

Francisco Font interviewed by Solomon Steckoll c1979

Transcription conventions

I – Interviewer

F – Francisco

() – uninterpretable utterance

(might) – possible interpretation

underlined – to show emphasis

capital letters are used only for proper names and for additional non-verbal
information

SIDE 1

I while you were a prisoner on Alderney do you remember other prisoners from North Africa

LONG PAUSE

F not with us

I you say the whole thing ()

F I don't remember any North African prisoners in Alderney

I there were

F I remember in Jersey

I no I'm talking about Alderney

F no I don't remember them no

I er

F well there were none in Alderney camp in ()

I no (I'm quite aware of that) you didn't come across them

F no no

I ()

F no I think no I can't recall

I when people died in camp in Alderney

F yeah

I or were killed

F yeah

I and they were buried who buried them comrades of them or did the Germans take them

F ah the Germans used to take them

I do you remember how can you remember incidents of people dying and being taken away

F no

I no what

F no I don't remember any incident of anybody dying and being taken away I know the Germans used to do it in some cases in some cases except except on er on D-day on D-Day when they were when they were () from Cherbourg

I when

F on D-Day the day after D-Day or a couple of days after when they were (evacuating) from Cherbourg the Germans were (evacuating) Cherbourg

I from Cherbourg to

F to Alderney was the nearest place they could not go down because the allies were already there and they were going down the coast like you know so they bought three Germans drowned they must have drowned and picked them up and put them into the boat so us five who were taken to there was a little cemetery in Alderney not by the Church going towards outskirts outskirts of the town there were five of us and one French man so they made us the French man washed the (gentleman's) face was full of you know his mouth and eye was full of sand so he washed his face and we buried we buried those but as for the inmates I don't

I ()

F I think so you know

I er in Alderney among the prisoners were there cases of prisoners being shot

F I don't remember I don't remember prisoners being shot in Alderney

I do you remember many dying

F yes oh yes I remember many dying

I what of

F of dysentery starvation oh yeah beatings

I and you were with the Jewish prisoners

F yes I was among the Jewish prisoners yeah

I er among the Jewish prisoners were some who were very religious orthodox

F er no there were some but I don't think the majority were not

I yeah do you remember some cases when some came

F yes I remember some of the Jewish inmates praying

I how were the Germans present or not

F no the Germans were not present when they used to pray no no no or I don't think they were allowed to pray anyway

I yeah yeah but how did they pray do you remember the emotions on their face for example

F oh yeah tears tears on their faces there were tears on their faces when they used to pray and sometimes we used to watch it because we () in the barracks

I in the barracks

F in the barracks yes yes as I say some of them

I before work in the morning or in the evening or Saturdays

F no more on Saturdays

I Saturdays

F the Sabbath that's right the Sabbath

I go on give me the details that you remember

F ah

I just a minute try and think back quietly as you visualise it now and was and then describe how you saw it

F yeah well on Saturday some Saturdays because some Saturdays they used to go from one barrack to another you know but I we used to witness this

I you personally saw it

F I used to witness the er (brain)

I describe it

F somehow they managed to get the er kind of er to put something on from shoulder to shoulder I thought it was kind of something a () I don't know what it is

I ()

F cloth white

I where did they find it

F I don't know this is the amazing thing eh I mean they got it somehow and some managed to put the () which they were not allowed to wear

I what

F I don't know what you call it

I the head

F the head head the black thing like you know but after the brain was done they used to take it away and hide it

I where

F well I don't know I never used to see it they managed to get it away and hide it se that's what I witnessed

I describe the ()

F well the praying well a lot of them used to join in yeah tears on their faces

I do you remember what language was it in French or in English

F er no I thought it was in () myself

I ()

F no I don't understand that

I therefore you know it wasn't French

F no it was not french no French

I () were there old (members) ()

F well there was mainly old () well the young people used to be a bit I I would not say they were indifferent but I think they would not be reluctant to joining

I yeah but when you say older people about what age were the prisoners

F er fifty forty five fifty Doctor (Dryfoos) was one of the oldest a lot er the one who lost (president of the ecole) what was his name

I () his name

F er (azule) Doctor (azule) all these people used to practice

I do you remember on Friday afternoons they managed to have (candles) () (candles)

F some did

I where did they () the candles

F some did light the candles or find ()

I where did they

F I don't know it was a mystery for everybody but they managed to get the candles ah

I when when did they light the candles

F Friday night very quiet very secluded

I and how did they ()

F the idea was somebody was somebody used to be () see so somebody used to stand guard a Jewish person one of them

I ah ha

F while the other were doing the er little ceremony

I and the ()

F pardon

I each barrack had one (couple)

F I don't know whether it's a case of

I in your barrack

F no

I ()

F I don't think that the Jews had couples I don't think so

I in your barrack were there ()

F I don't know about it I don't remember to be honest with you

LONG PAUSE

I ()

F there could have been a couple I could not put my finger on it he was a couple

I the non-Jewish prisoners did they pray

F no no the non-Jewish prisoners didn't pray

I why

F well they were not religious people

I were there any contact or conversation after all you were there for a few years with the regular German soldiers or the (vermat) TAPE INTERFERENCE were there any was there any during the time that you were a prisoner there working and so were there any conversations between you personally and the regular soldiers or officers of the (vermat)

