

1  
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:06,460

2  
00:00:06,460 --> 00:00:12,700  
With the exception of Dr.  
Benjamin Marmelstein, who

3  
00:00:12,700 --> 00:00:18,070  
was last chairman of the  
Theresienstadt ghetto,

4  
00:00:18,070 --> 00:00:19,750  
on the case of  
the Theresienstadt

5  
00:00:19,750 --> 00:00:26,200  
is a very particular  
one, with the exception

6  
00:00:26,200 --> 00:00:30,550  
of the Leib Garfunkel,  
who was the deputy

7  
00:00:30,550 --> 00:00:38,530  
of Dr. Elkes, Chairman  
of the Judenrat of Kovno,

8  
00:00:38,530 --> 00:00:43,450  
all the leaders of  
the Greek ghetto--

9  
00:00:43,450 --> 00:00:46,150  
I mean all the chairmen  
of the Greek ghettos

10  
00:00:46,150 --> 00:00:51,010  
of Poland and the Baltic area--

11  
00:00:51,010 --> 00:00:55,660  
or to use another word,  
all the Greek leaders

12  
00:00:55,660 --> 00:00:59,440  
of these ghettos--

13  
00:00:59,440 --> 00:01:01,070  
they don't exist anymore.

14  
00:01:01,070 --> 00:01:02,560  
They are all dead.

15  
00:01:02,560 --> 00:01:06,550  
Most of them were  
killed by the Germans.

16  
00:01:06,550 --> 00:01:12,550  
Czerniaków was the leader, the  
chairman, of the Warsaw ghetto,

17  
00:01:12,550 --> 00:01:20,380  
committed suicide  
the 22 of July 1942.

18  
00:01:20,380 --> 00:01:26,380  
And the these people  
left behind them

19  
00:01:26,380 --> 00:01:40,270  
nothing which permits to see how  
the experience is leadership.

20  
00:01:40,270 --> 00:01:47,470  
We have, of course, speech of  
people like Rumkowski in Łódź,

21  
00:01:47,470 --> 00:01:53,800  
like Gens in Vilna,  
like Moses Merin,

22  
00:01:53,800 --> 00:01:59,680  
who was the chairman of all  
the ghettos of Upper Silesia

23  
00:01:59,680 --> 00:02:03,280  
and who stayed in Sosnowiec.

24  
00:02:03,280 --> 00:02:08,919  
But no one lived there  
as Czerniaków did.

25

00:02:08,919 --> 00:02:13,090

Well, we have now his  
diary, and you wrote--

26

00:02:13,090 --> 00:02:14,560

you published it.

27

00:02:14,560 --> 00:02:18,700

And you wrote an  
introduction for it.

28

00:02:18,700 --> 00:02:24,040

Well, first of all, how could  
you characterize the diary

29

00:02:24,040 --> 00:02:27,040

of Czerniaków?

30

00:02:27,040 --> 00:02:31,600

It is certainly the  
most unique and I

31

00:02:31,600 --> 00:02:34,840

would say the most  
important document coming

32

00:02:34,840 --> 00:02:38,260

from the Jewish side  
about the Holocaust,

33

00:02:38,260 --> 00:02:42,910

because it was  
written by a man who

34

00:02:42,910 --> 00:02:48,490

began keeping a diary the  
very first week of the war,

35

00:02:48,490 --> 00:02:50,890

before the Germans  
entered Warsaw,

36

00:02:50,890 --> 00:02:53,770

and before he took over the  
responsibility of leading

37  
00:02:53,770 --> 00:02:56,320  
the Jewish community.

38  
00:02:56,320 --> 00:03:02,110  
And who kept his  
diary in daily entries

39  
00:03:02,110 --> 00:03:06,660  
until the afternoon of the  
day that he ended his life.

40  
00:03:06,660 --> 00:03:09,970

41  
00:03:09,970 --> 00:03:15,790  
And it is an important document,  
because Czerniaków occupied

42  
00:03:15,790 --> 00:03:19,180  
a post at the interface  
between the German and Jewish

43  
00:03:19,180 --> 00:03:22,750  
communities in daily  
contact with both,

44  
00:03:22,750 --> 00:03:24,730  
receiving the  
requests, and appeals,

45  
00:03:24,730 --> 00:03:27,170  
and entreaties from  
the Jewish population,

46  
00:03:27,170 --> 00:03:31,720  
and in turn appealing to  
the Germans every week,

47  
00:03:31,720 --> 00:03:34,630  
several times a week.

48  
00:03:34,630 --> 00:03:37,690  
And it is a unique document,  
because a man holding that

49

00:03:37,690 --> 00:03:44,110  
position sat down, in very  
matter-of-fact language,

50

00:03:44,110 --> 00:03:49,750  
without embellishment, in  
an almost laconic style,

51

00:03:49,750 --> 00:03:54,250  
everything that was transpiring,  
every meeting he had,

52

00:03:54,250 --> 00:03:58,870  
every subject that was  
discussed in these meetings--

53

00:03:58,870 --> 00:04:02,380  
thus the diary is just full  
of names, and incidents,

54

00:04:02,380 --> 00:04:04,090  
and occurrences  
of various kinds,

55

00:04:04,090 --> 00:04:07,630  
and covers the waterfront  
when it comes to subjects--

56

00:04:07,630 --> 00:04:16,690  
food, space, labor, hostages,  
children, shootings, violence,

57

00:04:16,690 --> 00:04:21,276  
deportations, ghettoization in  
general, all of it is there.

58

00:04:21,276 --> 00:04:23,958

59

00:04:23,958 --> 00:04:28,130  
There is simply  
nothing that compares

60

00:04:28,130 --> 00:04:31,640

in sheer content and coverage  
what this diary contains.

