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BAUER 1

C.L. Bauer, first of all I would like you to tell us something about yourself. As a Holocaust professor and researcher, were you personally involved, in one way or another, with the Holocaust?

B. No, not at all. I was not involved at all in the Holocaust itself, in fact I arrived in Palestine before the Second World War with my parents, and I spent a very calm and quiet childhood in Israel - Palestine - the State of Israel. I became interested in the Holocaust because I found that this was the central event in Jewish history - certainly in modern times, and probably much longer than that. As I wanted to be a Jewish historian, that's what I did.

C.L. Where did you come from?

B. I came from Prague, Czechoslovakia, when I was 12 years old. My father was a member of the Zionist movement there, and we got out on the last day before the Germans came in - in fact we came out on the day that the Germans came in.

C.L. In '39?

B. In '39.

C.L. But you could have been involved in the Holocaust.

B. I certainly could have been involved, and in fact the Nazis boarded the train as we were leaving Czechoslovakia, and the Czech engine driver crossed the Polish border without the Germans' agreement. That's how we were saved.

C.L. And when did you start to work on the Holocaust? Can you say something about your experience in this field? From a human point of view?

B. I think what made me deal with the Holocaust was a long discussion I had with Rabbi Kortner(?) in about 1964 or 1965. I was doing Palestinian Jewish history - Zionist history at that time...

C.L. Something completely different.

B. ... completely different, and I began dealing with the Holocaust, because you can't avoid it. I mean you cannot <u>not</u> deal with it. And he told me I was wasting my time, so I asked him Why? He said "Because if you want to deal with really important problems you've got to deal with the Holocaust." I said "I'm scared..." so he said "Well that's a very good point to start".

C.L. Yes?

B. "If you're scared that's a very good point to start with".

C.L. And you have worked now since how long?

B. Now I have been working at it for about 13, 14 years, something like that.

C.L. How would you characterise this kind of work?

B. I think it's very taxing, very difficult, because it involves me emotionally; on the one hand, if you rid yourself of emotion there is nothing to work on, but on the other hand, if you allow your emotions to overcome you, you cannot do any further historical writing. You have to find somewhere in between, and that is in fact what I do, not only for myself but also for my students. I always show a film, to all my classes, so that they will realise that this is not something which is sterile and dry and 'scientific' but which has a human value of tremendous importance - essential, humanly important events in human history.

C.L. Do you think that people who were not directly involved in the Holocaust can deal with this?

B. Well if they don't then the whole thing is lost.

C.L. Why?

B. Because the people who went through the Holocaust will die, the people who witnessed from outside will die, and then the next generation, nobody will know anything any more. If you want to objectivise this, if you want somehow to transmit it to the next generation, you have to find a way which will be as near as possible to emotional involvement and

yet at the same time will give an objective dimension to it.

C.L. But you admit there is a trend today, among the survivors of the Holocaust, among writers, who say it is impossible to deal with - that the best thing to do is keep silent, and there is something obscene in dealing with such...

B. Yes, well, the people who say that are, on the other hand, the ones who talk.

C.L. They talk much.

B. They talk a great deal, and I feel that they have to. You cannot take the attitude to remain silent because if it remains silent then the whole experience, which should be a warning to the Jewish people and to all the other peoples, will be lost. If the Holocaust is that important, then you have to do something to save it in such a way that it will mean something for the next generation. So you have to find a compromise between the emotional side and the objective, historical side.

C.L. Yes. And what do you think of such an undertaking(?) as mine, to try to make a film out of it?

B. That's exactly what you are doing. You are doing exactly what I said just now: you are getting emotions out of the people, but you do it on an objective plane. You ask questions, and you compare the answers in your film. So what you are really

doing is part of the job that I think has to be done.

C.L. Yes. Ok.

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BAUER 2

C.L. Now I would like us to discuss - in general terms first - the question of the Judenräte. I would like to know, first of all, if here in Israel since you started to work on this field, if you noticed a change in the outlook of the people towards the policy of the Judenräte - the question of the Judenräte.

B. Yes, very definitely there is a change. The people who came from the Holocaust, the partisans, were opposed to the Judenräte. There was a relatively large number of people who survived from Lodz, from Holland, from Warsaw - and those were Judenräte which, especially in Lodz and Holland, were of the very negative kind, and there was a tendency to generalise. The term 'Judenrat' became a term of cursing: it was an accusation. You didn't have to explain anything, you just said 'Judenrat' and it was an accusation. The research we have been into has contributed to a change in the atmosphere,

where people first of all begin to understand what the conditions were that the Judenräte were working under, and secondly - the main point - is this whole concept of the impossibility to generalise about the policy of the Judenräte altogether. There were so many cases, so many different examples, that the attempt to generalise becomes very, very difficult indeed.

C.L. What do you mean when you talk about 'negative Judenräte'?

B. I mean the kind of Judenrat - I will take Holland as an example. Holland had a Judenrat where you had a compliance with the German wishes before the Germans even expressed them. There was a complete and utter subservience to the Germans, to the extent that when the Judenrat was founded, the strike was on, the strike of Dutch workers against the Germans for the Jews. The Germans demanded of the Dutch Judenrat to intervene with the Dutch workers against the strike.

C.L. It was the Dutch Judenrat who broke the strike?

B. The Dutch Judenrat broke the strike. This is how it started. So in Holland you have a very extreme case. You have an equally extreme case, but in a quite different category, in Lodz, where Mordecai Chaim Runkowski(2) - an old dictator - wanted to save the Jews of Lodz by making them the slaves

of the Germans, because he thought no slave-master would murder his slaves. This was out of an ideology - there was no ideology in Holland. There was an ideology in Lodz.

C.L. You mean he had a policy?

B. He had a policy which came out of an ideology. The ideology said that the only way in which the Jews could survive was by listening to Runkowski. He went to the Rabbis in Lodz - we have one very definite case of this - and asked them whether what he was doing was correct. He got the support of the Rabbis - he got the support of the élite of the Jewish population in Lodz. He did not act in a vacuum - he was supported by some of the people who, after the war, attacked him because he was responsible for the murder of the children. He knew where they were going, and he delivered the children into the hands of the Germans.

C.L. Can you go into more detail about this?

B. The knowledge of what was happening in Auschwitz in 1942 was spreading. Runkowski knew what was happening in Auschwitz; we know this from a discussion Runkowski had with a German Christian - I mean not a Gentile, a Christian - who went into Lodz in order to try to help Jews. There was a discussion between that German and a Rabbi and Runkowski, and in that discussion it was perfectly

clear that Runkowski knew what the Nazi policy was.

C.L. The man was not Frederick Hilsche?

B. Hilsche, yes. And the report...

C.L. He met Runkowski personally? No, he met Leo Rosenblatt, the chief of police.

B. He met Leo Rosenblatt and he met Runkowski, personally yes. The problem you have is that after this discussion the children were delivered to the Nazis.

C.L. The Germans asked for them...

B. The Germans asked for the children and they were delivered to the Nazis, so he knew exactly what was happening. His policy was, through the German bureaucracy in Lodz to keep the ghetto alive, saying "If you destroy the ghetto, all these workers will not be working for the Germans any more. It is a fact that in July 1944, when there was no longer any ghetto anywhere in Eastern Europe, and certainly not in Poland - there was a remnant of Kovno(?) ghetto - there was still a remnant ghetto in Lodz because they were working like slaves for the German machine. It was only in July and August that the ghetto was finally destroyed. The last 60-odd thousand Jews were shipped to Auschwitz.

C.L. And what do you think about this - I call it a policy of rescue through work? Why did they think in such a way?

B. It was a logical thing to think, because in the

logic of modern society, where economics is a very central problem - and the Germans were very hard pressed in 1943 and 1944 to get uniforms, weapons and all kinds of things - just to throw away all these tens of thousands of slave labourers would be silly. So Runkowski in Lodz, and Barch in Bialystok, and Genz in Vilna, and not very many others...

C.L. And Merin in Sosnovets...?

B. No... Merin, yes, all right, Merin in Sosnovets, but there weren't that many more who had this very logical policy. You can prove, for instance in Bialystok, that between (shall we say) the end of 1942 and early 1943 there was a discussion in the German Nazi bureaucracy about what to do about the ghetto in Bialystok, and this was one of the problems they had to confront. "We get very important things out of this ghetto - what shall we do? Shall we destroy it or shall we not destroy it?" This was decided finally only by direct orders from Himmler. It is a fact that in the Spring of 1944, in Lodz, there were 69 000 Jews left. If the Soviet army, which was standing from July 1944 to January 1945 on the Wisla river, if they had advanced, like they did in 1945 in January, in 3 days, and conquered Lodz, they would have rescued 69 000 Jews. And perhaps you and I would have thought then that Runkowski was a great hero... I don't know.

C.L. A saviour?

B. A saviour! Maybe there would be a statue to him somewhere. But as it is, he was a murderer. He was a murderer, there is no doubt about it. And when he was shipped to Auschwitz, a Jewish figure from the underworld (around?) in Lodz whom he had sent personally to Auschwitz got hold of him and threw him alive into the fire.

C.L. Are you sure of this?

B. This was what the man told, the witness after the war, and it was published quite recently.

C.L. I know, but there are several...

B. ... several versions, but I think that is the true version.

C.L. But they were very clear in their thoughts, in one way - people like Runkowski, Genz - the pictures they deliver of the...

B. They were very clear. But there is a big difference, you see - Runkowski wanted to co-operate with the Germans, Merin wanted to co-operate with the Germans, Barasch did not. Barasch supported...