F er well as far as I know no

I you personally no

F I personally no

I they didn't speak to you

F on the contrary I used to keep away from them

I did they used to give you cigarettes

F no the () used to give us nothing no cigarettes no good-bye no good morning
no nothing

I er somebody told me that the Russian prisoners used to sell bread for
cigarettes and soap where did you get cigarettes did anybody have cigarettes

F somebody did

I where did they get them

F I dunno I never used to smoke I dunno that did not bother me what happened
sometimes what used to happen when we used to go from the camp to () in Alderney
to the harbour to work which I think is a good couple of miles there so you could see
everybody you don't look up the smokers used to look always down and they used to
pick up the fag ends

I from the soldiers

F of German soldiers that's how some managed to have cigarettes fag ends but
that didn't bother me cause

I where did they get the matches to light the candles

F ah well you know matches and things like that I don't know where they did
get em but somehow somebody managed to get em

I was there talk of escaping

F no ah I don't think there was any talk of escaping

I why

F because the island was so isolated and if they did escape does one thing the only thing that the Germans had control of was the prisoners there because that's the only way you could get food was in the camps outside the camps no life you understand what I mean outside the camp there was no life you know you could go from one camp to another but that's all there was there was nothing in the fields nothing anywhere

I you knew () political before so you knew that Central America the French had a penal colony called Devil's Island

F yeah

I when you were in Alderney () did you and some of your comrades think you were on a kind of Devil's Island

F yeah I thought that () it was worse

I why worse

F because as I recall back I've got a photograph in my mind of Alderney during the War

I what was ()

F every (rope) big or small barbed wire everywhere and () everywhere so if you left as you did in many cases if you left the main road you eventually went to a field more than likely you could be blown up as it happened many times to the rabbits or the () if you jump on it the mine used to go off that's why the question of escaping well I dunno I think it was very very ()

I did the prisoners catch the rabbits to eat

F if you could yes if you could catch rabbits you used to eat them grill them or roast them whatever it is if you could if you could

I ()

F after blown up eh or you know er when we used to work in the harbour somehow we managed with a bit of string and a bit of something used to catch fish and in a corner there light a fire and you know used to grill I dunno what it is we used to burn em

I in the harbour did you ever seen the chief (vermat) officer in charge of the harbour the harbour master

F no

I his name was (Mouseman) captain (Mouseman)

F I know we did er when we used to work in the harbour there was a big jetty there I'm almost sure that the group there was under the direction of some group some group

I you haven't heard of the harbour master

F no no

I did you ever see submarines

F no I never saw submarines in the harbour

I did you ever see anything like this I'm now showing a sketch of a one man operated er torpedo ah it operated like this this was a torpedo for sinking ships one man in here it goes into the ship and just before releasing it he goes off and the torpedo sinks the ship

F yeah yeah

I did you ever see anything like that

F no I never saw nothing like that

I cause they supposedly used these boats the one man one man operated torpedo boats against shipping British and () in the Channel

F never saw that no no I didn't see that no

I () er I want to go back and ask you again this question you say er Mr Font said you have a photograph in your mind of what was Alderney during the War when you were there as a prisoner take your time and give me this photograph

F well the photograph is taken from Alderney in October 1943 er it was one of the few occasions when my (soul) really fell into my feet because of the isolation it was a rainy day nobody on site what happened in Alderney in the evening dark soaking wet and from the harbour we had to walk () in Alderney not a sound no boats this was () when spring came I said to I says (Jimmy) do you notice something different silence complete silence () none of the clack clack of the German (boot) I think even the birds left the blasted place () they deserted it and I always the pitiful silhouettes came down of us the Jewish and the Spaniards and the Russians coming down to work at the Fort singing this is the one of the er German er mine working again they had to sing coming to work and going to work people could hardly walk but they had to sing after that you could feel always the em the wind that's the thing I could always hate I could understand coming form (Gorey) if it was raining you you used to say well it was rained so when you go to the barracks somehow it would be warmer so but you used to go to the harbour and work in the distance with wind and rain shock () to the skin and you had to stay there all day until the evening and then come back it was still raining that ha it's endurance that's brutality no matter whose way you look at it you know sad very sad

I ()

F ah yeah ah yeah

I ()

F they took em off the skull and the bones

I did you know the () before

F no I saw them in La Rochelle La Rochelle was the first time I saw these people

I were they black

F yeah black (but beautiful) with a skull and bones in the (head)

I ()

F ()

I ()

F in Alderney you mean I don't know his name we used to call him (Boots) you know Spanish we've got a funny way we call everybody by er a () you know we call him (Boots) because he () up to his ankles

I (Adler)

F and some (Adler Adler) we used to call him (Bootas)

I his first name was (Adam) his father's name was (Adam) is that a Jewish name

F I got his name there in the book but the name we used to call him (Bootas) with the runny nose

I yeah what did you call ()

F I used to call him runny nose we used to call him runny nose

I why

F because he always used to do that SNIFFING we used to call him (mocas) in Spanish er (Mocas) you know runny nose and the last one he had a very long neck

