then I went to lunch in the cafeteria of the railway administrative offices... and... there I happened to sit with three older colleagues... and one of them asked if it's true that the... Jews were being killed in Poland... I must have shown that the question was awkward for me, so the other one said... "let's go to my office"... yes...

L ... it was dangerous out in public?

P ... they noticed that I didn't want (*to talk*) and then... let's go to my office and smoke a cigar; that's what we did... went... into the room of the finance director... and that's where I... after a few cautious attempts... told what I knew... it was probably a fraction of what... one could have said... but... at the time, I did my best...

L What exactly did you say?

P Well, I told them that... that in my district there is an extermination camp...

L Treblinka...

P Treblinka... and that, eh, trains were going there from both sides, the South and the West... and that it is said, that Jews are being killed there... that must be true, for there is no camp big enough to accommodate all the trains arriving there... and told... eh... some minor details... and then one of them said... "how are they being killed... you'd have to hear shots"... I said, "no... from what I've heard, with prussic acid"...

L ... with prussic...

P Prussic acid... that is, chemicals...

L Prussic acid... that's zyklon...

P ...yes...

L It wasn't zyklon in Treblinka...

P ... and... you say in Treblinka... I don't know...

L ... Treblinka... carbon monoxide...

P ... yes, I don't know... I can't say... I didn't know... and then I... when I had told them all the details, this Dr. Hussbeck jumped up and said... pulled me up and shook me and said... "Say that those are lies... that's not true... no German man can do that... no German can do that"... that's what he said... and when I confirmed that it was happening and said, "I swear on my soul... unfortunately, it's true"... he went to the window and wept... a big, strong man... and then he said, turned around and said, "So then our so-called Führer is a criminal... my God..." or something like that... So that was the story... that was the story of what happened there, and then it was clear to me for the first time that one shouldn't talk about this even to one's best friends, and that's probably how most of the people who knew thought... but if you really want to know about the situation of the Jews, I'll describe for you another little scene, which I also gave as testimony... On a business trip, I came through the station at Celce... the Station Master comes at me all excited... and says... there are 2... later it was 3 officers to the head of the extra trains for the troops... they had stopped in Celce... that's where people... the train engine was changed and people got a meal... all the trains...

L You were at the Celce Station?

P No, I was on a business trip in Celce... I was working in Warsaw... and Celce was in my...

L ... district...

P ... district, yes...

L ...yes...

P ... and there... he brought over the 2, later it was 3 officers... and they were to tell me what they wanted... they stated..."if... the drama with the Jews over there doesn't stop... then our people demand to leave immediately without lunch..."

L ... what was the drama?

P On the Celce Station, the Jews were being transported... those who still had been able to work there... and all of them were waiting in the stifling heat on the big troop loading ramp for their train, which hadn't arrived...

L ... that was in August, I think...

P I can't say... I don't have it in my head... and it was very hot... and... they had to sit or kneel... that was unbearable... older, older people can't do that and they stood up now and then... to stretch...

L ... on the ramp?

P ... on the ramp... and standing on the side were Latvians... compared to them, the SS was benign... I've never (*seen*) anything that atrocious... actually I only saw it later, I didn't know before... after that, I took notice... they shot at everyone who got up... and found their mark... it was an atrocity and the... soldiers who were supposed to have a meal, refused to be witnesses to it any longer..."either it stops or we want to get out of here"... the officers demanded...

L Excuse me, where there many Jews in this...

P ...eh... it was 2-300 at least... I can't say...

L and they were invited

P ... they weren't invited, they were waiting to be loaded up on the ramp and around them stood a few Latvians, who were wearing a special uniform...

L ... and the Jews had to kneel...

P ... sit or kneel, whoever got up was shot... and...

L ... and there were Jews who...

