

John M. Steiner collection
Interviews with former members of the SS, other Nazi officials, and witnesses to Nazi Germany
RG-50.593

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The John Steiner Syndrome: Radio interview with John Steiner

In this interview conducted by Klaus Figge, John Steiner describes his experiences in various concentration camps during World War II and, especially, the horrific details of his transport from Auschwitz to Dachau in early 1945.

Interviewer: Dr. Steiner teaches at Sonoma State University, where many students take courses at the new Holocaust Studies Center. He is a sociologist, a Holocaust survivor and for the past two decades has studied the perpetrators and tried to understand their motivations and psychopathology. This is his story.

Steiner: My family came from Prague and my paternal great-great grandparents converted to Judaism; very mixed cultural and religious background; family was not nationalistic or chauvinistic, politically or religiously, and identified themselves as citizens of the world. He attended a German school; when the Germans arrived, the youths were all expected to join the Hitler Youth, but he was ineligible and his former friends suddenly perceived his as an enemy. The same was true of his teachers, who had previously favored him but who saw him in a new light. He was more and more isolated and finally thrown out of the school altogether because according to the Nuremberg Laws, he was not Aryan. His father, a bank official, was sent to Theresienstadt in 1941 as part of a work detail; his other relatives, who were not religious, were sent to various ghettos and camps; After the attempt on Heydrich, he was sent to Theresienstadt in a cattle car, packed in with hundreds of others. He also spent time in other camps, including Auschwitz, Reichenbach, and finally, via Prague, to Dachau.

The Interviewer then plays a reading from of one of Steiner's unpublished manuscripts:

In January 1945 it was rumored that we would be transferred from Reichenbach to an unknown destination. The medical condition of the prisoners was terrible, people died like flies and there was no medical care. How would they survive? The female prisoners panicked and were led away in haste by the SS, never to be heard of again. A few days later, it was our turn – Hans, our Kapo, who was pessimistic about our chances of surviving, nevertheless tried to encourage us and told us that cattle cars would be provided for their transport. We were given a few pieces of bread and some margarine. The six wagons were quickly filled with three layers of bodies, eighty to one hundred men per car. I was in the middle layer. Between every two cars, were wagons with watch towers, manned by armed Germans and Ukrainian guards. I was soon numb and my left leg hurt terribly. I was sure that only a miracle would allow me to survive but I

managed to work my way through the mass of bodies to the top of the car. Our train travelled slowly and stopped at night when no one would see us. The sight would have converted the most fervent Nazi to an enemy of the state. Fortunately, it was so cold that the corpses did not rot too quickly because we were not allowed to throw them out of the cars – that would have left evidence. The pile of bloating bodies grew quickly. On the third day, our rations were almost exhausted and one of the prisoners, who had managed to prop himself against the car walls, convinced us to give him the remaining rations so that they would not be stolen and which he would distribute fairly. He appointed a couple of lieutenants to help with the distribution. The new leaders quickly turned into dictators and they forced us to give up our rations. The first day, the food was distributed fairly, but on the second day, the new junta kept all the food for themselves and their favorites. Finally, the lieutenants killed the dictator. His reign was brief and no tears were shed for him.

More and more died. Many of the surviving no longer had the strength to move or to fight against those who were still able to push and shove. They died a horrible, slow death by suffocation. One cannot imagine the gruesome suffering of these people, the worst nightmare could not convey this experience. I remember one of the older prisoners, a friendly, sturdy man but who was weakened by pneumonia, and did not want to fight and survive at the expense of others. I tried to help him as much as possible and he took my hand and tried to calm me. I hope that I was able to help him during the last instants of his life by holding his hand as he died. He passed away with an almost angelic smile on his face, unburdened and at peace.

As we passed through railway stations, we recognized the route. Many stations had been destroyed by air strikes and we saw the damaged rail cars everywhere. We were encouraged when we realized that the allies were succeeding against the Third Reich. On the sixth day, we passed through Bohemia and I thought of my relatives and friends and wondered what they would say or how they would react if they saw me in my current state, cadaverous as I was. Then I considered what would happen if I tried to escape. Some prisoners actually tried to jump from the cars, either in acts of suicide or to attempt a desperate but futile escape. As we stopped in a bleak, wintry landscape, a well-known former attorney jumped from the car and cried “I cannot go on, I’m going home.” An SS man trained his gun on him from his watch tower and ordered him to get back in the car. He obeyed and as he regained his former place, the SS guard shot him, coldheartedly. Another prisoner jumped out of a moving train and died immediately. Even if they had succeeded, the escaped prisoners would not have gotten very far and in their inmates clothing, they would have been caught and turned in to the Nazis. Had I succeeded in fleeing to relatives or friends, I would have endangered them and they would all have been executed had I been found. All of the prisoners who tried to escape on our trip to Dachau were shot. I am sure that would have happened to me, too.

