

It's going. OK. And I still have old technology just as a backup.

Good, as backup. Yeah. Yeah. We are a little small office. We have six referent, six prosecutors or policemen--

You have six--

--altogether.

--[GERMAN] prosecutors, right?

We have four prosecutors and two police officers.

Four prosecutors and two police?

And two police.

That's all?

That's all. And we are, all in all, 20 people working here from up from high to the workers behind.

That's including--

Include them all.

--does that include the Bundes?

Not the Bundesarchiv. The Bundesarchiv is a separate office. We are working together. So they have taken our material up to the year 2006 now. And if you come here and want to have a look at files, you must ask the Bundesarchiv.

I see.

Later, I can give you a short overview of the building, if you want.

OK, yes, I would.

Or don't you?

Yes. Yes, I would love that. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. And you can see the Zentralkartei. It's our basic material. These are cards on that there is written on it our details, names, and villages, and cities where happened something. And you should ask me if you want to know more. I'm here that's 10 years about.

OK. I was going to ask you.

So I have years behind only from stories of other people.

Yeah. Can I ask you, how old are you?

I am 53.

So you started here after a career in?

I had a career in-- I was a lawyer at the Amtsgericht. It's the first level court.

Here in?

In another Land. Here, in Germany, you must know, the prosecutors come from everywhere. They are coming-- they are sent from everywhere, and remain here usually two or three years, and then go back.

Oh, only two or three years?

Yes.

They're rotated in.

Some longer, but mostly the Land is saying, come back. We need you here to the work you did before.

So what part of Germany did you come from?

I was naturally born in Bavaria and was working in the Bundesland Sachsen-Anhalt. That is in a town about 120 kilometers south of Berlin. I made this work as a lawyer. I was a penal lawyer for about 10 years. And now, I'm here for 10 years. And now, I am first prosecutor and deputy head of the Zentralstelle.

Now, was it always the Zentralstelle this small? Or was there a period where it was--

Oh, there was a period in the sixth '60s and later where about 130 people were living here.

In '60s then?

You can find a sheet on our home page in English where are some informations.

OK. OK. So there were about 130 people. Yeah. But how many prosecutors? That's the whole stat.

I would say it's about 40 prosecutors.

About 40 prosecutors, yeah. Yeah. And is the idea to keep this open? Is there a set window?

No, that is a political decision. You will learn about it if you go to Frankfurt. I'm sure there is something about the Zentralstelle. The minister of justice in Baden-Württemberg said-- he was elected three years, I think, or two and a half years ago-- he said, in his time, the Zentralstelle will not be closed.

But the decision is to be made from all ministries of justice of the Bundeslander. We are working for these 16 Bundeslander. And they have two meetings, two official meetings each year. And they have to decide how long we can work or not. But our official opinion is that we have still material to have a look on in different archives. And we have still puzzles that can be indicted.

Yeah. Right. Right. But when you do a case, you find someone to be indicted, like these cases of the Auschwitz guards, then you make the indictments? Or does it go to the prosecutors in their?

We are here for pre-investigation. And that was the decision in 1958. And it lacks in the review. It lacks in the possibility to take it to the court. We should have had it, I think, because we have a lot of our former colleagues. We have a lot of special--

Knowledge.

--knowledge. And if you give it out to a public prosecution, the prosecutor office throughout Germany, we have maybe a colleague that never worked on such a file.

Right. But that is the structure now. That was the structure from the beginning.

That's a structure. It is as it is. But thinking back, it should have been better. But it's a good thing to have

the Zentralstelle. But that was not wanted. Yeah. And we cannot force some people to make a testimony. We have no power as it has a public prosecutor office. Yeah. We are prosecutors, but we make only--

Preliminary investigation.

--preliminary investigation.

Yeah. Yeah. And do you think that was intentionally done that way to limit the power of this office?

I also have only the informations from books or so. There were many Bundeslander that had to make together a decision. Some did not so much want to found-- to have the foundation of the Zentralstelle. Some wanted it more. And that was the point they agreed. Some wanted more, then wanted less. This is the politics.