P ... yes... try kneeling for a while in the heat... and sitting is hard if you can't let your legs hang down if you're sitting on something flat... who can (*bear*) that as an old person... and... then a German policeman who was in charge of the Latvians... whom I had brought over to me immediately... "stopping it – that isn't for you to say", he said... eh... "they have their assignment and they'll continue to carry it out"... then a young captain spit the policeman in the face... and said... "how long till we get a train... we'll forget about our meal"... then it was announced to the soldiers, they yelled back their agreement... threatened the Latvians with their fists and were driven away. Of course, it took half an hour before the last train left... but that was just the background to show that the German wasn't a Jew hater and killer. The soldier was absolutely of a different mindset... this thing... no one took part in it and... later a sergeant told me from the train... from the last one that was leaving... he said then..." if I had known that"... I said, "yes, if everyone had known it, my dear man"... "yes" he said, "something like that is unbelievable"... and those are the attitudes which were prevalent on the outside... and... as I said... no one dared to tell about something like that, for he would have been arrested immediately... that's how it was... I was surprised when I returned from the war... among my friends... most of them didn't know about that during the war... when I later... I was home later at the end of the war...

L ... yes, but for instance, all these soldiers and officers witnessed this scene and they...

P ... there in Celce, they saw it...

L ... and I think, it wasn't the only incident...

P ... probably not... so I, I experienced it only once...eh... fact is... that these... that the people who knew... the soldiers rarely saw it... that was a special case that they just happened to... get a meal there, otherwise they wouldn't have seen that and ... in Celce there weren't many ... loadings, that was... I didn't know when I came to the station that there they were being loaded up.

L ... I think I read... the same story...

P ... yes... it's in there... in there... that's why I'm telling you...

L ... yes, but in another report as well, and the officer with whom you spoke said exactly the same thing...

P ... yes... the, the, the train official...

L ... yes...

P ... so, okay... it could be... I didn't make it up...

L ... yes, and I think, his name is Mr. Pfor...

P ... yes, I got to...

L ... and he's a major from Vienna...

P ... oh, could be... I, I didn't pay attention to their names...

Bob. 72

Prause 7

L Tell a few...

P ... jokes...

L ... jokes...

P ... ah, naw... I don't like to do that... it's not appropriate in serious situations... but... there were so incredibly many... and when there were no more political jokes... then it became clear to us... now it's getting serious... when the people... the people are actually able to bear all this, they can make jokes... but if there aren't any more... then that's really bad...

L ... yes, that's serious...

P ... no political jokes... and... according to this theory, everything would have to be very bad today because there are hardly any...

L ... another question – you say you knew everything...

P ... not everything... I knew more than most others... and was careful not to tell...

L ... no – I mean, the people in the Krakow ghetto, for instance, were... these directors of section 33...

P ... 34... you mean, that was the petition of the court in that case

L ...no, the so-called Special Train Section...

P ... the Special Train.... for passenger trains, it's 33... for freight trains, it's 34 ...

L ... yes...

P ... and those were normally the freight trains...

L ... yes, but I mean for people...

P ... yes, I was asked about that... here in the... in these activities... and I (*said*) the following... they presented me with the question... every section director 34 of the GEDOP [Generaldirektion der Ostbahn – General Management Board of the Reich East Railway] who signed the schedule telegrams for the trains... should actually be... arrested as a collaborator...

L ... yes...

P ... and then I laughed... and then I said, “Now look, if I had been 34... I would have signed those too... that man signs at least 200 schedule telegrams for trains a day... and what is in the trains, is none of his business... he doesn't care about that... for he signs only as a formality... the train has already been scheduled... he has to sign it... and the schedule telegram is never the source... for the scheduling of the train, because we had... they were all open cables... the telegraph cables... they had all be shot to bits... or otherwise destroyed ... and the trains ran in spite of that... so the schedule telegram was never the source of the trains running... rather... it was just a normal railway task that a person did... then I was asked, at the end the trains had names... that had to do with the Jewish transports.... I don't know...

L ... yes...

