OK. So you were talking about why it was that this plot to kill Hitler happened in July of '44.

The 20th of July, '44, yeah.

OK.

Well, the general idea is that most of the people felt that they wanted to have some sort of peace with honor, because they are afraid that they were all clear that the law-- the war was lost.

At that early point.

At that particular early point, 20 of July, '44 it was-- that was not early.

But by this time, they must have already been saying this for a while.

Oh, yes, they have seen it for a while. And I think it was purely pragmatic for most. Some other people also responded to all the atrocities and even mentioned the fact that Jews were being killed and what happened to people who were innocent and all that.

But the major concern was to get out of the war with the best possible conditions at that particular point. So it was self-serving and very pragmatic. And the question is, why did they wait so long and why did they become generals and colonels and high functionaries before they started to move?

And, well-- and it was five before 12. So I looked at the 20th of July movement with some degree of skepticism, and feel that these people were not really that tremendous heroes, apart from the fact that they bungled the whole thing terribly. And nothing came of it. As a matter of fact, it was just an absolute slaughter.

And innocent people got involved and got killed in the process. So I mean, it was very poorly organized and bungled, badly bungled. Now, it is, of course, from a historical point of view interesting and in the interest of German history that there was some sort of rebellion against it. So that is being played up and made into something which I don't think-- it's inflated, which I don't think it deserves.

But you were talking before about the difference amongst these perpetrator groups. So the Waffen-SS were this elite combat groups.

Yeah. That was their-- that was their-- so first of all, in the beginning 1923 was the beginning of the SS, which was a integral part of the Brownshirts, the stormtroopers, the Brownshirts, the SA. And their major function was to protect. And that's what they call the protection guard, or protection squad. That's actually the accurate translation of the German.

And why that? Simply because their responsibility, their duty was to defend and protect the Nazis, because Hitler, Goebbels, and all the people, [INAUDIBLE] people were addressing the crowds from hostile-- from a hostile audience.

Was this sort of like the FBI?

Well, no, no, no. Because you talk FBI would be-- it was just simply, if you go to a bar, you have in front of a bar someone who is going to see to it that not the right people will come in and nothing will happen. So that was to begin on a very primitive level and just a handful of people, not that many. But that's how it started. That's how the-- and that was their original function.

Body guards.

That's right. Anyway, guards of-- the bodyguards of speakers and also see to it that unruly crowds would not cause any

disturbance. And if they would cause it, they would just simply beat them down. And so that was the original function to begin with, the origin of the SS.

And then they had more and more people coming in as the number of Nazis increased. And then, eventually, they became the strong arm and the-- the policing, the protecting National Socialist functionaries of some sort, and being the sort of elite. And they developed into an elite.

Until 1934, they were under the SR, leadership of Rohm, who was the leader of the Brownshirts. And then they-- part of it played a very important role in not only deposing him, but also murdering him. And that was done by the members of the SS. And they played a very important role.

And as a reward, they became an independent organization in '34 after the Rohm coup, so-called Rohm coup. And that needs to be understood. And then they also had a lot of people who became members because of they felt that there was a career that they had some position.

And so then they incorporated the first police. The German police president was Himmler. So they incorporated policing responsibility into the SS.

And the police, the order police became-- they became members of the SS, you know. I mean, they were an integral part of the SS, except they may have had different uniforms. But they were part of that organization.

And then you had-- early in '33, you had Himmler appointed Heydrich to be the person to develop the secret state police. And Heydrich was then in charge of that. And then you had some other department and about-- just about, I forget exactly how many, 12 or 13 or whatever, different departments with different functions. Some had to do with race, some had to do with-- with political ideological things. Some of them had to do with-- with criminal things, you know, and criminal police. And all these people became part of the SS.

Where did the group-- the Gestapo--

And they were, in other words, incorporated so that they were not questioned. So some of the people, they're not asked, but they were incorporated-- the whole outfit was incorporated into the SS. So it was not just an individual sort of thing.

But they incorporated whether they liked it or not. They-- if they didn't like it, they always could have-- they always could design that they could. So they had very, very many functions and different tasks.

For example, development in occupied territories and the population of Germans in occupied territories and making plans for the future after war-- after the War I war. And very, very-- and then you also had the beginning then was also of the so-called volunteers, SS volunteers. And they had very special designations of-- simply because of ideological reasons, they joined the SS and were given what I know were just different grades of military rank.

And semi-- semi-military rank, because they're not really counting as military. With the exception of the Waffen-SS. And the Waffen-SS was called [GERMAN] which was directly under to the-- which meant that they were directly under the orders of Hitler, a special set up for Hitler to be used for whatever purposes he considered. It was-- that's what the meaning of [GERMAN] means.

And then you had the normal people who became members of the SS without any function, just to belong to the SS. And that was called general SS, Allgemeine SS. And they didn't have any specific function other than being members of the SS. And were then given various responsibilities in these various departments eventually.

So then there was a standard military hierarchy.

That's right.

Did the military brass have to be part of the SS?

Military brass, what do you mean?

Say you have your inducted into the army.

I would say, there was no induction. Because up to what I've tried to make clear is until '43 the military branch of SS was all made up of voluntary people.

After that.

After that they were inducted.

Inducted.

And all the higher ups were SS, either voluntary or--

That's right. But they always, they always subordinated to the military non SS. So that is to say, the highest rank in the SS. And there are only two active, three active SS colonel generals, that was the highest rank you could attain. And there were only three of them.

There was no field marshal. So the highest rank, and only three of them were colonel generals. And all the other ones, and they were subordinated to field marshals. So they were never in charge. There were division commanders.

But then the superiors, their superiors, were marshals, field marshals.

Non-SS.

Non-SS.

It was a separate military.

Yeah, of course.

Yeah, and they were the majority. And there were almost over 900,000 towards the end of the war. You had well over 900,000, about 910,000 SS.

And where did the Gestapo fit into this?

