

ZEUGENSCHRIFTTUM

Name:	ZS Nr.	Ed.	Vermerk:
<u>Lampersberger, Josef</u>	3146	I	

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Sachkatalog:

Personen:

s.a. MZS 1/1, 890-906 (= inhaltsgleicher Bericht, z.T. unterschiedliche Formulierungen)
s.a. Mappe "Lampersberger" in Emigrationssammlung

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~~Benutzungsbedingungen s. Vorbemerkungen zum Findbuch
"Zeugenberichte deutscher Juden"~~

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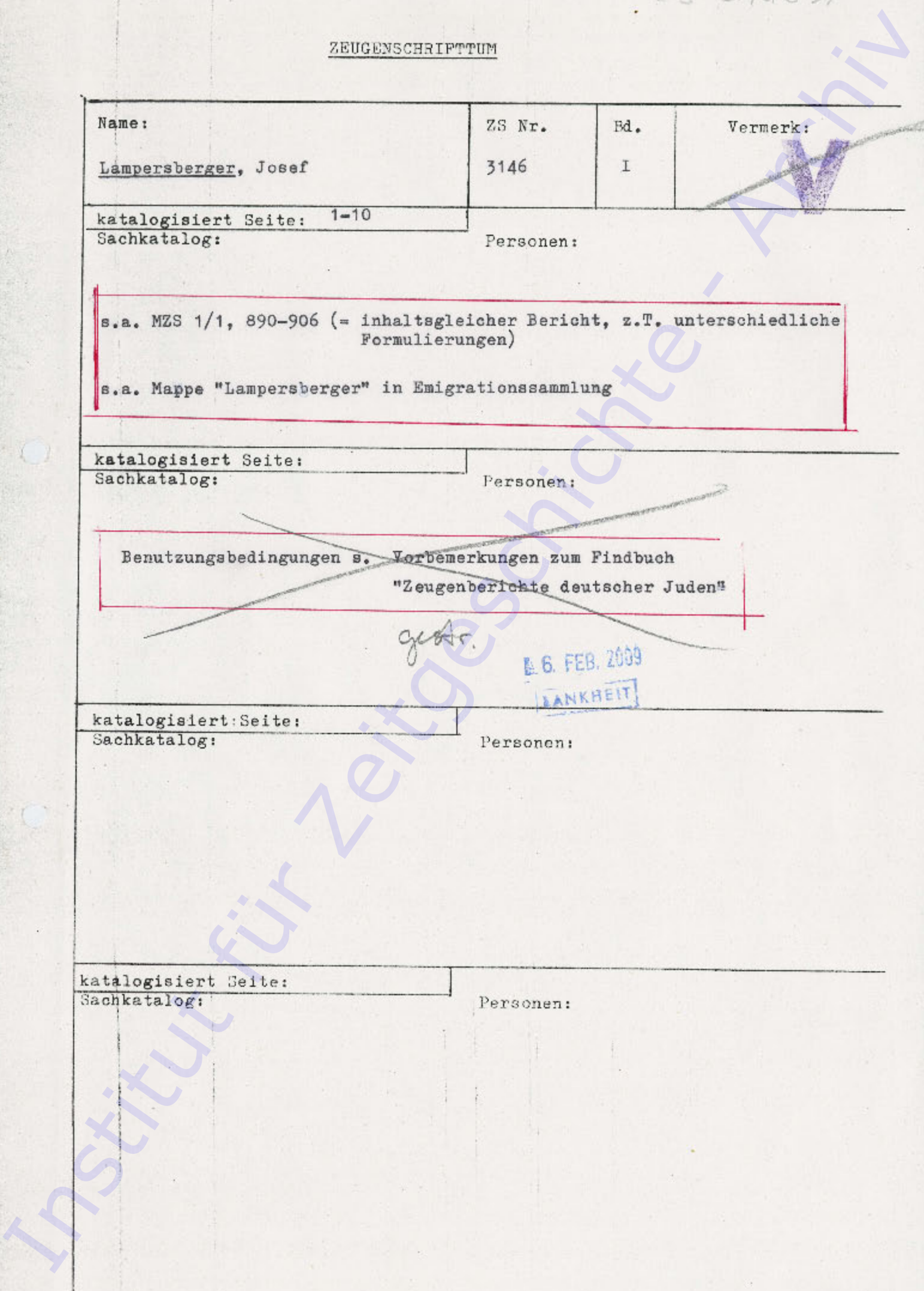
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A NOTORIOUS CASE OF KIDNAPPING