- P ... yes, that too... I can't say... during my time, I wasn't aware of it... eh... neither is that the source... the train would have run even if the man hadn't signed – it's just that the man would have had constant trouble... initially probably his boss would have... for they were all decent types... tried to protect him, but in the long run, that wouldn't have worked... at the very least, he would have been exchanged with someone else immediately, if that were possible without scandal... but worst case is that he would at least have landed in the concentration camp, if nothing worse had come his way... and as Wilhelm Busch once said, "The biggest calves choose their own butcher"... who is willing to risk his life for something that would take its course whether he's there or not?... that would border on insanity... just like a man who's assigned to shoot a... eh... a colleague, who, shall we say, deserted or whatever... who refuses, well, at the very least, he'll be locked up... by the Nazis for refusing to follow orders, maybe even shot on the spot... you have to see this in all seriousness... people lived in fear of the higher-ups, after all... a lot more people lived in fear of the higher-ups than were aware of it... they knew only that there were things happening about which they didn't speak and therefore they were careful...
- L ... yes, I understand...
- P ... so, as far as I'm concerned, that is...
- L ... yes, I understand, you are quite right; but, for example, there's something that really surprises me; I already spoke with a Mr. Stier...
- P Stier?
- L Stier... and he was the head of this so-called Section 33; I wanted to know about it in detail; for example, there is a German General Business Management East – telegram letters (*shows Prause the schedule*)...
- P ... do you know where those things come from... the Russians brought those in...these, these telegram letters... the Russians found those and started...

L ... I know, that's all clear. "We are sending a summary of January 15th, 43 in Berlin agreed upon special trains" and here is VD, that means ethnic German, RN, that means Romanian, P = Poles, PJ that's Polish Jews...

P ... yes, yes...

L ... and DA – I want to know exactly – what is DA?

P ... I don't know...

L ... and he told me – that's Germans...

P ... Auslandsdeutsche? [Germans foreigners]

L ... Deutsche Aussiedler [German forced resettlers]... that means German Jews...

P ... German resettlers... there was a train once from, from, eh... Russia... there were resettlement trains... those were Germans who, who, who... what were they called, who... in Russia, the ones we transported toward the homeland...

L ... yes; Wolinja, yes, I know... but that's not the case here, for this is Auschwitz, Treblinka...

P ... are those all extermination camps?

L ... not all...

P ... Schernowitz not... nor Janos... of course Auschwitz... Schernowitz, I don't know, I'm not familiar...

L ... but here, for instance, this train schedule...

P ... yes...

L ... it's very clear... you have the number of the train and the train goes from a little village to Treblinka...

P ... Celce...

L ... and the train returns – empty...

P ... Train Car 2 – C wagon and 50 G wagons...

L ...yes, freight trains...

P ... G are closed freight... G – those are closed freight trains... yes... and eh...C wagons are third class cars.

L ... yes...

P ... C...

L ... yes...

P ... 5, eh...2 third class cars and 50 eh... closed freight cars...

L ... yes...

P ... so, it's a typical mass transport... eh... for Jews in general... but for the soldiers, they were transported that way too...

L ... no, no, this is just for Jews...

P ... excuse me... I mean 2 C and 5 G...eh... 20 G or however many... that is...eh... a typical soldier train... for the officers and non-commissioned officers up front... C cars, those are generally cars with compartments... passenger cars...

L ... yes, but the C is Treblinka, that's what's written here...

P ... excuse me, the train did go to Treblinka, but this 2 C has nothing to do with Treblinka... 2 C means two third class cars...

L ... that's the escort...

P ... yes, yes, escort... just like every German army train...

L ... escort for the troops?

P ... every army train had, if possible, the army train B car, at least one B car... one car in the second class, which still existed then...

L ... no, but I mean, the train went...

P ... it went to Treblinka...

L ... Treblinka...

P ... indeed...

L ... the trains comes back... but empty... from Treblinka to another... and that is...

P ... that is a telegram for a Jewish train...

L ... yes...

P ... no doubt about it...

L ... yes, and to Treblinka again. The train comes back empty...

P ... yes...

L ... Treblinka, Treblinka, Treblinka – I asked this man, Stier: "it's clear, you knew exactly what..."

P ... later he knew, but he couldn't prevent it after all...

L ... that was Treblinka...

P ... but he couldn't prevent it...

L ... he told me, "I had an inkling, but I didn't know how... I didn't want to..."

P ... the people in Krakow mostly didn't know about the exterminations or they... this here is the General Administration of the East Railway – that was Warsaw...

