

COQUERET, Jean
France Documentation Project
French
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Box 1, Tape 1

In this interview, former policeman Jean Coqueret talks about the collaboration of the French police at the time of the German occupation. He focuses on the police's training, their daily routine and involvement in the enforcement of the racial laws in France. He discusses the different ways of "passive resistance" by the local population and the police. In addition, he comments on his work for the Red Cross in Drancy and the treatment of Jews there.

[01:] 00:45:00 – [01:] 06:15:00

He comments on his family background; talks about the influence of his father's profession as a policeman on his later career; discusses his father's background as a World War I veteran; *[restart of the interview:]* he provides his personal and professional background information; interprets his joining the police in France as being a way of "passive resistance"; comments on his youth around the Jardin du Luxembourg and his school years at the **Lycée Lavoisier**; discusses the evacuation of young people to southern France in a mail wagon; focuses on the situation at the station with the departure from Gare de Lyon; discusses the peace agreement between Germany and France; remembers waiting in Bordeaux for permission to return to Paris; comments on their return to Paris on an old train.

[01:] 06:16:00 – [01:] 08:13:00

He comments on his father's work as a police officer in the first district in Paris; discusses his own professional career starting at the police school in 1943; mentions the former hospital Beaujon; analyzes the different backgrounds of the young people who returned to Paris after the peace agreement and their different personal reasons why they returned to Paris; comments on the return to Paris as a way to avoid military service in Germany and to carry out "passive resistance"; discusses the Germans' policies regarding French enterprises; focuses on the professions of policemen, firemen and miners as being needed in France; discusses the profession of a policeman as being attractive for young people; comments on the regulation which predicted that young men born in 1921, 1922 or 1923 were subject to military service in Germany; talks about his being subject to the French mandatory labor service, "Service de Travail Obligatoire," (STO); discusses his STO for the French railway system, "Société Nationale des Chemins de fer Français," (SNCF), at the Gare d'Austerlitz and the professional backgrounds of his coworkers there.

[01:] 08:14:00 – [01:] 15:25:00

He discusses his strong intention to stay in France and considers it proof of “passive resistance”; remembers being called to the Special Labor Office, presenting medical records for a health exam and explaining his professional plans to a special commission of a German major and French bureaucrats; discusses the commission weighing up the pros and cons for sending him to Germany and deciding to have him stay in France as a policeman; mentions a further request to STO by a construction company where he had to prove his inability to do this job; comments on the high number of policemen in Paris at that time.

[01:] 15:26:00 – [01:] 26:25:00

He focuses on his work for the Red Cross in 1941 with U.S. ambulances in Drancy; remembers an incident in which he was trying to help an injured Jew; describes the work of the police in Drancy; comments on deportations and mass arrests from and in Drancy; focuses on the organization of the round-up of Vel’d’Hiv in 1942; discusses the collaboration by the police and by the local population; mentions Philippe Henriot, his propaganda and his involvement with the socialists.

[01:] 26:26:00 – [01:] 32:54:00

He comments on the general status of Jews in Drancy, their persecution and the mass arrests; analyzes the collaboration of the police then; stresses that he was not part of the police at that time, but that he heard of certain incidents afterwards; remembers Jews wearing Yellow Stars on public transportation; focuses on the organization and his involvement in the arrest of collaborators after the liberation; mentions his ignorance of the mass arrests of Jews; analyzes his father’s opinion on the collaboration of the police, the later arrests and prosecution of policemen; gives his opinion on the German occupation and the possibility of being ordered to arrest Jews in the line of duty; interprets the policemen’s behavior as “the execution of instructions”; mentions some incidents with Jews.

Box 1, Tape 2

[02:] 00:50:00 – [02:] 04:00:00

He discusses the internment buildings in Drancy; comments on his experience with the Red Cross there and on the hospital Val-de-Grâce; talks about life in occupied France; focuses on his work with the nurses; talks about the arrest and transport of Jews; comments on the railway system; discusses the means of communication at the time.

[02:] 04:01:00 – [02:] 13:30:00

He comments on his entrance into the police and on his first employment with the police as administrative assistant responsible for passport issues; discusses Vichy France and the recruitment of policemen at the time; talks about the requirements and the selection process for policemen; focuses on the daily routine of a policeman in 1943, on the work in a specific district in Paris, the organization and structure of teams of policemen, their areas of responsibility and supervision and their contact with the local population of their assigned districts; mentions an incident of fraud at the markets in Paris as an example for police work being between sanctions and protection.