Once, a Ukrainian SS man was inspecting our car. His gaze landed on one of my friends, a sixteen year old boy who was changing his position. He drew out his Luger, aimed and shot him. The time passed slowly. We had neither food nor water and ate snow or drank our urine. We were covered with lice. The train traveled day after day and on the sixth day, I recognized the landscape – we were in the vicinity of Prague, the city of my childhood, whose beauty and art I knew. It was the city that I discovered a new every day during my youth. It was the city I loved. I recalled a beautiful carved statue in one of the old convents. It depicted man as being half in full bloom and loveliness, and half in complete decay. My experiences on that train gave the statue a new dimension and meaning. What I saw in terms of human destructiveness and atrocity was sufficient for a lifetime. As a young man, barely eighteen years of age, I was

unprepared to confront death, hatred, and decay. I thought about that statue and it shed a new light on my suffering. What does earthly suffering mean in the face of eternity and what role do we humans play in the universe?

It must have been the seventh day of our journey when we arrived in Prague. We stopped near the station, under a bridge. People stopped in their tracks and stared at us. Some were visibly sympathetic and threw us food or offered us water. It was the first time during the whole journey that we got fresh water. But not everyone got water – the prisoners who were in better condition lunged at the water and spilled most of it. As the train continued, those who were still living became more and more anxious. The cars were now full of putrescent corpses, and some prisoners fought for more space, for example two brothers and their friend, the former lieutenants who had killed their dictator. They had succeeded in protecting their space and kicked and beat anyone who approached them. When they ran out of bread, and the space became more tight, as the corpses could not be kicked away, they decided to do away with their friend. He had a terrible case of the flu, was so hoarse that he could not speak and was too weak to defend himself. First they threatened, in a joking manner, to throw him into the center of the car, where he would surely be trampled to death. He did not comprehend their animosity and did not make more space for them. Even though he begged them in a croaking voice not to, they kicked him pitilessly away from the wall and into the center of the car, where he landed on the heads and limbs of others. The others couldn't stand that and he was pushed and kicked around until he was dead.

Like the others, I also tried to hold my ground. I was often threatened or attacked but in my despair, I still had enough strength in my fists and feet and teeth to defend myself. I bit as hard as I could. My young Czech friend, Erich Schwartz, cowered next to me and I tried to protect him. I had gotten two blankets, most of the others only had one, so I gave him one of mine. His fight foot was so gangrenous that his blanket was covered with pus and urine, his foot was literally hanging from a piece of skin. Aside from that, he had other infections and dysentery, and could no longer hold himself upright. He lay on me and I could hardly breathe and almost suffocated. I begged him to move aside because I could no longer bear his weight or his excrement. The others around us also began to complain and finally, we kicked him to the side. He was beaten and kicked and eventually landed in the middle of the car. The other prisoners had broken his fingers and his joints, and he died in terrible agony. Many were no longer in possession of their senses and some jumped from the moving train. IN the meantime, more and more drank their own urine. We drove through Pilsen, the home of Pilsener beer. Some of the laborers who worked close to the train station brought us something to eat. There was very little time to talk to them during and take their food, beer, and water, before the SS guards came and butted them away with their rifles.

Shortly thereafter, we crossed the Bavarian border into Germany. The train stopped again but we did not receive water or anything else. Half buried, amid the horrible stench of rotting corpses, the few survivors had little hope. I was pretty much finished. A prisoner, who had snapped, tried to climb out of another wagon into ours and he was already bleeding from a bullet wound. We tried to dissuade him from his intentions and berated him because he was drawing the attention of the SS to us. He clearly did not know what he was doing. He couldn't go forward or backwards and one of the SS suddenly appeared, shot and killed him. I suddenly lost my self control and screamed "why don't you shoot me too?" He just laughed and disappeared as quickly as he had appeared. My situation continued to get worse. One of the boys next to me warned me that I would also land in the middle of the car if I continued to take up so much