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BAUER 3

C.L. But I think we must try to go deeper, because there was not inside the ghetto a situation of potential

civil war, like for instance in occupied countries like France and other countries. Let's take France: there is always a permanent struggle, even if not always open, between the bourgeoisie and the workers, and where, for instance, the French bourgeoisie collaborated with the Germans - or a big part of it - because they preferred this, they had a kind of ideological agreement with them. One cannot say this was the case in the ghetto.

B. There is a great difference between what I call cooperation and collaboration. Collaboration is an ideological identification between the group or person that collaborates and the Nazis. They agree to the Nazi aims, they want to help the Nazis to win the war. We have only one case like that amongst the Jews, and that is not the Judenrat, it is the 13 in the Warsaw ghetto.

C.L. Gansreich.

B. Gansreich. The others want the war to end, they don't want the Germans to win although some of them think the Germans will win; they don't want them to win, and they want to save the Jews somehow until the end of the war. Because at the end of the war there will be peace and the situation will be safe. And this is Runkowski's idea. This is Genz's idea, this is Barasch's idea. And Barasch is expecting the Russian army to come quickly to rescue.

No collaborator - no Quisling, no Laval - hoped for the Russian army to come and liberate France or Norway! There is a vast difference there. So the Jews are forced to cooperate. And these Judenräte that want to save the Jews through slave labour are operating on a logical basis which, in the case of the Nazis, didn't work because the hatred of the Nazis for the Jews was not based on economic or political foundations but ideological and quasi-religious foundations. So the end was murder. They wanted to save as many as possible, you see, and Barasch (for instance) in Bialystok had relationships with the underground. He wanted the underground to act when there was no other way out. In the end he missed the last point and the underground rebelled, and Barasch led the people to the trains to Treblinka. But there is a big difference between Barasch and Runkowski, because Barasch was an honest person who was trying to save as many people as he could in the only way he knew how. Whereas Runkowski knew he was murdering, and he was doing everything to suppress the living standards of the people of the Lodz ghetto. He was combatting the underground there - there was an underground in Lodz and he destroyed it. So there is a big difference. You see, these cases of rescue through labour are not that many. There are a few very clear examples, but

if you take for instance Warsaw: there is very little of it there. There was an economic activity, but it was done by the Germans - Schulz and others - but it was also done by Jews illegally, underground. You had practically none of this in Lublin, you had very little of it in Lvov and other places, certainly none of it in Minsk, which was a rebellious ghetto... So here too, if you try to make a stereotype of it it doesn't work.

There were other Judenräte. We discussed Holland, we discussed Lodz, Bialystok and Vilna. There is a Judenrat like, for instance, in Siauliai in Lithuania. There, the ghetto population supported the Judenrat, there is no doubt about it. And the Judenrat organised labour, but on a different level, trying to save as many people and identifying with the population. It was a popular Judenrat.

C.L. Yes, but did they succeed? In Siauliai too there were children's actions, and they gave the people too.

B. They gave the people to the labour; they tried to save the children. The difference between Lodz - Runkowski - and Siauliai is tremendous, because in Siauliai the police, when they heard about the 'Kinderaktion' - the action against the children - they sent the policemen around to the families to hide the children. The fact that they did not manage

to save them is a second problem. What we are discussing is the attitude of the Jewish leadership. It was objectively limited in what it could do. What we are discussing is not the outcome - what we are discussing is the intention. It's the moral action that we are discussing. The outcome was the same everywhere, as far as the children were concerned. In Siauliai, by the way, it worked in a way because Siauliai and Kovno were the two last ghettos in Eastern Europe. In July 1944 they were shipped to Germany, and most of the survivors in the South German camps were Lithuanian Jews from Siauliai and Kovno.

You had a ghetto like Kovno, where the head of the Judenrat, Elkis, was active in trying to help the underground, protecting the ghetto as far as he could, cooperating with the Jewish police, who were on the side of the resistance. This is something again unique, in a way, because there were not very many ghettos where the Jewish police acted on the side of the Resistance against the Nazis. You can say again: the majority of the inhabitants of the Kovno ghetto were killed, including Elkis - but the action of Elkis was the action of somebody who was thrown into a position of leadership and tried to do his best to protect the ghetto.

C.L. And who didn't want to be...

B. He didn't want to be a leader, he was forced to be a leader.

And then, to take the same area, you have Minsk, where you have 80 000 Jews and a leader who was put there by pure accident - Leo Myschkin(?) - who, the moment he became head of the Judenrat, began to help in organising armed resisitance. And this is not a small ghetto - it is the fourth largest ghetto in Europe, 80 000 people. We don't know to this day exactly how many, but approximately 10 000 Jews were smuggled out of Minsk into the forest.

So you have from Holland, Lodz, Bialystok, Siauliai and Kovno to Minsk, a whole gamut of completely different reactions. And when you go to each Judenrat, whether in Slovakia or France or Belgium, a region or a country, each Judenrat has essentially a slightly different policy from any other you could examine. There are not two Judenräte that are precisely alike. So the attempts made after the war to present the Judenrat as a stereotype must fail; there was no stereotype.

C.I. And how do you explain these different positions? Only from the leaders?

B. No, no. Not only from the leaders, although when you take places like Vilna and Kovno, which had the same environment and the same type of Jewish people and the same German rule, the behaviour of the two

Judenräte is completely different. You begin to wonder whether it is not very much a question of the character of the leaders, and indoubtedly that plays a rôle, but look: Minsk, for instance, had forests. And there was a beginning of a partisan Soviet movement from the end of 1941. This is not the case in Central Lithuania, and certainly not in Lodz, not to speak of Holland. So you had a completely different non-Jewish local environment; also slightly different policies of the Germans - not in the overall attitude towards the Jews, but whether there was a military Government or a civilian Government. A military Government in Belgium, for instance, versus a civilian Government in Holland, where the civilian Government in Holland has thousands of SS men in Holland to execute the commands of the Government (the German Government), whereas in Belgium the enmity between the military and the SS made it easier for the Jews to escape, to hide, to make contact with the Belgian resistance and so on.

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BAUER 4

B. I think one ought to have a very clear picture of the periods in which the Judenräte operated. You

find in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, that in the first 'Kadenzia'...

C.L. Who called this "Kadenzia"?

B. The people themselves, in the ghettos... the first period of the first Judenrat, you find a very high proportion of Judenräte supported by the population, and of whom the population thought that they were good people. Afterwards they thought they had been good people. But you found afterwards, in Israel, that people said "The Judenräte were bad, but our Judenrat was good". We had a research made of 128 Judenräte in Poland, where you could define exactly what they did. There were about 250 all together, but of 128 you could say exactly what happened. And we found that of these 128, 107 were of the kind that the people said were good, or we found that they resisted the Germans, whether already in the economic persecution at the beginning or later on when they were asked to supply lists. In other words, none of these 107 Judenräte went to the point of handing over Jews to the Germans. That is the decisive line of these 128. That was the first period...

C.L. Because they didn't stay long?

B. No, some of them stayed for a very long time. Some of them stayed till the destruction.

And then you have the second group. After the first

big murder action the Germans usually chose people who were suitable to them, and there the proportion of Judenräte who cooperated with the Germans to the point of handing over people was much higher. But when you look at the situation the Judenräte were in, you find that whether they resisted or whether they refused to hand over lists or whether they did hand over lists, the possibilities, the perimeter of what they could do is extremely limited. They were part and parcel - and in this the other historian colleagues of mine who say this I think are right - they were part of a bureaucracy which was set up by the Nazis all over Europe to facilitate cooperation or collaboration with them. This is true of Czech mayors, mayors of French cities, of puppet governments all over Europe. You have to ask yourself: How many French mayors resisted the Germans' call to send French slave workers to Germany after February 1943? How many Czech officials objected or acted against the Germans' designs to send hundreds of thousands of Czech workers to German factories?

C.L. That is true, but the conditions were completely different.

B. But nobody knew that! In Holland, when they sent the Dutch workers to Germany, many Dutch people were utterly convinced that they would never see

those people again. You had the same situation in Poland, in Warsaw after the big Polish rebellion when the Germans evicted all the Polish population out of Warsaw. The Poles were utterly convinced they were going to be murdered, just like the Jews. But the Polish underground signed a treaty, after the rebellion, when they surrendered to the Germans, in which they enabled the Germans to do that. They had no other choice, they had to surrender.

So within that framework of the Nazi terror machine, the possibilities of action were very limited. We are talking about what the Judenräte did within that framework, and within that framework what they did was: Lvov, for instance - the first head of the Judenrat in Lvov refused to hand over Jews for slave labour - not destruction, slave labour. He was killed, so they put a second one in, and when he did not collaborate or cooperate with the Germans as the Germans expected him to, - he opposed them in his own way - he was removed. So you could say the result is the same. But again, what we are discussing is the attitude and the policy. The fact that very few people survived is a result of the German policy, obviously.

