

Interview with Mr. André Scheinman

13 November 1992

Mel Yoken: Good evening, it is the 13th of November, Friday, 1992, and I am very, very happy to introduce Mr. André Scheinman, whom I am interviewing. Good evening, sir.

André Scheinman: Good evening.

MY: To begin, where were you born?

AS: I was born in Munich.

MY: In Germany?

AS: Yes.

MY: Would you like to speak this evening about your experience during the Second World War?

AS: If you'd like.

MY: Yes.

AS: What would you like to know?

MY: Tell us exactly what you did during the war.

AS: Oh, it was very simple, I volunteered in '39, I had a deferment from my studies, but I broke the deferment, I volunteered, I served in the regular army, I continued in the Free French Forces [Forces Françaises Libres], I was detached to the British.

Cindy Yoken: But why France? You were born in Germany!

AS: But we left for France, my father was a militant, he was obliged to flee very early, and he had been in Strasbourg already, and he had the papers, so it was easy for us to come to France; that's the country where so many people wanted to go to, because it was the only country which still accepted Jews, or refugees.

MY: How old were you at this time?

AS: I was 18 years old.

MY: 18 years old.

CY: In Germany, it was difficult, at that time for the Jews?

AS: No, in '33, no, I left in '33.

CY: But, were there a lot of people who left Germany?

AS: There are a lot of them who would have wanted to leave, but could not leave. They were accepted nowhere. It was very difficult, and then there are a lot of them who did not believe, who did not think that something so terrible was going to happen, they felt just the same not safe, but felt just the same, until in '38 at least, they felt safe. There are a lot of people, a lot of Jews, children like me, who were born in Germany already, parents were from the East, from Poland, from Russia.....And children had the feeling to belong to these countries. It is the only country that they know. It was their country evidently, we were very well welcomed in France, on was lucky, in a little city of Pas-de-Calais, in the north, it was a city of charcoal mines, and, the people of the North were particularly welcoming to foreigners.

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MY: How did you land in this small village? For what reason?

AS: My father had left ahead of us, to see what he could do. And then he drew lots, someone gave three cities in France where to go. Then, by lot, it happened: Lille, or nearby Lille. And then, at that time, he met a Belgian family who said to him: "Well, we have someone who is renting a house there, a business, and if that interests you, you can have it." And then I had an uncle in Sarrebruke, who was in the clothing business and who told my father that he was going to help him. This uncle there was married to a sister of my father, and it is like that we came to this small city, a little city, a mining city evidently it was....

CY: What was the name of the city?

AS: The city was called Bruay-en-Artois, and it was a city of 35,000 inhabitants. There were tons of Poles, there were 17,000 Polish people in this city. Yes, because the French mines, after the 1st war had been inundated by the Germans. They had destroyed the mines, and so the French sent for miners from everywhere, and especially from Westphalia, where there were Polish miners who were living in Germany. And they promised them the same rights that they had, the right of pension, the right of retirement, as if they had worked in the French mines from the beginning. Therefore, if they had worked five years in Germany, or ten years, that made ten years, so they came. And then France attracted them. And then the economy was very good, and, in the city where we were living, you heard more Polish spoken than French.

MY: And you, you said that the villagers were welcoming?

AS: Yes, me, I very quickly made friends, I went to the Lycée [high school], in Bethune, 10 kilometers from Bruay, I returned to high school.

CY: You already spoke French at this time?

AS: I spoke a little French, yes, because before coming, we had taken lessons, and with that, we had polished up, so my sister and I, we already spoke French very well. And, upon arriving, we couldn't do otherwise, we had to help at the store, we had to help my parents, who did not speak French very well. My mother was originally Polish...and we were at the store, it was necessary to help. It is after one year only that I began to go to school a part of the day, and the rest of the day I was at home to help...

CY: You finished the French high school?

AS: Yes.

MY: At this time, how was France?

AS: It was doing quite well. There was no unemployment. It was in '33,34,35, there was no unemployment, business was doing quite well. And evidently, there are people: there was a big clothing merchant in this little city who did not like to see us arrive, because we were competitors. But he could do nothing, and we were very quickly in order, with papers, with documents. And then as soon as he had arrived, immediately renounced all nationality, German, Polish, or other. He put himself under the protection of the French government, and so we were without a country, we no longer had a country, we no longer had anyone, and it was the Geneva convention, and we had papers in order. And then we had rights to everything except elections: we did not have the right to vote, that, we were not French! But we integrated ourselves very quickly, me, at least, with friends. I belonged to the "Mine Club." I used to go to play tennis with friends over there. It was...One used to meet over there with friends, and then, it is normal life!

MY: Now, perhaps we can procede chronologically, it was in '33, yes? Do you remember perhaps the years '38-'39?

AS: Yes, it was at the moment, when there was the history of Czechoslovakia?

MY: That's it, yes, yes.

AS: My father and I volunteered. We were volunteers but then it was quickly over, because Chamberlain had come from England. There was Munich, the accords with Munich, so there was no longer a need of volunteers and then we had enlisted just the same and we were on the lists. And when '39 came, my father was already, not very old, but he was not in very good health. They did not take him, they did not want him in the army because he was not in good health. Me, they were okay with that, and there was one thing which was a little strange. I was sent to the reserves, with my age group, as if I had enlisted in '35. But it was '39 and when the general mobilization in August '39 made itself, me, I had a military book, a pass, and when

my number came up, I traveled to the unit to which I was called. And it is there, that it began.

So I was integrated to a regiment from the north where I knew quite a few people who were all from the same city as I, and I was rather at home! It was August '39 and then it was the beginning of the war. It was...one said a "phoney war," because one did practically nothing. We played soldiers. We were at the Belgian border towards the interior, we came back towards the German border. And then in '40, then it began. There, we were sent to Belgium, and it is there that the Germans passed behind, behind the Maginot Line which was not really pierced, because the Maginot Line was perfectly intact, but the error that the French high command had done, they had thrown reserves of French troops forward of the line instead of keeping them behind, as reserve. And so when the Germans passed by behind, they took everyone prisoner, there were 1 million French prisoners. I was lucky, I had been wounded in Belgium, there was a bombing, and then I had put myself against a hill, and the bomb had cut this hill which fell in and I was buried by this bombing. I had nothing, but someone had seen it, so they dug me out. But for several days, I had a headache, all that, so they put me on a hospital train, and sent me to Brittany.

And I arrived in June, '40...July '40, I arrived in Brittany. There, there was a colonel who greeted us at the railroad station to see, to triage us, to send those who were able, to the front, and the others to hospitals. Me, I was a volunteer to return to the front, because I still had a little headache, but it was nothing. And there was a bunch of people who invented a lot of illnesses, who didn't want to return to the front, and it was they that they sent to the front, and me they sent to the hospital, to the military hospital. It was a convent, there were the good Sisters who had taken 150 wounded and since I had nothing, I made myself known to the colonel, there and I said: "I can help you", all that, "I can go to town to do errands" all that. So he said to me: "very well." And then in Rennes, on the 6th [actually, the 16th] of June I think...yes... there was a terrible bombing. The Germans had succeeded in bombing the railroad station. It was a very big railroad station, the railroad station of Rennes. And there was a train of ammunition, and there was a wagon with "cedite," that's the dynamite. And a bombe touched the "cedite," there were 6000 dead, it was terrible. And me, I had already left for the hospital, because the colonel had allowed me to leave again. I returned to the hospital and said to him: "Listen, I am a volunteer to transport the wounded" all that. So he made me papers, and then for 2 days, I transported the wounded. And then afterwards I thought, I could not return to my home because everyone knew who I was, and also the bridges of the Loire were cut, so I returned to the hospital.