The Gestapo, as I said, originated in 1933, actually started already in '32. Reinhard Heydrich who was a Marine officer who was kicked out because of sexual misconduct. He was also cohabiting with the daughter of a Marine admiral or whatever and behaved in a way which was unseeming for-- unacceptable for a marine officer, Navy officer, actually Navy. And so he was kicked out.

And then because of his qualifications, Himmler became interested in him and he then became the person who helped Himmler and was primarily the person who developed the Gestapo, the secret state police. And that was made up of civilians primarily. But that does not mean that some of them did not, at certain occasions, wear the uniform, the black, at that time black uniform.

But primarily they were actually they were civilian. But they had military, they had SS ranks, which were comparable, SS ranks which were comparable. So the infamous person who was actually in charge of the Gestapo subordinated to Heydrich was a man called Muller and this Muller had a rank of lieutenant general, roughly speaking or equivalent.

One other explanatory thing, typically, what would be a concentration camp hierarchy?

A concentration camp hierarchy was made of the people who were-- and that is a very important question --was made up of the people who were the guards. And these guards were not permitted to really have any function or permitted to even enter for any length of time, the main camp. So all they were doing is guarding the premises of the concentration camp and shooting people or whatever, guarding the camp so that no one would escape, number one.

And then, when the people worked out, they would also guard them so that they would not escape to outside the camp. And then you had the SS, which was the member of the camp, SS and these people were, again, members of the-- most of them were members of the Security Service, which were part, under Heydrich also, Security Service.

And the Security Service was precisely to secure the position of the Nazi party and see to it that anyone who was rocking the boat would be taken out of circulation. And then you had the another security service which was developed out of what belonged to a man called Canaris, who was murdered after July 20, 1944. And that was then taken over by the SS and they had then a spy system, an espionage system, which then was also under SS leadership. And the man in charge was an SS Major General called Schellenberg.

And who were they spying on?

Well, just spying on-- just like espionage, just like CIA or the OSS during the war. That was just the equivalent of the OSS, Office of Strategic Services. So

Were they spying externally to the country or internally?

No, see, the internal was-- it was an internal security service and there was an external security service. And these people were spying outside the country and trying to get whatever information and intrigues and what have you.

But were they part of the concentration camps?

They had nothing to do with the concentration camps.

The guards that you talked about, were they simply--

Well, many of these people originally started with the so-called death head guards. And they started in Dachau under the leadership of a man called Eicke. And this Eicke became an SS general and had a division of these death head people. But these death head people had different functions and that's where things become very difficult. Because people for example who were military part of the thing became disabled in one way or another, wounded and then they were sent to concentration camps and able-bodied people were sent into combat.

So Himmler did it on purpose to mix them around so that that would not be, and he said it very clearly and for everything. He said, well, it's not that they should not consist of people who have earned their laurels in combat only and are clean so to speak, but also people who do the dirty work. So he wanted to mix them around so that everyone would be, so to speak, included in some of the dirty work.

And that's what happened, particularly towards the end, '43. '44, '45. They had some exchanges taking place where people who were in combat were sent to concentration camps because they were disabled.

So these would be SS.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And nominally, they would be nominally from SS, the military SS.

Why were these guards not allowed inside?

Well, because they wanted to have a separation of people so that only those people who did a certain part in that type of work would only know that much and not more than they needed to know. So the separation was on purpose so that no one would know more than they needed to do their job. And that was a special law and I've discussed that in great detail

with Hitler's secretary, who told me that this was utmost in Hitler's mind, to have this separation so that no one would know more than they needed to do their job, to separate each other, divide and rule.

And that was one of these principles to which he adhered and that's why he did not sign any documents which would have been-- could have been used against him under different circumstances. And so forth. So that's why he didn't sign anything, but gave any order which was especially consequential and inhuman, he never would have given that in writing because it could have been used against him. So therefore he gave all orders to the people whom he wanted to do the job, such as the extermination of the Jews.

Internally in the camps, what was the hierarchy, you know, the kapos were-- the prisoner-- immediate prisoner--

The internal hierarchy was based on the fact that they wanted to use as little of the SS as possible because they were needed in combat, number one. So in order to run the camps, they used the inmates, giving them privileges if they would support whatever the task of the SS and work along the lines of SS directions. So they were directly responsible to the SS.

But because they're small in numbers relatively speaking and had to run camps with 100,000s of people, they just simply didn't want to use that type of personnel, and therefore used the inmates to do some of their dirty work. And they've done so exceedingly successfully, very successful. So for all practical purposes, the inmates were perhaps more responsible in running the camps under the supervision, do the bidding of the SS, than the SS themselves.

Because if you were in a camp, you hardly ever saw an SS, only to supervise. And all the other work, the dirty, the immediate, body to body contact, eye to eye contact, was with fellow inmates, who were functionaries. And that was of course disastrous because that also produced, not a unification, but a tremendous conflict among the ranks of the inmates simply because they're not unified and therefore were not unified to resist, as they would have if they would have not divided against those who were the overseers and those who were the underlings, those who were the common--

So you had different ranks. And so you had a hierarchy and I wrote a paper, which may or may not be published in Austria on that just very question. And--

What were the levels of SS commanders?

Well, SS commanders were usually not that fully high, probably the highest rank would be an equivalent of a colonel and that was rare. Usually the highest were for example, Hoss, commander of Auschwitz was a lieutenant colonel. Even if you just think in terms of Eichmann.

Look at Eichmann with his tremendous power and this organizational talent to really get all the people into the various camps and all that, he was only Lieutenant Colonel. Never got any higher rank, which is nothing very much. But his power was unbelievable.

So there would be one person say, at the lieutenant colonel level.

Well, all over. For example, when I talked about the camp I was, the synthetic fuel industry there, the man who was in charge, and I remember him well, he was an older fellow, person, who was a major.

Would there be other SS below that person?

Yeah, of course. Yeah. And they had different ranks and most frequent ranks were the equivalent of captain, first lieutenant, and second lieutenant. These were the most frequent ranks of SS officers in camps.

And they were primarily--

And then they had of course noncommissioned people there who were of course, the most numerous ones.