I did they go with whips also

F oh yeah they used to go with whips ah yes

I ()

F for no reason at all

I yourself

F myself they () and I could run

I () was it a stick or with ()

F a stick a stick in my case it was a stick

I and did you see (the cat with nine tails)

F sometimes a mallet I saw on times of punishment they used to use a cat with
nine tails

I they used one () er four years ago er four years ago they were doing repair
works in Fort George on Alderney which was occupied by the (vermat) under the
floor boards they found a uniform a pyjama uniform of a prisoner in () with striped
blue and white how do you think a thing like that got there

F I dunno how it got there somebody must have buried it

I my personal opinion is that a German soldier took it for a souvenir and when
they waited for the British to come after the War

F he buried it there

I he was afraid to be caught with it and hid it

F more than likely yeah

I this is also now in the Museum in Alderney

F in Alderney yeah

I well thank you very much Mr Font

TAPE INTERFERENCE – ABRUPT CONTINUATION OF INTERVIEW

I that's what you just said

F yeah yeah I remember very vividly we used to have a (couple) in our barrack
who used to come () which in Spanish means short coat and being a (message) man he

looks ridiculous because he's got () and he used to enjoy himself by kicking people's
() soup

I ()

F he used to kick it all over the floor see and after they used to go in the kitchen
and when it was someone else's turn to pick up the soup they used to grab him and
send him in the cue so it would be another hundred men and have to wait half an hour
see that's the way he used to enjoy themselves

I was he German

F yeah German yeah German couple yeah

I the couple were a prisoner

F mm yeah yeah he was himself a prisoner the couple yeah

I () (do you remember their names)

F we used to call them nicknames

I ()

F yeah well I used to think they would take advantage of these things I don't
know which day it was but all the couples used to get together see not in our barrack
in somebody else's barrack see so this is when the Jewish I remember now used to
light the candle and some of them used to say the prayers in Jewish see well it was
while they were somewhere else

I the couple

F yeah with the other couple see () that's how they used to do it

I tell me the story of the SS Marie camp

F oh yes () was a Russian doctor and er a prisoner oh yes a prisoner and he
became involved with a French nurse because although I believe he was a German er
a Russian prisoner the (nurses) used to go to the camp down there like you know

anyway the Germans found out he was () with each other so she was both of them
were sent to France to a German concentration camp () that's what they told us they
were both they were both escorted with the SS guards

I ()

F ()

I how do you know all this

F because I saw it

I where did you see it

F in town

I they were beaten up and sent off

F they were taken away a French person she was French

I from where did you get the notion that they were sent to Autzwich

F that's what they told us

I () into the mike

F they told us that they sent them to Autzwich

I whose they the Germans

F the Germans or the () too as an example you know

I so when they took them away were they chained up

F ah no chained up chained up both of them with handcuffs

I together or separate

F separate one in front of the other

I ah but together

F together

I when was this

F this must have been () the beginning of June was D-Day that must have been
March it must have been March around March

I March 45

F March 45 no 44

I 44

F March 44

I do you have any recollection of Germans keeping Alsatian dogs on the island

F oh they did yes oh yes they did have Alsations

I did they use them against prisoners

F they were on our camp oh yeah

I how

F well mostly used to use them when there was a big transport of prisoners like
the last time I saw them was a big group of Spanish that's right but () they have a
funny idea of people it all depends on where you come from they keep you separate
see so this is the first time I saw them they brought them to () Alderney

I the prisoners

F the SS brought them but they had dogs with them Alsations yeah they used to
use them some in the front some in the middle some in the back

I against the prisoners

F yeah I suppose if anybody () they would have let the wolves to them see

I do you know anything about Alsatian dogs against prisoners at (sea)

F no see () was a bit isolated from us

I yes I know ()

F () you asked me any North Africans yes I remember () the ones in Alderney
the ones I saw () were prisoners of war from the French army and they used to wear
French er army uniforms

I do you remember if they got red cross parcels

F yes they used to have red cross parcels as prisoners of war

I and they bartered cigarettes for food among other prisoners

F I could not tell you that because this prisoners they were they were standing
down they were () concentration camps

I were they ()

F I do not know I know they were standing down opposite the church

I opposite the church () (National) Red Cross () and nobody else talks of ()
that's enough

TAPE INTERFERENCE

I okay er Mr Font you fought in the Spanish er

F Civil War yes

I Civil War when 'till when

F until 39

I from

F 39

I from

F Spain

I no but from what year

F from 36 39

I er in the international ()

F no in the Spanish Republican army

I er what happened after the end of the Civil war in Spain when Franco came in
what happened to you personally

F well we had to go we were forced to

I when you say we who you yourself

F I had to I was forced to withdraw into France the French border ()

I er and when you were in France what happened

F er we were put into concentration camps

I er concentration camps or detention camps

F detention camps

I where

F ()

I what happened when World War II broke out to you

F (World War Two) we were put into French working companies

I yeah

F administrated by the French army

I yeah

F and we were sent my particular unit were sent to ()

I er what happened after the er Germans conquered France to you personally

F I was we were forced to withdraw from ()

I when you say forced they took you or what

F no no we had to retreat because the Germans were advancing

I ah ha

F so we were retreating walking from () and we were arrived at the () which
after became the (zone administrator)