And at the hospital, an officer arrived, a German officer, and then I was there several weeks, and then I was thinking about escaping, because they sent me every week a convoy for Germany. All those who were not gravely wounded were leaving for Germany. And at the hospital, I had friends who were from the North, or from the same region as I. And I said to them: "What can we do? I am not going to have my finger cut, or an arm, or a leg in order to have get off, that would be idiotic!" So, one

of the doctors said: "You know, had in your medical history, you bled from the rectum, and everyone has hemorrhoids, and among the surgeon officers, there is a great specialist, one of the best in France, he will operate on you and then we can put you on the list as an amputee, and you will pass the review of the Germans and they will send you away." So I, I have never been in a hospital to be operated on. So, I said, OK. So they operated on me. And then several days later I got a piece of paper, the forms, all was marked on it, what I had, etc., and then I passed in front of the German officer to be sent away, I hoped, to my home. He looked at me, he said to me: "You're not Jewish?" I told him no. Because he asked everyone that. I told him no. He said to me: ".....eh....to Germany!" So I was operated on for nothing, nothing. That is terrible. I suffered for that.

So I say no that is not going to go, I had to extricate myself before they send me to Germany. Because it would be easier to leave from the place where I was, in France, than to go to Germany and to come back. And we had visited in this hospital, there were volunteers who were coming to see us. Because we, we had no packages, no mail, we had nothing. They brought us chocolates, things which were difficult to find, to eat, because what we had there, it was not much. And then there, there was a lady who used to come, it was the volunteers from the blue cross, I think. I said to her: "Listen, me, I am going to get out in a few days, do you know someone who has a room where I can live until I find a job?" She said to me: "Oh, you can come to my house." She was a widow, she was about 50-60 years old. And she said to me: "I have a big house and I will rent you a room." I did not tell her that I was going to escape for she would have said no, she would have been afraid.

And so, I was still in a very precarious situation, knowing that they were going to send me to Germany. And I had a camarade who was there, who was a forger, who had been in prison for forged documents, false signatures, etc., and who had been liberated at the moment of the war because he had volunteered. So they freed him from prison to send him to the front. And I said to him: "Listen, I have a paper here, the signature is missing, the seal....Could you do something?" He said to me: "Go on that's nothing at all the signature, it's nothing." But how about the seal? The seal! The German Eagle, with the Swastika, all that!" He said to me: "That's nothing, do you have a little money on you?" And then by chance, there was buddy who several weeks before, had been liberated and who was 2 kilometers from the place where we were living, where my parents were. And I had given him a letter. And I had said to them: "Make a package with civil clothes and put money in the lining of the coat and give it to a transporter of supplies." For the Germans needed to have supplies brought back from Brittany in the north in order to feed the population. And 2 days before I pass the review, the package had arrived. It was a miracle! So I said to him: "Yes, I have a little money." He said to me: "Go in the kitchen and for several francs, a dollar you ask for a raw potato, and you give it to me and will see how I do the seal." So I go to the kitchen, I give them 5 francs, they give me a big potato. Then I bring it to my friend. He cut it and then it was necessary that I find a buddy who had been liberated and who had a seal that which was still a little wet. Then I said to him: "Listen, I don't want to keep it your document, I'll return it to you immediately

but lend it to me for 5 minutes.” Then he gave it to me, I went to my camarade there, he took the potato, he applied the wet potato on the seal that was wet. He did that, it was the eagle and the Swastika, printed themselves on the potato. He took the potato afterwards, he put it on the sheet that I had, and indeed, the thing took, a little erased, but the thing took. And the signature, that, it was nothing at all that!

And so now, how to get out? The people who had been reviewed and liberated: there were German guard sentinels who stood by the door. And someone cried: “There are 20 liberated!” Bah, 20 liberated, that was not good because if I put myself in the middle if there are 21, everyone is stopped immediately. And so I waited one, two, three days. And then finally one day comes, there was an old German who was on guard and who had half fallen asleep, he was not with it at all! And then, that day, there were 40 or 50 soldiers who were freed. So I put myself in the middle, and out we went! Because he was counting no more, he was sleeping!

The Sergeant I knew who was a prisoner also, but had the right to go out, I changed into vilian clothes, and I went to the gendarmerie like the state police here. And I showed my release to the Germans, and asked them for a document. So with that the police made a document for me, stating that I was a prisoner, duly released by the Germans, so then I had a gorgeous documents, and was perfectly in order, wherever I went.

With that, I went to the home of the good woman whom I knew ~~Sylvie Pneumola~~, “I don’t know, I can not go home, but I am going to look for work. When I have work, I will pay you.” I went to the town hall to find work. So the guy looks at me, he said to me: “ Oh you know, there are you and a thousand others who are looking for work... Oh, bah, listen, I take everything in your name, etc.” And two, three days after, he sends someone to the address that I had given him... He asked me to come to town hall . So I go to the town hall. He said to me: “It seemed to me that you had a good education, do you speak German?” I said: “ Oh yes, I speak German.” “I think that I can find you a job, the Germans are looking for an interpreter.” I said to him: “Not with the Germans, that's no go.” The next day, he calls me again and says, you know, the French railroads need an interpreter, they don’t want a Pole, they don’t want an Alsatian, they want a Frenchman!” Ah, a Frenchman, a Frenchman! With all the identity papers that I had, I had that I needed!

So I went to the headquarters of the railroad and I was interviewed, interviewed by the head of the district, the big boss of all Brittany. He had I know not 5000 railroad employees under his orders. He had just come back from a camp in Germany for he was an officer who had been a prisoner. But the Germans liberated all the railroad employees, for they needed the railroad, for transports. And so he interviewed me, and then it was going very well. He said to me: “Fine, you are hired.” So, I was an interpreter without being one. And then 4 days after, were the first exams. So arrived at his place, they asked a ton of things, they were very arrogant, etc. And this meeting was going rather badly, the Germans left. And then, my chief of the district, he banged his fist on the table and said, “ I will return to the prisoners or war

camp rather than give them what they want!" He looks at me, he says to me: "you can tell them that!" Because he had no trust, he didn't know. "No I think like you," I told him. I knew that he was married to an English woman. SO I said, No, I agree with you. It is necessary to do what you must, it is not necessary to give in to all their demands. It is necessary to do what we have to, for ourselves."

So, 2,3 days after, again, he calls me, he says, ""you know, there is a guy who comes from London, who was parachuted, and who is looking to organize a network. Do you want to belong?" Me, I said, "I'm in." I said to him: " Listen, me, one can replace if something happens. But you, the head of the whole department, this is too important. You stay, officially you are not involved, but you cover me. If I need something, you let me do it, etc. " So he said: "OK." It is like that that I took contact.

And then, the following day, I began my work. And then it was annoying, the Germans were coming in every five minutes. The Germans would come in, they would be looking for something, they needed wagons, they needed this, that, etc. And then finally, I said to my boss from the railroads, I said: "Listen, you know what we are going to do, you give me an office, with a rug, a secretary, a window which looks out on the street, and you give me a title: Delegate of the SNCF, that was the French railroad, to the German authorities. And when they come, they come directly to my office, they no longer come to you. And if there is something that I don't know, which is technical, well then I will ask you. I am not going to make decisions which are technical, but all other matters, I will take care of.

And so, I had a beautiful office, the rug and everything and the Germans would come to my office and they were delighted to find someone so accommodating, all that. And said to them immediately: " Listen, I don't like you much. Don't invite me or anything because you wouldn't like us either if we were in Germany, and me I don't like it much that you are here. But anyway, I am here to facilitate things...but you have to keep me informed, you have to help me too. I don't want my railroad employees, my buddies who work at the railroad to go to prison for stupid things. I will do all that it is necessary to do as it is necessary, and for you it is a lot better also." Because, they were all afraid of being sent to Russia. Because the war in Russia had begun in June 1940. So they say OK. Then at the end of several weeks, it was entirely....it was me the head of the railroads there, and then I moved from everywhere. I went to all the heads of the railroad stations. My boss, he had informed them that I was his representative, that they should trust me. Then at the end of a short time, I had a network of 300 agents. There was not a station, not a railroad station, where I didn't have someone who was working for me, either he was an inspector, or he was something else. And I phoned people, I went see the Gestapo, I went see the authorities, I took out a guy out of prison, I managed as best I could.