But were the SS the ones who were primarily giving orders to kapos?

Of course, of course. Yeah. Yeah, of course. And the important thing is that they didn't have that much leeway. They had some, because they were assigned [INAUDIBLE] in situations of extreme stress and totally totalitarian setup. You always have a margin in your role. That is to say, discretion.

And the question is and that is something which I've developed just recently, the fact that was totally overlooked, that in every role we play in life, we have a degree of discretion which we can use to some purpose either to help other people and be more lenient and tolerant or in a way which would hurt other people. And that was a very interesting thing, which was totally ignored.

Because you had SS people and everyone there, including kapos, and that is to say inmate functionaries, who always had a certain degree of discretion. Of course in a dictatorship, in a totalitarian system, you have less discretion than we have in normal civilian democratic life. But even there you had discretion.

So even when I was, for example, in the open box car, I had discretion to save my own life at the expense of someone else's. There was my degree of discretion. But I could say, I'd rather die and let you live. And most people of course behave in a way which they'd rather live than die and cause the deaths of other people.

But again, even at Auschwitz-Birkenau, there was a SS man whom I didn't know at all. And I was just passing by and he called me. And I was expecting the worst, because obviously according to the experience, that usually meant bad news. And this fellow asked me are you starving? You hungry?

And I said, yes, of course. And so he asked me some questions and was very nice. So he used his discretion he had to get me more food. Very naive, because he said, OK, let's go to the kitchen. And order them to give me some food. And he said, any time he comes here, he ought to get more food, for no reason whatsoever.

The man didn't know me from Adam. Which was very naive, because without him supervising never would have happened anymore, unless I would have had some friends there, which I did not. But that was-- or that other fellow back in the synthetic fuel slave labor market.

There was another one and he caught me red handed, you know. I just had come from a contact I've had, who brought me a lot of contraband, which means medicine and money, and, well, not so much money, but food stuff and all sorts of important stuff, which was vital. And I was able to make the sort of money. So this fellow was known as-- was called-- this SS person had a nickname and he was called Tom Mix.

Can you imagine? In this camp, Tom Mix, you know? And I always said, Tommix because I didn't know the cartoon at all. But people there apparently knew that. And so they called in Tom Mix because he behaved like Tom Mix. Right. And he called me and I said, that's the end, you know.

And I thought, you know, I just put my knapsack, you know, behind so that he didn't see. But that didn't mean anything. He would search you, strip you naked. But because I responded in that style to which he could relate, perfect German, immaculate posture, and all that, he just lightly slapped my face, and said, I don't want to catch you again or you'll be a goner.

Absolute [INAUDIBLE].

That's right. So therefore again, he used the margin. He could have shot me on the spot without any problems to him, which he did. Which he did in other cases. But in my case he didn't do it.

So that's the margin of discretion which everyone has. And that has not been researched at all. And I'm very glad that I came up with these things because that was totally ignored. And that's going to be part of my future, part of what I'm writing.

Yes, I'd like to talk about that more [INAUDIBLE]. Why do you think these SS people allowed themselves to be interviewed?

Obviously, the thing is, after that time, they also had a need to reveal themselves, to find an outlet, to get things out of the system. And I was, in my interview techniques, I was able to somehow play the role of the catalyst, to get things which they had to repress out of their system.

So for them it was a relief in many cases. They had a need to talk to someone who had enough knowledge who would respond in a way which would not be threatening, but would somehow be encouraging for them to talk more about whatever they wanted to and play around with that and ask questions which were meaningful and respond to it in a meaningful way. So very appreciative.

And I didn't know that to begin with, because I said, for example with Steiner or with most of the other ones, 90% of all the other ones. There was only one person who refused or two persons who refused interviews. And that was very interesting.

One I missed because he was the highest of them all responsible for the slaughter in most of the Polish concentration camps and in the so-called Einsatzgruppen, a man called [Personal name] And I wanted to interview him in prison back in Bavaria, a place called [? Stadelheim. ?] And he came out and the director was with me and said there is Professor Stein. He would like to interview, and would you have some problem.

So we were actually face to face. And he was one of the really most responsible, I mean he was the highest, who really could cause mass killings. He was just really above most of the other ones, full general, police general. And he looked at me and kind of thought about and said, verbatim, I remember. "Rather not."

And this director was a tremendously fair, person exceedingly liberal and thoughtful and insightful. Very impressed with him, had lots of dealings with a number of people I interviewed at his prison where he was a director. And said, well, Dr. Steiner, what he said, Professor, Dr. Steiner, I don't think we should force him.

And I said I agree. Because you don't have anything anyway. You can't force them. And he only said, he didn't say, I won't do it. But he said, rather not. Rather not. And so it didn't happen because the man knew more about-- besides the mass killings than anyone else I've interviewed. He would have known more than Eichmann himself because he was, I mean, he was towering over Eichmann in terms of rank and power. One of the most destructive people in the entire situation.

Why do you think he--

I have no idea. I have no idea. I have no idea. I didn't come on threatening at all. And then I was somehow looking to be sure because I was very much aware of what he did and who he was. And he may not have been in the mood or whatever.

You know, he may have been afraid that I would threaten him or that I would give him a bad time and all that. I don't know

Do you think that this need that many of the perpetrators had to speak their feelings, did that reflect some kind of remorse or guilt?

Well, I gave them-- you know, I distributed about 1,000 questionnaires with questions of that precisely, with that particular question. Whether they were-- how they looked back at the activity, giving them a lot of choices. And remorse on one extreme and satisfaction on the other extreme, some other ones in between.

And most of them say they look back with satisfaction, with the exception of those people who were doing the dirty work in concentration camps, which doesn't mean that they were remorseful. But that they didn't look at it with

satisfaction. With regret, that was another thing, with regret. And so in my interviews, personal interviews, I found that very many of these people, and most of them actually, said it was their responsibility.

It was their duty. And depending on what type of work they were in, function they had, if they were in the Waffen-SS, most of them said they looked with satisfaction. If they were in something else, then they said with regret and not with satisfaction. Or if they said not regret, they said something in between. Because I shaded these things.

