

I think the date of your arrival back in the Netherlands was the 10th of October.

10th October.

1945. So that's almost exactly three years.

Three years and two days I'd been away, three years and 10-- three years and two days, the 10th of October. I stood outside my house where they had taken me. Only it wasn't half past 1:00 in the morning, but it was about 10 o'clock in the night.

When you were back in Holland and later on back in England--

Yes.

--did you find that anyone realized that there was something different about you? Did people react to you? I mean people who didn't know you.

Well, of course I was staying then in my brother's house. Because after my brother died, we moved back to Forest Gate, and I lived in Forest Gate. And people came in, neighbors and all that, and they had read the article in the paper, and they had heard, probably, other people talk about it.

So they came in, and they talked to me. And they didn't know what I was always talking about, but in the British hospital in Paris, the BBC had made a record or a couple of records of me. And I was telling on the records what had happened to me in the camps and so on. And I played those records to the people who came in and listened to it so they'd get a better idea of what I was telling them.

At my brother's place, when I talked about the camps, I told them several things. I don't think they took it all quite in. They couldn't understand it, not until years later, when they saw on television something about the concentration camps.

I remember coming in there one evening, and they said, you know, you told us about the camps when you came to us after liberation. Yes. They said, now we understand because we saw something like that on the television, and we know what you were talking about.

So people didn't always in the beginning what it was all about. They didn't believe it.

Now you spend a certain amount of your time talking at people's invitation to schools or groups about the life in the camps.

Yes.

How do you find people react or respond?

Very good, I should think. Very good up to now, especially the youngsters, the school. The older people have read a lot about it, but I seldom meet somebody who's really been in hell. The children, they listen to it, and it's news to them, but I'll give them a kind of a warning, and that's what I want to do.

Way back in Birkenau, when I saw the first man being almost beaten to death, I made a promise with God I'd go out and tell the world what was happening to us. And that's what I have been doing, have been wanting to do, and I am doing now if they let me.

So anybody, whether it's one or two or 1,000 or 2,000, if they want to know about it and they ask me, I'll tell them about it. It's a necessity.

There are people, as you know, who deny that the things that you say happened and deny 6 million Jews died and so on.

Yes. I didn't read the books, but I saw the titles. But I assure you it is true. Not only 6 million Jews died, but they say that four million non-Jews died. Where are those people? And they died a terrible death.

Not all of them died of pneumonia. Not all of them died of heart attacks or disease. The mass died in the gas chambers or being beaten up. Yes. I gather it was about 10 million altogether. That is so, and there's enough proof of it, and God help anybody who comes out of the camps.

You can underestimate it, but if you're talking about the things in camp, don't overestimate it. Don't make it fantastic more than it is. I myself will not tell you things. I am there again. I'm walking. I'm seeing it, and it's coming out of my mouth.

It's always there in my mind. And if anybody wants to know it, I'll talk about it.

Do you wish you could get it out of your mind and not think about it?

I never wished. I made this promise with God, and automatically it's come true. The world should know about it. I don't want people and children to be killed off just because their beliefs are different. It shouldn't be like that.

Did you follow Nuremberg and other war crimes trials?

No, I didn't follow them. I didn't read. I collect books about the camps and about my country where I used to live, Holland, Rotterdam especially, the town where I lived. But I don't read a lot in those books.

I got it in me. But I do like to know more about the camp Westerbork. After I left Westerbork, a lot of things altered there. And above all, I'm always looking and searching if I can find people who were there with me, and I could talk to them about things we both or whoever it was experienced.

Have you received restitutions from the German government?

Well, years ago, I got 2,500 marks. We all had paid, got paid from GI Farben, where most of the people in Monowitz and Auschwitz worked for. After that, it was a fight between me and the British government for compensation. I am disappointed in my country, in my English, England.

I've talked to people in Whitehall or wherever they were. I asked for compensation, and they didn't want to listen to me. I got no compensation from the Dutch government.

