An abstract painting with a woman in a black coat and yellow hat standing next to a black suitcase on a yellow path. The background features large, expressive brushstrokes in red, white, and yellow, suggesting a sky or a large tree. The foreground is dominated by dark green and blue brushstrokes, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall style is expressive and emotional, with a focus on color and form.

# Holocaust and Human Behavior



FACING  
HISTORY &  
OURSELVES





# **Holocaust and Human Behavior**

Facing History & Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to use lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to racism, antisemitism, and other forms of bigotry and hate. For more information about Facing History & Ourselves, please visit our website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

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## Dedication

“Richard and Susan have been staunch supporters and friends of Facing History for almost 40 years. Their foresight in funding the revision means that we will embrace twenty-first-century, cutting-edge educational technology and the newest teaching strategies that better engage students. This project increases our effectiveness and expands our virtual reach to educators in almost every country of the globe.”

– Roger Brooks, President and Chief Executive Officer

Facing History’s teachers and students have benefited enormously from the leadership of Richard and Susan Smith and the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation. The family’s visionary grant for the revision and publication of the 2017 edition of *Holocaust and Human Behavior* was a major five-year investment in the organization’s future.

The Facing History community appreciates the guidance and wisdom the family continues to provide. The community acknowledges, with great sadness, the recent passing of Susan Smith. Her passion for and commitment to Facing History’s impact on young people remains without parallel.

### About the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

The Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation ([smithfamilyfoundation.net](http://smithfamilyfoundation.net)) is committed to effecting permanent, positive change in the lives of the residents of Greater Boston, particularly individuals and families in economically disadvantaged communities. Today, three generations of the Smith family oversee the foundation, stewarding approximately \$15 million annually in grants aimed at promoting greater health, educational attainment, and economic mobility.

## Acknowledgments

The completion of this revised edition of *Holocaust and Human Behavior* would not have been possible without the remarkable generosity of the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation. Facing History recognizes its invaluable contribution to the organization and owes them a tremendous amount of gratitude for their support.

In addition, a resource of this magnitude is achievable only through the efforts of a large collaborative team. With that sentiment in mind, the entire Facing History staff is to be recognized for their talent and contributions to this project. In particular, we acknowledge the research and writing of Margot Stern Strom, leader of Facing History & Ourselves for nearly 40 years, and Phyllis Goldstein, our senior writer for 25 years, for providing the intellectual foundation for the book. We are immensely grateful for the wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration they provided on this project and over the course of their careers.

Daniel Sigward was the primary writer and editor, assisted by Marty Sleeper, Laura Tavares, and Jocelyn Stanton, who each wrote and edited sections of the book. Along the way, a variety of staff members also served as important editorial and administrative advisors: Marc Skvirsky, Adam Strom, Michael Durney, Doc Miller, Mary Johnson, Roger Brooks, Milton Reynolds, and Kevin Feinberg. Tracy O'Brien, Eva Radding, Madison Reynolds, and Kate Boylan in the Facing History library provided key guidance throughout the research process and ensured that the resources we needed were on hand.

This book and its digital counterparts were developed under the direction of Brooke Harvey. They were produced under the supervision of Catherine O'Keefe, with support from production team members Anika Bachhuber, Alissa Parra, and Samantha Landry. The accompanying website ([facinghistory.org/hhb](http://facinghistory.org/hhb)) would not have been possible without the knowledge, technical skills, and diligence of April Osheroff-Lambert, Ariel Perry, Erin Tackney, and Christopher Mallon. Under Adam Strom's leadership, Alexia Prichard and Rob Tokanel created dozens of short documentary films that complement the examination of history and human behavior in this resource.

We are fortunate and thankful to have received the guidance of leading scholars in the history of the Holocaust, civic participation, and the social sciences. We would like to thank Michael Berenbaum, Paul Bookbinder, Danielle Christmas, Lawrence Langer, Peter Levine, Barry Trachtenberg, and Waitman Wade Beorn for reviewing drafts of the manuscript. Special thanks go to Doris Bergen, Stephanie Corazza, Ryan Masters, and Timothy Langille, whose insight and support ensured that this book represents historical scholarship of the highest quality.



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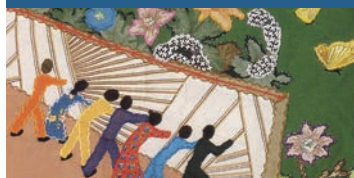
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# Get Started

## Teaching the Holocaust to Help Us Understand Ourselves and Our World

*Holocaust and Human Behavior* leads students through an examination of the catastrophic period in the twentieth century when Nazi Germany murdered six million Jews and millions of other civilians, in the midst of the most destructive war in human history.

Following Facing History's unique scope and sequence, the book also takes students on a parallel journey through an exploration of the universal themes inherent in a study of the Holocaust that raise profound questions about human behavior.

By focusing on the choices of individuals who experienced this history as victims, witnesses, collaborators, rescuers, and perpetrators, students come to recognize our shared humanity—which, according to historian Doris Bergen, helps us to see the Holocaust not just as part of European or Jewish history but as “an event in *human* history,” confirming the relevance of this history in our lives and our world today.<sup>1</sup>

This approach helps students make connections between history and the consequences of our actions and beliefs today—between history and how we as individuals make distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil.

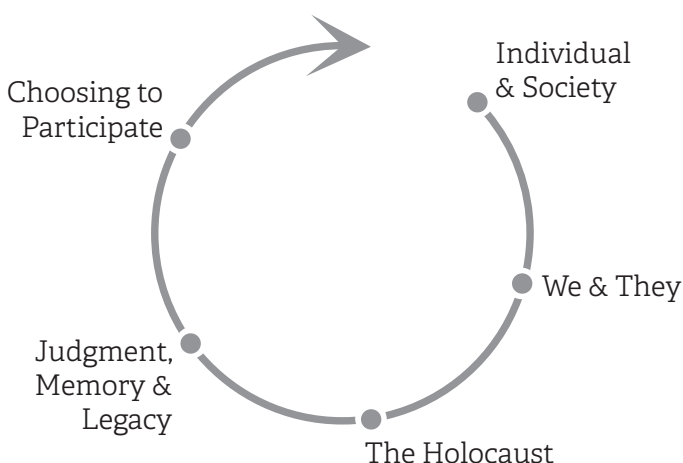
As students examine the steps that led to the Holocaust, they discover that history is not inevitable; it is the result of our individual and collective decisions. They come to realize that there are no easy answers to the complex problems of racism, antisemitism, hatred, and violence, no quick fixes for social injustices, and no simple solutions to moral dilemmas. After studying Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, one Facing History student wrote, “It has made me more aware—not only of what happened in the past but also what is happening today, now, in the world and in me.”

As theologian Eva Fleischner explains, learning about this history can change each of us: “The more we come to know about the Holocaust, how it came about, how it was carried out . . . the greater the possibility that we will become sensitized to inhumanity and suffering whenever they occur.”<sup>2</sup>

This crucial sensitization can help students develop the patience and commitment that is required for meaningful change. As another Facing History student wrote: “The more we learn about why and how people behave the way they do, the more likely we are to become involved and find our own solutions.”

## The Facing History Scope and Sequence

This book is organized according to Facing History’s scope and sequence, which follows a specific progression of themes designed to promote students’ historical understanding, critical thinking, and social-emotional learning.



### 1. Individual & Society

Students consider three questions—Who am I? Who are you? Who are we?—and how our answers affect our thoughts and actions toward ourselves and others. They examine how our answers to those questions are influenced by the categories and labels we learn from the society we live in. The ideas about human behavior and decision making that students encounter in this part of the journey serve as a foundation for analyzing the historical case study later.

### 2. We & They

Students examine the ways that humans so often create “in” groups and “out” groups and the sometimes profound consequences of creating those groups. In this part of the journey, students explore how and why important ideas about human similarities and differences—such as race, religion, and nation—have greatly influenced the way many societies have defined their membership in the past several centuries.

### 3. The Holocaust

Students dive deeply into the historical case study about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, practicing historical thinking skills while finding links to the universal themes of human behavior they examined in the previous stages of the journey. The case study invites students to examine the idea of democracy and what is essential to support and sustain it. This study

also challenges students to think about the choices available to individuals in times of crisis and the factors that influence their decision making. The dramatic and sometimes painful stories told in this part of the journey require students to respond to history not just with their intellects but also with their hearts.

#### 4. Judgment, Memory & Legacy

Students examine what happened after the Holocaust. They consider complicated questions: Who is responsible, and how can they be held accountable? Is justice possible? Can a society torn apart by war and genocide find healing and reconciliation? But the questions extend beyond the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and reach into our lives today: What have we learned from this history? How should it be remembered? Can we prevent genocide, mass murder, and other atrocities from occurring again?

#### 5. Choosing to Participate

While the first step investigates the ways society influences the individual, this last step explores the many ways in which individuals can influence society. This part of the journey provides examples of people who have chosen to speak out or take action to strengthen their communities or their countries. These stories encourage students to think about the ways we can participate in the world around us as caring, thoughtful citizens, and they prompt reflection on the values and actions that will help with the enormous job of bringing about a more humane, just, and compassionate world.

### Using This Book

*Holocaust and Human Behavior* is the flagship title in Facing History's collection of resources about the Holocaust and other episodes of genocide and mass violence. Comprised of primary sources, eyewitness testimonies, personal reflections, poetry, photographs, and maps, and with links to short documentary films and survivor testimonies, the book offers a continuous reading and learning experience that builds as the book progresses. Important themes and concepts are introduced early and then built upon and reinforced in later readings and videos. But while the book may be read sequentially, the number of resources offered here means that most teachers will need to select a smaller number for their classrooms that best support their goals, meet the needs and interests of their students, and fit within the time they have available.

The book includes three different types of questions to help guide student reflection:

- **Essential questions** introduce and connect each chapter's specific focus to the big ideas and universal themes that are woven throughout the book.

### On the Web



Streaming videos that include documentaries and eyewitness testimony to deepen students' understanding of the Holocaust



Resources to connect your study of the Holocaust to related histories and ideas



Activities that model how to share key resources with your students



Teaching Toolboxes, which include unit outlines and a playlist tool to organize the resources you need



Teaching Strategies for fostering a reflective classroom community and encouraging critical thinking through discussion, contracting, and journaling

Visit [facinghistory.org/hhb](https://facinghistory.org/hhb)

- **Connection questions** follow each reading and help students comprehend the text, illuminate important themes, and find connections between this history, their own lives, and the world today.
- **Analysis and reflection questions** conclude each chapter by reinforcing the connections between the chapter's specific topics and universal themes.

## Teaching Emotionally Challenging Content

While many teachers want their students to engage emotionally with the history of the Holocaust, this book, like any examination of this history, includes descriptions and firsthand accounts that some students may find emotionally disturbing. Teachers should select resources from this book that are most appropriate for the intellectual and emotional needs of their students.

It is difficult to predict how students will respond to such challenging material. One student may respond with emotion to a particular reading, while others may not find it powerful in the same way. In addition, different people demonstrate emotion in different ways. Some students will be silent. Some may laugh. Some may not want to talk. Some may take days to process difficult stories. For some, a particular firsthand account may be incomprehensible; for others, it may be familiar.

We urge teachers to create space for students to have a range of reactions and emotions. This might include time for silent reflection or writing in journals, as well as structured discussions to help students process content together. Some students will not want to share their reactions to emotionally disturbing content in class, and teachers should respect that in class discussions. For their learning and emotional growth, it is crucial to allow for a variety of responses, or none at all, from students to emotionally challenging content.

It is also important to note that our experience suggests that it is often problematic to use graphic images and films or to attempt to use simulations to help students understand aspects of this history. Such resources and activities can traumatize some students, desensitize others, or trivialize the history.

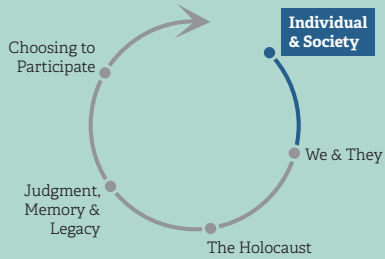
1. Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 1.

2. Eva Fleischner, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav Publishing Co., 1974), 228.





## Chapter 1



Getty Images / Jo McRyan

# The Individual and Society



## Overview

Who am I? Who are you? Who are we? How we answer these questions shapes how we think about, and how we behave toward, ourselves and others. And our answers to those questions are influenced by the society we live in. This chapter explores the relationship between the individual and society, and how that relationship affects the choices we make.



### Essential Questions

- What is the relationship between the individual and society?
- What factors shape our identities? What parts of our identities do we choose for ourselves? What parts are determined for us by others, by society, or by chance?
- What dilemmas arise when others view us differently than we view ourselves?
- How do our identities influence our choices and the choices available to us?

We begin to learn our culture—the ways of our society—just after birth. That process is called socialization, and it involves far more than schooling. Our culture shapes the way we work and play, and it makes a difference in how we view ourselves and others. It affects our values—what we consider right and wrong. This is how the society we live in influences our choices. But our choices can also influence others and ultimately help shape our society.

Imagine that you encounter a stranger walking down the street. How might you describe the person? What labels would you use? We know that every person is different from any other in countless ways, yet when we encounter others we often rely on generalizations to describe them. “It’s a natural tendency,” says psychologist Deborah Tannen. “We must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn’t be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn’t predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are.”<sup>1</sup>

Our society—through its particular culture, customs, institutions, and more—provides us with the labels we use to categorize the people we encounter. These labels are based on beliefs about race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic class, and more. Sometimes our beliefs about these categories are so strong that they prevent us from seeing the unique identities of others. Sometimes these beliefs also make us feel suspicion, fear, or hatred toward some members of our society. Other times, especially when we are able to get to know a person, we are able to see past labels and, perhaps, find common ground.

The stories in this chapter explore some of the dilemmas people face as they establish themselves both as individuals and as members of a group, and as they define themselves and are defined by others. As the first step in the Facing History & Ourselves journey, this chapter introduces ideas about human behavior and decision making that will serve as a foundation for examining the historical case study in the chapters that follow. Teachers are encouraged to select the readings that match their objectives and the interests and needs of their students.

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 16.

## Reading 1

# The Bear That Wasn't

No two people are exactly alike. Each of us is an individual with unique talents, interests, and values. Often, others do not recognize what is so distinct about us and instead attach labels to us that may differ from those we would choose for ourselves. Sometimes the labels others attach to us influence the way we think about our own identity. In the book *The Bear That Wasn't*, author Frank Tashlin uses words and pictures to describe that process.



Once upon a time, in fact it was on a Tuesday, the Bear stood at the edge of a great forest and gazed up at the sky. Away up high, he saw a flock of geese flying south . . .

He knew when the geese flew south and the leaves fell from the trees, that winter would soon be here and snow would cover the forest. It was time to go into a cave and hibernate.

And that was just what he did.

Not long afterward, in fact it was on a Wednesday, men came . . . lots of men with steamshovels and saws and tractors and axes . . .

They worked, and worked, and worked, and finally they built a great, big, huge, factory, right OVER the TOP of the sleeping Bear's cave.

The factory operated all through the cold winter.

And then it was SPRING again.

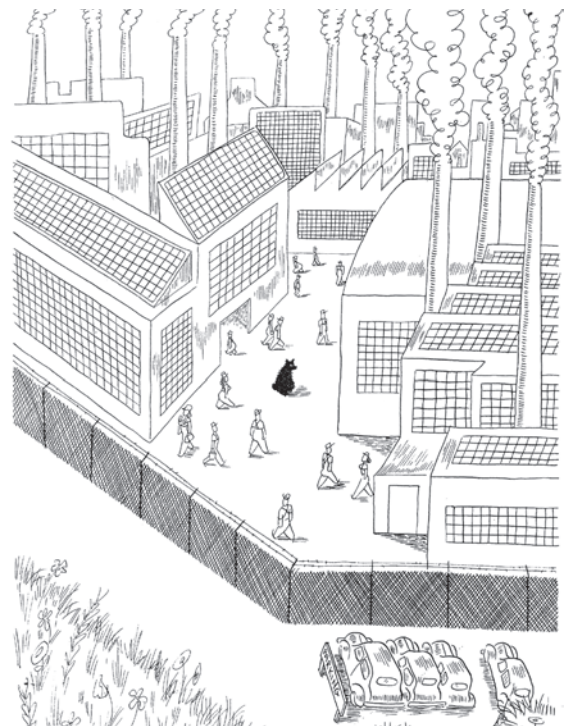
Deep down under one of the factory buildings the Bear awoke. He blinked his eyes and yawned . . .

He walked up the stairs to the entrance and stepped out into the bright spring sunshine. His eyes were only half opened, as he was still very sleepy.

His eyes didn't stay half opened long. They suddenly POPPED wide apart. He looked straight ahead. *Where was the forest? Where was the grass? Where were the trees? Where were the flowers?*

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

Where was he? Things looked so strange. He didn't know where he was . . .



LESSON

Teach **The Complexity of Identity**  
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VIDEO

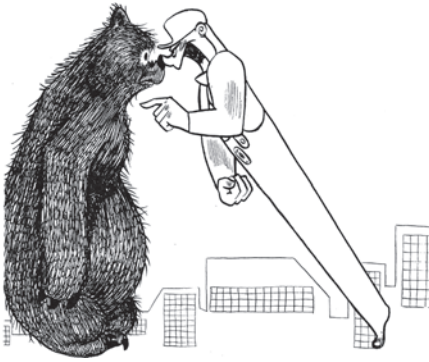
Watch **The Bear That Wasn't**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



VIDEO

Watch **A Class Divided**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)





Just then a man came out of a door.

"Hey, you get back to work," the man said. "I'm the *Foreman* and I'll report you for not working."

The Bear said, "I don't work here. I'm a Bear."

The Foreman laughed very loud. "That's a fine excuse for a man to keep from doing any work. Saying he's a bear."

The Bear said, "But, I am a Bear."

The Foreman stopped laughing. He was very mad.

"Don't try to fool me," he said. "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *General Manager*."



The General Manager was mad, too. He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *Third Vice President*."

The Bear said, "I'm sorry to hear you say that . . . You see, I am a Bear."

The Third Vice President was even madder . . .



The Second Vice President was more than mad or madder. He was furious . . .



The First Vice President yelled in rage. He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *President*."

The Bear pleaded, "This is a dreadful error, you know, because ever since I can remember, I've always been a Bear."



"Listen," the Bear told the President. "I don't work here. I'm a Bear, and please don't say I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, because the First Vice President and the Second Vice President and the Third Vice President and the General Manager and the Foreman have told me that already."

"Thank you for telling me," the President said. "I won't say it, but that's just what I think you are."

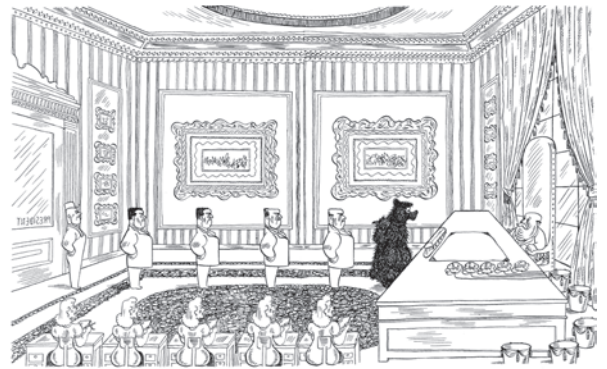
The Bear said, "I'm a Bear."

The President smiled and said, "You can't be a Bear. Bears are only in a zoo or a circus. They're never inside a factory and that's where you are; inside a factory. So how can you be a Bear?"

The Bear said, "But I am a Bear."

The President said, "Not only are you a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, but you are also very stubborn. So I'm going to prove it to you, once and for all, that you are *not* a Bear."

The Bear said, "But I *am* a Bear."



AND SO THEY ALL GOT INTO THE PRESIDENT'S CAR AND DROVE TO THE ZOO.

"Is he a *Bear*?" the President asked the zoo Bears. The zoo Bears said, "No, he isn't a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he wouldn't be outside the cage with you. He would be inside the cage with us."

The Bear said, "But I am a Bear."



... AND SO THEY ALL LEFT THE ZOO AND DROVE SIX HUNDRED MILES AWAY TO THE NEAREST CIRCUS.

"Is he a *Bear*?" the President asked the circus Bears. The circus Bears said, "No, he isn't a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he wouldn't be sitting in a grandstand seat with you. He would be wearing a little hat with a striped ribbon on it, holding on to a balloon and riding a bicycle with us."

The Bear said, "But I'm a Bear."

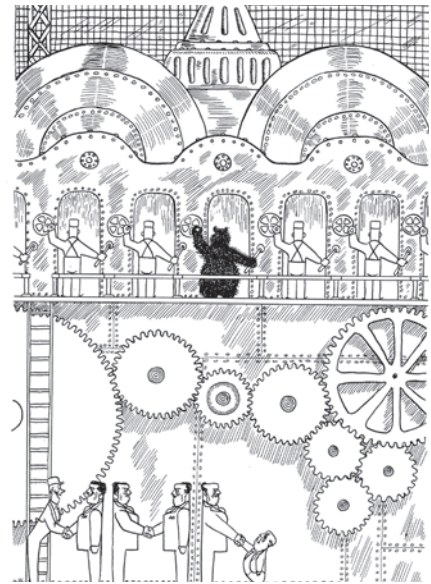
... They left the circus and drove back to the factory.



And so they put the Bear to work on a big machine with a lot of other men. The Bear worked on the big machine for many, many months.

One day a long time afterward, the factory closed down and all the workers left and went home. The Bear walked along far behind them. He was all alone, and had no place to go.

As he walked along, he happened to gaze up at the sky. Away up high, he saw a flock of geese flying south . . .



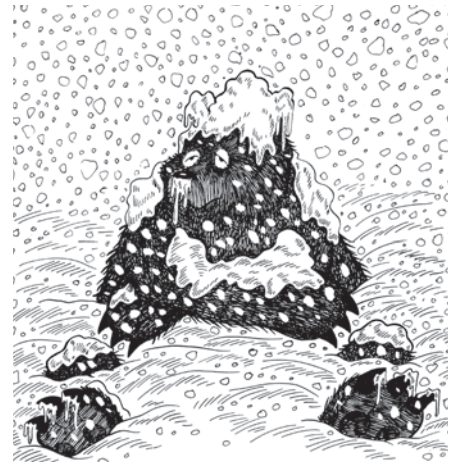
The Bear knew when the geese flew south and the leaves fell from the trees, that winter would soon be there and snow would cover the forest. It was time to go into a cave and hibernate.

So he walked over to a huge tree that had a cave hollowed out beneath its roots. He was just about to go into it, when he stopped and said, "But I CAN'T go into a cave and hibernate. I'm NOT a Bear. I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat."

So winter came. The snow fell. It covered the forest and it covered him. He sat there, shivering with cold and he said, "But I sure wish I was a Bear."

The longer he sat there the colder he became. His toes were freezing, his ears were freezing and his teeth were chattering. Icicles covered his nose and chin. He had been told so often, that he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, that he felt it must be true.

So he just sat there, because he didn't know what a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat would do, if he were freezing to death in the snow. The poor Bear was very lonely and very sad. He didn't know what to think.



Then suddenly he got up and walked through the deep snow toward the cave. Inside, it was cosy and snug. The icy wind and cold, cold snow couldn't reach him here. He felt warm all over.

He sank down on a bed of pine boughs and soon he was happily asleep and dreaming sweet dreams, just like all bears do, when they hibernate.

So even though the FOREMAN and the GENERAL MANAGER and the THIRD VICE PRESIDENT and the SECOND VICE PRESIDENT and the FIRST VICE PRESIDENT and the PRESIDENT and the ZOO BEARS and the CIRCUS BEARS had said, he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, I don't think he really believed it, do you? No, indeed, he knew he wasn't a silly man, and he wasn't a silly Bear either.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Create an identity chart (see example below) for the Bear. Which labels on the chart represent how he sees his own identity? Which ones represent how others in the story see him? When you are finished, create an identity chart for yourself.
2. Why do you think Frank Tashlin titled this story *The Bear That Wasn't*? Why didn't the factory officials recognize the Bear for what he was? Why did it become harder and harder for the Bear to maintain his identity as he moved through the bureaucracy of the factory?
3. What were the consequences for the Bear of the way others defined his identity?
4. Whose opinions and beliefs have the greatest effect on how you think about your own identity?
5. How does our need to be part of a group affect our actions? Why is it so difficult for a person to go against the group?



<sup>1</sup> Frank Tashlin, *The Bear That Wasn't* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995). Text and images reproduced by permission from Dover Publications.



## Reading 2

# The Danger of a Single Story



Teach **The Complexity of Identity**  
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LESSON

Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie describes the effects that labels can have on how we think about ourselves and others:

I'm a storyteller. And I would like to tell you a few personal stories about what I like to call "the danger of the single story." I grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria. My mother says that I started reading at the age of two, although I think four is probably close to the truth. So I was an early reader, and what I read were British and American children's books.

I was also an early writer, and when I began to write, at about the age of seven, stories in pencil with crayon illustrations that my poor mother was obligated to read, I wrote exactly the kinds of stories I was reading: All my characters were white and blue-eyed, they played in the snow, they ate apples, and they talked a lot about the weather, how lovely it was that the sun had come out. Now, this despite the fact that I lived in Nigeria. I had never been outside Nigeria. We didn't have snow, we ate mangoes, and we never talked about the weather, because there was no need to . . .

What this demonstrates, I think, is how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children. Because all I had read were books in which characters were foreign, I had become convinced that books by their very nature had to have foreigners in them and had to be about things with which I could not personally identify. Now, things changed when I discovered African books. There weren't many of them available, and they weren't quite as easy to find as the foreign books.

But because of writers like Chinua Achebe and Camara Laye, I went through a mental shift in my perception of literature. I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate, whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature. I started to write about things I recognized.

Now, I loved those American and British books I read. They stirred my imagination. They opened up new worlds for me. But the unintended consequence was that I did not know that people like me could exist in literature. So what the discovery of African writers did for me was this: It saved me from having a single story of what books are.

I come from a conventional, middle-class Nigerian family. My father was a professor. My mother was an administrator. And so we had, as was the norm, live-in domestic help, who would often come from nearby rural villages. So, the year I turned eight, we got a new house boy. His name was Fide. The only thing my mother told us about him was that his family was very poor. My mother sent yams and rice, and



our old clothes, to his family. And when I didn't finish my dinner, my mother would say, "Finish your food! Don't you know? People like Fide's family have nothing." So I felt enormous pity for Fide's family.

Then one Saturday, we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them.

Years later, I thought about this when I left Nigeria to go to university in the United States. I was 19. My American roommate was shocked by me. She asked where I had learned to speak English so well, and was confused when I said that Nigeria happened to have English as its official language. She asked if she could listen to what she called my "tribal music," and was consequently very disappointed when I produced my tape of Mariah Carey. She assumed that I did not know how to use a stove.

What struck me was this: She had felt sorry for me even before she saw me. Her default position toward me, as an African, was a kind of patronizing, well-meaning pity. My roommate had a single story of Africa: a single story of catastrophe. In this single story, there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in any way, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals.

I must say that before I went to the U.S., I didn't consciously identify as African. But in the U.S., whenever Africa came up, people turned to me. Never mind that I knew nothing about places like Namibia. But I did come to embrace this new identity, and in many ways I think of myself now as African . . .

So, after I had spent some years in the U.S. as an African, I began to understand my roommate's response to me. If I had not grown up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was a place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner. I would see Africans in the same way that I, as a child, had seen Fide's family . . .

And so, I began to realize that my American roommate must have throughout her life seen and heard different versions of this single story . . .

But I must quickly add that I too am just as guilty in the question of the single story. A few years ago, I visited Mexico from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, immigration became synonymous with Mexicans. There were endless stories of Mexicans as people who were fleecing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in Guadalajara, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight surprise. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized

that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself. So that is how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.

It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo [a language spoken in Nigeria] word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest way to do it is to tell their story and to start with, "secondly." Start the story with the arrows of the Native Americans, and not with the arrival of the British, and you have an entirely different story. Start the story with the failure of the African state, and not with the colonial creation of the African state, and you have an entirely different story . . .

When I learned, some years ago, that writers were expected to have had really unhappy childhoods to be successful, I began to think about how I could invent horrible things my parents had done to me. But the truth is that I had a very happy childhood, full of laughter and love, in a very close-knit family.

But I also had grandfathers who died in refugee camps. My cousin Polle died because he could not get adequate healthcare. One of my closest friends, Okoloma, died in a plane crash because our fire trucks did not have water. I grew up under repressive military governments that devalued education, so that sometimes, my parents were not paid their salaries. And so, as a child, I saw jam disappear from the breakfast table, then margarine disappeared, then bread became too expensive, then milk became rationed. And most of all, a kind of normalized political fear invaded our lives.

All of these stories make me who I am. But to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me. The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Of course, Africa is a continent full of catastrophes: There are immense ones, such as the horrific rapes in Congo and depressing ones, such as the fact that 5,000 people apply for one job vacancy in Nigeria. But there are other stories that are not about catastrophe, and it is very important, it is just as important, to talk about them.

I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

So what if before my Mexican trip, I had followed the immigration debate from both sides, the U.S. and the Mexican? What if my mother had told us that Fide's family was poor and hardworking? What if we had an African television network that broadcast diverse African stories all over the world? What the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe calls "a balance of stories."

What if my roommate knew about my Nigerian publisher, Muhtar Bakare, a remarkable man who left his job in a bank to follow his dream and start a publishing house? Now, the conventional wisdom was that Nigerians don't read literature. He disagreed. He felt that people who could read, would read, if you made literature affordable and available to them . . .

Now, what if my roommate knew about my friend Fumi Onda, a fearless woman who hosts a TV show in Lagos, and is determined to tell the stories that we prefer to forget? What if my roommate knew about the heart procedure that was performed in the Lagos hospital last week? What if my roommate knew about contemporary Nigerian music, talented people singing in English and Pidgin, and Igbo and Yoruba and Ijo, mixing influences from Jay-Z to Fela to Bob Marley to their grandfathers[?]

What if my roommate knew about the female lawyer who recently went to court in Nigeria to challenge a ridiculous law that required women to get their husband's consent before renewing their passports? What if my roommate knew about Nollywood, full of innovative people making films despite great technical odds, films so popular that they really are the best example of Nigerians consuming what they produce? What if my roommate knew about my wonderfully ambitious hair braider, who has just started her own business selling hair extensions? Or about the millions of other Nigerians who start businesses and sometimes fail, but continue to nurse ambition?

Every time I am home I am confronted with the usual sources of irritation for most Nigerians: our failed infrastructure, our failed government, but also by the incredible resilience of people who thrive despite the government, rather than because of it. I teach writing workshops in Lagos every summer, and it is amazing to me how many people apply, how many people are eager to write, to tell stories . . .

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.

The American writer Alice Walker wrote this about her Southern relatives who had moved to the North. She introduced them to a book about the Southern life that they had left behind. "They sat around, reading the book themselves, listening to me read the book, and a kind of paradise was regained." I would like to end with this thought: That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," TED video (filmed July 2009, posted October 2009), 18:49, accessed March 28, 2016, [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en).

## Connection Questions

1. Create an identity chart for Chimamanda Adichie. Which labels on the chart represent how she sees her own identity? Which ones represent how some others view her?
2. What does Adichie mean by a "single story"? What examples does she give? Why does she believe "single stories" are dangerous?
3. Is there a single story that others often use to define you? Can you think of other examples of "single stories" that may be part of your own worldview? Where do those "single stories" come from? How can we find a "balance of stories"?
4. Adichie herself admits to sometimes defining others with a single story. Why is it that people sometimes make the same mistakes that they so easily see others making?

## Reading 3

# Names and Identity

According to American author Ralph Ellison, “It is through our names that we first place ourselves in the world. Our names, being the gift of others, must be made our own.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when we meet someone new, our name is usually the first piece of information about ourselves that we share. What does our name reveal to others about our identity?

At the age of seven, Jennifer Wang came to the United States from Beijing, China, with her family. At 17, she wrote an essay called “Orientation Day” that explores the relationship between her name and her identity. It is a response to a familiar experience: introducing oneself to a group of strangers. Wang writes, in part:

Something about myself? How do I summarize, in thirty seconds, everything which adds up and equals a neat little bundle called Me? How do I present myself in a user-friendly format, complete with “Help” buttons and batteries? Who am I, and why do I matter to any of you?

First of all, I am a girl who wandered the aisles of Toys “R” Us for two hours, hunting in vain for a doll with a yellowish skin tone. I am a girl who sat on the cold bathroom floor at seven in the morning, cutting out the eyes of Caucasian models in magazines, trying to fit them on my face . . .

While I was growing up, I did not understand what it meant to be “Chinese” or “American.” Do these terms link only to citizenship? Do they suggest that people fit the profile of either “typical Chinese” or “typical Americans”? And who or what determines when a person starts feeling American, and stops feeling Chinese?

I eventually shunned the Asian crowds. And I hated Chinatown . . . I hated the noise, the crush of bodies, the yells of mothers to fathers to children to uncles to aunts to cousins . . . I hated not understanding their language in depth—the language of my ancestors, which was also supposed to be mine to mold and master.

I am still not a citizen of the United States of America, this great nation, which is hailed as the destination for generations of people, the promised land for millions . . . I stare blankly at my friends when they mention the 1980s or share stories of their parents as hippies. And I hate baseball.

The question lingers: Am I Chinese? Am I American? Or am I some unholy mixture of both, doomed to stay torn between the two?

I don’t know if I’ll ever find the answers. Meanwhile, it’s my turn to introduce myself . . .

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Ellison, “Hidden Name and Complex Fate: A Writer’s Experience in the United States,” in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, ed. John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 192.

\* In addition to its dictionary definition, *chink* is also an offensive, derogatory term for a person of Chinese descent.

I stand up and say, "My name is Jennifer Wang," and then I sit back down. There are no other words that define me as well as those do. No others show me being stretched between two very different cultures and places—the "Jennifer" clashing with the "Wang," the "Wang" fighting with the "Jennifer."<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What words or phrases does Jennifer Wang use to describe her identity? What words or phrases does she use to describe her attitude toward her identity?
2. What does Wang mean when she says "the 'Jennifer' clashing with the 'Wang,' the 'Wang' fighting with the 'Jennifer'"? What examples does she provide to support this description of her name?
3. What might your name tell others about your identity? What stories about you or your family might your name reflect? What about your identity is simplified, hidden, or confused by your name?

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Wang, "Orientation Day," in *YELL-Oh Girls! Emerging Voices Explore Culture, Identity, and Growing Up Asian American*, ed. Vickie Nam (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 199–200.