In 1928, at the age of 16, I was actively engaged in political activities, as a member of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the "Reichsbanner, Schwarz-Rot-Gold" - a uniformed Protection Guard against Nazi-attacks, and the German Trade Union (ADGB).

This activity was directed mainly against the Nazi-party (NSDAP) and their military, political organisation, such as the SA and SS. From 1927 until 1931 I was employed in the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten in Munich and had ample opportunity to obtain first-hand knowledge of the Nazi Hierarchy, who often stayed at this hotel. Apart from Hitler and Goering, they were party members like Hess, Roehm, Streicher, Hanfstaengel and many others. Hitler spent many hours in the tearoom, conferring with Herr Bechstein, owner of the famous Bechstein Piano Works and financial backer of the "Voelkischer Beobachter", the daily newspaper of the NSDAP, as well as with his daughter, Frä. Bechstein, who had feminine ambitions, not always appreciated by Adolf Hitler, especially at such times that the then famous operetta star from Vienna, Gretel Slezak, was appearing in the Gaertnerplatz Theatre and staying in Room 208 at the hotel. Every day Gretel Slezak received a bunch of red roses from Adolf Hitler, which she did not greatly appreciate, as she neither liked him, nor kept pre-arranged dates with him.

Hauptmann Goering took stimulating drugs and spent many hours gazing into a large log-fire, which Headwaiter Fuchs had to build up for him specially. This staring into the burning and crackling noise must have been an inspiration to him later in the Reichstagsfire.

Ernst Roehm and Hess had long Conferences with the Italian emissaries from the Duce, such as Baroness Hartogensis, Count Rocca and the militant Major Gramaccini. Streicher was never a welcome arrival, mainly because of his public behaviour and his blunder, when he called foreign guests "International Jews", who turned out to be influential Greeks and were offended. At that time Antisemitism was only meant to rouse the anger of the rabble in the street. Hanfstaengel used the hotel as a hunting ground for his homosexual desires, as well as for political intrigue.

I left the hotel in 1931 and then worked as a waiter on the "Mitropa" Speisewagen Co. and again had many opportunities to watch the human weaknesses of the new Nazi leaders. In 1933 I got the chance to visit places outside Germany. I now read newspapers and listened

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A HISTORICAL CASE OF ...

In 1905, at the age of 16, I was admitted to the ...
... as a member of the ...
... the ...
... and the ...

I left the hotel in 1907 and then worked as a ...
... and again had many opponents ...
... In 1917 I ...
... I was ...

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to the radio in other countries and became more than ever determined to keep my political beliefs and to act on their behalf. We often stayed overnight and whilst other members of the crew singled out their various pleasure haunts, I spent as much time as possible with some contacts I made and took away with me leaflets and literature. It was quite easy at that time to take them aboard the train, as the customs control for us was only very superficial. Naturally these illegal newspapers and leaflets were greatly appreciated by my friends and in small circles in and around Munich. But with the growing demand the danger grew as well and a certain negligence on my part - it was so easy to outwit the Nazis - must have marked me as a culprit.