Let me tell you a story which, I think, makes this clear:

In Eastern Galicia there was one of these 128

Judenräte, which I mentioned before. The place is called Kosov Uzursky(?). It was a small Jewish town, and there was a Judenrat there. The Jews were in an area in the town - it wasn't really a ghetto - and the Germans came from a neighbouring town to destroy the Jews of Kosov. At least, that is what the Jews of Kosov got by telephone from that neighbouring town - from Kolomyya. The road from Kolomyya to Kosov took about 25 minutes, half an hour by car. The Judenrat in Kosov decided that they would warn all the Jewish population and tell them to hide. In order to hold up the Germans when they came to Kosov, 4 Judenrat members remained in the building of the Judenrat - to hold them up for 5 minutes, for 10 minutes, for a quarter of an hour. Of these 4 people who stayed behind while all the others ran around to tell the Jews to hide, one of them became faint - understandably so - and the other 3 told him "We cannot have you with us, you are too weak". So they sent him to hide, and the three people in the Judenrat in Kosov remained to meet the Germans. This isn't armed rebellion, there were no arms. The environment was Ukrainian, and the Ukrainians hated the Jews and collaborated with the Germans - there was nowhere to hide on a large scale. They dug bunkers and places to hide in. What they did was the only thing they could do. As a historian I think

the action of these three people in Kosov was a heroic action. So you have that as against Holland. You have that at the opposite end of the scale to the Dutch case.

C.L. I am thinking of the case of Genz, for instance. In one of the speeches he delivered - he didn't stop talking, that man, because he wanted to explain what he was doing, he wanted to explain his policy to the Jews and ask for their understanding - the beautiful speech he gave to the intellectuals of Vilna, when he said "I am the one with the dirty hands. You will get out of this very cleanly." Could you talk about this?

B. Yes. That is another Judenrat policy which was engaged by some Judenrat heads (and Genz was one of them) to sacrifice a minority, as they hoped, in order to save a majority, so they hoped. In the speech you mentioned Genz was justifying the action of the Vilna Jewish police in the ghetto of Osniany, where the Nazis came in with Jewish police help to kill old people.

C.L. And the Jewish police participated in the killing.

B. And the Jewish police participated in the killing. Well, they didn't actually kill, but they helped the Germans to select the old people and handed them over to be killed. Genz justified it by saying "If I hadn't done that, they would have taken women

and children." This kind of policy was done not only by Genz. There were a few others who did it too. A very similar case happened in Vilna, in that very same ghetto: the head of the Jewish resistance movement was there - a Jewish communist by the name of Itzi Gritenberg. He had been elected head of the Jewish resistance movement. Apparently a Lithuanian communist was caught by the Germans outside the ghetto, and he told the story about Gritenberg. The Germans demanded that Gritenberg be delivered to them. Genz knew that Gritenberg was in the ghetto, he had met him, and he demanded that Gritenberg be handed over.

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BAUER 5

B. The Nazis demanded that Gritenberg be handed over to them...

C.L. This means the Nazis knew there was an underground movement in the ghetto...

B. They knew there was an underground movement in the ghetto...

C.L. And Genz was the head of the ghetto...

B. Genz was the head of the ghetto, and they demanded of Genz that they wanted the head of the Jewish underground, the communist Itzi Gritenberg, to be handed over to them. Genz was faced with a

problem of either resisting the Germans or acceding to their demands. He called in the heads of the Jewish underground, whom he knew...

C.L. He knew who they were?

B. He knew exactly who they were. They went in to him, and he demanded that they find Gritenberg and hand him over to him, Genz. They refused. Genz organised the ghetto against the Jewish underground, and you have here a case where the underground resistance faced not only the Judenrat, it faced the whole Jewish population. Because the Jewish population saw that if Gritenberg was not handed over to the Nazis, the Nazis would come and destroy the ghetto. This is the way Genz presented it to them, and probably it is not far from the truth. The fact that in the end Gritenberg was handed over to the Germans and the Germans nevertheless destroyed the ghetto is beside the point.

C.L. And the population started to demonstrate?

B. The population demanded the handing over of Gritenberg to the Germans. In the streets of the ghetto - and the ghetto was very small - whoever looked as though he could be a member of the underground was attacked, pushed and shouted at. People of whom they more or less knew they must belong to the underground were in serious trouble. The question really became one of a decision for the

underground: either to yield and hand over the commander of the underground to Genz, which meant to the Germans, or to rebel. To rebel meant not only against the Germans and against Genz, but against the ghetto, against the population, against the very population whom they wanted to lead against the Germans.

C.L. This means they would have been a kind of 'avant-garde' without any support?

B. An 'avant-garde' without any support whatsoever. Left in front without anyone to follow them. Nevertheless, they could not bring themselves to make their decision. According to material we now have, it was apparently a decision of the Communist Party cell that forced the issue by having the representatives of the Communist Party in the leadership of the underground support the handing over...

C.L. As far as I know, Gritenberg himself was as mistrustful of his comrades as he was of Genz and the Judenrat. He was hiding alone.

B. He was really alone. But he accepted - this is the information we now have from people who were members of the communist cell and participated in the decision - they say Gritenberg was not in agreement, but he accepted the decision of the cell.

C.L. Yes, but it was not only a decision of the communist cell, it was the decision of the whole underground.

B. Yes, but I think it is quite clear they would not

have decided to hand over Gritenberg if they had not been supported by the communist cell.

C.L. All right, but I don't think it is exactly the point, whether the Communists decided this or not - the fact is that the whole resistance movement..

B. But the interesting thing is that in their decision the communist cell reflected the view of the whole underground at that point.

C.L. They were really united.

B. They were united, but they waited for the cell to decide because he was one of their members. Then it came to a discussion in the general meeting of the leadership and the decision was taken. And Witenberg handed himself over to the...

C.L. No, it's not so simple; they said "Witenberg has to surrender", and they went to him, as far as I know. He didn't want to - he fought for one night. He didn't want to go. He knew he was going to his death.

B. I am talking about after that. In other words, after that night. I made it short, you are right, there was first a decision, they went to him, he objected, there was a long discussion, and then what decided the issue was the decision of the cell. They went back, he agreed to accept the decision of his own comrades. He did not agree with it but he accepted it. And he handed himself over.

I think what comes out in this episode ...

C.L. It was a kind of lesson.

B. Yes. I think what comes out very clearly is the terrible moral problem of an underground which see itself responsible for the lives of the whole ghetto, and whatever they do they may be accused of causing the death of the people in whose name they want to fight.

C.L. It is exactly the same problem as for the Judenrat, in a way.

B. Exactly. And therefore you find for instance in Vilna, and in Bialystok, that the policies of the Judenrat and the policies of the underground sometimes have a very similar tinge.

C.L. They converge?

B. They are parallel. They have points of meeting. You have another case, which is even clearer, in Bialystok. In February 1943, the Germans told Barsch they would deport 5 000 Jews, and the underground had to decide whether to rebel or not. There is a terrible discussion, and they decide in the end: "No, because if we wait for another few weeks we will have more arms and the rebellion will be greater. If the Germans take only 5 000, we won't rebel." So in effect they sacrificed 5 000 Jews in order, so to speak, to make a rebellion for the whole ghetto.

C.L. This was one of the great dilemmas of the resistance in many ghettos...

B. It was a terrible dilemma.

C.L. ...because they said "We will prepare ourselves to resist, but when will we start?" and they said "On the day of the liquidation".

B. Exactly. But nobody knows what the liquidation is. And in Bialystok, the 5 000 Jews who were supposed to be taken out of the ghetto became 12 000.

C.L. And that was a liquidation too.

B. ... and no rebellion occurred. Or, to be precise, a small part of the resistance group in Bialystok nevertheless rebelled, in February, without arms, without any hope, and with no result whatsoever.

C.L. This is why I insist on this: that there was cooperation by the resistance too.

B. You can't call it cooperation; there was an acceptance of the same situation the Judenrat had to accept. In Bialystok, Tenenbaum was in touch with Barasch - it is not as though Tenenbaum did not know what the problem was before Barasch. They met and discussed this together, it was one decision. I'll give you another example of the same thing: in a small place near Vilna, two young Jews escaped to the forest. This is an area not too far away from the Rudnyky forests. They were caught by the Germans and put into prison, tortured, and they managed to escape in the middle of the

night. They went and hid, and the Germans came to the Judenrat and said "If these two people don't come back we are are going to execute all the Jews in the village". The message was given to these two young men, and they decided not to come back to the village and not to hand themselves over to the Germans. The next day 150 Jews from the village were killed. This was the type of dilemma which the resistance faced. The Germans made them collectively responsible for the whole ghetto, the whole village, the whole population. In this kind of situation they had no way out.

C.L. This is why I think that to emphasise too much the contrast between the resistance and the Judenrat can lead to a completely distorted picture of the real situation.

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BAUER 6

B. We've talked about the fact that in certain respects and in certain cases the conditions imposed on the Judenrat and on the resistance forced both sides to adopt similar policies - to converge. But of course there is a vast difference between the resistance and the Judenrat in these two ghettos and in a number of others. Of course, there were

Judenräte that were resistance, but we are not talking about those. In the case of Bialystok, or Vilna, or in other cases, the resistance realised there was literally no way out. They accepted the fact that the Jews were being killed by the Nazis, and that the only possible reaction to that kind of policy was armed resistance. There was no other, although they knew perfectly well that everybody would be killed.

C.L. Themselves too.

B. And themselves too, so in that sense there was a clear-cut line of difference between themselves and the Judenrat.

I think I will read this letter now; it is the speech of Jakob Genz after the destruction of the ghetto of Osniani with the help of the Jewish police from Vilna.

C.L. Exactly what did the Jewish police do?

B. They selected old people in Osniani.

C.L. But did they actually participate in the shooting?

B. No.

C.L. Is it sure?

B. They didn't have weapons.

C.L. That's what I thought.

B. They led them to be killed.

C.L. And this was known in Vilna?

B. This was known. People came back and it was general

knowledge.