## Reading 4

# Finding One's Voice

How much of our identities can we define for ourselves, and how much is determined by other influences, such as our families, our culture, and the circumstances of our lives? Writer Julius Lester defied other people's expectations on his journey toward understanding and defining his identity. Here, he reflects on the way violence and humiliation affected his childhood:

I grew up in the forties and fifties in Kansas City, Kansas, and Nashville, Tennessee, with summers spent in Arkansas. The forties and fifties were not pleasant times for blacks and I am offended by white people who get nostalgic for the fifties. I have no nostalgia for segregation, for the "No Colored Allowed" signs covering the landscape like litter on the smooth, green grass of a park, I have no nostalgia for a time when I endangered my life if, while downtown shopping with my parents, I raised my eyes and accidentally met the eyes of a white woman. Black men and boys were lynched for this during my childhood and adolescence.<sup>1</sup>

Lester describes the way he survived those years as follows:

I grew up in a violent world. Segregation was a deathly spiritual violence, not only in its many restrictions on where we could live, eat, go to school, and go after dark. There was also the constant threat of physical death if you looked at a white man in what he considered the wrong way or if he didn't like your attitude. There was also the physical violence of my community . . . What I have realized is that on those nights I lay in bed reading westerns and detective novels, I was attempting to neutralize and withstand the violence that was so much a part of my dailiness. In westerns and mysteries I found a kind of mirror in which one element of my world—violence—was isolated and made less harmful to me.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, Lester found his voice in a book. He explains:

One of the pivotal experiences of my life came when I was eighteen. I wandered into a bookstore in downtown Nashville one frosted, gray day in late autumn aware that I was looking for something: I was looking for myself, and I generally find myself while wandering through a bookstore, looking at books until I find the one that is calling me. On this particular day I wandered for quite a while until I picked up a paperback with the word *Haiku* on the cover. What is that? I wondered. I opened the book and read,

On a withered branch  
a crow has settled —  
autumn nightfall.

1 Julius Lester, *Falling Pieces of the Broken Sky* (New York: Arcade, 1990), 69.

2 Ibid., 71–73.

I trembled and turned the pages hastily until my eyes stopped on these words:

A giant firefly;  
that way, this way, that way, this —  
and it passes by.

I read more of the brief poems, these voices from seventeenth-century Japan, and I knew: This is my voice. This simplicity, this directness, this way of using words to direct the soul to silence and beyond. This is my voice! I exulted inside. Then I stopped. How could I, a little colored kid from Nashville, Tennessee—and that is all I knew myself to be in those days like perpetual death knells—how could I be feeling that something written in seventeenth-century Japan could be my voice?

I almost put the book back, but that inner prompting which had led me to it would not allow such an act of self-betrayal. I bought the book and began writing haiku, and the study of haiku led to the study of Zen Buddhism, which led to the study of flower arranging, and I suspect I am still following the path that opened to me on that day when I was eighteen, though I no longer write haiku.

I eventually understood that it made perfect sense for a little colored kid from Nashville, Tennessee, to recognize his voice in seventeenth-century Japanese poetry. Who we are by the sociological and political definitions of society has little to do with who we are.

In the quiet and stillness that surrounds us when we read a book, we are known to ourselves in ways we are not when we are with people. We enter a relationship of intimacy with the writer, and if the writer has written truly and if we give ourselves over to what is written, we are given the gift of ourselves in ways that surprise and catch the soul off guard.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What barriers did society place in the way of Julius Lester's becoming the kind of person he wanted to be? How did he overcome these barriers?
2. When Lester found a book of haiku in the bookstore, why did he almost put it back?
3. Lester writes that when he found the book of haiku, "I knew: This is my voice." Have you ever found your voice in a work of art, music, literature, or film?

<sup>3</sup> Lester, *Falling Pieces of the Broken Sky*, 71–73.

## Reading 5

# The Eye of the Beholder

*The Twilight Zone*, a popular TV show that ran from 1959 to 1965, blended science fiction with fantasy and horror. The episodes often had familiar settings and featured characters that seemed quite ordinary. But the stories were far from ordinary because they took place in an imaginary world just beyond our own—"the twilight zone." In creating the series, producer and writer Rod Serling hoped these stories would prompt thoughtful discussions of social issues. "Eye of the Beholder," one of Serling's most provocative episodes, probes our ideas about what is "normal" and how those ideas influence the way we think about ourselves and treat others.

The following paragraphs provide a synopsis of the story:

Meet the patient in room 307, Janet Tyler. A rigid mask of gauze bandages covers her face. Only her voice and her hands seem alive as she pleads with a nurse to describe the weather, the sky, the daylight, clouds—none of which she can see. The nurse, visible only by her hands, answers kindly but briefly.

"When will they take the bandages off?" Janet asks urgently. "How much longer?"

"When they decide they can fix your face," the nurse replies.

"It's pretty bad, isn't it? Ever since I was little, people have turned away when they looked at me. . . . The very first thing I can remember is another little child screaming when she saw me. I never wanted to be beautiful, to look like a painting. I just wanted people not to turn away."

With a consoling pat, the nurse moves away.

A doctor enters Janet Tyler's room. We see only his hands, his shadow, his back as he looks out a window. Janet questions him with a mixture of fear and hope. When will he remove the bandages? Will her face be normal?

The doctor tries to comfort her. His voice is gentle. Perhaps this time the treatment will be successful. But he also issues a warning. He reminds her that she has had treatment after treatment—eleven in all. That is the limit. If this effort fails, she can have no more.

"Each of us is afforded as much opportunity as possible to fit in with society," he says. "In your case, think of the time and effort the state has expended, to make you look—"

"To look like what, doctor?"

"Well, to look normal, the way you'd like to look. . . . You know, there are many others who share your misfortune, who look much as you do. One of the alternatives,

just in case the treatment is not successful, is to allow you to move into a special area in which people of your kind have congregated."

Janet twists away from the doctor. "People of my kind? Congregated? You mean segregated! You mean imprisoned! You are talking about a ghetto—a ghetto for freaks!" Her voice rises in a crescendo of anger.

"Miss Tyler!" the doctor remonstrates sharply. "You're not being rational. You know you couldn't live any kind of life among normal people." His words are harsh, but his voice is sad and patient.

Janet refuses to be mollified. "Who are these normal people?" she asks accusingly. "Who decides what is normal? Who is this state that makes these rules? The state is not God! The state does not have the right to make ugliness a crime. . . . Please," she begs. "Please take off the bandages. Please take them off! Please help me."

Reluctantly the doctor agrees, and the staff prepares for the removal. Bit by bit, he peels the gauze away. She sees at first only the light, then the shadowy forms of the doctor and nurses. As the last strip of gauze comes off, the doctor and nurses draw back in dismay. "No change!" the doctor exclaims. "No change at all!"

Janet Tyler gasps and raises her face. She has wide-set eyes, delicate brows, fine skin, and regular features, framed by wavy blonde hair. She begins to sob and struggle away from the nurses.

"Turn on the lights," the doctor orders. "Needle, please!"

As the lights come on, the doctor and nurses are clearly visible for the first time. Piglike snouts dominate their lopsided, misshapen features. Their mouths are twisted, their jowls sag.

Janet runs through the hospital in a panic, pursued by nurses and orderlies. She passes other staff and patients. Each face is a little different but all share the same basic pattern—snouts, jowls, and all. She flings open a door and freezes in sudden shock. The doctor and another man are in this room. She sinks down by a chair and hides her face in fear.

"Miss Tyler, Miss Tyler, don't be afraid," the doctor urges. "He's only a representative of the group you are going to live with. He won't hurt you. . . . Miss Tyler, this is Walter Smith."

Walter Smith steps forward, and Janet Tyler cringes away. He too has regular features, lit by a friendly smile. A stray lock of dark hair curls over his forehead. "We have a lovely village and wonderful people," he tells Janet. "In a little while, a very little while, you'll feel a sense of great belonging."

She looks at his face. "Why do we have to look like this?" she murmurs.

"I don't know, I really don't," he replies with sadness. "But there is a very old saying—beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Try to think of that, Miss Tyler. Say it over and over to yourself. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

He holds out his hand to her. Slowly, hesitantly, she takes it, and they walk away together, through a corridor lined with pig-faced spectators.<sup>1</sup>

1 Marc Scott Zicree, *The Twilight Zone Companion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 144–45.

## Connection Questions

1. What is the “twist” in this episode of *The Twilight Zone*? What might creator Rod Serling be trying to communicate with this unexpected twist in the story?
2. Where do we get our ideas about beauty? How do we learn what is normal?
3. How would you adapt “Eye of the Beholder” to today’s world? What changes would you make in the story?

## Reading 6

# Gender and Identity

Frederic J. Brown / Staff / Getty Images



**Schoolchildren dressed in Halloween costumes: Spiderman for boys and Hello Kitty for girls.**

Sometimes our assumptions and expectations about others prevent us from seeing who they really are as individuals. Some of the most powerful expectations about people that we learn from our culture are about gender. A person's sex often leads us to make assumptions about that person's identity. Martha Minow, a legal scholar, explains:

Of course, there are "real differences" in the world; each person differs in countless ways from each other person. But when we simplify and sort, we focus on some traits rather than others, and we assign consequences to the presence and absence of the traits we make

significant. We ask, "What's the new baby?"—and we expect as an answer, boy or girl. That answer, for most of history, has spelled consequences for the roles and opportunities available to that individual.<sup>1</sup>

American author Lori Duron and her husband, Matt, have two children, both boys. She writes about what happened the first time her younger son, C.J., got a Barbie doll:

For days after C.J. discovered her, Barbie never left his side. When I'd do a final bed check at night before I retired for the evening to watch reality television and sneak chocolate when no one was looking, I'd see his full head of auburn hair sticking out above his covers. Next to him there would be a tiny tuft of blonde hair sticking out as well.

The next time we were at Target near the toy aisle—which I've always tried to pass at warp speed so the kids don't notice and beg me to buy them something—C.J. wanted to see "Barbie stuff." I led him to the appropriate aisle and he stood there transfixed, not touching a thing, just taking it all in. He was so overwhelmed that he didn't ask to buy a single thing. He finally walked away from the aisle speechless, as if he had just seen something so magical and majestic that he needed time to process it.

He had, that day, discovered the pink aisles of the toy department. We had never been down those aisles; we had only frequented the blue aisles, when we ventured down the toy aisles at all. As far as C.J. was concerned, I had been hiding half the world from him.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 3.



I felt bad about that, like I had deprived him because of my assumptions and expectations that he was a boy and boys liked boy things. Matt and I noticed that C.J. didn't really like any of the toys we provided for him, which were all handed down from his brother. We noticed that C.J. didn't go through the normal boy toy addictions that Chase [C.J.'s older brother] had gone through: he couldn't care less about balls, cars, dinosaurs, superheroes, The Wiggles, Bob the Builder, or Thomas the Tank Engine. What did he like to play with? We didn't worry ourselves much about finding the answer (a case of the second-born child not getting fussed over quite like the first-born); we trusted that in time something would draw him in. Which it did. It just wasn't at all what we were expecting.

At about the eighteen- to twenty-four-month mark of a child's life, the gender-neutral toys disappear and toys that are marketed specifically to boys or to girls take over. We didn't realize it until later, but that divide in the toy world and our house being filled with only boy toys left C.J. a little lost at playtime. We and the rest of society had been pushing masculine stuff on him and enforcing traditional gender norms, when all he wanted was to brush long blonde hair and dress, undress, and re-dress Barbie. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on C.J.'s identity, Duron concludes:

On the gender-variation spectrum of super-macho-masculine on the left all the way to super-girly-feminine on the right, C.J. slides fluidly in the middle; he's neither all pink nor all blue. He's a muddled mess or a rainbow creation, depending on how you look at it. Matt and I have decided to see the rainbow, not the muddle. But we didn't always see it that way.

Initially, the sight of our son playing with girl toys or wearing girl clothes made our chests tighten, forged a lump in our throats, and, at times, made us want to hide him. There was anger, anxiety, and fear. We've evolved as parents as our younger son has evolved into a fascinating, vibrant person who is creative with gender. Sometimes, when I think of how we behaved as parents . . . I'm ashamed and embarrassed.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What are the differences between the toys in the pink aisle and the toys in the blue aisle? What assumptions do the toys in those aisles reflect about what it means to be a boy or a girl?
2. How do you explain the anxiety, anger, and fear Duron felt when C.J. started playing with "girl toys"? How did her feelings change?
3. What are some other stereotypes about gender in your world? How do you respond to the assumptions people make about you because of your gender? To what extent do you accept or reject those assumptions?

<sup>2</sup> Lori Duron, *Raising My Rainbow: Adventures in Raising a Fabulous, Gender Creative Son* (New York: Broadway Books, 2013), 9–10.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

## Reading 7

# Defining Race

Imagine that you apply for a copy of your birth certificate, and when you receive it you discover that it lists your “race” as something other than what you and everyone else have always considered it to be. You are white and it says you are Black, or you are Black and it says you are white. That is exactly what happened to Susie Guillory Phipps, a woman who had always considered herself white, as did almost everyone she met. Sociologist Allan G. Johnson explains:

She had twice married white men, and her family album was filled with pictures of blue-eyed, white ancestors. The state of Louisiana, however, defined her as “colored.”

When she protested to state authorities, they carefully traced her ancestry back 222 years, and found that although her great-great-great-great grandfather was white, her great-great-great-great grandmother was black. Under Louisiana law, anyone whose ancestry was at least 3 percent black was considered black. Thus, even with an ancestry 97 percent white, the state defined her as black.

Susie Phipps spent \$20,000 to force Louisiana to change her birth certificate, and in 1983 Louisiana repealed the law. Why did she go to such expense? Beyond the obvious shock to her identity, there are larger issues. Why does the state have a formula for officially deciding what each person’s race is? Why would a tiny percentage of black ancestry cause her to be considered black, while an overwhelmingly white ancestry could not mean she is white?

The key lies in the word “mean” in the previous sentence, for . . . what things objectively are is often less significant to human beings than what things mean in cultural frameworks of beliefs, values, and attitudes.”<sup>1</sup>

Susie Phipps’s dilemma had little to do with biology or genetics and everything to do with the meaning the state of Louisiana attached to the word *race*. The way race is defined in the United States has often been in flux. Writer Bonnie Tsui explains:

In 1870, mixed-race American Indians living on reservations were counted as Indians, but if they lived in white communities they were counted as whites. Who was “white” evolved over time: From the 1870s to 1930s, a parade of court rulings pondered the “whiteness” of Asian immigrants from China, Japan and India, often changing definitions by the ruling in order to exclude yet another group from citizenship. When mixed-race people became more prevalent, things got murkier still. Who the U.S. Census Bureau designated “colored” or “black” varied, too, before

<sup>1</sup> Allan G. Johnson, *Human Arrangements: An Introduction to Sociology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 353.

and after slavery, and at times including subcategories for people of mixed race, all details often left up to the whims of the census taker. In 1930, nativist lobbyists succeeded in getting Mexicans officially labeled nonwhite on the census; up until then, they were considered white and allowed citizenship. By 1940, international political pressure had reversed the decision. It wasn't until 2000 that the Census Bureau started letting people choose more than one race category to describe themselves, and it still only recognizes five standard racial categories: white, black/African-American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Like the Bear in *The Bear That Wasn't*, Susie Phipps was told that she wasn't who she thought she was. What did she think? What was she told? By whom?
2. Why did Phipps go to such trouble and expense to change a word on her birth certificate? Why do you think she wanted the government to agree with her personal understanding?
3. What does Susie Phipps's story reveal about the concept of race?
4. Who defines race? How does Bonnie Tsui help you understand why it matters?

<sup>2</sup> Bonnie Tsui, "Choose Your Own Identity," *New York Times*, December 14, 2015.

## Reading 8

# The Social Reality of Race

Race is a category that we often use to describe and explain many of the differences between people. Yet the criteria used to categorize individuals as belonging to one race or another are different in different societies and cultures. This is what American Barbara Katz Rothman discovered when her family spent six months in the Netherlands. Fearful that her then five-year-old daughter Victoria would be “the only black kid in her class,” Rothman was told her concerns were unfounded. Yet, Rothman writes:

She was the only black kid in her class. She was the only black kid I saw anywhere in that school. If I hadn't been reassured by people I genuinely like and trust, I'd have just been angry. As it was, I was puzzled. I walked over to a wall of photographs of the school going back for years and years, group after group of class photos. No black kids. I didn't say anything, just kept watching, thinking about it. A few days later, light dawned for me: there were dark-skinned kids from India and Pakistan in all the classes. Black kids. European-style black kids.

For an American, with an American sensibility of race, Indian and African kids are not both “black.” For a Dutch person, with a different race system in his head, these were all black kids.

So what does that story prove, anyway? That the Dutch draw a different line? Maybe between the Dutch and everyone else? Not being Dutch, are all the blacks, well, black? The Indian kids in her class could see what my kid and I could see, the distinctiveness of African features over and above the similarity of skin color.

So does the story tell us that race is a socially constructed category, constructed differently in different places? Or does it tell us that the Dutch draw their lines so tightly around themselves that they don't bother to make finer discriminations—not that they don't see or experience the distinction as existing, but that they don't see why it should matter.

And is that what white Americans do when they see a black kid whose family has been in the United States since slavery days, a black kid whose family arrived two generations ago from Haiti, and a black kid who just immigrated here from Nigeria, and calls them all “African American,” seeing no meaningful differences?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Barbara Katz Rothman, *The Book of Life: A Personal and Ethical Guide to Race, Normality, and the Implications of the Human Genome Project* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2001), 51–52.

## Connection Questions

1. What does Barbara Katz Rothman mean when she says that race is a socially constructed category?
2. After describing her experiences with Dutch schools, Rothman asks, "So what does that story prove, anyway?" What do you think her story "proves"? What does it reveal about the concept of race? Does this story connect with anything in your own experience?
3. People often think of race as having an unchangeable definition and that races are defined the same way over time and in all places. How does Rothman's story challenge those assumptions?

## Reading 9

# The Consequences of Stereotyping



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Psychologist Deborah Tannen writes:

We all know we are unique individuals, but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It's a natural tendency, since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading.<sup>1</sup>

A *stereotype* is a belief about an individual based on the real or imagined characteristics of a group to which that individual belongs. Stereotypes can lead us to judge an individual or group negatively. Even stereotypes that seem to portray a group positively reduce individuals to categories and tell an inaccurate "single story." *Prejudice* occurs when we form an opinion about an individual or a group based on a negative stereotype; the word *prejudice* comes from the word *pre-judge*. When a prejudice leads us to treat an individual or group negatively, *discrimination* occurs.

Writing in 1986, journalist Brent Staples described his experiences walking the streets of Chicago and New York in the 1970s and 1980s. Here he talks about the effects of stereotypes and how he tried to counter the prejudices that strangers had about him:

I came upon her late one evening on a deserted street in Hyde Park, a relatively affluent neighborhood in an otherwise mean, impoverished section of Chicago. As I swung onto the avenue behind her, there seemed to be a discreet, unflinching distance between us. Not so. She cast back a worried glance. To her, the youngish black man—a broad six feet two inches with a beard and billowing hair, both hands shoved into the pockets of a bulky military jacket—seemed menacingly close. After a few more quick glimpses, she picked up her pace and was soon running in earnest. Within seconds she disappeared into a cross street.

That was more than a decade ago. I was twenty-two years old, a graduate student newly arrived at the University of Chicago. It was in the echo of that terrified woman's footfalls that I first began to know the unwieldy inheritance I'd come into—the ability to alter public space in ugly ways. It was clear that she thought herself the quarry of a mugger, a rapist, or worse. Suffering a bout of insomnia, however, I was stalking sleep, not defenseless wayfarers. As a softy who is scarcely

<sup>1</sup> Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Men and Women in Conversation* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 16.



able to take a knife to a raw chicken—let alone hold one to a person’s throat—I was surprised, embarrassed, and dismayed all at once. Her flight made me feel like an accomplice in tyranny. It also made it clear that I was indistinguishable from the muggers who occasionally seeped into the area from the surrounding ghetto. That first encounter, and those that followed, signified that a vast, unnerving gulf lay between nighttime pedestrians—particularly women—and me. And soon I gathered that being perceived as dangerous is a hazard in itself. I only needed to turn a corner into a dicey situation, or crowd some frightened, armed person in a foyer somewhere, or make an errant move after being pulled over by a policeman. Where fear and weapons meet—and they often do in urban America—there is always the possibility of death . . .

In that first year, my first away from my hometown, I was to become thoroughly familiar with the language of fear. At dark, shadowy intersections, I could cross in front of a car stopped at a traffic light and elicit the thunk, thunk, thunk of the driver—black, white, male, or female—hammering down the door locks. On less traveled streets after dark, I grew accustomed to but never comfortable with people crossing to the other side of the street rather than pass me. Then there were the standard unpleasanties with policemen, doormen, bouncers, cabdrivers, and others whose business it is to screen out troublesome individuals before there is any nastiness . . .

Over the years, I learned to smother the rage I felt at so often being taken for a criminal. Not to do so would surely have led to madness. I now take precautions to make myself less threatening. I move about [in New York City] with care, particularly late in the evening. I give a wide berth to nervous people on subway platforms during the wee hours, particularly when I have exchanged business clothes for jeans. If I happen to be entering a building behind some people who appear skittish, I may walk by, letting them clear the lobby before I return, so as not to seem to be following them. I have been calm and extremely congenial on those rare occasions when I’ve been pulled over by the police.

And on late-evening constitutionals I employ what has proved to be an excellent tension-reducing measure: I whistle melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi and the more popular classical composers. Even steely New Yorkers hunching toward nighttime destinations seem to relax, and occasionally they even join in the tune. Virtually everybody seems to sense that a mugger wouldn’t be warbling bright, sunny selections from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*. It is my equivalent of the cowbell that hikers wear when they know they are in bear country.<sup>2</sup>

2 Brent Staples, “Black Men and Public Space,” *Harper’s Magazine*, December 1986.

## Connection Questions

1. What are the key differences between stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination?
2. What words and phrases does Brent Staples use to describe his feelings and those of others? What tone do those words and phrases convey?
3. How does Staples learn about how others are seeing him? Why does he call this the "language of fear"?
4. What strategies does he use to counter the stereotypes around him? What are the benefits and costs to Staples of altering his behavior?

## Reading 10

# The Blink of an Eye

When learning about how stereotypes and prejudice can affect an individual's behavior, psychologists often distinguish between blatant and unconscious bigotry. Blatant bigotry is out in the open. According to social psychologist Susan Fiske, "We can identify the bare-faced bigots." Unconscious biases, meaning prejudice that we do not consciously or knowingly acknowledge, is different. Fiske describes how quickly this form of bias can be activated:

Neuroscience has shown that people can identify another person's apparent race, gender, and age in a matter of milliseconds. In this blink of an eye, a complex network of stereotypes, emotional prejudices, and behavioral impulses activates. These knee-jerk reactions do not require conscious bigotry, though they are worsened by it.<sup>1</sup>

Law professor Jerry Kang describes how unconscious, or implicit, bias works:

Stop for a moment and consider what bombards your senses every day. Think about everything you see, both still and moving, with all their color, detail, and depth. Think about what you hear in the background, perhaps a song on the radio, as you decode lyrics and musical notes. Think about touch, smell, and even taste. And while all that's happening, you might be walking or driving down the street, avoiding pedestrians and cars, chewing gum, digesting your breakfast, flipping through email on your smartphone. How does your brain do all this simultaneously?

It does so by processing through schemas, which are templates of knowledge that help us organize specific examples into broader categories. When we see, for example, something with a flat seat, a back, and some legs, we recognize it as a "chair" . . . We know what to do with an object that fits into the category "chair." Without spending a lot of mental energy, we simply sit . . .

Kang writes that we create schemas in our unconscious minds about human beings, too. When we sort people into categories—such as by age, gender, race, and more—we unconsciously form expectations about them based on the category rather than the individual. Those expectations are based partly on our experiences with other people but are also shaped by stories, books, movies, media, and culture. Kang explains:

We see that some of the underlying cognitions [thoughts] include stereotypes, which are simply traits that we associate with a category. For instance, if we think that a particular category of human beings is frail—such as the elderly—we will not raise our guard. If we think that another category is foreign—such as Asians—we will be surprised by their fluent English. These cognitions also include attitudes,



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<sup>1</sup> Susan T. Fiske, "Are We Born Racist?," in *Are We Born Racist? New Insights from Neuroscience and Positive Psychology*, ed. Jason Marsh, Rodolfo Mendoza-Denton, and Jeremy Adam Smith (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), 8.

which are overall, evaluative feelings that are positive or negative. For instance, if we identify someone as having graduated from our beloved alma mater, we will feel more at ease. The term “implicit bias” includes both implicit stereotypes and implicit attitudes.

Though our shorthand schemas of people may be helpful in some situations, they also can lead to discriminatory behaviors if we are not careful.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers have also shown that implicit bias can be reduced in a variety of ways, mostly by exposing ourselves to examples that contradict the bias. When we see images and read stories that reflect positively on a specific group, that can reduce a bias we might have had. Relationships between people of different races and ethnic groups have been shown to have a more lasting effect on reducing bias. Fiske agrees that just as implicit biases are learned, they can be unlearned:

But here’s the good news: more recent research shows that our prejudices are not inevitable; they are actually quite malleable, shaped by an ever-changing mix of cultural beliefs and social circumstances. While we may be hardwired to harbor prejudices against those who seem different or unfamiliar to us, it’s possible to override our worst impulses and reduce those prejudices. Doing so requires more than just individual good intentions; it requires broad social efforts to challenge stereotypes and get people to work together across group lines . . .<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How does Susan Fiske distinguish between blatant bigotry and unconscious bias?
2. How do we form unconscious prejudices? Are they ever useful? In what ways can they be harmful?
3. How do other people influence our unconscious biases? What else influences them? Can history, or at least the way that history is told, influence them?
4. Should we try to resist or reduce our own unconscious biases? If so, what actions can we take to do so? What obstacles must be overcome? If we can’t eliminate our unconscious biases entirely, is it still worth trying?
5. Why do you think friendships between people of different racial or ethnic groups have a more lasting effect on reducing bias than other ways of attempting to do so?
6. In 2014, journalist Jenée Desmond-Harris wrote an article titled “Implicit bias means we’re all probably at least a little bit racist.”<sup>4</sup> What do you think of that title? Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?

2 Jerry Kang, *Implicit Bias: A Primer for Courts* (n.p.: National Center for State Courts, 2009), 1–2, accessed April 29, 2016, [http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/sections/criminaljustice/PublicDocuments/unit\\_3\\_kang.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/sections/criminaljustice/PublicDocuments/unit_3_kang.authcheckdam.pdf).

3 Fiske, “Are We Born Racist?,” 7.

4 Jenée Desmond-Harris, “Implicit bias means we’re all probably at least a little bit racist,” Vox.com, June 23, 2015, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2014/12/26/7443979/racism-implicit-racial-bias>.

## Reading 11

# Little Things Are Big

As writer Jesús Colón discovered on a subway ride in New York City in the 1950s, perceptions about one's own identity and the identities of others can affect the decisions people make about one another.

It was very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm, a valise [suitcase] in her left hand and two children, a boy and girl about three and five years old, trailing after her. She was a nice-looking white lady in her early twenties.

At Nevins Street, Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station—Atlantic Avenue—which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to be a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm, and a medium-sized valise in her left hand.

And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of—not even the customary book under my arm, without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

As the train was entering the Atlantic Avenue station, some white man stood up from his seat and helped her out, placing the children on the long, deserted platform. There were only two adult persons on the long platform some time after midnight on the eve of last Memorial Day.

I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad and up into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep, long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Avenue station?

Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was—a Puerto Rican hours past midnight, a valise, two white children and a white lady with a baby on her arm [badly] needing somebody to help her, at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.

But how could I, a Negro\* and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady, who very likely might have preconceived prejudices about Negroes and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?

What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman perhaps coming from a small town with a valise, two children and a baby on her right arm? Would she say: yes, of course, you may help me. Or would she think that

\* The word *Negro* was commonly used in the early and middle years of the twentieth century to refer to an African American. Its use reflects the time period. During the 1960s, the term *Black* replaced *Negro* in common American usage, and today *African American* is often used instead of *Black*.



Watch **Little Things Are Big: Jesús Colón**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



petereleven / Shutterstock

**What are our obligations toward others? What influences our decision whether or not to offer help?**

I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went forward to offer my help?

Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute. The ancestral manners that the most illiterate Puerto Rican passes on from father to son were struggling inside me. Here was I, way past midnight, face to face with a situation that could very well explode into an outburst of prejudices and chauvinistic conditioning of the "divide and rule" policy of present-day society.

It was a long minute.

I passed on by her as if I saw nothing. As if I was insensitive to her need. Like a rude animal walking on two legs, I just moved on, half running by the long subway platform, leaving the children and the valise and her with the baby on her arm. I took the steps of the long concrete stairs in twos until I reached the street above and the cold air slapped my warm face.

This is what racism and prejudice and chauvinism and official artificial divisions can do to people and to a nation!

Perhaps the lady was not prejudiced after all. Or not prejudiced enough to scream at the coming of a Negro toward her in a solitary subway station a few hours past midnight.

If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, dear lady. I know that there is a chance in a million that you will read these lines. I am willing to take the millionth chance. If you were not that prejudiced, I failed you, lady. I failed you, children. I failed myself to myself.

I buried my courtesy early on Memorial Day morning. But here is a promise that I make to myself here and now; if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.

Then I will have my courtesy with me again.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was Jesús Colón's dilemma on the train? What were the different factors he was weighing in his mind?
2. What was at stake in Colón's decision? How did he feel about his choice afterward?
3. Why do you think he wrote this story? Why do you think Colón titled his essay "Little Things Are Big"?
4. Create a different ending to the story. What do you think Colón might have done? How do you think the woman might have responded to the action you have imagined for Colón? Describe the effect of that action on Colón.
5. How do your concerns about how others might perceive you affect your actions?

<sup>1</sup> Jesús Colón, *A Puerto Rican in New York, and Other Sketches* (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 115–17.



## Reading 12

# Words Matter

How does it feel to be called by a name you did not choose for yourself? Over time, people have used a long list of names for the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, but those words have rarely been what they would call themselves.

The power and meaning of labels comes not only from the choice of words but also from how those words are said. Niin, an Anishinaabe woman of both Cree and Ojibway descent, talked in an interview about the first time in her childhood when someone called her an “Indian.”

I’m not sure whether I was in grade one or in grade two; actually I think it was in kindergarten, because my Mom was home at that time. I remember being outside for recess. You know, everyone was running around, playing in the middle of the field. All of a sudden I stopped because I realized that a few of the kids who were in my classroom had formed a circle around me. They were going around and around the circle and I realized I was in the middle of this circle. I was trying to figure out what the heck is going on here? They were saying something and I started listening to them. They were saying “Indian, Indian, Indian.” And I was like what? I really didn’t understand myself, first and foremost, as an “Indian.” Right in the middle of when they were doing that, the bell rang and everybody just turned toward the door and started walking in. I remember looking down on the ground wondering, what are they talking about Indian, Indian, Indian? I don’t even know how that circle formed in the first place. I didn’t catch it. It just seemed all of a sudden they were all around me and I just stopped, looking at them all. The bell rang right away. I just remember putting my head down, walking, looking at the grass, I was really thinking about, what was that all about? I didn’t even remember it by the time we got to the door. Except for when I got home I asked my Mom.

I remember when I went home, my Mother was standing at the counter. She was baking something or other but she was working at the counter and I just walked up to her and I was watching what she was doing. I remember my chin barely touched the counter and I was watching her. I said, “Mom, what am I?” And she looked down at me and said really fast, “Were people asking you what you were?” I said, “Yes, they were calling me Indian.” She said, “Tell them you’re Canadian.” I couldn’t really figure out why she was sounding so stern and kind of angry. I just thought okay and I turned around but I remember that afternoon really clearly. I think why it stuck in my mind so much is because they were in a circle ridiculing me. And I don’t even know. I didn’t even take offence because I didn’t know what they were doing. Even though they were calling me Indian, I was still going yeah, so what? So it always puzzled me about why, why they were calling me Indian. And because I didn’t really feel any different from them, even though I knew my

skin was darker, my hair was brown, and I had a shinier face. I really didn't feel any different from them or feel I was different from them.

I just felt we were all just kids. I think that's when I started learning that there were different kinds of people. I knew that there were different kinds of people by just looking and seeing like different looking people but not people who are different from one another.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What do you think the word *Indian* meant to the kids in Niin's class? What factors might have shaped her classmates' understanding of the word?
2. Why do you think Niin's mother told Niin she was Canadian? What did she want Niin to understand about herself?
3. Considering the rest of the story, what might Niin's mother have wanted Niin's classmates to learn?
4. Do you have a memory of becoming aware of differences? If so, what was it?

<sup>1</sup> Mary Young, *Pimatisiwin: Walking in a Good Way, a Narrative Inquiry into Language as Identity* (Manitoba: The Prolific Group, 2005), 47–48.

## Reading 13

# Religion and Identity

Religion can be a central part of one's identity. The word *religion* comes from a Latin word that means "to tie or bind together." Modern dictionaries define religion as "an organized system of beliefs and rituals centering on a supernatural being or beings." To belong to a religion often means more than sharing its beliefs and participating in its rituals; it also means being part of a community and, sometimes, a culture.

The world's religions are similar in many ways; scholar Stephen Prothero refers to these similarities as "family resemblances." All religions include rituals, scriptures, and sacred days and gathering places. Each religion gives its followers instructions for how human beings should act toward one another.<sup>1</sup> In addition, three of the world's religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—share a common origin: all three trace their beginnings to the biblical figure of Abraham.

There is incredible diversity within each religion in terms of how members define their connections to it. For some, a religion's theological beliefs and rituals of worship are central to their lives. Others are more drawn to a religion's community and culture than to its beliefs and rituals. Many even feel part of a religion's culture but choose not to participate in its rituals at all. Some people feel free to choose a religion for themselves, or to reject religion entirely as a part of their identity. Others feel that they have been born and raised in a particular religion and are unwilling or unable to change it. Some governments grant privileges to one religion and not to others, while other governments protect citizens' freedom to follow any religion without privilege or penalty.

Different people have different experiences with their religion. In the following reflections, teenagers share parts of their religious experiences. While each belongs to a particular religion, each one's experience does not fully represent that religion as a whole.



Ramadan picnic in Istanbul, Turkey, in front of the Hagia Sophia (Ayasofya), a building that has been both a Greek Orthodox Christian church and a mosque.

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 12–13.

Rebecca, then age 17, explains the influence that her religion, Judaism, has on her life:

In the Bible, in the Torah, there are 613 commandments. They involve everything from how you treat other people, to Jewish holidays and how we observe them, and the Sabbath, which is every week, and how we observe that. It's like a guide how to live.