61  
00:04:31,640 --> 00:04:34,300

62  
00:04:34,300 --> 00:04:39,550  
But it is above all remarkable,  
because the farther away we

63  
00:04:39,550 --> 00:04:43,540  
are from the event itself,  
it seems that the diary

64  
00:04:43,540 --> 00:04:44,980  
transcends the man.

65  
00:04:44,980 --> 00:04:47,530

66  
00:04:47,530 --> 00:04:52,420  
It seems that keeping the  
diary under the circumstances

67  
00:04:52,420 --> 00:04:55,150  
was one of the most  
important things he did.

68  
00:04:55,150 --> 00:04:58,820

69  
00:04:58,820 --> 00:05:03,610  
For he left us a  
window through which

70  
00:05:03,610 --> 00:05:07,390  
we can observe a Jewish  
community in the terminal

71  
00:05:07,390 --> 00:05:10,180  
hours of its life.

72  
00:05:10,180 --> 00:05:11,710  
A dying community.

73

00:05:11,710 --> 00:05:13,880

Certainly a dying community.

74

00:05:13,880 --> 00:05:17,450

For it began dying  
from the beginning.

75

00:05:17,450 --> 00:05:19,790

And in that sense--

76

00:05:19,790 --> 00:05:21,950

Documenting the  
diary, when one reads

77

00:05:21,950 --> 00:05:25,970

it's a diary day after they,  
is that first of all this man

78

00:05:25,970 --> 00:05:30,190

is extremely busy.

79

00:05:30,190 --> 00:05:32,980

He has no time at all.

80

00:05:32,980 --> 00:05:36,910

And he wastes, in  
one way, his time

81

00:05:36,910 --> 00:05:42,340

in daily, routine tasks  
in the neverending

82

00:05:42,340 --> 00:05:48,780

meetings with the Jews of the  
Jewish Council of which he

83

00:05:48,780 --> 00:05:53,110

is the chairman,  
with the Germans who

84

00:05:53,110 --> 00:05:58,660

are above him and  
giving him orders.

85

00:05:58,660 --> 00:06:01,600  
But the most remarkable  
thing is that he seems

86  
00:06:01,600 --> 00:06:03,670  
to have no illusion at all.

87  
00:06:03,670 --> 00:06:08,140  
There is not the  
slightest [INAUDIBLE]..

88  
00:06:08,140 --> 00:06:12,790  
He never overdoes these things.

89  
00:06:12,790 --> 00:06:16,030  
Two illusions he does not have--

90  
00:06:16,030 --> 00:06:18,840  
he does not think of himself--

91  
00:06:18,840 --> 00:06:19,740  
As a great man.

92  
00:06:19,740 --> 00:06:21,480  
--as a great man.

93  
00:06:21,480 --> 00:06:23,460  
Well, he becomes mayor--

94  
00:06:23,460 --> 00:06:27,090  
a title given to  
him by the Germans--

95  
00:06:27,090 --> 00:06:30,120  
he compares himself to  
the King of Croatia.

96  
00:06:30,120 --> 00:06:31,410  
A puppet.

97  
00:06:31,410 --> 00:06:33,870  
Well, not even a  
puppet, since Croatia

98



00:06:33,870 --> 00:06:35,670  
turned out not to have  
had a King really.

99  
00:06:35,670 --> 00:06:38,420

100  
00:06:38,420 --> 00:06:43,960  
When he visits an  
insane asylum, somebody

101  
00:06:43,960 --> 00:06:47,950  
accosts him and wants  
to talk to the chairman.

102  
00:06:47,950 --> 00:06:50,830  
And he backs away,  
saying he, Czerniaków,

103  
00:06:50,830 --> 00:06:54,070  
is not the chairman.

104  
00:06:54,070 --> 00:06:55,120  
He's self-effacing.

105  
00:06:55,120 --> 00:07:02,530

106  
00:07:02,530 --> 00:07:09,390  
What is remarkable in this diary  
of Adam Czerniaków is, I say,

107  
00:07:09,390 --> 00:07:12,820  
he seems to have no  
illusions at all.

108  
00:07:12,820 --> 00:07:14,770  
But he has not  
only no illusions,

109  
00:07:14,770 --> 00:07:18,100  
but maybe he has no illusions  
because he has no plan,

110  
00:07:18,100 --> 00:07:19,420

he has no policy.

111  
00:07:19,420 --> 00:07:22,360  
Or he has no plan  
and he has no policy

112  
00:07:22,360 --> 00:07:24,580  
because he has no illusions.

113  
00:07:24,580 --> 00:07:28,330  
If one compares him to the other  
leaders of the great ghetto

114  
00:07:28,330 --> 00:07:32,080  
like Rumkowski in Łódź,  
like Gens in Vilna,

115  
00:07:32,080 --> 00:07:38,650  
like Merin in Sosnowiec, all  
these three had a policy.

116  
00:07:38,650 --> 00:07:41,110  
I mean, they wanted at  
least to achieve something,

117  
00:07:41,110 --> 00:07:44,190  
and they saw that  
their work would be

118  
00:07:44,190 --> 00:07:46,300  
the way of rescuing the Jews.

119  
00:07:46,300 --> 00:07:51,730  
I mean, all the speeches, they  
explained that the rescue's

120  
00:07:51,730 --> 00:07:54,460  
work is the only way.

121  
00:07:54,460 --> 00:07:56,170  
That there is no other one.

122  
00:07:56,170 --> 00:07:59,920  
And they delivered  
Jews to the Germans

123  
00:07:59,920 --> 00:08:05,740  
for deportations, for the  
extermination centers.

124  
00:08:05,740 --> 00:08:09,040  
And the question of  
whether they knew

125  
00:08:09,040 --> 00:08:11,240  
or if they didn't, this  
is another question,

126  
00:08:11,240 --> 00:08:13,360  
and you will talk about this.