Well so, remorse, some had remorse, and some people who were Auschwitz perpetrator, whom I interviewed in a prison, a place called [Place name] broke out in tears. But I never was threatening. I asked questions in some sort of an understanding manner and not in some sort of a threatening manner whatsoever. And some broke into tears.

And when I came back and said, Professor Stein, you caused me not to sleep last night or whatever. You know because I stayed there and saw them a number of occasions and kept in touch. And so I had people broke down on me. And yes, had regret. And some people I had contact with for very, very many years.

I have stacks of papers. And that is one thing which I want to say, that this is something I did not anticipate. I felt that that was would be an interview, and that would be it. But because they had a need to stay in contact with me. They kept in touch with me. They wrote to me.

They interacted with me and were looking forward for me to come. So that we developed a relationship, which I never anticipated, which included Steiner and all the SS generals, all of them. And also a lot of people, I would say to 80% of the people I interviewed, we developed a relationship rather than just an interview type of situation, which takes place once or twice and that's it. And you never hear from these people again.

This is not something what happened, which is a very interesting and certainly did not anticipate it.

Did these people at any point, realize you are a survivor?

Some did and some did not. And in some cases, I volunteered that, not because I had to. I volunteered it. I wanted them to know, which includes Hitler's secretary. Which includes a number of other SS officers and men.

And they appreciated me even more because they said, my god, this person is not doing it, but he has a human interest in me, which I always showed. And they appreciated that, so they're looking forward to me. And wrote me letters, which were very loving. And one of these people-- and that's exactly what is the positive of the whole thing, was the Hangman of Buchenwald, one of the most brutal people one can possibly imagine.

And he then was sent into combat because he did some things along with the command of that camp of Buchenwald, who was shot. Because he was appropriating things which didn't belong to him and all that. So he was shot. And this fellow was sent-- was also sent-- as a matter of fact, was in a camp for a while. And then they sent him into combat.

And he was totally so injured that he was a total invalid. He couldn't walk and he had to be only in a wheelchair. And, so I interviewed him at this particular prison I mentioned in Bavaria, with the help of this director, and also because there are some other people there, one is this gentleman I saw periodically.

So I got to know him there and interviewed him. Because this SS general told me about him. Well, you should really interview this person. He's there and all that and some other lady was the so-called the Angel of the Inmates, with whom I became-- a Swedish lady who was-- kind of a story by itself.

And-- related to Goering via marriage, so his first marriage, so she was related to Goering because she was related to his first wife. So she had a very important position in Nazi Germany by virtue of that. Anyway, so her job was later on to aid political, so-called political prisoners, and that was her specialty. And she went there and talked to them and supported them, and whatever.

Anyway, so she came with me and she took me there to this for the first time. And I was there the first time to this

prison in Bavaria. Anyway, so there is a person called Sommer was his name. Was in a wheelchair, and I interviewed him. And then he became so enamored with this type of relief he apparently experienced that he started to write me regularly.

If I didn't respond to him, if he got very upset. And I became so to speak not only his father confessor so to speak, but someone he looked for was some sort of support and the man had a prison sentence, which was many, many life sentences, many life-- absolutely no chance for him to get out, ever. He didn't.

He died in this sort of semi-- some sort of a home aid, a special place, but as a prisoner. Because he could not stay in a prison because he needed medical attention all the time. So they put him into some nursing home type of situation.

In these cases, where as you say the people [INAUDIBLE] that their relationship in need of this, [INAUDIBLE] did you deduce remorse and regret from that, even if they didn't say so on the question?

Well, see you had the different levels of sophistication in these people and also different emotional states. But even when I did sort of broadcast where we had three former SS officers and myself just recently two years ago, two years, no, was '92, when was it? I think it was '92. It's '93, no, '91.

They officially and on broadcast, you know tabletop broadcasting, which I initiated, they regret it. They said, we regret, if we had known, the consequences and all that, and what happened and all that, we certainly would have not become members of SS. And that was the public sort of disclosure, and for which other members of the SS, still alive will never-- that's why I've finished my situation. Because I blew my cover so to speak and went public.

And so the people who didn't know that I was in camps and all that know by now. And it's just went through like through the grapevine situation, just like lightning.

So they won't talk.

Well, so they still talk, you know. But that people who want to talk and some other, their wives don't want me to talk to them or something, you know, and very opposed because they feel that I betrayed their confidence or whatever, you know. And betrayed their confidence in as much as I didn't tell them that I was an ex-inmate.

But I knew that something needed to be done and since my work is pretty much in terms of interviews pretty much done, I felt the time was, the timing was all right. I don't know whether it was worth it all, depends, you know, that I went public.

I don't necessarily have any regrets because the people who want to talk to me will still talk to me. And most of the people I'm talking about now are dead. They all had died of old age or some other.

Maybe you could describe at this point what your conscious idea of your interviewing technique was, what you thought about--

Well, yeah, well, well, I've done a lot of graduate work in group dynamics back at Berkeley when I was working my doctorate. And I had tremendous teachers, some of whom were psychologists, some of whom were psychiatrists. One lady psychiatrist who was just a terrific, it was a postgraduate course.

And another person was a social worker, a professor of social work, social welfare. And so I was exposed to a number of different techniques and schools of thought. And the one which I used pretty much exclusively, almost, not quite, was the client-centered, [INAUDIBLE] method. And in which I simply ask questions without really being, and using myself as a mirror.

So that's what you mean, and they said-- and so it was non-threatening. And that was the best thing. It was just, when I was in the summer in Luxembourg, I visit my very close friend, a professor retired emeritus, professor of criminology and also a psychiatrist. Was professor at the University of Mines and Luxembourg and was also in the Resistance and all

that.

Anyway so he took me to one bistro where he usually spends a great deal of time and met new people. And introduced me to some people, and I was interested. And I use this sort of technique. And he went home and said, my god, I've never heard anything like that.