Yeah. Yeah. It was negotiated. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And so the original impulse to create it, though, as you understand it, how much was Bauer himself involved in that. Do you know whether? And was it also the result of, I guess, the Ulm?

As you know, Bauer was from Stuttgart. He was from here, from this country. And he was-- he emigrated after the war. He was Jewish. And he was a powerful man. He was a man that wanted to make a call against the mentality to close all, to shut it down. He said, we have to look on everybody and not only to the persons that were at the front of the deeds. Everybody that took his pardon, this crimes, is maybe guilty. That was his-- he wanted to make it for the whole country. And you know about the Ulmer Einsatzgruppen process?

Yes. Was that--

That was the starting, the reason to build the Zentralstelle. it was in Baden-Württemberg in the city of Ulm. It initiated the idea that there was a hole between-- excuse my English--

No, no, it's very good.

--a hole between the work of the normal prosecutors that only worked here for deeds and persons that were or happened in Germany and the fact that in outside, in foreign countries, were made deeds--

The biggest crimes.

--that had to be investigated. Everybody said, it's not my work. And that was the reason that we had to build the central office, that anybody is looking was for this what happened in Russia or in Poland. And then we made a complex that we made for Oblast, for example, what happened in this Oblast in Kraków, for example, and so. And we gave it.

We put together as much as we could-- or not we, my colleagues, former colleagues, they put together as much as they could, and made a package, and gave it out. Sometimes, they found persons. And they gave it to the public prosecutors where the persons lived. Sometimes, they found no certain persons. Then they put the [GERMAN], the first, the highest court had to decide who had to work it. Yeah. He said, this case must be made by Munich.

Right, right, right, right. And that Ulm case, was that the one with Georg Heuser?

Ulm case, yes.

That was Heuser's case?

No, that's not Heuser.

That was not Heuser's? OK.

This was a differently set this up.

That's a different, separate case. Yeah.

This case, where the prosecutor in this case was Mr. Schüler.

Schüler.

Schüler. Schüler, then later was the first head of the Zentralstelle.

Ah, OK.

Yes. And they all know each other. Schüler was known to Hausmann, the justice minister in Baden-Württemberg, and of course, was familiar with Fritz Bauer, Hausmann. And the people knew each other. I, from my understanding, don't know if there was a official workout from Fritz Bauer. But I think he gave also an impulse.

Yes. And so the justice minister of Baden-Württemberg was Hauser?

Was Hausmann.

Hausmann, Hausmann. What was his first name, do you remember? I can find it.

You can find it.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. And then this background, I know you have some of this on your website. But is there anything, just so I don't forget, in terms of the statistics on the number of cases, the prosecutions, and so forth that you could give?

We have a sheet on our homepage. You read it?

Yes. Yeah. Is that the most up-to-date one?

We must update it, of course.

Right, right, but that, I can rely on that.

That's our official. And you can't--

Cite those statistics.

Yeah.

Yeah, yeah. And just before we get into some of the cases, is there-- you personally, what was your personal motivation for getting involved?

It differs from everybody else works here, of course, no?

Right, right, right, right, right, I'm just asking in your case.

It's my special case. As a young child, I was confronted with the war in the way that my grandfather and my grandmother from the mother's side lost two sons in the war. And I think my grandfather was a broken man then, when I was born. And it was always-- but it's very private.

But it was always a theme. The war was always a symbol. I did not understand as a little child why happened this war. And I was interested in these ideas. And it was spoken about Hitler. And I very soon

began to ask questions because then the last of these uncles, the brothers of my mother, died in on the 8th of May, '35.

So the two sons? Yeah, yeah, yeah. They died on 8th of May?

The one died.

One died.

And the other, two years ago in Russia.

He died here in Germany?

He died here in Germany near the Donau, in Bavaria. He was 17 years old.

17.

17 years old. And it's happened--

Yeah, I know. I know.