There are also a lot of dietary laws. The dietary laws say we can only eat certain kinds of meat that are killed and prepared in a certain way. We can't eat meat at nonkosher restaurants. My parents like to remind me of this funny story. One time when I was two, we were driving past a Burger King. I saw the sign, and I yelled out, "That sign says Burger King. No burgers for Jewish people." I picked up on those observances. It was always something that was part of me. I recognized that it was important.

We set the Sabbath aside as a day of rest because God rested on the seventh day after creating the world. Because of this, there are lots of rules for things you can and can't do . . . It's supposed to be a day of rest—you're not supposed to do any type of work, or watch television, use the computer, use electricity, any of that stuff . . . For me it's very spiritual. It really separates the day out from the rest of the week.

I spend a lot of time with my family—from Friday night at sundown until Saturday night. I go to prayers at my synagogue in the morning and sometimes in the afternoon. It's just a really spiritual experience. It makes it more of an important day . . .

I haven't gone to see a movie on a Saturday or Friday night ever.

It's weird being in a public high school because you're faced with being in a school where there's lots of activities on Friday nights and things to miss out on. Like all the school plays are on Friday nights. I have to give up trying out for school plays. And sports—I used to play softball. But there are games every Saturday, so I couldn't play those.

A lot of people look at it like, "How can you give up all of this stuff because of your religion?" It's just a matter of how you look at it. You can look at it as being a burden—that you have these religious obligations, so you're not able to do your school activities. But I look at it as a more positive experience. It's something that I choose to do.<sup>2</sup>

Often, the way individuals relate to and practice a religion changes over the course of their lives. Maham, age 19, explains how her Muslim faith and practice has changed as she has grown older:

When I was fifteen, I was really super-religious actually. Then I fell into this not-so-religious stage—that was between the end of junior year of high school and freshman year of college. I started praying less and hanging out with my friends more. I believe that spirituality is a roller coaster and that you're going to have your ups and downs, because when you're up, there's nowhere to go but down. That's how life is.

2 "How Can You Give Up All of This Stuff Because of Your Religion?" in Pearl Gaskins, *I Believe In . . . : Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Young People Speak About Their Faith* (Chicago: Cricket Books, 2004), 58–59.

I went down, and now I think I'm heading right back up. I still am not back praying five times a day because of my schedule (I try to pray as much as I can), but I believe that true spirituality transcends ritual worship, so I try to live my life with the philosophy that Islam teaches—of compassion, peace, submission, tolerance, and things like that. I try every day to fight the jihad of personal struggle to become a better person.

That's what Islam is to me now, more than just praying five times a day. When you're fourteen, that's enough. But as you mature, life becomes complicated and harder to categorize as just good and bad. The rules are not laid out in black and white anymore—you find a lot of gray area since you gain more independence as you get older. After all, you start to make your own decisions—some good, some bad—but life has to teach you its lessons somehow.

I do believe in rituals. Like Ramadan is coming up next week. Do I plan on fasting all thirty days? Yes, I do. Those things help me become a better Muslim. There are a lot of things that are taught in Islam, like wearing the headscarf and praying. Just as people eat food four or five times a day to nourish their bodies, prayers nourish the soul four or five times a day. It's a way for me to meditate. It's a way for me to tune myself out from the things around me that are bad influences. It's a way to remind myself of who I am so I have less chances of doing something I'll regret.<sup>3</sup>



**A woman lights a candle with her daughter during the start of the Passover seder.**

Sara, age 18, feels differently about the rituals and worship practices of her religion than Rebecca and Maham do:

I feel really connected with my Jewish community, but a little less connected to the observance factor of my religion. I don't keep kosher. I don't really feel that that's necessary. When I was little, my whole family would sit down every Friday night and light the *Shabbat* candles and say the blessings. We don't do that anymore. Now it's like, "It's Friday night. I'm going to go out with my friends."

I don't like organized prayer. Every once in a while I go to services, but I appreciate it a lot more when I do my own thing and say my own prayers . . .

When I was younger, I never really thought I was different 'cause I was Jewish. It didn't occur to me until high school when I started getting really involved with stuff. It's kind of weird when I really think about it. It's like I'm just like everyone

<sup>3</sup> "I Try Every Day to Fight the Jihad of Personal Struggle," in Gaskins, *I Believe In . . .*, 68–89.



else, except there's that little part of me that's going to be Jewish forever, and that makes me different.<sup>4</sup>

Hesed, age 14, a member of the United Methodist Church, explains how he knows the Christian religion in which he was raised is right for him:

After confirmation [as an adolescent] I was getting stronger in the faith, but I still thought about it and said, "Well, what about other religions? Are they fake? And if they are, why are there millions of Muslims around the world who pray to Allah five times a day? And why are there Buddhists who make Buddhism their faith? Why do I think this one faith is real?"

And basically, to me, I just get a feeling. It's really hard to explain. Christianity just feels right to me. I go to church, and I see the cross, and we're at prayer—it feels right. And I can honestly say that I feel the presence of God in that place. And for me, Christianity is the religion where I feel that. To me that's basically what faith is—to just believe in what you think is right. And this is right for me.

Now I'm really secure in what I believe. And I don't know if it's wrong to say it—since I'm a Christian and we're supposed to go out and save the world and convert people to Christianity—but I truly do believe that there are a lot of people who feel that their religion, whether it be Islam, or Buddhism, or Hinduism, is right for them. And I don't see anything wrong with that. I'm not saying those are the right faiths, but you just get a feeling when something is right for you.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How do the young people in this reading experience religious belief and belonging? What can we learn from the similarities and differences in their stories?
2. Based on your experiences and observations, what are some other kinds of experiences with religion that are not represented in these four short reflections?
3. How would you describe the role, if any, that religion plays in your identity?

4 "I Wear Two Stars of David," in Gaskins, *I Believe In . . .*, 33.

5 "Shaky Waters," in Gaskins, *I Believe In . . .*, 103.



## Reading 14

# Fear

Sometimes, feelings of embarrassment and humiliation about parts of our identities can influence the way we think about and act toward others. In a reflection titled “Fear,” writer Gary Soto writes about how such feelings affected the way a boy he knew growing up treated others.

A cold day after school. Frankie T., who would drown his brother by accident that coming spring and would use a length of pipe to beat a woman in a burglary years later, had me pinned on the ground behind a backstop, his breath sour as meat left out in the sun. . . . I stared at his face, shaped like the sole of a shoe, and just went along with the insults, although now and then I tried to raise a shoulder in a halfhearted struggle because that was part of the game.

He let his drool yo-yo from his lips, missing my feet by only inches, after which he giggled and called me names. Finally he let me up. I slapped grass from my jacket and pants, and pulled my shirt tail from my pants to shake out the fistful of dirt he had stuffed in my collar. I stood by him, nervous and red-faced from struggling, and when he suggested that we climb the monkey bars together, I followed him quietly to the kid’s section of Jefferson Elementary. He climbed first, with small grunts, and for a second I thought of running but knew he would probably catch me—if not then, the next day. There was no way out of being a fifth grader—the daily event of running to teachers to show them your bloody nose. It was just a fact, like having lunch.

So I climbed the bars and tried to make conversation, first about the girls in our classroom and then about kickball. He looked at me smiling as if I had a camera in my hand, his teeth green like the underside of a rock, before he relaxed his grin into a simple gray line across his face. He told me to shut up. He gave me a hard stare and I looked away to a woman teacher walking to her car and wanted very badly to yell for help. She unlocked her door, got in, played with her face in the visor mirror while the engine warmed, and then drove off with the blue smoke trailing. Frankie was watching me all along and when I turned to him, he laughed, “*Chale!* She can’t help you, ese.” He moved closer to me on the bars and I thought he was going to hit me; instead he put his arm around my shoulder, squeezing firmly in friendship. “C’mon, chicken, let’s be cool.”

I opened my mouth and tried to feel happy as he told me what he was going to have for Thanksgiving. “My Mamma’s got a turkey and ham, lots of potatoes, yams, and stuff like that. I saw it in the refrigerator. And she says we gonna get some pies. Really, ese.”

Poor liar, I thought, smiling as we clunked our heads softly like good friends. He had seen the same afternoon program on TV as I had, one in which a woman in an apron demonstrated how to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner. I knew he would have tortillas and beans, a round steak, maybe, and oranges from his backyard. He went on describing his Thanksgiving, then changed over to Christmas—the new bicycle, the clothes, the G.I. Joes. I told him that it sounded swell, even though I knew he was making it all up. His mother would in fact stand in line at the Salvation Army to come away hugging armfuls of toys that had been tapped back into shape by reformed alcoholics with veined noses. I pretended to be excited and asked if I could come over to his place to play after Christmas. “Oh, yeah, anytime,” he said, squeezing my shoulder and clunking his head against mine.

When he asked what I was having for Thanksgiving, I told him that we would probably have a ham with pineapple on the top. My family was slightly better off than Frankie’s, though I sometimes walked around with cardboard in my shoes and socks with holes big enough to be ski masks, so holidays were extravagant happenings. I told him about the candied yams, the frozen green beans, and the pumpkin pie.

His eyes moved across my face as if he were deciding where to hit me—nose, temple, chin, talking mouth—and then he lifted his arm from my shoulder and jumped from the monkey bars, grunting as he landed. He wiped sand from his knees while looking up and warned me not to mess around with him any more. He stared with such a great meanness that I had to look away. He warned me again and then walked away. Incredibly relieved, I jumped from the bars and ran, looking over my shoulder until I turned onto my street.

Frankie scared most of the school out of its wits and even had girls scampering out of view when he showed himself on the playground. If he caught us without notice, we grew quiet and stared down at our shoes until he passed after a threat or two. If he pushed us down, we stayed on the ground with our eyes closed and pretended we were badly hurt. If he riffled through our lunch bags, we didn’t say anything. He took what he wanted, after which we sighed and watched him walk away after peeling an orange or chewing big chunks of an apple.

Still, that afternoon when he called Mr. Koligian, our teacher, a foul name—we grew scared for him. Mr. Koligian pulled and tugged at his body until it was in his arms and then out of his arms as he hurled Frankie against the building. Some of us looked away because it was unfair. We knew the house he lived in: The empty refrigerator, the father gone, the mother in a sad bathrobe, the beatings, the yearnings for something to love. When a teacher manhandled him, we all wanted to run away, but instead we stared and felt shamed. Robert, Adele, Yolanda shamed; Danny, Alfonso, Brenda shamed; Nash, Margie, Rocha shamed. We all watched him flop about as Mr. Koligian shook and grew red from anger. We knew his house and, for some, it was the same one to walk home to: The broken mother, the indifferent walls, the refrigerator’s glare which fed the people no one wanted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gary Soto, “Fear,” in *Living Up the Street* (New York: Laurel-Leaf, 1985), 59–62.

## Connection Questions

1. Make an identity chart for Frankie. Choose two phrases from the text that reveal something important about his identity. How might the identity chart you made for Frankie be different from the one he would make for himself?
2. What connection do you see between Frankie's identity and his choices?
3. What range of feelings does the narrator have for Frankie?
4. Why do you think Gary Soto called this story "Fear"? Who feels fear in the story, and what are they afraid of? How does fear affect their actions?
5. What is a bully? What motivations does this story suggest might be at the root of bullying behavior? What other factors might influence one to bully others?

## Reading 15

# The “In” Group



Watch **Eve Shalen:**  
**The “In” Group**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Our desire to belong and feel connected to other people can shape the way we think about and act toward others and ourselves. Here, Eve Shalen, a high-school student, reflects on how her desire to belong once affected the way she treated one of her classmates.

My eighth grade consisted of 28 students, most of whom knew each other from the age of five or six. The class was close-knit and we knew each other so well that most of us could distinguish each other’s handwriting at a glance. Although we grew up together, we still had class outcasts. From second grade on, a small elite group spent a large portion of their time harassing two or three of the others. I was one of those two or three, though I don’t know why. In most cases when children get picked on, they aren’t good at sports or they read too much or they wear the wrong clothes or they are of a different race. But in my class, we all read too much and didn’t know how to play sports. We had also been brought up to carefully respect each other’s races. This is what was so strange about my situation. Usually, people are made outcasts because they are in some way different from the larger group. But in my class, large differences did not exist. It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us.

The harassment was subtle. It came in the form of muffled giggles when I talked, and rolled eyes when I turned around. If I was out in the playground and approached a group of people, they often fell silent. Sometimes someone would not see me coming and I would catch the tail end of a joke at my expense.



Andrew Tallon / Getty Images

How does our desire to belong affect the choices we make?

I also have a memory of a different kind. There was another girl in our class who was perhaps even more rejected than I. She also tried harder than I did for acceptance, providing the group with ample material for jokes. One day during lunch I was sitting outside watching a basketball game. One of the popular girls in the class came up to me to show me something she said I wouldn't want to miss. We walked to a corner of the playground where a group of three or four sat. One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl's diary. I sat down and, laughing till my sides hurt, heard my voice finally blend with the others. Looking back, I wonder how I could have participated in mocking this girl when I knew perfectly well what it felt like to be mocked myself. I would like to say that if I were in that situation today I would react differently, but I can't honestly be sure. Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did Eve Shalen's strong desire to belong shape her choice in the story?
2. Why does her choice still trouble her?
3. How important is peer pressure to the way we see ourselves and others?
4. How do you understand Shalen's statement, "Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us"? Does it connect to anything in your own experience?

<sup>1</sup> Eve Shalen, "A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence" (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves, 1993).

## Reading 16

# Finding Confidence

In Reading 15, “The ‘In’ Group,” Eve Shalen says, “Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last.” In the following passage, Cameron Tuttle explains how her need for acceptance shaped her experience when she was in high school and came to understand that she was gay.

No one bullied me in high school because absolutely no one knew I was gay. Definitely not me. It took me years to figure that out.

I was one of those squeaky clean, annoyingly mainstream, overachiever types. I got good grades, did student government, sang in musicals, played team sports, and joined lots of clubs to fatten up my college applications. But even though I was popular and friends with lots of different people, I felt alone, really alone, like no one knew the real me.

How could they? I was trying so hard to be perfect.

On the outside, I was a thriving, active, make-my-family-proud, successful teenager. But on the inside, I was emotionally numb, comatose, flat-lining. My mom had died of breast cancer two weeks before the beginning of ninth grade. She was an amazing mom, loving and supportive, and she gave me enough freedom to explore who I was so I could succeed or fail with my own personal style. After she died, I was devastated. But I was determined to prove to the world and to myself that I was okay.

I found myself working really, really hard to be the best because I was scared. Scared of being different. Scared of being defective. Scared of feeling my feelings. So for years, I didn’t let myself feel.

I got a lot done in high school but I didn’t have a lot of fun. And even though I wasn’t ever bullied by other people, I was relentlessly bullied by my own thoughts and fears about who I was, how I was supposed to behave, and what would happen if I didn’t.

I actually had this pathetic idea that I would somehow let down my community—people I barely knew in the conservative, snooty neighborhood where I grew up—if I ended up being a lesbian. How ridiculous is that?

Bullying isn’t just what real people in real time say to you or try to do to you. Bullying is everywhere—it’s in the words of fearful, judgmental parents who are trying to control you. (BTW: it’s also in the words of well-meaning but misguided parents who are trying “to protect you from being hurt.”) Bullying is in the news and in government policy. It’s in the imagery of pop culture. It’s in religion. And as a result, it gets into your head.



How did it get better for me? Slowly. It helped that I went to college across the country, as far away as I possibly could go from my hometown without needing a passport.

I eventually found the guts to stand up to my inner bully, the judgmental, fearful, bossy voice in my head that kept telling me, *You can't . . . You shouldn't . . . Don't you dare!* And then I finally found the confidence to listen to my body and to my heart and to be honest with myself.

And then I moved to New York.

When I was living there, I met tons of people who were a lot like me—squeaky-clean, annoyingly mainstream overachievers who just happened to be gay: former high-school cheerleaders, homecoming kings, class officers, student leaders, star athletes. And I realized . . . yeah, I can do this. Yeah, I can be this. And now, I love being different—in my squeaky-clean, annoyingly mainstream way.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How do you define “bullying”? How does Cameron Tuttle’s story add to your thinking?
2. Create an identity chart for Tuttle. How might the identity chart you made for her be different from the one she would make for herself? What might be some differences between the way others see her and the way she sees herself?
3. What did it mean for Tuttle to find her own voice?

<sup>1</sup> Cameron Tuttle, “Too Good to Be True,” in *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living*, ed. Dan Savage and Terry Miller (New York: Plume, 2012), 130–32.

## Reading 17

# One Identity, Multiple Belongings

Amin Maalouf, a writer who was born in Lebanon and immigrated to France, resists other people's attempts to oversimplify his identity. He explains:

Since I left Lebanon in 1976 to establish myself in France, I have been asked many times, with the best intentions in the world, if I felt more French or more Lebanese. I always give the same answer: "Both." Not in an attempt to be fair or balanced but because if I gave another answer I would be lying. This is why I am myself and not another, at the edge of two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. This is precisely what determines my identity. Would I be more authentic if I cut off a part of myself?

harpazo\_hope / Getty Images



To those who ask, I explain with patience that I was born in Lebanon, lived there until the age of 27, that Arabic is my first language and I discovered Dickens, Dumas and "Gulliver's Travels" in the Arabic translation, and I felt happy for the first time as a child in my village in the mountains, the village of my ancestors where I heard some of the stories that would help me later write my novels. How could I forget all of this? How could I untie myself from it? But on another side, I have lived on the French soil for 22 years, I drink its water and wine, my hands caress its old stones everyday, I write my books in French and France could never again be a foreign country.

**Is there a danger in making people choose one part of their identity over others?**

Half French and half Lebanese, then? Not at all! The identity cannot be compartmentalized; it cannot be split in halves or thirds, nor have any clearly defined set of boundaries. I do not have several identities, I only have one, made of all the elements that have shaped its unique proportions.

Sometimes, when I have finished explaining in detail why I fully claim all of my elements, someone comes up to me and whispers in a friendly way: "You were right to say all this, but deep inside of yourself, what do you really feel you are?"

This question made me smile for a long time. Today, it no longer does. It reveals to me a dangerous and common attitude men have. When I am asked who I am "deep

inside of myself," it means there is, deep inside each one of us, one "belonging" that matters, our profound truth, in a way, our "essence" that is determined once and for all at our birth and never changes. As for the rest, all of the rest—the path of a free man, the beliefs he acquires, his preferences, his own sensitivity, his affinities, his life—all these things do not count. And when we push our contemporaries to state their identity, which we do very often these days, we are asking them to search deep inside of themselves for this so-called fundamental belonging, that is often religious, nationalistic, racial or ethnic and to boast it, even to a point of provocation.

Whoever claims a more complex identity becomes marginalized. A young man born in France of Algerian parents is obviously part of two cultures and should be able to assume both. I said both to be clear, but the components of his personality are numerous. The language, the beliefs, the lifestyle, the relation with the family, the artistic and culinary taste, the influences—French, European, Occidental—blend in him with other influences—Arabic, Berber, African, Muslim. This could be an enriching and fertile experience if the young man feels free to live it fully, if he is encouraged to take upon himself his diversity; on the other side, his route can be traumatic if each time he claims he is French, some look at him as a traitor or a renegade, and also if each time he emphasizes his links with Algeria, its history, its culture, he feels a lack of understanding, mistrust or hostility.

The situation is even more delicate on the other side of the Rhine. Thinking about a Turk born almost 30 years ago near Frankfurt, and who has always lived in Germany, and who speaks and writes the German language better than the language of his Fathers. To his adopted society, he is not German, to his society of birth, he is no longer really Turkish. Common sense dictates that he could claim to belong to both cultures. But nothing in the law or in the mentality of either allows him to assume in harmony his combined identity.

I mentioned the two first examples that come to my mind. I could have mentioned many others. The case of a person born in Belgrade from a Serb mother and a Croatian father. Or a Hutu woman married to a Tutsi. Or an American that has a black father and a Jewish mother.

Some people could think these examples unique. To be honest, I don't think so. These few cases are not the only ones to have a complex identity. Multiple opposed "belongings" meet in each man and push him to deal with heartbreaking choices. For some, this is simply obvious at first sight; for others, one must look more closely.

If . . . people cannot live their multiple belongings, if they constantly have to choose between one side or the other, if they are ordered to get back to their tribe, we have the right to be worried about the basic way the world functions.

"Have to choose," "ordered to get back," I was saying. By whom? Not only by fanatics and xenophobes of all sides, but by you and me, each one of us. Precisely because these habits of thinking are deeply rooted in all of us, because of this narrow, exclusive, bigoted, simplified conception that reduces the whole identity to a single belonging declared with rage.

I feel like screaming aloud: This is how you "manufacture" slaughterers!<sup>1</sup>

1 Amin Maalouf, "Deadly Identities," trans. Brigitte Caland, *Al Jadid* 4, no. 25 (Fall 1998), accessed July 12, 2007, <http://www.aljadic.com/content/deadly-identities>.

## Connection Questions

1. Amin Maalouf writes, "Multiple opposed 'belongings' meet in each man and push him to deal with heartbreaking choices." What are some of the "heart-breaking choices" that he is describing? Can you add any examples from your own knowledge or experience?
2. What does Maalouf believe is the danger in making people choose one part of their identity over another?
3. This reading is an excerpt from an essay that Maalouf titled "Deadly Identities." Why does he suggest that identities can be dangerous?

## Chapter 1 Analysis and Reflection

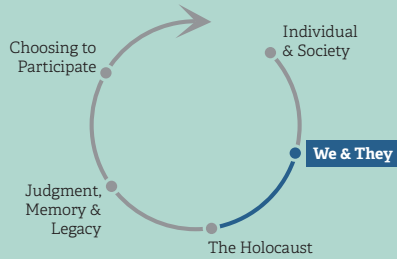
1. The following poem appears in the Midrash, a centuries-old collection of commentaries on Jewish scripture:

A person has three names:  
one that he is called by his father and mother;  
one that people know him by,  
and one that he acquires for himself.

What is this poem suggesting about the ways we come to understand our identities?  
What stories from this chapter could illustrate this poem?

2. *The Bear That Wasn't* is a children's book that reflects universal questions about the relationship between the individual and society. How do you see ideas from Reading 1, "The Bear That Wasn't," echoed in some of the other readings throughout this chapter?
3. In Reading 2, Chimamanda Adichie warns of "the danger of a single story." What does she mean? What other readings in this chapter illustrate this danger? Which ones suggest ways to overcome the danger of a single story?
4. Legal scholar Martha Minow writes, "When we simplify and sort, we focus on some traits rather than others, and we assign consequences to the presence and absence of the traits we make significant." What are some of the "traits we make significant" in our society? Do you think some traits and differences matter more than others, and if so, why? Who decides which traits matter most? What readings from this chapter have had the strongest influence on your thinking about these questions?

## Chapter 2



James Luna, "The Sacred Colors - Sacred People"

# We and They





## Overview

Who are “we”? Who are “they”? The answers to these questions can have profound consequences, because they define who belongs and who does not. This chapter explores the human tendency to create “in” groups and “out” groups and the consequences of that behavior.





### Essential Questions

- Why do humans separate themselves into groups? When is this behavior harmless, and when does it become a problem?
- How have societies distinguished between who can be a member and who must remain an outsider, and why have those distinctions mattered?

Collecting ourselves into groups is a natural behavior; everywhere on Earth, to be human means to live with others. In groups we meet our most basic needs, we share culture, values, and beliefs, and we satisfy our yearning to belong.

Like individuals, groups too have identities, and how a group defines itself determines who is entitled to its benefits and who is not. Sometimes the consequences of being excluded from a group are quite small. Someone who does not enjoy running is unlikely to be hurt by not being a member of a track club. But sometimes the consequences can be substantial, even dire. If someone is denied citizenship by a country, their freedom, livelihood, or safety may be at risk.

Chapter 2 examines both how societies decide who belongs and the consequences of those decisions. This chapter also explores how and why important ideas about human similarities and differences—such as *race*, *religion*, and *nation*—have greatly influenced the way many societies have defined their membership in the past several centuries. Finally, this chapter looks at what happens when people claim that the differences that matter most are permanent and biological—a belief that leads to *racism*. According to scholar George Fredrickson, racism has two components: *difference* and *power*.

It originates from a mindset that regards “them” as different from “us” in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the . . . Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group.<sup>1</sup>

By introducing and exploring the “we and they” dynamic that so often plays out in all of our lives and throughout history, this chapter serves as a crucial step in the Facing History & Ourselves journey. We encourage students and teachers to take the time to reflect broadly on why we humans separate ourselves into groups, as well as on the benefits and dangers of this universal behavior. In addition, this chapter prepares students for the case study of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust by helping them understand how some key “we and they” dynamics—racism, antisemitism, and nationalism—were constructed throughout history. With these goals in mind, teachers should select the readings that are most appropriate for their curriculum and classrooms.

<sup>1</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 9.

## Reading 1

# What Do We Do with a Difference?

Poet James Berry raises important questions about the ways we respond to differences in a poem titled “What Do We Do with a Variation?”:

What do we do with a difference?  
Do we stand and discuss its oddity  
or do we ignore it?

Do we shut our eyes to it  
or poke it with a stick?  
Do we clobber it to death?

Do we move around it in rage  
and enlist the rage of others?  
Do we will it to go away?

Do we look at it in awe  
or purely in wonderment?  
Do we work for it to disappear?

Do we pass it stealthily  
or change route away from it?  
Do we will it to become like ourselves?

What do we do with a difference?  
Do we communicate to it,  
let application acknowledge it  
for barriers to fall down?<sup>1</sup>



Watch **Creating**  
**“We and They”**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

## Connection Questions

1. James Berry uses many verbs and verb phrases to show what we “do” with a difference. Pick out these verbs and think about the variety of responses to difference that they present.
2. Reflect in your journal about how one of these verbs or verb phrases connects to a time you experienced difference. Is there a word to describe how your school or community has reacted to difference?
3. What do you think the phrase “let application acknowledge it” means? How might it connect to the idea of barriers?
4. What is the message of the poem?
5. Write another stanza of the poem describing how you’d like to see your community respond to differences today.

<sup>1</sup> James Berry, “What Do We Do with a Variation?,” in *When I Dance: Poems* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1991).

## Reading 2

# Universe of Obligation



LESSON

Teach **Understanding**  
**Universe of**  
**Obligation**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

What does it mean to be a member of a group? In groups we meet our most basic needs; in groups we learn a language and a culture or way of life. In groups we also satisfy our yearning to belong, receive comfort in times of trouble, and find companions who share our dreams, values, and beliefs. Groups also provide security and protection from those who might wish to do us harm. Therefore, how a group defines its membership matters. Belonging can have significant advantages; being excluded can leave a person vulnerable.

How the members of a group, a nation, or a community define who belongs and who does not has a lot to do with how they define their *universe of obligation*. Sociologist Helen Fein coined this phrase to describe the group of individuals within a society “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, a society’s universe of obligation includes those people who that society believes deserve respect and whose rights it believes are worthy of protection.

A society’s universe of obligation can change. Individuals and groups that are respected and protected members of a society at one time may find themselves outside of the universe of obligation when circumstances are different—such as during a war or economic depression. Beliefs and attitudes that are widely shared among members of a society may also affect the way that society defines its universe of obligation. For instance, throughout history, beliefs and attitudes about religion, gender, and race have helped to determine which people a society protects and which people it does not.

Although Fein uses the term to describe the way nations determine membership, we might also refer to an individual’s universe of obligation to describe the circle of other individuals that person feels a responsibility to care for and protect. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks describes how individuals often define those for whom they feel responsible: “[Eighteenth-century philosopher] David Hume noted that our sense of empathy diminishes as we move outward from the members of our family to our neighbors, our society, and the world. Traditionally, our sense of involvement with the fate of others has been in inverse proportion to the distance separating us and them.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 4.

2 Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002), 30.



Scholar and social activist Chuck Collins defines his universe of obligation differently from the example Sacks offers. In the 1980s, Collins gave the half-million dollars that he inherited from his family to charity. Collins told journalist Ian Parker:

Of course, we have to respond to our immediate family, but, once they're O.K., we need to expand the circle. A larger sense of family is a radical idea, but we get into trouble as a society when we don't see that we're in the same boat.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What factors influence the way a society defines its universe of obligation? In what ways might a nation or community signal who is part of its universe of obligation and who is not?
2. What do you think might be some of the consequences for those who are not within a society's universe of obligation?
3. What factors influence how an individual defines their universe of obligation? In what ways might an individual show others who is part of their universe of obligation and who is not?
4. In the 1800s, sociologist William Graham Sumner wrote, "Every man and woman in society has one big duty. That is, to take care of his or her own self." Do you agree with Sumner? Why or why not? Is it wrong to prioritize caring for those closest to you over others? How does Sumner's suggestion about how we define our universe of obligation differ from Chuck Collins's view?
5. How would you describe your nation's universe of obligation? Your school's? Your own?

<sup>3</sup> Ian Parker, "The Gift," *New Yorker*, August 2, 2004, 60.

## Reading 3

# Understanding Strangers

Journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski explains that “an encounter with the Other, with other people, has always been a universal and fundamental experience for our species.” He writes:

Archaeologists tell us that the very earliest human groups were small family-tribes numbering 30 to 50 individuals. Had such a community been larger, it would have had trouble moving around quickly and efficiently. Had it been smaller, it would have found it harder to defend itself effectively and to fight for survival.

So here is our little family-tribe going along searching for nourishment when it suddenly comes across another family-tribe. What a significant movement in the history of the world, what a momentous discovery! The discovery that there are other people in the world! Until then, the members of these primal groups could live in the conviction, as they moved around in the company of 30 to 50 of their kinfolk, that they knew all the people in the world. Then it turned out that they didn’t—that other similar beings, other people, also inhabited the world! But how to behave in the face of such a revelation? What to do? What decisions to make?

Should they throw themselves in fury on those other people? Or walk past dismissively and keep going? Or rather try to get to know and understand them?

That same choice our ancestors faced thousands of years ago faces us today as well, with undiminished intensity—a choice as fundamental and categorical as it was back then. How should we act toward Others? What kind of attitude should we have toward them? It might end up in a duel, a conflict, or a war. Every archive contains evidence of such events, which are also marked by countless battlefields and ruins scattered around the world.

But it might also be the case that, instead of attacking and fighting, this family-tribe that we are watching decides to fence itself off from others, to isolate and separate itself. This attitude leads, over time, to objects like the Great Wall of China, the towers and gates of Babylon, the Roman limes [border fortifications] and the stone walls of the Inca.

Fortunately, there is evidence of a different human experience scattered abundantly across our planet. These are the proofs of cooperation—the remains of market-places, of ports, of places where there were agoras and sanctuaries, of where the seats of old universities and academies are still visible, and of where there remain vestiges of such trade routes as the Silk Road, the Amber Route and the Trans-Saharan caravan route.

All of these were places where people met to exchange thoughts, ideas and merchandise, and where they traded and did business, concluded covenants and alliances, and discovered shared goals and values. "The Other" stopped being a synonym of foreignness and hostility, danger and mortal evil. People discovered within themselves a fragment of the Other, and they believed in this and lived confidently. People thus had three choices when they encountered the Other: They could choose war, they could build a wall around themselves, or they could enter into dialogue.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. According to Ryszard Kapuscinski, what are the three possible ways to respond to unfamiliar people? What other responses can you imagine?
2. How have you responded to individuals or groups that are different from you? Why? What factors influence the choices people make about how to respond to difference?
3. Why do we humans so often divide ourselves into "we" and "they," or "in" groups and "out" groups? Is that division always negative? When does it become a problem?
4. What does Kapuscinski mean when he speaks of "the Other"? When do others become "the Other"? What do you think he means when he writes, "People discovered within themselves a fragment of the Other"? How might discovering the Other within yourself affect your universe of obligation?
5. What are some visible markers in your community of isolation and separation? Where are these markers in your school? Where in your community or school is there evidence of cooperation between different groups of people?

<sup>1</sup> Ryszard Kapuscinski, "Encountering the Other: The Challenge for the 21st Century," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2005), accessed November 8, 2007, [http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2005\\_fall/02\\_kapuscinski.html](http://www.digitalnpq.org/archive/2005_fall/02_kapuscinski.html).

## Reading 4

# First Encounters in the Americas

When two people meet for the first time, each takes stock of the other, often focusing on differences. Scholar Martha Minow warns that difference always “implies a reference: difference from whom? I am no more different from you than you are from me. A short person is different only in relation to a tall one; a Spanish-speaking student is different in relation to an English-speaking one. But the point of comparison is often unstated.”<sup>1</sup> By identifying unstated points of comparison, we can examine the relationships between those who have the power to assign labels of difference and those who lack that power.

The first meetings between Europeans and the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas\* illustrate Minow’s argument. Historians Peter Carroll and David Noble describe those encounters:

[On] an otherwise ordinary autumn day shortly after sunrise, the Arawak inhabitants of the Caribbean Islands noticed strange ships sailing on the horizon, much larger than their dugout canoes. As these ships moved closer and closer, they saw strange-looking people with light skins aboard, making odd gestures. The Arawak youths stood at the banks hesitantly, and then some of the braver men began swimming toward the mysterious boats.

These strangers offered the Arawak red-colored caps, glass beads, and other curious trifles. In exchange, the Arawak brought parrots, cotton skeins, darts, and other items. Then the strangers drew out swords, which the Arawak, in ignorance, grasped by the blades, cutting themselves. It was a symbolic act, this inadvertent drawing of blood. For the Arawak and the strangers looked at the world from opposite angles, and both were fascinated by what the other was not.<sup>2</sup>

The newcomers were so obviously different in language, dress, and color that the Arawak doubted that the Europeans were human beings. “They believe very firmly,” wrote Christopher Columbus after his first voyage to the Americas, “that I, with these ships and people, came from the sky.”<sup>3</sup> Other Indigenous Peoples reacted in similar ways to their first encounters with Europeans.

\* The Indigenous Peoples of the Americas are not a single homogenous group. This term—as well as terms used in the United States, such as *Native American* and *American Indian*—refers to hundreds of culturally diverse groups who inhabited the Americas before Europeans settled there.

1 Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference: Inclusion, Exclusion, and American Law*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 22.

2 Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, *The Free and the Unfree: A Progressive History of the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin, 2001), 34.

3 *Ibid.*, 34–35.