And the head of the German office liked me a lot also. And one fineday, he said to me: " Listen, I have a big meeting coming and I would like you to be my interpreter." But I said that.. (I was dying to go to that meeting.) But I said to him, " You know,

you have to ask my boss, me I can not decide, I work for the railroads, I am a railroad employee." Then he said: " Good I am going to ask him." So, evidently, my boss said: "Well, I need him, but nevertheless, for several weeks, I am willing to lend him to you!" And so, I went with the German head, there to the places he was going. And then, since I was with him, there where they were going, no one thought that I was not a person who had been vetted, one of them. And so, that went very well.

And, meanwhile, I had made contact with a lady who was living on an island, the island of Breat. It was an island on the Brittany coast, the island of Breat, and it was a very special island, it was several kilometers from Saint-Brieuc.

MY: Oh yes.

AS: And, it was a tropical climate.

MY: Oh yes.

AS: On this island, there were palm trees.

MY: Palm trees??

AS Oh yes, that's the only place. It is there that passed the current of warm air, all that, it was great!, There was a woman there, by the name of Madame Wilborts, who had been during World War I nurse with the African batallions, that's to say, the disciplinary batallions of discipline where there were all the hard heads which were there for punishment....And her husband was the most decorated officer of the French Army he had the elephants from Siam, the legion of honor...he had everything. And he was very sick, but this was her husband. And she had a radio, she listened to the BBC from London and this radio was hidden in a cabinet. And she was also searching for a contact a little. Me, I said to her..."Listen, me, I have a contact." And then she had a daughter, [Marie José Chombart de Lauwe] who was 14, 15 years old, a high school student, and who go out and about on the island with a girlfriend, and they would go see the Germans, who liked to see young girls, and thewhen they got home they would draw from memory, the posts where they were stationed and all that. And then they would pass that information on to me.

And then, there was another girl who was a religious sister in Nantes. And this girl....er....was a sister, she was in her habit. And then, through this lady, Mrs. Willborts, I made the acquaintance of another lady in Nantes, Mrs. Cedelle, who had a whole network already of people who were in the resistance, who had not yet made contact, but they were beginning to do something. And she said to me: "You know, I have 9 aviators here, I don't know what to do with them, we're hiding them but it's getting dangerous!" Especially so because that week, A German commander had been killed. There was an act....someone had killed him, who had slaughtered him with a pistol. Then the Germans searched all the houses, and she had 9 aviators in her house! It was necessary to feed them, which was not easy! This was something!

She said to me: "What do we do?" I said: "Listen, we are going to get them out." Then, as she was in her habit, I said to her: "Listen, you have them come to Rennes, and there, we are going to send them with someone through the free zone." So I reserved a train compartment of railroad and she walked them through the city, explaining to the Germans, that they were deaf-mutes, greatly wounded!

MY: Deaf-mutes? Good!

AS: Yes because it was necessary that they not speak. They were English. They were pilots... And so it was not necessary that they open their mouth because you know....this was war....Deaf-mutes, and so she walked them through the city and through the railroad station to the compartment, and so on to me. And we, in the meantime, we had contact. And we sent them to the south, to the Pyrenees...Someone passed them and they left for England!

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And there was another strange story too. One day, there was a pilot, who had arrived later. And so I had brought back to Saint-Brieuc....in order to bring him back, to hide him on the island. And then there was a small boat which used to make the round trip. And I said to him to that Englishman: "Be sure not to open your mouth, say absolutely nothing!" Okay, he was with me! And then there was the little girl of this lady who had her bicycle, who had come to get me with him. And when it was necessary to put the bicycle on the boat, the shuttle, there was a very gallant German soldier who took one wheel. And the Englishman, when he saw that, not wanting to be left out, he took the other wheel aside and he said: "Collaboration!" [English accent]

MY: Ahh, ahh.

AS: Ahhh...Me, I almost died. But the other did not realize! And was a gift! And....like that, we would leave for the island.

MY: We are in what year now?

AS: We are in '40 there.

MY: Ah in '40 yes.

AS: And then, my network was working well. And we had a woman who was coming every week to see my chief. She was also from Alsace-Lorraine, Mrs. Louis. And she said that she sent the mail off every week through the Pyrenees. So I would make the report of everything that had happened, all the transports. There is not a soldier that the Germans could transport or change without the English knowing of it. So, every week, she would come, we would give her the mail, we gave her everything she wanted for England and she would go off again. And several months after, suddenly, she was arrested. The Germans had followed her... And they arrested her. And they followed the whole line because we did that from Paris to Rennes. But we

were very careful, we never met her at my boss'. Each week that she came, we had a different rendez-vous: once at a pool, once at a park, etc. So we were not implicated. And she had a bag full of reports....it was a network which was called 31, and she had given numbers and letters to each agent, me I was 31AQ, my boss was 31AP. And then the Germans knew that 31AQ and 31AP were missing, but they could not find them. When they had arrested her, she did not speak, that was very good. And then me, I was there now every week, there were inspectors who were arriving, reports arriving, and in my office there was paper piling up to here...And I still didn't know what to do....So I knew that we had to reconnect with England!

I would go out of the railroad station...Opposite the station, there was a very nice restaurant. And I had noticed as I went to the station every day, 2 or 3 times a day...I had a job. There were two young people, relatively young, who were wearing blue gabardine, it was the gabardine of the French Air Force. And one had the pilot's insignia on his shoulder and the other the insignia of a radio operator. And me, I had noticed that they were eating everyday there, and that they were eating black market evidently because there were not enough rations tickets to eat everyday there. So I said to myself: "There is something with those guys, they are up to something." And I observed that there were people who would arrive, would look around, go up to them, speak to them a little and then leave again. So at the end of eight days, I went right up to them and told them straight out, "Look, this is who I am, I work at the railroads, our liaison is broken, the network was stopped, and you must help me, transport my mail and get me to England!" And they said to me: "Are you crazy! But we are not at all that!" I said to them: "Listen, it is normal that you wouldn't trust me, you don't know me! But listen, here's my number: you send something to London with your radio and you ask permission to bring me! You'll see, if they say no, you know it's no go, but if on the contrary they say yes..." Three days later, I saw them....They said: "yes, it's ok, we can bring you, we can bring your mail, all that." So I had found a contact. Then I made that known to all my people that we were saved, that we had the contact we needed.

And then, upon that being settled, there was someone who arrived at my boss', and it was a Breton... who was sent by the Free French forces, by DeGaulle, with his brother, to France, to organize an network of escape, a network of sabotage, and a network of propaganda. And so, as my boss was married to an English woman, the English knew.... they had the lists of all the Franco-English associations, and then they went on the theory that...They contacted the people who were married to an Englishman or an English woman. Because they said to themselves: "If they don't want to work for us, at least, they will not denounce us to the Germans!" And it is like that, they went to my boss'. He said: "Ah no, me I won't touch it, but my interpreter will take care of it! Put yourself in front of the railroad station, on that square, where he can see you from my window, and, if it is ok, he will come to see you."

So this young person was there, he was a young captain from the Free French forces, who had been parachuted in France before, who had exploded the electric power

plant of the Gironde. And so, that is how I met him he was....He was later a minister, a deputy. And I told him who I was...and then...but I didn't know if I could trust him or not! And we talked we talked, we spoke of a lot of things which had nothing to do with that. And finally, his brother who was there with him said, " well, here's who we are, now, if you trust us, fine, and if not, forget it!" We saw each other, we didn't know each other, that's all. Then I told him what I wanted. I wanted them to bring me to England. He said: " Good, very well, we live on the coast near Brest, at Saint Pabu, and it is from there that we generally leave. And next week, we have three trips, we have people to send to England, and ourselves, we must go there. So get to Saint Pabu, the city, next Wednesday and we will take you."

So I went to Paris, my parents were in Paris... I went to Paris. I didn't tell them what I was doing. They knew that I worked as an interpreter. " I'll be on a trip for several days, you will not hear from me, don't be surprised." And then I returned and I went to Saint Pabu.