L ... Krakow...

P ... no, oh General Administration, well yes... I was thinking General Business Administration... eh... General Management Krakow... is the... is the East Railway General Administration under the Management Lemberg...

L ... yes, but that is so...

P ... it's clear...

L ... that is it exactly and...

P ... that is clear... yes...

L ... yes, that's clear. You knew something, didn't you?

P ... We had a... we heard it of course; in the beginning, it was probably the Polish railway employees, who had to ride along... at the back on the last car, there was generally a sort of brake cabin... a Polish train employee... one of them once told me... about a transport of Italians, I think... from Celce to Treblinka...

L ... and there were train drivers too...

P ... yes...

L ... they were Germans...

P ... the train driver eh... no... we had only Polish train drivers... occasionally we had a German train driver, if one of the top people came through... eh... traveled through Poland... whereas it was funny, eh... after all, they had... the Führer train had anti-aircraft protection front and back... eh, sharpshooters and such... as if that would... as if that would... German train drivers did exist but very, very few... so, I actually worked only with Polish train drivers... the Poles didn't agree with it, just as little as the Germans...

L ... yes... yes...

P ... no one ever pushed for that...

Bob 73

Prause 8

- L ... I wanted to say something – I was in Poland last year...
- P ... yes...
- L ... I went there, and I went to Treblinka, for example, and to Maukenia too, and I spoke with the people, the Poles – and it's very surprising, because the Germans, who were in the extermination camps were there as...
- P ... SS, eh...
- L ... they had to keep secrets...
- P ... yes... yes...
- L ... you weren't allowed to say anything; but what's very surprising is that the Poles knew everything...
- P ... it's always like that...
- L ... all around the camps were Polish farmers...
- P ... not only that...
- L ... they knew everything... it wasn't a secret at all, it was...
- P ... I... I personally experienced it... something to that effect... from the German Station Master, a young man in Maukenia... he told me, he said... the... SS camp commander invited him... to see it for himself... if I were interested to come along... and told me then that it's being done with prussic acid... I didn't know it till then and... and then... of course, I said, eh... "if you want to see something like that, go ahead"... but to go without saying a peep about being against it, that's not okay... so, either-or... I don't go... the chance was there... I was an administrator; I could have gone... they... at my hearing, they wanted to know, what his name was... I didn't know it back then... I don't know now, but I had heard just before that, that he didn't... come back or... had an accident or what, I don't know... before the hearing... it was so long ago, I don't know anymore what his name was... nor the details...
- L ... yes...

P ... as I said, he really kept his mouth shut... really... after this episode in Hamburg, I told only one friend and then he said, “that’s inflammatory – don’t spread it any further”, and he, as far as I know, didn’t tell anyone... I didn’t tell anyone else...

L ... that is inflammatory...

P ... it was very inflammatory and... if it had been known who it was, something would have happened... and that’s what interested the hearing examiners the most... what was most interesting with Ganzmüller was the famous Wannsee Conference...

L ... yes...

P ... where, for the first time... the ones who weren’t keeping state secrets of the Party heard about the extermination of the Jews... this... it was on the Little Wannsee, I think... and eh... they held that against Ganzmüller... I thought about it, if I had been sent there from the German Railway and had listened to that... I couldn’t have done anything against it... that would have been a certain death... and what can a person servicing the train cars... for the railway is a kind of moving business... what can one do against assignments, which one can’t refuse... who is willing to... who is able to... it’s crazy to think that a Ganzmüller had the capability to stop the transport trains... not to mention the section 33 employees, who scheduled them...

L ... yes...

P ... I don’t know who could have done it...

L ... yes, but these well-known letters from Ganzmüller to Wolf...

P ... letters of compliance, I don’t know them, but people talked about them... insofar as he felt he had to do that or not... I don’t know... but... but just now the thing came up with the... the Bremen senator for construction... who, when he was 17 or 18, was for the destruction of the Jews, and who is now leaving to keep peace within his Party which is probably the right thing to do, but the fact that a person is blamed today for the political statements he made as a 17 or 18-year old... I have to say, I find that idiotic...