Columbus and other Europeans had their own misconceptions. They mistakenly believed that the Arawak were “Indians.” Carroll and Noble write:

This misconception originated in Columbus’s basic error (which he himself never realized) in thinking that in sailing westward from Europe he had reached the Indies [in Asia], which were the true object of his voyage. To Columbus, it was literally inconceivable that he had found previously unknown lands. Like other Europeans of his time, he believed firmly in the completeness of human knowledge. What he saw, therefore, he incorporated into his existing worldview, and the Native Americans thereby became, to the satisfaction of most Europeans, simply Indians.<sup>4</sup>

In describing the “Indians,” Europeans focused not on who they were but on who they were not. They then went on to describe what the Indigenous Peoples did *not* have. Amerigo Vespucci, for whom the Americas are named, described the “Indians” as neither Muslims nor Jews. He noted that they were “worse than heathen; because we did not see that they offered any sacrifice, nor yet did they have a house of prayer.” John Winthrop, an Englishman who helped found the Massachusetts Bay Colony, justified his claims to the Indigenous Peoples’ land by arguing that they did not mark their ownership of it in ways that Europeans recognized. He wrote that they “enclose no land, neither have they any settled habitations, nor any tame cattle.”<sup>5</sup>

To many newcomers, the Indigenous Peoples were not only “backward” but also dangerous. In historian Ronald Takaki’s words, “They represented what English men and women in America thought they were not—and, more important, what they must not become.”<sup>6</sup> Colonial leaders warned that colonists must strictly adhere to the laws and moral guidelines that defined their communities; otherwise they would allow themselves to become “Indianized.” Increasingly, “to be ‘Indianized’ meant to serve the Devil.” It also meant to be “decivilized, to become wild men.”<sup>7</sup> After all, the English viewed “Indians” as people living outside of “civilization.”

Such ideas were rooted at least in part in religious beliefs. As Carroll and Noble point out in their description of Spanish explorers:

Europeans in the age of Columbus saw themselves as Christians, the most spiritually pure people in creation. This ethnocentric idea found reinforcement in the ideals of the Roman Catholic Church, which claimed to be a universal spiritual community. Yet this ideology clearly excluded such religiously different people as Muslims, against whom Christians had waged holy wars for centuries, and Jews, who remained outsiders throughout European society. Believing in a single unitary religion, members of the Catholic Church viewed [nonbelievers] as suitable either for conversion to the true faith or worthy only of death or enslavement. Such religious attitudes shaped the Europeans’ relations with Africans as well as Native Americans.<sup>8</sup>

4 Carroll and Noble, *The Free and the Unfree*, 35–36.

5 Ibid., 36.

6 Ronald Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 34.

7 Ibid., 42–43.

8 Carroll and Noble, *The Free and the Unfree*, 37.

Such attitudes were not limited to Europeans who were Catholic. They were shared by Protestants as well.

Relations between the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Europeans were also shaped by the fierce competition among European nations for wealth and power. As Europeans took control of more and more of the Americas, millions of Indigenous Peoples were killed. Countless others were pushed into the interior of both continents. Still others were forced into slavery.

## Connection Questions

1. Find words that Europeans used to describe Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. What do those words imply about how Europeans understood Indigenous Peoples and the new people they encountered?
2. What misconceptions did the Arawak seem to have about the Europeans who arrived on Christopher Columbus's ships? What misconceptions did Columbus and other Europeans have about the Indigenous Peoples they encountered? Why did both groups have so many misconceptions? What effect did these misconceptions have on how Europeans and Indigenous Peoples thought about each other?
3. Sociologist Kai Erikson writes: "One of the surest ways to confirm an identity, for communities as well as for individuals, is to find some way of measuring what one is *not*."<sup>9</sup> In what ways did Europeans define the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas according to that logic? What purpose did such thinking serve for these newcomers to North America? What might be the effects of a negative identity—of defining others by what they are not?
4. Have you ever been defined by what you are not? If so, how did it affect the way you viewed yourself? Why do you think that people so often focus on differences rather than similarities when they meet others for the first time?
5. What factors shape your initial understanding of unfamiliar people, places, and things that you encounter? What happens when you meet a person or group for whom you have no category? How difficult is it to avoid forming misconceptions about the unfamiliar?

<sup>9</sup> Kai Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance*, rev. ed. (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2005), 64.

## Reading 5

# We and They in Colonial America

For at least 400 years, a theory of “race” has been a lens through which many individuals, leaders, and nations have determined who belongs and who does not. The theory is based on the belief that humankind is divided into distinct “races” and that the existence of these races is proven by scientific evidence. Most biologists and geneticists today strongly disagree with this claim. They maintain that there is no genetic or biological basis for categorizing people by race. According to microbiologist Pilar Ossorio:

Are the people who we call Black more like each other than they are like people who we call white, genetically speaking? The answer is no. There’s as much or more diversity and genetic difference within any racial group as there is between people of different racial groups.<sup>1</sup>

Some historians who have studied the evolution of race and racism trace much of contemporary “racial thinking” to the early years of slavery in the colony of Virginia, in what is now the United States.

When the first Africans arrived aboard a Dutch slave ship in 1619, status and belonging in colonial Virginia society depended much more heavily on one’s religion or whether one owned property than it did on skin color or any notion of race. The stories of two Virginians of African descent—Anthony Johnson and Elizabeth Key—help to illustrate this fact.

Anthony Johnson, who arrived from Africa in 1621, was initially enslaved by a Virginia family from England, but he was permitted to obtain his freedom sometime in the first few decades after his arrival. It is not clear how he did so, but at the time those held in slavery were sometimes granted freedom by their owners, or, more often, they were allowed to farm a plot of their owner’s land, sell the crops, and purchase their freedom from the profits. By 1640, Anthony had married a woman named Mary (who was also enslaved), started a family, and acquired a sizeable farm of his own. When a fire destroyed much of the Johnson plantation in 1653, local officials noted that the Johnsons were “inhabitants in Virginia above thirty years” who were respected for their “hard labor and known service,” and they excused Mary and the couple’s two daughters from paying taxes for the rest of their lives. The ruling allowed the family to rebuild. In issuing the ruling, officials ignored a Virginia law that required that “all free Negro men and women” pay special taxes.

1 Pilar Ossorio, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, Episode 1: “The Difference Between Us” (California Newsreel, 2003), transcript accessed May 2, 2016, <http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race1.htm>.

Historians T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes offer one explanation for the successes of African Americans like the Johnsons:

The foundation of liberty in mid-century Northampton—for whites as well as blacks—was property. Without land and livestock, without the means to support a family, no one could sustain freedom. Property gave men rights before the law; it provided them with an independent identity that translated into a feisty self-confidence in face-to-face contacts. Indeed, in this [rudimentary] social system, in which people placed extreme emphasis upon personal independence, upon material gain, and upon aggressive competition, property became the only clear measure of another man's worth. And while the great planters of the Eastern Shore exploited dependent laborers, they also recognized the prerogative of almost everyone to take part in the scramble for wealth. It had not yet occurred to them to cut the Johnsons [and other people of African descent] out of the game.<sup>2</sup>

Like Anthony Johnson, Elizabeth Key was also able to secure her place as a free member of seventeenth-century Virginia society. She was born in Virginia in 1630, the daughter of an enslaved African woman and a British man who served in Virginia's House of Burgesses, the colony's legislature. After her father's death in 1636, Elizabeth's godfather, a prominent politician, took the child into his home.

At first Key's godfather treated her as an indentured servant, but in time he sold her to a judge in Northumberland County, Virginia, who considered her his permanent slave. When the judge died in 1655, Key sued his estate for her freedom. She claimed that she was an indentured servant who had been sold wrongfully into slavery. Her enslavement was wrongful, she argued, because her father was an Englishman and under British law (which then ruled the colonies), she inherited his status in society. He was a free person and therefore so was she. And, finally, she provided a certificate of baptism as proof that she was a Christian, which meant under British law that she could not be enslaved. In 1662, the House of Burgesses was both Virginia's legislature and its highest court. When it ruled in Key's favor, she became a free person.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the success of Elizabeth Key, Anthony Johnson, and other Virginians of African descent, Virginia's laws and traditions began to change in the 1660s. The House of Burgesses began to pass laws that favored people of European descent and restricted the freedom of those of African descent. Shortly after Key's case was settled, the same lawmakers who decided that she had been wrongfully enslaved passed several new laws that prevented any other person of African descent from making a similar argument. One of the new laws stated that whether the child of an Englishman and an African woman was slave or free was to be determined *solely* by the mother's status. If she had been enslaved, her child was a slave. Slavery was now a "permanent" and inheritable condition for people of African descent. Another law reinforced that idea by declaring that conversion to Christianity did not

2 T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640–1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113.

make an enslaved person free. In the spring of 1670, Johnson died and left 50 acres of land to one of his sons. In August, an all-white jury ruled that the colony could seize the son's inheritance because he was "a Negro and by consequence an alien." These laws and rulings ensured that white property owners would have a permanent work force—one bound to them by law, custom, and, increasingly, race.

## Connection Questions

1. What qualities gave someone status and power in seventeenth-century Virginia? How had that changed by the 1670s? Why might the Virginia legislature have restricted the freedom of people of African descent? What role do you think economics played in these new restrictions?
2. Were Anthony Johnson and Elizabeth Key included in Virginia's universe of obligation during their lifetimes? What people and institutions played a part in defining the colony's universe of obligation?
3. What do you think the jury meant when it labeled Anthony Johnson's son an "alien"? Where does that label place Anthony Johnson's family in relation to Virginia's universe of obligation? What consequences might a person who is labeled an alien face?
4. What do the stories of Anthony Johnson and Elizabeth Key suggest about the role of law in creating the "other"? How might laws about the "other" give legitimacy to discrimination?
5. What questions does this reading raise for you about the notion of race and its effect on society? How does it complicate your understanding of the history of racism and slavery in North America?

## Reading 6

# Inventing Black and White



Watch **Race: The Power of an Illusion**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

In Virginia in the 1600s, Anthony Johnson secured his freedom from indentured servitude, acquired land, and became a respected member of his community. Elizabeth Key successfully appealed to the colony's legal system to set her free after she had been wrongfully enslaved. By the 1700s, the laws and customs of Virginia had begun to distinguish *Black* people from *white* people, making it impossible for most Virginians of African descent to do what Johnson and Key had done.

Why did Virginia lawmakers make these changes? Many historians point to an event known as Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 as a turning point. Nathaniel Bacon was a wealthy white property owner and relative of Virginia's governor, William Berkeley. But Bacon and Berkeley did not like each other, and they disagreed over issues pertaining to how the colony should be governed, including the colony's policy toward Native Americans. Bacon wanted the colony to retaliate for raids by Native Americans on frontier settlements and to remove all Native Americans from the colony so landowners like himself could expand their property. Berkeley feared that doing so would unite all of the nearby tribes in a costly and destructive war against the colony. In defiance of the governor, Bacon organized his own militia, consisting of white and Black indentured servants and enslaved Black people, who joined in exchange for their freedom, and attacked nearby tribes. A power struggle ensued with Bacon and his militia on one side and Berkeley, the Virginia House of Burgesses, and the rest of the colony's elite on the other. Months of conflict followed, including armed skirmishes between militias. In September 1676, Bacon's militia captured Jamestown and burned it to the ground.

Although Bacon died of fever a month later and the rebellion fell apart, Virginia's wealthy planters were shaken by the fact that a rebel militia that united white and Black servants and slaves had destroyed the colonial capital. Legal scholar Michelle Alexander writes:

The events in Jamestown were alarming to the planter elite, who were deeply fearful of the multiracial alliance of [indentured servants] and slaves. Word of Bacon's Rebellion spread far and wide, and several more uprisings of a similar type followed. In an effort to protect their superior status and economic position, the planters shifted their strategy for maintaining dominance. They abandoned their heavy reliance on indentured servants in favor of the importation of more black slaves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, rev. ed. (New York: The New Press, 2013), 24.



After Bacon's Rebellion, Virginia's lawmakers began to make legal distinctions between "white" and "Black" inhabitants. By permanently enslaving Virginians of African descent and giving poor white indentured servants and farmers some new rights and status, they hoped to separate the two groups and make it less likely that they would unite again in rebellion. Historian Ira Berlin explains:

Soon after Bacon's Rebellion they increasingly distinguish between people of African descent and people of European descent. They enact laws which say that people of African descent are hereditary slaves. And they increasingly give some power to independent white farmers and land holders . . .

Now what is interesting about this is that we normally say that slavery and freedom are opposite things—that they are diametrically opposed. But what we see here in Virginia in the late 17th century, around Bacon's Rebellion, is that freedom and slavery are created at the same moment.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first appearance in print of the adjective *white* in reference to "a white man, a person of a race distinguished by a light complexion" was in 1671. Colonial charters and other official documents written in the 1600s and early 1700s rarely refer to European colonists as white.

As the status of people of African descent in the British colonies was challenged and attacked, and as white indentured servants were given new rights and status, the word *white* continued to be more widely used in public documents and private papers to describe the European colonists. People of European descent were considered white, and those of African descent were labeled Black. Historian Robin D. G. Kelley explains:

Many of the European-descended poor whites began to identify themselves, if not directly with the rich whites, certainly with being white. And here you get the emergence of this idea of a white race as a way to distinguish themselves from those dark-skinned people who they associate with perpetual slavery.<sup>3</sup>

The division in American society between Black and white that began in the late 1600s had devastating consequences for African Americans as slavery became an institution that flourished for centuries. Lawyer and civil rights activist Bryan Stevenson explains:

[S]lavery deprived the enslaved person of any legal rights or autonomy and granted the slave owner complete power over the black men, women, and children legally recognized as property . . .



**This 1905 painting by Howard Pyle depicts the burning of Jamestown in 1676 by Black and white rebels led by Nathaniel Bacon.**

<sup>2</sup> Ira Berlin, interview, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel, 2003), accessed March 21, 2016, [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-02-08.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-08.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, interview, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, Episode 2: "The Story We Tell" (California Newsreel, 2003), accessed February 17, 2016, <http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race2.htm>.



American slavery was often brutal, barbaric, and violent. In addition to the hardship of forced labor, enslaved people were maimed or killed by slave owners as punishment for working too slowly, visiting a spouse living on another plantation, or even learning to read. Enslaved people were also sexually exploited.<sup>4</sup>

Leaders and scientists from the United States and around the world would increasingly rely on the supposed differences between the Black and white races to justify the brutal and inhuman treatment of slaves.

## Connection Questions

1. Why was Bacon's Rebellion a turning point for the status and rights of people of African descent in Virginia?
2. What motivated Virginia's lawmakers to make legal distinctions between white and Black inhabitants? What effect did those distinctions have on Virginia's universe of obligation? Can laws influence the way people think about who belongs and who does not?
3. What does Ira Berlin mean when he says that freedom and slavery were created at the same moment? How does creating an "out" group strengthen the identity and status of the "in" group?
4. In the documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, historian Mia Bay says that "part of where the idea of race comes from [is] in the tendency for people to see existing power relationships as having some sort of natural quality to them."<sup>5</sup> What does she mean? Why would people of European descent in the late 1600s begin to believe that people of African descent were naturally or biologically inferior to them? What role might economics have played in encouraging this belief? What role might have been played by the insecurity some felt about their social status?
5. How does the history of Bacon's Rebellion complicate your understanding of the history of racism and slavery in North America? What does this story, along with the stories of Anthony Johnson and Elizabeth Key (see Reading 5, "We and They in Colonial America"), suggest about the concept of "race"?

4 "Slavery to Mass Incarceration," YouTube video, posted by Equal Justice Initiative, July 7, 2015, accessed February 26, 2016, <http://www.eji.org/slaveryevolved>.

5 Mia Bay, interview, *Race: The Power of an Illusion*, Episode 2: "The Story We Tell" (California Newsreel, 2003), accessed February 17, 2016, <http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race2.htm>.

## Reading 7

# Who Is Human?

In the mid-1700s, many European philosophers and scientists began to use the ideas and methods of science to examine humans and human societies. These thinkers were part of a movement known as the Enlightenment. Most Enlightenment scientists believed that all humans everywhere have the ability to reason for themselves and form their own societies. They also believed that all humans are entitled to certain basic rights that they called *natural rights*. In time, these ideas spread and shaped the way ordinary people viewed the world. Some began to say that if societies are human inventions, rather than ordained by God, then people have the right to alter or even replace an oppressive government with one more to their liking.

In 1776, this theory was made concrete: 13 British colonies along the eastern coast of North America broke their ties to Britain and formed their own government. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia wrote their Declaration of Independence. It states:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The French Revolution was also inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment. In 1789, in their Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the French revolutionaries boldly stated that “Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights.” As a French leader explained, “Since men are all made of the same clay, there should be no distinction or superiority among them.”

But the emphasis on human equality presented Enlightenment leaders with a dilemma. Historian Ira Berlin explains:

After the Declaration of the Rights of Man [and] the Declaration of Independence, the presumption is that all men are created equal. Equality is the point. And what then has to be explained for the very first time in world history is inequality, and why inequality exists. In other words, if all men are created equal, why are some men and women still slaves?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ira Berlin, interview, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (California Newsreel, 2003), accessed March 21, 2016, [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-02-08.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-08.htm).

Although the great thinkers of the Enlightenment stressed the equality of humankind, the belief that humanity is divided into separate and unequal races continued to develop during those same years. Less than ten years after writing the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson, a slaveholder himself, wrote:

I advance it . . . as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind . . . This unfortunate difference of colour, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people.<sup>2</sup>

Jefferson was one of many who wrestled with the contradiction in simultaneously promoting equality and upholding hierarchical divisions in society. Historian Londa Schiebinger offers one explanation:

The expansive mood of the Enlightenment—the feeling that all men are by nature equal—gave middle- and lower-class men, women, Jews, Africans, and West Indians living in Europe reason to believe that they, too, might begin to share the privileges heretofore reserved for elite European men. Optimism rested in part on the ambiguities inherent in the word “man” as used in revolutionary documents of the period. The 1789 [French] Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen said nothing about race or sex, leading many to assume that the liberties it proclaimed would hold universally. The future president of the French National Assembly, Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau, declared that no one could claim that “white men are born and remain free, black men are born and remain slaves.” Nor did the universal and celebrated “man” seem to exclude women. Addressing the Convention in 1793, an anonymous woman declared: “Citizen legislators, you have given men a constitution . . . as the constitution is based on the rights of man, we now demand the full exercise of those rights for ourselves.”

Within this revolutionary republican framework, an appeal to natural rights could be countered only by proof of natural inequalities. The marquis de Condorcet wrote, for instance, that if women were to be excluded . . . one must demonstrate a “natural difference” between men and women to legitimate that exclusion. In other words, if social inequalities were to be justified within the framework of Enlightenment thought, scientific evidence would have to show that human nature is not uniform, but differs according to age, race, and sex.

According to Schiebinger, scientists responded to this challenge by seeking “natural foundations to justify social inequalities between the sexes and races.”<sup>3</sup>

2 Thomas Jefferson, “Notes on the State of Virginia” (1787), available at the Avalon Project website (Yale Law School), accessed February 10, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/jeffvir.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jeffvir.asp).

3 Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 143–45.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the practice of slavery call into question the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers who supported the American and French Revolutions? How did these thinkers seek to resolve the contradiction?
2. According to Londa Schiebinger, the thinkers of the Enlightenment encouraged a search for “evidence . . . that human nature is not uniform, but differs according to age, race, and sex.” What does she suggest inspired that search? What consequences might such a search have?
3. Suppose the Enlightenment had sought evidence of the similarities among humankind. What might have been the consequences for society of that search? For individuals within that society?

## Reading 8

# The Science of Race



RESOURCE

Explore **Race and Membership in American History**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

In the 1700s and early 1800s, scientists in Europe and the Americas studied “race science”—the idea that humankind is divided into separate and unequal races. They tried to explain the contradiction between the belief in human equality expressed during the American and French Revolutions and the emergence of slavery in the United States and several European countries (see Reading 7, “Who Is Human?”).

Prominent scientists from many countries built upon each other’s conclusions. They included the following:

- **Carolus Linnaeus**, an eighteenth-century Swedish naturalist, was among the first scientists to sort and categorize human beings. He regarded humanity as a species within the animal kingdom and divided the species into four varieties: European, American, Asiatic, and African.
- **Petrus Camper**, an eighteenth-century Dutch professor of anatomy, believed that the ancient Greeks had come closer than other people to human perfection. He used Greek statues to establish standards of beauty and ranked human faces by how closely they resembled his ideal.
- **Johann Friedrich Blumenbach**, a German scientist, coined the term *Caucasian* in 1795 “to describe the variety of mankind that originated on the southern slopes of Mount Caucasus” along Europe’s eastern border. He claimed it was the “original” race and therefore the most “beautiful.”<sup>1</sup>
- **Samuel George Morton**, an American anthropologist, theorized in the mid-1800s that intelligence is linked to brain size. After measuring a vast number of skulls from around the world, he concluded that whites have larger skulls than other races and are therefore “superior.”

The work of important scientists like Samuel Morton gave racism legitimacy. Journalists, teachers, and preachers began to popularize their findings. Historian Reginald Horsman, who studied the leading publications of the time, notes: “One did not have to read obscure books to know that the Caucasians were innately superior, and that they were responsible for civilization in the world, or to know that inferior races were destined to be overwhelmed or even to disappear.”<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, those who questioned scientists like Morton were ignored or marginalized. German professor Friedrich Tiedemann attempted to replicate Morton’s work during this period but could not reproduce the results. He also found no evidence for the racial hierarchy—a kind of racial ladder on which Caucasians always stood at the top and Africans at the bottom—

1 Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 47.

2 Ibid., 157.

that Morton had claimed to uncover. Tiedemann's work did not attract much attention; it was largely ignored or dismissed as "unscientific."

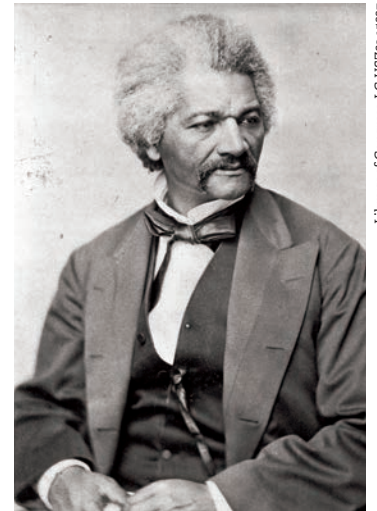
Frederick Douglass, a former slave and the most prominent nineteenth-century opponent of slavery in the United States, also argued against the idea that Africans are less human than Anglo-Saxons (the descendants of people who settled in England in the fifth century):

Man is distinguished from all other animals by the possession of certain definite faculties and powers, as well as by physical organization and proportions. He is the only two-handed animal on the earth—the only one that laughs, and nearly the only one that weeps. . . . Common sense itself is scarcely needed to detect the absence of manhood in a monkey, or to recognize its presence in a Negro. . . .

Tried by all the usual, and all the unusual tests, whether mental, moral, physical, or psychological, the Negro is a MAN—considering him as possessing knowledge, or needing knowledge, his elevation or his degradation, his virtues, or his vices—whichever road you take, you reach the same conclusion, the Negro is a MAN. His good and his bad, his innocence and his guilt, his joys and his sorrows, proclaim his manhood in speech that all mankind practically and readily understand . . .

It is the province of prejudice to blind; and scientific writers, not less than others, write to please, as well as to instruct, and even unconsciously to themselves, (sometimes,) sacrifice what is true to what is popular. Fashion is not confined to dress; but extends to philosophy as well—and it is fashionable now, in our land, to exaggerate the differences between the Negro and the European.

Why was it "fashionable" for many white Americans to deny the humanity of Africans? Douglass explained: "The whole argument in defense of slavery becomes utterly worthless the moment the African is proved to be equally a man with the Anglo-Saxon. The temptation, therefore, to read the Negro out of the human family is exceeding strong."<sup>3</sup>



Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-15887

**Frederick Douglass, a former slave and the most prominent nineteenth-century opponent of slavery in the United States.**

## Connection Questions

1. What were some of the key ideas of "race science"?
2. Why might the ideas of "race science" have been appealing to so many Europeans and Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?
3. What does Douglass mean when he claims that race scientists sacrificed "what is true to what is popular"? Why is it so easy to accept and support popular ideas, even if they are incorrect, and so difficult to challenge them?
4. How does Douglass explain the possible motivations of those who wanted to "read the Negro out of the human family"? What are the consequences when popular but untrue economic, political, or social ideas influence the thinking of scientists?

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Douglass, *The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered: An Address Before the Literary Societies of Western Reserve College, at Commencement, July 12, 1854* (Rochester, NY: Lee, Mann & Co., 1854), 8–9.

## Reading 9

# We the People in the United States

In 1787, 11 years after the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that “all men are created equal,” the US Constitution was adopted. It begins with this preamble:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.<sup>1</sup>

Who is included in “We the People”? This is a question that has been debated throughout American history. William H. Hastie, the first Black federal judge in the United States (appointed in 1937), wrote: “Democracy is a process, not a static condition. It is becoming, rather than being. It can be easily lost, but is never finally won.” Much of the history of the United States reflects this ongoing process, as individuals and groups have attempted to make the country better reflect the democratic ideals expressed in its founding documents.

Women’s suffrage activist Susan B. Anthony was one individual who challenged the country to expand its definition of who belongs. In November 1872, she was arrested for voting in a federal election before women had gained the right to do so. Before her trial, she gave a speech titled “Is It a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?” In that speech, she quoted the preamble to the Constitution and then stated:

It was we, the people, not we, the white male citizens, nor yet, we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union. And we formed it, not to give the blessings of liberty, but to secure them; not to the half of ourselves and the half of our posterity, but to the whole people—women as well as men. And it is a downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them provided by this democratic-republican government—the ballot.<sup>2</sup>

To support her argument, Anthony pointed out that “the words persons, people, inhabitants, electors, citizens are all used indiscriminately in the national and state constitutions.” In some states, only white men could vote; in others the language was vague enough that all property owners, including white women and African Americans, could vote. Yet, by the

Wikimedia Commons



Women’s suffrage leader Susan B. Anthony on her 50th birthday in 1870.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Const. preamble, available at the National Constitution Center website, <http://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/preamble>.

<sup>2</sup> Susan B. Anthony, “Is It a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?” (1872), quoted in *Speeches that Changed the World* (London: Quercus, 2005), 43.



early 1800s, white men no longer needed to own property or pay taxes in order to vote anywhere in the United States. At the same time, states that had previously allowed free African Americans and women to vote now took away those rights.

In 1776, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia were the only states to limit the right to vote to white men, and no northern state limited suffrage on the basis of skin color or race. After 1800, every state that entered the Union, except Maine, denied free African American men the right to vote.

In a nation that declared its belief in freedom and equality, those decisions had to be justified. And for many, there was only one justification: Native Americans and Blacks belonged to distinct and inferior “races” and therefore should be denied full citizenship. In 1857, the US Supreme Court confirmed that view. The justices heard a lawsuit brought by Dred Scott, an African American who demanded his freedom because his “owners” had taken him to several states and territories that did not permit slavery. In a decision written by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, the court ruled that Blacks “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect.” The American people, Taney argued, constituted a “political family” restricted to whites.

By 1865, a brutal civil war had finally brought an end to slavery in the United States but not to the prejudice and the discrimination experienced by African Americans. Immediately after the war, three amendments were added to the US Constitution to protect African Americans’ rights—the thirteenth amendment ended slavery and the fifteenth granted former slaves the right to vote, but it was the fourteenth that Susan B. Anthony focused on in her 1872 speech. That amendment states, in part:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.<sup>3</sup>

Susan B. Anthony saw those two sentences as proof that women had all of the rights of citizenship. In her view, the first sentence established that women are citizens, and the second settled whether or not they hold a place in society equal to that of all other “persons.” She concluded her speech by firmly stating:

The only question to be settled, now, is: Are women persons? And I hardly believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not. Being persons, then, women are citizens, and no state has a right to make any new law, or to enforce any old law, that shall abridge their privileges or immunities. Hence, every discrimination against women in the constitutions and laws of the several states, is today null and void, precisely as is every one against Negroes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Const. amend, XIV available at the National Constitution Center website, <http://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/preamble>.

<sup>4</sup> Susan B. Anthony, “Is It a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?” (1872), quoted in *Speeches that Changed the World* (London: Quercus, 2005), 43–44.

Despite her argument, Anthony was tried and convicted for “the crime of having voted” in the 1872 election and fined \$100. Women did not obtain the right to vote in the United States until 1920. In fact, until 1922, a woman born and reared in the United States would lose her citizenship if she married a foreigner. She had to assume the citizenship of her husband. However, an American man could marry a foreign woman without losing his citizenship.

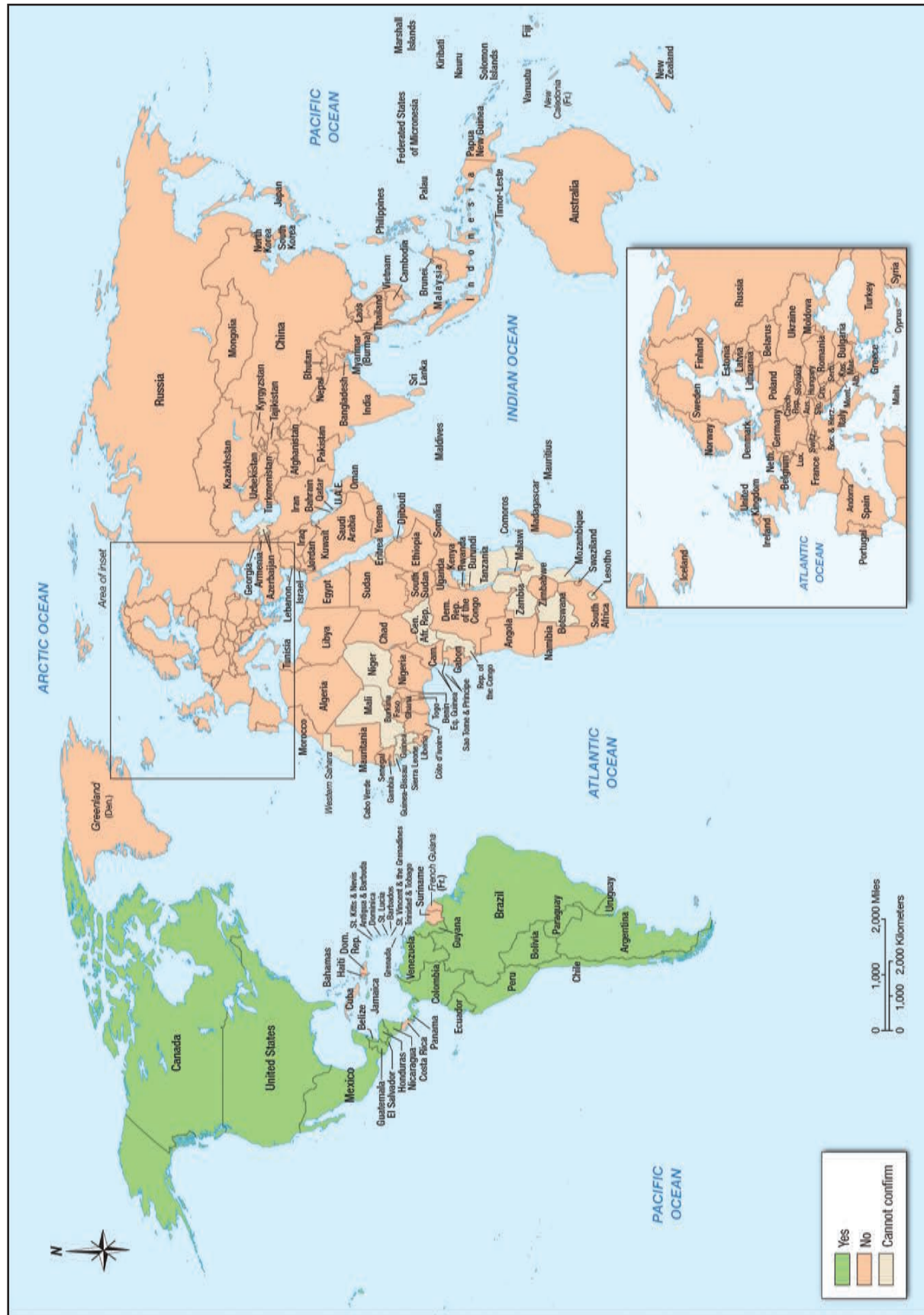
Even though the fourteenth amendment introduced *birthright citizenship*—meaning that anyone born within a country’s borders is automatically a citizen regardless of the parents’ nationality—this remains a controversial idea, both in the United States and in other countries. The extent to which the amendment’s promise of “equal protection of the law” is a reality continues to be debated today. In 2010, about 15% of the countries in the world, nearly all of them in North or South America, recognized birthright citizenship (see map on the next page).<sup>5</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. Who did the phrase “We the People of the United States” refer to when it was written in 1787? What did the preamble to the Constitution promise to those people?
2. What are the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship in a country? How did America’s leaders justify excluding women, African Americans, and Native Americans from the benefits of citizenship?
3. What options are available to individuals when their nation does not live up to its ideals? How did Susan B. Anthony confront the differences she experienced between ideals and reality in the United States and work for change?
4. What is a democracy? How is it different from other forms of government? How should a democratic society define its universe of obligation?

<sup>5</sup> Eyder Peralta, “3 Things You Should Know About Birthright Citizenship,” *The Two-Way* (blog), NPR, August 18, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/08/18/432707866/3-things-you-should-know-about-birthright-citizenship>.

# Birthright Citizenship Worldwide, 2015



**Who can be a citizen? Many countries recognize birthright citizenship, meaning that anyone born within a country's territory is automatically a citizen, even if the parents are not citizens.**

## Reading 10

# Religion, Loyalty, and Belonging



RESOURCE

Explore **Give Bigotry  
No Sanction**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

The ways people think about who belongs and who does not have been influenced for centuries by religious beliefs as well as beliefs about race and gender. However, Enlightenment-era ideas about natural rights and human equality challenged the notion that one's religious beliefs should determine a person's rights and privileges in society. In the late eighteenth century, the United States and France were both new democracies with large Christian majorities, struggling with tensions over religion, loyalty, and belonging.

On August 17, 1790, Moses Seixas, an official of the Hebrew congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, was selected to deliver a public letter to President George Washington, who was visiting the state. While Seixas expressed hope that the young country would extend respect and tolerance to all of its citizens, regardless of religious beliefs, his letter emphasized the vulnerability of a religious minority in the new nation. The relationship of religion to the state was not yet clear. Responding to Seixas three days later, Washington used the opportunity to explain his own beliefs about religious freedom in the young democracy, writing:

The Citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy: a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance[,] requires only that they who live under its protection should demean [conduct] themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.<sup>1</sup>

Although over half of the United States population, including women and slaves, was disenfranchised during this time, and Washington himself owned slaves, his words nevertheless established an ideal of religious freedom and equality. Shortly after Washington's visit to Newport, in 1791, Americans added ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights, to the Constitution. The first begins with these words: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." However, judges at first interpreted the amendment to mean that it applied only to the national or federal government. The states were

<sup>1</sup> "Washington's Letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island (August 1790)," George Washington Institute for Religious Freedom website, <http://www.gwirf.org/washingtons-letter-to-the-hebrew-congregation-of-newport-rhode-island/>.

free to establish an official church, limit the rights of religious minorities, and discriminate against them. The struggle to end that discrimination took much longer.