And we were seven who all had to leave from that little place. It was a little house on the beach, and we were waiting for a message from England that all was ready and that a motor torpedo boat was coming to get us. Then, it was the message...I don't remember the words any more ...Something like "the uncle Edward is waiting for you" etc. Then..."he says hello to you" etc. Then that evening - it was necessary to leave by a full moon, because there were reefs and for the boats, it was difficult. And the Germans who were in the houses on each side, if they had lifted the curtain, they would have seen us on the beach. Anyway, on the evening we left, we were seven, we were on the beach. And my friends, they had a kayak, and the kayak took three persons. And then on the first trip, were my two friends, they were brothers, and one of the seven left with them. They went on the boat 2 miles out to sea. And the Atlantic in January, it was terrible, it was 20 feet, there were waves of 15 feet, 20 feet. They were in a kayak, they did not have any cares, it's ok! They made three round-trip voyages. They would go on the boat. One of the brothers would come back alone. He took two of us, that made three leaving, after there was a second time, he took again two, that makes five and after there was a third time, they took the last two. And as it happened, I fell into the water, there was a wave and I fell, I had water up to here [mid-torso] At last, we arrived on the boat.

Once we arrived on the boat, we left for England. It was a motor-torpedo boat, which had two different motors. There was an auxillary motor that was completely enclosed inside the boat, and that the Germans couldn't detect or hear.. And then there was a big motor that made a lot of noise. So they waited until they were at 10-15 miles out to sea and then made that motor work. And we were obliged... to take in hand the machine guns in case there was an attack by airplanes. And so, at the end of 10-15 minutes, I began to be seasick. I was sick as a dog! That was the most frightful thing...

MY: Oh yes.

AS: Besides, there was with us a pilot that we transported who was sick as can be, he was inside, he said: "If I had know that, never will I have been to England!"

MY: That's the worse thing in life!

AS: Ah it is terrible! And then finally, I went below, in a space there, to sleep, in the covers, and I fell asleep, and then I woke up when we had arrived in England, on the English coast. And then the fact that I had slept 3 hours, 4 hours had done me some good! I felt good, I was no longer sick. But I really had had my share. And then when we arrived, the English were waiting for us, there was a welcoming committee.

MY: Welcome yes...

AS: Yes, yes, it was an inspection, they were guys of English and French espionage, because they didn't know who it was, after all, could have an infiltration! So they put you through your paces, they asked you questions and all that. It is like the story during the war, the Americans, they asked people things about basketball, in order to know if they were Americans or not. And there, they asked us lots of things, as for example....er...stories that we learned in school when we were a child. Like that they knew immediately if someone was or was not!

And so, the French officers who were in London, who had been evacuated, they all had names of metro stations. They did not have their name, they all had names of Paris metro stations. And then at the beginning, I found that funny, there was on which was called Bonne-Aventure, the other Passy: and Passy was the big chief of French information who under the General. That's how they did it.

And then me on arriving, I said me: "Listen, I want to see so and so" -the English contact. And there was a French officer who had come who said: "Listen, what do you need to be with the English for, you can work with us!" I said: "No but listen, I began with them, I am going to finish properly with them!" And so they separated us, afterwards the Englishman came to get me. And it was very funny, he was an Irishman, he was six feet, six feet two; and who was a civilian, who was a volunteer. He was paid a dollar per year. And yes, there were lots of Englishmen who had signed up for a dollar a year. And... he was called, it was Green and his first name was Tom. And had an office in the middle of London, and then so it was Uncle Tom's cabin; and it was also the password, if one wanted to know if he was there, one spoke of Uncle Tom... and that's where we went. There was a debriefing. There was all that. You started there... And then there were instructors for the Codes...you had to learn Code and me I found out that I was one of the first agents who had worked for such a long time without being taken. That was already from June-July '40 until January '41. [42]

Then they introduced me to a radio operator, who would be my radio operator. And they gave me two Codes, one for me personally and one for the Radio operator. The Radio operator didn't know my Code: the English were wonderful for intelligence.

The radio operator knew only his Code and but I knew the two Codes. So, if I had information to give, in theory, if I didn't want the Radio to know it, I put that in my Code, that was the idea. And the Radio that they gave me had been already one year on an English boat; it was very good, because the Radios of the English navy were wonderful, the Radios of the navy were the best. And so, as it had been on the boat Admiral Nelson, its nickname was Nelson. One didn't disrespect [pun/pneumonic?] the name.

And yes, then...One had to go to school for Code, for demolition, all that...It was necessary after all to know something about how to demolish a bridge, derail a train, weapons. There were specialists for [teaching] everything. And then, there was the parachute training. It was beside ...Blackpool. And there was a parachutist station there, and so one went to the training, and one jumped two times a day. Because one didn't have a lot of time, me it was necessary to do it in 8 days, 10 days. I had to get back. I couldn't be away for months on end. I had to get back after 15 days, because I had prepared my absence already with the Germans, saying that I had bleeding from the rectum, I had to go to a hospital, that I had vacation coming, and I would be absent for 15 days, and so they weren't surprised that I was not there.

And so one had the parachutist and demolition training...And that was that...And then once the training was finished and one had gotten it, one was in a hurry to leave again; me I was a volunteer to leave again. And what's more, I had my parents who were in Paris and I wanted to get them out, because I thought to have them leave on the next convoy to England.

And so we left from London for the coast. And there was something there, the English knew something but they didn't tell us. And they said: "No, there's a change, they can't be waiting for you on the [improvised air]field that they had prepared.

.....
There is something which is too precious for us, that cost us too much already, it is too important, you know, etc., you are going to leave again with a boat, with an auto-pilot boat. Me, I was not very happy with that because me I preferred that than to jump again.

So...er... We were transported, we went to Manchester in England somewhere, and then in a train, in a sleeping car...So it was very funny. We left London, in a sleeping car, and the train had not still left, we were five...three, four... and we were there at the window, all that and they have grades of Lieutenant, of Captain. And there, there were several superior English officers and who wanted the sleeping car. So the commissary guard said: "But I don't have a sleeping car!" Then, there was a General who said: "but and those!?! And the Capitain there?" Then the commissary guard said that he knew who we were and he said: "If you were going where they are going, you would have also the right to the sleeping car there, but for you, I have only a compartment of first class, a seated place. Ah, that the English were very good! We, we left for the sleeping car, we were happy because one made him see, it was us! There, we left for the sleeping car and then we embarked.

So, we arrived on the French coasts. And then the mother of my two friends, it was her house, was waiting for us. And so, she was an old lady who had been a teacher and who had been director of a school, of a high school. And she came, she had two, tree grenades and a machine gun pistol and she climbed the guard when we debarked. So, we debarked with the kayak again and with the waves again, but at last we arrived! And then we transported all the material that we had; we had a lot of explosives, of grenades, etc. Oh la, la, a lot of mess, bric-a-brac, that it was necessary to transport to the house. We did that. And the following morning, I left again at the railroad station in Brest, and from Brest, I left for Rennes to take my job.

And there, I made a mistake, lack of experience. Er...upon arriving, I went home at first, there all seemed well. And then I went to the station and I saw someone who had worked with me at the station and he said: " Listen, they have all been arrested, your boss, his secretary, his wife, everyone, don't go there!" Oh bah, they know who I am, nothing, me I have an alibi, I was operated on for hemorrhoids all that at the hospital, I had prepared everything, they would have been able to telephone over there, they would have said: "Yes, he is here," all that. I said: "They don't know." I would not have to, I would have damned the camps immediately, if I had been intelligent. So I presented myself at the office of the Germans. Ah they look, they had big eyes. And then, the inspector said: "Good sit down two minutes, have a coffee etc and how's it going?" And meantime, he telephoned the Gestapo. And ten minutes after, they went to get me. Then I was arrested. And the Gestapo was furious because they know me, I had had pleaded for....the railroads, because they had done something, sabotages, no matter what. Then they know me, they had confidence in me, and then suddenly, there, I am all another thing that what they were thinking!

MY: It is still in '40 yes? Or '41?