--a lot of times. But in this family, it was a problem. Of course, it was not worked out. And that was my first initiation to ask me what happened. And then if I was in my teenage years, I had a look on it. And it was a question of what was happening with the Jews. Why did it happen? Why could it happen?

And that was a historical theme that I was always interested in. And when I was in Dessau, when I was at the court, there was a route, there was an apply for Zentralstelle to send new personnel. And I said, it could be a good idea. I was now 10 years on the pedal kart. And it's a good idea to do something else.

So you were in the Criminal Court?

Yes, yes, to do something else, and decided to say a word, and came here. And so they said, you can. You should. So I started it. My first plan was to do it for one or two years. And then it prolonged. And some years later, I changed to the justice in Baden-Württemberg. I changed completely.

Your affiliation.

I'm now here.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. So I mean, but basically, from your story, it's one of these stories of--

As well, a lot of stories.

--a lot of stories of people, young Germans trying to understand, how could this have happened? What happened, first of all, as a child? And then how this could have happened.

Yeah. Later, I was very sorry that I did not earlier ask the older people in Germany. And now it's too late. Yeah.

I know. I know.

But it was not easy to get good answers. You must say-- I'm born in 1960. And you must say, they did not want to talk about it. And if--

You were born in '60, yeah.

Yeah. And if you asked again, they said, you did not live in this time. You have no idea what was in those

times. And you can talk easily about it. And in the first years of the Zentralstelle, it was surely that this office was not to-- I first-- I try to speak in-- as good as I can-- it was not too welcomed here, if I may say.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yeah. And colleagues that were working here should not have told if they were looking for an apartment that they work here.

Oh, really?

It was not good to get an apartment then. And I heard that if you wanted, from a taxi driver, to bring you to the Zentralstelle, it could have given problems.

Really?

They here were not driving. Yes.

It was interesting. I took a taxi from-- because I'm on a hotel on the other side of town.

Yes.

And she didn't immediately know. She said, I think I know the building. But it was like, I'm not sure, which I thought strange because, surely.

The people here have their problems with the Zentralstelle. And the proudness to have us here from the city and his citizens is grown, of course.

Now, it's a pride.

It's a proud-- a lot of pride.

Pride, yeah.

Yeah, it's a pride. They now are proud to have us here.

They are proud.

They try to make this institution last, also, when the work is done. Yeah. It is tried to find a way to leave the material here, there's a lot of documents, and to make something as a point of remembrance and for working with interesting people about this theme. And also, now, there is one times, one day a week, is a teacher here from a gymnasium, from lyceum, a college teacher. And he works with pupils and teachers.

From a gymnasium?

For example, last Monday, here was a school class from Poland. It's very outbooked, a year ago.

Really? Yeah, yeah. So a class from Poland.

That's passed into us. There was a Israel class here. Yeah. And now, a lot of people don't know about is prosecution of Nazis. For them, it is over.

Yes, yes, yes, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But you also have local schoolchildren?

Locals, but not only. Yeah, yeah, yeah, awesome. Yeah, OK. All right, so tell me about these cases, which you have now, with the last 40 cases.

As far as I can.

As far as you can, which were announced-- there's been a lot of publicity. Yeah. So first of all-- also, actually,

one question-- how much in these cases and earlier did-- I know that Zuroff and others have sometimes been involved to a certain extent. And I don't know if Wiesenthal worked with the Zentralstelle in the old days.

There were connections, yeah.

Yes, yeah, yeah. What can you tell me about those connections about-- have they been-- did Wiesenthal personally provide information? Or did you share information?

As I know it from all the material, Wiesenthal and the Zentralstelle were writing letters of-- had contact. Yes. And Zuroff, Mr. Zuroff visited us two or three years ago personally. And we spoke about the possibilities of working together. But the difference is that we are a state--

Organization.

--organization. And he is--

Unofficial.

--I find his work great. But he's a private.

Yes of course. Yeah, yeah, it's totally different.

So we have to be careful.

Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, right.

