Ernst Junger Briefing Notes

Early Life Until 1918 (Outline details known by the Audience)

You are a wild, free spirit. You joined the Wandervogel ‘back to nature’ movement at 16 and, more dramatically enrolled in the French Foreign Legion at 18.

You couldn’t wait to get into the war in 1914 and joined the 73rd infantry regiment as an ordinary trooper seeing action before being selected for officer training.

You were a fabulous officer, gaining the respect of the men for your fair discipline and immense bravery.

You had little regard for danger and were wounded seven times – often very seriously.

Your will to win was enormous and although not gratuitously cruel you did not hesitate to use booby traps or prisoners to shield your position.

You won the Pour le Merite – Germany’s highest decoration. This was rarely awarded to junior officers in the infantry. Usually it was given to senior commanders or flying aces. The Red Baron gained one.

**Later Life (Probably Unknown to much of the Audience)**

You saw war as a shaper of men

You served in the army of Germany’s Weimar Republic until 1923

Your writings were considered strongly conservative and nationalist.

You refused to join the Nazi party or serve as a Nazi deputy in the Reichstag and made your position publicly known.

You refused permission for any of your writings to be used by the Nazis

You never signed any letters of support for Hitler

You did serve in the Army of the Third Reich as a Captain in the second world war. Like all German soldiers in that war you took an oath of loyalty to Hitler.

You were responsible for the executions of several young German soldiers who deserted from the army occupying France.

You were involved in the bomb plot against Hitler and influenced its participants. On discovery you were merely dismissed from the army.

In 1984 you appeared alongside Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterand in a gesture of reconciliation on the former battlefield of Verdun. Here you called the ideology of war ‘a calamitous mistake’

**Ian L’s Questions to Junger as an old man in the 1980s**

**What is your attitude towards war?**

**Answer along the lines that war is a noble tragedy that shapes men**

**How do you explain your conduct towards prisoners in the Great War?**

**Answer along the lines that the survival of the German nation was at stake. War is such a brutal thing that rules mean very little. Victory in the battle meant more than the lives of your prisoners. If no advantage could have been gained then you would not have put them in harm’s way. Cruelty was not your intention and is a form of cowardice.**

**Why did you serve in Hitler’s army?**

**Answer along the lines that you loathed the Nazis but once again the future of your nation was at stake. You did what you had to do.**

**Why did you feel it was the right thing to do to send young German conscripts for execution?**

**Answer emphatically - Armies require discipline.**

**Even in the Nazi cause?**

**Answer thoughtfully - The Nazis were the legal government of my nation.**

**Why did you feel that you were a fit representative of Germany at the Verdun ceremony dedicated to reconciliation in 1984.**

**Answer along the lines that you had served in the armies of both Germany and France. That since the EEC the future of the nations of Europe were intertwined and war no longer had any place. It was important that somebody who had experienced the fighting of the Great War was present to give meaning to the ceremony.**

**Will you die with a clear conscience concerning your actions and writings?**

**Emphatically yes.**

**Are you a patriot?**

**Answer as you think he might! Refuse to answer if you wish.**