"Many Jews regard me as a traitor", Genz said, "and many of you wonder why I am showing myself at this literary gathering. I, Genz, led you to death, and I, Genz, want to rescue Jews from death. I, Genz, order the "uncovering of malinés" (that's the hiding places)" and I, Genz try to get more food and more work and more certificates for the ghetto. I cast my accounts with Jewish blood, and not with Jewish respect. If they ask me for 1 000 Jews, I give them, because if the Germans themselves came they would take with violence not 1 000 but thousands and thousands, and the whole ghetto would be finished. With 100"(meaning that he gives them 100),"I save 1 000. With 1 000 I save 10 000. You are a people of spirituality and letters"...

C.L.He is addressing

B. He is addressing the intelligentsia of the Vilna ghetto:"... you keep away from such dirty dealings in our ghetto. You will go out clean, and if you survive the ghetto you will say 'We came out with a clear conscience', but I, Jakob Genz, if I survive I will go out covered with filth and blood. Blood will run from my hands. Neverthless, I would be willing to stand at the bar of judgment before Jews. I would say I did everything to rescue as many Jews as I could, and I tried to lead

them to freedom. In order to save even a small part of the Jewish people, I alone had to lead others to their deaths. In order to ensure that you go out with clean consciences, I have to forget mine and wallow in filth".

C.L. It's a fantastic declaration.

B. I think first of all this is an attack on the Jewish intelligentsia. "You have your clean hands, you don't do the dirty work that has to be done; somebody has to do it, and I am doing it. I hope to save a section of the Vilna ghetto..." I think he was actually convinced that by his policy he would manage to lead a remnant of the Jews to the world after the war.

C.L. But there is something else which is striking, whether it is Genz or Runkowski, or even Cherniakow. Cherniakow is very different we know, but all of them insisted on the saving of the youth. They said youth was hope. This is extraordinary, because

B. Well, it's a tradition really. You find - in a different setting of course - a continuation of the Jewish tradition from previous times; during the time of the Tsars, the Jewish communities in Russia sent poor youngsters to the Russian army, which meant either death or conversion away from Judaism, in order to save the spiritually valuable youths of the community. There, too, you had the

sacrifice of some in order to save...to save who? In those days it was to save the intelligent, rich, young population of the Jewish community. Here the concentration is on the youth; all the Jewish parties and groups had this orientation on young people. There is no doubt about that. And it was the hope of these leaders to save youngsters in that way.

But again, I am afraid that if we overemphasise Genz, and Barasch, and Runkowski, the impression will be as though that was the general picture. I insist that this is not the general picture, it is part of the picture, and there were other parts of that picture too. If I may introduce here another case, it is the case of Slovakia, where you had a Judenrat which became, in 1942 in the course of the deportations, a Judenrat which represented groups of Jews who wanted to save the whole community - not one part of it, the whole of it. And they did it in a number of ways: by negotiations, but not only by negotiations; by trying to pay money to the Slovak Government (Slovakia was a puppet State) and establish work camps for Jews in Slovakia. There too you had that emphasis on youth, but in a different setting altogether. The youth will work, they will give the Slovaks the furniture or whatever they produce in these camps,

and as a result of their work the whole community will be saved. That same Judenrat also, in 1943 and even in 1944, tried to smuggle arms to the Jews in these camps. This is a completely different policy, although there is also that concentration on youth.

C.L. But the conditions were completely different, too.

B. The conditions were different.

C.L. There were no ghettos.

B. Well, if you want to take similar conditions, you can take the ghetto of Minsk, or the small ghettos of Wolinia and Belorussia, where the Judenräte - some of the Judenräte, certainly - tried to organise the youth in order to go out into the forests and fight against the Germans.

C.L. Yes, I know very well the case of Slovakia ... (inaudible).

You wanted to say - and I think it has to be said - about the difference of the generations.

B. Yes. I think what we find in the ghettos of Eastern Europe, but also partly in the West, is a rift, an abyss developing between youth and older people. The youngsters, especially in the youth movements in Eastern Europe, whether they were Zionists or Bundists or Communists (most of them were Zionists)...

C.L. The Jewish youth movement?

B The Jewish youth movements... They had not participated in the life of the adult community. The Nazi conquest forced them into redirecting their attention to the community: first in education - they had to try to encompass as many young people in their educational activity as possible - and later on they found themselves (against their will, really) representatives of the whole Jewish population in its struggle for life. This is really what the resistance meant. These youngsters, who made the rebellion in Warsaw or Cracow or Bialystok and in other places, before the war they had no interest at all in what was happening in the community. And now, because the old generation was so slow in understanding what was happening around them, - it was under shock - the youngsters freed themselves quicker from the shock and they established a new life for themselves in which they became the leaders of the community.

C.L. And why were they cut off from the Community before the war?

B. If they were Zionists they wanted to go to Palestine and build a new life. They had nothing to do with the life in Eastern European Jewish communities - this was old, and they rebelled against it. If they were Communists...

C.L. This is a very important point too...

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BAUER 7

B. If they were members of the Zionist youth movement they were preparing for a life in Palestine, before the war. They didn't want to have anything to do with the Jewish communities in Poland or anywhere else - they would come after them as time went on.

C.L. It was a real rupture.

B. It was a complete rupture. You had basically the same attitude amongst, shall we say, the Communist youth, who wanted to create a new society. They were not going to be active in Jewish community life. The Bundists were a little bit different but even there it was a cooperation between the Jewish and Polish working classes to build a new society. The everyday activities in the Jewish community were not their business.

C.L. Not only this, but the way of life.

B. The whole way of life sure. This was foreign to them and they wanted to escape from it. When the Nazis came and you had the creation of the ghetto, everybody was pushed together and people began to realise they shared the fate of the community in which they were living. There was no escape.

C.L. But in a way it was what they hated the most.

B. To be part of that community, precisely. They were forced into it. And when they discussed what to do, some of them - there was a discussion in Vilna ghetto and in Bialystok ghetto and in Cracow, where people said "Look, why should we stay here? We have to protect our own movement. We have to protect the fighters. Let us escape to the forests, let's fight the Germans. And what will happen to the community will happen to the community. We can't help it in any case".

C.L. There were even some who said "Our aim is Palestine. We have to protect ourselves..."

B. Sure, "We have to ... our task is to reach Palestine." There was certainly such a view expressed. But amongst these youngsters, those who didn't want to stay in the ghetto said the ghetto was lost in any case, -"Escape to the forest and save for Palestine, for the future, for whatever, save the few that would fight and save the honour of the Jewish name," and so on. The majority, of course, did not accept this view. The majority in the end stayed, or if they went to the forest they went to the forest 'out of the ghetto', so to speak, taking with them whatever they could. When you go eastwards to the masses of the Jewish partisans, in Belo-Russia for instance you had about 25 000 Jews who escaped into the forest to fight. Not all of them

managed to fight, but 25 000 people escaped...

C.L. But they escaped why? Because there were forests.

B. Because there were forests. Elsewhere there were no forests.

C.L. ...(?)...conditions.

B. You had whole communities escaping, families escaping. This was a different situation altogether.

C.L. Yes, go on. I thought this was very important. This was the case of Smolar, for instance.

B. Well, the case of Smolar in Minsk is, I think, a bit different. Smolar came as a Communist into an environment which had been Soviet, in Minsk. He found a Judenrat which was willing to do everything in favour of armed resistance. On the other side of the fence, in the 'Belorussian' city of Minsk, there was practically no support, and what Smolar and his group did, together with the Judenrat, was to organise the people to go out into the forests. That wasn't just young people; anyone who was able could go out - with arms, if possible, because it was very difficult to be accepted in the forest into partisan units without the arms. It was in that area, the Minsk area, where you had whole family groups who fought - the so-called 'family camps' like the Bielski brothers and others.

C.L. But to come back to the discussion between the people of the Jewish youth; it's important to

mention that some of them said "What is the use of rescuing ourselves if there is no Jewish people behind us?"

B. All right, let me go into that. You had a very clear case of that in September 1942 in Warsaw. In fact, after the great deportations from the Warsaw ghetto, most of the people who formed the resistance group thought there was no use in carrying on any longer, and they wanted to commit suicide. It was Artek Zuckermann(?) and Sylvia Loubetsky and Mordecai (?) and a few others who changed their views, who said "It is our task to remain in the ghetto because we have to lead the Jewish remnant of the ghetto to a struggle. We cannot leave the ghetto behind us. We cannot escape by committing suicide or by some other way". In other ghettos you could escape into the forest, and people said "No, we must not do this, we must stay here because we are part of the ghetto and we must fight with the ghetto".

C.L. And the irony is that they decided this after the big Jewish masses had been destroyed.

B. Yes, while they were being destroyed they had no support whatsoever from the leadership, they had no organisation, they had no arms, and in fact in the Warsaw ghetto the few arms they had were by pure accident found by the Germans and the people

responsible for it were killed. So there was no technical way of having any kind of armed action during the big deportations in any case.

BAUER 8

B. I think the reason for the failure of the resistance groups in the summer of 1942 in Warsaw to organise resistance is due to the fact that they were still unprepared. They were still at the stage of looking for some way of action but they had not yet identified with the masses of the Jewish population around them. They had not prepared any means of meaningful resistance - it was far away from their whole background, their history, their traditions.

C.L. And they were living together.