I when you went there were you under guard of the French soldiers or police or what

F no again we I was put in the football pitch football camp

I ()

F football field

I and guarded

F guarded by the French army

I yes

F and from there they put us in a new er French working unit

I er of the (Vichy)

F of the (Vichy) yes

I and you were there until when

F until May 41

I er what happened

F er one particular we were made to er gather in the that particular place where we were stationed ()

I about how many people were there

F about I would say about two hundred

I all Spanish

F all Spanish all Spanish and one particular morning we knew they were a group of the we knew they were er (French army) () people and some people dressed in Civilians and later we did found out they were members of the Gestapo

I yeah go on

F from there they were asking () et cetera et cetera and they were asking for volunteers to go to work for the French occupied France to work for the Germans

I did they say what kind of work

F no they didn't say just to work for them

I and then

F asking for volunteers and nobody going forward so they decided

I who was it the French who said it or the German (civilians)

F ah no the French said it the (Germans) didn't say nothing

I yeah go on

F () officer he came forward and he walk as far as more or less the middle of the group and he separated half the group one side and half the group more or less half the group to the left and the other group to the right

I and then

F we were ignorant of what was happening

I ah ha

F but apparently

I you were on the left side or the right side

F yeah I was on the right side

I yes go on

F and after that the next day we did find out what happened

I yeah

F unfortunately the side that I was standing at was the side that was supposed to go and work for the Germans

I and what happened

F about two days after that we were sent to to work at (La Rochelle) work on the (U-boat) base which is still in existence today

I were there any Germans

F only German only Spanish and Germans were there

I and er you worked there until you were sent to Jersey

F sent to Jersey in forty-two

I yeah we got that before thank you very much

SIDE 2

I will you please tell me from the moment you were arrested until you arrived in Jersey

F I was I wanted to come where a Gorey

I ()

F a Gorey Gorey there is a location in Jersey Gorey (was a camp at Jersey)

I when did you come to Jersey

F in 1941 42

I no before before the war where were you

F ah I was (arrested) in France

I when were you arrested the first time

F the first I was arrested in May 1941

I where

F at the () in France

I and then

F I was sent to La Rochelle

I and then

F (bill) for certification () for the general

I and then

F then we were brought to Jersey in 41 42

I you say we who was we

F Spaniard
I how many
F fifteen hundred
I Spanish
F republicans
I Spanish republicans anti-Franco
F anti Franco yes
I and you were living before in exile in France
F in France
I ()
F we were living in exile in France
I since the Franco
F since the Franco er took over Spain
I so he bought you two first
F he bought from Jersey from er the names of er
I the French ones
F the French ones yes
I oui
F at the end of 41 beginning of 42
I and you kept in Jersey in a camp
F in a camp yes
I where
F various camps various
I where
F at the Fort

I ()

F ()

I and on Jersey you did what work

F built fortifications

I ah ha

F building the walls fortifications of the walls bunkers

I when were you sent to Alderney

F I was sent to Alderney from here in October 1943

I you with Abbott or

F no

I who were you with

F no me and another Spaniard

I only two

F ()

I what was his name again

F (Ginnie Parma) ()

I only the two of you

F no there was another one that we picked up in Guernsey there were five of us

I five of you

F but I don't know the names you know

I five why were you five from fifteen hundred sent to

F in my case because when we were at the camp at Gorey when we were coming back to the camp from work a Spaniard was delivering bread threw me a loaf of bread so automatically you know you could not do that you see so I hid the loaf but the Germans saw me that was looking after us see so he says what you got there so I said

a loaf of bread so he said where you get it from so I could not say the other Spaniard gave it to me cause that's no the thing to do so I said I stole it

I ah ha

F so they beat me up I retaliated

I they beat you up with fists or with sticks or with a rifle

F uh kicking kicking and belting me with a stick yeah

I all over

F all over the body yeah and not enough with one ay I could have handled him see I could have handled him because there was only one against one but two of them came to his help

I were these German soldiers or

F no no no otis otis

I otis operation (torture) yeah they were not soldiers

F no

I German (operation)

F yeah yeah yeah

I German operation ()

F yeah yeah so they were almost unconscious on the floor from the camp and from there

I did you say you'd (be back)

F at the beginning when there was one against one I said that's fair enough I could handle it see but when the other two joined in they left me practically unconscious

I ah ha

F so we went to the camp and from the camp took him up to the Fort

I which Fort

F up in town

I in Jersey

F in Jersey and from there was the question of transit and a couple three or four days after that I was sent to Guernsey because the boat that went from here to Alderney was () and from here to Guernsey and in Guernsey I stopped there for four or five days

I yeah

F until we collected the other five

I ah ha

F altogether there were five of us

I ah ha

F and from there we were sent to Alderney

I ah ha and in Alderney you were put in

F (like an ordinary number two)

I and one camp was divided was it () or what

F no that camp wasn't no the Spanish were you no the German were with them there they only used to separate people ()

I it was one camp

F si si

I ()

