

## Alfred Wehner

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**QUESTION:** Your name is?

**ANSWER:** Dr. Alfred P. Wehner.

**QUESTION:** Did you grow up in the Rhine Valley?

**ANSWER:** Yes, in Wiesbaden, its situated about 20 miles west of Frankfurt at the Rhine River. And Wiesbaden right after the war for a number of years was headquarters for the United States air force in Europe.

**QUESTION:** That's why that name is so familiar.

**ANSWER:** uh huh.

**QUESTION:** So you were born in what year?

**ANSWER:** 1926; October 23, 1926.

**QUESTION:** What did your dad do?

**ANSWER:** My dad was a dentist.

**QUESTION:** Like father like son.

**ANSWER:** Yeah. He would have loved to see me stay there and work together with him.

**QUESTION:** You know it's interesting growing up when I did and teaching World War II they never gave any perspective other than the American perspective on World War II.

**ANSWER:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** And we forget that war affected everybody. We always talk about the US. We were in a depression and the war brought us out of the depression. What was Germany like growing up when you were a child?

**ANSWER:** Well, before Hitler came we uh um, the economic situation was bad and getting worse. There were I've forgotten now but something like 40 parties in the parliament the equivalent of the parliament and everyone was pulling in a different direction and it crystallized into two camps the communists who wanted international labor movement.. workers of the world unite under the leadership of the Soviet Union and they were pretty brutal. It was a rough bunch and the only ones who went into the streets to fight them were the Nazi's, the national socialists and uh it came down for many Germans to a choice between a red Germany or a Germany under Hitler and what he promised and what he talked about sounded very good.

He stressed that he wanted peace, but equality for the German people for the nation in the family of nations. And he stressed frequently that he was a soldier in the front line of World War I and knew what war is, and that if he can help it he never wants another war and he came to power.. and of course legally, he was appointed as chancellor by President Hindenburg who was a World War I hero.. and by that time in 1933 already a pretty old, some even say feeble man.

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And in any event he came to power and he did remarkably good efficient things, which you can do if only you are a dictator. You don't have an opposition in parliament you know. But he uh, not he personally but the Nazi party.. which became the government, it was anonymous, the Nazi party was the German government. They initiated programs like Mother and Child... giving support to poor mothers and uh there was an organization called Winterhilfswerk (Winterhilfsmitteln?) Winter Aid Organization. Their slogan was nobody shall starve and freeze, well who could be against that. It all sounded great and uh.. in fact the number of unemployed people shrank rapidly, and the bums and beggars disappeared so everything looked pretty good but...

He of course was a fascinating speaker. He started in a low tone and then worked himself up and when I look at tapes now from my American perspective I ask myself, is this man insane, how he ranted and screamed?. But in those days uh.. uh.. he just mesmerized people. And um the fire of the Reichstag, the uh German parliament in a.. believe it was in 1934 which was started by a dim witted Dutch communist and whether Goring was behind it, it's a controversy no one can determine. But in any event the Reichstag went up in flames, and Hitler and the German government.. meaning the Nazi Party, portrayed that as a signal uhh ..for a red revolt. A coup to bring the government down, meaning the Nazi government and replace it with the uh.. a.. a red communist government. And uh, to put that putsch down, this revolt the Nazis resorted to very brutal and direct measures and a lot of people were executed there and I have no doubt some personal differences were settled too. But uh.. he..

**QUESTION:** Would this have been similar to say.. I mean because we didn't have a war at this point. Would this be similar to say the US unions... thugs to a certain extent, street.. street fighting I guess?

**ANSWER:** And the communists they wanted to bring down the Nazi government. And at that time Hindenburg was still alive, and Hitler asked Hindenburg who was still the figurehead but very respected by the.. as sort of father figure for the Germans.