127  
00:08:13,360 --> 00:08:20,250  
But they took the risk or  
the took the responsibility.

128  
00:08:20,250 --> 00:08:23,580  
They very often said,  
yes, we have bloody arms,

129  
00:08:23,580 --> 00:08:28,470  
but we do this in order to save  
the part of the community which

130  
00:08:28,470 --> 00:08:29,940  
can be saved.

131  
00:08:29,940 --> 00:08:35,309  
There is nothing of this kind  
in the diary of Czerniaków.

132  
00:08:35,309 --> 00:08:42,039  
And the remarkable  
fact is that the day

133  
00:08:42,039 --> 00:08:47,350  
he has to do the same things  
as the three others did,

134  
00:08:47,350 --> 00:08:53,107  
again Rumkowski and

Merin, he refuses to do it

135

00:08:53,107 --> 00:08:54,065  
and he commits suicide.

136

00:08:54,065 --> 00:08:57,790

137

00:08:57,790 --> 00:08:59,020  
Yes.

138

00:08:59,020 --> 00:09:01,660  
I think that he was  
not given to illusions.

139

00:09:01,660 --> 00:09:04,480

140

00:09:04,480 --> 00:09:09,670  
He is alleged by one  
person who survived him

141

00:09:09,670 --> 00:09:13,480  
who had actually  
left Warsaw in time,

142

00:09:13,480 --> 00:09:16,180  
but who was there  
at the beginning,

143

00:09:16,180 --> 00:09:18,220  
to have called the  
initial council together

144

00:09:18,220 --> 00:09:22,720  
and to have shown them a  
little bottle containing

145

00:09:22,720 --> 00:09:28,890  
24 tablets of cyanide which  
he said to them was going

146

00:09:28,890 --> 00:09:30,750  
to be kept in his drawer.

147

00:09:30,750 --> 00:09:32,910

There was one for each of  
them when the time came.

148

00:09:32,910 --> 00:09:34,410

For the 24th members  
of the council.

149

00:09:34,410 --> 00:09:35,037

For the 24.

150

00:09:35,037 --> 00:09:36,120

I mean, this is the story.

151

00:09:36,120 --> 00:09:37,770

I cannot confirm it.

152

00:09:37,770 --> 00:09:40,410

I do not know  
whether it is true.

153

00:09:40,410 --> 00:09:43,860

But it is a story that was told  
by somebody who says that it

154

00:09:43,860 --> 00:09:46,830

occurred in front of his eyes.

155

00:09:46,830 --> 00:09:49,590

And there's no question of the  
fact that when the time came,

156

00:09:49,590 --> 00:09:54,465

one of those pills at least was  
consumed by Czerniaków himself.

157

00:09:54,465 --> 00:09:57,110

158

00:09:57,110 --> 00:10:00,410

And in between these two events  
which are almost three years

159

00:10:00,410 --> 00:10:07,910

apart, there are constant  
references to the end.

160  
00:10:07,910 --> 00:10:11,150  
He talks in terms  
of Greek mythology,

161  
00:10:11,150 --> 00:10:13,880  
for he was familiar  
with the mythology,

162  
00:10:13,880 --> 00:10:18,430  
as so very many of the learned  
people of those days were.

163  
00:10:18,430 --> 00:10:24,940  
And he refers to himself  
as wearing a poisoned cloak

164  
00:10:24,940 --> 00:10:26,260  
as Hercules once did.

165  
00:10:26,260 --> 00:10:35,960  
And he also speaks of the  
coming events, the end.

166  
00:10:35,960 --> 00:10:39,710  
He's never surprised.

167  
00:10:39,710 --> 00:10:43,740  
He knows that the  
very first week

168  
00:10:43,740 --> 00:10:46,260  
that he takes over  
the community or tries

169  
00:10:46,260 --> 00:10:49,516  
to take it over that  
the Germans are coming.

170  
00:10:49,516 --> 00:10:55,140  
And he prints up  
cards in which he is--

171

00:10:55,140 --> 00:10:58,710  
just a visiting card in which he  
lists himself as the Obermann.

172  
00:10:58,710 --> 00:11:01,770  
And he prints these cards  
even while Poland is still

173  
00:11:01,770 --> 00:11:03,210  
fighting in German.

174  
00:11:03,210 --> 00:11:04,410  
It's German.

175  
00:11:04,410 --> 00:11:06,600  
That's the German.

176  
00:11:06,600 --> 00:11:10,860  
He knows that the  
ghetto is coming.

177  
00:11:10,860 --> 00:11:14,810  
He knows it because he knows  
about the wall building.

178  
00:11:14,810 --> 00:11:17,640  
And it comes as no  
surprise to him.

179  
00:11:17,640 --> 00:11:18,665  
He's never revolted.

180  
00:11:18,665 --> 00:11:26,630

181  
00:11:26,630 --> 00:11:29,420  
One could ask, why  
did you take the job?

182  
00:11:29,420 --> 00:11:32,970  
And why did he keep the job?

183  
00:11:32,970 --> 00:11:36,910  
It's harder to figure  
out why he took it then

184

00:11:36,910 --> 00:11:39,760  
to say why he kept it.

185

00:11:39,760 --> 00:11:43,540  
He took it at a moment when  
the then existing chairman

186

00:11:43,540 --> 00:11:48,250  
of the Jewish community,  
Maizel, had fled.

187

00:11:48,250 --> 00:11:51,670  
I think he did have a  
sense of responsibility.

188

00:11:51,670 --> 00:11:55,960  
He did not have great  
major successes in his life

189

00:11:55,960 --> 00:11:58,090  
before September 1939.