space. By that time, only the physically strongest and a few lucky men were still alive. The two brothers, who had killed their friend, started a fight and made me the scapegoat. I could not hang on to my spot anymore and was thrown into the middle of the wagon. In my despair, I looked around for help and one though saved me. There was some space alongside a pile of stinking, slimy, glassy-eyes corpses and buried myself between two corpses, one of which was what remained of my friend, Eric. I stayed that way for about a day. Just as I realized that I could no longer stand it, the train stopped. Men in prison uniforms opened the car doors and said that we had arrived at Dachau. The SS guards who received us were appalled at our appearance. A few even showed sympathy and tried to help us by withholding their blows and treating us courteously. One appointed me to be the guard of a nearby water spout that was surrounded by prisoners who had not had a drink of water since the trip began. That was my first and last job as a prisoner in a Nazi death camp. The water that came out was contaminated and not potable. After waiting endlessly, we were registered, showered, disinfected and given new clothing. We were greatly relieved to be rid of our filthy rags and lice, we felt cleaner. Our few remaining possessions were confiscated. They took my photos of my mother, important documents, medicine, and a beautiful pocketknife that I had gotten in Auschwitz. I felt guilty about the medicine – I could have given it to a fellow inmate – he could have used it and asked me for it, but I refused. It had cured me of a potentially fatal case of pneumonia.

While we waited for an orientation, an SS guard came to inspect us and to address us. As the fittest of the group and the one who spoke perfect German, I was selected to be the spokesman for the group. Since I had nothing to lose, I said to him “You see what condition we are in. Either you shoot us and end our suffering, or you help us to survive.” He was impressed by my boldness and courage and he ordered the overseer of the sick bay where we were housed to give us extra rations. We actually got them for two weeks and perhaps this saved, or at least prolonged, some of our lives. Others in our group died from badly treated or untreated frostbite, infections and diseases. A few lived long enough to be liberated on April 29, 1945 by the Seventh US Army, the famous Rainbow Division.

We survived because we kept our will to live, even though we did not believe that we would survive. Most of my friends and family died in the death camps. I survived, but I lost my capacity to love or to be happy.

Tape ends with a very disturbing and discordant piano concerto.

Interview covering the post-war years is continued on another track of this CD and summarized in Interview 3-29-2.

This interview with John Steiner focuses on his activities after he was released from Dachau, his work as a sociologist, the reasons why he, a former victim, dedicated his life to the study of the SS, and his high-level findings.

Interviewer: Talks about the period after Steiner was liberated from Dachau, in April 1945. Two months later, Steiner was back in Prague. The family home had been destroyed in an air raid, all of his relatives had been killed in the camps, and only his father had survived.

Steiner: Says that he was barely twenty-one, wanted to catch up with his studies, and attended a special Czech Gymnasium that permitted former victims of persecution to complete their

education. He began medical studies at the university, but that, too, was interrupted because he was not in agreement with the political situation after 1948 and could not accept living under a second dictatorship. He opposed the regime, was politically active, was locked up for his political activities and concluded that there was no future for him in Communist Czechoslovakia. He did everything possible to emigrate, either to the US or to Australia (where he had some distant relatives who could support him). In 1949, he fled to Australia, where he continued his studies and rather quickly got a job as a public servant with the immigration service.

Interviewer: Says that Steiner studied in Melbourne, Australia; Columbia, Missouri; Berkeley, California; and the University of Freiburg, where he was a Fulbright scholar. He has been a professor of Sociology since 1968 at the University of Sonoma. His life's work has been on the SS and he has had had contact with dozens of former SS officers who had survived the war.

Steiner: Says that it was easier than he expected because he started with a namesake called Felix Steiner, who was a general in the WaffenSS but who had nothing to do with the camps. Felix was quite prepared to talk and he led the younger Steiner to others, until eventually he got to the people who had worked in and been responsible for the camps. Given his experience with the behavior of the SS in the camps, he was particularly interested in whether they would continue to think and behave as they had in the past, or whether there were some fundamental changes in their attitudes. Though he started with certain preconceptions, he saw that they were not very different from the average citizen and that their behavior was very much influenced by the socio-politico-economic situation. He found that behavior is situational, that it varies, and that it is important to understand how a given situation stimulates men to commit acts that they would not commit under other circumstances.

He says that when the socio-politico-economic circumstances are disadvantageous, people act differently than when they are advantageous. He says that politicians must understand this, and work to create favorable socio-politico-economic circumstances and to develop a social structure wherein catastrophes cannot happen, wherein people would not harm others. That is one of the main reasons why he tries to observe the Nazi perpetrators whom he had known under the Third Reich under different circumstances, to determine whether the brutality which the Third Reich provoked would continue to exist, or whether those behaviors would not be possible under other circumstances in which people are not encouraged to behave inhumanely. He says that after the war, many of his interviewees behaved just like everyone else because the behavior in which they engaged during the Third Reich was no longer emphasized or promoted.