A friend of mine, who was a member of the Nazi-party, a "member of convenience", was told after a drinking session in the "Neuaußinger Bierstueberl" that my name was on a list and I was to be arrested. He told my father. I immediately left home and went on my season ticket to Munich, but changed trains in Pasing for Augsburg, where I waited next morning for the Munich - Nuremberg - Eger express. A restaurant car colleague, whom I told I wanted to visit a girl friend in Eger but did not want to pay the fare, hid me in the storeroom. We often did these favours for other colleagues. Early next morning the police came to our house, but as I was not there, left a message that I must report to the police station immediately upon my return. As I was often away from home because of my work, they suspected nothing unusual. Thus I had an uneventful journey into Czechoslovakia and into exile.

Having made a legal entry into Czechoslovakia with a German passport was, of course, a disadvantage, but eventually my contacts and special circumstances cleared away any doubts. Without work or financial help, my life became a grim existence. A place to sleep and some food were all I could hope for and this was provided by my falling ill and being taken to a hospital. I was able to prolong my stay there through new illnesses, an operation and finally working in the ward and under Dr. Heller, who was a deciding factor for the release of patients. In April 1934 I could no longer stay in the hospital and from then on matters improved considerably. I obtained financial and other assistance and although the former barely paid for my room, I was sometimes able to obtain work or to help friends and had many invitations for meals, etc. I also succeeded in holding a job for about six months, until the Czech Authorities found out. Other similar cases were quite severely dealt with, but I got away with a warning, mostly due to the intervention of some party officials.

Contacts had to be established again and a visitor from Germany set the matter again in motion. I had to make a trip into Germany to see two people from Munich and another trip to Bayrisch Eisenstein to guide a valuable contact across to Czechoslovakia. At the same time this meant making a reconnaissance for further activities along the border.

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... in the hope of other countries and because...

... of course, who was a member of the...

... being with a legal...

... Germany had to be established...

About this time a man called George Huber from Starnberg near Munich contacted me. He was a kitchen assistant in a "Mitropa" Dining Car and called at the Volkshaus in Eger to make my acquaintance. I was in Karlsbad that day and he was asked to call again on his next trip. On his second call I was present in the Volkshaus, but did not introduce myself and left the talking to some S.P.D. party members. The third time he called we got together and his explanations - where he came from, what he was doing and why he was thrown out of the NSDAP - sounded alright. It was decided to give him the chance to prove his sincerity and he was entrusted with some minor activities, all carried out to the letter and accepted to Munich. This went on for nearly nine months and during the winter months the S.P.D. in Munich paid the expenses for his trip to Eger, because the seasonal run by Mitropa was ended.

In the meantime my mother came to visit me, but upon her return she was questioned by the police. The excitement was too much for her and she died two days later.

The Munich leaders wanted to arrange a meeting of various underground workers from Munich with the political leaders in the emigration and it was suggested that a conference should be held in Neuern, about 12 miles inside Czechoslovakia. Prior to this meeting G. Huber was introduced to a Captain of the Czech Intelligence, partly to get a final scrutiny and partly from the point of view of reporting the activities of certain Sudeten Germans, who had to leave the CSR because of unlawful behaviour, being members of the Henlein party. Huber was finally cleared and practically lost to our cause, because he mainly worked for the captain.

It was hoped that four men from Munich would take part in the Neuern conference. Eventually we were informed that three would come, two of whom were personally known to us. It was also decided that I should proceed to Zelezná Ruda, the Czech name for Eisenstein. I left the train and walked to the station on the border - a 15 minutes' walk. While I was waiting outside the station on the Czech side - the station entrance was divided into half by wooden posts about 3 ft. high, right across the street - I noticed some activity among civilian and uniformed SS men in the distance, but saw nothing unusual in their presence.

My plan was to mingle with the crowd from the train - always rather heavy on a Saturday - and let the contact men follow me into the village of Bayrisch Eisenstein and enter the CSR by a path, as previously done. The train arrived late and I wondered why no passengers came through the station exit. I was just going to visit a station buffet a few yards further inside the CSR, when I suddenly saw three hefty men rushing out of the station and grab me about 12 ft. inside Czechoslovakia.