190

00:11:58,090 --> 00:12:01,000  
He was second in command of  
the Jewish community in Warsaw.

191

00:12:01,000 --> 00:12:02,890  
He led the Jewish Artisans.

192

00:12:02,890 --> 00:12:06,830  
He had a job with a  
foreign trade house.

193

00:12:06,830 --> 00:12:11,570  
But he was 59 years old, and his  
career had not been meteoric.

194

00:12:11,570 --> 00:12:16,740  
He had failed to be elected  
to the Polish Senate.

195

00:12:16,740 --> 00:12:19,950  
He was not amongst the  
most prominent luminaries



196

00:12:19,950 --> 00:12:24,840  
of the Polish community or  
the Polish Jewish community.

197

00:12:24,840 --> 00:12:29,510  
He had only one virtue which  
he assigned to himself, loyalty

198

00:12:29,510 --> 00:12:31,520  
and steadfastness.

199

00:12:31,520 --> 00:12:32,150  
Yes.

200

00:12:32,150 --> 00:12:34,400  
But do you think,  
for instance, it's

201

00:12:34,400 --> 00:12:39,650  
obvious that a man like  
Rumkowski had a lust for power,

202

00:12:39,650 --> 00:12:42,380  
even a crave for power.

203

00:12:42,380 --> 00:12:48,280  
A man like Murelstein too  
admitted it in front of me.

204

00:12:48,280 --> 00:12:52,990  
And it's a very  
real question how

205

00:12:52,990 --> 00:12:55,520  
did these people come  
to reserve their power

206

00:12:55,520 --> 00:12:58,760  
from the actual killers  
of the Jewish people.

207

00:12:58,760 --> 00:13:03,180  
But it doesn't seem that  
Czerniaków had the same lust

208

00:13:03,180 --> 00:13:03,680  
for power.

209

00:13:03,680 --> 00:13:05,250  
He did not.

210

00:13:05,250 --> 00:13:09,440  
He did not only not lust for it,  
he had no enjoyment out of it.

211

00:13:09,440 --> 00:13:10,670  
He suffered.

212

00:13:10,670 --> 00:13:12,590  
He mentions this suffering.

213

00:13:12,590 --> 00:13:15,380  
He had physical  
maladies and he had

214

00:13:15,380 --> 00:13:17,630  
maladies of a kind  
which are associated

215

00:13:17,630 --> 00:13:18,980  
with bureaucratic life.

216

00:13:18,980 --> 00:13:24,050  
He had criticisms for those who  
wouldn't let him do his job.

217

00:13:24,050 --> 00:13:26,390  
He didn't enjoy the job.

218

00:13:26,390 --> 00:13:27,320  
He suffered.

219

00:13:27,320 --> 00:13:28,880  
He mentions that.

220

00:13:28,880 --> 00:13:32,360  
He's asked by associates,  
how can he even stand it?

221  
00:13:32,360 --> 00:13:35,810  
And he says, well, I haven't  
had a pleasant childhood.

222  
00:13:35,810 --> 00:13:37,890  
I have learned  
early on to suffer.

223  
00:13:37,890 --> 00:13:39,570  
This is his answer.

224  
00:13:39,570 --> 00:13:45,840  
So obviously and clearly, he  
does it as a matter of duty.

225  
00:13:45,840 --> 00:13:47,610  
And there are  
remarkable passages

226  
00:13:47,610 --> 00:13:53,500  
in the diary that illustrate  
precisely what he meant.

227  
00:13:53,500 --> 00:13:58,440  
I can give you two examples  
which are very striking.

228  
00:13:58,440 --> 00:14:01,020  
Mind you, everything in the  
diary is out of context.

229  
00:14:01,020 --> 00:14:04,470  
He doesn't write in paragraphs,  
he doesn't have introductions,

230  
00:14:04,470 --> 00:14:06,330  
he doesn't have a  
theme, he doesn't

231  
00:14:06,330 --> 00:14:11,340  
have a thesis or an objective.

232  
00:14:11,340 --> 00:14:16,980  
But here are two episodes  
that are one year apart.

233

00:14:16,980 --> 00:14:23,730

There is a lady somewhere in  
Warsaw in love with a man.

234

00:14:23,730 --> 00:14:27,290

And the man was hit--

235

00:14:27,290 --> 00:14:32,270

was somehow grievously wounded,  
as a result of which it

236

00:14:32,270 --> 00:14:34,940

was left there in the street  
somewhere with his insides

237

00:14:34,940 --> 00:14:36,840

coming out.

238

00:14:36,840 --> 00:14:40,840

This woman stuffed the insides  
back with her own hands.

239

00:14:40,840 --> 00:14:44,920

She carried the man to a  
first aid station-- he died.

240

00:14:44,920 --> 00:14:46,500

He was buried in a mass grave.

241

00:14:46,500 --> 00:14:51,330

She disinterred  
him and buried him.

242

00:14:51,330 --> 00:14:54,420

This to Czerniaków,  
this simple episode,

243

00:14:54,420 --> 00:14:58,080

was the ultimate of virtue.

244

00:14:58,080 --> 00:14:58,860

For him.

245

00:14:58,860 --> 00:15:00,150  
For him.

246  
00:15:00,150 --> 00:15:01,080  
He writes it.

247  
00:15:01,080 --> 00:15:02,640  
He writes it.

248  
00:15:02,640 --> 00:15:04,380  
Quite out of context.

249  
00:15:04,380 --> 00:15:06,060  
But he remembers it,  
it impresses him,

250  
00:15:06,060 --> 00:15:07,500  
and he writes it.

251  
00:15:07,500 --> 00:15:09,480  
And he has a second episode.

252  
00:15:09,480 --> 00:15:13,920  
And ironically the second  
episode duplicates the first.