Ironically, there was a time that the Dutch government refused to compensate me for what I went through, and they said, because you're a British subject. Why didn't they say that in '42? Why didn't they say you're English, you're interned instead of being sent away? I would have had my wife and child. I would have been a grandfather by now.

Ironically, I had to fight that as well. In various ways, the Dutch government said, you are Dutch because of your grandfather. You're British because you were born in England. It happened to you in Holland, and we got to compensate you if you got your Dutch nationality.

Well, the first 10 years or more, I wasn't back in Holland. I didn't want to go back to the country where I had such sorrow. Then I did by writing to the Queen I got so-called my Dutch nationality back again, and I get a compensation from the Dutch government.

You're now a dual national.

I'm a dual national. I was it all the time without knowing it. I never joined the Dutch Army. I've got a paper which says, he need not join the Dutch Army because of his British nationality.

Father had proclaimed us as British subjects at the British consul in Holland. The British consul in Holland never informed me at the very end that we are going, you can come with us. They went without getting me to go with them.

I accuse four people. To start with Mr. Groot, J-R-O-O-- G-R-O-O-T, a man of the town hall in Rotterdam, who refused to listen to me about talking about my nationality, who could have collaborated with me. Instead, he didn't do his job right.

I accused the Dutch consul, Mr. [PERSONAL NAME] for not answering my dozens of letters which I wrote to him. In the very end, I found my forms and photographs for a passport on his desk. And shortly after that, we were taken away to Westerbork.

I accuse Inspector Roos, one of the chief inspectors of the alien police in Rotterdam, who told me when we were together in one room, he said, I know you're British, but I'm not going up the wall for you. I can only stamp you now as a Dutch national. He refused to help me.

And most of all Kurt Schlesinger, the German Jew who came to Holland, in Westerbork, later became chief inside Westerbork camp, could have exchanged me with a special program the Germans had exchanging prisoners, German prisoner of war for Jews.

He didn't do that for me. He sent us away. And when we were away, he found letters to me, my wife and child could have been interned. He opened the mail after the train went intentionally. He ought to open the mail before the train went, and he could have got me out of there, American-Dutch subjects, and other English-Dutch subjects out there. He didn't.

And I hope that those four people can be brought to justice. I can't do one wrong thing, or I am for it. Why should those four men get away with what they've done? Not only to me but for the others, something like that must never occur again. And that's how I feel.

And if Kurt Schlesinger is still alive, I want to find him. And if he's dead, I want to know if he's dead. Give me black and white where he's buried, where he died.

What would you do if you did find him?

I would try to get him in front of the judge, and I think I would be then talking about this, because most of the others didn't come back to tell what this man has been doing. One can read in the books coming out now what kind of a man he was. He was a bad man.

I'm not a murderer, but I live with this. He is the man that said no to us, and he ought have said yes.

Have you been back to Germany or to Poland?

No. During my stay after the war in show business, I once went back for about a half an hour to an hour in a little place called Gr¹/₄nau just over the Dutch border when I was in show business in the town near Enschede.

I walked there, and I walked back. I was, in my mind, in the mouth of the lion, and I walked out of that again. To Poland I haven't been, but I contemplate going in October to visit once the place where I was a slave laborer, Auschwitz and Birkenau.

And the life I'm leading now, which I don't always show to the outside world, but when am I alone, it's daily. It's minutely. It's hourly. It's always there, the life I lead is not good, and I blame the Germans for that.

I dare say there were good Germans. So were my wife and child. They were good. No one asked were they good or bad. They did away with them. I can't do away with the bad Germans. I can't find the good ones, but I hope I never have

anything to do with them.

What they done to my folk, the Jews, but also to the non-Jews we will never forget. And when I'm dead, there's one less to talk about it.

Thank you very much for making this recording. Because of course you now will continue to talk about it whenever anyone listens to your recording.

Yes.