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They immediately set upon me with knuckledusters and rubber truncheons and a uniformed frontier policeman rushed out and pushed his rifle butt into my ribs. Gradually they dragged me nearer the border posts and I clung to one with all the strength left in me. A Czech policeman intervened, but he was also knocked down (this made it into an international dispute) and a last final robust effort brought my collapse and I was dragged along the road to conclude the kidnapping.

Months later I realised that this was the luckiest day I could wish for. The Gestapo bungled the job completely. All they had to do was to let the people and the contact out and I would have been on German soil, where they could have arrested me without any international complications. From eyewitness reports: Four men eventually carried me down the road to the village and outside a butcher's shop they revived me with buckets of water, handcuffed me and set upon me again with their fists. After knocking me out a few times the water treatment was always applied. A woman bystander begged them to stop, but they replied that it was not her business and she should move quickly, or she could keep me company. They left me lying on the ground for a time, then a police car arrived to pick me up and I was moved to the police station in Eisenstein. Now they handcuffed my hands on my back and the two guards now in charge of the room took an occasional backhand swipe at me, because they had to be on duty instead of enjoying some festival in the next town. My face was terribly swollen, my eyes practically closed, my nose broken and loose skin hanging down from my lips.

Two of the men originally involved in the attack came back and I gathered that the way they arrested me was not very favourably received by Gestapo Headquarters in Munich. This was quite obvious, as they blamed my resistance for the attention this arrest had caused. Now they started questioning me and I had great difficulty in answering even the most harmless question such as name, age, etc., because my mouth and tongue were so badly swollen and I had the feeling of choking myself. My inability to talk clearly was taken as a further resistance to their questioning and further blows followed each time. On three more occasions I had to be revived. The last time I came to, I found myself in a lavatory on the floor, my head hanging into the pan soaking wet. I was taken back to the room and a village policeman came in with a bottle of iodine, very likely to patch my face up a little. This was resented by the Gestapo men and one of them knocked the open bottle out of his hand. It landed in my face and the iodine ran down my badly mauled face, giving agonising pain. My hands were cuffed on the back and I had a tremendous urge to touch my face. I shrieked and threw myself forward into the stomach of one of them. He must have thought I went berserk and delivered a blow at my neck, which must have made me unconscious for many hours.

After I came to, I noticed it was already dark and we were in a car. Soon after leaving Eisenstein, I was alternatively given heavy

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blows by the two men and the chauffeur and only after he nearly ran off the road was he told to concentrate on driving and leave the softening up to them. Their blows were mingled with questions, which I mostly ignored, mainly due to my condition and also due to despair at the hopeless situation I was in. As they got no further, they stopped the car in a lonely place, dragged me along the field to a tree, put a rope round me and tied my head to the tree. From the car a beam of light - a movable car lamp very likely - was directed at me and as I did not answer any questions for the above-mentioned reasons, they threatened to shoot me down. As I still kept silent, they shot at me, but very wide, quite obviously to frighten me. If they had only known how I welcomed a bullet at that time to end it all.

Still without food or water, my condition was very poor indeed. They must have realised this, because as we were nearing Munich, they stopped the car again near a little river, one man took a car rag, dipped it into the water and rubbed my face down. Never had water tasted so good, even if it was only a few drops that I sucked into my mouth from the dirty oily car rag. They also washed some of the blood off my clothes. This early-morning wash brought some sense back to me and I realised that if I ever got a break, I must concentrate on some kind of defence. Luckily the two men had fallen asleep and I had some rest and peace to think.

At 5 a.m. we arrived in Munich and I was taken to the Wittelsbacher Palais, which was the Headquarters of the Munich Gestapo. A guard of SS-men was waiting for our arrival. As I was helped out of the car, a sudden black-out occurred and after turning round, I must have fallen face-down onto the gravel path. Immediately the guard set upon me again, kicking me with their heavy boots, but this time, the two men who originally attacked me came to my help by holding the boards back. They must have realised that with my hands tied in the back, I was quite unable to get up and also they may have had a little remorse at what they had done to me. After all, they themselves were very likely heading for some trouble for bungling their job.

