

So we had been talking about the role of child raising practices, particularly thinking about the Alice Miller theory and how this affects the creation of the authoritarian personality, the role of raising obedient people, et cetera. So do you have any notions about how that plays out?

Well, what I found in some of the cases, as far as one could go back into details-- so two things which were striking, as far as that is concerned, which I found interesting to reflect on, was first of all, the relative ignorance of the parents, people who were not very educated, low-middle class, if not low class, people who were unenlightened, culturally and otherwise. Number one.

Number two, the strictness and the more the challenges are, the less educated people are, less cultured they are, the more they will depend on the role they play. And by virtue of their role they play as a parent, they say, I say so, not because of my knowledge or wisdom, but by virtue of the fact that I play a parental role. And therefore, you have to obey, you have to do that.

So that was this type of strictness which was, to me, quite not only apparent, but probably striking. So you talk about strictness and adhering to the rule without knowing the whys and wherefores. So they say, because I say so. And so I think that was a very strong tendency, particularly in those people who were relatively unsophisticated, with very little education and basic school, and some even less, coming from culturally and economically deprived backgrounds. And that to me was very typical.

Now, that was one group of people, namely from the social stratum of the low class or lower classes. And it was different with the upper classes. And there, I think things become more complicated. And what enters into the picture is, I think, the tradition.

And I dwelled on some of that in my writing, because I think that the Prussian tradition, the military tradition as well as the social cultural tradition, has elements in it which are, indeed, strongly authoritarian and particularly male chauvinist and male dominant. And so that I could see that, in these families, the father was the ruler, in these middle, upper-middle class people. And so that obviously had rubbed off.

And again, the sort of strictness, which was reflected in the parents' notion that they know better. And they reflected the tradition that, indeed, there is a pecking order or hierarchy. And these people don't have to rule, because if they don't rule, they are not really playing the roles as they should be. And that was also reflected as I said in the middle class and upper middle class.

Now--

Do you think that this was particularly severe in Germany, or not particularly severe compared to other European countries?

Well, I think-- I don't know whether it's just German. I think it's pretty Central European. I think, certainly, part of Austria plays a role in that, certainly, no question. It's changing now a little bit, but it's still, I think, very apparent that the male feels-- and even if they don't like to, it's just part of the role they play. It means that they have to be the boss. And if they don't-- or, not because they enjoy necessarily being the boss, but somehow, if they are not the boss, they feel that they are not living up to the expectations of the role they should be playing and feel very self-conscious about that.

That is something which is very crazy. It's not necessarily because they want to play. But they feel if they don't, they will not be taken seriously or they will be targets of some sort, some targets of ridicule.

I would imagine historically it was the children who couldn't question the parents. They couldn't, as you say, ask why or form their own opinion. Is this still true? Or has there been--

I think it has changed. They said-- I found that there is a great deal of rebellion of children against the parents who are strict and unyielding. So now, I think people, because condition has changed, it's very difficult to enforce things,

because so many things which will influence the children, the media, and the peers. And I think they're just pretty much out of control now.

So this is no doubt true among the children of the SS, as well?

Well, I would imagine. But as I said, I really don't want to talk about the children of the SS, because I have relatively very little experience. And so-- because that's not my focal point.

Those SS that chose to answer the questionnaire, they were clearly, in some form, a self-selected group. But did you find that they had any particular motivation for wanting to answer this questionnaire, for wanting to be interviewed?

Well, I think the letter, which was written by General Steiner, I think was persuasive enough to say, well, if someone is interested in us who wants to be fair and just in assessing who we are, we'll do it. Because that may be in our interest, so that the public will know somewhat about the people who will lead the study, and what have you. And so I think that was certainly also a motive, that they felt there is someone who is really interested. They're not biased and will put us in the proper light.

In their interest, in the sense that they could speak their side, perhaps speak to-- if not justification, at least to--

Yeah, yeah, in our favor. Now, this can be contested, because I have very different experience. And that should be mentioned in connection with that, because I think it's quite revealing.

Then, when I was asked to go with the crew to do Hitler, Man or Myth-- Man and Myth, or Myth and Man-- to Germany, I already had talked to people prior to that. And they are very willing to cooperate, because they're willing to cooperate with me in the past.