253  
00:15:13,920 --> 00:15:15,960  
There is a discussion  
in the Jewish council,

254  
00:15:15,960 --> 00:15:21,300  
and somebody says, who are the  
true mentors of the people?

255  
00:15:21,300 --> 00:15:25,740  
And Czerniaków becomes  
very angry and says, well,

256  
00:15:25,740 --> 00:15:28,350  
certainly not those  
who emigrated in time.

257  
00:15:28,350 --> 00:15:31,020  
The true mentors are right here.

258

00:15:31,020 --> 00:15:33,690

And then he goes  
on to tell a story

259

00:15:33,690 --> 00:15:36,720

without even introducing  
it, without tying it up

260

00:15:36,720 --> 00:15:39,300

with a discussion.

261

00:15:39,300 --> 00:15:42,990

As you know, in Warsaw  
there were post offices.

262

00:15:42,990 --> 00:15:45,060

And the ghetto had  
one such post office.

263

00:15:45,060 --> 00:15:49,680

But delivery of all mail and  
parcels was carried on by Jews,

264

00:15:49,680 --> 00:15:52,950

not by the regular  
post office employees.

265

00:15:52,950 --> 00:15:55,620

And once a 15-year-old  
was substituting

266

00:15:55,620 --> 00:15:59,130

for his mail carrying father  
with very vital parcels.

267

00:15:59,130 --> 00:16:02,550

As you know, parcels  
kept people alive.

268

00:16:02,550 --> 00:16:04,230

And while he was  
making his rounds,

269

00:16:04,230 --> 00:16:07,060

some guard was shooting, as

happened very frequently,

270

00:16:07,060 --> 00:16:11,110  
and this boy was a gun  
hit in the stomach.

271

00:16:11,110 --> 00:16:12,030  
He collapsed.

272

00:16:12,030 --> 00:16:16,400

273

00:16:16,400 --> 00:16:19,430  
(film slating)

274

00:16:19,430 --> 00:16:21,550

275

00:16:21,550 --> 00:16:23,470  
OK.

276

00:16:23,470 --> 00:16:28,330  
He was shot and he collapsed.

277

00:16:28,330 --> 00:16:32,910  
And with intestines  
coming out of his abdomen

278

00:16:32,910 --> 00:16:36,990  
and a spinal cord that  
was apparently severed,

279

00:16:36,990 --> 00:16:43,210  
he crawled to the  
nearest house and asked

280

00:16:43,210 --> 00:16:45,290  
that [INAUDIBLE] policemen  
deliver the packages

281

00:16:45,290 --> 00:16:46,165  
that he was carrying.

282

00:16:46,165 --> 00:16:49,770

283

00:16:49,770 --> 00:16:52,170  
Czerniaków says no more.

284

00:16:52,170 --> 00:16:57,490  
For him that story tells all.

285

00:16:57,490 --> 00:16:59,810  
The boy was 15.

286

00:16:59,810 --> 00:17:02,840  
This means, what, that the  
boy fulfilled the mission?

287

00:17:02,840 --> 00:17:03,340  
[INAUDIBLE]

288

00:17:03,340 --> 00:17:05,589  
He fulfilled the mission.

289

00:17:05,589 --> 00:17:07,960  
Passed the end since  
he was already hit.

290

00:17:07,960 --> 00:17:12,550  
But he was going to make  
sure that those parcels which

291

00:17:12,550 --> 00:17:15,280  
he was carrying would  
reach the people for whom

292

00:17:15,280 --> 00:17:18,069  
they were intended.

293

00:17:18,069 --> 00:17:21,740  
And that was a mentor,  
that was a loyal person,

294

00:17:21,740 --> 00:17:24,069  
that was an individual who  
did not forget his task

295



00:17:24,069 --> 00:17:27,880  
or didn't desert his people,  
as so many of those whom

296  
00:17:27,880 --> 00:17:33,160  
Czerniaków knew well had done  
perhaps late in '39, early

297  
00:17:33,160 --> 00:17:34,630  
'40, or perhaps even later.

298  
00:17:34,630 --> 00:17:37,300

299  
00:17:37,300 --> 00:17:43,430  
So Czerniaków had as a single  
vision this sense of loyalty.

300  
00:17:43,430 --> 00:17:49,660  
Do you think that he  
despised the people who left?

301  
00:17:49,660 --> 00:17:50,430  
Absolutely.

302  
00:17:50,430 --> 00:17:52,920  
Because he constantly  
refers to those who had

303  
00:17:52,920 --> 00:17:56,820  
emigrated in a tone  
of writing or voice

304  
00:17:56,820 --> 00:17:59,910  
which clearly indicates that  
he certainly despised them.

305  
00:17:59,910 --> 00:18:02,700  
For instance, Zygielbojm

306  
00:18:02,700 --> 00:18:05,520  
Well-- all of them.

307  
00:18:05,520 --> 00:18:08,100  
All those who

emigrated and all those

308

00:18:08,100 --> 00:18:09,780

who left the community  
in the lurch.

309

00:18:09,780 --> 00:18:12,510

He did not believe that  
somebody was emigrating

310

00:18:12,510 --> 00:18:14,700

for the purpose of helping.

311

00:18:14,700 --> 00:18:17,610

And he especially  
had harsh words

312

00:18:17,610 --> 00:18:20,700

to say for those who were  
going to emigrate in order

313

00:18:20,700 --> 00:18:23,040

to collect funds or to  
help the Jewish community

314

00:18:23,040 --> 00:18:24,445

from the outside.

315

00:18:24,445 --> 00:18:26,820

He didn't believe that that  
would be done, could be done,

316

00:18:26,820 --> 00:18:29,100

or that could even have  
been the intention of those

317

00:18:29,100 --> 00:18:30,360

who were leaving.