F one camp ah ha

I and er you remained in Alderney until when

F until D-Day

I until D-Day

F two days two days after the D-Day

I right most of the people that were evacuated from there long before

F no no no after D-Day

I from Alderney

F from the Jewish camp I'm talking about

I ah no just a minute

F I don't know about the others

I yeah go on

F from Alderney we were () after

I after

F after two days ()

I and directed to

F directed no no to Guernsey

I to Guernsey

F because the allies were already up at (Cherbourg) see

I ah ha

F so the only way to go to France

I Guernsey

F Guernsey

I and how long were you in Guernsey

F ah a couple of days

I do you remember when you were in Guernsey on the way back

F yeah

I from Alderney

F yeah

I that somebody bought you food vegetables and so on () and Falla said the Germans bring him food trays and soap () nicely and he said the German said to him () and they can take it like dogs

F that's right that's right

I ()

F what they said in Guernsey Falla offered to bring food for us

I yeah

F and he put it in a special way

I yeah

F when the Germans saw him they told him to throw it away like we were cattle or dogs you know

I and then you were taken to ()

F no to Jersey

I ah then back to Jersey

F another stop here you see so I felt sick you know sick you know and I stopped in bed for about a week up at the Fort again see but in the meantime the first expedition left for St Malo see

I ah ha

F the Jewish contingent left on the first expedition like () and () and Doctor (Dryfed) and all these people you see so we were left behind for the second expedition but the second expedition never came

I ah ha

F by the time they were ready for us to go over there the allies already took St Malo () the coast

I so you remained

F I remained here

I until

F until 1945

I the end

F the end of the War

I and you were () when the British came on the 9th

F 9th of May 9th of May 1945

I did you then tell the British authorities what happened to you

F yes I did

I ()

F I told the British together it was a British Soviet Commission here staying at the British hotel they were inquiring the atrocities committed by the Germans in Alderney and in Jersey so together with () we told them what we saw and what we witnessed in Alderney and Jersey

I the British authorities

F the British authorities British intelligence

I (sign)

F yes yes together with the Russians Russian commission

I okay now we go back to Alderney do you remember an incident where took the guards seven hundred prisoners in Alderney and put them in a tunnel and closed it () big concrete bunker they put seven hundred in and they closed it and kept them in for fifteen twenty minutes

F that was the tunnel that was alongside the camp they put them there

I mm tell us about it

F they didn't close them together the one occasion when was it the beginning there was a lot of commotion going around on the continent so the Germans as a reprisal they put they were all Jewish they put them in the particular tunnel and they closed the entrances the purpose of it I don't know but you can only guess

I only the Jews

F only the Jews ones

I ah ha

F after they released them they sent us to work you see and after they put them back to the camp that's a fact that

I you spoke of atrocities

F yeah

I can you tell me if you think back details of atrocities that you personally saw

F yeah there was an occasion

I you personally

F I was working at the () harbour and I was laying the rails for a new steamer

I railroad

F no a steam crane

I crane

F crane and alongside us they were logging a boat () and the logging were done by er the Russians Soviet prisoners of War they used to wear the striped pyjamas

I mm

F the Russians used to and er there was () they used to rub their foot with anti-(cement) with paper () was running and one Russian I remember quite vividly was a younger guy a young person I used to all over walk over from the boat to the ship all over cement and come back see so () who were also guarded but used to take us there

and leave us there and er () there was one missing see () and couldn't see from the outside and he saw the Russian changing taking his paper bags his paper on his feet see () so without any hesitation any hesitation took his gun off his shoulder and shot him there and then through the head now

I ()

F no no no () he throw us out but on top of that () there was an anti-aircraft gun and the officer in charge of that there's a funny thing about that the officer in charge of the aircraft () and he told the () guard if you want to do that do it in the camp don't do it here that I could understand and there was a big argument between the two of them so eventually he took the prisoner took him away they must have burnt him they must have he must have () hundred or so (morsels burnt) n Alderney

I () shot down did you see it yourself or were you told about it

F no no we saw it was on D-day

I what was

F on D-Day was a big bomber coming from bomber from bombing the continent

I (what) did he bomb

F (British) bomber and returning and he was you could see he was in great difficulty so they all jumped out with parachutes and the (boat)

I (how many)

F well it could have been five or six could have been well we could see them (bobbing) on the sea see and I remember that vividly and a little boat or canoe or boat or (launch) left the harbour but when they came back they came back at the (end) so we assumed we assume they all drowned that's we can that's all we can () you know what happened at sea we don't know

I any other examples of your personal

F yeah we saw going once we used to go

I what you personally saw not the others

F yeah I saw going used to go sometimes er in Alderney we used to do jobs you know like patching up () knocking walls down making opening in the walls like you know and we () go through (lager silk and at lager silk) we saw a Russian he was hanging strung up from the main gate and he had on his chest something with a (prescription) for stolen bread and after we found out from the other prisoner the other Russian apparently he stole it from somebody else and they strung him up he was strung up for about three or four days cause atrocities is difficult to if atrocities means killing people and throwing people yeah we saw some of that but atrocities when people kicks you and belts and knocks you for no reason whatsoever and when people throw buckets of water in the winter on top of you and things like that that was a common thing like you know

I In Alderney do you remember on Christmas Eve when the Deputy () and gathered all of the prisoners together and said merry Christmas I have here letters from your family and had a big pile of letters and they took the letters and threw them into the fire