- L ... yes... but in Poland it wasn't a single case... it happened on a daily basis...
- P ... it keeps happening, yes, although... in the daily life in Poland, it hardly played a role...
- L ... didn't play a role?
- P ... no... that is, the Poles... as far as they knew, as far as they didn't know, they were concerned only with their survival... that's... that's clear; but I was just telling my Polish visitor yesterday... if, during the war in Warsaw, we wanted white bread, we couldn't get it... we had army rations... we got really awful commissary bread...
- L ... yes...
- P ... if ever we wanted white bread, the we went into the real Polish, Polish residential quarters... we could get white bread in every other hallway, could buy it for a lot of money...
- L ... black market?
- P ... black market of the Poles...
- L ... yes...
- P ... and that's where we Germans went to the Polish black market in civilian clothes... looked left and right with that famous German cautious glance (*smiles*)... and bought white bread
- L ... yes...
- P ... if the wives of my colleagues – I was a bachelor – were invited to my place for coffee... that was once a month... some of the women were active with the Red Cross and other places... then I got Polish coffee for a lot of money... the best baked goods made with butter... we got the coffee beans from the Poles... the army didn't give us any at all... and the best our people could do was to get a quarter pound or so at times...
- L ... and was there a black market in the Warsaw ghetto?
- P ... yes, in the ghetto... that black market was terrible... I went through once...
- L ... yes...
- P ... when that was still possible... when... the ghetto was just a kind of prison part of the city... nothing happened then...
- L ... prison city...

P ... prison part of the city – yes, it was a city neighborhood, after all, yes... surrounded by a wall – like the Berlin Wall now. That’s how the Pol... the Jews had to build one, under direction of the SS... there’s where you could wheel and deal for everything... for a brick of brown coal... for oranges which we were supposed to get some time later... which had been siphoned off from us... there was nothing that you couldn’t wheel and deal for...

L ... yes...

P ... but... the dealing was done with such harshness... of the Jews among themselves... it was awful...

L ... harshness, what do you mean?

P ... well, among themselves, there was no mercy between the dealers...

L ... yes – they were...

P ... each one betrayed the other wherever possible...

L ... there was no solidarity?

P ... no; and that is always the danger when it comes down to the last crumbs... that was so awful that I swore to myself never to go again.

L What was your impression of this visit to...

P ... terrible, the lethargic, old people... who had no one anymore... and died on the curb.

L You saw that?

P I saw them as they took their last breath... and that was... the most terrible...

L ... taking their last...

P ... the breath... they were... dying...

L ... ah yes, yes, yes... were there many?

P ... that... I saw at least four or five...

L ... ah, yes...

P ... it was terrible, that no one cared... I spoke to an old Jew then, which was forbidden... spoke to an old Jew and... “don’t you want to tend to him?”... he responded with “I can’t tend to all of them“... turned around... and left... so, the misery at the end is terrible... and human connection hardly existent... I could have imagined that they... back then I thought that it was better among us... as Germans or... other Europeans... but given my experiences in the... last days of the war... that wasn’t anything to be proud of either...

L ... that’s true, yes! And when was this visit to the ghetto?

P ... that must have been during my... first stay there... then the ghetto was still... it was still possible to enter the ghetto, later that wasn't possible anymore... must have been during my first visit... eh, the first part in Warsaw, that is in 41...

L ... and your main impression was this struggle...

P ... no, my main impression was this terrible misery... and this haggling... when I got home from there, I told a colleague... I always took that as a form of Jewish joke, that they haggle over everything... there was the expression "the haggling Jew" among us... I always thought that was a joke... but this visit to the ghetto... it showed it so shockingly... my God, has it always been like that?

L ... everywhere?

P ... yes, the haggling was the most awful thing... not that they fought...no, they didn't hit each other or so, but... ice cold...

L ... ice cold?

P ... the haggling was done ice cold... really terrible...

L ... the Jews with the Jews?

P ... only the Jews among themselves; there were no others...

L ... Jews among themselves?

P ... yes...

L ... there was no haggling between Jews and Germans?

P ... no... they weren't allowed to... they couldn't get out...