AS: No, it is '41...yes...'41, January '41 yes. Then they had put handcuffs on my hands, handcuffs on my feet. And then guards in front....They put me in a cupboard... There was no way to escape. And then we saw a prison in the evening, a prison in Angers, and there, we slept the night and I tried to escape from Angers because the people from Angers, the soldiers who were like that....As guardians of the prison, but they didn't know who I was nor anything. They had left the door open all that and then I was already outside but the other had come back and then there, it was finished! Beginning from that moment, it was still handcuffs on the hands, still handcuffs on the feet. Then at Angers, they put us on the train for Paris. And on the train for Paris, there was a German who was coming and who was looking.... He asked for the "Nephews", it was my....The "Nephew" : it was the nephew of Uncle Tom! It was my name on the Radio all that, like that we corresponded. Me, I didn't put up a fight, huh; then the Germans began to run from all along the train, they already believed that the "Nephew" was no longer there, that he had escaped! Then after, they came back, they said: "Is it you Nephew?" Good...the Nephew...good From there, arrived at the East railroad station... To

which station on had arrived bon...? What was the name of the station that arrived from Brittany?

MY: The North Station?

AS: No, no.

CY: It's not the Austerlitz station?

AS: No, no...It was a railroad station, it was magnificent. It's not serious, that will come back to me...

CY: Montparnasse?

AS: Montparnasse, yes Montparnasse! And then there, they came to get us to bring us back to prison, at Fresnes. Then there, I had come to the secrets, alone, the lights, at night....At last all that, there was no way. And then we were there one day. And then the night after, I was exhausted, I was tired, I was hungry....Then they woke me about midnight...midnight or 1:00. With a pocket lamp on the eyes: "What is your name?" That, they did for generally, when one arrives like that, if there is something, one is betrayed, huh, no? But me, I was well trained, my identity, I was...really, it was me! Then I told him my name all that. Good, very good. The next day, they came to get us in order to bring us back for an interrogation. So we were questioned in a hotel. The Gestapo had more hotels in Paris where they had brought back the prisoners in order to interrogate them. And then, we had had a chance there. In that hotel, was one of the great German chief of counter-espionage of the Admiral "Canaysse" who was sold after, who was he....He had changed his life, but he was a wonderful guy...He spoke English very well, he spoke French very well. And he had...It is through him that they had gone back to our network to arrest us. Because he had had a English civilian liberated from the internment camps, in presenting himself as an English officer, he was in the two services, he spoke English with him, he had him liberated. And like that, he went back to the Lille line until Rennes until us! And then after bah, it was finished!

Then, he interrogated us, he was very intelligent, he is wonderful that guy. He was not brutal, he deprived us of eating, of this, of that but he was...he was correct. And then he tried to return to me. He hoped that I was going to work for them. So I, that will not have displeased me, that is wonderful. But then it was necessary to speak about the others. They had arrested four friends and it was necessary that I say what I knew about them, what we had done, all that. Then, there was not a medium. Then, that didn't work. So I, I looked evidently to diminish my importance. Because there were relations 31AQ-31AQ, but they could not read all the radios all that for the Radio that he had transmitted...he had kept it, he ought to have burned it but he didn't do it. But there was not a big thing inside. From there, they could not know that I had a lot of relations, that I had 300 agents who were working for me. They didn't know.

So I, I explained to them that I worked economically. I was economical information. I had to transmit in English all that they transported, as supplies to Germany, etc. That was that. And then, they believed, they didn't believe. Finally, he said to me: "Why did you go to England for that?" I said: "Ah, listen, that's a story, you are not going to believe it!" And then, he said to me: "Bah try, we are going to listen to you!" So that is how in '39, when the first Englishmen had arrived, there was one....Englishman, there was a colonel, with his family, he had two daughters. And I fell in love with a girl and I got engaged, she was my fiancée. And then later, in '40, I listened to the news on BBC, and then I heard, there was a marriage, and I heard the

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family name but not the first name and that it was terrible, it was necessary that I know if yes or no my fiancée was married or not. So I said no matter the cost, it was necessary that I go to England, I will have gone there with the devil!" Ah I took a walloping that day... They were looking at me, I was beaten, I lost two teeth, my ear was pierced...Finally I came back from prison, they carried me to prison...Then for three days I was "not there." [out of it, unconscious]

And then I always maintained that, that was why I went to England. And then I knew finally that they believed it because I heard them talking about it in the next room. And there was one of them who said: " Ah, you have to be French in order to go for a girl to England in those circumstances.

So, one fine day, the guy who interrogated me takes me to another German sergeant who was from the counter-espionage. And he said: "Good listen, there, that's the one who took care of your first network 31; to me, you told the truth, tell him all what you know!" When he said: " As you told me the truth, " I knew that they had believed me. You had to be German to believe that! And that's when I told them a lot of stories which didn't stand up, but they believed them, they believed everything I would tell them.

And then, we were still in prison. At then at the end of eleven months, I was eleven months in solitary... eleven months. Then, I was finally brought back to another cell, we were three there. That at least was more pleasant because eleven months alone, I had had enough of it. We had nothing to read, nor anything.

MY: Absolutely nothing?!

AS: No, nothing, nothing....nothing. The only thing that we could read... In the morning they passed to give us a bit of the newspaper for the toilet. And this was a little piece of the German newspaper: I could read it - that it was the only thing that I had to read. And then with those pieces, little pieces, I made myself a game of cards to play "patience." So, at the end of 30 days, I had enough paper to play cards. But they surprised me one day, we were playing, and then they took that away also! There was nothing! One was not allowed to speak from cell to cell , nor to the other cells. And then they had nailed the windows... nailed the windows. But when one is

in prison and there is nothing to do, one only thinks of one thing: how to escape or how to speak to one's neighbor. And then, there was the neighbor next to me, we communicated. Me I knew Morse, but he didn't know Morse, so we had an alphabet: A, was one, a knock on the wall, B was two, three, etc. and that, in the whole prison, everyone knew that. So we spoke to each other, we spoke from one cell to the other, down the line. And the one who was next door said to me: " Listen, the nails on the window, see, it's very simple, you wet your napkin and you wet the nails, and you have to work at it a lot of hours; you wet, wet the whole day and finally that widens the holes where there are nails and you get to down to a little bit of a nail with your napkin..." We had nothing to do so we did that for hours and hours. And at the end of eight days, I was able to remove the nails, and to open the window. And then, I cut the nails, I had made a sort of saw with an bit of metal from my bed, from the cell. And I replaced the head of the nails in the holes. Because they came around from time to time to inspect if the window was still nailed....So they still saw the heads, then it was very good. They didn't know that in the meantime, it was nothing more than that, it was only the nail heads. So for months, I could open the window from time to time, to speak a little to the neighbors...And then...

MY: You were still in the cell always?

AS: Ah yes.

MY: You could never get out?

AS: Ah no...Yes we went out five minutes, they walked us in the courtyard, where we looked for...

MY: To do a little exercise?

AS: No, no...

AS: It was to show that they were human, etc...

MY: Ah, "in quotes" "in quotation marks" ...

AS: Then, we were...

CY: This was in Germany?

AS: No, no, in France, at Fresnes.

CY: It was in France?

AS: it was a regular prison, we would walk in a circle...

CY: Where exactly in France?

AS: In Fresnes.

CY: Ah, in Fresnes.

AS: In Paris, next to Paris, the suburbs of Paris. It was a big prison, there were three divisions there, it was a very big prison. And then when we were walking, we looked for contacts And at that time, in London, there was a Night Club... Xavier Cougat who was playing there.

MY: A club?

AS: A night club.

MY: Ah, a night club there.

AS: And Xavier Cougat was playing there...

MY: Ah.

AS: Yes, yes, then he was playing a song: "I want my mama, you want your mama." And it was the big song of the year! And so, in order to know if someone was in London, one whistled that song in the courtyard, we weren't allowed to sing, but we whistled... And if someone had been there, whistled it back! ...We found what cell he was in and we passed on news. Like that, we took contact! Ah...A prisoner, when he has only one thing to do, he thinks of everything! It is incredible.

And then, we were after three in a cell. A cell which was for one!

MY; Ah, tight as sardines!