You're just really fabulous, the way you just get information out of people, without threatening and things which are just masterful. And to come from him, who's a real expert one of the leading people in the field, was just about the highest praise I could possibly get. And with the years, you know and all that, trying to put yourself in the shoes of other people and all that, you can develop the skills.

And I don't think I'm particularly talented. But I've just developed a skill which has been exceedingly useful. And if I would pinpoint it in a way, it's primarily [? rotarian ?] type of client centered.

Roughly, what were the kinds of questions that you were interested in when you--

Well, I was interested why they joined and to what extent why they did what they did. And if they understood the consequences and how they felt about it when they were doing it, how they felt afterwards, , and how they came to become what they did, you know.

And that was precisely the radius pretty much. We also at times ran into some other things which were related, but not directly centered on that. But in order to get back to the center, I know what the situation in a way that and they will be more open and say, hey, yeah. So what did you do? And why did you do it? And how did you feel?

And what did you feel when these people died? And I'm talking about Auschwitz perpetrators, and I'm one of the very few who, well, the only victim to be-- victim if you will, survivor victim, who has interviewed Auschwitz perpetrators and SS people, period, as far as I can tell for sure. And so, so they came out and said, yeah, well how do you feel?

You know what, I could complain, and if I wouldn't have done it, this would have been the consequence. So we talk about, can you-- do you feel comfortable or whatever the number of things which deal with their role, why they assume the role, and what the consequences of their role was, and how they look at it in retrospect.

So generally speaking what do you feel like you found as a group?

Well first of all, I found, and that is something which because of my questionnaires and the more scientific aspect which preceded the interviews, or if not preceded, was generally the basis, that these people were very strong on the authoritarian F scale, fascist scale. So that is greater, and higher than the equivalent were in the German armed forces.

So I've had two groups. I've had the SS, members of the SS, German armed forces, and there was a significant difference in some of the aspects of authoritarianism. OK.

So you used the F scale from your research with a [INAUDIBLE] personality. [INAUDIBLE].

And then I read some few things which were not part of the F scale and I went to people who were actually the originators, he died on me, and he was very interested in that. But nothing came of it. Gave him a copy of my questionnaire and was very interested. A man called Theodor Adorno.

And he didn't-- he died very soon afterwards. So we had no chance to discuss it further. And then it was published, the whole thing which is the only publication of that nature, ever will be, because most of the people are dead now and who could be interviewed. And so, the basis of my findings was yes, some are authoritarian.

Which is an important understanding, because their obedience. And if you have obedience linked with ideological identification, which is part of national socialism that is in this case national socialism, then you have an instrument who is going to do the bidding of those people who are their superiors even if they don't like it. Now, the interesting thing is

that I would say 80% of those people who are perpetrators would have not initiated what they did.

They would have not initiated it. They only did it because they were ordered to do it. And that was an interesting thing. Because I went back into files and interviewed them and also found out that the level of criminality among former members of their cells is lower than the average of other people, other segments of Germans.

So that it would have taken even initiative to be the individual criminal, but obedience in the personality--

That's threatening thing and that's where Zimbardo comes in and I come in with my then notions about the power of the situation, which brings out certain things. And my notion which I've developed the notion of the sleeper, that we all are sleepers in as much as we can do things in certain novel situations, capable of doing things, which we had not done before and we don't know we are capable of doing.

And that I think is a very valid sort general notion. And these are some of the outcomes, apart from the fact now the thing which the latest thing which I'm trying to develop and I have already written down in some sort of rough draft, is the so-called what I call a role margin, that we really have to look at the role margin as to how we use the role margin to what purpose.

Because that's our discretion, that's us, and not the authority, the way we use the role margin. And that is something which has not been done and I'm very proud of having come to that. It's just serendipity.

Serendipity.

Serendipity. Because just reflecting on these things just recently, just a few weeks ago, suddenly serendipity, that's exactly and I just came to that, and that to me is a very important thing because I haven't read anything about it anyplace. It's my recognition.

So a role margin, as we're defining it, is where this obedient person does take initiative--

That's right, because it's up to his discretion, to do what he does without really having to do it. And that I think is a proof of the pudding. That's the proof of the pudding. In terms of what sort of person that person is. And Fromm would be overjoyed. Erich Fromm, and I worked with him.

And he was very impressed with what I've tried to do, very impressed and unfortunately he died on me. But, you know, I mean, died on me. I mean, you know. Because he really understood what I was-- he was one of the few people appreciated, understood what I was trying to do.

And appreciated me-- more than he even appreciated Zimbardo wasn't he was not at all in agreement with-- in terms of his methods and what he did.

Well, actually, following this out, it seems to imply that even the authoritarian totally obedient seeming person is an individual too.

Yeah. Yeah. Because regardless of what role you are, I mean, we have to understand that we have to scale that, the more totalitarian the situation is, the more totalitarian, the more encompassing the role will be, so that the momentum of discretion will be smaller. Then for example, we have here, you know, for example, John is supposed to be in charge of the camera here.

But he's playing the role. He's got a discretion whether we like it or not. He just absents himself and does something else. Although his role would include that. But I mean that's the discretion that is not very much we can do about it and say, hey, I don't like what you do. That you absent yourself. But it's still part of the discretion he has, without really interfering too much with what is happening here. See.

And same thing the police is very good. Now, I'm working with the police very frequently. And they don't know what

I'm doing, except I'm riding with them and I'm observing them. And that also helps me somehow to come to some seeds which come to fruition in a way, recognition and all.

And now I can see some people are real SOBs. They could be much more, because it does not serve the role at all. But there is a discretion to be humane. But they refuse to be humane because they enjoy not to be humane.

And that's the moment of this [INAUDIBLE]. Because they don't have to do it. It's not part of the role which will be functional in that particular situation.

In the case of SS, assuming that often they may not have known the brutality that was going on that they would be expected to act out, how do they comprehend the terrible killing and brutality that was taking place?