And I made a mistake by saying it's the people who are behind it, or who just behind that sort of you say -- well, which cooperation or whatever was doing that. And I made a mistake. Instead of saying Greystone-- which was the subsidiary or whatever of doing the movie, that producing the movie-- I said Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. And then they all backed out.

Horrible.

Because said well, Jewish, and they've already done so many bad things with their movies on the Nazis and SS. So we will be portrayed in a way which will be to our disadvantage. And there will be a typical stereotype of the typical Nazi, movies which Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer already-- and they just refuse to participate. So I had to find new people when I was in Germany, people who would participate, because they were just out. They were out of it. They just refused to cooperate.

Were they ever informed that that was not the studio that was making it?

Well, I didn't. I made the mistake, because they asked me, instead of-- was stupid, was not properly reflected. Because I felt that if I tell them Greystone, they've never heard of it, because I didn't. I don't know who Greystone, or who could-- so I said Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in order to create some impression. But I didn't know that it would backfire, that they had that impression of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, that they simply distort realities and turn that against the SS and Nazi and stereotyping them in this source.

Because I could have known that if I would have thought more about it. If I would have reflected more, I could have guessed it, I could have prevented it. But I didn't think about it. And then, therefore, I lost a great number of people who were ready to be interviewed on camera.

You were able to get others, I gather?

I was able to get others, but it wasn't easy. I was able to get others, and they're not very easy, because they, too, were influenced, and people whom I had more direct contact and all that. But the powerful people, the people who would

have been possibly of great interest, I just simply didn't get with, just other people. And so I had to find substitutes.

In your talks, personal talks with the SS, did any of them ever discuss Adolf Hitler, per se, with you?

Well, some did, yes. But you see, to me, it was not that relevant to discuss Adolf Hitler with people who didn't know him or were not in his entourage or were not close to him. I was more interested in discussing that with people who indeed have been in his presence. And those people just simply were glowing, absolutely glowing, with few exceptions the rule.

But one SS general said that he didn't get the charisma at all and that he wasn't particularly impressed with him, and all this and that. Two of them, Steiner and another SS gentlemen, that they're not that fully impressed. And somehow his charisma, which no question he must have had for very many people, didn't affect them.

And so that-- but other people who were in his entourage were absolutely taken by him. Wolff said and then saw that he was just a very charming person. And then his secretary was the most important to me, who knew him best of them all, because she was 24 hours available, had to be 24 hours available. I mean, she was not the only one therefore, but she was one of the senior ones and by far the most sophisticated of them, intellectual.

And so she said that he was a very mixed bag, that he would be exceedingly charming and at times totally unyielding and scary and all that. But I mean, this is something which so many people said, that he had a very, very specific personal charm and very caring and interested in his environment and inquiring relatives and kind and pleasant and writing short notes, birthday and all that, and seemed concerned, as long-- and that's very important-- as long as they were useful to him.

When they ceased to be useful, he dropped them like a hot potato, dropped them like a hot potato. And they were out. So they are no longer part of his horizon. And that was all very clear. That was very, very clear.

And that happened, for example, to the family of Baldur von Schirach who was a youth leader and later the [INAUDIBLE] leader of Vienna and his wife. And they came in and they talked about-- she came and talked about what she saw in Holland when the Jews were rounded up to be deported and how horrible it was, whether he knew about it. Asking, my Fuhrer, do you know about that? So he became very unpleasant, very abrupt, and said, you don't understand. You don't know what you're talking about, and all this and that. You don't understand what is involved there.

And that was the end. He cut off all-- he knew her when she was a small girl, because she was the daughter of the court photographer, a man called Hoffman. And so he knew her since she was a small girl because Hoffman was kind of a court jester. Apart from being the court photographer, he also was used as a kind of a court jester and as a person who was very humorous and was entertainer of the sorts of Hitler and his entourage.

So he knew her for a long time. And then, of course, Baldur von Schirach played a very important role, but especially as long as he was leader of the youth, the Hitler Youth. And then he was replaced and became [INAUDIBLE] leader of-- special title of Vienna.

And so because she had saw that, they had to leave the next day. They just had to leave, because that was-- but it was talked about and all that. It brought an important point, because some people say Hitler didn't know, or didn't give their orders and all that, of course.