AS: Ah, it was terrible! But we would walk, we had a rythm, we walked one behind the other and at certain moments, one went to the toilet, one took a drink of water. Truly, we had to organize how we did things! And then, we were given soup... a soup..., it was water with two spinach leaves which were fighting in duel, and a crust of bread. We had how much bread?...We had perhaps....8 ounces of bread...7 ounces of bread. And this soup....then... and a little piece of cheese, sometimes something, a little jam. And then there were prisoners who cut this bread in 4 little pieces and which they would eat every 3 hours. And so, they put that on the little shelf, where we kept our things. And then, after I did that for 3 days I thought that it was costing me too much strength not take that piece, I knew that there was a piece and I was so hungry. So, I thought, listen, I am going to eat once a day, every 24 hours, when the soup comes, I will eat all my bread, like that, for an hour, I will not be hungry. And that is what I did! I ate once a day, every 24 hours....And that was that! And afterwards, they took me, I was lucky, one more bit of luck....I was taken...I no longer know...Ah yes, I tried to escape again, from the hotel where they

were interrogating me. I was already outside...I was already outside! And I had my hands in my coat that I had. And then the interpreter who was questioning me came back that day several minutes earlier from his lunch. I knew the times that he would leave and when he would come back. And that day, he had to come back 5 minutes earlier! Ah, evidently, I was locked up..

And with that, they put me in the hole in the prison. It was underneath the ground floor. There, no light, nothing....handcuffs...There, we ate every 3 days only....Yes every 3 days....Then....

MY: Once every 3 days!?

AS: Yes, that's all...Ah yes!....3 days.... And then this prison had 5 floors. It was rectangular, a rectangular building, 5 floors. It is not like in America, the cells all have doors, it is not cages, it is not that....And then on the 5th floor, it was all those who were already condemned, or that they were going to kill them or something. And I had a lot of friends up there. And then what there was in that prison...there was ventilation, heating all that, that left horizontally [vertically] from the 5th floor to the basement...It was the same....same...as here....air conditioning!

MY: Air conditioning, yes.

AS: That left from the 5th floor to the basement. And then when friends knew in what cell I was, they made a package; because there were some of them who had the right to packages, who all that, food, and then they collected the food, they made a package and they put that in this hole, in this ventilation shaft. And then, that descended...Tac...All the 5 floors, that made a terrible noise! They did that after 5:00 because after 5:00, the German guards left. There were guardians for the night but the trick of the day all that which was always controlled, they were not there! Then, they put that in the hole and that descended. And with the shovel that we had to clean, because it was necessary to clean our cell....We had not removed the shovel, we put it in the ventilation shaft, like that, if for example, at the moment or that descended, a guy looked precisely or controlled, I didn't need to take the package, I could wait that it had left, because it was stopped by this shovel!

And then, at the end of 3 weeks, me, I had more to eat than what I had for months. I had put a marvelous physique, I slept 12 hours...I never did anything...I ate. And then the Gestapo came to get me at the end of 15 days. A cell like that, that regime every 3 days, they no longer understood anything! I had pink cheeks, I was rested. And, I was really in shape! Then, they only kept me a month in that cell and then they put me again on top. They didn't understand how that worked. Oh no, they had wonderful tricks!

...That still works? On my God!....

(End of French) Next part in English:

ASL February...Wait...From July to February...8 months, 9 months...9 months, 10 months, it was really the beginning you know.

CY: How long were you in prison there?

AS: I was in prison 17 months.

CY: 17 months.

AS: And 23 months in concentration camp. I was arrested very early... ..

CY: Where were these camps? In France, in Germany?

AS: My first camp was on the border of France in Germany.

CY: Was that near Strasbourg?

AS: Yes, Struthof.

CY: Struthof. In Struthof, after prison?

AS: Yes, after prison. From prison, we were sent to Struthof. I was in a special category: "NN", Nacht and Nebel. There was a decree Hitler had made, that certain prisoners instead of killing them right away, should be sent into concentration camps, unable to write or receive mail or get packages. They should never be heard or seen again. We were called "Nacht and Nebel:" Night and Fog. This was a special category. Our category, the one we the heavyweights. And even in camps, in Struthof, when we came there, we had civilian clothes...They gave us... We didn't have a striped clothes. We had clothes from prisoners that had been gassed or killed. There were civilian clothes and they had paintings around the arms. And they had painting on the sides. And we had NN everywhere, on the arms and on the pants. So we could be recognized immediately by any SS---- with us, that we were very dangerous and that they should be very careful with us.

CY: Was it a work camp at Struthof?

AS: It was a camp to kill people.

CY: So it was a death camp?

AS: This camp, it was a camp to kill you either by hanging, by shooting or by gassing...or by over-work! We had to go, we worked in a silo. And you know, when you eat practically nothing and you work 12 hours, it doesn't take long! You go down by way...

CY: How long were you in there? How long were you in Struthof?

AS: In Struthof, I was from July... '43. I have to check at home. I have some notes, I forgot already...I was in Struthof...Then Dachau...

CY: Dachau after?

AS: Yeah, we were evacuated from Struthof. When the Allies landed in Normandy, we were evacuated.

CY: So then you were in Struthof from 1943 until 1944. The Normandy invasion was June 6, 1944.

AS: Yes, we were evacuated in 1944.

CY: Then, you went to Dachau?

AS: In Dachau yes.

CY: And then, in Dachau, you were liberated...

AS: Liberated from the American Army. It was '45, 26th of April '45.

CY: How could you survive?

AS: It was hard! It was hard! Not many survived!

CY: You were working in the silo?

AS: Oh, I didn't do much work! We started working in the silo... I was lucky or unlucky. When we got to Struthof, there were practically nobody, there was nobody to put as interpreters. Because they only had Polish and Russian prisoners and Polish and Russian interpreters. And the guy who was doing the interpreting in Polish and Russian, didn't hardly know any French. So the Germans, the SS said, they knew, they had our files, everything else. And the camp commander Kramer, the famous Kramer, came down, when we were first time at the showers there, and he said: "Where is the this French officer who talks German?"

CY: It was you!

AS: It was me but I didn't volunteer for anything! So he said: "Look, it is very simple, unless he comes forward, we shoot 3 guys!" And we knew he would do it, I mean, he didn't hesitate anything!

CY: Yes, so you had to come forward?

AS: So my friends behind me pushed me in the back and said: "André, go, go... go," and so I said, "Here." So OK, you are the French interpreter for the French block, the French barrack. And so I had a position inside the camp which was better than just working there, because, somehow, being officially named the interpreter, they had to count on me and they wanted me to do things. And you know, the people who were were running... There was a hierarchy of prisoners, who were running our barracks. If they didn't do what they were supposed to do with the prisoners, they would go back to ordinary work without all the privileges. So they tried to put all chances on their side and they tried to keep welding me because they needed to talk to my friends! They couldn't talk to them anyhow! If these prisoners wouldn't do what they were supposed to do, the people who were in the barrack would be punished too.

So I had a position of responsibility which was not nice. Because there were things that had to be done. And I explained – we had a little committee among some of my friends in the office who were there – and I told them: "Look, there are certain things we have to do. If we don't do them, that's suicide! We want to come back, we want to win the war. And there are certain things we have to do. You have to... The rule is that the morning, you have to wash yourself in the washroom with ice-cold water, you have to strip! The water was ice-cold, and I have to translate, I have tell you: strip. And it is not me who wants it but if you don't do it, you are going to be punished. When you are punished, you're either beaten to death or whatever it is so I explained to them, you have to bear with me, we'll make the best out of it, and we do!" And from then, I had responsibility and this would happen. For instance I was the only Kapo in camp, we had a Kommando to build a road. Throad road exists, it goes from up to the camp from Rothau, the station, it goes up. And there was a curve we have to build so that the cars could pass without counting over, falling down the mount.