Questions about religious freedom were raised in France as well. Shortly after the French Revolution began in the spring of 1789, a new body called the National Constituent Assembly was formed with the goals of reforming the French government and rewriting the French constitution. In August of 1789, it took a major step toward ending the monarchy: it adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, a political document that begins with the words, “Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.” Two years later, in 1791, France became the first European country to grant “emancipation” (or full civil rights) to its Jews—its largest non-Christian minority.

Their rights, however, came with a limit. As a French member of the assembly named Clermont-Tonnerre put it, “We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to the Jew as an individual.”<sup>2</sup> In other words, as long as Jews kept their collective identity and religious practice private, their rights as French citizens were ensured. But the constitution granted nothing to them as a religious group.

In 1799, ten years after the French Revolution began, Napoleon Bonaparte declared himself emperor. Questions of French citizenship and nationality still persisted: while some felt that religion was to be kept out of public affairs, others, including Napoleon, felt that Catholicism had a special relationship to the French state. In 1807, less than 20 years after Jewish emancipation, Napoleon summoned a group of French Jewish religious leaders in order to find out how loyal they were. Among a list of 12 questions, he asked,

In the eyes of the Jews, are Frenchmen considered as their brethren? Or are they considered as strangers?

Do Jews born in France, and treated by the laws as French citizens, consider France their country? Are they bound to defend it?

Are they bound to obey the laws and to conform to the dispositions of the civil code?<sup>3</sup>

His questions reveal the uncertainty many French people felt toward the minority groups in the country; for many, non-Catholics were not to be trusted. Fully aware of these feelings, the Jews at the meeting pledged their undivided allegiance to France:

The love of country is in the heart of Jews a sentiment so natural, so powerful, and so consonant to their religious opinions, that a French Jew considers himself in England as among strangers, although he may be among Jews; and the case is the same with English Jews in France. To such a pitch is this sentiment carried among them, that during the last war, French Jews have been seen fighting desperately against other Jews, the subjects of countries then at war with France.<sup>4</sup>

2 Count Stanislas-Marie-Adelaide de Clermont-Tonnerre, “Speech on Religious Minorities and Questionable Professions,” December 23, 1789, Center for History and New Media website, accessed June 13, 2008, <https://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/284/>.

3 Abba Solomon Eban, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 233–34.

4 *Ibid.*, 234.

The Jewish leaders stated clearly that their allegiance was to France and that their religious affiliation was secondary to their national identity. In the decades following this exchange, Jews climbed slowly but steadily up the social ladder in France. Many of them became well-known artists, authors, and scientists; others developed flourishing businesses; still others enjoyed successful careers in politics and in the military. In a story that would be echoed across much of Europe, however, an upsurge of antisemitism toward the end of the nineteenth century disrupted their progress.

### Connection Questions

1. What is George Washington saying in his letter to Jews about the relationship between religious beliefs and citizenship in the new United States?
2. Why are Washington's statements about religious liberty significant? How might a president's words shape what citizens believe about who belongs and who does not?
3. How were the rights of French Jews defined in the 1790s? Were Jews part of the country's universe of obligation?
4. How did French Jews respond to Napoleon's questions about their loyalty? What factors might influence how people emphasize membership in one group over another? What might be the consequences of being forced to choose one aspect of your identity over another?
5. How might laws divide a society into "in" groups and "out" groups? How might laws unite a society? What do laws indicate about a nation's universe of obligation?



## Reading 11

# Breeding Society's "Fittest"

By the late 1800s, more and more people were looking to science and biology to justify their ideas about who was "in" and who was "out." They found support for their arguments in a work that seemed unrelated to human societies. In 1859, Charles Darwin, a British naturalist, published *On the Origin of Species*. It explained how various species of plants and animals physically change over time. Darwin's work suggested that each species competes for a limited amount of space and nourishment, and only some survive. An individual organism that is well suited to its environment has the best chance of living long enough to mate and produce offspring. Over many generations, the traits that help an organism to survive are passed on, while the traits that create disadvantages die out. As a result, new traits, species, and forms of life gradually develop or evolve. Darwin called this process "natural selection." Shortly after *On the Origin of Species* was published, it became a sensation.

Many readers immediately saw connections between Darwin's theory of evolution and their own society. A number of them were influenced by the writings of Herbert Spencer, a British thinker. Referring to Darwin's work but using his own phrases such as "the struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest," Spencer helped to popularize a theory known as Social Darwinism.

Social Darwinists saw their ideas at work everywhere in the world. People who were at the top of the social and economic pyramid were considered society's fittest. People at the bottom must be "unfit," they reasoned, because competition rewards "the strong." Many Social Darwinists therefore questioned the wisdom of extending many rights and privileges, such as the right to vote, to groups who were "less fit." They argued that if the laws of natural selection were allowed to function freely, everyone would find their rightful place in society. Increasingly, that place was based on race.

In Germany, Ernst Haeckel, a biologist, popularized Social Darwinism by combining it with romantic ideas about the German Volk (the people who share German heritage, language, and culture). In a book called *The Riddle of the Universe*, he divided humankind into races and ranked each of them. In his view, "Aryans"—a mythical race from whom many northern Europeans believed they had descended—were at the top of the rankings and Jews and Africans were at the bottom.

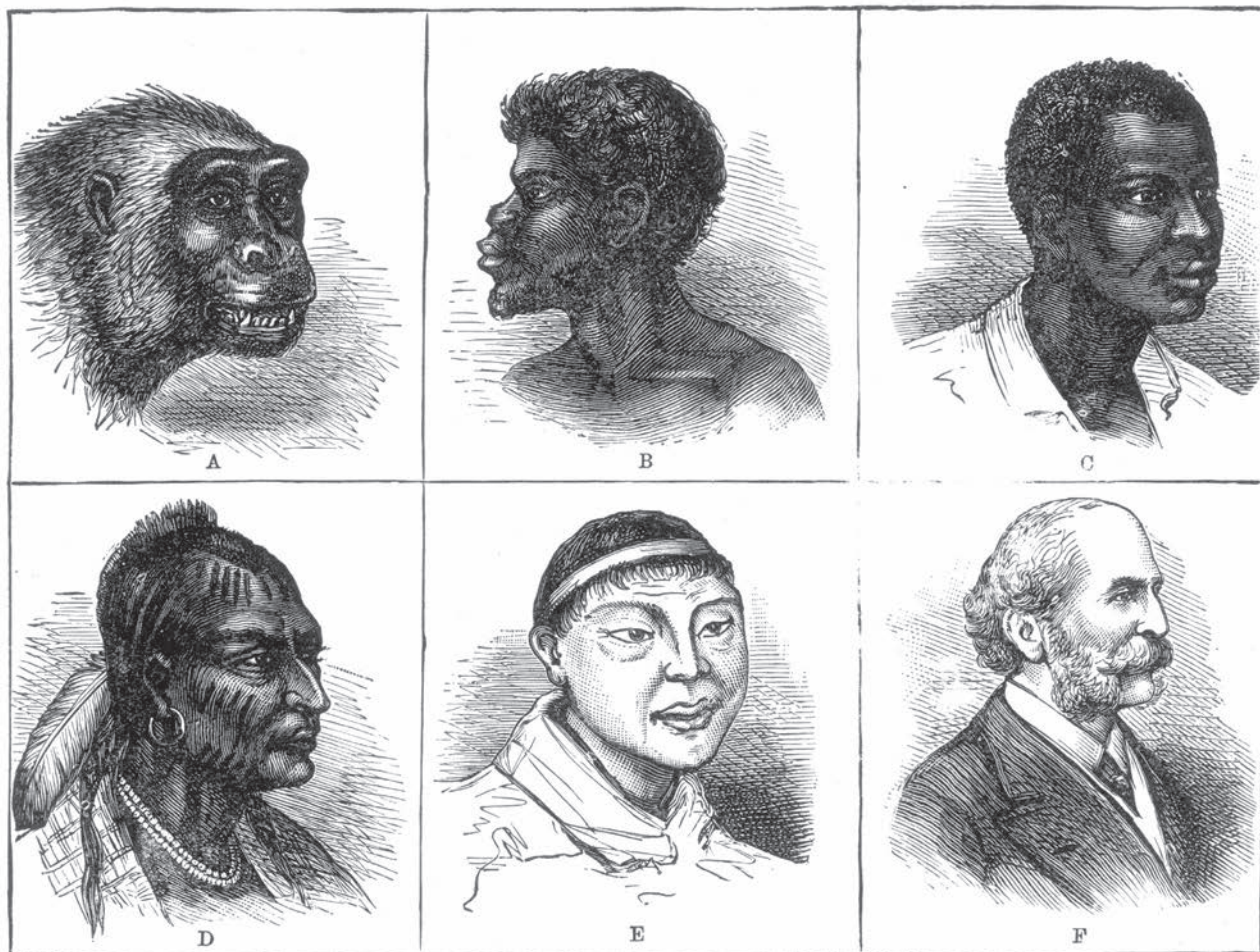


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Granger, NYC — All rights reserved.

This late-nineteenth-century chart shows the supposed racial stages of evolution from ape to European that many scientists supported.

Haeckel was also taken with the idea of *eugenics* as a way of keeping the “German race” pure. Eugenics is the use of science to improve the human race, both by breeding “society’s best with the best” and by preventing “society’s worst” from breeding at all. Eugenicists believed that a nation is a biological community that must be protected from “threat,” which they often defined as mixing with other allegedly inferior “races.” The eugenics movement in Germany was founded by Alfred Ploetz, who advocated for “racial hygiene”—the effort to promote not only the health of individuals but that of the “German race” as a whole.

Ploetz and Haeckel were inspired by the work of eugenicists in England and especially the United States. The term *eugenics*, which literally means “well born,” was coined in England by Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, but many of the most prominent eugenicists were Americans. American eugenicists advocated restrictions on marriage and immigration in order to prevent races from mixing. They also lobbied for laws that would permit sterilizing the “socially unfit.” These American laws, passed in the 1920s, became models for similar laws enacted in Germany a decade later.

Scientists who tried to show that there was no “pure” race were ignored. In the late 1800s, the German Anthropological Society, under the leadership of Rudolph Virchow, conducted a study to find out if there really were racial differences between Jewish and “Aryan” children. After studying nearly 7 million students, the society concluded that the two groups were more alike than they were different. Historian George Mosse says of the study:

This survey should have ended controversies about the existence of pure Aryans and Jews. However, it seems to have had surprisingly little impact. The idea of race had been infused with myths, stereotypes, and subjectivities long ago, and a scientific survey could change little. The idea of pure, superior races and the concept of a racial enemy solved too many pressing problems to be easily discarded. The survey itself was unintelligible to the uneducated part of the population. For them, Haeckel’s *Riddles of the Universe* was a better answer to their problems.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did people apply Darwin’s theory of natural selection to human society? What are the connections between “race science,” Social Darwinism, and eugenics?
2. According to historian George Mosse, “The idea of pure, superior races and the concept of a racial enemy solved too many pressing problems to be easily discarded.” What “problems” did such ideas of race solve? Are there any problems in our world today that are solved by “us and them” thinking?
3. Eugenacists conducted their research at prestigious universities and other respected scientific and medical institutions. They also formed their own organizations, such as the International Congress of Eugenics. What role do institutions play in giving legitimacy to ideas?
4. Why did the findings of eugenicists and “race” scientists so often suggest that their own group was superior? What evidence would you use to dispute the ideas and arguments of eugenicists?
5. Think of times when prejudice has blinded you or someone you know. How did you react when you recognized the prejudice? How did you feel? How do Mosse’s comments support the view that what people believe to be true is more important than the truth itself?

<sup>1</sup> George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (New York: Fertig, 1978), 92.

## Reading 12

# Creating the German Nation

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**Germania**, painted by Philipp Veit in 1848, was a symbol of the German nation during the revolutions of 1848–49 and in later years.

By the early 1800s, the biological view of race was gaining legitimacy in the minds of many Europeans and Americans. As a result, it shaped the way many people defined the word *nation*. According to their definition, the members of a nation not only shared a common history, culture, and language but also common ancestors, character traits, and physical characteristics. Many believed, therefore, that a nation was a biological community and that membership in it was passed on from one generation to the next. Among those who promoted this idea were a number of German professors and other scholars. In 1810, one German nationalist wrote: “A state without a *Volks* (a people who share a language and culture) is nothing, a soulless artifice; a *Volks* without a state is nothing, a bodiless airy phantom, like the Gypsies\* and the Jews. Only state and *Volks* together could form a Reich (great empire), and such a Reich cannot be preserved without *Volksdom*.”<sup>1</sup>

This concept of the German nation came at a time when what is now Germany was divided into 30 separate and often quarreling states, each with its own ruler and its own laws. Many students at German universities were eager to unite the German people of these states.

In 1817, some of those students assembled at Wartburg to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Martin Luther’s break with the Roman Catholic Church and the start of Protestantism. The students regarded Luther as more than a religious leader. To them, he was also a German nationalist. After vowing that they would never fight other Germans, the students threw dozens of books that they

\* The word *Gypsy* has been commonly used to refer to two distinct ethnic groups, the Sinti and the Roma, who migrated to Europe from northern India in the 1400s. Europeans called members of these groups Gypsies because they erroneously believed that these people had migrated from Egypt. It is more appropriate to refer to individuals from these groups by the specific names Sinti or Roma.

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, quoted in Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2010), 27.



considered anti-German into a huge bonfire in the “name of Justice, the Fatherland, and the Spirit of the Community.”

To the young men who gathered around the bonfire, *nationalism* was a crusade. Its aim was not only to “restore” a powerful German nation but also to protect its purity. It was an idea that also attracted such scholars as Friedrich Schlegel, who imagined the founders of the German *Volk* as a gifted “race” who had left India long ago and carried its culture westward. Schlegel did not have a name for this ancient people, but others called them Indo-Europeans. It was not until later in the century that they became known as “Aryans,” the name of a group of people who inhabited parts of what is now India around 1500 BCE. Scholars today reject Schlegel’s theory that this group migrated west and shaped German culture.

The students, their teachers, and other German nationalists saw non-Germans as “outsiders.” Some insisted that those people could become Germans if they assimilated—that is, if they were “properly” educated in German customs and traditions and accepted Christianity as their faith. Jews were one of the largest minorities in Germany at the time, though they were only about 1% of the population. Many of them doubted the sincerity of calls to assimilate. They were painfully aware that a growing number of Germans believed that assimilation was not enough to turn a Jew into a German. Eduard Meyer, a German historian, wrote in the mid-1800s:

Baptized or not, it’s all the same. We don’t hate the religion of the Jews but the many hateful characteristics of these Asiatics, among them their so frequent impudence and presumption, their immorality and frivolity, their noisy behavior, and their so frequently base approach to life. . . . They belong to no people, no State, no community; they rove about the world as adventurers, sniffing around . . . and they stay where they find lots of opportunity for speculation.<sup>2</sup>

Even as some Germans were treating Jews as outsiders who could never belong, many Jews were demanding acceptance as both Germans and Jews. One of the most prominent was Gabriel Riesser, a legal scholar. In 1831, he wrote an article demanding equal rights for Jews as a matter of “honor and justice.” Heinrich Paulus, a professor of languages and theology at the University of Heidelberg, responded by arguing that Jews were “Ausländer”—foreigners incapable of understanding the German soul. Riesser replied, “Whoever disputes my rights to my German fatherland disputes . . . my ideas, my feelings, the language which I speak, the air that I breathe; therefore I have to defend myself against those people as if they were murderers.”<sup>3</sup>

Riesser saw no contradiction between his religion and his right to citizenship. He argued:

There is only one baptism that can initiate one into a nationality and that is the baptism of the blood in the common struggle for a fatherland and for freedom. “Your blood was mixed with ours on the battlefield,” this was that cry which put

2. Eduard Meyer, quoted in Gordon A. Craig, *The Germans* (New York: Penguin, 1982, 1991), 135.

3. Gabriel Riesser, *Gesammelte Schriften*, trans. Gelber and Mendes-Flohr, in “The Paulus-Riesser Debate, 1831,” *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford University Press, 1995), 145.

an end to the last feeble stirrings of intolerance and antipathy in France. The German Jews also have earned this valid claim to nationality. . . . They have fought both as conscripts and volunteers in proportionate numbers within the ranks of the German forces.<sup>4</sup>

In 1848, Jewish activists, including Riesser, joined their Christian counterparts in a revolution that rocked much of Europe, including the German states. The goal was democracy and unification. Riesser was one of nine Jews elected to a “National German Parliament” in Frankfurt; he also served as its vice president. Among the lawmakers’ first acts was a proclamation that stated: “Every German has full freedom of conscience. Nobody shall be forced to disclose his religious creed.” It also stated that “enjoyment of civil or political rights shall be neither conditioned nor limited by religious confession [identification].”

Yet as delegates were trying to sustain a united Germany, the mood in Europe was changing—particularly the mood of the well-to-do. Within a few months, most of Europe’s kings and princes, including those of the former German states, had regained power and the old order was restored. Still, not all of the gains made in 1848 were lost. In 1859, Riesser became the first Jew to serve as a judge, but he did not live to see the unification of Germany in 1871; he died in 1863.

### Connection Questions

1. In the mid-1800s, Germany was divided into 30 separate states, and there was a movement to unify them. What is needed to create a nation? How did some believe the idea of the *Volks* could help with that process?
2. How did the students and scholars in this reading define what it meant to be “German”? What role did identifying an “other” play in their definition?
3. What are the key differences between Eduard Meyer’s and Gabriel Riesser’s views of who belonged in the German nation? How did they define Germany’s universe of obligation differently?
4. In the 1860s, the United States began to grant *birthright citizenship* (see Reading 9, “We the People in the United States”). What are the main differences between how the United States defined a nation and how the German thinkers discussed in this reading did?

<sup>4</sup> Riesser, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 144–45.

## Reading 13

# Anti-Judaism before the Enlightenment

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, American and French Jews felt vulnerable as their countries debated their loyalty (see Reading 10, “Religion, Loyalty, and Belonging”). In the mid-1800s, Germans argued over whether or not Jews could belong in the German nation (see Reading 12, “Creating the German Nation”). All of these debates were influenced by hundreds of years of prejudice, hatred, and violence toward Jews.

Judaism, a religious faith that has existed for more than 3,000 years, is the oldest monotheistic religion. Throughout much of the faith’s history, Jews lived in territories ruled by other groups. They were often treated as “the Other” and made scapegoats for calamities and misfortunes suffered by societies in which they lived. Continuous rumors, lies, myths, and misinformation about Jews have existed throughout history, and many of them persist in the contemporary world. Often this hatred has led to violence.

Historians have traced anti-Jewish myths, hatred, and violence back more than 2,000 years to the time of the Roman Empire. Tensions with the Romans led Jews in Palestine to revolt in 66 CE. The Romans responded violently. Historian Doris Bergen explains:

Roman authorities worried that Jewish refusal to worship local and imperial gods would jeopardize the security of the state. At times such unease, coupled with political conflicts, turned into open persecution and attacks. In 70 C.E. the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, the focal point of Jewish life up to that time; sixty years later they dispersed the Jews of Palestine, scattering them far from the region that had been their home.

During this same period, a new faith was born out of Judaism and began to spread across the Roman Empire. Bergen continues:

The rise of Christianity added new fuel to anti-Jewish sentiments. Christianity grew out of Judaism—Jesus himself was a Jew, as were the apostles and important figures such as Paul of Tarsus. Nevertheless, early Christians tried to separate themselves from other Jews, both to win followers from the gentile (non-Jewish) world and to gain favor with Roman imperial authorities. Some early Christians also stressed their loyalty to the state by pointing out that the Kingdom of God was not of this earth and therefore did not compete with Rome. Such efforts paid off; in less than four hundred years, Christianity went from being a persecuted branch of Judaism to being the dominant religion of the Roman Empire. It is significant that some early Christian accounts blamed Jews for Jesus’ death even though crucifixion was a specifically Roman form of punishment commonly practiced during



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**In much of Europe during the Middle Ages, Christians blamed Jews for the plague. In many towns, officials arrested Jews, confiscated their property, and burned them at the stake.**

Jesus' time. The version of events that had Jewish mobs demanding Jesus' death while the Roman governor Pontius Pilate washed his hands allowed later Christians to emphasize their difference from Judaism and downplay the hostility that Roman authorities had shown toward Christianity in its early stages. All of the false accusations against Jews associated with the Roman imperial period—that Jews were traitors and conspirators, that they killed Christ—remained familiar in Europe into the twentieth century.

In many ways the Middle Ages—from around the ninth to the sixteenth centuries—were difficult times for Jews in Europe. Often crusades against Muslims and Christian heretics started off or ended up with violent attacks on Jews. Such attacks, known as pogroms, were also common responses to outbreaks of plague or other disasters. For example, in many parts of Europe, the Black Death of 1348 sparked brutal pogroms, as Christians blamed Jews for somehow causing the epidemic of bubonic plague. Mobilized by such accusations, Christian mobs—sometimes spontaneously, sometimes urged on by state and church leaders—attacked Jewish homes and communities, plundering, destroying, and killing. The scale of the pogroms varied wildly, from brief local incidents to weeklong massacres that swept through entire regions. In their wake they left among Christians a habit of using Jews as scapegoats, and among Jews, a sense of vulnerability and a repertoire of defenses, such as paying protection money, sticking together, and keeping a low profile.

In addition to sporadic waves of violence, Jews faced harassment and restrictions of various kinds from governments across Europe. In some cases, regulations forced Jews to live in certain areas or ghettos; sometimes Jews were required to wear identifying badges; elsewhere, state authorities drove Jews out of their



territories altogether. In 1492, for example, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain expelled all Jews and Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula except those who agreed to convert to Christianity. Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews everywhere in Europe faced limitations on the occupations in which they could engage as well as the kinds of property and titles they could hold.

Some church leaders and secular rulers tried to convince or coerce Jews to abandon their religion and convert to Christianity. But even conversion did not necessarily solve the problems of intolerance. Converts from Judaism to Christianity in sixteenth-century Spain found that they were still viewed with deep suspicion and regarded as somehow tainted by supposed “Jewish blood.” . . .

The Protestant Reformation did not improve the lot of European Jews. At first its leader, the German monk Martin Luther, hoped that his break with what he considered the corrupted church of Rome would inspire mass conversions of Jews to Christianity. When the anticipated wave of baptisms did not occur, Luther turned against the Jews, whom he derided as stubborn and hard necked. In 1542 he wrote a pamphlet called *Against the Jews and their Lies*. That tract, with its vicious characterization of Jews as parasites and its calls to “set their synagogues and schools on fire,” would later be widely quoted in Hitler’s Germany. Other medieval images—the association of Jews with the devil; charges that Jews used the blood of Christian children for ritual purposes—also survived into the modern era . . .<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Draw a timeline documenting the major events that Doris Bergen describes in her summary of anti-Judaism. What parts of this history were unfamiliar to you?
2. On what basis were Jews viewed as a threat, or “the Other,” by the Romans?
3. In the first several decades after the death of Jesus, why did Christians try to separate themselves from other Jews? What were the consequences for the Jewish population? How can defining “the Other” help a group strengthen its own identity?
4. What is a scapegoat? What purpose do scapegoats serve for communities that have suffered some kind of misfortune? For what events did Christians use Jews as scapegoats in the Middle Ages?
5. Bergen tells us that in the sixteenth century, Jews began to be regarded as tainted by “Jewish blood” and seen as a separate race. Why did this false idea of a biological difference prove to be so significant?
6. Why is the history of anti-Judaism before the Enlightenment important? What relevance does this history have for today’s world?

<sup>1</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 4–6.

## Reading 14

# From Religious Prejudice to Antisemitism



VIDEO

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VIDEO

Watch **When Does "Us" Turn Against "Them"**

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On July 3, 1871, a newly united Germany granted citizenship to all Germans "independent of religious denomination." It was a moment of triumph for the approximately 500,000 Jews who lived in Germany at the time. But, as had so often been the case in many European societies for hundreds of years, Jews in Germany still did not have the same rights as other citizens. They were excluded from some occupations and denied high-ranking jobs in the army, some universities, and the upper ranks of the civil service.

Despite discriminatory laws and practices, however, many Jews in Germany prospered in the late 1800s. Those who prospered took advantage of the rapid mid-century growth of business, industry, and trade to find careers in new fields. They financed railroads, developed department stores, innovated in science and medicine, created theaters, founded newspapers and magazines, and experimented with new forms of music, art, and literature. Although they accounted for only 1% of the population and most were not wealthy, more Jews than ever were succeeding in Germany and becoming increasingly visible members of society.

But many Germans were disturbed by the changes in their society, and they felt that their traditional culture, status, and livelihoods were being threatened. It became appealing to accuse Jews of causing the transformation of German society that was disrupting their lives. Historian Saul Friedländer writes that for some Germans, "Jewish striving and Jewish success, real or imaginary, were perceived as the behavior of a foreign and hostile minority group acting collectively to exploit and dominate the majority."<sup>1</sup>

Wilhelm Marr, a German journalist, was among those who felt threatened by the progress Jews had made. In 1878, he published a pamphlet titled "The Victory of Judaism over Germandom." It stated, in part:

There is no stopping them. . . .

German culture has proved itself ineffective and powerless against this foreign power. This is a fact; a brutal [inescapable] fact. State, Church, Catholicism, Protestantism, Creed and Dogma, all are brought low before the Jewish tribunal, that is, the irreverent daily press [which the Jews control].

<sup>1</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 82.

The Jews were late in their assault on Germany, but once they started there was no stopping them.

Gambetta, Simon, and Crémieux were the dictators of France in 1870–1871. . . .

Poor, Judaized France!

In England, the Semite Disraeli [Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli], a German hater . . . , holds in his vest pocket the key to war and peace in the Orient [the East].<sup>2</sup>

The pamphlet was filled with lies and exaggerations. Jews did not control the press anywhere. Although Crémieux was a Jew and France's minister of justice, he was neither a dictator nor a head of state. Léon Gambetta, the president of the French Chamber of Deputies in 1879, and Jules Francois Simon, the minister of education in 1870, were neither dictators nor Jews; both men were Christians. As for England, Marr referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who belonged to the Anglican Church, as a "Semite" because Disraeli was born to Jewish parents.

Such facts were irrelevant to antisemites. To Marr and a growing number of other Europeans, all Jews, regardless of their religious beliefs, belonged to the "Semitic race." In the late 1800s, many European and American scientists continued to divide humankind into smaller and smaller "races," one of which was the "Semitic race." (The word *Semitic* does not actually refer to a group of people but is a linguistic term that refers to a group of languages traditionally spoken in the Middle East and parts of Africa, including Amharic, a language spoken in Ethiopia, as well as Hebrew and Arabic.)

Marr viewed Jews as more than just members of a distinct "race." In his view, the "Semitic race" was dangerous and alien. He coined the term *antisemitism* to describe his racial opposition to Jews and founded the League of Antisemites in Berlin in 1879 to combat the threat he imagined they posed. The group tried to turn antisemitism into a popular political movement. It never attracted many members, but another political party—the Christian Socialist Workers' Party, founded a year earlier by Protestant theologian Adolf Stoecker—had more success.

At first Stoecker's party focused on the social effects of industrialization and the need for Germans to rededicate themselves to Christianity. Antisemitism was a relatively minor theme until the party's leaders discovered they could increase their membership by demanding that German Jews renounce their alleged dreams of ruling Germany and by calling on the government to further limit the number of Jews in certain professions and universities. Like Marr, Stoecker and his followers were convinced that modern "science" justified discrimination against Jews.

By the end of the century, antisemitism had found a home almost everywhere in Europe. Every country interpreted racist ideas a little differently. Scientists who showed that more differences existed within a so-called race

2 Wilhelm Marr, "The Victory of Judaism over Germanism," in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, 2nd ed., ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 331–32.

than between one “race” and another were ignored. So the myth that Jews were a race continued to grow throughout Europe.

### Connection Questions

1. In 1871, Jews were guaranteed citizenship in Germany, but they still did not have the same rights as other citizens. Were they members of the German nation? Were they part of Germany’s universe of obligation?
2. Why do you think Jews were targeted in Germany in the 1870s? Was their success in German society related to efforts to exclude them?
3. How did Wilhelm Marr apply ideas of “race” to Jews? How did “race science” support his views? What were some consequences of his ideas? How did antisemitism spread in Germany?
4. What makes a myth so powerful that it continues to exist even when it is not supported by factual evidence?

## Reading 15

# “Expansion Was Everything”

In the late 1800s, English businessman Cecil Rhodes made a fortune claiming huge tracts of land in South Africa—places rich in gold and diamonds—and brutally exploiting the labor of the local population, who he considered to be members of an inferior race. Thousands died as a result of the labor practices his businesses used in Africa. In his later years, he wrote that “the world is nearly all parceled out, and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered and colonized. To think of these stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach, I would annex the planets if I could; I often think of that. It makes me sad to see them so clear and yet so far.”<sup>1</sup>

Rhodes was an imperialist, and to an imperialist, “expansion was everything.” *Imperialism* is the policy of expanding the rule of a nation or empire over foreign countries by force. In the 1800s, European nations acquired great wealth and power from both the natural resources of the lands they conquered and the forced labor of the people from whom they took the land. Imperialists used ideas from eugenics and Social Darwinism to justify their conquests. To imperialists like Rhodes, the idea that there would soon be no opportunity for further expansion was unsettling.

The French held similar views. In a speech to the French Chamber of Deputies in 1884, Jules Ferry, who twice served as prime minister of France, said:

Gentlemen, we must speak more loudly and more honestly! We must say openly that indeed the higher races have a right over the lower races. . . . I repeat, that the superior races have a right because

This caricature, “Rhodes Colossus,” depicts British imperialist Cecil Rhodes straddling the continent of Africa after announcing plans for a telegraph line from Cape Town to Cairo.



Wikimedia Commons

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Stead, ed., *The Last Will and Testament of Cecil John Rhodes* (London: William Clowes Ltd., 1902), quoted in Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan, *Imperialism Past and Present* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.



## Colonial Presence in Africa



At the Congress of Berlin in 1884, 15 European powers divided Africa among them. By 1914, these imperial powers had fully colonized the continent, exploiting its people and resources.

they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races. . . . In the history of earlier centuries these duties, gentlemen, have often been misunderstood, and certainly when the Spanish soldiers and explorers introduced slavery into Central America, they did not fulfill their duty as men of a higher race. . . . But in our time, I maintain that European nations acquit themselves with generosity, with grandeur, and with the sincerity of this superior civilizing duty.<sup>2</sup>

A few months later, France took part in an international meeting known as the Congress of Berlin. It was called by Otto von Bismarck, then chancellor of Germany, and was attended by 15 nations. They came to establish rules for dividing up Africa—the only large landmass Europeans had not yet fully colonized. By agreeing to abide by those rules, the group hoped to avoid a war in Europe. They paid little or no attention to the effects of their decisions on Africans or the people of any other continent. The results of their efforts can be seen in the map on the previous page. The inset shows Africa just before the Congress of Berlin; the main map shows the continent in 1914.

In 1915, W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American scholar and activist, summed up the meeting held some 30 years earlier in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*. In it, he revealed that the Congress of Berlin was having an impact on Africa nearly two weeks before the first group of delegates arrived in Germany.

The Berlin Conference to apportion the rising riches of Africa among the white peoples met on the fifteenth day of November, 1884. Eleven days earlier, three Germans left Zanzibar (whither they had gone secretly disguised as mechanics), and before the Berlin Conference had finished its deliberations they had annexed to Germany an area over half as large again as the whole German Empire in Europe. Only in its dramatic suddenness was this undisguised robbery of the land of seven million natives different from the methods by which Great Britain and France got four million square miles each, Portugal three quarters of a million, and Italy and Spain smaller but substantial areas.

The methods by which this continent has been stolen have been contemptible and dishonest beyond expression. Lying treaties, rivers of rum, murder, assassination, mutilation, rape, and torture have marked the progress of Englishman, German, Frenchman, and Belgian on the dark continent. The only way in which the world has been able to endure the horrible tale is by deliberately stopping its ears and changing the subject of conversation while the devilry went on.

It all began, singularly enough . . . with Belgium. Many of us remember [Henry] Stanley's great solution of the puzzle of Central Africa, when he traced the mighty Congo sixteen hundred miles from Nyangwe to the sea. Suddenly the world knew that here lay the key to the riches of Central Africa. It stirred uneasily, but [King] Leopold of Belgium was first on his feet, and the result was the Congo Free State. . . . But the Congo Free State, with all its magniloquent heralding of Peace, Christianity, and Commerce, degenerating into murder, mutilation, and downright

2 Jules Ferry, "Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884," *Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry*, ed. Paul Robiquet (Paris: Armand Colin & Clie., 1897), trans. Ruth Kleinman, available from the Fordham University/Modern History Sourcebook, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1884ferry.asp>.



robbery, differed only in degree and concentration from the tale of all Africa in this rape of the continent already furiously mangled by the slave trade. That sinister traffic, on which the British Empire and the American Republic were largely built, cost black Africa no less than 100,000,000 souls, the wreckage of its political and social life, and left the continent in precisely that state of helplessness which invites aggression and exploitation. "Color" became in the world's thought synonymous with inferiority, "Negro" lost its capitalization, and Africa was another name for bestiality and barbarism.

Thus, the world began to invest in color prejudice. The "Color Line" began to pay dividends. For indeed, while the exploration of the valley of the Congo was the occasion of the scramble for Africa, the cause lay deeper. . . . Already England was in Africa, cleaning away the debris of the slave trade and half consciously groping toward the new Imperialism. France, humiliated and impoverished, looked toward a new northern African empire, sweeping from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. More slowly, Germany began to see the dawning of a new day, and, shut out from America by the Monroe Doctrine, looked to Asia and Africa for colonies. Portugal sought anew to make good her claim to her ancient African realm; and thus a continent where Europe claimed but a tenth of the land in 1875, was in twenty-five more years practically absorbed.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What motivated European nations to colonize Africa and Asia in the 1800s? How did they justify their conquest of other lands and people?
2. What do you think it meant to Jules Ferry to "civilize the inferior races" of Africa? What effect was this policy likely to have on the culture and way of life of indigenous Africans?
3. W. E. B. Du Bois writes: "Thus, the world began to invest in color prejudice. The 'Color Line' began to pay dividends." What does he mean by "invest"? In what sense was color prejudice an "investment" for imperialists?
4. How might the legacies of imperialism and this period's stereotypes about Africa influence the way people view the world today?