Despite his very good work and his engagement, you understand me.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, there's always a tension a little bit between the--

Not interested-- of the interesting.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's understandable. All right, so these cases that are now in the news, so there were-- it's also interesting that, as I understand it, I remember, Bauer, I think, made the case that anybody who is part of the death machinery--

That was his idea. They said it there.

Yeah, yeah. And it seems like only with the Demjanjuk case in 2011 did the courts accept that. Am I correct in that now, you can build these cases not in proving a specific deed, but in saying, these people, say, were Auschwitz guards. Therefore, whatever their role, they were part of that. Or is that correct? Or is that too simple?

I have the idea that my English could not be good enough to make this details necessary clear.

Do you want to say this in German?

Yes. Yeah. Fritz Bauer had the idea as it-- for example, was in the Demjanjuk case. He said, everybody who supported this was guilty. But everybody has to be looked about the height of his guiltness.

The degree of his guilt.

The degree. That's clear. That's also clear with Demjanjuk and other persons. They are not the main--

Perpetrators.

--perpetrators. There are people like Demjanjuk. They are the smaller helpers. Yeah? That must be clear. But the idea is that all these people are guilty. Yeah? And you know that Bauer was not such successful as he wanted to be. Yeah? The idea was not completely reflected as he asks three years later. The practice in the prosecution offices was by the-- I don't know the English word, gehilfe.

Yeah, helpers.

By the helpers. Let's talk. Let's-- by the helpers, that they accused only these that were, had said, made clear deeds or did excessful deed, excessive.

Yeah, excessive.

That's right. And the others were named. But mainly, they were given-- now, it's difficult. They were given an exclusion. Because they said, they thought that they can't say no.

Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

Yeah? Yeah? And almost everybody thought that he can't say no.

Yes, yeah. So that was an out.

And it helps him even if it's not true. But he thought. I hope you understand.

Yes, yes, yeah. Yeah.

And there were some indictments that were punished the helpers, yes? But it changed. And any time, it changed. In later years, I can speak about me. I can speak about generations of prosecutors that worked here before me.

There was a time, I think, but I'm not a scientist in this, there was a time that it was thought, Auschwitz is done. Auschwitz is prosecuted. And it was made. Here, everybody, this huge complex is worked. And in the times of the Auschwitz process in Frankfurt, there was a so-- there were known a lot of helpers that it was made the Auschwitzliste, as you have a lot about this. He was God in Auschwitz. He was God in Auschwitz. But these people were mainly not prosecuted.

Yes, yeah. From the '60s, you mean?

Yes, for example. And now, as we were successful, in our opinion, it's not new law. It's a new way to see on it, to look on it. Yeah?

Do you mean--

You have a new generation--

--in the Demjanjuk case, you were successful.

Yes. We have a new generations that looks on this deed as they were. They were criminal deeds, and criminal crimes, and no political crimes. Yeah? For years, people said, I was just only a helper. The deed was done by Hitler, Himmler, Goering, and so on. And now, we can look at this and say, that is pure criminal law.

But the decisive moment here was the Demjanjuk case, you think, in terms of that changing the tint?

It was clear to us that when the Demjanjuk case goes forward, and brings a chance of indictment, that we have to look on these other people. Yeah?

Right.



First, we, the public, says, why only Demjanjuk? What is against Demjanjuk? Why he?

Yes. Yeah, why is he?

We were fast to investigate against others. It would have been clear, if we had only fixed on Demjanjuk, it would have been a case law, a case investigation that was not the will. We did not have only an idea against Demjanjuk. Yeah? That was a beginning of our idea that we had to prove all guards.

Yeah. So in effect, here we are, in 2011 going forward, that original idea of Fritz Bauer has been vindicated.

That's lastly-- yes. Yeah.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

And unfortunately, we don't have a last decision in the case of Demjanjuk, as you know, he died before the Bundesgerichtshof had a look on it. So it's a little bit open. And the problem is that these people are getting older and older. Yeah? And it's possible that nobody of them comes to court.

Yeah. But if that had been the attitude back 30-40 years ago, of course, there could have been thousands more in court.