I mean, this is the proof of the pudding, one of many other ones, documents, and what he said in some of his table talks, and all that. And I've got it all down, too. Absolutely, unmistakably, that it had to come from him, and no one else assumed the responsibility to initiate something. If people spat in the landscape, he was informed about it. And that was a major thing, millions of people. So absolutely, particularly in terms of revisionism, it's just simply not any.

So anyway, so they were very close to Hitler. They're very frequent guests and all that. And he just dropped them overnight, simply because she asked that question.

And when people were dropped like that, were there any other kinds of retribution?

Well, it could have been in some cases, yes, indeed. But I mean that-- yeah, certainly. But in their case, it wouldn't be. I mean, it wouldn't be because of the duration of their relationship and the position they've had.

But in some other cases, yes. He'd drop people if they were accused of some sort of serious breach of confidence, or if they did something which he didn't like, or betrayal of sorts, and all that. He just dropped them like-- even if they're very close, drop them. You just talked about the chief of espionage, Admiral Canaris, and some of the people of the 20th of July 1944 movement who were part of the inner circle. That was it.

And also, in case they didn't-- so he had, for example, a dietitian. And all these sort of informations I got direct from an eyewitness who was the secretary of [INAUDIBLE] and all that, because they were directly there. Wolff became the later adjutant, and Christa Schroeder was, of course, Hitler's secretary. And I said, I've met two of them or one of them in addition, and she by far was-- in terms of what I've read and what I've seen myself, she was by far, as I said before, the most sophisticated.

So some of these things which I've been told just come from eyewitnesses. But there was something else I wanted to say. Yes, and they've told me that he was absolutely-- when any something happened, people fell into disfavor and just finished. And they just-- they're dropped. And there are quite a few people throughout Hitler's 12 years, quite a few were dropped, and who used to be members of the inner circle. But that was something else I was going to say, but I forgot.

We had been talking about whether there was any act of retribution to--

Oh, well, active retribution, yes, in some cases, yes, there was active retribution. And some were sent to concentration camps and some people were able to escape and get out of Germany.

And one of them, for example, is [Personal name] And he was able to get out in time, although, they said he should come back and nothing's going to happen to him, that it was all a mistake, and all this and that. And he was certainly part of the early inner circle and wrote a very, very well-written book on his experience, early experience, with Hitler, a man called [Personal name]

And then you had Otto Strasser. And they tried to-- he escaped. His older brother was assassinated in 1934 during the Rohm Purge. And he was able to escape to Czechoslovakia. And there he was politically active against Hitler and all that.

And they send a special commando, or SD people, security service people, SS security, to assassinate him, except it just didn't work. And they've tried it on several occasions. He was lucky, that's all. Or, they didn't work too well, but [INAUDIBLE]. So there you get clear-cut retribution.

For the average, say, SS person, as you say, Hitler wasn't a personal force in their life. But was the Hitler-- the charismatic Hitler an active, sort of godlike force, or the ideology something that they felt strongly about?

Well, I'm glad you mentioned that, because that's something I wanted to talk about a little bit, that very many researchers have underplayed the power of the ideology as something secondary and was not that important. Well, I totally, totally reject that. Because the ideology was, again, the cement which hold things together with Hitler's personality. And Hitler's personality and national socialism, or Hitler is something which cannot be dissociated to then fit together.

And so it has to be understood-- and particularly when we talk about the SS, we talk about 1943 when people volunteered. It's not something with people who were not drafted, but they volunteered to join the SS. So that means even if they in some way are not party members, they must have had some sort of affinity towards National Socialist ideology, to be sure. And so therefore, they had to have some feelings about Hitler.

Now, later, that may have changed. Because out of the tremendous success he had during the early parts of the war, which turned then, particularly after Stalingrad, into the beginning of the defeat, the beginning of the end, then, of course, they had a change of heart, obviously. And that's what I said also in one of my writings, who's better at his song, I'll sing.

And I think it's a very nice German saying, because it's opportunism. I like you because you satisfy my needs. And if you don't, I just-- I may drop you. Well, some people won't, and say, OK, you have friends, and we still may be friends. You may not be the same level on friendship, but still be-- but in Hitler's case, and some of the very pragmatic, utilitarian types, they just simply said, OK, you no longer of any use to me. Therefore, I will reflect it in my feelings.