3 W. E. B. Du Bois, "The African Roots of War," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1915, 707–14.

## Reading 16

# Imperialism, Conquest, and Mass Murder

In the late 1800s, European nations were competing fiercely for control of Africa, the only continent (other than Antarctica) that had not yet been colonized by Europeans. Some European imperialists, such as French leader Jules Ferry (see Reading 15, “‘Expansion Was Everything’”), justified the conquest by claiming that “superior races” had both a right to the territory and a duty to “civilize” the “inferior races” that made up the indigenous people of Africa. Others claimed no duty at all toward the indigenous people. Historians David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen explain:

The white races had claimed territory across the globe by right of strength and conquest. They had triumphed everywhere because they were the fittest; their triumphs were the proof of their fitness. Whole races, who had been annihilated long before Darwin had put pen to paper, were judged to have been unfit for life by the very fact they had been exterminated. Living people across the world were categorized as “doomed races.” The only responsibility science had to such races was to record their cultures and collect their artifacts from them, before their inevitable extinction.

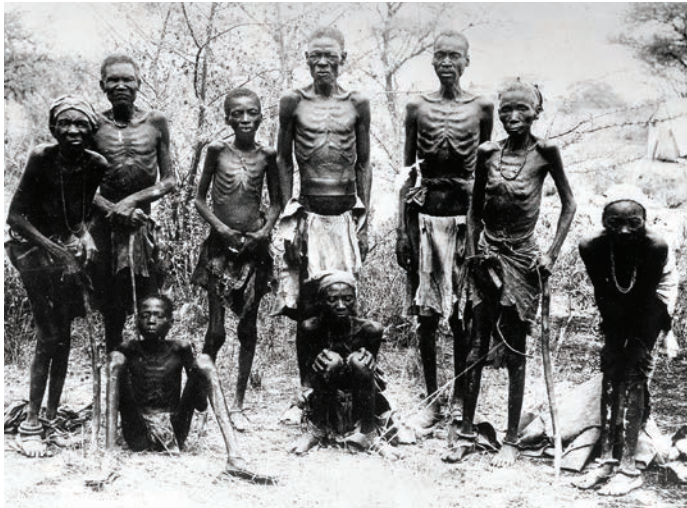
The spread of Europeans across the globe came to be regarded as an almost sacred enterprise, and was increasingly linked to that other holy crusade of the nineteenth century—the march of progress. Alongside the clearing of land, the coming of the railroad, and the settlement of white farmers, the eradication of indigenous tribes became a symbol of modernity. Social Darwinism thus cast itself as an agent of progress.<sup>1</sup>

Along with Belgium, England, France, and Portugal, Germany was one of many European nations deeply influenced by Social Darwinism. It affected the way the nation justified its actions in South-West Africa (modern-day Namibia), where Germans occupied the land of indigenous groups, including the Herero and Nama, beginning in the 1880s. Within 20 years, German settlers not only occupied much of the land but had also acquired (through confiscation or purchase) more than half of the Herero people’s cattle. Cattle were central to the Herero culture and economy.<sup>2</sup> Theodor Leutwein, the governor of German South-West Africa, explained what had happened to the Herero and Nama from an imperialist point of view when he wrote: “The native who did not care to work, and yet did not want to do without worldly goods, eventually was ruined; meanwhile, the industrious white man prospered. This was just a natural process.”<sup>3</sup>

1 David Olusoga and Casper W. Erichsen, *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (London: Faber & Faber, 2010), 73.

2 Benjamin Madley, “Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803–1910: The Aboriginal Tasmanians, the Yuki of California, and the Herero of Namibia,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 2 (June 2004): 182.

3 *Ibid.*, 169.



**After the Germans drove the Herero into the Kalahari Desert in South-West Africa in 1904, the few that survived returned from the desert starving.**

When the Herero, the Nama, and other groups in the region fought to keep their land and resources, German leaders were outraged. The Herero, led by their chief Samuel Maharero, began to revolt in January 1904. Though they had much better weapons than the Herero, German soldiers were unable to quickly end the rebellion. They lost hundreds of soldiers to disease, the unfamiliar desert climate, poor supply lines, and ambush attacks by Maharero's soldiers.<sup>4</sup> German officials in both Africa and Europe were made furious not only by the uprising but also by the idea that an "inferior" people were challenging their authority.

In August, Kaiser Wilhelm sent German Lieutenant-General Lothar von Trotha to take control of the colony and to "crush the rebellion by all means necessary."<sup>5</sup> Von Trotha had been previously stationed in east Africa, where he had a reputation for brutality in his efforts to put down all resistance to German rule. Von Trotha vowed to "annihilate the revolting tribes with streams of blood."<sup>6</sup>

Aware that large numbers of Herero warriors and their families were congregating on the nearby Waterberg Plateau, von Trotha ordered his troops to attack not only the warriors but also their wives and children. They were to take no prisoners. The troops quickly surrounded the Herero on three sides. They left open the fourth side—the Kalahari Desert. To make sure that no one used it to escape, soldiers were ordered to poison all water-holes and set up a chain of guard posts in the desert.

On October 2, long after thousands of Herero had already been murdered, von Trotha issued an "Extermination Order." It stated:

The Herero people must leave the land. If they do not do this I will force them with [big guns or cannon]. Within the German borders, every Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I will no longer accept women and children. I will drive them back to their people or I will let them be shot at. This is my decision for the Herero people.<sup>7</sup>

Before von Trotha arrived in South-West Africa, historians estimate the territory was home to between 70,000 and 80,000 Herero. Most of them were killed at the Battle of Waterberg or by trying to escape through the desert. Only 20,000 to 30,000 remained in South-West Africa. Most of them were sent to labor camps and forced to work for German authorities. Conditions in the camps were so brutal that nearly half died.<sup>8</sup>

4 Madley, "Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803–1910," 185–86.

5 Ibid., 186.

6 "The Herero Uprising 11 January 1904," Namibia-1on1.com, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.namibia-1on1.com/herero-uprising.html>.

7 Lothar von Trotha, "Proclamation 2," October 2, 1904, quoted in Olusoga and Erichsen, *The Kaiser's Holocaust*, 149–50.

8 Madley, "Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803–1910," 188.

In 1907, following increasing criticism in Germany and abroad, von Trotha's mission was canceled and he was sent back to Germany, where he was honored by the military. The shift in policy came too late for the Herero. Only 15,000 remained alive. It also came too late for the Nama people. After the defeat of the Herero, the Nama also revolted, and they too were swiftly defeated by von Trotha's forces. On April 22, 1905, he ordered them to surrender or "be shot until all are exterminated." He reminded them that if they continued to rebel, they would be treated in much the way the Herero were. Of an estimated 20,000 Nama, about half were murdered and the rest confined in work camps. Historians have explained the genocide in German South-West Africa as a result of Social Darwinist thinking, embodied especially in von Trotha's idea of race war, combined with the German military's institutional culture of extreme violence.<sup>9</sup>

The German atrocities against the Herero and Nama were not unique; similar attacks were made by British settlers against Aboriginal Tasmanians in Australia in the nineteenth century and by American settlers against the Yuki in California around the turn of the twentieth century. Contemporary historians call these episodes—in which an imperialist country intentionally tries to annihilate an indigenous people in order to control their land and resources—*frontier genocide*.<sup>10</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Describing the actions of Germans in South-West Africa and other similar historical cases, historian Benjamin Madley writes:

Victors write history, and . . . perpetrators create a myth to excuse their crimes. By claiming that so-called "primitive" peoples and cultures are fated to vanish when they come into contact with white settlers, a deadly supposition emerges: the extinction of indigenous people is inevitable and thus killing speeds destiny.<sup>11</sup>

What myths did Germans use to explain their attempts to annihilate the Herero and Nama? What motives did these myths attempt to excuse?

2. What is "the march of progress"? What did progress mean to imperialists?
3. In what kinds of situations have you used or heard the word *exterminate*? What is the significance of the way von Trotha used this word in describing his plans in South-West Africa?
4. What questions does the history of imperialist conquest and violence raise for you? In what ways is such brutality unexplainable?

9 Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5–6; Jürgen Zimmerer, "Annihilation in Africa: The 'Race War' in German Southwest Africa (1904–1908) and Its Significance for a Global History of Genocide," *GHI Bulletin*, no. 37 (2005): 51–57.

10 Madley, "Patterns of Frontier Genocide 1803–1910," 167–68.

11 Ibid., 168.

## Chapter 2 Analysis and Reflection

1. Reread Reading 1, "What Do We Do with a Difference?" What responses to differences between people occur in the history presented in this chapter? What were the consequences of those responses?

2. Scholar George Fredrickson writes that *racism* has two components: *difference* and *power*. He explains:

It originates from a mindset that regards "them" as different from "us" in ways that are permanent and unbridgeable. This sense of difference provides a motive or rationale for using our power advantage to treat the . . . Other in ways that we would regard as cruel or unjust if applied to members of our own group.<sup>1</sup>

How is Fredrickson's definition of racism reflected in the history of slavery in North America?  
How is it reflected in the histories of antisemitism and imperialism?

3. What is antisemitism? In what sense is antisemitism a form of religious prejudice? In what sense is it a form of racism?

4. What have you learned about the forces that shape a nation's universe of obligation?  
What have you learned about the forces that shape an individual's universe of obligation?

5. This chapter introduced many different ideas about the evolution of the concept of race.  
What echoes of these ideas do you recognize in our world today?

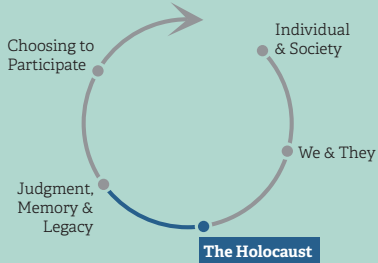
6. Why do humans so often divide themselves into "we" and "they"? When does it become a problem? What historical examples from this chapter help you answer this question?  
What examples from the world today help you answer it?

<sup>1</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 9.





## Chapter 3



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# World War: Choices and Consequences





## Overview

The ways societies define “we” and “they” can help to precipitate war. In turn, the violence and chaos of war can sharpen the differences people perceive between their nation and others, as well as between different groups within their own nation. This chapter focuses on how World War I shaped and was shaped by ideas of “we” and “they,” and it highlights aspects of the war that influenced the history of Nazi Germany in the following decades.



### Essential Questions

- How did World War I change the balance of power in Europe? How did it affect people's attitudes toward other nations as well as their own? How did it affect people's attitudes toward war?
- How did World War I affect the way that people perceived the value of human life?
- What happens to the way a society defines "we" and "they" in the midst of the chaos and violence caused by war?

The world war that began in 1914 in Europe would eventually involve 30 nations and 65 million soldiers. It was a war with incredible loss of human life on every battlefield and huge damage to the land wherever fighting occurred; it was marked by genocide, civil wars, famines, and revolutions. World War I was a *total war*, affecting thousands of civilians even in countries where no actual fighting took place. By its end, more than 9 million soldiers and more than 5 million civilians were killed. As a result of the war, three European empires fell. But the war had encouraged strong nationalist feelings in the countries that had made up those fallen empires, creating lingering post-war tensions, not only in Europe but also in the colonies in Asia and Africa, where pre-war racism continued to endure.

World War I, which many had hoped would be the "war to end all wars," was an explosion of violence on a scale never before seen in modern history. That explosion, wrote philosopher Hannah Arendt in 1951, "seems to have touched off a chain reaction in which we have been caught ever since and which nobody seems to be able to stop."<sup>1</sup> And yet neither the First World War nor the Second, which began 25 years later, was inevitable. Each was the result of decisions made by individuals and groups.

Chapter 3 focuses on the explosion of violence Arendt describes and the chain reaction it set off. This chapter begins the case study of the years leading to the Holocaust, which is the centerpiece of the Facing History & Ourselves journey. But instead of tracing the course of the war itself, the chapter highlights the aspects of World War I that had an important effect on the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. Historian Doris Bergen writes that while World War I did not cause Nazism or the Holocaust, its aftermath left in place fertile ground for the history that followed in at least three ways. First, the destruction and brutality of World War I "seemed to many Europeans to prove that human life was cheap and expendable." Second, the trauma of World War I created in Europeans and their leaders a "deep fear of ever risking another war." Third, the war's resolution left in place across Europe lingering resentments about the war and the terms of the peace. These resentments would later prove useful to leaders such as Adolf Hitler who sought to create "a politics of resentment that promoted a bitter sense of humiliation."<sup>2</sup> As teachers and their students explore the history of World War I, they should select the readings from this chapter that are most appropriate for their curriculum and classrooms.

1 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1968), 267.

2 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 42–43.



## Reading 1

# 1914: War or Peace?

Frantic competition among European powers marked the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The strength of a nation was measured by the scope of its wealth and resources, the amount of land it held, and the size of its army and navy. The leaders of many countries believed that a nation could only achieve its political and economic goals if it had a strong military, a belief known as *militarism*. Conscript armies grew in most countries, in which young men were required to undergo a year or two of military training and were then sent home as reserves to be mobilized or called to action when needed for fighting. Naval budgets increased every year, especially in Britain and Germany. No country wanted to be without allies if war broke out, so two major military alliances took hold. Germany, fearful of being hemmed in by enemies on its east and west, signed an agreement with Austria-Hungary to support each other in a European war. Russia and France reached a similar agreement.

Militarists increasingly viewed their nations' armed forces as above criticism. And many greatly admired such military values as self-sacrifice, discipline, and obedience. War was increasingly seen as an adventure, an opportunity to fight and even die for one's country. Karl Pearson, a British writer at the time, claimed that wars are necessary. He maintained that nations could establish their rightful position in the world "by contest, chiefly by way of war with inferior races, and with equal races by the struggle for trade routes and for the sources of raw materials and food supply."<sup>1</sup>

Others held similar views. Count Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, the chancellor of Germany at the turn of the twentieth century, claimed that "the old saying still holds good that the weak will be the prey of the strong. When a people will not or cannot continue to spend enough on armaments to be able to make its way in the world, then it falls back into the second rank."<sup>2</sup>



**Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement, inspects scouts in Britain in 1915.**

<sup>1</sup> Karl Pearson, *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905), 46.

<sup>2</sup> "Notes and Comments," *Oriental Review* 1, no. 15 (June 10, 1911): 279.

Militarism shaped the way people used words like *patriot* and *hero*. Patriots were no longer defined only by a love of country but also by an eagerness to fight for that country. The word *hero* was reserved for military men who excelled in battle. Historian Margaret MacMillan notes, "In Britain small children wore sailor suits and on the Continent schoolchildren frequently wore little uniforms; secondary schools and universities had cadet corps; and heads of state—except in republican France—normally dressed in military uniform."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout Europe and the Americas, many children, particularly boys, now belonged to youth groups that stressed physical fitness, military discipline, and, above all, an avid nationalism. One of the most popular of these groups was the Boy Scouts. Its founder, Lieutenant General Robert Baden-Powell, hoped it would transform British boys and young men from "pale narrow-chested, hunched up, miserable specimens, smoking endless cigarettes" into strong and healthy patriots.<sup>4</sup> Within a year of its founding in 1908, the Boy Scouts had more than 60,000 members in England. From there the movement spread to other parts of the British Empire and to English-speaking nations like the United States. In 1911, a similar group in Germany taught boys "that service to the Fatherland is the highest honor of the German man."<sup>5</sup>

Possessing colonies outside of Europe was another way for countries to demonstrate power. Encouraged by widespread ideas of imperialism, competition to gain colonies continued in the first decade of the twentieth century. Conflicts often arose, but they were settled through diplomatic means. These diplomatic agreements did not recognize any rights of inhabitants of these areas, who were generally considered inferior and unable to take care of themselves. As the second decade of the century began, several conflicts also erupted between the small countries of the Balkan Peninsula. Each crisis was settled through negotiation, but with each new crisis, more Europeans believed that negotiation would someday fail and war would eventually result.

Still, there were many who both feared and opposed war. Among the strongest opponents of war was Jean Jaurès, the leader of the French Socialist Party. He repeatedly argued that to work for peace was to engage in "the most heroic of battles."<sup>6</sup> He asked:

What will the future be like, when the billions now thrown away in preparation for war are spent on useful things to increase the well-being of people, on the construction of decent houses for workers, on improving transportation, on reclaiming the land? The fever of imperialism has become a sickness. It is the disease of a badly run society which does not know how to use its energies at home.<sup>7</sup>

Jaurès was a *pacifist*—literally, one who favors peace. The term was coined at a Universal Peace Congress in 1901 and it quickly caught on. One of the

3 Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace: The Road to 1919* (New York: Random House, 2014), 275.

4 Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 169.

5 Derek S. Linton, "Preparing German Youth for War," in *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914*, ed. Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering, and Stig Förster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 177–78.

6 Quoted in Frederick Brown, *The Embrace of Unreason: France, 1914–1940* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 13.

7 "Voices of the Great War," *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century*, WGBH website, accessed April 4, 2016, [http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch1\\_voices2.html](http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/chapters/ch1_voices2.html).

most outspoken pacifists of the time was an Austrian countess, Bertha von Suttner. This was a time when most women did not speak publicly about their political views, but, ignoring that expectation, the countess set out to change the way people viewed war.

In the late 1800s, Suttner had written a book that vividly described what she considered the “true horrors of war.” The novel, *Die Waffen nieder!* (Lay Down Your Arms), was reprinted many times and was translated into a dozen languages. It was not the only tool the countess used to promote peace. She founded anti-war societies in Austria and Germany and inspired similar groups in other countries. Her efforts aroused others, including Alfred Nobel, a Swedish arms manufacturer and the inventor of dynamite. He created a special award for peace activists at the countess’s request. Known as the Nobel Peace Prize and first awarded in 1901, it was established to honor those who try to end war or prevent it.

In 1899, the countess persuaded Tsar Nicholas II of Russia to host an international conference to promote peaceful alternatives to war, particularly *arbitration*—the use of a neutral third party to resolve international disputes. As a woman, the countess was not allowed to take part in the meeting, but she worked behind the scenes to establish the Permanent Court of Arbitration (popularly known as the Hague Tribunal).

In 1905, Bertha von Suttner was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in recognition of her work in promoting arbitration. Yet despite awards like the Nobel Prize and the increasing popularity of anti-war literature, most people found the idea of “fighting for our nation’s honor” far more appealing than seemingly endless rounds of arbitration. Increasingly, pacifists were isolated and demonized.

## Connection Questions

1. In what ways did Europeans in the early 1900s believe that countries could demonstrate that they were strong and powerful? What were different ways that individuals thought they could show loyalty to their country? Why might fighting in a war be appealing?
2. What conditions in the early 1900s made war appear likely?
3. What is militarism? What is pacifism? Why were efforts to promote pacifism over militarism unsuccessful?
4. How are the words *hero* and *patriotism* used today? When you hear these words, what comes to mind? Can someone be a patriot and a pacifist?
5. What was the “fever of imperialism” to which Jaurès referred? How might a country’s desire to gain imperialist power influence its policies at home?

## Reading 2

# Turning Us against Them

By 1914, in almost every European country, patriotic symbols were everywhere. Leaders encouraged not only a fierce love of *our* country but also an even fiercer hatred of *theirs*. This fervent “we and they” thinking was especially prevalent in France, which still held bitter memories of its defeat by Germany in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and its forced surrender to Germany of two of its provinces, Alsace and Lorraine.

Stefan Zweig was a widely read Austrian novelist, poet, journalist, and playwright. In his autobiography, written in 1941, Zweig recalls the day in the spring of 1914 when he visited a theater in a small French town:

First on the screen came a newsreel—“News from All Over the World”. A boat race in England; the people talked and laughed. Then a French military parade, and again the audience took little notice. But the third item was entitled: “Kaiser Wilhelm [of Germany] Visits Emperor Franz Joseph [of Austria-Hungary] in Vienna.” . . . As the old Emperor appeared on the screen, stooping slightly and not entirely steady on his feet . . . , the audience in Tours smiled kindly on the old gentleman with his white side whiskers. Then there was a picture of the train coming in. . . . The door of the salon car was opened, and out stepped Wilhelm II. . . .

At the moment when Kaiser Wilhelm appeared in the picture a storm of whistling and stamping broke out entirely spontaneously in the dark hall. Everyone was shouting and whistling, men, women, and children all jeering as if they had been personally insulted. For a second the kindly people of Tours, who knew nothing about the world beyond what was in their newspapers, were out of their minds. I was horrified, deeply horrified. For I felt how far the poisoning of minds must have gone, after years and years of hate propaganda, if even here in a small provincial city the guileless citizens and soldiers had been roused to fury against the Kaiser and Germany—such fury that even a brief glimpse on the screen could provoke such an outburst. It was only a second, a single second. All was forgotten once other pictures were shown. The audience laughed heartily at the comedy that now followed, slapping their knees loudly with delight. Only a second, yes, but it showed me how easy it could be to whip up bad feeling on both sides at a moment of serious crisis, in spite of all attempts to restore understanding, in spite of our own efforts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (New York: Viking Press, 1943), 210–11.



## Connection Questions

1. Propaganda can be defined as the use of information and media to influence public opinion. How would you define "hate propaganda"? How did Zweig see its impact at the theater?
2. How do you think crowds can reinforce and escalate strong reactions such as hatred and anger?
3. Chapter 1 looked at how society influences an individual. Chapter 2 explored how we so often divide ourselves into "us" and "them." How is "a love for our country" strengthened by "an even fiercer hatred of theirs"? Why does turning on an "other" help to create a sense of belonging? What examples of this process do you see in this reading? Are there examples in our world today?

## Reading 3

# A Last-Ditch Effort to Prevent a War

The spark that set off World War I came on June 28, 1914, when a young Serbian patriot shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The assassination took place in Sarajevo, a town in the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the Balkan Peninsula. Bosnia-Herzegovina had been taken over by Austria in 1908. The assassin and his co-conspirators belonged to a group that wanted Bosnia to break away from Austria and unite with the Kingdom of Serbia.

Austrian military leaders saw the assassination as an excuse for a quick war with Serbia, which would end with a victorious Austria taking over that country. After seeking and receiving a promise of full military support from Germany, with whom Austria-Hungary had an alliance, the Austrian government presented Serbia with a list of demands to which it must agree or face invasion. Europeans now expected war, and Austria and Germany began mobilizing their armies, or preparing them for the fighting. Russia, which had promised to come to the aid of Serbia in any war, also began to mobilize its armies. Serbia agreed to all of Austria-Hungary's demands except one, which would have allowed Austria to take part in, if not control, an internal inquiry into the archduke's assassination. To Austrian leaders, that single refusal was enough for a declaration of war against Serbia on July 25.

As the Austrian army began to invade Serbia, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany and Tsar Nicholas of Russia, who were first cousins, made a last-ditch effort to contain the conflict through an exchange of telegrams—messages that in the early twentieth century were transmitted over wires through a series of electrical pulses that used Morse code. The exchange, which took place in English, began with a telegram sent by Nicholas shortly after midnight on July 29, 1914:

In this serious moment, I appeal to you to help me. An ignoble war has been declared to a weak country. The indignation in Russia shared fully by me is enormous. I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure forced upon me and be forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war. To try and avoid such a calamity as a European war I beg you in the name of our old friendship to do what you can to stop your allies from going too far.

Before Wilhelm received the telegram, he had already sent one to Nicholas:

It is with the gravest concern that I hear of the impression which the action of Austria against Serbia is creating in your country. The unscrupulous agitation that has been going on in Serbia for years has resulted in the outrageous crime, to which

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**Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1905, both wearing military uniforms associated with their empires.**

Archduke Francis Ferdinand fell a victim. The spirit that led Serbians to murder their own king and his wife still dominates the country. You will doubtless agree with me that we both, you and me, have a common interest as well as all Sovereigns to insist that all the persons morally responsible for the dastardly murder should receive their deserved punishment. In this case politics plays no part at all.

On the other hand, I fully understand how difficult it is for you and your Government to face the drift of your public opinion. Therefore, with regard to the hearty and tender friendship which binds us both from long ago with firm ties, I am exerting my utmost influence to induce the Austrians to deal straightly to arrive to a satisfactory understanding with you. I confidently hope that you will help me in my efforts to smooth over difficulties that may still arise.

On the evening of July 29, Wilhelm responded to Nicholas's first message:

I received your telegram and share your wish that peace should be maintained. But as I told you in my first telegram, I cannot consider Austria's action against Serbia an "ignoble" war. Austria knows by experience that Serbian promises on paper are wholly unreliable. I understand its action must be judged as [seeking a] full guarantee that the Serbian promises shall become real facts. This, my reasoning, is borne out by the statement of the Austrian cabinet that Austria does not want to make any territorial conquests at the expense of Serbia. I therefore suggest that it would be quite possible for Russia to remain a spectator of the Austrian-Serbian conflict without involving Europe in the most horrible war she ever witnessed. I think a direct understanding between your Government and Vienna possible and desirable, and as I already telegraphed to you, my Government is continuing its exercises to promote it. Of course military measures on the part of Russia would be looked upon by Austria as a calamity we both wish to avoid and jeopardize my position as mediator which I readily accepted on your appeal to my friendship and my help.

Two hours later, Nicholas wrote:

Thanks for your telegram conciliatory and friendly. Whereas official message presented today by your ambassador to my minister was conveyed in a very different tone. Beg you to explain this divergence! It would be right to give over the Austro-Serbian problem to the Hague conference [for arbitration].

At 1:20 a.m. on July 30, the tsar sent yet another cable:

Thank you heartily for your quick answer. Am sending Tatischev [a Russian diplomat] this evening with instructions. The military measures which have now come into force were decided five days ago for reasons of defense on account of Austria's preparations. I hope from all my heart that these measures won't in any way interfere with your part as mediator which I greatly value. We need your strong pressure on Austria to come to an understanding with us.

Wilhelm responded almost immediately:

Best thanks for telegram. It is quite out of the question that my ambassador's language could have been in contradiction with the tenor of my telegram. Count Pourtalès (the German ambassador) was instructed to draw the attention of your government to the danger & grave consequences involved by a mobilization; I said

the same in my telegram to you. Austria has only mobilized against Serbia & only a part of her army. If, as it is now the case, according to the communication by you & your Government, Russia mobilizes against Austria, my role as mediator you kindly entrusted me with, & which I accepted at you[r] express prayer, will be endangered if not ruined. The whole weight of the decision lies solely on you[r] shoulders now, who have to bear the responsibility for Peace or War.

The next day, on July 31, Wilhelm sent a second telegram:

On your appeal to my friendship and your call for assistance began to mediate between you and the Austro-Hungarian Government. While this action was proceeding, your troops were mobilized against Austro-Hungary, my ally. Thereby, as I have already pointed out to you, my mediation has been made almost illusory.

I have nevertheless continued my action. I now receive authentic news of serious preparations for war on my Eastern frontier. Responsibility for the safety of my empire forces preventive measures of defense upon me. In my endeavors to maintain the peace of the world I have gone to the utmost limit possible. The responsibility for the disaster which is now threatening the whole civilized world will not be laid at my door. In this moment it still lies in your power to avert it. Nobody is threatening the honor or power of Russia who can well afford to await the result of my mediation. My friendship for you and your empire, transmitted to me by my grandfather on his deathbed has always been sacred to me and I have honestly often backed up Russia when she was in serious trouble especially in her last war.

The peace of Europe may still be maintained by you, if Russia will agree to stop the military measures which must threaten Germany and Austro-Hungary.

At about the same time, Tsar Nicholas sent this telegram:

I thank you heartily for your mediation which begins to give one hope that all may yet end peacefully. It is technically impossible to stop our military preparations which were obligatory owing to Austria's mobilization. We are far from wishing war. As long as the negotiations with Austria on Serbia's account are taking place my troops shall not make any provocative action. I give you my solemn word for this. I put all my trust in God's mercy and hope in your successful mediation in Vienna for the welfare of our countries and for the peace of Europe.

On August 1, the tsar telegraphed again:

I received your telegram. Understand you are obliged to mobilize but wish to have the same guarantee from you as I gave you, that these measures do not mean war and that we shall continue negotiating for the benefit of our countries and universal peace [dear] to all our hearts. Our long proved friendship must succeed, with God's help, in avoiding bloodshed. Anxiously, full of confidence await your answer.

On August 1, the kaiser replied to the tsar:

Thanks for your telegram. I yesterday pointed out to your government the way by which alone war may be avoided. Although I requested an answer for noon today, no telegram from my ambassador conveying an answer from your Government has reached me as yet. I therefore have been obliged to mobilize my army.

Immediate affirmative clear and unmistakable answer from your government is the only way to avoid endless misery. Until I have received this answer alas, I am unable to discuss the subject of your telegram. As a matter of fact I must request you to immediately order your troops on no account to commit the slightest act of trespassing over our frontiers.<sup>1</sup>

Within hours, Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, France, as an ally of Russia, joined in. Another monarch, Britain's King George (who was also a cousin of Wilhelm and Nicholas), was trying to contain the fighting. He sent several urgent telegrams calling for arbitration, but neither side responded. Armies throughout the rest of Europe were ready for war.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the conflict between Austria and Serbia lead to European war?
2. How did Nicholas and Wilhelm describe the conflict between their countries differently? How did each attempt to persuade the other? How did the tone of their communications change over time? Why might that be the case?
3. What language did both leaders use to describe their roles as monarchs? What language did they use to describe their decisions to enter into war?
4. Does the failure of the two leaders to stop the approach of war mean that war was inevitable? Why or why not?

<sup>1</sup> Isaac Don Levine, ed., *The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920).

## Reading 4

# War Fever in Vienna

While some leaders were trying to avert fighting, excitement gripped Europe. Stefan Zweig, writing in 1941, here recalls the reaction in Vienna, the capital of Austria, immediately after that country declared war on Serbia on July 25, 1914:

In every station placards had been put up announcing general mobilization. The trains were filled with fresh recruits, banners were flying, music sounded, and in Vienna I found the entire city in a tumult. The first shock at the news of war—the war that no one people or government, had wanted—the war which had slipped, much against their will out of the clumsy hands of the diplomats who had been bluffing and toying with it, had suddenly been transformed into enthusiasm. There were parades in the street, flags, ribbons, and music burst forth everywhere, young recruits were marching triumphantly, their faces lighting up at the cheering—they, the John Does and Richard Roes who usually go unnoticed and uncelebrated.

And to be truthful, I must acknowledge that there was a majestic, rapturous, and even seductive something in this first outbreak of the people from which one could escape only with difficulty. And in spite of all my hatred and aversion for war, I should not like to have missed the memory of those first days. As never before, thousands and hundreds of thousands felt what they should have felt in peace time, that they belonged together. A city of two million, a country of nearly fifty million, in that hour felt that they were participating in world history, in a moment which would never recur, and that each one was called upon to cast his infinitesimal self into the glowing mass, there to be purified of all selfishness. All differences of class, rank, and language were flooded over at that moment by the rushing feeling of fraternity. Strangers spoke to one another in the streets, people who had avoided each other for years shook hands, everywhere one saw excited faces. Each individual experienced an exaltation of his ego, he was no longer the isolated person of former times, he had been incorporated into the mass, he was part of the people, and his person, his hitherto unnoticed person, had been given meaning. The petty mail clerk, who ordinarily sorted letters early and late, who sorted constantly, who sorted from Monday until Saturday without interruption; the clerk, the cobbler, had suddenly achieved a romantic possibility in life: he could become a hero, and everyone who wore a uniform was already being cheered by the women and greeted beforehand with this romantic appellation by those who had to remain behind. They acknowledged the unknown power which had lifted them out of their every day existence. Even mothers with their grief, and women with their fears, were ashamed to manifest their quite natural emotions in the face of this first transformation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stefan Zweig, *The World of Yesterday* (New York: Viking Press, 1943), 222–24.



## Connection Questions

1. How does Stefan Zweig describe what he felt when war was declared? How does he describe how others seemed to feel?
2. What impressed Zweig about the atmosphere in Vienna?
3. How does war shape a nation's sense of identity and belonging?
4. What are the effects of feeling part of something bigger than yourself? When is that feeling a good thing? When might it be dangerous?

## Reading 5

# Between Peace and War

War had erupted, with Austria-Hungary and Germany on one side and Russia and France on the other. German war plans, drawn up long before the conflict, called for quickly defeating France with a rapid attack so that it could then turn its full attention to fighting Russia. The quickest way to attack France was to march through Belgium, even though it was a neutral country that Britain had vowed to defend. The invasion of Belgium by German troops, which caused substantial destruction and many civilian casualties, prompted Britain to join the war on the side of Russia and France. Full-scale European war was now under way. Countries allied with Germany and Austria were known as the Central powers. Those who supported Serbia, Russia, France, and Britain were called the Allies. On August 23, 1915, Japan joined the Allies. That same year, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) joined the Central powers, while Italy (which had previously supported Germany) now backed the Allies.

As world leaders were choosing sides, a few individuals and groups in almost every nation had been trying desperately to stop the momentum toward war. On July 28, 1914, the German Social Democratic Party, then the largest political party in the world, held a huge public meeting that ended with cries of "Down with war! Long live world peace and the brotherhood of the working class!" Over the next few days, there were more rallies for peace. Then the news came that Germany had declared war. Almost instantly, the demonstrations came to a halt, and party leaders issued the following statement:

We are face to face with destiny. The consequences of imperialistic policies, which ushered in an era of competitive war preparation and which roused the antagonistic elements of various peoples, are crashing over Europe like a tidal wave. The responsibility for this disaster lies with the supporters of these policies; we are not responsible. Social Democracy has done everything in its power to fight this disastrous development and has worked to the very last minute to uphold peace by organizing powerful demonstrations in all countries, especially in close cooperation with our French comrades. Our efforts have been in vain.

Now we face the inexorable fact of war. The horror of hostile invasion threatens us. Today it is not for us to decide for or against war; rather we must decide which means are necessary for the defense of our country. Now we must think of the millions of our fellow countrymen who are drawn into this disaster through no fault of their own. It is they who will suffer the most from the horrors of war. Our most heart-felt wishes go out to all these, irrespective of party, who have been called to arms. We also remember the mothers who must give up their sons, the women and children robbed of their providers. For them, fear for their loved ones is combined with the threat of hunger. And this army of women and children will

soon be joined by tens of thousands of wounded and crippled soldiers. To help all of them, to improve their fate, to erase their inestimable suffering—we consider this our urgent duty.<sup>1</sup>

Now thousands of Germans gathered in the streets not to protest the war but to show their support for it. Ernst Toller, a young German socialist, was studying abroad when war was declared. He immediately headed back to Germany on the last train to leave France before the borders closed. He later recalled that when the train made its first stop in Germany, he and other passengers received photos of the kaiser inscribed with the words “I recognize no parties; only Germany.” Toller marveled, “The Kaiser recognized no parties; there it was in black and white; all factions were to be united; everybody spoke one language; everybody defended one mother: Germany.”<sup>2</sup>

As a Jew, Toller had experienced discrimination; as a socialist, he was against war; and yet he enlisted in the army as soon as he crossed the border into Germany. He wasn’t alone; more than 100,000 Jews fought in the German army during World War I. In fact, Jews were represented in every army involved in the conflict. The same was true of other religious minorities.