Well, ideologically, because you see again, what we have to understand, most of these people are not very sophisticated people, certainly were not very educated, with the exception of the people like Mengele and all that, these people were highly trained, the people, if they would have been left to do what they did, would have become professors and whatever in their various fields, including anthropology, ethnology, and medicine and whatever.

And so these people are much more, I would say, they are more accountable for-- but many of the other people who were their subordinates, they're very uneducated and unsophisticated people, and therefore more impressionable because they didn't know-- I mean they needed to be led because they didn't know right from wrong to that extent. But they knew emotionally that what they were doing was terrible.

But because they had this ideological conviction and accepted the indoctrination, integrated the indoctrination, they could justify what they did to themselves. And that's what we call reduction of cognitive dissonance. They reduced the cognitive dissonance, that's murder. But murder is in the interest of the state.

I'm doing a favor by being brutal. I'm doing that in the interest of the national socialist state. I'm doing that in the interest of Germany. Therefore I can accept it. Justified.

Partly it stemmed from thinking of murder as in war in the interest of the state.

Well, yeah, but you mustn't forget that was all war. That was war. See, because all these sort of things did not happen before. Yet concentration camps, terrible concentration camps, people got killed, shot whatever. But you didn't have mass murder. You didn't have genocide. Genocide only happened during the time of war. That's when it happened.

Were there precedents for Hitler's policies?

For what?

Precedents, as in he was not the one to invent the whole system and its perpetration and its plan.

Well, I mean Hitler is charismatic leader with this sort of as, father of this type of ideology. I mean, which was a eclectic he took it from other places and put some of his own in it. It was not that [INAUDIBLE] because so many things existed before him already, except he was the one to put it into practice, actually, act upon it. Put it together and act upon it.

Well they looked to him as their leader. Von Reich, [INAUDIBLE] one leader, And the identification of Germany with Hitler and Hitler's notions and that is something they accepted because they looked at him, you know, he was a prophet. He was a charismatic leader.

I mean there is no way around it. I mean he was absolutely, no question about it, the real sense of the word, whether we like it or not. At that time it was perceived as charismatic. Today, we have different things. To Today we have the prince, we have all sorts of all the various people, I Hollywood types and all that.

We have Ronnie Reagan. And Ronald Reagan had some type of charisma, for reasons which, if you look at it, you have

to be ashamed.

When you were interviewing the SS, did you find that they expressed anti-Semitism, active Jew hatred--

You see, I had a scale in my questionnaire in which I did the following thing, which I think was a pretty good idea, as a matter of fact, I thought it was pretty cool. I gave them a set of 99% names of major cities in the world, distribution of all countries pretty much with one fictional.

There was Jerusalem and Moscow there. And what do you think happened? They would have preferred to live in Jerusalem rather than in Moscow. And that was a significant difference.

How did you interpret that?

Well, I interpreted that the communism is worse for them than-- than Israel. That's what. And Israel is a Jewish state, isn't it?

Mm-hmm.

Right.

Still, they were murdering the Jews.

That was after the fact.

Oh. Yes, I'm asking, when you interviewed them. I can see, relatively, they prefer Jews to Russians. But was there any way--

The Soviets.

The Soviets. Was there any way to discern whether they had any kind of act [INAUDIBLE]?

Oh, yeah, well, yeah, sure. Because there, there are some other questions which were indicative of how they felt about it. And I couldn't ask, because, you see, the thing is, what was very helpful, the person with whom I did my pilot study was General Steiner. And I had very specific questions about Jewishness and their feelings about Jews.

And he looked at it. I have still the original sort of things. Because I used him as a testing ground, and he was exceedingly helpful. It's just the man opened the doors for me. Without him, I never would have-- just absolutely would have even come base-- wouldn't made any contacts whatsoever.

Because he wrote an accompanying letter, which I always placed with my questionnaire. Without that, they would have thrown it in, because he was a commanding general. He was one of the senior SS general-- period, boom. So many things, which-- I couldn't have done it today. Today, without him, it would have been virtually impossible. I don't think I could have ever succeeded without this letter.

All right, so I showed him the original thing, which had a lot of questions real hidden, or some were clear-cut about their feelings of Jews. And said, John, if you put that in, I want you to throw it into the basket, paper basket. So if you have questions, you have to give the question in such a way that they are not going to be threatened by it. Because if you ask them, they're not going to tell the truth. They're not even going to bother. They'll just throw it out.

So therefore, many of these questions which were directly testing antisemitism-- directly, not indirectly-- I had to throw out, because of his advice. And I trust him. I trust his judgment.

Did you come away with any impressions? Or did they ever volunteer any feelings--

Oh, yeah, sure.

--about--

Oh, yeah, sure. Sure, sure. But you see, the funny thing is that many of these people were very ambivalent about it. And I really can say, in terms of also the documentary which I did with people-- the documentary, Hitler, Myth and-- Man and Myth-- I interviewed one person who turned out to be much higher than I thought, because many things came out which I didn't know at that time of the interview. And who actually was present, or in the vicinity, was at the Wannsee Conference. I didn't know that. I didn't know that.

So he knew about the Wannsee Conference and a very clever person and all that. And so I have to catch up with him next time when I'm there. And I got it from another SS officer. And said, hey, did you know? And, of course I didn't. And I have-- one of my best research assistants is an SS officer. He gives me information I never could even come close to.

Sounds wonderful.

But where was I? I was--

Just talking about whether, even inadvertently, you learned what the level of Jew hatred was post-war.

Yeah, and all I say, it's just very-- very ambivalent. Because then for examine that, I tested in the following way. When I invited American Nazis to one of my lectures, to several of my lectures, I told them about my [? issues ?] of the SS, and they didn't see me as a Jew, necessarily, and all that or something. They don't--

And so they asked me if I would assist them as a liaison person to make contact with former members of the SS. And I said, sure. And this is where-- they're leading people here. They're leading Nazis here in the Bay Area. I haven't heard from them for quite a while, I think. So the leader of the group and his lieutenants.