And we all are in some way. We get divorced, or we just don't stop a relationship, friendship, or whatever you have simply because it's no longer satisfied. And therefore, we lose interest in that person. And some other people say, well, I mean, you may not satisfy my needs, but because of the past relationship, I'm not going to drop you.

And so there are always alternatives, and it's exactly how we play the roles. But that's the role margin. And in coming back to the role margin, to the glimpse of my discretion, which I have. And then I can use this in a certain way. And if we look at it so we can see much more and tell much more about their personality of the character of that person we are observing.

Anyway, so--

Well, in terms of, as you say, it was an element of choice to join the SS, to embrace the ideology. Did that--

Well, no, I would say element of choice. Well, I chose, not just in order to-- when so many people became SS people out of ignorance inadvertently, but not because they disliked Hitler and national socialism. Because if you did, you just-- it was your own place.

Now, some people changed their mind. Some few people changed their mind and became disillusioned. And that certainly happened. That certainly happened in a number of cases.

But you see, if I have too much of an investment-- and many people had a long years of investment, relatively speaking, long years of investment-- so you're not going to cut the ties that easily because of the reinvestment. And therefore, you will justify. You will justify, you will rationalize. You--

So I presume--

--use the cognitive dissonance.

--at first, when the ideology was very focused on Aryanization, et cetera, but not talking about the total destruction of--

That's right. That's--

--you entered at that point. Do you have some sense of how these general SS people reacted once they learned the total scope of--

Well, that depended on their level of sophistication. Among the 20th of July people are some SS people, too. And a person who was the police president of Berlin was a highly posited general of the SS. And so he was caught in that. And another one, too, was caught in that who was directly on the high deck and caught later under Miller, a man called [Personal name] And [Personal name] became disgruntled, although he was a leader of the Einsatzgruppen there, too.

But see he, he could see the end coming. So it was also opportunism and say, hey-- I mean, what they did to Mussolini and how they felt about history, once you are unsuccessful-- I know we all have that same-- once you successful, people will kowtow to you and be nice and all that. But when they see that the going gets rocky and you no longer in favor because you just fail or just simply are not succeeded in some of the things you are doing, they won't continue their

alliance.

And that's what you see. Well, if I'm not famous, people will treat me as someone who is not necessarily infamous, but nothing special. But when I become a big success and get a lot of publicity and the praise and recognition, then people go, oh, yeah, you're my friend. And I say, where were you when I was not recognized and rewarded and whatever, for whatever.

And that's what I think very frequently, is one day I may wake up and say, hey, I've done my work which has been recognized. And then some people I'm sure who ignored me will come, oh, it's so nice to see you. I congratulate you. I've always your friend and supporter. Bull.

And I say, well, where you? Well, that's exactly what I would-- where were you when I needed you? Now, I don't need you. See you later, alligator. Well, or just go and fly a kite. I have a lake nearby so you can jump into it.

So that is something which I think is we are talking also about human nature. And human nature is cross-cultural. You're not really that different. There may be some genetic differences maybe and so who knows? But in terms of climatic differences, whatever. But human nature is pretty much the same. It hasn't really changed.

And that's one thing which I also have discovered, fortunately, and wrote in one of my things about the fact that human nature has not changed, really, and over thousands of years. So for all practical purposes, you see 4,000 or 5,000 years the same human nature and driven by the very same sentiments.

And that's something which I keep on stressing. Because I don't think we've-- we may have made quite a bit of progress in the technological field, but with the human nature, I think not much has happened which would reflect a positive evolution.

This is an enormous and depressing point, because-- maybe it's too much to get into this time, but it's the whole issue of can we do anything different?

Well, I think we can. I mean, my-- I may be wrong there. You see, why do people become educators? Well, people-- educators become educators, because if they're really dedicated, if they identify with what they are doing, if they view that as an avocation, then they do it because they think they can make a difference. And I still do, in spite of my pessimism, and no question about my pessimism.

And I still feel that, yes, if we try-- and we have to try-- then we can make a little bit of a difference. And in some cases, we actually may make it so. Therefore, what is my alternative? Not do anything, or become a crook, or howl to the wolves?