318

00:18:30,360 --> 00:18:35,920

In spite of the fact that  
he knew that he was--

319

00:18:35,920 --> 00:18:39,730

I don't like the word myself,

I don't like to use this word--

320

00:18:39,730 --> 00:18:44,900  
it would concern the Jewish  
councils and their leaders--

321

00:18:44,900 --> 00:18:46,860  
but I have to tell it.

322

00:18:46,860 --> 00:18:49,710  
In spite of the fact that  
he knew that he was obliged

323

00:18:49,710 --> 00:18:51,960  
to fulfill the German orders--

324

00:18:51,960 --> 00:18:54,630  
this means to  
collaborate in one way.

325

00:18:54,630 --> 00:18:57,270

326

00:18:57,270 --> 00:18:59,707  
He thought that it  
was better to stay--

327

00:18:59,707 --> 00:19:00,540  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

328

00:19:00,540 --> 00:19:01,020  
--even at this price--

329

00:19:01,020 --> 00:19:02,395  
He thought it was  
better to stay.

330

00:19:02,395 --> 00:19:06,060  
--than to run, than to escape.

331

00:19:06,060 --> 00:19:07,650  
You see, running  
was possible only

332

00:19:07,650 --> 00:19:09,330  
for what were a small  
handful of people.

333  
00:19:09,330 --> 00:19:12,630  
The bulk of the Jews would  
remain behind leaderless.

334  
00:19:12,630 --> 00:19:15,660  
The constant dilemma of  
every Jewish council,

335  
00:19:15,660 --> 00:19:18,180  
particularly of Czerniaków  
as the head of the largest

336  
00:19:18,180 --> 00:19:25,740  
of them, was that one could  
not stay at one's post without

337  
00:19:25,740 --> 00:19:27,690  
serving the Germans.

338  
00:19:27,690 --> 00:19:31,770  
And one could not leave  
the post without apparently

339  
00:19:31,770 --> 00:19:33,420  
hurting the Jews.

340  
00:19:33,420 --> 00:19:36,060  
This was a paradox and a  
contradiction with which

341  
00:19:36,060 --> 00:19:38,530  
they all had to live.

342  
00:19:38,530 --> 00:19:43,020  
It was impossible to separate  
the two elements of the job.

343  
00:19:43,020 --> 00:19:47,010  
It was a fatal combination,  
and it killed him.

344

00:19:47,010 --> 00:19:47,860  
Yes.

345  
00:19:47,860 --> 00:19:51,270  
And I think one has to  
keep absolutely this

346  
00:19:51,270 --> 00:19:55,680  
to answer of the role  
in order to understand

347  
00:19:55,680 --> 00:19:59,490  
what was a real problematic  
of the Jewish councils

348  
00:19:59,490 --> 00:20:00,882  
and the tragedy.

349  
00:20:00,882 --> 00:20:02,340  
What do you think  
of the people who

350  
00:20:02,340 --> 00:20:06,210  
have a definite attitude  
on the Jewish council,

351  
00:20:06,210 --> 00:20:10,360  
when they say, they  
were collaborators?

352  
00:20:10,360 --> 00:20:11,310  
Well--

353  
00:20:11,310 --> 00:20:12,520  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

354  
00:20:12,520 --> 00:20:13,980  
There are many.

355  
00:20:13,980 --> 00:20:15,840  
All sorts of people say  
all sorts of things.

356  
00:20:15,840 --> 00:20:17,970  
They've done it

without much study.

357

00:20:17,970 --> 00:20:20,280

They've done it without  
deep penetration

358

00:20:20,280 --> 00:20:22,800

into the problem areas  
that these very people had.

359

00:20:22,800 --> 00:20:24,690

I think it's necessary  
to role-play.

360

00:20:24,690 --> 00:20:26,940

It is necessary to put  
oneself, to some extent,

361

00:20:26,940 --> 00:20:29,520

into somebody else's place.

362

00:20:29,520 --> 00:20:32,020

Invariably and  
inevitably I did this,

363

00:20:32,020 --> 00:20:35,700

living five years  
with this diary,

364

00:20:35,700 --> 00:20:39,540

and beginning to think somewhat  
the thoughts which Czerniaków

365

00:20:39,540 --> 00:20:40,950

had.

366

00:20:40,950 --> 00:20:43,800

In that sense, of  
course, one enters

367

00:20:43,800 --> 00:20:45,540

into the mind of the  
person and begins

368

00:20:45,540 --> 00:20:48,580

to see the parameters,  
the limits,

369  
00:20:48,580 --> 00:20:52,380  
much as they were seen then.

370  
00:20:52,380 --> 00:20:54,900  
There was no such  
thing as collaboration

371  
00:20:54,900 --> 00:20:57,750  
as such in the Jewish  
community, because there's

372  
00:20:57,750 --> 00:21:02,910  
no Jewish leader who  
even in the remotest

373  
00:21:02,910 --> 00:21:07,440  
identified with or wanted  
to help the German cause.

374  
00:21:07,440 --> 00:21:08,130  
No one?

375  
00:21:08,130 --> 00:21:11,630  
No one that I know of.

376  
00:21:11,630 --> 00:21:15,222  
I mean, can it be compared  
with the French collaborators

377  
00:21:15,222 --> 00:21:15,930  
or the Quislings?

378  
00:21:15,930 --> 00:21:16,200  
[INTERPOSING VOICES]

379  
00:21:16,200 --> 00:21:17,360  
No, they cannot.

380  
00:21:17,360 --> 00:21:18,340  
No, no.

381

00:21:18,340 --> 00:21:19,050  
Not at all.

382  
00:21:19,050 --> 00:21:21,120  
There are some who  
come very close.