He says that it is definitely possible that people, under certain conditions, will hurt, or even kill others because the possibilities exist to do so. This was done during the Third Reich to all enemies of National Socialism and those whose racial background deemed them born criminals; those who were simply not useful to the party therefore had to be annihilated. That is what is incredible about an absolutist ideology, that people accept it because it purports to offer solutions to problems that cannot be resolved and that, instead, it leads to catastrophes.

Interviewer: Says that Steiner interviewed Karl Wolff (General of the WaffenSS, the highest-ranking SS and police officer in Italy at the end of the war, and the presumptive successor of Heinrich Himmler). He notes that Steiner talked with him many times, and for many hours from

1975 to 1982, and, in the end, befriended him. He then plays an audio segment of an interview (not easy to understand) during which Wolff talks about the WaffenSS; why he identified with the Nazi ideology; his duty to serve his country; the enthusiasm, camaraderie, and good will of his fellows; and that he never regretted joining.

Interviewer: Asks Steiner whether his interviewees knew that they were being questioned by a victim of Nazism.

Steiner: Says that he does not think most of them knew of his background, but that some were mistrusting because they didn't know how he might use the information they gave him. He was very clear in his goal to understand how people get into situations in which they accept and assume roles that lead to catastrophes, in the Max Weberian sense. His concern was to understand, and this is how they too perceived it; they also realized that he helped them to better comprehend their own situations. They accepted him because he helped them to confront the past, to better process what happened in an almost cathartic, therapeutic way.

Interviewer : Steiner's list of interviewees reads like a "Who was Who in the Third Reich." His first example is Karl Wolff, Himmler's right hand and his principal communications link to the Fuehrer. He then plays part of an interview with Wolff, who paints a sympathetic picture of the Fuehrer and his many accomplishments. His second example is that of Heinrich Heim, adjutant of Martin Bormann, and he plays a tape of Heim's characterization of Hitler as a politician, as a man, and as a National Socialist [this conversation is very difficult to understand].

Interviewer: Asks Steiner what types of former SS members he interviewed.

Steiner: Says that there were different groups: many were from the WaffenSS, many from the Death's-Head Units, some who worked in concentration camps such as Auschwitz and Buchenwald. He then groups them into six categories:

1. Ideologues/Idealists;
2. Careerists, including former military men who had fought in WWI, who joined the Reichswehr and tried to further their careers, not necessarily because they were Nazis;
3. Opportunists, a crasser group, who simply passed themselves off as Nazis without having strong National Socialist convictions;
4. Hangers-On, people who were simply willing to compromise;
5. The naïve and uneducated, people who were uninformed and not independent thinkers; they were used in the camps because they would obey orders without giving them any thought;
6. People who felt trapped and saw no possibilities to resist (e.g. men who joined the SS in 1943 even though they could have asked to be assigned to other duties). They were different than the Hangers-on because they felt threatened.

Time Coded Notes
CD 1-26-1

71.04 total

00:02 Starts mid-sentence, Figge talks about arriving in San Francisco and going to Sonoma State University and a Holocaust study center to visit Professor John Steiner, a survivor.

01:49 Steiner introduces his background including coming from Prague and a family mixed from different national backgrounds. This made him less nationalistic or religious. He went to a German school, which automatically brought him into the Nazi youth movement. Gradually he was removed from this movement as not belonging. His father, a banker in Prague, was deported in 1941 into a work camp in Theresienstadt. Other relatives were also sent to camps or put into ghettos. Steiner was sent to Theresienstadt and then three or four other camps, finally ending up in Dachau.

06:14 Figge introduces Steiner's writings about his experiences, which are read by Arnold Richter (a professional reader).

06:31 In January 1941 Steiner wonders how he can survive with all the sickness and infections existing in the camp when he arrives in Dachau. He tells of transporting prisoners who couldn't walk or climb into the rail cars. He also tells of hiding food and people crying from hunger and pain from broken bones.