L ... I think you're right.

Bob. 74

Prause 9

L You were in Warsaw during the time of the Warsaw Ghetto?

P At the beginning of the revolt...

L ... yes, how was that?

P ... yes, maybe later when I find it, I may be able to show you a photo of it... from the roof of the Administration Building, that is, the current Transportation Ministry... of the Poles... eh, in the direction of the ghetto... I made a few photos...

L ... ah yes...

P ... eh... we thought the Jews set it on fire...

L ... the Jews?

P ... most likely, most likely the SS did that... but we didn't know where it was coming from originally; then I got an call from the Danziger Railway Station... what was it called... Danzinger... Danzinger Station... in Warsaw... I got a call and then the German railway employee there told me, here is – is the end of a sewer tunnel... and out of it come a steady stream of Jews... I said, "what do you do then?"... and he said to me... "well, when they... when they come, report it to the SS"... I said, "now take care that first of all, you... let them go... run off, those who are there..." and "yes, but we can't allow that"... I said, "you (*don't*) need to see, to witness it"... "yes, but Poles saw it too"... that was the... "then let the SS discover it for themselves or... just call the nearest police station about what's going on"... and by that time, a whole bunch had disappeared already... but they didn't have much of a chance with the Poles, the Jews did... the Pole hardly ever protected a Jew... of the one we let go... there in Celce... and... later in... Lobitsch, where I almost got into trouble... yes, our, our 300 which were really 450... 150 more came along than were supposed to when we got them out of the ghetto... of those, few survived... they were killed in the woods and elsewhere... the hatred was too strong that many... and the head of... our head of the camp, whom I sent home on leave on the evening when he let them go, so that he wouldn't be there and... have any responsibility... and he had a lot of trouble about it after that...eh...

L ... but the...

P ... he told me later... "now I got... I got close to going into the concentration camp... and for what... almost all of them were killed..."

L ... but did you know that it was a Jewish revolt, with weapons and such?

P ... that came later...that is... after we first thought that they set the ghetto on fire... and, and were trying an escape... so we thought... and I was laughed at... there were conversations among the various offices in Warsaw, in which I often participated... a higher SS officer and a police captain... and... there the... that isn't... you know... because the Jews had armed themselves... what kind of weapons did they have...

L ... it was unbelievable...

P ... it's not unbelievable... there were always German soldiers... who were sent back from the front to... eh... to get candles and such... they stayed in Warsaw... went underground... in the Citadel, I was shown whole laundry baskets full of shoulderboards of German soldiers who were shot in the Citadel... as deserters... and they usually sold their weapons... that is, sold them in the ghetto, for no one came into the ghetto...

L ... yes...

P ... and there they were relatively safe... that's where they sold their weapons and whatever else... they had weapons, they even... with cannons...

L ... and they had a lot of weapons?

P ... a whole bunch, it seems... I don't know... I wasn't able to get the details... and they even, I think, shot with tank cannons... the... the Jews...

L ... yes, and the ghetto burned down?

P ... it burned down... when this tape comes to an end, I'll go and see if I can put my hands on the photos... I don't want you to go without them; you should see them... eh... I couldn't get them enlarged by any photographer during the war... and then I... when Hanover was destroyed, I...

L ... you the photos yourself...

P ... took them...

L ... took them...

P ... yes... eh... later, when Hanover was destroyed, got permission from the Railway Supervisor of the Hanover Administration to take photos... after the fact... I had already taken the photos... and with this permission, in Bielefeld... I persuaded someone I knew well...

P ... a pharmacist, who had a photo lab, who let me enlarge in the lab
... and they allowed that... I wasn't allowed to let anyone near them, that
would have, would have been the end of me if I... if that had been
known... in Bielefeld, I also, when Bielefeld was bombed... took
photos... and eh... and enlarged in the same way...

L These photos?

P ... yes, in the same way...

L ... why, that is a very nice...

P ... yes, it's very good, but back then it was a dangerous thing to show a
picture of destroyed cities...

L ... yes...

P ... yes... a very dangerous thing and you couldn't just ignore that...