Of course, of course.

So the irony is now, the way you are interpreting it, it is possible, but there are relatively small number of very old people.

They have some bad luck that they survived, as we would say.

Yeah.

But it's, I don't want to say it radically. We can only work with these people that are alive.

Yeah, yeah, right. Right, right. So when you organized this, you found the 50 people? Or you let's say the Auschwitz guards.

You must make a difference between concentration camps. And there were camps that were not only for killing--

Yes, there were also labor camps

--and the killing camps.

Yes. And there was the killing camps. We had-- Demjanjuk worked in a killing camp.

Yes, Sobibór.

And Auschwitz in its totally was not one. Yeah? Only Auschwitz-Birkenau. Do you have to change it? No.

No, no, no. I think it's fine. Yeah. Yeah.

Auschwitz-Birkenau was a camp that you can say, it was made for killing people who came in, had no chance, normally no chance to get. He should have been killed. And we have about 8,000 people that worked in Auschwitz altogether. And the problem is to get--

You mean, 8,000 who worked--

In camps-- and guards.

--at the time?

Over the time.

Over the time, got it.

And you have to show, first, it's not a too small work, as you can see. You have first to look, who is alive. And it's a long way to find it out. As you know, we had no central [GERMAN]-- we have no central people's office.

Registry.

Registry. We have it local. These people without first life were the people that were easiest to find, comparable to others, of course. So it was not easy. But we could find them living here in Germany. And we could find them. I can't say how we found it. But it was easier than the others that are much-- it's much harder to find them. And these 50 were these that we found. And we gave last November, we gave 30 of them to the prosecutor's offices--

Around Germany.

--around Germany. And they are now working on it. And this is the special aim of the Zentralstelle. We are a pre-investigators office. And the case must be looked on from the prosecutors. He must be looked on from the lawyers. And he must be hauled by the Berufungsgericht, by the [GERMAN]. So there are a lot of jurists that are working on it. And it can't be-- we do just our work to make it prominent, to give it a forward. That is not so that we give it out, if the Zentralstelle gives it out, it means he is sentenced.

Or even in court.

Or even in court. We only make this work. We have had the decision that we should look on it again. And these people put it further.

Right, right. So of those 50, though, some have already been-- has that number been reduced already?

Yes, this is about over 30. It have been 30. And now it are less.

Less than 30 because they found that more people have died or less?

Yes, they died meanwhile. We speak of very old people. And it's very special.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And what do you feel-- I mean, knowing that even in these 30 or less cases, as you say, the chances that you will get through the whole process while they are still alive, that they will-- what is the significance of continuing with this?

It depends. It depends. Some people are with 90 years-- if they are 90 years old. My grandfather died with 94. When he was 90, he was very fit. And he could have made this trial for one or two years. But you don't may forget that this trial is hard for them. It's not hard to get the police in your apartment or your house, looking everywhere to find some material. It's not so hard work. The hard thing is what says a neighbor, what says the press. Yeah? That makes a lot of worry for them. And it's also-- it can have effects for their health.

Yes, yeah, yeah.

That's very difficult.

Yeah. But is the goal, as you see it, and just even as an individual working here, to make them feel the consequences of their actions in their youth? Or is it to teach a lesson more broadly? How much is aimed at

the individual?

The official aim is not to teach the public. Yeah. My official aim is to get the law work. And we have no democracy that has only that, the idea of Rache. You know Rache?

Rache, oh, sort of-- I'm not quite sure what that means. Is that like-- oh, like an accounting, a personal accounting?

No, it's revenge.

Revenge, revenge. Yeah.

It may be revenge. That's not our first aim.

And yet, though, to do the work are doing, you must have in your head that this is more important than what happens to each of those individuals in some ways, right?

Can you say it again?

I mean, to prepare these very complicated cases from long ago, to go against an individual who is maybe 92 years old, you must be thinking, there is a bigger purpose too?

I don't think so that is a bigger purpose. But I think it's right. It's good to make clear that everybody should say, no if he is forced to do something that he never should do.