10:05 Richter, reading from Steiner's work, tells of the guards whose job it was to throw the sick and crippled into the rail cars and whoever was amongst the first, was unlucky because the rest were thrown in on top of him. Many on the bottom were suffocated or crushed. They were packed like sardines, about 80 to a car.
Tells about a guard watching over each car. (Very gruesome details)

11:44 Wonders if he will ever survive this journey, which was very slow and long. After 3 days the food rations were almost exhausted and the distribution of the little that was left and that people fought over. People kept dying and losing strength but trying to fight for some air or last bit of life. Steiner held the hand of someone dying.

15:53 They finally could see some rail stations as they traveled along and he somewhat knew their route. This went on for six days and finally people tried to jump from the train. They came into a cold wintery area which the jumpers could never have survived, even if they hadn't been shot, because they were thinly dressed. Steiner didn't want to jump and run toward family or friends because that would have brought the troops to them and they would all have been executed.

18:10 One guard seemed nicer, which was noticed by others as well as Steiner. On the sixth day he recognized that they were near Prague. He recognized a statue from his childhood. Steiner was not 16 years old and unprepared for what he was experiencing. On the seventh day they arrived in Prague, stopping under a bridge, where people gave them fresh water for the first

time. The wagons were now full of corpses and space was difficult. Tells of pushing off various bodies trying to crowd him aside. Tells of very gruesome dying and people losing their sanity.

24:27 They went through Pilsen where workers brought them food and beer or whatever they had to give. Finally they were over the German border. The remaining living prisoners were now losing all hope as they were increasingly covered by corpses, their smell and the lack of food and water.

25:54 Steiner doubted that he would survive and not be part of the pile of corpses being pushed in the middle of the car. Finally they arrived in Dachau, just as Steiner was losing all hope of surviving. Someone offered him water that was contaminated and undrinkable, but they had more room to move and new clothes and fewer lice. Whatever they had with them was taken away, photos, mementos, medicines, etc. He was the healthiest of the survivors and spoke fluent German so Steiner was the spokesman for the group. He asked the commanding officer to either shoot them or help them survive. They were fed and rested in the infirmary for two weeks. With this respite, some died anyway but others lived on to be rescued in April 1945 by U.S. troops. Many of his friends and family died in the camps, but he survived but lost the ability to ever be happy or hopeful again.

30:44 Piano music plays until 34:40.

35:05 *Starts mid-sentence.* Figge (?) tells of Steiner being liberated. Talks about a photo of Steiner, then about 20 years old, showing a U.S. soldier one of the crematoria. Steiner returned to Prague to find that only his father had survived the war.

35:48 Steiner speaks of seeking to finish his education. He eventually went to university to study medicine, but he had to give that up. He finally decided to emigrate and went to Australia in 1949 to restart his studies. Steiner went on to study in Melbourne, Columbia, MO, and Berkeley, California. He had a Fulbright Scholarship and in 1968 became a professor of sociology at Sonoma State University focusing on survivors of the Holocaust and the still living SS.

35:52 Steiner speaks of seeking out the SS survivors and starting to interview those responsible for the concentration camps. He wanted to see if they had changed from the war years, but he found that people behave differently under difficult situations. People do things they wouldn't otherwise do but for the circumstances they are in. People who haven't survived a catastrophe cannot fully understand this. Steiner wanted to know if the brutality of the Third Reich could have survived. Some of those he interviewed thrived under the economic boom.

38:43 Piano music plays until 50:42.

50:45 Figge starts mid-sentence about Steiner who spoke with Karl Wolff many times between 1975 and 1982 and even somewhat befriended him before Wolff's death in 1984.

51:39 Wolff (?- different voice) begins to talk about nationalism and the bloodthirsty nature of the war. Wolff is very nationalistic and proud of his fatherland. Talks about the far right nationalism and the far left, Communism and responds to questions from Steiner (?). Talks about his being brought into the army and his service in World War I, when he had been an officer. Talks about brown shirts, different uniforms and other minor differences between the old German army and the Third Reich. Wolff didn't anticipate how the philosophy would all play out.

59:10 New voice - Figge (?) relates chronology of promotions and career ladder of Wolff, personal adjutant to Himler. Then Wolff tells about his relationship with Himler and other people around him. Some were just around because they were otherwise unemployed or lonesome and they wanted to join in.

64:40 New voice - Figge talking about Steiner continuing to interview Wolff?(weaker voice) about Hitler and his monologues. (difficult to understand - voice ends at 68:00

68:00 *Two different voices - Figge and ? May be spliced interviews between Steiner and Wolff at different times, or Figge and Steiner. Difficult to tell.* Continues about nationalism, opportunists, the unemployed and uneducated and others who joined in without much thought. There were also those who felt they had no other choice but to join.

