

TITLE- Louis Arzt
I DATE- November 26, 1992
SOURCE- Jehovah's Witness
SOUND QUALITY- very good
IMAGE QUALITY- excellent
DURATION- 33 minutes
LANGUAGES- French with English translation

0:01:00 Louis was born November 3, 1930 in Mulhouse (Alsace), France. His father's name was Charles Arzt and his mother's was Anne Mueller. He had two older brothers, Charles and Pierre. The family were Jehovah's Witnesses.

0:02:45 Louis was too young to remember much about life in France in 1938-39, before the Nazi occupation. His memories begin in 1941, the year his parents became Jehovah's Witnesses.

0:04:00 All five family members were baptized in the space of two weeks in 1941. They had only had contact briefly with the Jehovah's Witnesses but were afraid of the world situation, of the possibility of Armageddon. The parents feared that anyone who was not baptized might become a victim. The three boys immediately took a stand of neutrality in their school.

0:06:30 The children informed their teacher that from that day on, they would no longer salute Hitler at school. The teacher's response was very negative, but all she really said was, "We will get in touch with you later on." She was German and a Nazi sympathizer.

0:07:45 Later the constable came to the house and confiscated all their publications; they even wanted to take the Bible. Louis' father insisted that a German law existed that prohibited the removal of the Bible, so the family was allowed to keep theirs.

0:08:45 Louis' father worked in a factory for 35 years, but he broke down emotionally the day the three boys were taken away. From that day on he could work only part-time. His mother had more fortitude but suffered the absence of her sons nevertheless.

0:10:30 As for Louis, of course he was frightened to be taken away from his parents but he relied on two things for strength and comfort: the first was his strong love for Jehovah, and the second, obedience to his parents insistence on neutrality.

0:12:00 The day Louis was taken away, the Gestapo came to the family's home. The Gestapo had warned the parents two or three days earlier to have the children ready to depart. The Gestapo took the three boys to the Mulhouse railway station. A judge that worked with juveniles accompanied them all. This judge acted against his will and behaved humanely toward the boys. Later he secured their release.

0:14:00 The family never knew why the Gestapo took away the boys and not their parents. Louis' father tried to persuade the Gestapo to take him in place of his sons. The

Gestapo replied that they were interested in having the youngsters and not in adults. En route from Mulhouse, they were treated well. It was a short, two-hour train ride from Mulhouse to Karlsruhe, Germany.

0:15:45 After arriving in Karlsruhe, the Gestapo accompanied Louis to the penitentiary -- apparently a sort of Nazi reform school -- where the director of the penitentiary then took charge. It was then that the bad treatment began.

0:17:00 The daily routine at the penitentiary involved 2-3 hours of classes (at least half consisting of Nazi political indoctrination). Otherwise, they worked in the fields. The food they ate there was poor -- Louis at the point holds up a photo taken of him at the camp showing how much weight he has lost.

0:19:45 The Nazi education generally consisted of an assembly before the flag at 7 a.m. followed by an update of the progress being made on the war fronts. Afterwards they would work in the fields.

0:20:45 One day, Mr. Baumgartner, the director, noticed that Louis refused to salute Hitler at assembly, and he beat him on his backside with a wooden rod. At the lunch hour, Louis was still in too much pain to sit -- he was black and blue and swollen. The other children laughed at his predicament. The next day the opposite took place: Mr. Baumgartner put his arm around Louis and told him that if he would just once say "Heil Hitler" he would be put on the train and later that day find himself at home on his mother's lap. This was the most incredibly cruel thing it was possible to say to a young boy separated as he was from his parents.

0:23:30 Most of the other youths at the penitentiary were there for reasons similar to Louis'. One boy had been caught after he blinded someone by throwing stones at them. Louis' brothers were elsewhere, perhaps 30 km away, to prevent them from talking to one another.

0:24:40 At this point, Louis displays his notebook from the reform school with his grades in it. It starts off with an explanation of Louis' misbehavior in refusing to salute Hitler. In addition, it is noted, he didn't recite German poetry or recite German songs, and would not participate in any political activities.

0:28:00 Nine months after Louis' deportation, M. Strobert, the juvenile judge, discovered a valid law that prohibited the deportation of children younger than 14. The judge thus managed to secure the release of Louis. During his time in the penitentiary, Louis never once saw his brothers, but his parents visited him twice.

0:31:00 Later, when the French regained control of Alsace, doctors examined Louis and finding him frail, they ordered four weeks of recuperation in Savoy (the French Alps).

0:32:00 By way of conclusion, Arzt stated that his ordeal during the war had strengthened his faith in God, because no ordinary 13 year old child has the fortitude to stand up to such things alone. The strength of God allowed him to go on and he thus experienced God's presence.

0:33:00 When he hears today of the rise of neo-Nazi groups, Louis is unafraid, because he has faith

in God and does not believe such a Nazi system can come into existence again. He relies on the principles of the Bible -- what the apostle Paul said to Timothy: Only God's kingdom can change things, not humans.