Hitler asked Hindenburg for the so called *Ermächtigungsgesetz*, which means the law to give him pretty much total power to put down that putsch to save the father land from that red revolution, which Hindenburg did and shortly thereafter Hindenburg died and then of course Hitler had all the power. And he put his henchmen, "died in the wool" Nazi's in uh.. uh.. key positions in the media so after a very short time you could hear on radio, there was of course no TV and you could hear and read in the papers only the Nazi party line. And uh with this power in the days before TV and satellites, um you could very well influence the thinking of the people.

And uh when he started his adventures, first the reoccupation, the military occupation of the left side of the country the German part left of the Rhine River which was demilitarized after World War I. So he sent the troops back in and said well, this is German territory, always has been, and this as uh, as he called it the "Dictate of Versailles", which ended World War I; which was in fact a dictate. It was very imprudent to uh.. impose conditions which were almost impossible to meet on the defeated Germans. The only ones who um.. who foresaw potential complications, mainly another war were the Americans, Wilson, but in World War II the Americans did not swing the political weight that they did after World War II. And the.. in the spirit of the time in that era there was hatred.. hatred of the French against the Germans, hatred of the Germans against the French, hatred of the English of the Germans I guess, and vice versa. So the western powers, England and France, really um.. imposed conditions which caused a few years after World War I a terrible inflation. One dollar which was the equivalent of four Marks and twenty pennies in old gold pre World War I currency, um.. one dollar.. four Marks and twenty went in November 1923.. to uh something like four billion and

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several hundred million Marks. And um by the time if you were an employee and got paid monthly on my dad.. until the patient's paid their bill uh.. the money was practically worthless. Things like that and then the great depression affected the whole world. There's a saying if America sneezes the whole world catches a cold. And all this prepared the uh.. the.. soil so to speak for a Hitler to come and appeal to national instincts and patriotism. So it boiled down to a um.. choice between the Nazis and the red. And as I said the media were completely controlled by the Nazis, and Joseph Goebbels was a devious, a brilliant devil. He was probably the smartest of them all, an intellectual many of uh.. anti Nazis read his editorials in the Nazi paper Völkischer Beobachter just to enjoy the German, you know the sentence, it's like Churchill in England, you know.

**QUESTION:** So Hitler was and I mean, and again I've always heard this said, Hitler was a genius and again there is good and bad to being a genius. But you talked about how he set up the media and put people in charge of the media and now he has the propaganda going you've got people that are starving, out of work, and their money is not worth anything.. and here's Hitler.

**ANSWER:** There you go. And uh.. so when he sent troops into the Rheinland, the German General Staff sweat blood. My dad had a patient and he told him we were sweating blood because all the French would have to do is send one battalion in there, and the German's would have withdrawn because there was no.. under Versailles there were no tanks, there were no submarines, there were no airplanes, no war planes uh.. probably no artillery um.. but the western allies did nothing. And the German's of course said, well, this is our.. our country. If we had had a war with Mexico, the Mexicans win and said we can't have any American troops after the war south of the Colorado. It sounded all so plausible then there was the Olympics in 1936 which was a masterful propaganda piece. And again he emphasized the world that all Germany needed was peace to give it a chance to build up again and create jobs so that we have satisfied citizens.

Well.. then of course the ironic thing is that Hitler wasn't even a German he was an Austrian, he was born in Austria, and he always had the dreams since both countries spoke German, to unite them. And when he of course this was all prepared by undercover types, instigation, acts against the (inaudible), criminal matters. When... then a Nazi or Austria invited the German's in, the German troops, the Anschluss the reunification.. Hitler was greeted by tens and hundreds of thousands, you can't fake that. We saw this when he ended Vienna. Heil, heil, and the people were cheerful you know, and all so we thought that is good and fine. But then the Nazi propaganda started to work preparing the crises in the Sudetenland, which is the border area between Germany and what was then Czechoslovakia. Now it's the Czech Republic. Things heated up and of course the people were always told how the German minorities were uh.. suppressed and persecuted and tortured and even killed by Czech gangs with the approval of Czech authorities. And it got so bad that a.. a war situation arose and that is when Chamberlain went to Munich and Daladier the French Premier and I really feel sorry for Chamberlain. He was an English gentleman and Hitler the head of state gave him his word that after the Sudeten question has been settled, that he has no more demands territorial or otherwise and as an English gentleman he took the word of a foreign head of state you know. But the next year Hitler under some pretext I don't know what you said swallowed all of Czechoslovakia. And then of course that was in 38 and maybe early in 39 then he already prepared the crisis with Poland. And there were reports of atrocities by the Poles against German minorities in the western part of Poland, and there were a lot of German settlements and German villages. Excuse me.