That's one-- these are alternatives. Or, do something which will set a precedent, or will produce some sort of a role model out of me, which will be taken more seriously. And in some way, I think I may have succeeded in doing that, in accomplishing that, in a minor sort of way.

Do you know of any--

What sort of difference it will make is another question in practice. But I think, in terms of my own recognition, my own insight I think has altered my life somewhat in the way I conduct myself. I think I've become more accountable. And I think I've become more mindful. I'm far from being what I would like to be, but I think I've made some progress.

Yes. Do you know of any instances in which, say, a member of the SS took on some of these notions of the undoing?

Oh, yeah. Well, we've talked about it. We've talked about it. I've talked about it with a lot of people. And to some extent, I also motivated them to work with me or talk and respond to questions, and said, hey, that's the way to your restitution, that's restitution. So that we better-- and they understood it and said yes.

And particularly, one of the hangmen of Buchenwald, I became like-- he was older, of course, so considerably older than I-- but I became a very significant other to him, a kind of a role model to whom he looked up. And it was not just simply because I rendered support of sorts and even send him money, but simply because he understood the message. And wrote me-- that by itself would be a book, in terms of all the letters which he has written to me.

And he is an individual who was condemned and, indeed, infamous at the concentration Buchenwald, which includes [Personal name] And people who were there, I talked, and all that, and said, you deal with him? Tell me where he is. I'm going to murder him. No, really. And this person was a well-known physician whom I got to know, a Jewish physician I got to know in Germany through a friend of mine. And he was in Buchenwald and said, what? This fellow needs to be killed.

So he got the message, this Buchenwald hangman, he got the message. And--

Was he able to act on it?

--understood that some restitution has to be made. And I think he's made some, in terms of-- well, he tried to in his relatively limited way, because he was in prison. He had many times life sentences.

So what-- I mean, in what kinds of ways did he act that out?

Well, that he just tried to tell me about his motivations, about-- talk in-depth psychology, by any means, if that wasn't in-depth psych, I don't know what was. And so he wrote me several autobiographical accounts. He's submitted to interviews on many occasions. He wrote me letters, probably hundreds over the years, and taped the interview before he died. He was a cripple, couldn't walk. He was a wheelchair type, totally crippled, with open wounds which never healed and all that terrible stuff and really suffered and all that.

And so what they did, they took him out of the prison where I met him, because I was involved there. And some other people-- this Bach-Zelewski was in the same-- the General Bach-Zelewski was in the same-- von dem Bach-Zelewski was in the same prison. And that's where I met him.

And then they removed him and put in some sort of a nursing institution because the prison couldn't take care of him. He needed medical attention. So they put him there, but he was in confinement, in confinement. And it was not easy to see him. Well, I managed and all that, because I cut all the red tape. So Wolff and other people, I always got to the people I wanted to talk, whether they were in prison or elsewhere, and we talking dozens of people.

So he was very limited in what he could do?

Oh, yeah, very limited.

Were there any other examples of SS people who did such things as speak out openly, or teach, or--

Yeah, yeah, yeah, right. And this is one fellow who was the witness-- who witnessed the destruction in one way or another-- was an eyewitness of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto, because he was in the vicinity and all that. What sort of hand he had in it, you know, that still is something he's very reluctant, because that could finish him.

So I'm not quite sure what sort of role he actually played. He said he was a bystander. He happened to be in the vicinity there and was stuck there and so he was present when these sort of things happened. I'm not necessarily buying that altogether.

But maybe-- he wrote down a very detailed account which by itself should be published because it's unique. There's no one else who has done anything which would even come close, other than description on part of the Jewish people. But none of the SS people have described it in the detail and the reflections what was going on at this particular time. So I really think that this is a very unique sort of--

Is it likely to be published?

Well, I mean, I don't know. I mean, I've-- so far, we've heard oral history, talked about all sorts of things. But you see, most people talk more than they can deliver. And so I have a new lead maybe that the Holocaust Museum or Foundation, they may-- they have a publishing sort of situation, which they're interested in. So I'm going to pursue that. We have to call and see what's going to happen. I've got the number. I was given that by what's his name.

But then, one particular person, as I said, was the eyewitness of the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. He came out at a publishing press company, publishing company, and he came out with a book to publish the contribution of German Jews to German culture. And very well done, very well done, and I have a copy of that. And so they all-- the list of all the people, German Jews, who've made a major contribution to German culture.