Yes. If forced or even just asked to do something, yeah. Yeah. And do you think that lesson has been learned now or not?

I had my doubts. I have my doubts. Surely, we have found the principal of crime against humanity. And we are working on going, stepping ahead. And we are going. We're coming further and further. But the Second World War was and is less enough, maybe the beginning of this idea of crime against humanity.

Do you think, if you went out and just asked people here in Ludwigsburg, they would understand that, that concept that you do not have to follow orders?

I think you yourself can answer this question. I think it depends. It depends on the situation the individual is, from the personal problems he has, the existential problems he has. And I can only hope. Yeah, sometimes you do something. And it must be done. And it should be done. And one or other person has learned. I'm not so idealistic. I think it should be done. I only think it should be done. It was so huge guilty that we should work as long as we can.

There are so many guilty people, you mean, or are there was such a--

The hole was so monstrous.

Yeah. There was so much guilt. Yeah. I mean--

I don't think with the people that are living today have this guilt. No.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, Zuroff says, he will never say, it's over.

Yeah, of course. We would wonder if it would be always else. Yeah. But the year will come. Of course, we have less and less victims and testimonies.

And less and less perpetrators.

So you can calculate if the 1927-born were at the end of the war 18. And 18 is-- today, it's a mature--

Age, yeah.

--mature age. And if they are 95, then we should-- it should be, that's 1922 that these people are 95. And it's the last one. It's eight years. And I don't know. And 2027, it's these last 100 year, I don't know if it will last so long. It's a terrible show. And to justice, we saw. We will see what says the Bundesgerichtshof in this cases or what say he-- the Bundesgerichtshof said to a person that was 95, about, we close the file because he is so old, it is not to expect that he endures it.

In the trial, yeah, yeah.

The Bundesgerichtshof is-- where is it?

In Karlsruhe.

In Karlsruhe, yeah. And that is for all the Lander, right?

This is for also Land, the Lander, he is the highest level in--

The highest court.

--of the criminal courts. And over it is the Bundesverfassungsgericht. Do you know it? And this Bundesverfassungsgericht, for example, can be appealed, that it could say, the rights of man-- it's against the right of man to go against people that are so old. Maybe. It could say. But it's totally only hypothetically. It could say, you had 70 years now. And it's good.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. OK. And in terms of the list that you use, for instance, now to find those when you are trying to find the 50 and now to do it, so what list-- you took the list of the Auschwitz guards? And then you compare it to residency lists? Or is that how?

It's difficult to say it. I don't want to say it too much about it. We have, you will see it then, we have a lot of names separate for ourselves. And we have on it more actual informations. And of course, it was compared.

Right. So people like this Hans Lipschis and others? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

But as you know, Hans Lipschis is closed. The court said that he is no more capable to get clear this complex trial. He cannot understand it.

He cannot understand trial.

He could understand a small deed that he's accused, for example, taking something with this, but not this complex. Maybe this is heard more often in the future.

Yeah. Yeah, well, it's already happened in some cases. Yeah. Yeah. On not a case related to your work, but just out of curiosity, did you see this film, and that the TV, [GERMAN]?

I saw it.

Yeah, what did you think of it? I'm just curious. I had to discuss it at a--

It's a time ago. I was impressed about the-- as I think, the-- it seemed very natural-made. Yeah? It seemed it was good made. The people were good positioned. And it seemed as it was filmed then. It was a good background, as you can say it. I found this film-- I saw it positive, I would say.

You saw it positive, yeah. Yeah. It did show the different views, the different problems.

Yeah. I mean, I thought it was a little-- I mean, I think a lot of the feel of it was very convincing. I thought

some of the fact that the two brothers each killed their superior officer, that seemed a little-- this is crazy.

Yeah, it was also literary, of course.

Yeah, yeah. And then sort of the real antisemites were the Polish Home Army in Poland.

That they problems in Poland, but as you know, also today, the Polish speak about the Polish and the Jewish. And mostly, they investigated against misdeeds that where were killed Polish in Poland. There is a problem. There has been a problem.