F yeah yeah that's probably because he called everyone to a big assembly so everyone thought () and everybody thought well Christmas is Christmas so he took us all outside

I outside

F outside well in the main assembly what you call it the assembly line you know

I yeah

F outside the () was the you know first eight first eight er barracks the () well put us all outside we just came out of the main camp so he came out and said well I've

got something nice to tell you so he brought out a packet of cards you know letters for a lot of the inmates there and he first he read out some names which I don't recall none for us for the Spaniards () and so everybody was very () you know correspondence from the family so after waiting for a while you know waiting for the reaction of the people there so he got them all and threw them into the fire

I what was the reaction

F well the reaction from the inmates was a real collapse of moral like you know but (laughter on the inside)

I do you remember the incident when the concrete bunker was brought down () and one prisoner was thrown into the concrete and ()

F no no I don't remember that because I was working mostly in the harbour all the time

I you were working mostly in the harbour

F in the harbour yeah and in some places around town like you know

I the prisoners of (silk)

F silt yeah

I those who wore the pyjamas

F yeah yeah

I they had different (signs) on the Jew red triangle

F red triangle

I red triangle with a point on top

F ()

I but with a point on top

F point yeah

I the point of the triangle on top

F mm

I do you remember seeing prisoners with a (pyjama) with a red triangle with the point of the triangle ()

F yes yes I remember in the reverse with the point of the triangle at the bottom

I do you know what it was

F well they were called er () they were called er

I I know what they were called I wasn't

F I don't know what it was no somewhere ()

I ah ha

F political

I ah ha

F Jewish

I senior () officers () move against the regime and went were sent as prisoners (in punitive) as a penal colony

F ah yeah () among the signals and distinctions of certain () and all the Jews were the yellow one and there was the red ones and the blue ones

I and if you hear of Germans being as er German army officers as a penal colony

F well we knew for a fact because some of the couples that were commanding the Russian units they were all Germans

I ah ha

F whether they were some of them were criminal

I the green

F yeah the criminal

I the green triangle

F the criminal type of general like you know because they were all fit () of the (Gestapo) they were all fit you know the only people that weren't very fit were the Russians and the Czechs

I what was the food that you ate

F oh my god we used to all it cabbage soup without the cabbage so that's to give you a rough idea of the low calorie intake and the low er

I can we start okay what food did you eat

F half a loaf of bread a day

I in the morning

F in the morning some days we had coffee some days some days we had a little bit of sausage

I how big

F ah I would say about an ounce and after that soup practically water and in the evenings soup again

I and you worked from what hour to what hour

F oh twelve hours a day

I everyday of the week

F everyday except no except half a day half a day every two Sundays one Sunday on the other Sunday half a day in the afternoon but the ()

I every second Sunday half a day off

F half a day

I in (Auschwitz) they didn't work on Sundays

F no the philosophy the general philosophy was this () so if you didn't work on Sunday afternoons you never had (food) in the evening you know what I mean that was a typical () reaction of them you didn't work no food

I (the guards were normally assessed)

F no the guards were assessed but they used to take us at work we used to be under the direction of the () because the assessors knew nothing about building or er how to do () you know so they used to drop us there and then we used the () used to be in charge

I ()

F SS () was a commando of the ()

I what do you know of () and ()

F I didn't know I know we passed them sometimes () was going to () on the left hand side and the other one I knew he exist but I don't know what he was the other one

I the prisoners with the stripe the pyjama obviously you saw them working

F yeah in the most

I you say you saw them working

F I saw them up at the Fort Fort Albert

I yeah did any of you from the ordinary prisons speak with him

F sometime when we were altogether see in our group we were all mechanics I was more or less the brick layer there was a couple of carpenters and the other guy was an electrician so when we used to work up the Fort we used to be with him

I did you speak with him

F yes

I what was the conversation

F er political

I what

F about politics that we spoke with two Czechs two young Czech students and er so one was () the conversation was railways and Spanish republicans and he was a Czech student but he was in the (concentration camp) for his so-called political activities and he was a very young man so the communication we used to have was singing he used to sing songs we knew we never knew the words but we knew the music see

I and this was ()

F and no we used to ra ra ra shouting like you know moralise you know sometimes to somebody you know but there I saw the Germans up at the Fort there were people manning the Fort every morning we used to throw the rubbish over the keep like you know to the sea so the rubbish was potato peelings cabbage leaves bits of food you know and the prisoners the people with the stripe used to jump over there to grab anything and then the () used to go there with their (ruffled butts) some cases used to go into the water and used to beat them you have to say y y you not hungry you not hungry just unrealistic because people used to jump jump over the place just to get a potato peeling or a cabbage leaf like you know

I (did you ever see any prisoners being thrown into the sea)

F no I never saw any prisoners being thrown into the sea

I you heard about it ()

F yeah I heard about it

I who told you

F () another Spaniard who was there with us

I ()

F he told us because that Spaniard was able to used to do some fishing

I ()

F with a boat

I ()

F because he used to fish for the General see

I ah ha

F one of the concessions was he was a good fisherman so he got the boat and go
and fish see so he saw something like that