I was lifted off the ground and marched along with the two men helping me to climb the stairs to the first floor, where the main interrogation room was situated. Two different men appeared on the scene and one of them took off my handcuffs, so that I could obey and undress. My arms were completely numb and I was unable to lift my arm to unbutton my waistcoat - the jacket was ripped to pieces anyway. This was taken for a refusal to co-operate and I received two more blows. Full of rage I kicked out against the man and, strangely enough, the other man held him back from throwing himself on me in a rage of fury and told me to sit down. He took the other man by the arm and pushed him out of the room. Both disappeared and only the man who had unexpectedly shown some kindness came back and helped me to undress and completed a thorough search. I stood naked for about 15 minutes and shivered with cold. I was told to dress again and after a few

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preliminaries, I was taken by car to police headquarters. By the time a further search had been made and a cell allocated to me and I had been taken there, it was about 7 a.m.

I was very tired, but sleep did not come, so I kept thinking along the lines of my defence. It was now Sunday mid-day and I was given some food for the first time, having had nothing to eat since early Saturday morning. I vomited this up and the warder brought a bucket and water to clean up. The strawbed was chained to the wall and one had either to stand or sit on a small stool in a very small cell. All that Sunday and the next day I was free from questioning. This was a lucky break, because I used every minute to work out my statement and kept repeating it hour after hour. Had they kept on beating me and asking me questions, I might quite easily have broken down and compromised myself all the way. Certain matters puzzled me all along and I had a feeling that either G. Huber or the Czech captain must have played a double game. If it was the captain, my position might not be completely lost if I played it right. If it was G. Huber or both, then that was the end, whatever I tried to say or do.

On Tuesday morning the interrogation started early. I was again taken under guard to the Wittelsbacher Palais and Police Commissar Schmidt started the questioning. (My two days' respite was due to the fact that Herr Schmidt was called to Berlin to explain the circumstances of my arrest on Czechoslovak soil.) I stated that my going to the CSR was actuated by my desire to visit a girl in Eger, whom I got to know during my employment with Mitropa. For months I was ill in hospital and only well after my release did I make contact with some persons politically opposed to the Third Reich. This gradually developed into some leaflet smuggling and talking to people coming from Germany, or having some connection there. All my activities could be described as high spirited and had no organisation behind them. (This was true as the Sudeten German Socialdemocratic party had held themselves apart from the activities of the emigrants.) There were, however, funds available to assist persons like me and I had to have some assistance to be able to live. I laid the blame on a Czech captain who tried to engage me in his activities, but G. Huber dealt with this part and I had nothing to do with it. (By this time it was clear that G. Huber was an agent provocateur, as I had seen some reports handwritten by Huber on some large files. If the captain was in it too, then these two men would be blamed in full.) The interrogations went on day by day and always in the presence of Herr Schmidt and a woman secretary called Fratz. Herr Schmidt had not harmed me physically and actually apologised for the behaviour of the men in Eisenstein, but said that because of my resistance they lost their temper, especially as I had injured one man by biting him in the arm.

He also told me that a certain interest had been aroused in the World press about the kidnapping and that terrible lies were being spread

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in the newspapers, even that I had already been killed by the Gestapo. This I poopooed and asked whether I could see it. He promised to do so later, but at the moment he had a proposition to make to me. To counteract these "lies" I should make a statement over the radio, silencing these allegations once and for all. I talked to him about the merit of such a statement, which would, of course, prove that I was still alive, but nothing else. On my further request he showed me the "Prager Tagblatt", which he described as a "Jewish lavatory paper", but only the headlines and nothing about my death. I realised that my position was not as hopeless as it seemed and it gave me courage. The statement I was to have given personally over the radio ran roughly as follows :-

"To counteract the impact of the wild propaganda against the Third Reich, I am perfectly willing to state that my treatment is more than good, that no further physical violence has taken place after the first few minutes of my arrest, when I offered strong resistance and in doing so injured one of the members of the State police, doing his duty. I have seen the folly of my actions, fully regret them and make good the terrible harm I have done the Fatherland. I am fully aware that my actions demand severe punishment, but by mending my ways and condemning the work of the traitors in Prague, I shall after a time be allowed to join the Gemeinschaft of the Third Reich."