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Oh, there have been problems. It just felt, in a German film, to focus like the real antisemites are over there.

Yeah. It's not my aim to point at the Polish.

Yeah, yeah. No, I understand. I understand. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, you had-- also, sorry to skip around. But the Ulm process, is there a particular book or a particular source on that that you think is particularly good? Is that something you have?

You find it in several--

I know it's mentioned in several, yeah, [CROSS TALK].

--several offices. There is a student from the University at Mannheim that writes on it. And she has this writing. She's writing about Adalbert Rückerl.

Oh, right. Right, right, right, right.

But he was later.

Yeah. Yeah. I have, actually, one of the books of Rückerl. Yeah. Yeah.

You have it?

He had a small book, Rückerl.

There is a book in English.

Yes, I think I even have that here. Yeah, I think so.

Yeah, [GERMAN]-- Perpetration of NS Crimes-- 1945 to 1978 or so. Maybe you have it.

I'll take a look. And the other question I had is how much-- this comes up, for instance, Rosenbaum talks about this in the US context-- how much evidence from the Soviet archives were used? And how much did the Zentralstelle work with the Russian archives and use evidence from there and them? They did accept some of that in?

It's a special theme. It's a special theme where is working another student now, actually. You know the Hauser file, the Hauser file. The Hauser file was maybe the first time that we got Russian material. It was brought by a diplomatic way and given up, and given over.

And you know that in the Cold War between Germany and Russia, usually, the USSR was no diplomatic-- no [GERMAN]-- no law aid. There was no legal aid. Generally, it was no legal aid, for example, concerning NS crime. Yeah? That was a speciality. NS crime cases, it was brought together. Sometimes, the Russians gave material as they thought it would be helpful. And in the 1967, maybe, was a delegation from the Zentralstelle in Russia--

Around '67?

--in Moscow. And there is also a report from the Zentralstelle that describes it. And later, it was tried to get material. It was possible. And that was mainly the only way that these nations worked together. And we got no material in 1956. Of course, 1956, I think, came the last prisoners of war back to Germany from Russia. And some were-- about 40,000 were sentenced because of war crimes.

After they came back, you mean? No, no.

In Russia.

--in Russia, yeah, yeah.

They mainly got 25 years forced labor.

And these were allegedly for war crimes?

Yeah. And the last 600-700 were brought back in a train with military guards. They were not rehabilitated. There was no amnesty for them. And they gave it over to the Germans, first in the East, and then the remaining in the West, and handed it out. But in the years later, they first said, we gave the material. We gave the documentations. We gave the sentences. But it did never come.

So these are the ones that were given 25 years, you're saying, the 40,000 were given this?

Yeah about. It was always the same, 25 years.

25 years, yeah, yeah. That was the standard. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So this was aside from other POWs. Or this all the POWs?

Yes. Yeah, the most-- it was million. The most were not sentences.

Yeah, so about 40,000 were sentenced for war crimes. OK. OK. But they were released in '56?

They gradually--

They were last--

Yeah.

They were the last ones to be released in '56. And how many of them came back out of the 40,000, do you know?

The most.

Most of them

Or was all of them. The problem was to survive the war in the camps. As you know, from the POWs in Stalingrad, the most died. And now, I could see this material. I started with in, I think, 2010 to look on these sentences. And they're mostly one page, very short, very small.

Protocol.

Yeah. And it's no much not much to get out it. We have about a couple of cases that I gave out to the public prosecution offices. But there's no-- I don't have too much hope to get something out of it. But it's also our work.

Yeah. Yeah, so most of-- in your cases, for the most part, Soviet evidence did not play a role. I mean, the

Heuser case was an exception because there was [CROSS TALK] evidence. And of course, as you may know, sometimes, for instance, the Klarsfelds got evidence from East Germany sometimes that they were clearly-- yeah, there was a combination of interests there.

Of course. And how far did we get?

OK. OK. I think-- yeah, I know. One other question and then if you have a moment just to show me around.

