

David P. Boder interviews Jürgen Bassfreund

Munich, September 20, 1946

David Boder: Spool 139, continuation of Spool 138 and 137. We have Jürgen Bassfreund continuing his report. Munich, September the 20th, 1946. Rather late in the evening at the camp for displaced people...managed by the UNRRA.

David Boder: Tell me now, where were you since your discharge from the hospital until you arrived here in the UNRRA distribution camp?

Jürgen Bassfreund: I left immediately for Fürth. In Fürth I had an aunt who was a teacher and I hoped she still might be alive. But then I was informed by eye-witnesses that she was shot in Riga.

David Boder: In Riga?

Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes.

David Boder: How did your aunt come to Riga?

Jürgen Bassfreund: My aunt was sent to Riga already in 1941. It was one of these deportation transports and shortly after in Riga the people were shot, mostly elderly people and the like and my aunt was among them. That I was told. And so I did not find my aunt. I was eager to remain in the American zone of occupation and so I remained in Fürth. Through the efforts of the Jewish community I was given a room, and from there I wrote to my relatives in America and picked up again my contacts. And I was fortunate to receive an affidavit from my uncle, and am able to stay here at the Funkkaserne while waiting for the opportunity to embark. I decided that it may be the right thing to learn something while waiting because during these years of constant change one had to chance to apply himself to anything, and I took a job as an operator in a motion picture house.

David Boder: Did you have any contact after your liberation with real Germans?

Jürgen Bassfreund: Yes. I had contacts with Christians and I must tell you that these people have almost no understanding for our situation. When you tell some people that you are coming from a concentration camp they say, "Well my relatives were killed by bombs and that is just as bad." And then there are others who say that they didn't know what was going on in the concentration camps and if they would have known they couldn't say anything anyway, because they would have been afraid that they themselves could be taken to concentration camps. There are quite divergent

viewpoints. I must tell you, however, that one hears but very rarely an admission on part of the Germans that these things were wrong.

David Boder: As far as you understand it, what do the Germans expect in the future? How do the Germans appraise the whole situation?

Jürgen Bassfreund: That is hard to tell. The Germans believe that the Americans will build them up again. For instance, I have heard quite often the opinion: "Well, you are a Jew; you are going now to America; see to it that the Jews from America should come here and revive our trade." And these are their naive and childish views. At least a large part of them think so. And they cannot understand that Germany now doesn't mean anything to us in spite of the fact that we are born there. It is clear that in a country where one has been deprived of everything—first of his parents, a loss that is of course irreparable, if one has lost them, one cannot have any sentiment for such a country.

Jürgen Bassfreund: I wish to thank you first of all for giving me the opportunity to talk about my experiences in the lager so that people should get a picture of that which has really happened. What I have told you are only isolated incidents, and I can tell it with a clean conscience that nothing is exaggerated. On the contrary one cannot describe these things the way it really happened.

Source:

Voices of the Holocaust, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago

[Link to the transcript.](#)

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