[02:] 13:31:00 – [02:] 20:00:00

He focuses on his father's work for the police, the shift work and the responsibilities after liberation; compares the laws, rules and regulations before and after liberation; comments on police contact with the Germans in their daily routine before liberation; mentions occasional attacks by people on bikes on the German occupiers; mentions an incident in which he helped two women and considers that an example of his "passive resistance."

[02:] 20:01:00 – [02:] 34:35:00

He comments on the police school and the timetable they had there; discusses the rules, regulations and infractions they had to learn; emphasizes the ignorance of racial laws by the police; comments on the nonexistence of racial laws and the Jewish status as a subject in police school; discusses the manipulation of the police by the German occupiers; mentions Pétain and the bombing of London; remembers an air crash in 1943 in Paris; discusses the plundering and gives a theory of the involvement of the Jews of Drancy in the bombing of the plane and the later plundering; comments on the general status of the media; focuses on the involvement of specific parties in the resistance; analyzes the rehabilitation and reintegration of collaborators after the liberation; remembers incidents of theft as being excused as "for the resistance"; comments on the existence of the topic of "persecution of Jews" as a subject of prosecution and later rehabilitation; analyzes the reasons for the rehabilitation of certain policemen; mentions the collaboration of the policemen with the special units; discusses the killings of the heads of the special units in the course of the liberation.

Box 2, Tape 3

In this interview, former policeman Jean Coqueret talks about the collaboration of the French police at the time of the German occupation and the later prosecution of these collaborators. He focuses on some specific incidents of aggression against Jews and on antisemitism in France in general. He tries to analyze the distinction between "simple" collaboration and active participation in genocide.

In addition, he presents several personal documents of which some might serve as proof of “secret or passive resistance.”

[03:] 00:42:00 – [03:] 15:00:00

He remembers a colleague from the police being accused of collaboration; describes how the accusation of collaboration changed the lives of several policemen; focuses on his own behavior towards these so-called collaborators; discusses the special units in Paris; comments on their “blind obedience” and on resistance during the German occupation; focuses on the role of the police being between patriotism and obedience; compares the society and police routine before and after the German occupation; focuses on the later careers of collaborators; analyzes obedience, resistance, fear and police behavior during the occupation; weighs up the risks of working for the police department in Paris.

[03:] 15:01:00 – [03:] 22:50:00

He focuses on an incident in July 1944 in which people were arrested and sang the “Marseillaise”; remembers hearing of shootings of prisoners in the prison de la Santé; discusses status of the city of Caen; comments on the resistance transmitting information through correspondence; mentions “ethnic cleansing” operations; analyzes the situation of the police after the liberation; mentions Jean Moulin; analyzes the question and difficult distinction between “simple” collaboration and active participation in genocide; gives his definition of genocide; comments on the ignorance of Jews’ fate after deportation; mentions an incident in which a man who was in the resistance was deported to Fresnes and told them about life in the camps, but did not mention gas chambers.

[03:] 22:51:00 – [03:] 32:35:00

He comments on the nonexistence of antisemitism in France and his not having any personal contact with Jews in the line of duty; discusses again the tolerance of Jews in France; focuses on his worst memories on the period of the German occupation; comments on France being pro-regime, but antiwar; talks about his father’s background again and his mother’s fear of the regime; remembers some personal incidents in his family around Christmas when they ran out of food and wood; mentions a bad professional experience in which he witnessed the humiliation of a woman.

Box 2, Tape 4

[04:] 00:50:00 – [04:] 08: 50: 00 [end of recording]

He comments on France’s collaboration in the “final solution”; explains the reasons for collaboration; analyzes the ignorance of the French population; discusses the fact of

Jewish deportation by French means of transport; focuses on the persecution of certain people, mentions Bousquet.

[He shows some of his personal documents: property papers, food ration cards, bike registration card, exemption card for STO, work permit, armbands, one of the "Commission Parisienne de Libération," (CPL), correspondence by resistance movements, medical records, and other papers and documents to prove "secret or passive resistance."]