383  
00:21:21,120 --> 00:21:24,200  
One might think of Szerynski  
the Jewish police chief.

384  
00:21:24,200 --> 00:21:24,700  
In Warsaw.

385  
00:21:24,700 --> 00:21:26,200  
In the Warsaw ghetto, yes.

386  
00:21:26,200 --> 00:21:29,290  
There are some people who  
come very close to that line.

387  
00:21:29,290 --> 00:21:31,080  
He was a convert  
to Christianity,

388  
00:21:31,080 --> 00:21:32,950  
and he behaved in an  
abominable fashion

389  
00:21:32,950 --> 00:21:34,840  
during the deportations.

390  
00:21:34,840 --> 00:21:38,920  
But all such exceptions  
aside-- and there are not many,

391  
00:21:38,920 --> 00:21:44,140  
and even they are in a  
rather ambiguous zone--

392  
00:21:44,140 --> 00:21:45,850  
it must be said of  
the Jewish councils

393  
00:21:45,850 --> 00:21:48,550



that they were  
authentically Jews.

394  
00:21:48,550 --> 00:21:51,070  
The Germans did not  
really select them.

395  
00:21:51,070 --> 00:21:54,330  
The Germans didn't  
pick Jewish leaders.

396  
00:21:54,330 --> 00:21:55,920  
That must be remembered.

397  
00:21:55,920 --> 00:21:58,200  
The Germans simply  
appointed those

398  
00:21:58,200 --> 00:22:00,120  
who happened to be on hand.

399  
00:22:00,120 --> 00:22:02,640  
This includes Czerniaków and  
this includes a great many

400  
00:22:02,640 --> 00:22:03,820  
others.

401  
00:22:03,820 --> 00:22:06,600  
And so while it may be said that  
the Jewish councils were not

402  
00:22:06,600 --> 00:22:09,570  
necessarily representative  
of the Jewish people,

403  
00:22:09,570 --> 00:22:12,240  
certainly there were  
middle-aged individuals,

404  
00:22:12,240 --> 00:22:15,180  
certainly they were individuals  
who had achieved something

405  
00:22:15,180 --> 00:22:18,900

before the war, certainly they  
were men rather than women,

406

00:22:18,900 --> 00:22:22,170  
certainly they were limited  
in a variety of ways

407

00:22:22,170 --> 00:22:24,060  
in their pre-war careers.

408

00:22:24,060 --> 00:22:26,490  
So they could not be said  
to represent the totality

409

00:22:26,490 --> 00:22:27,930  
of the Jewish community.

410

00:22:27,930 --> 00:22:31,210  
By the same token however,  
they were authentically Jewish.

411

00:22:31,210 --> 00:22:32,730  
They were not Germans.

412

00:22:32,730 --> 00:22:34,050  
They were not imposed.

413

00:22:34,050 --> 00:22:36,000  
They didn't come  
from the outside.

414

00:22:36,000 --> 00:22:38,720  
They came from within.

415

00:22:38,720 --> 00:22:40,880  
That indeed is the disaster.

416

00:22:40,880 --> 00:22:44,420  
For throughout they retained the  
trust of the Jews in everything

417

00:22:44,420 --> 00:22:46,050  
they did.

418

00:22:46,050 --> 00:22:50,280  
Throughout, they could command  
even to the last moment

419  
00:22:50,280 --> 00:22:54,000  
and into the extreme  
the allegiance

420  
00:22:54,000 --> 00:22:56,340  
of the Jewish people, even  
those of the Jewish people

421  
00:22:56,340 --> 00:22:58,950  
that criticized  
them very loudly.

422  
00:22:58,950 --> 00:23:03,330  
Because in the ultimate  
sense, they were Jews,

423  
00:23:03,330 --> 00:23:06,780  
and they were believed to  
be doing what they did out

424  
00:23:06,780 --> 00:23:09,570  
of desperation, but  
still with a view

425  
00:23:09,570 --> 00:23:12,660  
to saving what could be  
saved, to helping whomever

426  
00:23:12,660 --> 00:23:13,770  
could be helped.

427  
00:23:13,770 --> 00:23:16,030  
This is true--

428  
00:23:16,030 --> 00:23:16,950  
This is true of--

429  
00:23:16,950 --> 00:23:19,830  
--of Rumkowski, of  
Gens, of all of them?

430

00:23:19,830 --> 00:23:22,410

Of course it is less true  
of some than of others.

431

00:23:22,410 --> 00:23:24,270

I make a large  
generalization here,

432

00:23:24,270 --> 00:23:26,580

cutting across Europe  
and across time.

433

00:23:26,580 --> 00:23:27,150

Yes.

434

00:23:27,150 --> 00:23:30,060

But still, I think it's  
a common denominator.

435

00:23:30,060 --> 00:23:36,810

Why is the idea of a Jewish  
traitor so unbearable?

436

00:23:36,810 --> 00:23:40,080

I mean, you have British  
traitors, American traitors,

437

00:23:40,080 --> 00:23:41,250

French traitors.

438

00:23:41,250 --> 00:23:45,570

This doesn't touch the whole  
of the French community

439

00:23:45,570 --> 00:23:50,670

or British, but when we  
touch this question about,

440

00:23:50,670 --> 00:23:54,600

let's say, between  
brackets, collaboration

441

00:23:54,600 --> 00:23:58,740

of the Jews with the Germans,  
everybody becomes so sensitive,

442

00:23:58,740 --> 00:24:01,930

even the people who  
don't like the Jews.

443

00:24:01,930 --> 00:24:04,860

Well, a traitors-- you  
know, it's interesting.