This was a work detail phase. So I was going to be the interpreter. That means, I didn't have to use a pick or a shovel. Just walking next to the guy who was responsible for the detail, and be there to watch it. So I took out, I decided to take out people who were weak or very sick, because when you worked outside, you got 2 slices of bread at 10 o'clock. And that was 2 slices of bread that could save you, that could give time, 1 month, 2 months, 3 months survival. So it was important to gather as many people to have the ration. And also to have a work detail with who nobody was beaten. So they said to me: you are the guy who is going to be the interpreter. So I said: "Yes, one condition: nobody gets beaten, nobody...Don't take away the 2 slices of bread from them which they liked to take away because they could manage to buy cigarettes with this and so on...." Then I'll go."

And after the second day, the guy who was taking us out didn't come back. That morning, he had killed somebody the day before and he was in prison. And so, nobody was available to take that detail out. And so were alone standing there for 2 hours. So finally, the SS in charge came down and said: "What's going on here? There is nobody...." And nobody wanted to take the French detail out, because they knew

we didn't work much and we were difficult prisoners. So the German prisoners or the Polish prisoners who were in charge of work details, they would have lost their privileges. So they didn't want that detail. So he came towards me and said: "You take them out!" "Fine!" So from then on, I took them out. I was the only one, I was the only NN Kapo, in any camp: there has never been any NN Kapo.

So I took out everyday 40 to 60 guys. And there is one thing I told them: "There is one thing you have to do, for you and for me, you have to walk out of camp, you have to go up, walk up the terraces, and through the gate and you had to walk, you to walk by like on parade. You know, you have to put your hands on the side, and stiff and walk and really go by the soldiers." I told my, I told: "Look, there is one thing, you have to go out straight like soldiers, and you have to come back, because the SS were standing on both sides, and if you don't perform, they'll start hitting you, and once they hit you, you get a broken bone and so on.... You are done!" In this camp, there was no survival. So we walked out beautifully! We walked back to camp beautifully. And even, I got them seen out outside the camp to the work place. So they marveled, the German realized that it was one form of moral building for the prisoners.

CY: An esprit de corps.

AS: And so this was known as the best detail in camp! And I was running it... On my God.... Many months!

CY: Because, just because you could speak....

AS: Because I was able.... I knew what it would do for me and so... And so we didn't work much. We put next to people who couldn't work really. But I took them along because for the bread, I put some next to them so they wouldn't be surprised when the guard came and looked if they were working. So they start shoveling, you know, picking so on. The minute he turns his back and went away and couldn't see them, they started to fall and sat down on the wheelbarrel. I mean I had it organized. I had a work detail for.....wheelbarrows. So I organized it....We had 12 wheelbarrowss, 6 that were full and when they were full, they stopped. And then we had bushes and trees to cut down, so that we did. We cut them down but not completely and then no work. And then, when all of a sudden, somebody looked somebody of the inspection coming, when he is there, I made the bushes fall, the trees fell down, and the full wheelbarrows went up, the empties went back....It looked like marvelous. They couldn't believe their eyes to see the French working like this! We didn't do anything, we just did it that moment... So that's how we survived.

CY: So that was in Struthof and in Dachau.

AS: And then in Struthof, I lost the detail....The detail was finished, we went somewhere else. And I got a very good job at.... We had a barrack where we were weaving. We were weaving.... In all of Germany, in all the occupied territories, they

picked up all kinds of pieces of textile, anything. And they made a ballast out so when the ships were boarded, they wouldn't get damaged, you know, these big things. You had to cut them down, with a razor, strips, and one team was weaving them together. So when I got there, they had a quota, and when got over the quota, they got a little piece of bread. I told them: "Look, this is -we don't work for the war effort." And so I changed the system completely. Instead of having the German prisoners, or Dutch prisoners or other prisoners preparing the material, cutting things, I put French there. So they cut practically nothing! So our production went down 50%. So after 3 weeks, they came down, they couldn't understand what was happening! And then, they realized that there was something wrong with me, I was running the show. So they took me out of here. It was a good 3 weeks really, we rested up, it was fine, everybody out of the cold, it was raining.... and so on. Really, It was good, good 3 weeks! We didn't do any work!

CY: So it wasn't as bad as some of the camps that you hear about....Auschwitz...?

AS: Oh yes, yes..

CY: It was bad there.....

AS: Oh yes, it was completely. It was an extermination camps! There was gas...We got the camp transports, we knew they were feeding them, weighing them.... And then they did experiments on them and how long would they survive in doing this.... Or how would they come back after they were in the cold or whatever it is. It was unbelievable!

CY: And the Germans were in charge of the camp, not the French?

AS: Oh no, it was Germans of course. Oh no.

CY: German....But because you spoke German!

AS: Yes, that's why. I had the chance to do....And the thing, it happened because, when we arrived, we had to go through the political section. It means that they took down your ID, they took down.... And they asked you why were here and so on. So I told my friends, all my friends: "Look, don't say you did nothing." Because automatically, every French prisoner said: "I am here for nothing. I shouldn't be here." I said: "Don't say that because they have your file. If you say that, they beat you half to death!" So some of them followed my advice and some didn't and got beaten up. And so, when my turn came, I said: "I went to England, I had tracts, we did some sabotage work and so on....and the camp commander..." It was just....When he heard me talk, he said: "Oh we have a guy who did something here! Who is not innocent! Oh that's fantastic! Here, come forward!" And that's how I got really closer to him. And somehow, he took a liking to me. It was stupid.

And you know, in this camp, there were 5 Jews....

CY: What was your name? Was your name changed at that time?

AS: No, nobody knew my name, no. We had 5 Jewish prisoners. In this camp, there were not supposed to any Jewish, strictly Aryan camps. And ... the Jews wouldn't have survived in that camp. Two of the five died in 3 days.... They couldn't make it. It was terrible the work. And the 3 others were transported to Auschwitz. And one of them, he lives! He was a tailor! And he got to Auschwitz, and at that time, the camp commander of Auschwitz was Kramer! Our first camp commander! Who was later in Bergen Belsen, and who was killed by the British, they hung him. But he was there, and then they took them out from the wagons in Auschwitz. They were immediately sending them to be gassed in the gas chambers! And this guy.... What was his name... Lemberger, I had helped him quite a lot.... He was in my Kommando. And I helped quite a lot and he couldn't understand it! Later, he told me: "Does anybody help him?" Of course I helped him because he was Jewish. So I gave him a good job. In the silo where I worked. I helped him.

CY: Did he know that you were Jewish?

AS: No, of course not. But he was surprised that I favored him with work. Because, usually, he was beaten up every time he went out! So when he jumped from the wagon, and he told.... He stood out and told the camp commander he had been received in Struthof for 8 months. And it was funny, he said: "You helped him for 8 months. Alright, you still stay with me." Instead of sending him to the gas chambers. And he came back! Some things, you know, you never know!

CY: But you said Struthof wasn't really for the Jews? It was more for political prisoners!

AS: No, no Jews. It was for NN, yes, Nacht und Nebel," night and fog. It was the last category of prisoners.

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When we got into camp, it was absolutely terrible! The first three days, they made us pick up stones on the bottom of the hill – always running – up the hill, down all the terraces, put all the stones in a pile. And all the stones from downhill outside, were up; inside the camp, we had to pick up stones inside the camp and brought them back downhill outside.

CY: No one knew you were Jewish, if they had, what would have happened to you?

AS: Who knows? But they would have sent me out.

CY: To another camp?

AS: But then, they would have sent me back to jail first, to interrogate me, in order to find out if I had

CY: Other crimes?

AS: Yes, it wouldn't have been very good! It was bad enough!

CY: So in order to survive, you had to hide who you were....

AS: It's normal. Besides, I was in the army. Practically, so this was it. It was no sense of saying I was Jewish and so on, it's ridiculous.

MY: Up to this point, you've never mentioned the name Hitler. When did you first hear the name Hitler?

AS: I had seen him! In Germany.

MY: Oh! You had seen him!

AS: Oh yes, I saw him at parades... You know, in '33, after the....

MY: How old were you in '33, André?

AS: I was...hum... 18.

MY: Ah huh.