And so we talked. And I said, fine, I'll do that. Because I said, hey, it's a tremendous opportunity. So I took that message, whatever the message was, whether they would cooperate and all that, and went to some of the leading people now in the SS organization. Which exists, because that's legitimate, and they have an SS organization in Germany. And it's kind of hidden. But, I mean, they're very active and-- exceedingly active and very well-organized.

And anyway, so I went to the leading people and say, here, this is something which is a message. They said, my God, I wouldn't even touch them with a 10-foot pole. We have nothing to do with these people. They are just behind. Today is a different time, and we have absolutely nothing-- we would not dream-- I mean, just totally rejected the idea. Absolutely rejected the idea.

And that, to me, was very interesting, because that's what they stand for. Because they are into antisemitism. They are into racism, in general-- anti-Black, anti-Catholic, you name it. And they wouldn't have-- they wouldn't even bother. They said, my God, just leave us alone with these crazies.

Well, they make themselves sound like a liberal organization.

Well, but they are not, you see? They are not at all. But they've changed. They've changed to a very large extent. They've changed their tune now. And that is, again, what I say with my notion of the sleeper.

If, for example, what is called the Fascist Party of today in Germany, the Republicans-- and they are increasing in numbers, they were called Republicans. If these Republicans would gain ground, now then it would be very interesting to see to what extent the former members of the SS would flock to that organization. Most of them are pretty old and decrepit now, even the youngsters. Because the people-- the youngest people will be one year younger than I who would have been admitted during the war-- would have been recruited. That is to say--

Drafted.

Drafted.

Well, actually, we have a lot more to go. I'd like to stop here and let Carol have a chance to ask questions on what's been happening, if you have anything.

Or if you want to continue with yours.

I can continue. But if you have anything you want to say up to-- with what happened up to this point, or related, you're welcome. Feel free. Otherwise, I'll go on.

OK, maybe just a couple, and then we'll go back to you.

Sure.

One was, you're planning another Nazi tabletop, or roundtable, if you can, right? If you can find enough of the older SS to participate?

No, no, it's not a question of finding the people. It's a question of finding people in the radio business or TV business who would be interested in doing it. And that's what I was doing last summer. And I could see that people who have done it, the one person I've done it with, said there is no interest for it. They've got other interests now.

To what do you attribute that change in German media culture?

I really don't know. I mean, I would be guessing. I mean, that's all in my head. What I would say is that they are preoccupied with the first time after the-- after the so-called economic miracle, the demise of the economic strength of Germany, where they really have unemployment and really serious problems, primarily due to the unification of Eastern and West. Which I could foresee, which I also-- in one of the interviews, I told them. And I was the only one who said, hey, you have a serious problem. And all the other people thought that I was off of the wall.

So anyway, so what I'm saying is that I would-- yeah, I would think that this is perhaps due to the fact that no longer they're interested in National Socialism, but whatever patterns are emerging now, which they seem to focus on more than the other stuff.

So far, I haven't had any response. I have to call again and find out if there is anything one can set up. But I thought it was a sensation, but the timing was bad. And they broadcast the thing during the summer, when everyone was gone.

So what would you be hoping to find out in one more last conversation?

Well, I don't know whether it should be the last. I'd say that just I would be interested in-- in, where do we go from here? So see the errors of their way and say, well, what can they do to remedy? What can be done in order to make some restitution and prevent future occurrences of this nature? That's what I'd say. Well, you had the experience, you were part of it, so what-- that's what I would be interested in.

So go one step further. Now, they've said they regret and all that. But so now what would we do? But you see, you don't have many sophisticated people in Germany who are interested in this sort of thing. To them, it's very threatening.

And I've said before, that when I try to get people to work with me on research, none of them want it. And you're talking young people. You're talking young people. You're talking old people. None of them were interested in working on that thing, because it's too threatening.

I just had a friend, a fellow doctorate from Stanford, professor at a relatively new university in Germany, he's a psychologist, whom I got interested in. Some of the interviews, I took him with me to interview the Auschwitz

perpetrators once and so that he just developed some taste for it. And when he came here to visit, he said, I can't-- I can't do it.

It's too threatening to me. I can't do it. I just can't stand it. I can't do it. I'm very interested, and I think what you do is very important and all this. But I can't be part of it. I just can't do it.

Isn't that a bad sign that Germany is unwilling to explore --

Well, I think it's a very bad sign.

--in depth again?

Yeah, well, I think it's a very bad sign. And I have not found one person. The only people who work with me, believe it or not, are former members of the SS in giving me some-- helping me with my research. And that, I think, is a catastrophe.

Well, it is of use to me, very useful to me, because these people have insight-- much insight I don't have because of that part of it. The same thing, if you have some rabbi, young kid, Greenhorn, telling me now, as a survivor, how it was in concentration camps, which upsets me a great deal.

So the same thing. I'm going to tell the SS person how it was to be-- how it was to be a member of the SS. So I recognize the value of the information. And regardless whether I like it or not, I'm going to use it in order to develop the insight I need in order to do something with it.

But in terms of social scientists, the only people you have there who have not shied away are historians, German historians, who've made a major contribution. No question. And some political scientists. Period. Not a single sociologist, as far as I know. Not a single psychologist.

You should tell what happened to [INAUDIBLE] when he was on the roundtable, what had happened to his magazine and so forth.

Who?

Your editor.

What happened to my editor?

Well, how his subscriptions went down, and he was practically ruined because--

Oh, well, yeah. Well, there was this person who was an SS. Actually, he was a guard to begin with. He was a guard at Dachau, SS guard. And I got to know him, did other things. He wrote me an autobiography, and part of it was the eyewitness to the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. I've mentioned that in some of my lectures when you were there.

So he was part of that roundtable discussion. And instead of-- that was during the summer, so there was not much of an audience. Because as I said before, most of the middle-class, intelligent Germans were someplace on a vacation. But those people who apparently listened to it and immediately told it to some other people were fellow members of the SS. And they clobbered him. And they clobbered him to such an extent that the-- he's got-- he had a small, but fairly influential type of publication firm, whatever you would call it-- a--

Newsletter?