444

00:24:04,860 --> 00:24:07,680

But in our own country,  
the United States,

445

00:24:07,680 --> 00:24:10,200

the only crime defined in the  
Constitution of the United

446

00:24:10,200 --> 00:24:12,630

States is that of treason.

447

00:24:12,630 --> 00:24:15,810

And it is to give aid  
and comfort to the enemy

448

00:24:15,810 --> 00:24:18,570

or to side with the enemy--

449

00:24:18,570 --> 00:24:20,850

those two things.

450

00:24:20,850 --> 00:24:24,020

In fact, the Jews did  
not side with the enemy.

451

00:24:24,020 --> 00:24:25,530

They didn't.

452

00:24:25,530 --> 00:24:28,070

And it was not their intent  
to give aid or comfort

453

00:24:28,070 --> 00:24:30,560

to the Germans,  
though inevitably that

454

00:24:30,560 --> 00:24:32,570  
is precisely what they did do.

455  
00:24:32,570 --> 00:24:36,650  
But they always did it for  
the purpose of saving Jews.

456  
00:24:36,650 --> 00:24:41,450  
They were making concessions  
to an extreme extent or else

457  
00:24:41,450 --> 00:24:47,620  
they took their own lives,  
which also is an extreme act.

458  
00:24:47,620 --> 00:24:49,530  
Did you change  
your mind since you

459  
00:24:49,530 --> 00:24:51,900  
wrote the description  
of the European Jews

460  
00:24:51,900 --> 00:24:54,990  
in this particular point?

461  
00:24:54,990 --> 00:25:02,160  
Because I have the feeling that  
you were much more harsh severe

462  
00:25:02,160 --> 00:25:05,670  
towards these people when you  
were writing the books than you

463  
00:25:05,670 --> 00:25:07,910  
are now.

464  
00:25:07,910 --> 00:25:10,080  
Well, of course, in  
the first version,

465  
00:25:10,080 --> 00:25:13,490  
which is at this moment  
the only person in print--

466

00:25:13,490 --> 00:25:14,710  
No, no, no, no I mean--

467  
00:25:14,710 --> 00:25:15,610  
I know, I know.

468  
00:25:15,610 --> 00:25:19,010  
I speak of the destruction  
of European Jews in its very

469  
00:25:19,010 --> 00:25:21,920  
first and still only version.

470  
00:25:21,920 --> 00:25:23,240  
I was very brief.

471  
00:25:23,240 --> 00:25:25,910  
I was very, very brief  
about the role of the Jews

472  
00:25:25,910 --> 00:25:27,440  
in their own destruction.

473  
00:25:27,440 --> 00:25:30,260  
And the very brevity of  
the words made them harsh.

474  
00:25:30,260 --> 00:25:34,480  
It isn't the tone, it  
isn't the adjectives,

475  
00:25:34,480 --> 00:25:38,470  
but rather it is the sheer  
brevity, the simple statement

476  
00:25:38,470 --> 00:25:42,790  
that the Jews were in a sense  
aiding their own destruction.

477  
00:25:42,790 --> 00:25:45,100  
Not necessarily  
just the councils,

478  
00:25:45,100 --> 00:25:48,370  
but the Jewish

community, as a whole,

479

00:25:48,370 --> 00:25:52,450  
in all of its activities, in  
complying with German orders,

480

00:25:52,450 --> 00:25:55,150  
and carrying out German  
wishes, and following

481

00:25:55,150 --> 00:25:58,880  
what it is that the Germans  
told them to do to the letter,

482

00:25:58,880 --> 00:26:03,990  
was moving in a single direction  
to its own destruction.

483

00:26:03,990 --> 00:26:06,690  
And to say this, as I have  
just said at this minute,

484

00:26:06,690 --> 00:26:10,380  
so briefly, in a single  
paragraph, is to be very harsh.

485

00:26:10,380 --> 00:26:12,270  
Because a single  
paragraph does not

486

00:26:12,270 --> 00:26:17,130  
tell what happened in the  
process of doing these things--

487

00:26:17,130 --> 00:26:22,080  
what thoughts, what pain  
occurred during that time.

488

00:26:22,080 --> 00:26:25,380  
Now, of course, then we did  
not have the diary of Adam

489

00:26:25,380 --> 00:26:25,920  
Czeriakow.

490



00:26:25,920 --> 00:26:28,410

We did not have a lot  
of other documents.

491

00:26:28,410 --> 00:26:30,030

Today, we do.

492

00:26:30,030 --> 00:26:34,080

So today, while not really  
changing the conclusion,

493

00:26:34,080 --> 00:26:38,580

I certainly tell the story at  
a much more elaborate and hence

494

00:26:38,580 --> 00:26:41,010

perhaps more consoling fashion.

495

00:26:41,010 --> 00:26:42,710

Human.

496

00:26:42,710 --> 00:26:46,690

Perhaps a more human fashion .

497

00:26:46,690 --> 00:26:52,480

This is not to say that I now  
believe that the councils were

498

00:26:52,480 --> 00:26:53,740

not a disaster--

499

00:26:53,740 --> 00:26:54,460

they were.

500

00:26:54,460 --> 00:26:57,510

501

00:26:57,510 --> 00:27:00,790

There's no question of that.

502

00:27:00,790 --> 00:27:04,390

In some sense, one can see even  
more how much of a disaster

503

00:27:04,390 --> 00:27:05,060  
they were.

504  
00:27:05,060 --> 00:27:06,670  
Right.

505  
00:27:06,670 --> 00:27:09,650  
But one can see the mechanisms.

506  
00:27:09,650 --> 00:27:12,860  
One can see the step-by-step  
process not only on the German

507  
00:27:12,860 --> 00:27:15,500  
side, but can now see it  
also on the Jewish side,

508  
00:27:15,500 --> 00:27:18,820  
as inevitably going from one--