**QUESTION:** Did I read right that some of the atrocities were actually Hitler had a..

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**ANSWER:** Yeah, that comes when the war actually broke out, but I remember I was twelve years old the German government published a white book where you saw mutilated bodies of um supposedly German minorities in Poland, slaughtered by Polish mobs. And I remember one picture impressed me terribly I was twelve years old there was a woman who had just given birth and her corpse was lying next to the babies corpse still connected to the mother by the umbilical cord.. stuff like that. Of course it can be faked and I'm sure that was some provocation from the.. the Germans living in Poland agitated by the Nazis secretly. And uh.. then there were increasing reports of border violations by Polish military aircraft and the um troops and meanwhile Hitler always emphasizing his love of peace and leaned over backwards to accommodate and find a solution. And then finally on September 1<sup>st</sup>.. of course we know now this was staged, on September 1st he had first concentration inmates in Polish uniforms.. under SS leadership and attacked a German radio station just across the border. Radio station Gliewitz, and then the SS leaders shot the inmates and called in the press and said here.. for the first time Polish troops in some strength attacked German territory and he.. I still hear him today with his Austrian accent as he went in front of the Reichstag the Parliament oh of course the Nazis you know, all the others had been removed. There were no other parties, was a one party state with the press under control.

He in that speech and I have a tape somewhere.. he reiterated how he as a World War I soldier knew the horror of war, and how he had continuously leaned over backwards to avoid another war but now and he said as of 5:45 we are shooting back, so this is how we learned of the outbreak of war. We thought until the bitter end, that we were fighting in defense of our country, and we were not fighting for Hitler, we were not Nazi soldiers we were fighting for Germany, we were German soldiers.

**QUESTION:** It's interesting, because again I mean hindsight, you know now we know everything but to hear you describe what Hitler said, as of this time we are now.. I could play back December 7th 1941 is a date.. same words..

**ANSWER:** Yeah

**QUESTION:** But different pieces to it. But like you said, now you're a countryman.. and Hitler is saying I want peace and you know, we are protecting our peace. The 1936 Olympics is that the one your dad was at, that was the one your Dad was at. Do I have the years right, or am I mixed up on that?

**ANSWER:** Are you talking about the Olympics?

**QUESTION:** Yeah, I'm just backing up a little bit. Did you go to the Olympics with your dad?

**ANSWER:** Yes, that picture was taken in Berlin.

**QUESTION:** Did you see Hitler or hear Hitler?

**ANSWER:** Not then. I saw Hitler once, when he visited uh.. that must have been about 1933 or '34 um.. he flew to our local airport and we came to see him and he was uh.. driving in his big Mercedes convertible standing there you know. And we were on a second floor balcony and he was driving right below us and of course the people screamed, heil, heil, heil, and he looked up and did this (gestures with hand). Ja he a.. I saw him there. In Berlin I did not um see him.

Speaking about the Olympics it is this um.. what I call the pop (coughs) the pop history, uh.. that the impressions people have here from the news snippets they pick up here and there.