As subjects of the British Empire, thousands of men from Ireland, Canada, India, and Australia joined the Allied armies. Even though Britain was in the midst of a crisis over Irish demands for “home rule”—the right to self-government—thousands of Irishmen enlisted in the British army. When asked in 1916 why he had volunteered, Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson, a young Canadian physician, replied:

In the first place, I was in great sympathy with the Allied cause, secondly I am chiefly of English descent; my great grandfather served under Lord Nelson and lost an eye in the battle of Trafalgar and my paternal grandfather came to the U.S. from England in the 1840s and was Captain and adjutant on a New York regiment during the Civil War. The third factor was the desire for surgical experience and adventure which I felt war service would afford.<sup>3</sup>

Only a few men refused to fight. They declared themselves *conscientious objectors*—people who refuse to serve in or aid the military for religious or moral reasons. A British man who called himself “Artifex” expressed his views of their stand in a letter that appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*: “I think that to be a real conscientious objector a man must be, consciously or unconsciously, an extreme individualist with little sense of the solidarity of mankind and of our membership one of another.”<sup>4</sup> Philosopher Bertrand Russell sent a letter to the *Guardian* in response:

1 Hugo Haase, “The Socialists Support the War (August 4, 1914),” trans. Jeffrey Verhey, German History in Documents and Images website, German Historical Institute, accessed March 2, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=816](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=816).

2 Ernst Toller, *I Was a German: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary* (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1991), 62.

3 “Wartime Letter from Captain Bellenden S. Hutcheson,” Veterans Affairs Canada, last modified November 16, 2014, <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/diaries-letters-stories/first-world-war/bellenden>.

4 Quoted in Bertrand Russell, “Conscientious Objectors,” *Manchester Guardian*, March 19, 1917.

There are no doubt many kinds of reasons which lead men to become conscientious objectors, but I am convinced that the chief reason, and the most valid, is precisely that sense of "the solidarity of mankind," of "our membership with one another," which "Artifex" denies to us. It seems to me that when he wrote of "mankind" he was thinking only of the Allies. But the Germans too, are included among "mankind." The conscientious objector does not believe that violence can cure violence or that militarism can exorcise the spirit of militarism. He persists in feeling "solidarity" with those who are called "enemies," and he believes that if that feeling were more widespread among us it would do more than armies and navies can ever do to prevent the growth of aggressive Imperialism, not only among ourselves but also among potential enemies.<sup>5</sup>

In other letters, Russell continued to defend his position even as he described himself as "tortured by patriotism." "Love of England," he wrote in one letter, "is very nearly the strongest emotion I possess, and in appearing to set it aside at such a moment, I was making a very difficult renunciation."<sup>6</sup> In another letter, he wrote, "The greatest difficulty was the purely psychological one of resisting mass suggestion, of which the force becomes terrific when the whole nation is in a state of collective excitement."<sup>7</sup>

Almost everywhere, conscientious objectors were imprisoned for refusing to fight. Russell was no exception.

### Connection Questions

1. Why did the German Social Democratic Party, which had worked for peace, decide to support the war?
2. Why do you think anti-war demonstrations in Germany came to a halt as soon as war was actually declared?
3. What does it mean to be a "conscientious objector"? Can one be both a patriot and a conscientious objector?
4. How would you define Captain Hutcheson's universe of obligation? How does it compare with that expressed by Bertrand Russell?

<sup>5</sup> Russell, "Conscientious Objectors."

<sup>6</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Man's Peril, 1954–55*, ed. Andrew G. Bone (London: Routledge, 2003), 128.

<sup>7</sup> Bertrand Russell, "Some Psychological Difficulties of Pacifism in Wartime," in *We Did Not Fight: 1914–1918 Experience of War Resisters*, ed. Julian Bell (London: Cobden Sanderson, 1935), 329.

## Reading 6

# The Brutal Realities of World War I

## World War I in Europe and the Middle East



World War I was fought between the Central powers and the Allied powers simultaneously on several fronts in western Europe, eastern Europe, and the Middle East.

In August 1914, both sides expected a quick victory. Neither leaders nor civilians from warring nations were prepared for the length and brutality of the war, which took the lives of millions by its end in 1918. The loss of life was greater than in any previous war in history, in part because militaries were using new technologies, including tanks, airplanes, submarines, machine guns, modern artillery, flamethrowers, and poison gas.

The map above shows the farthest advances of Axis and Allied forces on the fronts to the west, east, and south of Germany and Austria-Hungary.



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Most of the war's major battles took place between those lines of farthest advance on each front. Germany's initial goal was to knock the French out of the war by occupying Belgium and then quickly march into France and capture Paris, its capital. German troops could then concentrate on the war in the east. That plan failed, and by the end of 1914, the two sides were at a stalemate. Before long, they faced each other across a 175-mile-long line of trenches that ran from the English Channel to the Swiss border. These trenches came to symbolize a new kind of warfare. A young officer named Harold Macmillan (who later became prime minister of Britain) explained in a letter home:

Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the modern battlefield is the desolation and emptiness of it all. . . . Nothing is to be seen of war or soldiers—only the split and shattered trees and the burst of an occasional shell reveal anything of the truth. One can look for miles and see no human being. But in those miles of country lurk (like moles or rats, it seems) thousands, even hundreds of thousands of men, planning against each other perpetually some new device of death. Never showing themselves, they launch at each other bullet, bomb, aerial torpedo, and shell. And somewhere too . . . are the little cylinders of gas, waiting only for the moment to spit forth their nauseous and destroying fumes. And yet the landscape shows nothing of all this—nothing but a few shattered trees and 3 or 4 thin lines of earth and sandbags; these and the ruins of towns and villages are the only signs of war anywhere.

The glamour of red coats—the martial tunes of fife and drum—aide-de-camps scurrying hither and thither on splendid chargers—lances glittering and swords flashing—how different the old wars must have been. The thrill of battle comes now only once or twice in a [year]. We need not so much the gallantry of our fathers; we need (and in our Army at any rate I think you will find it) that indomitable and patient determination which has saved England over and over again.<sup>1</sup>

The area between the opposing armies' trenches was known as "No Man's Land" for good reason. Fifty years after the war, Richard Tobin, who served with Britain's Royal Naval Division, recalled how he and his fellow soldiers entered No Man's Land as they tried to break through the enemy's line. "As soon as you got over the top," he told an interviewer, "fear has left you and it is terror. You don't look, you see. You don't hear, you listen. Your nose is filled with fumes and death. You taste the top of your mouth. . . . You're hunted back to the jungle. The veneer of civilization has dropped away."<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the war on Germany's western front, the war on the eastern front was a war of rapid movement. Armies repeatedly crisscrossed the same territories. Civilians were frequently caught in the crossfire, and millions were evacuated from their homes and expelled from territories as armies approached. On both sides of the conflict, many came to believe that what

1 Quoted in Mike Webb and Hew Strachan, *From Downing Street to the Trenches: First-hand Accounts from the Great War, 1914–1916* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2014), 180–81.

2 Quoted in Jasper Copping, "Unseen interviews with WW1 veterans recount the horror of the trenches," *The Telegraph*, March 6, 2014, accessed May 4, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/10681656/Unseen-interviews-with-WW1-veterans-recount-the-horror-of-the-trenches.html>.



they were experiencing was not war but “mass slaughter.” A private in the British army explained, “If you go forward, you’ll likely be shot, if you go back you’ll be court-martialed and shot, so what the hell do you do? What can you do? You just go forward.”<sup>3</sup>

The carnage was incomprehensible to everyone, as millions of soldiers and civilians alike died. Historian Martin Gilbert details the loss of life:

More than nine million soldiers, sailors and airmen were killed in the First World War. A further five million civilians are estimated to have perished under occupation, bombardment, hunger and disease. The mass murder of Armenians in 1915 [see Reading 10, “Genocide under the Cover of War”], and the [Spanish] influenza epidemic that began while the war was still being fought, were two of its destructive by-products. The flight of Serbs from Serbia at the end of 1915 was another cruel episode in which civilians perished in large numbers; so too was the Allied naval blockade of Germany, as a result of which more than three-quarters of a million German civilians died.<sup>4</sup>

The chart on the next page provides estimates of the number of soldiers killed, wounded, and reported missing during World War I. Exact numbers are often disputed and are nearly impossible to determine for a variety of reasons. Different countries used different methods to count their dead and injured, and some methods were more reliable than others. Records of some countries were destroyed during the war and its aftermath. Also, some countries may have changed the number of casualties in their official records for political reasons. The numbers of civilians from each country killed during the war are even more difficult to estimate. The numbers in the chart reflect the estimates made by most historians today.

3 Quoted in Jonathan Glover, *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 157.

4 Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), xv.

## World War I Casualties

Country	Total Mobilized Forces	Killed or Died*	Wounded	Prisoners or Missing	Total Casualties
Allied Powers					
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000	2,500,000	9,150,000
France**	8,410,000	1,357,800	4,266,000	537,000	6,160,800
British Empire**	8,904,467	908,371	2,090,212	191,652	3,190,235
Italy	5,615,000	650,000	947,000	600,000	2,197,000
United States	4,734,991	116,516	204,002	—	320,518
Japan	800,000	300	907	3	1,210
Romania	750,000	335,706	120,000	80,000	535,706
Serbia	707,34	45,000	133,148	152,958	331,106
Belgium	267,000	13,716	44,686	34,659	93,061
Greece	230,000	5,000	21,000	1,000	27,000
Portugal	100,000	7,222	13,751	12,318	33,291
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	10,000	7,000	20,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>42,188,810</b>	<b>5,152,115</b>	<b>12,831,004</b>	<b>4,121,090</b>	<b>22,104,209</b>

Central Powers					
Germany	11,000,000	1,773,700	4,216,058	1,152,800	7,142,558
Austria-Hungary	7,800,000	1,200,000	3,620,000	2,200,000	7,020,000
Turkey	2,850,000	325,000	400,000	250,000	975,000
Bulgaria	1,200,000	87,500	152,390	27,029	266,919
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>22,850,000</b>	<b>3,386,200</b>	<b>8,388,448</b>	<b>3,629,829</b>	<b>15,404,477</b>

<b>GRAND TOTALS</b>	<b>65,038,810</b>	<b>8,538,315</b>	<b>21,219,452</b>	<b>7,750,919</b>	<b>37,508,686</b>
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\* Includes deaths from all causes.

Source: WWI Casualty and Death Tables, "The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century," WGBH website.

\*\* Official figures.

### Connection Questions

1. How was war different in World War I? Why did this war result in so many casualties?
2. How did the reality of combat in World War I compare to the beliefs and attitudes many Europeans had about war before fighting broke out?
3. What did Richard Tobin mean by his statement, "The veneer of civilization has dropped away"?
4. How would you describe the mood and tone of the voices of soldiers quoted in this reading?

## Reading 7

# Building Support on the Home Front

*Propaganda* is the use of information and media to influence public opinion. Propagandists during World War I relied on familiar stereotypes to evoke strong feelings like fear, pride, and prejudice, usually basing their efforts on facts that they embellished to demonize the enemy.

The postcard image that accompanies this reading was part of one of the most successful British propaganda campaigns during the war. It centered on Edith Cavell, a middle-aged British nurse who worked at a hospital in occupied Belgium. After the German invasion of Belgium, she joined an underground group that secretly aided Allied soldiers trapped behind enemy lines. When the Germans discovered her activities, she was arrested, tried, and found guilty of espionage. On October 12, 1915, the Germans executed her.

In addition to building public support for the war, leaders believed it was necessary to forbid criticism and opposition. Official German policy, which was similar to policies in all fighting countries, suppressed expressions of anti-war sentiment by peace movements, pointing out especially the possible impact in other countries:



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George Metcalf Archival Collection, CWM 19960034-008

A British propaganda poster depicting the execution of Edith Cavell in 1915. Cavell was a British nurse working in Belgium during the German invasion. The Germans accused her of espionage.

In the neutral countries as well as among our enemies, false impressions about Germany's domestic strength will form. Every statement that can be interpreted as a sign of weakness or disunity is used by the enemy side, with obvious pleasure and satisfaction to energize the will and hope of defeating Germany militarily. Through personal contacts and correspondence, the impact abroad of these German apostles of peace can also cause immediate harm without their being aware of it themselves. Their statements about the domestic political, economic, and military situation can give the enemy important information, and it is to be expected that enemy agents will take advantage of the pacifist will to communicate . . . Finally, such behavior by people who portray themselves as representatives of German intellectual life is likely to diminish the respect for the German character and German diligence which we have achieved as a nation in arms. . . . It is thus necessary to make unambiguously clear to the people who stand out in the peace movement in an undesirable way that their activity is dangerous, and to put this communication somehow in writing. . . . Should they defy such a ban, they will have made themselves liable to prosecution. . . . The publication and distribution of pacifist writings and pamphlets may not be tolerated. Sending of these materials to foreign countries or to the front is to be prevented. Writings of this sort that arrive from abroad, as well as private letters whose purpose is to promote international pacifist goals, are to be confiscated.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Analyze the image of Edith Cavell in this reading using the following process:
  - First, look closely, observing shapes, colors, and the positions of people and objects.
  - Second, write down what you observe without making any interpretation about what the image is trying to say.
  - Third, list questions this image raises for you that you would need to have answered before you can interpret its meaning. Share and discuss your questions with another person, and try to find some answers.
  - Finally, given the historical context you have learned, describe what you think the creator of this image is trying to say. Who is the intended audience, and what does the image's creator want the audience to think and feel?
2. Who tries to influence your ideas, opinions, and feelings today? How do they go about it? Which kinds of attempts to influence you would you classify as propaganda?
3. Why would leaders believe that forbidding expressions of anti-war sentiment is necessary? Are there times during war or national crisis when the right of free expression and dissent must be suspended?

<sup>1</sup> "Suppression of Anti-War Sentiment (November 1915)," trans. Jeffrey Verhey and Roger Chickering, German History in Documents and Images website, German Historical Institute, accessed March 2, 2016, [http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=965](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_document.cfm?document_id=965).

## Reading 8

# The Western Front at the Cinema

As the war dragged on, staggering casualties mounted. For example, at the Battle of the Somme in 1916, over 1 million men were killed in fighting between July and November, with little gain of territory by either side. Despite censorship, it was not possible to hide the death toll from the public. Leaders on both sides feared those huge losses might turn public opinion against the war. The British found a solution in a relatively new technology: the motion picture. Author Adam Hochschild describes its use:

Two cameramen with their cumbersome hand-cranked cameras were given unprecedented access to the front lines, and the resulting 76-minute *Battle of the Somme* was rushed into cinemas in August 1916, when the battle was not yet at its midpoint. It opened in 34 theatres in London alone, and 100 copies were soon circulating around the country. . . . In the first six weeks of its release more than 19 million people saw the film. . . . (Noticing its success, the Germans hurried out a copycat production of their own, *With Our Heroes at Somme*.)

For audiences accustomed only to short, set-piece newsreel clips of formal occasions like parades the film was nothing short of electrifying. Its black-and-white images



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Imperial War Museums (Q 79501)

A still from the 1915 propaganda film *The Battle of the Somme*, showing a soldier rescuing a comrade under fire. Although the documentary included staged scenes, this frame was taken from a real combat scene.



also provided a wealth of detail about the front-line lives of ordinary, working-class soldiers, for here were the army versions of daily routines people at home knew so well—feeding and watering horses, preparing a meal over a fire, opening mail, washing up in a roadside pond, attending a church service in a muddy field—plus the drudgery of unloading and carrying endless heavy boxes of artillery ammunition.

Many parts of the film were calculated to inspire awe, such as shots of huge mines exploding underneath the German lines or the firing of heavy howitzers. TERRIFIC BOMBARDMENT OF GERMAN TRENCHES, says the title. Such scenes . . . are now believed to have been faked, taken well behind the lines, but neither audiences nor critics appeared to notice at the time, so riveted were they at what seemed to be the authentic nitty-gritty of the real war.

Millions of people must have watched *The Battle of the Somme* yearning for a glimpse of a familiar face—or dreading it; what if a husband or son appeared on the screen wounded or dead? For although the battle's casualties were sometimes presented sentimentally . . . the remarkable thing is that they were presented at all. Unlike almost all earlier propaganda in this war, the film did not shy away from showing the British dead and surprising numbers of British wounded: walking, hobbling, being carried or wheeled on stretchers.

The film's images, wrote the *Star*, "have stirred London more passionately than anything has stirred it since the war [began]. Everybody is talking about them. . . . It is evident that they have brought the war closer to us than it has ever been brought by the written word or by the photograph." Men in the audience cheered when attacks were shown; women wept at the sight of the wounded; people screamed at the staged sequence showing British soldiers falling as if hit by bullets. . . .

The government had taken a calculated risk in allowing these images into the nation's theaters. David Lloyd George, recently made secretary of state for war, argued that the film, however painful to watch, would reinforce civilian support for the war—and he was right. The more horrific the suffering, ran the chilling emotional logic of public opinion, the more noble the sacrifice the wounded and dead had made—the more worthwhile the goals must be for which they had given their all.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did *The Battle of the Somme* portray the war? How did it appeal to viewers' emotions? What was risky about showing this film so widely in Britain?
2. War often provides its own justification. Once people have died for their country, why can it be hard for others to believe the war is a lost cause? Is it possible to honor the soldier but not the cause for which they fight?
3. How do we distinguish between a film's use to manipulate public opinion and its use to portray conditions as they truly exist?

<sup>1</sup> Adam Hochschild, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914–1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), 227–28.



## Reading 9

# Hatred on the Home Front

The war unleashed feelings of hatred on the home front against anyone thought to be associated with the enemy. To prevent supplies from coming into Britain from any nation, in 1915 the Germans announced a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, meaning that they would sink any ship that entered or left a British port. On May 7, they torpedoed the *Lusitania*, a British passenger ship sailing from the United States to Britain. Fourteen-year-old Pat O'Mara, who lived in Liverpool at the time, recalled how he and his friends responded to news of the tragedy:

It was five o'clock one evening . . . when a newsboy came racing down from Park Lane, yelling: "Sinking of the Lusitania!" The men stopped short; women peered from doorways. I joined one anxious group, poring over the fatal news. It was right—the "Lusy", the fine boat I had left Joe and Harold aboard not two months ago, had been torpedoed . . .

[My friends and I] walked around Scotland Road listening to the cries of the women whose husbands and sons had gone down in the "Lusy" and we heard the bitter threats made against Germany and anything with a German name. We walked down Bostock Street, where practically every blind was drawn in token of a death. All these little houses were occupied by Irish coal-trimmers and firemen and sailors on the Lusitania; now these men who, barely two weeks ago, had carried their bags jokingly down the street were gone, never to return. . . . Something was afoot; we could sense that and, like good slummy boys, we crowded around eager to help in any disturbance.

Suddenly something crashed up the road near Ben Johnson Street; followed in turn by another terrific crash of glass. We ran up the road. A pork butcher's [shop] had had its front window knocked in with a brick and a crowd of men and women were wrecking the place. A little higher up the same thing was happening—everything suggestive of Germany was being smashed to pieces. . . . Everyone had a brick or a stick or something tucked under his or her coat or apron and there was much pilfering. The police themselves . . . were the most passive guardians of the law. . . .

Mr. Beech had been living in Liverpool thirty odd years, but there was a faint suspicion that years ago he had changed his name. His big shop was in shambles. When we got to it, Mr. Beech and his son had made their escape. The crowd then moved onto Yaag's store in Great George Street.

"Joan of Arc" (a female chip-chopper by the name of Mrs. Seymour) led the mob on a rampage that rarely spared kith or kin. Mr. Yaag, a big, wholesome fellow allegedly had been born in Germany, but I don't think he remembered much about

it. Two of his nephews were with my cousin Berny and the Eighth Irish [fighting] over in France. I always liked Mr. Yaag, but not quite as keenly as I liked to break his window. . . .

As we converged on the big shop, Mr. Yaag came out, pipe in mouth and with his usual broad smile; this vanished instantly as someone kicked him in the belly and a volley of bricks sent in the huge windows. From the sawdust floor the astounded man had the pleasure of seeing his choice sausages kicked down and thrown about and the furnishings reduced to shambles. "You'll sink the bleedin 'Lusy', will you!" yelled our Joan, waving a shillelagh. . . .

Cook's pork butcher in Mill Street came next. Mr. Cook knew as much about Germany at the time, I think, as I did. Later investigation proved that he came from strictly Yorkshire stock. . . . But he had a pork butcher's shop, and as pork and Germany were identical items, we left his shop in a shambles and himself stretched across the counter groaning. I began to get sick from all the free sausage I'd been eating.

If the Germans had torpedoed the Lusitania, we certainly had torpedoed everything German in our immediate vicinity—certainly all the pork butchers' shops.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. For what reasons were the butcher shops in Liverpool attacked? What details, words, and phrases in the text help to explain why individuals like Pat O'Mara participated in destruction and violence?
2. What other choices could Pat O'Mara have made? How might being in a crowd change an individual's behavior?
3. How does this account contribute to your understanding of the term "total war"?
4. When might stereotypes about the "the Other" lead to violence? For a group that has been accepted in a society and has been part of its universe of obligation, what conditions can cause members of that group to lose such acceptance and become vulnerable to hatred and violence?

<sup>1</sup> Pat O'Mara, *The Autobiography of a Liverpool Irish Slummy* (Bath: Cedric Chivers Ltd., 1972), 223–29.

## Reading 10

# Genocide under the Cover of War

At the beginning of World War I, the Ottoman Empire included territory that ranged from the Balkan Peninsula in Europe to parts of the Middle East. The ruler of the empire, known as the sultan, was facing serious challenges from inside and outside of the empire at the turn of the twentieth century. While minority groups within the empire were demanding equal rights, some Turkish reformers were seeking a more modern government. At the same time, there were tensions between the empire and other world powers.

Seizing the opportunity, a coalition of reformers called the Young Turks, with the support of some Armenians, overthrew the sultan in 1908 with promises of democratic reform and equal rights for all. However, the first few years of the new government did not go well. Supporters of the sultan led a massacre of Ottoman Armenians in Adana in 1909, and the empire lost territory in the Balkan wars of 1912–1913, when former minority subjects were able to free themselves from Ottoman rule.

Sensing weakness, an ultra-nationalist group from within the Young Turks took control of the government in a coup d'état in 1913. Their plan for saving the shrinking empire was to create a modern state that favored people of Turkish descent like themselves; some scholars have described their program as “Turkey for the Turks.”<sup>1</sup> The Armenians (a Christian minority that had lived for generations within the historically Muslim empire), Greeks, and other Christian minorities who had survived massacres under the sultan were now viewed as a threat. As the Ottoman Empire fought alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I, the Young Turks leadership—Enver Pasha, Talaat Pasha, and Djemal Pasha—were prepared to solve the “Armenian problem” once and for all.

During the winter of 1914–1915, Armenian men who had been drafted into the Ottoman army were stripped of their weapons and killed. Attacks on Armenian villages and Greeks continued throughout the winter and early spring. On April 24, 250 Armenian intellectuals and leaders were arrested, marking the beginning of the systematic deportation and mass murder. In May, Allied leaders in Britain, France, and Russia asked the US ambassador, Henry Morgenthau, to pass along a telegram condemning the crimes to the Young Turks leadership. It read:



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<sup>1</sup> “Turkey for the Turks”: Demographic Engineering in Eastern Anatolia, 1914–1945,” in *A Question of Genocide, 1915: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Ronald G. Suny and Fatma M. Göçek (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 287–305.



**An Armenian mother and child flee persecution by the Turks at the height of the Armenian Genocide.**

For about a month the Kurd and Turkish populations of Armenia has been massacring Armenians with the connivance and often assistance of Ottoman authorities. Such massacres took place in middle April . . . at Erzerum, Dertchun, Eguine, Akn, Bitlis, Mush, Sassun, Zeitun, and throughout Cilicia. Inhabitants of about one hundred villages near Van were all murdered. In that city Armenian quarter is besieged by Kurds. At the same time in Constantinople Ottoman Government ill-treats in-offensive Armenian population. In view of those new crimes of Turkey against hu-

manity and civilization, the Allied governments announce publicly to the Sublime-Porte [Ottoman Government] that they will hold personally responsible [for] these crimes all members of the Ottoman government and those of their agents who are implicated in such massacres.<sup>2</sup>

Attacks intensified throughout the spring and summer. Reports poured into Morgenthau's offices from American consuls across the Ottoman Empire describing the crimes. He was outraged. On July 16, he wrote a telegram to the American secretary of state, one of several he sent to his bosses in Washington:

Have you received my 841[telegram]? Deportation of and excesses against peaceful Armenians is increasing and from harrowing reports of eyewitnesses it appears that a campaign of race extermination is in progress under a pretext of reprisal against rebellion.

Protests as well as threats are unavailing and probably incite the Ottoman government to more drastic measures as they are determined to disclaim responsibility for their absolute disregard of capitulations and I believe nothing short of actual force which obviously the United States are not in a position to exert would adequately meet the situation. Suggest you inform belligerent nations and mission boards of this.<sup>3</sup>

Despite Morgenthau's warning, massacres continued, using the cover of war. However, the war did not stop press coverage. In 1915, the *New York Times* ran 145 articles on what is now recognized as the Armenian Genocide. While the United States did not intervene militarily, humanitarian efforts launched with Morgenthau's assistance by the Near East Relief Foundation, and supported by donations from people in the United States and around the world, are credited with saving over 100,000 lives. Despite these efforts, over 1.5 million Armenians were murdered.

<sup>2</sup> Telegram sent to American embassy in Constantinople, May 29, 1915, available at the Armenian National Institute website, accessed May 6, 2016, [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.160/current\\_category.7/affirmation\\_detail.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.160/current_category.7/affirmation_detail.html).

<sup>3</sup> Telegram sent to Secretary of State from American ambassador in Constantinople, July 16, 1915, available at the Armenian National Institute website, accessed May 6, 2016, <http://www.armenian-genocide.org/us-7-16-15.html>.

## Connection Questions

1. Historians Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt note that “the genocide of the Armenians was made possible by two events: the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the twentieth century and the advent of total war in the second.”<sup>4</sup> Why would the staggering brutality of World War I have made the Armenian Genocide possible? How might war provide an opportunity to enact policies that might not be possible or acceptable in a time of peace?
2. The telegram from the Allied powers to the Ottoman government coined a new term in the language of human rights, describing the actions taken against Ottoman Armenians as “crimes against humanity.” This idea is now a key principle of international human rights law. The original draft of the telegram used the phrase “crimes against Christianity.” Consider the two phrases. What is implied by the choice of words? How is calling something a crime against humanity different from calling something a crime against Christianity?
3. Read the Morgenthau telegram to the state department. What words would you use to describe the tone? What does Morgenthau want the secretary of state to know about what is going on? What choices were available to Morgenthau? In light of Morgenthau’s report, what choices were available to the secretary of state?
4. Look at the photograph of the Armenian mother and child. What can you learn about their situation by studying the image? What questions are you left with? Armin Wegner, a German medic who was in the Ottoman Empire during the genocide, took the picture and smuggled it out of the country along with many others. He wrote this caption for the photograph, which he called “Mother and Child”:

Fleeing from death. An Armenian mother on the heights of the Taurus Mountains. Her husband has been killed or slaughtered, thrown into prison or driven to forced labor. On her back she carries all that she owns, i.e. what she could take with her, a blanket for sleeping or to use as a tent to protect against the sun, some wooden sticks, and then, on top of everything else, her baby. How much longer can she carry this weight?<sup>5</sup>

How do Wegner’s comments influence the way you respond to the photograph?

4 Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Holocaust: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), 35.

5 Caption from *Armin T. Wegner and the Armenians in Anatolia, 1915: Images and Testimonies* (Guerini e Associati, 1996), 96, available at the Armenian National Institute website, accessed May 6, 2016, [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/photo\\_wegner\\_view.html?photo=mother.jpg&collection=wegner&caption=Mother+and+child](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/photo_wegner_view.html?photo=mother.jpg&collection=wegner&caption=Mother+and+child).

## Reading 11

# Russia Quits the War

The year 1917 brought two major changes in World War I. First, in its continuing effort to prevent all countries' ships from transporting food and supplies to Britain, the German navy's submarines sank several American ships. In response, President Woodrow Wilson asked for a declaration of war against Germany and the Central powers in April. The declaration brought a powerful new army into the war on the side of the Allied powers. The second change was occurring as Congress voted to approve the American president's request: a revolution had begun to take place in Russia.

The monarchy of the Russian tsar had been vulnerable since a revolution against its autocratic power had been attempted and brutally put down in 1905. By 1917, participation in World War I had resulted in disaster for the tsar's armies and government. The nation's casualties were much higher than those of any other country, and its economy was in shambles. On March 8, another revolution began when food shortages prompted hundreds of women to riot in the streets of St. Petersburg, the empire's capital. In the days that followed, the violence spread to other cities and towns. Disheartened soldiers increasingly joined the revolt. In less than two weeks, Tsar Nicholas II had to give up his throne at the urging of the Duma, Russia's parliament. Members of the Duma then set up a provisional, or temporary, government that shared power with councils of soldiers and workers, called "soviets."

German authorities saw the upheaval in Russia as a chance to end the war in the east. They knew that Russian Communists known as Bolsheviks had long opposed the war and were eager to make peace. But the tsar had exiled their leaders, including Vladimir Lenin, years earlier. Hopeful that their return would undermine the Russian war effort, the Germans allowed Lenin and other Bolsheviks to return to Russia from exile in Switzerland.

Soon after his arrival in Russia, Lenin called for the overthrow of the provisional government by the soviets. But there was little response to his demand; most people were willing to give the new government a chance. As a result, Lenin was once again forced into exile. Within a few months, however, starving Russians weary of war had become impatient with the slow pace of change under the provisional government. Lenin's calls for "peace, land [for farm laborers and workers], and bread" now attracted more followers. By October, he was back in Russia, and by November 7, his Bolshevik-led army, the Red Guard, had forced out the provisional government and proclaimed government by the soviets.





Bettmann / Getty Images

**Standing with a portrait of Vladimir Lenin, a communist agitator advocates for the Bolshevik program to Russian peasants sometime between 1918 and 1924.**

Lenin believed that Russia must end its participation in the war so that the nation could focus on building a communist state based on the ideas of Karl Marx, a German philosopher who lived in the mid-1800s. Marx argued that the struggle between workers and property owners would end only when workers as a community owned all land and other resources. The system Marx envisioned was a radical form of socialism; its underlying idea was that the government should take work from each citizen according to his or her ability and give goods and services to each according to their need.

Lenin revised many of Marx's ideas to make them more applicable to Russia. Marx believed that communism would be most successful in an industrialized country with a large worker class, but Russia was not as industrialized as other European countries. Lenin did not believe that Russian workers themselves could bring about a revolution. He thought that the country would instead need a small group of leaders to plan and direct the revolution and then rule the country until the people were ready to lead on their own.

In March 1918, the new Russian government, now under Lenin's leadership, signed a peace treaty with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in what is now Belarus. Lenin had no say in the terms of that treaty; the Germans imposed

it by threatening to resume their attacks on Russia if the agreement was not signed immediately. Under the treaty, Russia had to turn over several territories to Germany: Finland, Russian Poland, Estonia, Livonia, Courland (now part of Latvia), Lithuania, Ukraine, and Bessarabia. In addition, the Bolsheviks had to give much of the southern part of Russia to what was still the Ottoman Empire, controlled by Turkey. In all, the treaty forced Russia to give up about 30% of its territory.<sup>1</sup>

The treaty ended Russian participation in World War I, but it did not bring peace to Russia. Even before it was signed, the Communists found themselves in a vicious civil war with the White Army, a group that wanted to restore the Russian monarchy and that had the support of the Allies. The Communists also faced opposition from various nationalist groups within the Russian Empire; each wanted its own independent country. In addition, the country was filled with outlaws who hoped to acquire wealth and power amid the confusion. As a result, in some parts of Russia, no one was in control, and enormous suffering and loss of life among the civilian population resulted. It was not until 1920 that most of the fighting finally ended and Lenin and his followers could focus on turning Russia into a communist state. Two years later, the Communists gave the nation a new name—the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), also known as the Soviet Union.

Leaders of western nations, particularly the United States and Britain, watched with anxiety as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia succeeded. Communism, which rejected religion and which wanted to end private ownership of property as the means of producing wealth, was opposed to the economic and social systems of those countries. It was also noted that Leon Trotsky, who, besides Lenin, was the other major leader of the Russian Revolution, was Jewish. That fact further fueled antisemitism in Europe and inflamed fears that a supposed Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy was plotting to dominate the world—a conspiracy theory that would persist, especially in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s.

### Connection Questions

1. How did the war contribute to the downfall of the Russian monarchy? Why did Lenin's ideas eventually appeal to many Russians? Who stood to benefit from those ideas?
2. What were the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk? Why did Lenin lack the leverage to negotiate a better treaty for Russia?
3. How did other nations respond to news of Russia's revolution? What fears were sparked by the news?

<sup>1</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 42.

## Reading 12

# Disillusion on the Battlefield

The soldiers who fought in World War I were profoundly affected by their experiences. For many of them, the reality of combat did not live up to their previous visions of the heroism and nobility of fighting for one's country. The poetry and literature written by soldiers in World War I often painted those patriotic and militaristic beliefs as illusions.

British soldier Wilfred Owen wrote several poems about his experiences in the war in 1917 and 1918 (before he was killed in action), including the following poem that ends with a phrase in Latin that means, "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country."

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—  
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—

My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori*.<sup>1</sup>

After the war, Erich Maria Remarque, who was wounded five times in battle, wrote the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* based on his experiences as a German soldier. The novel's protagonist, Paul, joins the German army, inspired by the patriotic fervor at the beginning of the war, but his experience leaves him disillusioned. In one passage from the novel, Paul describes the terror of the battlefield:

From a mockery the tanks have become a terrible weapon. Armoured they come rolling on in long lines, more than anything else embody for us the horror of war.

We do not see the guns that bombard us; the attacking lines of the enemy infantry are men like ourselves; but these tanks are machines, their caterpillars run on as endless as the war, they are annihilation, they roll without feeling into the craters, and climb up again without stopping, a fleet of roaring, smoke-belching armour-clads, invulnerable steel beasts squashing the dead and wounded—we shrivel up in our thin skin before them, against their colossal weight our arms are sticks of straw, and our hand-grenades matches.