I did you have any Chinese prisoners there

F none one Chinese prisoner in Alderney camp I remember that quite vividly
because

I do you remember what happened to him

F no no I don't recall only I only know he was there

I did you see him

F yeah yeah I used to see him I met him

I where did he come from did he say how he came to be a prisoner

F no no no no no I was not really er in intimate friend with him like you know

I er he () against one of the huts

F LAUGHTER

I so () came and broke three ropes and he () for twenty days and died they took
him to Guernsey and buried him

F ah I didn't know that

I ()

F yeah yeah

I lets see in the huts that you stayed in in Alderney wooden huts

F wooden huts

I how many inside a hut

F roughly we went in with two one on the top one on the bottom I would say about a hundred

I in one hut

F roughly hundred you know

I er was there blankets

F oh yeah there were blankets straw ()

I straw () what (clothes) in there

F the clothes the same clothes you took in with you you had to come out with

I er there were lice

F there were lots of lice

I how often did they make fumigation

F well er

I ()

F they used to be crazy enough and fumigate everybody you know everybody had () two or three times yeah about two or three times ()

I were many people took sick

F yes but when you were sick some people took sick but when you were sick you know the man used to wrap your bandages or whatever or your wounds on your leg with paper bandages paper you know

I ()

F ah this was a common thing you know the diarrhea dysentery

I among the prisoners in Alderney from France there were some medical doctors do you remember them

F yeah Doctor (Dryfoos)

I (there were others) did they help the patients at all

F yeah Doctor (Dryfoos) did he was in charge of the was a doctor of the camp
and afterward a doctor

I ()

F () I remember those two you know

I and the Germans ()

F no no there was a nothing available eh I mean it was a question of if you suffer
from a headache they used to give you a () or aspirin aspirin was good for everything
you know simple as that

I did you see women on the camp

F no I didn't

I did you see women with the Germans

F yes

I describe

F I saw women with the Germans

I what kind of women

F a French woman

I ()

F pardon

I French or German

F no no French I think

I er women working as cooks or

F yeah working as cooks

I prostitutes

F er not what I would call prostitutes but more or less everybody had there own
name see

I ()

F yeah well not as prostitutes but everybody was adaptable lets put it that way
see

I () you saw them

F I saw them not in the camp in town see

I going to or from work

F going from work

I if I show you a photograph of some of these women do you think you will
recognise

F mm the only women I would recognise

I if I show you a photograph

F mm maybe

I I am now showing you a photograph do you recognise any of these people the
men or the girls look carefully take your time

F mm

LONG PAUSE

F no I don't sorry to say

I look carefully if you recognise any of the men or the girls

F no I don't as I said before you know (lager silt) I never used to work at (lager
silt) and these people I used t o see

I in passing

F in passing it's as simple as that

I er there was one incident () where a prisoner escaped and he stayed in the
church of St Anne for two days and then was (arrested) () did you hear about that why
he was there

F no

I () it was before he was in a penal colony

F ah

I er while you were on Alderney did you come across or hear of people working
as volunteers for the Germans from Belgium

F from Belgium there might have been

I () volunteers

F there might have been a volunteer yes some Belgians yes

I but did you know about it when you were there

F er we heard about it

I no did you know about it

F yeah we knew about it

I were there any volunteers from Jersey or Guernsey

F no no I don't know any volunteers from Jersey or Guernsey

I but ()

F from Belgium and from Holland

I when of the construction companies working for OT were not German
companies but were Holland companies

F is it ah I don't know some things come back to me like you know

I come back

F yeah you know come back

I and then after the War I said after the war

F after the war was yeah

I you were liberated in Jersey

F in Jersey May 1945

I what did you do or where did you go

F er from here in September

I ()

F in September 1945 we were () I was () to Guernsey

I by the British

F by the British with the intentions of being () to France because being what do you call it ()

I ()

F no country because we could not go back to Spain so the British authorities they didn't want us there so we had to back to the country of origin the country of origin was France

I right

F during that period from May to September I become friendly with er the person who is now my wife so while I was Catherine Catherine Fox while I was in Guernsey she managed to get over there it was very difficult because in them days you had to travel by boat and in them days you had to have a special permit the advantage of it was that Catherine had four brothers in the British army so he had she made a special application not her the eldest brother so he was able to come to Guernsey to visit me so while I was there and she was there we decided to get married I made an application to the British authorities

I to get married

F to get married to Brigadier Harding and er application was refused

I why

F because according to them they said to me well look he said you'll be alright (you can't come back) I says look that invisible (stripe) that I carry with me

I what

F invisible stripe I call it

I yeah

F invisible stripe I carry it with me as long as I live and I'm sure as soon as you see me go back to () I'll never come back that I'm sure anyway so my Katie was very disturbed so I said the only thing to do is to stay behind so finally we were (equated) finally (equated) I got in touch with two of my best friends I says well when they call us cause there were about a hundred and fifty of us so when

I ()