I bluntly refused to sign this statement and although a certain pressure was put brought to bear on me - threats of resumption of violence, arrest of my relatives, bread and water for 24 hours every second day - this faded away and no more was mentioned. I was allowed to spend some of the money I had on me and the police gave me the standard course operating on that day for Czech currency. This enabled me to buy some cigarettes, twice some chocolate and some fruit. My only exercise was the transportation to and from the Wittelsbacher Palais for interrogation, always with guards and with a superior.

One afternoon I was left alone in the room for a few minutes and Frll. Fratz, the secretary who had first taken down everything in shorthand and then typed in my presence word for word what was said, told me quite openly that I was going to be sent back to Czechoslovakia. I was so taken aback that I nearly fainted and she assured me that it was true. She seemed open and honest enough and I always had a feeling that she felt a sense of shame and disgust at the way I was being treated. Her soft voice never faltered and there was definitely some sympathy for me and for the plight I was in.

I had a feeling that they would try anything to make me stay or make it impossible for me to be returned to CSR. During a further interrogation, which only lasted a few hours, I had to walk with a civilian. He stopped and looked into windows, sat down on a bench

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opposite the famous Regina Palast Hotel and made it pretty obvious that there were plenty of chances to escape. What he did not realise was that I felt we were being followed by armed guards and they just waited for me to make a false move. Had I tried to escape, they would have shot me dead with the perfect excuse that I was a man in custody trying to escape. I wonder even today whether Fr. Fratz knew of such a plan and by telling me of the intended release, warned me not to do anything foolish.

The time for my return came nearer and efforts were being made to force me to give another statement over the radio to say that being now informed of the circumstances, I preferred to stay in Germany. They permitted a visit by Liesel Goessel, whom my parents had taken into the family as our sister. She was asked to bring fresh clothing, and some soap. Until then I had had to go without. When Liesel saw me, she fell round my neck and quickly whispered that Papa had also been arrested. Go back! Herr Schmidt's effort to bring my sister here to persuade me to stay in Germany was not successful as Liesel, either on purpose or otherwise, kept on crying and she was led away. I asked why I could not see my father and told them that this left me in some doubt regarding his wellbeing. They refused, saying that according to the rules, no person who might in any way be connected with a prisoner's activities, was allowed to talk with him. This, of course, was enough to convince me that my father was under arrest.

I was told to let a man shave me, had a bath - the first since my imprisonment - and my suit was mended and cleaned. I was put into a larger friendly cell with a little table and a stool inside, some American cloth on the table and a flower vase - but it was empty. The cell did not have the usual terrible sanitary arrangements and one had to call for a warden to be led to the toilet. I was then informed that I should ask for the Czech Consul to see me, to make a declaration in front of him that I wished to stay in Germany. Again I refused and pointed out that Herr Schmidt was so eager to clear up the charges made against the Third Reich and by this even more suspicion would be aroused, because people abroad did not believe such voluntary statements were given without pressure.

Not to jeopardise my chances of safety, I then said that I really thought my best way the best way to end the matter would be if I returned to Germany within three days of my liberation. This would give me time to clear up certain things and would also prove to the world that the Third Reich was law-abiding. To a certain extent I think I succeeded with my story, possibly too, because the Gestapo had no other way out anyway.