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When you mention uh.. 1936 Olympics in Berlin, automatically like the Pavlov reflex what comes to mind Hitler refused to shake Jessie Owens hands and all. This is just about all the people remember here. Now what really was the overwhelming impression is that the Americans have always.. have always been admired for their sense of sportsmanship and fairness. And the best German broad jump fellow was a man by the name of Lutz Long and when they did their practice jumps, Jessie of course always jumped further than Lutz Long. Jessie instructed Lutz Long on his techniques and Jessie one of the gold medals he won was in far jump, 8 meters and 3 centimeters and Lutz Long using Jesse's technique won the silver and that made the news all over Germany you know that Jessie Owens taught his opponent his techniques, you know a typical example of American sportsmanship. We didn't even realize that Hitler didn't shake hands with Jessie Owens. Hitler didn't shake hands with every gold medal winner you know, but this is sort of the one sided presentation that you often get just like Nixon-Watergate you know Olympics 36-Jesse Owens not shaking Hitler's hand. Of course I have no interest or no cause to defend the Germans or Germany, but there are many instances uhm.. where you get a one sided picture and that is bad because sometimes we can learn from history.

**QUESTION:** Again, hindsight is twenty twenty, we all know the answers now but when it was there it was real, and Hitler appeared good and there was its just like anything World War II was terrible but there are a lot of good things that came out of World War II. Well Hitler had some terrible sides but I think there were also some benefits that Hitler provided so you have to look at the full picture.

**ANSWER:** Of course uhm.. the man was evil incarnate. The way he steered the nation towards war and what his people leaders particularly in certain branch of the SS did in the eastern territories just defies description this uh.. And uhm even though I have left that country almost 50 years ago it still weighs on me because I fought for this flag. Because we... hundreds of thousands, millions of my fellow comrades German soldiers thought that we were the guys with the white hats.. you know. And uhm.. that was perhaps the worst thing for me after the war. You can lose a war and still hold your head high if you fought a good fight for a good cause, but when you suddenly realize the reality.. what happened under that flag it was as if somebody had pulled the rug out from under me. It was a moral vacuum and it took awhile to sink in. We did that? because I know I wouldn't have done it, none of my comrades would have done it, my father wouldn't have done it, his friends and acquaintances wouldn't have done it. My dad was a soldier, he volunteered again in World War II and uhm.. his fellow soldiers wouldn't have done these things. But when you see the documentation that is a... horrible disillusionment.

From the Russians you knew it you expected it. When you.. when you read the atrocities committed in Africa like uh in a.. Burundi, and in all the civil wars that are merciless slaughtered, you say well that is Africa, tribal differences, you know. But in the center of Europe the people who produced Goethe, and Beethoven that was a bitter shock. Of course similarly.. the allies bombed German cities and there was a.. as I mentioned.. it was a declared war of the British air marshal Harris.. "Bomber Harris" to erase German cities, with a declared aim of maximum casualties to the civilian population. Uhm.. but that was war and the German's had bombed British cities in that war so it was a matter of degree. But I don't think many people know that more than 640,000 civilians women, children and old men uhh.. were killed by allied bombs.

Now that is not a counterweight to the German atrocities, its just to show that.. what you would now cause bad deeds were committed on both sides. After the war.. during the end of the war and after the war 13 million German refugees fled from the eastern parts of pre-war Germany. 13 million, or in the first year or two after the war were forcefully evicted..

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German minorities in Poland and Czechoslovakia, and out of these 13 million two million didn't make it you know. So these are terrible figures and this as you said the same thing... there is no glory in war, war is bloody, war is dirty, yet sometimes you have to stand up and fight. Hitler had to be stopped you know, and this is the tragedy that sometimes it seems you have no choice.

**QUESTION:** And it's very well said the way you stated that. It is not tit for tat, its explaining war. You know you are right, all sides had things that in the quote normal world we see as terrible and that.. is unfortunately some of war. Good, bad and ugly.

**ANSWER:** See my dad was arrested by the order of American Authorities in August 45. My dad was a party member but had no.. he was a full time dentist. He had no rank in the party. He was arrested away from his dental chair uh.. and he disappeared.. for 15 months. I did not know for 5 months whether he was alive. He just disappeared. He was arrested by German detectives on the order of uhm.. Americans. And they told him.. he sensed something was wrong and he asked whether he should bring along a toothbrush and pajama.. and uhh the German.. said, oh no Herr Doktor its just interrogation. And of course it was a lawless uh.. period for quite some time. The German Police was disbanded, only after enough people had gone through the process could there be new reformed police which took many months or a year or two, and the military government had absolute authority and law. So my dad disappeared. I tried to locate him. I went to the German Police Department and they said well we did it on the order of the Americans, we turned him over to the Americans. So I went to the uhm.. the American commandant and they brushed me off and after. Now there was a habit that a lot of German prisoners were given to the French, were turned over to the French for doing work in the mines and many of them perished there because the conditions there would not pass a Red Cross inspection.