L ... and why did you... in spite of that...

P ... yes... these pictures... I was a long-time photographer...

L ... yes...

P ... I wanted... these photos...

L ... and that was...

P ... unfortunately, I left my biggest stack of Hanover... the president said,
"that is inflammatory... you leave those films here"...

L ... and it was impressive, these...

P ... the destruction?

L ... yes...

P ... ah, in the ghetto?

L ... yes...

P ... in the ghetto, it was a total destruction... there was no fire department
to douse... yes...

L ... it took a long time... many days?

P ... at the very least... many days, yes...

L ... ah yes... many days...

P ... and they were probably supposed to come out...

L ... and did anyone...

P ... the SS probably set that on fire, so they would come out... they were
then supposed to... to the...

L ... among yourselves, for instance, did you talk about this event?

P ... even the, even the wives of our colleagues saw that... all of Warsaw was talking about it...

L ... all of Warsaw?

P ... just that, at the beginning, we thought the Jews set it on fire... later, as the Jews were fighting and were supposed to be out... then we came to the conclusion that the SS wanted to smoke them out...

L ... yes, smoke them out...

P ... but, I can prove neither one nor the other...

L ... but you figured out, that the...

P ... that, that was our impression...

L ... the liquidation – the end...

P ... yes, not that they were supposed to be killed; rather that they get out of there... they wanted them out... for they were shooting... but by then it was already clear that they were sure to be killed...

L ... yes...

P ... you know, it's really hard to give advice to anyone... I (*tried?*) to do that... in conversations with police and at other places in Warsaw... since I never wore a uniform anymore... for a time, I wore a railway employee uniform... then there was a blue administration uniform for the East... I had that one too without all the shoulderboards and such... but at the end, I wore only civilian clothes and then, of course, I could risk a few things even with the gentlemen, the higher SS and heads of police... so the army representatives were mostly envious... that I was in civilian clothes... for the higher SS and head of police were at the level of a general... and those gentlemen wore their uniforms... and that made... things not so easy... but I just kept talking merrily away... said this and that...

L Who were the higher SS and Head of Police in Warsaw?

P The highest... I don't know anymore what his name was... there were two during my time, but I don't know anymore what his name was... the police knew about it, the federal criminal office... the biggest joke was... like the Aranikatsche, the golden cat... a wonderful little restaurant at... what was that part called... well, about in the center of the city...

L ... yes...

P ... one of the... eh... current, current military parade sites in eh...
Warsaw, I think... eh... that's where the German administrators and
officers hung out... and were served by... pretty Polish girls, who had
been chosen for their beauty...

L ... yes...

P ... and one day, the restaurant was closed... when I arrived there... and
then I asked around and found out that the girls were rounded up by the
SS... they were spies... and then I made called on a higher SS and police
captain... but then he didn't have time and two days later... then there
were meetings again... all the others were there... what luck... then I
started right in... and it wasn't even on the agenda but I started with it...
and then they said "in order of the agenda", but the others were all so
interested, that he couldn't get around it and had to hear us out... and then
I said... well, for starters, the girls had to be looked for... that what they
heard, weren't likely to repeat it, even if they do have a bit of patriotism in
their hearts... and second, what was he planning to do with the girls, yes,
they would be sent to a brothel, and then, then, then the others said, not he
himself, but his assistant there... and then... I said to him, "well, what do
we get out of this... then your SS men... they get the pretty girls... for
how long... and we get new ones... and they'll do the same... are we
supposed to have a steady rotation here or how do you envision this...
we're all satisfied with these girls... they're delightful, nice, obedient and
neat... we're all happy... and you want to let your SS men have them and
you want to replace them with some old backwoods-types" and the others
of course, are all in adamant agreement.. then he looked at us and then he
said, "you mean..." "Yes, we all mean" ... yes and then... the girls were
back within two days...

L ... yes...

P ... and... and I... I got everything free for two days... I couldn't pay for anything...

L ... why?

P ... even in this... very "insider" meeting... someone among us who told the girls... yes, so not everyone keeps secrets...

L ... but you got the permission, these ...

P ... not because of me – because of everyone...