All right. And then he opposed it and argued the point that, yes, there are gas chamber, yes, it happened, against those Nazis who are even further to his right, who are deniers, who were just revisionists. And he got into things, and they virtually destroyed him.

He is also a person who said, yeah, I regret that I've been a member of the SS and all that. Yeah. So that's what I call-- he has had a tremendous hard time. And I almost got killed once when we got into an argument while he was driving a car. We were going to some specific place. He did a lot of things when he was physically better off. Now, he's got lots of serious illnesses and hardly can walk around anymore.

And so we were in the car and we started discussion and disagreements and all this and that, and he got a red head and drove like a maniac. I thought I was going to get killed, you see, because he got so upset. Red head, immediately red head, and so either he had a stroke, or I'll get killed because he was driving like a maniac, and all these sort of things. Now, he's much calmer, in spite of the fact that he's worse off physically, much worse off. And you can argue your point differently and he won't get upset and will accept many things which he was not prepared to accept before.

Now, I went to with him to interview very important people no one ever has interviewed and who were actually the SS ideologues and published the SS weekly, the Black Corps which was translation Black Corps. And that was a weekly, which had an edition of one million a week. And so these were the two publishers, both SS people in relatively high rank. One was a colonel, and the other one was a captain, his deputy. And so we went to-- I got them to interview, because of his-- so he was very willing.

And now, next summer, when I'll go to Europe-- if I go, which is most likely-- we already have arranged that regardless whether it will be broadcast or televised, we get a number of SS people together. And we'll have a table talk, which may or may not be publicized at this particular time. I certainly will tape it, because I've got the equipment now-- which I haven't used-- but the equipment, too late professional equipment, to tape, and stereo.

So we're going to have a discussion with them. And I'm looking forward to that, because-- and so it may or may not be developed into a broadcast. Because, again, very many people are totally blind.

So I have to call one of the persons in Germany and remind her because she was interested. And I could have stayed a little bit longer-- they would have paid me the difference, penalty difference-- but I had to go see my son, so I just didn't do it. So I have to remind her, because I sent her material and she has not acknowledged or not done anything.

I think we're coming to the end today, but one more question. Was the plans of the final solution and the internal workings of the camps known to all the SS?

No.

No?

Because you see, that is something which I also learned very directly from Hitler's secretary. And she said Hitler had one idea, which she absolutely-- and she gave me a copy of the original document in which it is said that people only



need to know what they need to for the role they played within that organization, or Nazi-- any Nazi organization, and not go beyond that.

So there was a very severe penalty. Any person who was caught that he talked about, SS person, who knew about that and all that-- and that's also one of the reasons why they gassed periodically those people were helpers in the mass destruction. So whether it was in Auschwitz-Birkenau, people who worked in Canada, every six months, they're gassed and a new crew came because, precisely because, they were witnesses to mass murder.

And that the same thing was in where they had also a gas chamber, in Mauthausen. And so that was-- they replaced it. So anyone [INAUDIBLE] some people-- so therefore, it was top secret. It was just top secret. And any sort of communication which I've seen and all that regarding the final solution was stamped top secret.

And so even among those SS that knew, the knowledge was contained.

Yeah. Well, I mean, that's something interesting, why I don't accept that. Wolff said, I didn't know about the gassing. Now, I have absolute proof that the man went to-- own admission, mass destruction, the Einsatzgruppen where he saw-- actually, Himmler was in that situation, where Einsatzgruppen were. So he admits that, and says, yeah, I know that that happened. He does not deny the gassing. Said, but I didn't know about it. He doesn't deny it, never denying that, not for a moment. But he said, I don't know about it. Well, that may be.

But so the funny thing is, yes, that he admits that he was present with Himmler when the Einsatz commandos were killing people. And he admits that. But then, when we talked about gassing and all that and that Hitler gave that order, he denied it. And when I pressed him-- and I still have that taped telephone conversation-- I say, hey, look, I've been waiting now, and it's just about time. I have documents to show you and all that. I showed him. He said, well, if you say so. If you say so, I'll have to accept it. But it was very difficult for him. And then when he was dying, the devil was after him.

Well, we'll stop here today.

I guess so, at the devil.

John?

Probably a [INAUDIBLE].