And after five months I got a form letter from him with the lines, where he informed me he was in an American concentration camp. Of course they called it internment camp, in the.. near a southwestern city in Germany. There was no arrest warrant, no accusation, no trial, nothing, they just took him and after 15 months they said you can go home. No reason given, nothing. Those were the times in Germany in 1945, 46.. and 47 in parts.

And then of course there were the uhh. I was surprised having grown up under Hitler and see the people cheer heil heil heil, and out of the collapse everybody was antifascist. And of course they had taken over the newspapers under the authority of the allied occupation forces. And there were some very agitating articles. For example I remember one where it said Nazi's uhh.. have to go.. should go into barracks, the Nazis were guilty, responsible for the war and some Nazis still had apartments left that were not bombed and so many antifascists and refugees had nothing left and the Nazis should be forcefully evicted from their homes or from their apartments.

So I was at that time nineteen years old. I was alone.. my mother left us in 1935.. so my dad brought me up so I had to defend the home. Uhm.. I fashioned some, of course we had to turn over our weapons, our guns, and knives, even.. cameras, binoculars everything had to be turned over to the occupation forces. So in each room.. we had a four room apartment.. I had one.. a potato masher, in case these guys come.. come in there. We had a fairly nice apartment, oil pictures and uh, Persian rugs, upper class, upper middle class culturally. And over my dead body would I have let a.. let a gang in there and take all that away.

**QUESTION:** And for those who don't know a potato masher is a German grenade, correct?

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**ANSWER:** No, no, no, that's a wooden club, really, yeah yeah. No I didn't have any grenades.

**QUESTION:** I've heard them called that, but you just had a club and you were going to..

**ANSWER:** yeah.. yeah a wooden club uhm and I had some kitchen knives I hid under pillows in case I was surprised in one room. So uh.. and after 15 months my dad came back. And then of course I had to lease the office to an antifascist dentist refugee because I could not hold open empty a badly needed space. So after he returned he could not practice because he had to go through the de-nazification process which took another, I've forgotten now.. at least a year. And the irony of all of this, there were five classifications. Number one were the uhm.. chief culprits like the ones they hanged in Nuremberg and other places. And number four were the ones that just paid their dues, but never did anything. And number five, were the die nicht schuldige not guilty ones. To be classified in group five you have to prove with witnesses that you either suffered under the system or helped persecuted people like Jews or anti nazis. And after all that.. most of them were classified under number four, they were party members and not to find obstacles to their professional development to let them pay the two marks a month and wear the party emblem and uhm. Most of them were number four, my dad was classified number five so.. but uhm.

**QUESTION:** Did you have a choice really, I mean like uh.. like you said they paid their dues and there was only one party left so?

**ANSWER:** You were not forced at gunpoint.. but it was known if you wanted to advance in certain fields where you were employed, government employee or so, it would be helpful if you had your party membership. You were not.. were not.. there was a certain moral pressure. Well you knew it would help you, so you paid your dues. It was the German government, it was a legitimate party so that is a view from the other side. But under Hitler was what he would call a law and order state. Uh.. give you an example uhm.. there were oh TVs' were not there but in those prisons I'm not talking about concentration camps, there were no gyms, no color TV and what have you, uh.. commissary. At one time we were burglarized, our apartment.. and my dad had of course a number of guns.. rifles and pistols. And uhm when the burglar left, he left one of my dads guns on the little table next to the exit door because if you were caught as a burglar you were sent for a few months or a couple of years to prison, but if you were caught.. a burglar with a gun they locked you up and threw the key away. Just an interesting highlight. Well uhm.. I have given you some of uhm.. bits from the other side.