Of course, of course.

The statute of limitations, which I know has several times on various crimes has been changed is-- what is the situation now?

I think I did not understand your question.

The statute of limitation, what does it means?

It means-- so for instance, after 10 years, you cannot prosecute someone for a crime.

Yes, yeah, the status of prosecution will not end for murder.

For murder, it will never end. And that was changed, it was, because originally there was--

After the war, there was-- the status ended first after 20 years and was prolonged. And then in the '60s, it was a great debate in the Bundestag. Then it was unfinished. It was open. It will never end, it was decided. There was a great discussion.

Yeah. This was in the '60s, it was decided.

Yes. Yeah.

Yeah, OK. OK.

We only can work with murder. The normal killing, we decide, we have a difference between killing--

And manslaughter.

--and manslaughter. Yes. It must be brutal or some details, Yeah. And it must be-- I don't know the correct translation for these cases. You are murder if you did it that, you made a rape, for example, and then you killed this person because you don't want that anybody knows. That is murder.

That is murder. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. OK.

Or is a very cruel.

Cruel, yeah, that can also be a factor, yeah, still today.

Or low conscience, if you-- murder is if you kill somebody because he has another ideology-- the Jews, for example, yeah, or to kill small children.

Right, right. OK.

If you make an execution of 10,000 that were partisans, it was killing, of course. But it's not murder, normally.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's like the Priebke case.

The Priebke case and the Ardeatinische Höhlen in Rome, yeah. It's murder.

Murder, yeah. Yeah.

Because they were working with detonation material.

Oh, with detonation material. Is that why?

I think they got to the whole--

Blew up the caves.

Yeah, yes, yeah.

Yeah, so it's an unusual cruelty too.

It's written in the. It's our weapons that are totally dangerous, [GERMAN], it's dangerous for all, and this detonation material. For example, but also other aspects-- that's not the only aspect that makes it murder.

Right. OK. Good. All right, well, thank you so much. And if we could go around some. And then I hope you don't mind, because I'm still-- I have one. I have to finish this book by exactly one year from now. So I still have-- I'm still doing work and so forth. But if occasionally, if I still ask you a question by email or something--

Of course, it helps, I would be glad to help you.

I really appreciate it. OK.

Let's see if perhaps Mr. Schrimm comes to the States.

Yes, that would be wonderful. If not, then at least maybe I can follow up with a couple of quick questions with a short phone interview or something like that.

Yes, yes. It should be possible. But he does not dare, as I do, to speak English.

To speak English, yeah.

Well, I don't mind to make mistakes.

Yeah, no, your English is very good. But if he can speak German, I can record it. And then I can check if I don't understand something. I can check it.

You can give it back to read of us. OK.

OK, great. Shall I leave this here? Can I leave this here?

Yes, you can leave it. We'll come back here. Yeah, yeah.

That has a lot of material. There is a lot of material.

When did that come? It was started here.

In 2000.

2000, yeah, yeah, yeah. It was to decide what happens with the material after the work is done. And they make it viewable for the users. Worldwide, you can see the study room.



So people can come-- scholars and others can view the material. Yeah.

It's like every other archive.

Yeah, yeah. Right, right. Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE]

[GERMAN]

I want to give you a look at those archive rooms if we can.

Before I forget, you said, did you grow up in Bavaria?

Yes.

Yeah, where-- which town?

[PLACE NAME]

Yeah.

[PLACE NAME], [GERMAN]. I grew up in the north end of Bavaria and then studied in Nuremberg.

Oh, in Nuremberg.

See? I made my second season of my study in the court in Nuremberg where there was the trials.

Yeah. I had a remarkable interview with Benjamin Ferencz. You know who he is? He is the prosecutor in the Einsatzgruppen case--

I know, of course.

--who is 93 or 94.

Still alive?

Alive, vigorous, smart, unbelievable.

Very good.

Very unbelievable.

These are old sentences. It's a sentence, for example-- one sentence. You see the dimensions of these six cases. It was Bochum. And--

Yeah.