Huh?

Newsletter?

No, no, books and all that.

Publishing.

Publisher. Yeah, a publication firm. And so he had to fold, because people stopped-- stopped buying things. Right wing, right wing-types, which included the SS-- some members of the SS. It included right-wing Germans, who were not the SS, but right-wing.

So I got a letter now from him, whatever, recently. So he just sold it to someone else who was going to take over, who was much more on the right than he was-- much more on the right.

Actually, he's a-- he is a follower of General Ludendorff. And he was a rabid antisemite and just totally off the wall, this fellow-- unbelievable. General Ludendorff. And he was the person who participated, in 1923, trying to start a revolution in Bavaria and Munich.

And he was marching with Hitler. And Hitler used him as some sort of a front. Because Hitler was unknown, but Ludendorff was a World War I German, World War I hero, along with Hindenburg. But he was totally-- just totally-- I mean, he's got very strange religious notions, which go back to Germanic myths type and anti-Christian, anti-Jewish extreme. And so this fellow bought that publishing firm. He's a fellow of this Ludendorff.

Kind of scary.

Well, I will have-- if I get to Germany, financially and all that, so I'm going to discuss it with him. Because I think it was a possible-- worst possible choice he could have made.

Do you have some [INAUDIBLE]? Go ahead.

You had said already that, very often, people would rationalize or lower their cognitive dissonance by somehow making it OK, what they were doing. Did any of these people admit to the fact that atrocities were happening?

Oh, yes.

They did.

Oh, yeah. The difference, for example, one SS general who was a liaison between Himmler and Hitler was one of the senior SS generals, period, but in the-- more the political sphere. He didn't have any-- he didn't deny that people were gassed. He didn't deny that people were murdered. But what he denied, and what I couldn't get him to accept-- and that is something I'm still working on-- is that Hitler gave the order.

And so you have a lot of people who said it was Himmler who was responsible. Hitler was still the person, the pure person, the ideal type. And that happens for a number of different reasons. In his case, there may be a different reason than some other person's. Denial is another reason.

So many people with a vested interest in the whole National Socialist business want Hitler to have a white shirt, clean type of thing. And he was one of them. But in his case, there was some other complication also, because he denied that he knew anything about the whole thing, which is absolutely unacceptable because he was so close to the center.

And that he links-- I didn't know, because Hitler didn't know. So if Hitler didn't know, how could I know? And if he would-- and he also insisted, although he broke his-- I broke that in some of his-- and I got very, very rough with him, actually. And that was shortly before the-- one of my last conversations with him. It was a telephone conversation. I said, the documents, which are clear-cut, have you looked at them and all that? And I cited some specifics and all that.

And I said, how come they-- well, I'm sorry, I don't want to-- so I have to think about it. But he thought about it, but

didn't reach a conclusion, because he died before he could give me his concluding thoughts. And said, of course, if you say that it is so, and if you give me the facts which you have given me, of course I cannot deny it, but I have to think about.

And he knew the SS apparatus from A to Z. I mean, absolutely. So it was a denial. It's not a question. It was absolute repression. No question about it. Because I've talked to some other people who were also imprisoned with him, and they laughed and said-- I mean, all the other people knew it, but he is one of the senior SS generals, left-hand, right-hand of Himmler, and friend of Heydrich and all that, he didn't know anything it's laugh -- It's just impossible of it.

Was this a general attitude? Or just specific to this person?

No, it was a specific sort of thing. Because other people, of course, also tried to tell me. Because self-justification, if I'm implicated and am to assume the sort of unbelievable responsibility, we also have to understand that so many revisionists cannot accept this, because this horrendous truth is a tremendous burden.

And we see that when we work with Holocaust-related staff at the university and all that. Now, it's not a healthy thing to be in for any length of time. Because it'll do something to you. And that is part of my recognition. I just probably will have to get out of that, too, because it does something to people.

And it is a terrible burden to deal with all this blood and tears. It's terrible to do that years and years and years. And particularly when you then find some idiotic administrators-- and I say idiotic administrators, who don't see the validity of what we are doing and simply more interested in paper-pushing and administrative concerns rather than what we have to-- what we have to contribute. And to work with this without getting any sort of support and minimum of recognition.

All right, so these people-- these people, the SS people, were privy-- not only privy, but they were where the people actually enacted all these orders. Now, what does it do to your self-image if you say, hey, I'm a murderer, in a time when there is no call for murderers?

So, I mean, you will become defensive, because you have to live with yourself. So that's why-- and I am trying to make it very clear-- that's why people prefer to justify, reduce cognitive dissonance to a minimum, so that they can live with themselves.

So for example, this one general-- and there is an important recognition, which to me is-- and the one who denied that Hitler knew anything, and also denied that he knew anything, which is absolutely ridiculous-- because he abetted-- and aided and abetted the transport to Treblinka of 300,000 Jews, intervening, so that the railway people would make that possible so that they could be moved there.

And so when he was dying of cancer, during the last periods of his life, and his lady friend told me that-- I was not privy, but his lady friend is pretty accurate, and now she's trying to soft-pedal it. But she told me that he was howling during night because he had dreadful nightmares and said-- and about the devil is getting him, the devil is after him.

That, to me, is psychologically exceedingly important. And he was howling really-- howling is the right-- exact word she used-- during the night. So people got scared and woke up and because he was howling, because the devil was after him. He comes from a very strict, upper-middle class family. Very Christian, very Protestant.

So you think it had worn-- worn him to that point? His behavior had caught up with him [INAUDIBLE].

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

But I think you're also saying, people can say things like, I committed atrocities, but it was in the interest of the state.

Yeah. See, for that, you need to use ideology. You have to have an ideology which will help you to justify that. And that's why the ideology was absolutely essential, because without the ideology, people would have not initiated it.

German people would have not initiated it without the orders, without the indoctrination, the ideology supplied by the leadership. No question. No question.

OK, I think this is a good point to stop and begin again next time.

OK. It's 7:00 almost, my God.

John?

So I brought some--