**QUESTION:** One thing we haven't talked about yet, well a couple of things, it's interesting because right now Nazi is a word that has a connotation with it. Where then it was like talking Republican, Democrat, Nazi... because nobody knew what was (inaudible). What about the uhm.. Hitler youth, when did that start, and what was?

**ANSWER:** Oh Hitler and the party realized very early that getting hold of the youth in the formative years and convert them to the national-socialist philosophy was very important. He had in mind a thousand year Reich you know and if you went over the youth then you built a foundation because then their children will grow up within the system. The Hitler youth actually started before he came to power. It's a.. a bad comparison but it's the equivalent to the Boy Scouts here. It became mandatory in 1936 but before that it was voluntary and it had the kids from 14 to 18. Then it had a subdivision that's called Junge Volk, Young People from 10 to 14 and it kept the kids off the street .. ja, and it was sort of.. we were instilled with the party ideology, the heroes of World War I all heroic acts. And physically training, Hitler said he wants Germany youth to be quick as greyhounds, tough like leather and hard like

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Krupp steel. So.. in contrast to the Boy Scouts, in Hitler youth for example you could learn rifle training, and as I mentioned to you they had the motor branch where kids could drive motorcycles which was not otherwise possible. You had the navy Hitler youth, where they went on sailing ships and uh.. got all the training that naval recruits did in those days in a reduced way of course and then had the flying branch, Fliegen Hitler Jugend and I joined that branch.

**QUESTION:** \Now you said, you compared it to the Boy Scouts and then you said but that is not a good comparison but yet what you described sounds like?

**ANSWER:** Yeah, but the Boy Scouts are more they're teaching Judeo Christian values and there was nothing of that in the Hitler youth. You were trained to be tough. Compassion was ridiculed. "Hart wie Kruppstahl" hard like steel you know, and tough like leather. Uhm.. it was in a way a youth.. youthful form of paramilitary education. And then of course you had the indoctrination. The heroes of the party, and the close order drills, and the.. the.. you had the what was called service.. Wednesdays, Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, and when we went out into the country there were war games and close order drills. And when we were indoors in the evenings we recited to the umpteenth time the curriculum vitae of the Führer.. this type of thing, you know you were indoctrinated.

**QUESTION:** And so there weren't smores and camp fire songs, this was..?

**ANSWER:** There were camp fire songs but they were marshal camp fire songs. You know it was a very clever infiltration of the uhh.. impressionable young mind toward that ultimate goal to make what Hitler would call a good German tough.

**QUESTION:** Boys and girls?

**ANSWER:** Yes, the uhm.. girls were the League of German Girls "Bund Deutscher Mädels" and uhm.. they, of course I wasn't in that branch but they also had athletics, prepared for.. being prepared for motherhood, and this type of thing, and songs.. ja.

**QUESTION:** So you got in the Hitler youth, how old were you?

**ANSWER:** Well, I volunteered too after my mother left.. I was lets see nine years old then.. and frankly pretty soon I had my brim full. I uhm.. My dad was a cultured man and he had cultured friends and acquaintances and uhm that tough stuff (mimics drill sergeants orders) "ugh! Ugh! Ugh!" that pretty soon turned me off.

It's perhaps understandable that in the beginning the uniform has an appeal you know.. and you see those big drums.. and the fanfares. ach.. fine but after a few of months. I uh.. I was never a good Hitler youth.

Now I uh.. was fortunate because my dad was a member of the German Olympic team, and he was an old party member, that means before Hitler came to power he had joined the party. And as a dentist.. member of the Olympic team he had certain prestige in my home town and he wrote an affidavit to the youth leader that he needs me for his Olympic practice, because I went down you know where the.. fifty meters where the target is, they had a ditch and you had a stick with a round uh.. white circle where you indicated where the shot was you know, and that worked so I uh I no longer attended the service.