F no Spanish some Italians were left here behind from the Italian army like you know and er I say when they call my name somebody answer for me because you say hi you know so we did that I hid they went away so I waited for two days and after two days I presented myself to the er British authorities because we used to be (dependent) from the British authorities the army not the local authorities see so there was a bit of a hullabuloo there because they thought ah () in the papers he says to his Sergeant () a very nice person very amiable man he says well I says well whose there I say Francisco () he says Francisco () I say yes look at the list yes he say according to this you're supposed to be in France what I was afraid of in my place () could have () he says you could have gone to prison for this I says I know I accept full responsibility but I can see no reason why I says when I'm liberated I'm supposed to be I cannot be merry when I want to be merry it was not a question of not having papers because the document I had with me was a birth certificate the birth certificate I always had it with me see and that's all that's needed the only person that didn't was my wife she was not twenty at the time and she need a special permission from her father so we talked to () he said ah that's a point he said as far as I'm concerned he

says I don't object to her I don't know what the local authorities are going to say I says well I'll have to get in touch with my father in law and I had no money Katie had no money so then (Mr Cotton) I think it was a nice gesture that put his hand in his pocket and gave me ten shillings he said look that's ten shillings you know what ever it is you know and they gave me er they gave me some ticket or something to go and have I used to go to it with the British boys you know like in the army like you know the kitchen so in the meantime I went to the Greffe asked them how long was it need for me to get married he said no we'll put the () whatever it is one week he says up to the week if nobody objects he says you can get married () by the () of course

I (in Guernsey)

F in Guernsey so in the meantime they said Mr Cotton got in touch with the local authorities in Guernsey to discuss my case ah they made a lot of paraphonelia a lot of rubbish you know

I LAUGHTER

F you should have gone and you should have gone there I said ah yeah yeah well I'm here and Mr Cotton told these people from the States he says well the man is here it's only one you know I think we can cope with it and the other one ah was most opposed to it

I ()

F well I member from the States yeah form the immigration officer one of the immigration officers in there anyway () says to me he says don't (worry about me if you're getting married get married) by the time these people find out () too late for them to do anything

I ah ha

F so I was hoping and waiting for (somebody) took any position and sure enough after a week we went to the Greffe I says well he says well the week is up he says all you need is a letter from you father-in-law I says yes a letter of consent he say that's all we need so there again I sent some money to my father-in-law he came over on a trip from Jersey and we got married in Guernsey in the (Greffe) offices in the (Greffe) office

I were there any witnesses

F the two er girls the two girls the two girls who used to work at the Greffe office

I ah ha and then

F and then I stopped there they allowed me to stay there see so () to find a job I did find a job

I in Guernsey

F in Guernsey

I you stayed in Guernsey until when

F until 1951 now I stopped in Guernsey with the intention of coming back here now

I here to

F to Jersey

I yep

F because my wife was she was Jersey born like you know

I yeah

F and er this type of thing was denied to me time and time again

I by who

F the Jersey authorities

I Jersey

F Jersey I found a sponsor once but after that that a sponsor withdrew the er the sponsorship so they don't want me I got letters there to prove it form the Lieutenant Governor I wrote to the Queen I got a letter from the Queen in writing no point blank they didn't want me here I could come here for a holiday we used to come here every Christmas time with my wife like you know and I used to got to see the Islands officer I used to tell him all the time I say what's the point he says well it's nothing against you the only thing you should have gone to France with the others you think you can do what you like you cannot do that () and I went () and eventually I used to go up to the you had to every now and then you had to report to the Island's officer in Guernsey and every time you changed your job you had to your employer had to go to the Island office and sign a paper for you see so I didn't do that I objected completely so they call me one day and they say Mr Font he says what's the matter with you you changed a job I says yes I have he says well your employer (hasn't) been here to fill the form and plus for the form we have to pay fifty shillings you know I says um well look I says I done two jobs for that because everytime I tell my employer that he must come here to sign this paper and pay fifty shillings I didn't want to do that all I wanted to do was be free and eventually they consented to that and there was a person there a lady was er

I sure when were you allowed to come back to Jersey

F when I become a British subject

I when

F in 1950

I ()

F British subject

I ()

F yeah

I but you said 1954

F no fifty fifty-one fifty

I ah

F ah so the lady said to me he says after all this () there's a solution to this problem you have I says what is it tell me and I'll do it he says well he says you () a British subject I was surprising you know I thought I dunno but then I mentioned it to my wife and my wife was all for it because my wife was all for it because she was homesick for her father and mother were living here and she (seemed) to love Guernsey very much so er I considered it an obligation to keep my wife happy I said if there's the solution for it I says I'll do it I'll become a British subject

I and come to Jersey

F and I come to Jersey (without saying nothing to nobody)

I and you've been in Jersey ever since

F ever since

I you've been in Jersey

F I've been in Jersey ever since

I () all the prisoners who were in all the camps Alderney you are the only one who lives in the Channel Islands

F yeah I'm the only one that lives in the Channel Islands that (where in) Alderney camp

I and of other camps

F the other camps yeah

I ()

F the only one yeah living in Jersey

I in the Channel Islands

F yeah

I do you go back to Alderney sometimes

F oh yes we go every year () monument () and we pay our () to all the dead

Spanish Jewish Russians Poles every year and () one year too () memory of the

French and the Russians and the Spanish we do that every year

I you go back

F we go back yes

I ()

F no you can you can write (something) nothing happy