71:02 Ends abruptly.

CD 2-20 - Radio Interview with John Steiner about the SS, with the participation of three former SS members (Hermann Lankitsch [sp?], Jost Schneider, and Herbert Taege) – Hosted by Klaus Figge on January 23, 1982

Steiner says that he was deemed “racially impure” and sent to a series of concentration camps, including Dachau and Auschwitz. He studied sociology after the war and is particularly interested in the organization of the SS and the psychology of its individual members. He says that he tried to understand the SS by studying historical documents but that he had to launch a series of interviews with former SS members in an attempt to fathom the human dimension of the organization.

Steiner asserts that the SS was not monolithic, that it was a multi-layered organization with diverse responsibilities but that these were all in pursuit of a single ideology; that the Nazi ideology was voluntarily accepted, that it was characterized by incredible prejudices, and that it was inherently destructive from the start. Steiner asks the three former SS participants what motivated them to join, what led them to identify with the values, ideologies and practices of the SS. He quotes Himmler's early statements about the inferiority of the Jews, that they were essentially human refuse; and notes that such views were clearly stated, in the press and in the publications that were used to indoctrinate new SS members.

Taege says that he does not agree that the ideology was necessarily destructive, that he joined the SS voluntarily in 1939 because he wanted to more than “just his duty,” and that he was unaware of Himmler’s positions.

Lankitsch says that there were different types of people in the SS and that the majority were not destructive war criminals but soldiers eager to fight for their country.

Steiner asks “What goals did the SS serve? What did the SS fight for? Before I fight and kill people, I need to know what the goals are. You need to examine an organization very carefully before you join.” He says that it is not believable that the SS members did not know anything about the destructive ideology of the SS because it was the subject of widespread propaganda and widely publicized.

Schneider responds that he was only seventeen when he joined and did not have a grasp of the Nazi “big picture.” He says that his comrades did not completely understand what they were fighting for, that he himself fought for Germany because his country was at war and that he joined the SS because it was considered an elite corps, comparable to some units of the Luftwaffe. Figge states that the goal of the Third Reich was not just to destroy the enemy but to annihilate whole peoples and that the WaffenSS participated in the murderous *Einsatz Gruppen*.

Schneider responds that, at the age of 17, they knew nothing about the destruction of entire races. Their training was military, they learned how to handle their weapons and to fight, that ideology had no part in this, nor did they have time for ideological discussion.

Steiner notes that Schneider had long been a member of the Hitler Youth and that he must have read the newspapers. He asks Schneider whether he served Germany or whether he served Hitler and the Nazi Party; whether Hitler managed to impose his ideas because the population was receptive to them.

Schneider says that he and his family did not receive any propaganda, and that though his father was a party member, he joined the SS because he had been rejected by the Navy. He says that with hindsight, he would not do it again.

Lankitsch says that he was only 18 in 1936, and that there were no other influences besides the Nazi view, that all the information one received was one-sided.

Taege, who was a guard at Dachau, said that his responsibilities were to guard the perimeter of the camp and that they were told that the people inside were all criminals.

Steiner says that he was in Dachau at the beginning of 1945 and asks why people were sent to concentration camps and why Jews were persecuted. He says that by 1938 and Kristallnacht, it was clear that people started being sent to camps; that the Nazis required a huge bureaucratic organization to transport prisoners and keep the camps running. He states that people couldn't just ignore what was happening behind the front because they were fighting for their lives; that we need to understand their motivation to prevent a reoccurrence of such a monumental catastrophe.

Taege says that he agrees and that terrible things happened in the concentration camps but that sometimes your conscience develops with time.

Figge says that anti-Jewish measures began even earlier and the campaign to boycott Jewish stores started in 1933/4. He asks the former SS members whether any of them had ever had a crisis of conscience and ever apologized for what they did.

Schneider says that he had a guardian angel that kept him away from incriminating activities and that he only read *Mein Kampf* in 1945. He says that he is sorry that these things happened but that he is not responsible for them. Lankitsch agrees with that statement.

Taege says that, looking back on his own experiences, he has little reason to apologize. However, he recognizes that he was part of this machinery and saw a lot of things that others did not see and that he therefore took on the duty to study and write about the past. In retrospect, he says that it is lucky that Germany did not win the war.

Steiner asks why no one protested against the concepts of Aryanism and *Untermenschen* (sub-humans) and how it was possible for Christians to accept these theories. He concludes that it is important the people learn to say no to ideologies with which they cannot morally agree.