B. Yes, and the attempts they made were just the beginnings. Then the deportations came and the leader, Josef Kaplan, was caught by the Germans and murdered. The ammunition and arms they had collected was taken by the Germans and the girl who transported it was killed; by pure accident the organiser, Braslav, was caught on the street and killed. So by a series of accidents any resistance during the big deportation was impossible. After that there were about 55 000 Jews left in the ghetto in

Warsaw. The Jews realised that the others had been killed. They didn't know it before; it suddenly came to their consciousness that all these masses of people were no more, and they began accusing themselves for having let them go. This formed a good background for the resistance to get the support of those who remained, the 55 000, for an action of resistance against the Germans...

C.L. There was a real unity?

B. ...and the result was that the Judenrat was neutralised, the Jewish police was neutralised, and a unity came into being between the resistance group and the masses that were left, those Jews that were left in the Warsaw ghetto.

C.L. And the Judenrat was not even useful any more to the Germans.

B. The Judenrat was neutralised, it just couldn't act any more. It was useless.

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C.L. OK, now I would like us to talk about how it happened here...

B. First, let me say one thing: the knowledge of what was happening in Europe reached the whole Western world, including Palestine, until 1942 in a way in which all detailed knowledge was there. You had news about pogroms in this place, and murder in this place, and descriptions of ghettos. All this

you can find in newspapers - in the New York Times or in Palestinian Hebrew newspapers at that time. But nobody put it together into a plan. It was unthinkable. It had never happened before. There was no precedent, and therefore people couldn't accept the idea of what today we know to have been the Holocaust. In Palestine the real rupture came in November 1942, when a group, largely of women and children, Palestinians who had been living in Europe, were exchanged for Germans living in Palestine. This was October 1942, and they left Europe. They arrived here in November, and they knew everything. They told personally the story of the Holocaust, and there was a sudden change: from not realising what was happening, there was a shock. The Zionist leadership in this country took the attitude that in fact nothing much could be done; the Jews were lost...

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BAUER 9

B.J. The news about the Holocaust was not put together in one big picture. There was the individual news which came in: for instance, on March 17th 1942 in the Hebrew paper 'Davar'(?), an article by a very well-known journalist who complains about the spreading of rumours. He said: "Don't those who spread the rumours about tens of thousands

and about a quarter-million massacred Jews feel that the majority does not tend to get over-excited from the fact of the numbers in this news because of their being unreliable and exaggerated?"

And in July 1942 Itzak Greenbaum, who was in charge with of relations/Jews in the Diaspora on behalf of the Jewish agency in Palestine,...

C.L. He was a very important member of the Jewish agency...

B. He was a member of the Jewish agency, yes, and he was asked in the executive, "What about all this news about Vilna? That masses of Jews were killed in Vilna?" And he said "It can't possibly be true, because the rumours talk about more Jews in Vilna being killed than there were Jews in Vilna before the war - which shows that all this news is exaggerated". This same Greenbaum, later on, in December 1942, said he knew about the slaughter in Poland in August but refrained from making it public because of the threat of the German invasion of Palestine, which was then overwhelming, and he did not want to make the atmosphere in Jewish Palestine deteriorate even more. There is something in that: he received very detailed news, and two of these dealt with the Holocaust itself. There was a news item coming from England of the Bund report which was publicised in Britain in June and which reached

Palestine in July, that the Jews were being killed in Poland, and there was a letter from Lichtheim, the representative of the Jewish agency in Switzerland, who was the only one of Greenbaum's correspondents who put this in very clear language: that the Jews were being systematically killed in Europe. The reply of Greenbaum to Lichtheim is different to what he had said in December 1942, because in his reply to Lichtheim he said he didn't believe him. The fact is he did not make Lichtheim's letter public, either to the Jewish agency executive, or to the general public, whatever his reasons were.

C.L. Why? What were the reasons?

B. I think the real reason was that he did not want to believe what he was reading, and when the news did come through the shock was tremendous - both to Greenbaum himself, who felt himself responsible for not having reported what he knew before, and to the general public, because in November these 69 (largely women and children) came, who were Palestinian citizens in Europe exchanged for Germans in Palestine. They reached Palestine with the news they had seen.

C.L. They came from Poland?

B. They came from Poland, from Germany, from Belgium, from France. They came here and told the story of

the Holocaust. They saw it. And suddenly, all of a sudden, from one day to the other, there was a shock to the whole population. Newspapers appeared in black margins, and the reaction of the agency executives, and of the leadership of the newspapers, and of Greenbaum (who was responsible for rescue actions)...

C.L. It must be said that he was the head at that time...

B. ... of the rescue committe. But I will say something about that in a moment, because it is not as simple as that. He was responsible. And the reaction that you see in his activities, and in fact in the activities of the leadership in Palestine altogether, is one that says "Look, there is no chance of saving anyone in any case. The only way to save the people is to win the war quickly". As Greenbaum said in December 1942 in an article in a Hebrew paper, "If there is rescue it will come from the American and Soviet armies. It will not come from us".

C.L. He talked exactly like the Americans, like the British - "Rescue through victory".

B. Precisely. That was the attitude of Greenbaum. One must, however, understand that Greenbaum...

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... the attitude of Greenbaum has to be understood against the background of his position in the

agency: he was a minority representative. He was shunted onto the rescue committee because the majority party in the Jewish agency executive, the Labour Party, occupied the major positions: finance, foreign policy, leadership and so on.

C.L. Greenbaum was a member of the Hachomer(?)

B. No, Greenbaum was a member of the General Zionists. He was a minority representative. When you look at the actions that were done, whatever was done it wasn't through Greenbaum. Greenbaum never sent the emissaries to Istanbul to contact the Jews in Slovakia and Hungary and Rumania and Poland and send them money - that wasn't done through Greenbaum.

C.L. OK, but why was such a man appointed head of the rescue committee?

B. You could say that here you had a scandal of a lack of proper organisation at a time when such organisation was needed. I am just explaining the facts, and the facts are that when, at the same time (the end of 1942), the Jewish agency tried to send parachutists in large numbers to Europe - there was a plan to send immediately 500 parachutists from Palestine to organise resistance all over Jewish Europe - this was proposed by the Jewish agency executive without Greenbaum's even knowing about it, never mind acting in it. So the personality of Greenbaum is important, but it has to be taken

in the proper context. The Jewish agency executive in Palestine at the time was generally of the view that very little could be done.

Now, let's examine whether more could have been done.

C.L. But I think this lack of organisation came from something much deeper, because...

B. I am coming to that. The problem with the Zionist movement in Palestine all together at that time was: you had a very weak Jewish population in Palestine, half a million. There was the British empire that was opposed to the continuation of the Zionists' endeavour. And there was the threat from Germany - in 1942 Rommel stood near Alexandria. In this kind of environment the Zionist leadership said there was no possibility whatsoever for us to help European Jews, but we must help ourselves. We must defend Palestine, we must recruit ourselves to the British army against the Germans and so on. The lack of Jewish power and influence caused the Zionist leadership to say "All we can do is look after Palestine. There is very little we can do abroad. Some things we can do, and whatever we can do we should do. But there is very little we can do. What can we do? We can press the British to send parachutists, military people, to organise Jews in Europe. We can send money, whatever we can

collect in Palestine but it is a very small community. We can try to influence the powers diplomatically. But let us not kid ourselves that we can do more than that." That was the attitude of the leadership; it was not the attitude of some of the youth movements, of some individuals and so on, but that was the attitude of the leadership and it was accepted by the majority of the population.

C. There is the case of Greenbaum, precisely about the approach of the Germans, where he says "We have to fight, and if we know that the Jews are killed like sheep in Europe this will destroy our fighting spirit".

B. This is what he said in January 1943 about August and September. It is true of January 1943 - in other words he does not want to emphasise too much the news about the disasters in Europe because - and he says it openly - "They went like sheep to the slaughter; we must defend ourselves. We must be different." The point is that Greenbaum and his group, and the people who agreed with him did not change their basic attitude that nothing could be done, even after they knew about the Warsaw ghetto rebellion, three months after this. (Because this he said in January). In April they knew about the Warsaw rebellion, it was immediately publicised, and they did not change - they said "we cannot do anything." What was done was done ...

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BAUER 10

B. The problem is what they could have done. For instance, you have a quotation from Greenbaum in early 1943. He says "Zionism is above all. This is to be said whenever a big Holocaust takes us from the struggle for redemption in Zion."(Redemption in Zion? Whose redemption in Zion?) "Our redemption struggle does not develop from, and does not directly merge with the actions for the Diaspora. This is our disaster." There is a contradiction there: the contradiction is that you want to create a State, if you were a Zionist, you wanted to create a State in Palestine for whom? For the Jews in the Diaspora. And who would populate such a State?

C.L. It is a question: for the Jews in the Diaspora, or for an élite of the Jews from the Diaspora?

B. No, they wanted to create a mass Jewish State, and for the mass Jewish state they needed the masses of the Jewish people in the Diaspora. They saw themselves as an avant-garde, and the others would follow. But if there was nobody to follow they would remain an avant-garde without a following, and that would be a tragedy.

C.L. Yes, but at least there would be the avant-garde.

B. All right, but what for? So they are struggling

with themselves all the time. There is a contradiction in the sentences I was reading - a contradiction inside. This was the contradiction with which they were living at that time. They were trying to fight for a State, because if they did not fight for a State, nothing would be saved. If they fought for a State, something would be saved. If there was no Jewish State after the war and no country that would absorb whatever was left, then everything would be lost.

C.L. Yes, everything you say is perfectly true, but in a way they took too easily for granted that nothing could be done.