AS: Well, in 32. ...When he had won the elections, there were everywhere victory parades. And all the students of all the high schools and universities had to go and applaud the parade. And I had organized in Düsseldorf where I lived, I had organized a group of all the Jewish students, from every school, because things had changed completely since that Easter, for the Jews. They were badly treated, they were very badly marked [graded] and so on. So we had to get up the marks of the bad students, we had to help them physically. So I organized all the Jewish students and we managed to meet once a week and to give them directives what to do and what not to do. And when, the parade came, I had decided.... There was a girl, she was my age, she was running the girls, I was running the boys... We decided that we would not go to the parade. So I went to see the head of the high schools and said: "I think the Jewish students should be excused from going to the parade, You don't want the Jews." So he said: "Look, I did what the republic of Weimar make me do all these years and you do it too!" I said: "Look, I am not going, I am not coming!" He said: "What! You are going to be expelled, and God knows what else!" So we had to let know... I couldn't take the responsibility... We had to let know all the students that if they wouldn't go to the parade, they would be punished. But we told the parents that we definitely wouldn't go, and they should take the same stand as we did, and they shouldn't allow their children to go to the parade.

So, a few days after, I was called back to the principal of all these high schools. He told me: "Yes, I forwarded your request to the authorities and they don't want the Jews at the parade." So immediately, we told all the Jewish students: "You see, it pays to be firm!" And, it was good.

CY: So, just to finish up, you were liberated from Dachau in 1945.

AS: That's right. April 26th.

CY: And after that, you went back to France.

AS: Yes, we were driven back by American army troops and these were all black drivers.

MY: Can we go back a minute?

CY: American army troops, was that....?

AS: Yes, the Patton army.

CY: The Pétain?

AS: No, Patton, General Patton.

CY: Oh, Patton's army!

AS: Some of his troops liberated Dachau. It was the 641 tank regiment. It was all black...

CY: All black army.

AS: Yes, it was all black. And they drove like, my God! We were in those trucks, you know those army trucks and they drove like there was no day tomorrow!

CY: They drove you back to France?

AS: To Strasbourg. And so, I told the driver, I said: "Please, drive slowly! We are afraid for our lives! We survived all these years, we hope to survive a transport from Dachau to Strasbourg!"

CY: And did you live in Strasbourg for all those years?

AS: No, this was... At the end of the day, we were screened by the French authorities, given papers and so on, we had no documents, we had nothing!

CY: Could you then say you were Jewish?

AS: No, no. I wanted the ID and there was no sense of saying anything else. Because then, I would have opened up a whole, I would never go home until they could research all this. So I kept on going. It wasn't important at that time! The Jewish issue, it wasn't existing at that time! You had to show that you had been in the Army, or in the Resistance, in the underground, and that gave you your certain rights and that's all!

CY: And then where did you live after that?

AS: Paris.

CY: Was that in Paris?

AS: Yes, I didn't want to go back home.

CY: Back home was in...?

AS: North of France.

CY: North of France. Paris, you got married.

AS: Yes, I got married.

CY: You met your wife in....

AS: In Paris, yes.

CY: And then , you lived in Paris until...

AS: In one of the suburbs, until we came to America.

CY: Until 1958?

AS: No, we came in '52, '52 yes.

CY: In '52.

MY: Can we just go back to the day that Dachau was liberated. Did you said it was April 26th...

AS: April 26th.

MY: April 26th 1945.

AS: Yes... Ah yes, '45. And you know, the first person I hugged.... I went to the door, to the gate. The Germans were still shooting, killing prisoners who tried to go to the door. And, that person who took their helmet off was Margaret Mitchell!

MY: Was who?

AS: The anthropologist.

MY: Margaret Mead?

AS: Mead yes! Her blond hair came down.

CY: She was there?

MY: Isn't that? The great anthropologist. And what was she doing there?

AS Well, she is an anthropologist... She went with the advanced troops to see the results.

MY: I had no idea of that, really. Did she identify herself or did you know that?

AS: Yes... No I didn't know...

MY: How did she introduce herself, she just said I am Margaret Mead?

AS; Yes, that's all. To me, it wasn't important. She could be anything you know. She could be working for the USO or whatever it is!

MY: That is remarkable!

AS: Yes, that was unbelievable!

MY: You didn't realize at that point what it means...

AS: No only later.

MY: Only later you realized that.

AS: Oh, sure! [note by DMH: probably Lee Miller]

CY: But having been in the camps for so long, you must have been under-nourished and...

AS: Yes, I had just....Typhus... before. There was a big epidemic in Dachau. 'Cause hygiene had broken down and we had lice. And 3,000 French men died.

CY: So you were in a hospital afterwards?

AS: I was, I was lucky again. I had friends who worked in Munich, clearing after each raid you know. There was a detail sent out to take away, to clear out the streets and so on... And when you have Typhus, you don't eat!... And of course, you don't eat at all, you can't eat! And there was no medication, nothing. And I had friends who worked in Munich. And they broke into the SS hospital and stole for me, four, five...[crying] It was a mixture of 'Straffontain' and glucose, raisin glucose. And that kept your heart going, the 'Straffontain', the poison, and glucose kept a certain amount of nourishment. And I had four injections, because nobody had.... Just, I had friends...And that's how I survived. I weighed 56 pounds I think. [kilos]

MY: You weighed 56 pounds!

CY: After the war?

MY: You were a sheer skeleton.

AS: Oh, everybody was.... You see, in camp, when they went to the showers, the lice controllers and so on, they were living dead, living skeletons...

MY: 56 pounds!

AS: Oh, this is awful. That was still good, 56 pounds is still a good weight.

MY: And your normal weight is about 150, 140-150 pounds.

AS: Oh, 56 was still a good weight!

MY: Could you survive at that weight, 56?

AS: Yeah!

MY: Yes, you could.

AS: But the typhus was terrible because you had 105 fever, 106 fever! And the European doctors couldn't do anything. There was no medication, they didn't know it! The Russian does, there were some Russians, we had one so-called doctor! And the Russian medicine you know, after the revolution, they had not enough doctors. So the Russian medicine was very specialized. They created doctors up to here, this part, they were all for arms, or for knees. And this doctor was a specialist in the injections. And we called him doctor Espicure, and he was marvelous! Because you know, at 56 pounds, try to get a nerve! Your doctors here, they couldn't find any vein, and he found them, he found them. and knew it!

CY: It's a miracle!

AS: Oh, it was something!

CY: So how long after did it take you...

AS: Oh, we stayed there... Another 2 weeks, about. We went out of the camp a little bit, and then I was sent back very early. Because it went by rank and if you were in the army and resistance and so on, it was hierarchy you know. So I got back pretty fast. I think I was back, 10th of May I was back in Paris.

CY: Your weight was going up...

AS: Oh, yes. Well, then you see, I had a very good friend who died a few years ago at the age of 94. He was one of the oldest prisoners and he was a doctor. And he immediately warned everybody not to eat! Because temptation was tremendous! The Americans came, there was food! So he told people, he took away food from them! And also I listened to him and I didn't eat much. Because you had to go very slowly for 2, 3 weeks, to gain gradually, gradually, get used to food again. Because more people died the first week than the week before. The one week after liberation, more people died than in the last week in camp!

CY: Like when you fast....

MY: They died in that first week...

AS Yes, from over-eating!

MY: Over-eating! Isn't that something!

AS: Oh, they got immediately all kinds of sicknesses and so they were gone.

MY: So you did it very gradually.

AS: I did it very gradually. I disciplined myself. And from then on, I never ate much. I can discipline myself very well. I don't eat much. I never do much.

CY: You told me tonight you're a small eater.

MY: You eat 2 times a day, 3 times?

AS: Yes...But even things I like! You know, when you like something, you tend to eat more! I stop! I like, say I like cheese cake, I could eat 2 or 3 slices, I eat only one slice.

MY: That's good.

INTERVIEW AVEC Mr. ANDRÉ SCHEINMAN

13 Novembre 1992

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CY: Good discipline.

AS: I have no problem with my weight! I have never problems with my weight! I am still 155 pounds.

CY: Excellent. Any last minute remarks, any left....?

AS:

CY: This is a good interview.

MY: I think everything's been covered.

(End of Interview)