The day of my return-trip arrived. After a long wait in the morning I was put into a high-powered Mercedes and with me were a Colonel of the German Army in civilian clothing, an Oberregierungsrat from the Foreign Office - special envoys sent from Berlin - Herr Schmidt and the chauffeur. On the journey only Mr. Schmidt talked to me, occasionally

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pointing out achievements of the Third Reich. Both high officials ignored me and practically also Herr Schmidt. In Regensburg we made a stop for lunch and the two Berliners sat at a separate table from us, leaving Herr Schmidt and the chauffeur with me in another corner. The chauffeur, who came from Berlin and was going back the same day, had a lot to grumble about the autobahn and as he opened a packet of cigarettes, some card fell out showing a German naval vessel. He burst out laughing and said: "What a fake, this particular ship looks quite different from what you can see here." He knew, he lived in Kiel and a brother of his was on this ship. I enjoyed this talk immensely, but it was not to Herr Schmidt's liking.

At about 4.30 p.m. we crossed the German border, entering a strip of no-man's land of about 300 meters. It was hard to believe that I was already outside German territory and a certain number of people gathered at the Czech border seen in the distance, made it real enough. Suddenly the Colonel gave an order to stop and naturally, I suspected a last minute trap. I quickly surveyed the surroundings and my chances of escape which were alright, provided the men carried no arms. As we waited on the road about 100 meters from the Czech border, some Czech uniformed Official, accompanied by two frontier guards, approached us and after assuring the German party that they were perfectly safe to cross the border, did we get out of the car and marched along towards the barrier. The Czech official, who was a member of the Czech Foreign Office said jokingly: "We may be called Bohemians, but we are not Barbarians." This somewhat embarrassed the Berliners. We entered the Czech Customs House, where quite a large gathering of men in uniform and civilians was assembled.

The Czechs offered the Germans some packages of cigarettes but they, having nothing to offer, at first refused the gift, saying that it would not be appropriate for them to accept gifts from Czechs. After some ridicule they accepted the boxes and one was also given to me by the same Czech official.

The prepared statement was unacceptable to the Germans and asked for reasons they proclaimed: "Die Deutsche Regierung kann Josef Lampersberger nicht ausliefern." (The German Government cannot hand-over surrender Josef Lampersberger.) On hearing this, I moved a little closer to a Czech police captain, fearing a last minute hitch. Being asked to explain this, they said: "Da J.L. Deutscher Staatsbuerger ist, koennen wir ihn nur uebergeben." (As J.L. is a German citizen, we can only hand him over.) Oh well, who cared about the wording at this stage - so a new statement was made. This was again unacceptable, because the position of the signatures would have put Germany under the Caechoslovak signatures. Again it had to be rewritten and each time the matter was discussed on a direct line to Prague. Prague must have been interested to get it all settled and said O.K. to these trivialities.

At last the signatures were put on the statement and with a stiff bow of good-bye - no handshakes - the German party moved off into the pouring rain, looking rather shamed and humble. We got into some

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cars and the hidden guard went in three lorries away with us into Eger and freedom.

The condition for my repatriation contained the clause that my release must not be used in any way as propaganda against the Third Reich, to which the Czech Authorities agreed. This later had some grave consequences for me. After a few more hours a car was put at my disposal to take me to some friends. On the way I read the headline of a newspaper: "Lampersberger von den Toten auferstanden." (L. resurrected from the dead.) I felt like agreeing with it.

Postscript: Two definite outcomes of this episode in my life:

I am glad to report: That my case of kidnapping was the only political success the Czech Government achieved against Nazi Germany.

I am not so glad to report: That after 25 years I am still under doctor's treatment to give me some relief from very frequent and very sickening headaches.

Bridgend: February 1960 (signed) JOSEF LAMPERSBERGER

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and I'm hidden away in the kitchen away from the rest of the family.

The conditions for my registration included the signing of a statement which was used to help me in my application for the first time to which the Government responded. This later led to my appointment for the first time as a teacher. After a few years I was sent to a school in London where I was in charge of the school. In 1942 I was appointed to the post of a manager of a school in London. I left the service in 1945.

My first job was as a teacher in a school in London. I was in charge of the school for several years. I was then appointed to the post of a manager of a school in London. I left the service in 1945.

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