Y.B. Well, now the problem arises of what could be done. As I said, there were differences of opinion. We take Greenbaum as the extreme example, but there were other members of the Jewish agency who acted differently. But what they essentially saw was a completely powerless Jewish people, and in 1942 and 1943 this is undoubtedly exactly correct. The Jews have no influence, they are pushed aside, nothing will be done for their rescue and all you can do is run to the British: "Please, please, send a few hundred parachutists into Europe" - and they didn't even do that. In the end they sent 31 parachutists.

C.L. Jewish?

B. Jewish parachutists from Palestine to help save Jewish communities in Europe. It was useless. They wouldn't even send a few hundred parachutists. So what else could you do? We had no ships, no aircraft, so how would you get to Europe? Swim? There was no way. This was a country at war. There was no way of getting to Europe. The only thing they could do was get those few pounds together, collect money, send it to Istanbul, get it to Europe, advise them, and the parachutists.

So practically speaking, there was the question the leadership asked: "Ok, you want us to do something - what shall we do?" The youth movements, the kibbutz movements in this country and others said "Please do what you can do".

C.L. Yes, but about the Judenrat you talked about the moral attitude, and one could say they were very rude, these people. They were statesmen and politicians...

B. That is undoubtedly true. They had to decide where to put their effort.

C.L. Their priorities.

B. Their priorities. And their priorities were what they thought they could do at that moment, which was to struggle for the continued existence of the Jewish population here, and to establish Jewish political independence later on. But when you

come to see what actually was done, the little that was done, you have to ask yourself "Who wanted to do it? Did they get the support of the leadership?" Well, they did get the support of the leadership. That same Greenbaum, who is now quoted very often in the kind of quotations I gave, says in one of his speeches to the rescue committee, of which he was chairman: "Anything we can do is useless." He said it. But then he added "But we must do it. We must do it". So he runs around and gets the money, and he does the little he can do. When, after the war, he was accused of the things in the kind of quotations I just quoted, he said "What else do you suggest I should have done?" I don't accept his excuse...

C.L. There is another quotation which is very astonishing too - "I don't swear..."

B. Yes, he was asked by members of his own group, people who came from Poland - "They always demanded of me alarms..." (This is a bad translation from Hebrew which means that he should publicise in the country what was happening)..."and I would pour cold water in their faces and cool their enthusiasm. They said to me 'You have to swear in the name of the Jewish agency that there will be no peace and quiet until we stop the massacre and save the remnants of our brothers in the occupied countries'." And he says "No, I will not swear. It is possible that

this is a main issue, but it is not the only one that must be seen to. And again I spoke of the pledge we have, and the need to get out of the situation of the exceptional people and become a people like all the other peoples. 2 000 years of diaspora are enough. We shall have equal rights in the family of nations in this world. This is a testament and we have to execute it. We can't do anything for the diaspora; we have to execute the testament of the diaspora here to establish ourselves as an independent people."

C.L. There is this, and there is also the other one, where he says very clearly "If I have to choose whether to give money for rescue or give money for ..."

B. I remember the quotation.

C.L. "... for the Jewish cause..."

B. "... for the Jewish cause, then there will be the Jewish cause." In actual fact he said it and he did the opposite, because when the discussion came up: "Where should the money go?" he demanded that the money should go to the rescue. One has to say that in his favour. I told you, there is a contradiction in their attitude. The interesting thing is the pressure that is excercised in Palestine by the people from the kibbutz movement, by the youth movements, by the working-class movement in this

country and by other groups, who demand more action. And the 'more action' expresses itself in sending a delegation to Istanbul which will be in touch with the Diaspora and will try to send the money. That is in effect what they were asking for, and that is in effect what they got. Then we come to 1943 and 1944, and for the first time a real possibility opens up to do something real, and that is with the mission of Joel Brandt, the Hungarian business. There you can see, the moment there is a possibility, what they do. Greenbaum is completely out of the action, he doesn't exist there. The people who do it are Ben Gurion and Sharett, and they tried to influence the British and American Governments to carry on negotiations with the Nazis to save the Jewish people of Europe. The expression of Sharett is "dangle a carrot in front of their eyes" - don't actually give them anything, just negotiate, and by the very process of negotiating you will save Jews, because you will postpone their murder.

So, when you come to June 1944, for the first time the Jewish agency in Palestine does have a possibility of doing something real, and this is what they do. They demand negotiations.

C. Do you think they did their utmost?

B. I don't quite know what the utmost is. This is the

time of the invasion of Europe. The invasion of Europe was early June 1944. Joel Brandt came to Istanbul on 19th May, and Sharett flew to London on 26th June. A demonstration in front of Churchill? Can one really suggest that British Jews should have demonstrated in front of the Houses of Parliament 3 weeks after the invasion of Europe? Or do you suggest that this should have been done in America at the same time? Hardly likely. So there was pressure. What is pressure? Meetings, memoranda, organising non-Jewish diplomats and statesmen to intervene on behalf of whatever the Jewish agency wanted to be done.

C.L. I agree with you completely, but what is so striking is that when one compares the pace and the reason of the deportations day by/in Hungary - the fantastic speed, and the slowness of this pressure...

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BAUER 11

B. One of the big problems there is the lack of congruity - you have the Nazis in Europe doing the destruction of the Jews at a fantastic speed, and the reaction of the outside world is complicated, slow and contradictory.

C.L. And the outside world knows.

LB The outside world knows what is happening. What is the basic reason for that? I think the basic reason, and this comes out very clearly in the Hungarian episode with the Jewish agency demanding negotiations and the Western world opposing it - the real reason behind it is that the Western powers were leading a war to be won by military means. The aim of the war was actually to change the world - to destroy a terrible, Satanic force, the Nazi power, which was trying to destroy peoples. So in actual fact the aim should have been to save people, but this was lost in a concept which saw the war as a purely military affair. There was a decision taken by the American military, in January 1944, which said in so many words that no military action should be taken to save civilians which was not in line with military needs. Military needs meant anything that was conducive to a military victory in the war. The Jews - and in some cases others - were civilians who were threatened by the Nazi machine, but their saving was not a military aim of the Western powers. Therefore, whatever the Jewish agency did - and eventually it went to London in June 1944 to try to convince the British - was useless. On 2nd June 1944 Greenbaum sent a cable to America to convince the Americans they should bomb Auschwitz. This was another thing the Jewish agency could do: to demand the bombing of Auschwitz. This was not

actually an idea of the Jewish agency, it came from Slovakia, from Weissmandel. But it reached the Jewish agency, they adopted the plan and sent it in.

But you see, the Americans and then the British didn't see this as a priority. The priority was to bomb the chemical factories near Auschwitz, not to bomb the concentration camp. So what the Jewish agency in Palestine could do, even in that situation, was what we said before the Judenräte could do: they could show good intentions, they could press. There wasn't very much more they could do in those circumstances.

C.L. But that is exactly what was asked by the Jews of Warsaw back in October 1942, when Karski was sent. He said "One has to take specific measures..."

B. ..."specific military measures." In 1942, when Karski came to Europe and America, in October 1942 there was no military means by which American bombers could reach Eastern Poland. But in 1944 there was, and it was realistic, and the Western powers wouldn't do it. We don't talk about the Soviet Union, because the Soviet Union simply wasn't interested in the whole business.

Now let me come to the Hungarian problem. There are several issues involved: I think one basic issue has to be got out of the way straight away,

and that is that Kastner (who was the factual, although not the nominal, leader of the Zionist rescue committee in Budapest) was accused of negotiating with the Nazis and in return for the negotiations with the Nazis, kept quiet about the mass murder in Poland and thereby prevented Hungarian Jews from reacting to the Nazi deportations differently to the way they did in fact react. This is put forward especially clearly in the case of one town in Eastern Hungary, Klusz(?), where Kastner comes from, where it was said that he saved a number of his friends and family and so on by bringing them to Budapest and did not warn the others, thereby preventing their escape to Rumania, which was just 12 kilometres away across the border. Let me put this very clearly: I think this whole issue is put the wrong way round. Hungarian Jewry, including the Jews of Klusz, did not have to be told about the mass murders in Poland or about the plan of the Germans to annihilate the population of Europe. They saw it happening in front of their eyes. It is quite futile to talk about anyone, whether Kastner or anyone else, being needed to tell the Jews of Klusz or any other place in Hungary about what was happening in Poland. How did they know? First of all there were 2 500 Polish Jews who escaped between 1942 and 1944 into

Hungary from Poland, especially from the area of Lvov.

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B. How did they know? First of all there were 2 500 Polish Jews who escaped between 1942 and 1944 into Hungary from Poland, especially from the area of Lvov. They told their hosts, the Hungarian Jews, about Belzec, about Treblinka, about Majdanek, about the mass destruction in all these places. Some of them survived, we have their testimonies in Yad Vashem(?). They tell us that the Jews who hosted them, including people who escaped into Klusz, did not want to listen to them - threw them out! The Judenrat, the Hungarian Judenrat in Budapest, created a separate department which sent out emissaries to Hungarian provincial towns to warn the Jews that they were going to be deported to Poland and killed.

C.L. What does it mean? When they sent people to warn, what did they tell them?

B. They went to the various ghettos - by this time there were already ghettos, this was after the beginning of April..

C.L. Yes, but in order to understand one has to say that the lifetime of the ghettos was very short.

B. Six weeks.

C.L. Yes.