**QUESTION:** Who were, who were the.. here they are scout masters, who were the leaders?



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**ANSWER:** Kids who were two years older, ja. That shows you the fallacy of this system. These youngsters could not possibly have the maturity to lead other youngsters, uh.. be examples other than just presenting the tough guy you know. But interestingly enough had my father not been an old member.. and member of the Olympic team this affidavit would have been interpreted as anti Nazi. You know he wants to keep me away from the Hitler youth, ja.. so

**QUESTION:** And that's when I assume something like that would be when you saw that Hitler wasn't this peaceful

**ANSWER:** No not then.. not then, because Goebbels with his very refined propaganda, presented us as being.. a.. in a defensive posture. We did not want war. I thought at the time I'm just not a good Hitler youth, I'm just not a good Nazi because I don't like that rough stuff you know. I've always been a.. an individualist. I'm not a joiner and I'm not a leader. Uhm.. I march by my own drummer, but if there is a crisis I take over.. but I don't want to lead and I don't want to follow unless there is a good reason to follow you know. So a.. this may have entered into the picture.

**QUESTION:** As a youth did you have a concept of America?

**ANSWER:** Yes, yes. My grandaunt and her husband immigrated to the states after World War I, and she visited us and I must have been about oh 4-5 years old. Aunt Mary from New York. Aunt Mary was a big event when she came, and uhm.. still remember her, in fact when I immigrated I came to New York, not to her but I visited her several times.. ja. And she told me about America where they have these huge buildings called sky scrapers you know, and earthquakes, and to get to America you have to go on a big boat and you have to be on that boat ten days.. only water you know why I was enormously impressed. And then when I was about eleven or twelve, we had a German news.. er youth writer, his name was Karl May, and he published 34 books before he died and then his group continued publishing another 30 books. But he was a remarkable man. He described his adventures, his travel adventures all over the world and it was actually fictitious. The guy has never been here until after he got rich, and then he only came to the eastern states and I think he saw Niagara Falls. But in any event, he described his adventures in the wild west with the Indians... and people have been amazed at how accurately he described the conditions in the United States and the scenery and the landscape in the United States and I learned a lot from Karl May about the United States, uhh about the Ku Klux Klan.. and interestingly enough he died in 1912. Already in those days when uh.. Hollywood 20-30 years later they still made the movies of bad Indians and the good white guys you know, he already.. he described good Indians and bad Indians and he described good whites and bad whites very realistically.. his clash with the Ku Klux Klan.. uhh. So I read a lot about America and uhm..

There was one other aspect, my dad was one of the relatively few.. few people who had a car. He bought a used car. Cars were fairly.. not rare but, not too frequent on German roads before World War II. And uh.. like so many German drivers of that era when somebody wanted to pass you it was a personal challenge of your honor you know.. and then the insane road race started which often kept the surgeons busy and the under takers. And my dad.. had a front wheel drive which gave him a certain advantage on these narrow curving German roads and uhm.. very rarely did somebody succeed in passing my dad, with one exception. There came a car, a big car and my dad had his car floored you know.. and regardless of front wheel drive and his driving skills that guy just passed us like we were parked, and my dad said well that is an American. An American car you know.. and that impressed me no end when I was ten, eleven, twelve years old. Where your dad is the smartest, the strongest and

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the best.. you know and everything German is the best you know. So ja, I knew.. a lot about America and this actually planted the bug in my heart to come and see this great country.

I have traveled in a lot of countries and I consider my travels the most uhm.. educating experience in my life. You see other cultures. You realize you're not the center of the universe. Naturally you see yourself and everything around you is on the periphery, but when you travel in other countries and you see the other customs you get a wider perspective. And uh.. uh.. I can say of all the countries I have traveled in, America is by far the greatest. I voted with my feet. I uh.. I got my degrees in Germany. My father would have been happy to have me as an associate. I had everything on a silver platter. I was the young Dr. Wehner, but as soon as I got my last degree I packed and left, and here I am. It wasn't always easy but.