B. Most of these emissaries came within those six weeks. They were sent out as a measure of immediate rescue. They came with the task of telling the Jews in those ghettos, "Don't agree to be taken into trains, don't agree to be taken away, because you are going to be shipped to Poland and Poland means death". That is what they were told. Of these 12 people who were sent out (it was a small department immediately organised to send out people who did not look Jewish and could go around) there is not a single one - and I think 8 or 10 of the twelve are here in Israel today - who does not tell the story that he came to this ghetto and that ghetto and this town and that town, and was kicked out by the community.

C.L. But it is not very surprising. It was the same in Poland too.

B. But this is two years after the destruction started in Poland. And what I am trying to say is that it is not a matter of the Jews of Hungary not knowing; it is a matter of their not <u>wanting</u> to know, because to know meant...

C.L. But we have to enter into details; these Jews who were sent as emissaries... what did they do? They gathered the people and delivered speeches and talked to the chiefs of the community...

B. They tried to see the chiefs of the community, and it was the chiefs of the community who did not want to receive the message. The accusation that was afterwards levelled against Kastner and a few others was that they did not warn the chiefs of the community; and what I am saying is that the chiefs of the community, and the community, had the information and did not have the knowledge, because they did not want to have the knowledge.

C.L. You don't convince me absolutely. I think what you say is too simple. And secondly, we don't understand very well what Kastner, at the same time, was doing.

B. I am coming to that, but I first want to make this point clear because if I didn't convince you I have more points. There were Hungarian soldiers who came from the Ukraine on leave...

C.L. No, no. I agree completely about this - that they knew about the destruction is very clear. But I think if they had been warned in another way - and I don't know which way - maybe the results would have been different. When you talk to some of these people today - and I have talked to some of them who are in Israel and were shipped from Transylvania or from Klusz to Auschwitz - these people complain and say today that they were never warned.

B. Well this is simply not true. In Klusz there was a rescue committee composed ...

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BAUER 12

B. In Klusz you had a very typical situation, and a very important one because Klusz is a very short distance away from the Rumanian border. There was theoretically a possibility of crossing it, although how many could in fact have crossed the border in the middle of war between Hungary and Rumania is very doubtful. In Klusz there was a committee of community leaders, Kastner was not a community leader, he was a journalist, an important journalist. The list I have here of one, two, three, four, five, six central leaders of the community including the Rabbi of the Niarlo(a) community in Klusz, they were trying, during the period of ghettoisation (a very short period of time) to convince the Jews of Klusz that they should escape. It was a rescue committee. They knew what was happening in Poland and they were trying to warn them. What I am trying to say is that to have Kastner or any person come into Klusz to tell the people of Klusz what was happening in Poland so they shouldn't go there, was futile. They knew it in any case.

C.L. I think the warning was not delivered properly.

B. I am saying that the warning didn't have to be delivered properly, because the people knew. The

addition of somebody else telling them what they already knew had no meaning. Their own leaders told them.

C.L. If the chiefs of the community had said in proper terms, "Don't...."

B. But that was the leadership! Dr Moshe Weinberger, for instance - he was a leader of the community. Hilel Danzig was a leader of the community. These people were on that committee. This was before some of them went on the Kastner train, yes.

C.L. What does this mean? That the population of Klusz ...(?)...

B. Yes, what we discussed before. That the Jewish population in the Hungarian provincial cities - in fact anywhere - simply did not want to realise what was going to happen. It's not that they didn't have the information.

C.L. I think they had no time...

B. Now we are coming to that.

C.L. ... because it happened very fast. And secondly, I don't think they were warned properly by their own natural leaders.

B. But those were their natural leaders.

C.L. If their leaders had said - and I am not sure they did say - "Run away! Anyway you are doomed, you are finished..."

B. No, they didn't say "Run away". They said "Escape

to Rumania" in Klusz. In most cities in Hungary there was no point in trying to escape anywhere, because there was no way. But what Kastner was accused of was that he was negotiating with the Nazis to save the whole Jewish population of Hungary, if possible, against money. That is what he was doing. He first met with Dieter Wislitzeny at the end of March 1944 and then again in April. They were trying to negotiate for a ransom which would, first of all, not put the Jews of Hungary into ghettos. This was the first thing. And afterwards to try to save, by some kind of negotiation, through the Braun(?) negotiations and afterwards, whoever it was possible to save. By doing these negotiations, he was accused of closing the option of turning to the Jews of Hungary and telling them to run. When you analyse this, you have to see he could have done either the one or the other. The moment he turned to the Jewish population and told them to run, that would have been the end of the negotiations with the Nazis because there was no hiding. So the problem for Kastner was, What was more effective? What had more chance? The Germans came into Hungary with a plan, a very quick plan. It took them very little time to go through the stages of concentration, isolation, Aryanisation and so on. The ghettos existed for a

very short time, only as preliminary steps to deportation, the central Judenrat in Budapest had very little effect anyway. The process was very quick, the cooperation of the Hungarian population and Government was almost 100%, there was no possibility for the Jews to escape into the countryside, there were a few Jewish communities on the Rumanian border and all the rest were not in that situation at all; and Kastner decided, together with Komoy and other members of that group, that the only chance to save Jews was by negotiation. The Jewish men were in labour battalions...

C.L. But you said "the only chance to save Jews..."; you should say "the only chance to save some Jews...", because as a matter of fact he thought already that the others were doomed and he was going to save a handful.

B. No, that is not true.

C.L. I think it is.

B. ... because his negotiations to start with, with Wislitzeny and ...

C.L. But this was...

B. ...the first stage. The second stage was Brandt, and Kastner believed in the Brandt mission. And the Brandt mission was to save one million Jews. Don't forget that.

C.L. Yes, but Kastner was the third stage.

B. But you see, when the second Kastner negotiations started, they did not start, as you know, before early June. By early June the process of the deportation of the provincial Jews was in full swing.

C.L. That's exactly what I am saying; he knew it.

B. ...so the only way he could act, or he thought he could act, was by negotiating with the Nazis to save whoever he could save. His negotiations turned about the Jews of Debrecen, the people who were transported - 15 or 17 000 people...

C.L. But he himself writes in his report that he wanted to save a kind of Noah's Ark...

B. It was not only that. What he wanted to do was to break the precedent, he wanted to create a precedent of saving Jews with German agreement. Once this precedent was created, negotiations would then begin to save large numbers. The precedent was the famous Kastner train. By the way, Kastner of course thought there would be more trains, but there was in the end only one. Like all leaders in Europe in a similar situation (of the adult groups, not the youngsters), he took from Klusz his friends, his family, and he took into that train people representing all the sections of Hungarian Jewry, and he argued...

C.L. And many rich too, who could pay.

B. And rich people who could pay for the rest... He

argued that if he put his family in there, then people would join. If not, who could know? Perhaps the Germans were going to betray him, like they had betrayed so many times before, and they would ship the train to Auschwitz. I don't know whether that is true or not, but what is clear to me is that he believed in this idea of a precedent.

C.L. What interests me is that one can see the achievement of Kastner in a double light - either a completely positive one, or a negative one. The positive one is what you say: he created a precedent and in fact this was the first time the Nazis released Jews. 1,600 Jews is nothing, and it is tremendously much. The negative thing is that he behaved like a classic Judenrat member: in one way he was only interested in saving a handful, because he knew he couldn't save the ...(?).

Y.B. I am not sure that you are right.

C.L. I am not sure you are right either.

Y.B. All right. I would plunge for the positive explanation in the case of Kastner. Not that Kastner was the ideal representative of the Jewish people - by no means. He certainly was interested in saving his own group, there is no doubt about that; he was a person with very peculiar standards, occasionally, but there is no doubt in my mind that he wanted to save the Jewish population of Hungary and not

just that group; that the group he saved was for him a stepping-stone to save others, more people and as many as he could; and I think he was right, because I think there was no other way of saving Jews in the situation of Hungary, where you have all the Jews in the labour battalions and no rebellion is possible - where you have no weapons and no suppport from the Hungarian population, where you are under SS occupation; in Hungary there was no other way than by ransom and negotiations. He conducted these negotiations very cleverly, and in fact, through Eichmann and afterwards through Becher, he convinced Himmler that he was somebody with whom it was worthwhile negotiating. I think it can be said that partly due to Kastner...

BAUER 1

B. I think it can be said that even in 1942 already, Himmler and some of the German generals knew that Germany couldn't possibly win the war. I think you can find it in Felix Kersten's memoirs and various other places.

C.L. Kersten was the masseur of Himmler.

B. Kersten was the masseur of Himmler and he had discussions with him and so on... I think these memoirs have to be taken seriously. So I would say the Jews were for Himmler a means to get to

this kind of negotiations. This was based on the idea that Himmler believed in, like most of the top Nazis, that the Jews were a world power, that they could influence the Western allies, that those Jews who were in Nazi Germany's control could be used as a means to reach the Western allies. This was a complete fantasy; the Jews didn't have any power, but the Germans believed they did. And this is the basis for these negotiations, otherwise you cannot explain them.

C.L. This is enough to understand why the Jews were killed; powerlessness...

B. Powerlessness, and they were imputed a power they did not have.

The Western allies had no such illusions, of course. And for the Western allies the Jews were a relatively unimportant element in the whole situation. The Jewish position, in between this Nazi idea of a tremendous Jewish power through whom one could reach the Western allies, and on the other hand the complete lack of interest, really, of the Western allies who were fighting a war against Germany - that is the situation of the Brandt mission. That is the situation in which the Brandt mission failed. It had to fail, because the Germans meant it seriously and the Allies did not. Behind the Brandt mission in 1944, you have this

figure of Bandi Gross(?). A fascinating figure, because Bandi Gross was sent by the SS to try to negotiate a separate peace. It is ridiculous to think that anybody would have taken Bandi Gross seriously; he was a smuggler, a little thief, a crook, but he was the only person in the whole Nazi Reich who in 1944 had direct contact with the British and American intelligence services in Istanbul and in neutral country. He was used by the SS in order to try to get the negotiations with the Allies going. He was sent along with Brandt; really Brandt was a cover for Gross. In reality the Brandt mission - he was sent in order to exchange goods, trucks, for Jews - was just one line. The Gross mission was the real one. They wanted to get to negotiations with the Allies. The refusal of the Allied powers to negotiate over the Brandt scheme stemmed from the fact that the British and the Americans realised in the end that the real mission was Gross, and Gross was negotiating a separate peace. The Western allies would not have anything of that.

C.I. Do you think they would have negotiated with the Brandt mission if there had been no Bandi Gross ?

B. No, but the complete burying of the Brandt mission was the result of finding out about Gross. Until the Gross mission was found out, a few weeks passed.

During these weeks both the British and the Americans said "Ok, we are not going to give the Germans any goods or anything like that, but let's keep the door to negotiations open". That was the phrase. I don't know what would have happened if they had not discovered the real aim of the Gross mission, but it is clear that when they did discover it, it buried the Brandt mission completely. And there again you have this Jewish situation, where the Jews are the victims of powers which are completely beyond the Jewish fate: the Nazi realisation (or some Nazis realised) that the war was lost, or could not be won, they wanted to negotiate with the Allies, the Allies' refusal, and in the middle there are millions of Jews who are slowly - or quickly, rather - being ground up in the Nazi machine while this is going on.

C.L. It's true, but it's difficult to understand because at the same time Eichmann was killing.

F.B. Eichmann was killing, because there were in the SS two parallel lines of policy. One was the one I just outlined, in other words the line of Himmler and Becher, which said "We must try to find some way of reaching the Western allies" - but of course this was not known to Hitler. And the idea of the complete destruction, annihilation of the Jewish people in Europe was the second one. It

was going on, and Himmler was carrying on with it.

C.L. It was not done without his knowledge.

B. No, of course not. It was the second line. He was pursuing two lines at the same time. But you see, both lines are within the Nazi ideology, and it cannot be explained without reference to Nazi ideology. Nazi ideology did not see the Jews as human beings. Therefore you could either kill them or sell them, whichever was more convenient. The selling process stemmed from the same background as the killing process.

C.L. Exactly. They saw them as trucks.

B. The same as trucks, yes.

And then you have the same situation carrying on after the failure of the Brandt mission, with the negotiations in Switzerland which were conducted from August 1944 to February 1945 by a representative of the JDC, the Joint in Switzerland, Saly Meyer, with this same group - with Becher on behalf of Himmler. And it is the same line. Himmler there, quite clearly, is trying to get to the Americans.

C.L. Yes. At this time it is clear.

B. So throughout the Holocaust, at least from 1942 on, in my view - it can be proved later, but I think it is true from 1942 on - a possibility of saying "The Nazi decision to murder all the Jews of Europe was conditional in a sense. If there was somebody

to buy the Jews "they might have sold them". But there was nobody to buy the Jews, because the Allied idea was...

C.L. This is very important: to sell or kill was the same thing. It cannot be understood otherwise. This is very good.

B. Next...

C.L. There are now the people of the Europaplan, the Jews: Weissmandel, Fleischmann...

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BAUER 15

B. I think it ought to be stressed that if the Allies had agreed to negotiate about the trucks, that would have led also to direct negotiations, precisely as Himmler wanted.

Now let me go to the Slovak negotiations of 1942.

C.L. But one has to add too, I think, the fact that the only way they thought of making an opening to the Allies for negotiations was through the Jews.

B. That is perfectly true.

C.L. And this goes with their idea of a Jewish power.

B. Definitely. The whole idea of the Nazis was that they were fighting a war against world Jewry. Therefore, any negotiations with the powers they were fighting against involved the Jewish problem in one way or another. That is perfectly clear.

C.L. This is very, very important.

B. I think it has been proved that the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union was an attack designed to fight against world Jewry. That was the idea of the struggle against the Soviet Union. The same applies to the so-called 'Western plutocracies', who were supposed to be controlled by the Jewish world power.

C.L. One can even follow a line starting much earlier - the negotiations ... (?)..

B. Schacht-Rubli(?), certainly. You have a line from Schacht-Rubli, perhaps even earlier than that, where the Nazis already before the war say there are various ways of dealing with the Jews, and one of them is to sell them. This was the idea behind the Schacht-Rubli negotiations of December/January/February 1939.

C.L. Could you say in one word?

B. The Schacht negotiations were the result of the Evian conference of 1938. The idea was to have 100 000 young Jews emigrate abroad, where they would prepare the ground for the others to follow, and the Jewish people outside Germany would pay for it, in essence. America wasn't very happy about this plan, and by the time the negotiations started the world war had broken out. But Hitler explicitly gave his agreement to this, so one

can say that the idea of selling the Jews in this sense was, with Hitler in 1939, parallel to very grim decisions that were apparently in the process of being taken at the same time. You have this kind of parallel attitude throughout the war.

When we come to the question of the ransom deal, or the supposed ransom deal in Slovakia, Jewish survivors argue that the ransom paid by Weissmandel and Gizi Fleischmann in Slovakia to Wislitzeny in June and September 1942 stopped the deportation of Slovak Jewry. There is circumstantial evidence to show that this was so. What is the circumstantial evidence? The dates of the discussion between Wislitzeny and the Jewish group precede by a few days a meeting between Wislitzeny and the German ambassador to Slovakia, Hans Ludin, and the Slovak Prime Minister, Tuka. In that discussion Wislitzeny announced to a very surprised Slovak Prime Minister that the Nazis were stopping the Jewish deportations, supposedly because of the intervention of the Catholic Church, supposedly because the Slovaks were corrupt and were letting 35 000 Jews out of the deportations. When you check this it is very unlikely. The Catholic intervention was in March, not June. 35 000 Jews freed from deportation by the Slovaks? That is pure fantasy. Nothing like that ever existed.

And it is a fact that the Germans stopped the deportations. They - Ludin and Wislitzeny - reported to Berlin that they were stopping the deportation for those reasons. So you have this time element, which comes together. There is therefore a case for saying the ransom stopped the deportations, but there is no proof, because you could say the deportations were stopped for other reasons which we don't know today, we don't have the documentation.

C.L. We could say too it was always the way the Nazis dealt with, because they never deported one community at once.

B. It is very difficult to say, but it is a fact that the deportations were stopped for six weeks, that within those six weeks the other part of the ransom was supposed to be paid and it was not paid, that more transports went, and that after the second payment was paid there was only one more transport and then the deportations stopped for almost two years. So there is a case, but if you ask me whether there is proof, I cannot say there is.

What was our next point?

C.L. I am sure there is no proof.

B. Well, I don't know. We find peculiar things in the last few years, and I haven't lost hope that we may find the truth one way or another in this case. But when you look at this, you see that what is really important is the utter conviction of the

people who were negotiating that they had stopped the deportations through the ransom, because that made them approach Wislitzeny in November for the Europaplan. Had they not believed that they had stopped the deportations, they would not have tried it.

C.L. Yes, for sure.

But why did the Germans answer them when they suggested the Europaplan: "Ok, we agree to this; find the money and we will stop"?

Why did they say that?

C.L. Yes.

B. I think it is quite clear. They said they wanted to negotiate with foreign Jews, with world Jewry. They said they wanted the money in a neutral or Allied country, to be delivered to them. They quoted a ridiculously low figure, in money terms, for the ransom - they demanded 2 million dollars. What are 2 million dollars in a world war? The very sum they demanded, the small sum, goes a long way to show that what they were after was not the money. The money was just a means to get into negotiations, and to me at least it is perfectly clear that already in 1943, what they really wanted was the negotiations with the Allies.

C.L. Yes, because they wanted the money from outside...

B. And I think Weissmandel's story there is very clear;

He invented world Jewry, he invented somebody who represented it in Switzerland, a man by the name of Ferdinand Roth, and in his name he wrote letters and that was OK. In fact, Wislitzeny reflected his belief in the person with whom he was negotiating when he was on trial in 1946 in Slovakia after the war. In his testimony before the trial he reflected that.

C.L. What did he say?

B. He said he was negotiating with world Jewry. He was convinced of that. And he reported this through Eichmann to Himmler. That he also said in the trial.

C.L. A last point: what you said about the war against the Soviet union, that it was in fact a war against the Jews. Can you elaborate?

B. Yes. This you find in Hitler's second book, which was written in 1928 - that the Jews control the Soviet Union and therefore any expansion of Germany must be at the expense of the Soviet Union and destroy the Jewish power there, which would be the destruction of the world Jewish power. His preparations for the attack on the Soviet Union at the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941 reflect this very clearly. He is attacking a Judeo-Bolshevist power which is the greatest demonic power he is fighting against; he is fighting against the control of the world by world Jewry.

He says this in a number of places and I think it is perfectly clear. It is unbelievable to a normal person today to say that Hitler was fighting the war against Russia to fight against Jews - it sounds crazy, but it happens to be true. What can you do? The Jewish problem for Hitler was one of the two poles of his whole ideology. The positive pole was the conquest of the world by the healthy and cultured Germanic race, and the negative pole was the demonic, Satanic power of the Jews that was in fact in control of the world of Hitler's enemies and against which he had to fight in order to win.

(fin de l'interview)