Shells, gas clouds, and flotillas of tanks—shattering, corroding, death.

Dysentery, influenza, typhus—scalding, choking, death.

Trenches, hospitals, the common grave—there are no other possibilities.<sup>2</sup>

Later, the character Paul anticipates the end of the war:

Everyone talks of peace and armistice. All wait. If it again proves an illusion, then they will break up; hope is high, it cannot be taken away again without an upheaval. If there is not peace, then there will be revolution . . .

Here my thoughts stop and will not go any farther. All that meets me, all that floods over me are but feelings—greed of life, love of home, yearning for the blood, intoxication of deliverance. But no aims.

Had we returned home in 1916, out of the suffering and the strength of our experience we might have unleashed a storm. Now if we go back we will be weary, broken, burnt out, rootless, and without hope. We will not be able to find our way anymore.<sup>3</sup>

In the book, Paul is killed soon after writing these words.

1 Wilfred Owen, "Dulce et Decorum Est," available at the Poetry Foundation website, accessed May 4, 2016, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46560>.

2 Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, trans. A. W. Wheen (New York: Ballantine Books, 1929, 1982), 282–83.

3 Ibid., 293–94.

## Connection Questions

1. What phrases from the poetry and literature excerpted in this reading stand out to you the most? What ideas, feelings, and images do those phrases communicate?
2. What did Wilfred Owen and Erich Maria Remarque learn from their experiences in World War I?
3. How do you think the leaders of England and Germany, during the war and after, might have responded to the ways that Owen and Remarque depicted the war? How might other British and German people have responded?

## Reading 13

# Commemorating the War

While commemorations of war throughout history have often focused on gallantry and heroism, artists struggled with the task of memorializing World War I. The destruction of human life during the war, multiplied by the use of such new weapons as poison gas, flamethrowers, and tanks, stunned and appalled soldiers and civilians alike. A year after the war ended, Britain's War Memorials Committee commissioned John Singer Sargent, one of the most famous artists of the day, to create a large-scale painting as a memorial to the nation's fallen soldiers. Well known for his portraits and landscapes, Sargent had never taken on a project as momentous as this one, and he found it difficult and challenging. Eventually, he produced a painting titled *Gassed* (see next page).

### Connection Questions

1. Analyze the painting using the following process:
  - First, look closely, observing shapes, colors, and the positions of people and objects.
  - Second, write down what you observe without making any interpretation about what the image is trying to say.
  - Third, list questions this image raises for you that you would need to have answered before you can interpret its meaning. Share and discuss your questions with another person, and try to find some answers.
  - Finally, given the historical context you have learned, describe what you think the creator of this image is trying to say. Who is the intended audience, and what does the image's creator want the audience to think and feel?
2. What vision of war does this painting portray? Does it commemorate destruction or heroism?
3. How do you think the members of Britain's War Memorials Committee might have responded to Sargent's painting? What is at stake when governments or individuals choose how to commemorate a war?





John Singer Sargent painted *Gassed* in 1919, depicting the effects of chemical weapons used by Germans against the British in the Battle of Arras on August 21, 1918.

Imperial War Museums (Art.IWM ART 1460)

## Reading 14

# Negotiating Peace



LESSON

Teach **Analyzing**  
the Effects of World  
War I

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After the United States entered the war in 1917, the tide turned decisively in favor of the Allies. In September 1918, Germany's generals informed Kaiser Wilhelm and his chancellor, Prince Max von Baden, that the war was lost. Two months later, the British and French governments demanded that the Germans sign a cease-fire or face an Allied invasion. At 5:10 a.m. on November 11, the Germans signed the document, and at 11:00 a.m. the guns fell silent on the western front. The kaiser had already abdicated, or given up his power, and a new German government awaited a peace treaty that would formally end the war.

The Germans had hoped to negotiate a cease-fire based on principles set forth in a speech given by US president Woodrow Wilson in January 1918. They also hoped those principles would be incorporated into the peace treaty. In his speech, Wilson had identified "fourteen points" he considered essential to a just and lasting peace. They included the removal of the German army from territories it had conquered during the war, an end to secret agreements between countries, open seas, no more barriers to international trade, disarmament, national self-determination for groups that were once a part of the old empires (see Reading 15, "Self-Determination"), and the establishment of a League of Nations to prevent future wars (see Reading 16, "The League of Nations").

However, neither Britain nor France had agreed to Wilson's Fourteen Points. During the war, the two nations had made secret plans to divide up the colonies Germany had held before the war. They had also made deals with various nationalist groups eager for the independence of those colonies. In addition, much of the war on the western front had been fought in Belgium and France, and both expected Germany to pay for the devastation.

The Allied countries—including the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan—negotiated the peace treaty at the Palace of Versailles in France from January 1919 to January 1920. The final Treaty of Versailles contained 440 articles.

Article 231 of the treaty explained who would pay for the enormous cost of the war and the damage in the war-torn Allied countries:

### Article 231

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a

consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.<sup>1</sup>

Other portions of the treaty outlined how Germany would pay reparations to other countries. In addition, the treaty stated that Germany would limit the size of its military to fewer than 100,000 soldiers. It also specified new borders for Germany, with the result, as historian David Stevenson notes, that “Germany lost about 13 per cent of its area and 10 per cent of its population in Europe (though most of those transferred were not ethnically German), in addition to all its overseas possessions.”<sup>2</sup> In addition, Germany had to give up all of its colonies abroad. The maps that follow show the change in Germany’s territory between the pre-war and post-war period. The first map shows the world in August 1914, when World War I began. The second shows the world six years later, soon after the war ended.

Germans had no choice but to accept the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty required more concessions from Germany than Wilson’s Fourteen Points had suggested. However, historian Doris Bergen argues that the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were not as harsh on Germany as the terms that Germany had imposed on Russia in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 (see Reading 11, “Russia Quits the War”).<sup>3</sup> Regardless, many Germans were outraged and believed that the treaty had humiliated their nation.

## Connection Questions

1. According to the Treaty of Versailles, who should be held responsible for the war and the damages it caused?
2. What do the two world maps show about the way the world changed between 1914 and 1920? Who gained land? Who lost land? Which nations were created by the peace conference at Versailles?
3. In the aftermath of a war, who should get to define the terms of peace? Who defined the terms of peace after World War I?

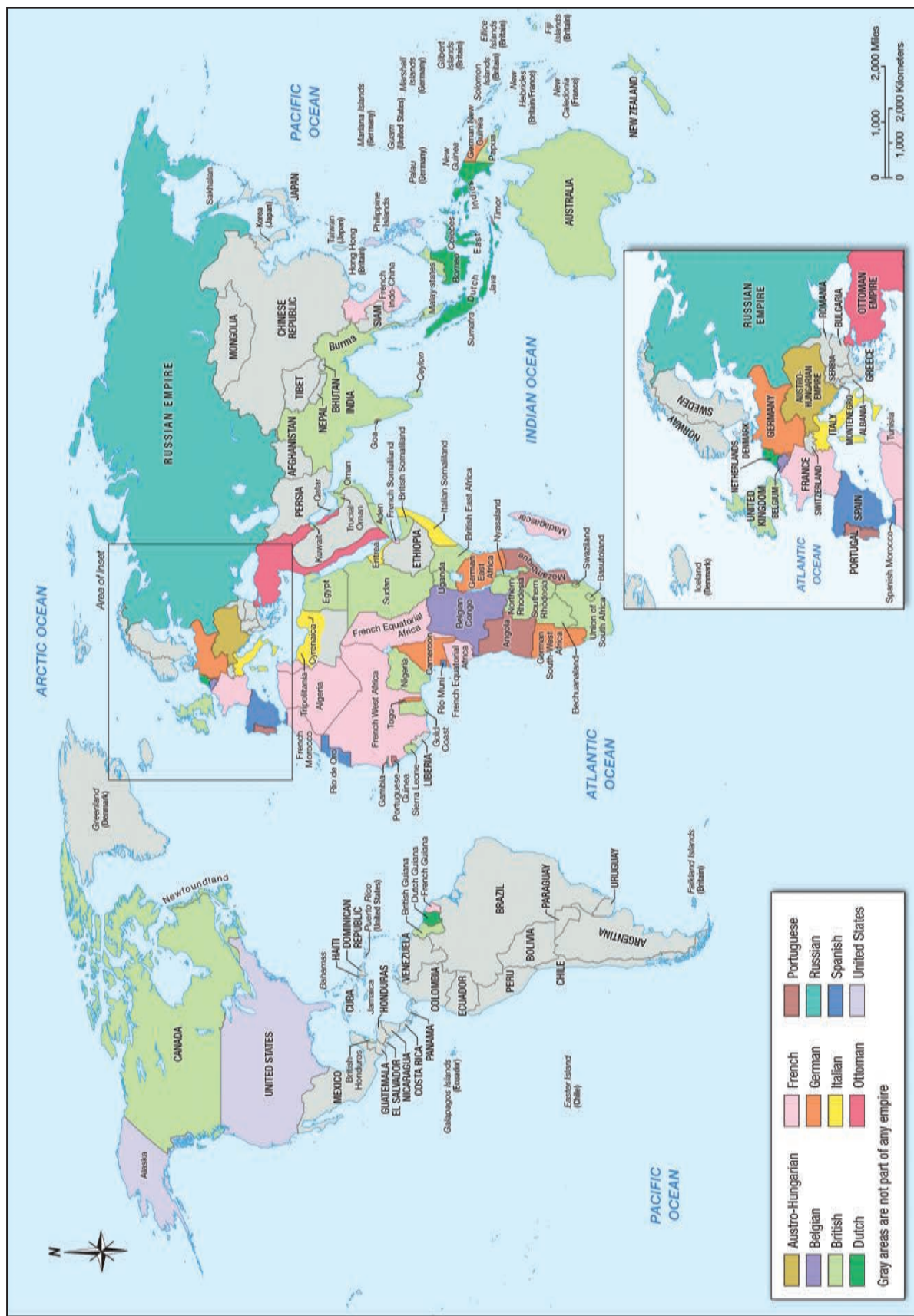
1 “The Versailles Treaty, June 28, 1919,” available at the Avalon Project (Yale Law School), accessed March 2, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/versailles\\_menu.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp).

2 David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 422.

3 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 42.

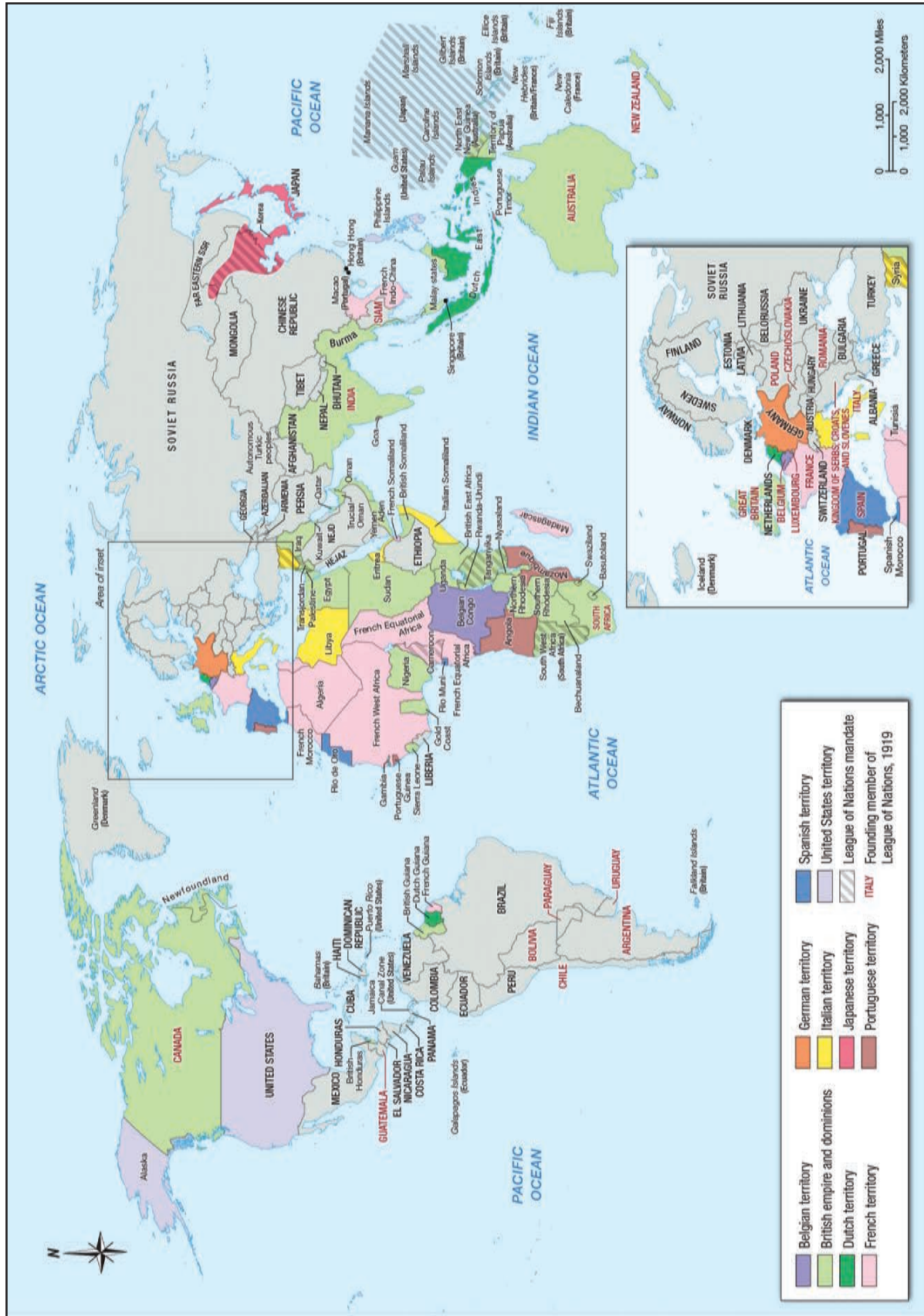


# Empires before World War I



In 1914, much of the world was dominated by a handful of empires. When fighting broke out that year, the global reach of warring empires ensured a world war.

# The World after World War I



World War I hastened the crumbling of several empires, while others retained their global power. Compare this map of the 1920 world to a map of empires in 1914.

## Reading 15

# Self-Determination

Wilson's Fourteen Points were based on a major idea—the principle of self-determination, under which nationalities would have their own states. The members of a nationality or ethnic group share a cultural heritage, often associated with the place of its members' birth or descent. With the collapse of the Ottoman, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German Empires during and at the end of the war, the peacemakers at Versailles expected to draw new borders, creating new nations with racial or ethnic homogeneity. The Versailles delegates believed that this would substantially decrease, if not end, violence between different nationalities inhabiting the same country. But as historian Margaret MacMillan explains, "The possibilities for dividing up peoples were unending, especially in central Europe, where history had left a rich mix of religions, languages and cultures. About half the people living there could be counted as members of one national minority or another. How were peoples to be allocated to one country or another when the dividing lines between one nation and another were so unclear?"<sup>1</sup>

Articles 81, 82, and 84 show how the treaty attempted to address this question in the newly created state of Czecho-Slovakia.

### ARTICLE 81.

Germany, in conformity with the action already taken by the Allied and Associated Powers, recognises the complete independence of the Czecho-Slovak State. . . . Germany hereby recognises the frontiers of this State as determined by the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and the other interested States.

### ARTICLE 82.

The old frontier as it existed on August 3, 1914, between Austria-Hungary and the German Empire will constitute the frontier between Germany and the Czecho-Slovak State.

### ARTICLE 84.

German nationals habitually resident in any of the territories recognised as forming part of the Czecho-Slovak State will obtain Czecho-Slovak nationality ipso facto and lose their German nationality.<sup>2</sup>

A related question, addressed in Article 22 of the treaty, was whether the principle of self-determination should apply to the people of former German colonies and current Allied ones.

1 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2003), 12.

2 David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 422.



## ARTICLE 22.

To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant. The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility. . . .<sup>3</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How would you define the concept of self-determination in your own words?  
Why did Woodrow Wilson and others believe that using this principle to create new countries could prevent future wars?
2. What does the example of the new state of Czecho-Slovakia suggest about the complications of using nationalities as the basis for creating new countries?  
What other difficulties might arise?
3. What are some ways that life might change for ethnic minorities within a large empire after the area in which they are living becomes its own nation?
4. What does Article 22 suggest about how pre-war imperialist ideas affected those who wrote the treaty?

<sup>3</sup> "The Versailles Treaty, June 28, 1919," available at the Avalon Project (Yale Law School), accessed March 2, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/versailles\\_menu.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp).

## Reading 16

# The League of Nations

The first 26 articles of the Treaty of Versailles created the League of Nations, a new international council designed to maintain a lasting peace. All participating nations agreed to support one another against any aggressor nation. These 26 articles, also known as the Covenant of the League of Nations, include the following provisions:

### Preamble

THE HIGH CONTRACTING PARTIES,

In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,

by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,

by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and

by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another,

Agree to this Covenant of the League of Nations.

### ARTICLE 10.

The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

### ARTICLE 11.

Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. . . .

### ARTICLE 16.

Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants . . . it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nations and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial, or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval, or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the covenants of the League. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Despite strenuous efforts by President Woodrow Wilson to build support in his own country, too many Americans were determined that they would never again join in a foreign war. The American Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and to join its League of Nations.

## Connection Questions

1. How was the League of Nations supposed to prevent future wars?
2. What actions were countries that joined the League of Nations prepared to take against aggressor nations?
3. What is the significance of a major power like the United States refusing to participate in the League of Nations?
4. The term *sovereignty* refers to the right of a country to govern itself and make its own decisions. In what ways might joining the League of Nations interfere with the sovereignty of a country?

<sup>1</sup> "The Versailles Treaty, June 28, 1919," available at the Avalon Project (Yale Law School), accessed March 2, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject\\_menus/versailles\\_menu.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/versailles_menu.asp).

## Reading 17

# People without Papers

At the end of World War I, the intense nationalism that had helped cause the war led a number of countries to force out ethnic minorities in order to achieve “ethnic purity” among their remaining inhabitants. (The members of an ethnic group share a cultural heritage, often associated with the place of its members’ birth or descent.) Such countries did this even though they had signed a treaty that guaranteed those minorities equal rights. For instance, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turks that resided in Greece were forced by the Greek government to move to Turkey, while the Turkish government expelled hundreds of thousands of ethnic Greeks to Greece. In all, the two countries exchanged 1.5 million people. An additional 280,000 were similarly traded between Greece and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, those countries, like almost every other nation, still had large minority populations. And as empires crumbled and new nations were forming, many who were uprooted by the war or expelled from the country in which they had lived were left without a government willing to take them in. Almost everyone was painfully aware that the war had displaced millions of other people who were now essentially “stateless” and in desperate need of a place to live. Dorothy Thompson, an American journalist at the time, observed:

Since the end of [the Great War] some four million people have been compelled by political pressure to leave their homes. A whole nation of people, although they come from many nations, wanders the world, homeless except for refuges which may at any moment prove to be temporary. They are men and women who often have no passports; who, if they have money, cannot command it; who, though they have skills, are not allowed to use them. This migration—unprecedented in modern times, set loose by the World War and the revolutions in its wake—includes people of every race and every social class, every trade and every profession.<sup>1</sup>

Where could these refugees settle? Their choices were limited, and even as they searched for new homes, their numbers rose sharply. Russia, which was in turmoil in the first few years after the war, is a good example of the problem.

Between 1917 and 1921, more than 2,000 pogroms (organized acts of violence, in this case against Jews) took place in Russia and neighboring countries in eastern Europe. As a result, more than 75,000 Jews were killed, even more were injured, and about half a million were desperate to find another place to live. Other minorities were in similar danger. In 1922, a commission on repatriation reported on a train that left Soviet territory and headed for Poland with 1,948 refugees on board, most of whom had been forced to leave their homes in Poland because of battles fought

<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Thompson, *Refugees: Anarchy or Organization?* (New York: Random House, 1939), 1.

nearby during World War I and the subsequent war between Poland and Russia. Due to the wars, the border between Russia and Poland had shifted back and forth, and these Poles had ended up on Russia's side of the line. When their train arrived in Poland, only 649 people had survived the trip. The rest died of "exhaustion, privation, and infectious diseases." Historian Michael Marrus writes of that journey:

This train had come all the way from Kazan on the Volga, a distance of over 1,700 kilometers; the repatriates had traveled at a snail's pace for three months, eating little but the scraps of black bread given to them by the Soviets. The dead were simply left unburied, thrown out at stations along the way. This description matches many others by travelers to the Soviet Union [at the time]. Trainloads of refugees crisscrossed the vast spaces of Russia, carrying starving fugitives from town to town, spreading malaria, cholera, and typhus from one end of the Soviet state to the other.<sup>2</sup>

By 1921 the drama in Russia was reaching a climax. The civil war ended with the Communist-led Red Army's victory over the White Army, which wanted to restore the monarchy. As a result, many White Russians fled the country, adding to the refugee crisis. That same year, Russia experienced a famine that killed 5 million people. Many of the survivors also left the country. Their plight was complicated when Lenin deprived them and all other Russian emigrants of citizenship. About 800,000 people suddenly found themselves stateless at a time when official papers mattered greatly.

Before the First World War, it was possible to travel almost anywhere in the world without a passport, visa, or other official papers. But wartime anxieties had led nations to enact laws requiring passports and other official documents that confirmed a person's citizenship and their right to travel abroad. Those laws remained in effect long after the conflict ended, mainly because the fears that had prompted those laws remained long after the danger had passed. As a result, refugees needed papers. A representative of the International Red Cross, Edouard August Frick, came up with the idea of issuing an identity card that could serve as a passport. Frick called it the "Nansen passport" after Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian diplomat who led several humanitarian missions after the war to famine-stricken nations, including Russia. The idea took hold, and the new passports were issued by the League of Nations and recognized by more than 50 countries.

Many benefited from Nansen passports, but the refugee problem persisted. On August 17, 1920, the *New York Times* reported:

Leon Kaimaky [a commissioner of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and] publisher of the Jewish Daily News of this city, returned recently from Europe, where he went, together with Jacob Massel, to bring about the reunion of Jewish families who were separated by the war. Mr. Kaimaky had been abroad since last February. . . .<sup>3</sup>

2 Michael R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War Through the Cold War* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002), 58.

3 "Plight of Poland's Jews Is Described," *New York Times*, August 17, 1920.

In an article in the *Jewish Daily News* describing conditions in eastern Europe, Kaimaky declared that “if there were in existence a ship that could hold 3,000,000 human beings, the 3,000,000 Jews of Poland would board it and escape to America.”

### Connection Questions

1. Why do wars often create refugees? What factors during World War I led to so many people becoming refugees?
2. What are the benefits of being a citizen of a country? What might be the consequences of being “stateless”?
3. What are a nation’s responsibilities to “stateless” people? How can refugees become part of a nation’s universe of obligation?



## Chapter 3 Analysis and Reflection

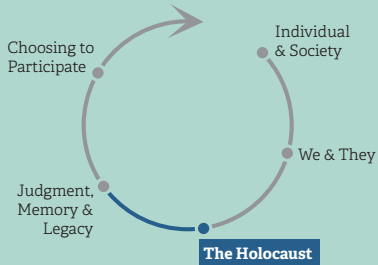
1. War takes place between armies, but it also changes what happens within a nation. What do the readings in this chapter suggest about how war can reshape the identities of people and nations, build upon and expand ideas of “we” and “they,” and affect an individual’s or a nation’s universe of obligation?
2. Several historians, in describing the immense destruction to both military and civilian populations, have pointed to the after-effects of violence and the “cheapening of human life” as one of the most significant legacies of World War I. How might such a legacy have impacted the post-war world?
3. Historians often debate whether ideas or actions are more important in bringing about change. What do you think are the key ideas in this chapter that had the greatest impact? What events occurred that either challenged those ideas or made them more acceptable?
4. While in a German prison camp in October 1918, Captain Charles de Gaulle, who later became president of France, wrote:

Will France be quick to forget, if she ever can forget, her 1,500,000 dead, her 1,000,000 mutilated, Lille, Dunkerque, Cambrai, Douai, Arras, Saint-Quentin, Laon, Soissons, Rheims, Verdun—destroyed from top to bottom? Will the weeping mothers suddenly dry their tears? Will the orphans stop being orphans, widows being widows? For generations to come, surely every family will inherit intense memories of the greatest of wars, sowing in the hearts of children those indestructible seeds of hatred? . . . Everyone knows, everyone feels that this peace is only a poor covering thrown over ambitions unsatisfied, hatreds more vigorous than ever, national anger still smouldering.<sup>1</sup>

What does de Gaulle’s view suggest about the aftermath of World War I in Europe and throughout the world? Is it possible for people to put the hatred, violence, and loss caused by war behind them?

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 181.

## Chapter 4



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# The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy





## Overview

The Weimar Republic, the post–World War I German government named for the German city where it was formed, lasted more than 14 years, but democracy never found firm footing. This chapter explores Germany in the years preceding the Nazis' ascension to power by highlighting efforts to turn a fledgling republic into a strong democracy and examining the misunderstandings, myths, and fears that often undercut those efforts.



## Essential Questions

- How do fears, both real and imagined, shape the way we as individuals and as citizens define our nation's universe of obligation?
- How can we as citizens build and maintain a democracy that protects the nation as a whole without undermining individual rights?
- How could a society that is politically and culturally liberal and progressive fall victim to a government that espouses intolerance, discrimination, and hatred?



Watch **Facing History Scholar Reflections: The Weimar Republic**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



LESSON

Explore **The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

After World War I ended in 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm fled to the Netherlands, and Germany became a republic. The Weimar Republic was characterized by contrasts and conflicts. The Weimar government granted significant new rights and freedoms to individuals and groups, beginning an era in which creativity and experimentation flourished. At the same time, the republic struggled to convince many Germans, accustomed to monarchy, to accept and trust its authority. The people's trust in the republic was especially damaged as it faced economic crises as well as challenges from political parties that were hostile to democracy.

Two very different moods characterized Weimar politics and society. The first mood was one of excitement and creativity. Newly permitted freedom of expression in art, music, dance, and architecture burst forth in Weimar culture and left a lasting legacy for our modern world. Women took on new roles in Weimar society, as they constituted roughly a third of the German workforce after World War I, exercised their new right to vote, and held political office for the first time.

The second mood was one of anxiety and fear. The pace of change, especially in expanding political rights and social freedoms, made many Germans uneasy and sparked backlash against the changes. Many also feared the impact of communism, which had taken over Russia and threatened to spread its abolition of private wealth and property to Germany, by violence if necessary. This fear was heightened by two economic crises that tested the leadership of the Weimar government: the hyperinflation that beset the republic in its early years and the Great Depression in its final years. Parties from across the political spectrum clashed violently in the streets throughout the Weimar era, leaving citizens on edge. Meanwhile, interest in and enthusiasm for the message of ultra-conservative forces, in particular the growing National Socialist Party with its message of racial hatred and its demand for a return to an autocratic government, continued to grow.

In his autobiography, artist George Grosz recalls how these moods shaped life in Germany during the 1920s:

Even the capital of our new German Republic was like a bubbling cauldron. You could not see who was heating the cauldron; you could merely see it merrily bubbling, and you could feel that heat increasing. There were speakers on every street corner and songs of hatred everywhere. Everybody was hated: the Jews, the capitalists, the gentry, the communists, the military, the landlords, the workers, the unemployed . . . the politicians, the department stores, and again the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> George Grosz, *An Autobiography*, trans. Nora Hodges (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 149–50.

An investigation of the Weimar Republic not only provides a crucial foundation for understanding the Nazi era that followed it but can also serve as a warning and a guide for democracies today. Historian Paul Bookbinder explains:

The history of the Weimar Republic illuminates one of the most creative and crucial periods in the twentieth century and serves as a significant case study of our own time. Many of the questions asked about the Weimar Republic are relevant to problems that individuals and societies face in the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup>

Historian Detlev Peukert has observed that the hallmark of the Weimar period was uncertainty.<sup>3</sup> In many ways, the crises and dilemmas Germans faced in the 1920s were similar to those that people in other nations have faced and continue to face today in times of transition and change.

2 Paul Bookbinder, "Why Study Weimar Germany?," *The Weimar Republic: The Fragility of Democracy*, Facing History and Ourselves, accessed March 30, 2016, <https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/readings/why-study-weimar-germany>.

3 Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 275.

## Reading 1

# The November Revolution

By fall 1918, the military leaders of Germany knew that they could not win World War I. In hopes of gaining more favorable terms when they surrendered to the Allies, German generals urged the liberal Prince Max von Baden to form a new German government that was more democratic than the monarchy under the kaiser. But Baden was unable to control the navy, whose leaders wanted to go down fighting rather than surrender. In October 1918, when navy ships sailed to fight the British fleet, German sailors, refusing to begin a battle they were likely to lose, mutinied against their admirals. The news of the mutiny touched off uprisings in support of the sailors throughout Germany.<sup>1</sup> Ernst Toller, a German poet and playwright, described the demonstrations:

First Kiel, then Munich, then Hanover, Hamburg, the Rhineland, Berlin. On November 9th, 1918, the Berlin workers left the factories and marched in their thousands from north, south, and east to the center of the city—old gray men and women who had stood for years at the munitions benches, men invalided out of the army, boys who had taken over their fathers' work. The processions were joined by men on leave, war-widows, wounded soldiers, students and solid citizens. No leader had arranged this uprising. . . .

The procession marched on in silence; there was no singing, no rejoicing. It came to a standstill before the gates of the Maikäfer Barracks. The gates were barred; rifles and machine-guns threatened from every window and loop-hole. Would the soldiers shoot?

But the men in field-gray were the brothers of these ragged, starving crowds. They flung down their weapons, the gates were opened and the people streamed into the barracks and joined forces with the Kaiser's army. . . . The ruling powers gave in without a struggle, the officers surrendered. . . .<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the unrest, Kaiser Wilhelm, Baden, and other German leaders in the monarchy abdicated, or gave up their power, and left the country. On November 10, the *Berliner Tageblatt*, a conservative newspaper, summed up the events of the previous day: "Yesterday morning, everything was still there [the kaiser, the chancellor, the chief of police]; yesterday afternoon nothing of all that existed any longer."<sup>3</sup> The Social

1 Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 61–62.

2 Ernst Toller, *I Was a German: The Autobiography of Ernst Toller*, trans. Edward Crankshaw (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1990), 139–40.

3 Quoted in Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 89.



Democrats, the political party that had the largest number of delegates in the Reichstag (the German parliament), were now in charge of the country.

But the Social Democrats, under the leadership of Friedrich Ebert, struggled to keep order. Radical groups and other political parties also tried to seize power in the confusion that followed the end of the war and of the monarchy. They took control of many city halls and state governments across the country. The war was over, the German empire had fallen, and now the question was whether Germany could create a new future and what kind of society it would become.

### Connection Questions

1. What kinds of challenges face a society in the immediate aftermath of a war?
2. What was "revolutionary" about the events of November 9–10, 1918?
3. What motivated the protesters? Why did members of the military refuse to stop the protests?

## Reading 2

# Rumors of Betrayal

Writing in 1939, German journalist Sebastian Haffner remembered his feelings as an 11-year-old upon hearing that the war had ended:

On the eleventh there was no army bulletin on the notice board at my local police station when I appeared there at the usual time. Empty and black, the board yawned at me. Horror overcame me to think that the board, which had sustained my spirit and nourished my dreams every day for years, would remain empty and black forevermore. I walked on. There must be some news from the front somewhere. If the war was over (and one had to reckon with that possibility) there must at least have been some sort of end worth reporting, something like the final whistle at a soccer match. A few streets away there was another police station. Perhaps there was a bulletin there.

There was none there either. The police had obviously also been infected by the revolution, and the old order had collapsed. I could not come to terms with it. I wandered on through the streets in the fine November drizzle, looking for news. The neighborhood became less familiar.



Three Lions / Stringer / Getty Images

German military aircraft being dismantled and scrapped after World War I, according to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

Somewhere, I saw a bunch of people gazing into the window of a newsagent's shop. I joined them and carefully edged my way to the front. There I could read what they were all reading in silence and gloom. It was an early edition of a newspaper and it bore the headline "Armistice Signed." Underneath were the terms, a long list. I read them. As I read, I turned to stone.

How shall I describe my feelings—the feelings of an eleven-year-old boy whose entire inner world has collapsed? However much I try, I find it difficult to find an equivalent in ordinary, everyday life. Certain fantastic catastrophes are possible only in dream worlds. Maybe one could imagine someone who year after year has deposited large sums of money in his bank, and when one day he asks for a statement, discovers a gigantic overdraft instead of a fortune; but that happens only in dreams.

The terms no longer spoke the careful language of the army bulletins. They spoke the merciless language of defeat; as merciless as the bulletins had been, when they spoke of enemy defeats. The fact that such a thing could happen to "us," not as an isolated incident but as the final result of victory upon victory, just would not fit in my head.<sup>1</sup>

As the Social Democrats and their allies were trying to restore order to the nation and organize a democratic government, a rumor spread rapidly through Germany. It was whispered at first and later openly proclaimed: "Germany did not lose the war. While our soldiers were putting their lives on the line, they were being betrayed by others back home." Who betrayed Germany? Who stabbed the nation in the back? General Erich Ludendorff, a war hero, told lawmakers that the nation had been betrayed by Social Democrats, the Catholic Center Party, socialists, and Jews. In fact, German military leadership, realizing in the last months of the war that their country could not win, had asked for an armistice. So why did the idea that the war was lost because of a betrayal gain such traction?

When Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democrats, and the heads of other large political parties took charge of the nation on November 10, 1918, they learned for the first time the terms of the truce that Germany had already begun to negotiate. In exchange for a ceasefire, the Allies were demanding that Germany give up its armaments, including all its ships and submarines, and pull back all troops to the eastern side of the Rhine River, giving up the territory it had gained from the war in eastern Europe and Russia. If Germany did not accept these terms within 72 hours, the Allies would invade the country.

Germany's new leaders were not sure how to respond. Matthias Erzberger, the head of the Catholic Center Party, asked Paul von Hindenburg, the commander-in-chief of the German Armed Forces, for advice. Hindenburg, who after the war became one of the most powerful supporters of the "stab in the back" myth, tearfully told Erzberger to do his patriotic duty by signing the document immediately. There would be no negotiation.

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (Farr, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 26–27.

So early on the morning of November 11, Erzberger and two other representatives of the new republic journeyed to France and signed the agreement. The generals did not attend the armistice signing; they did not want their names associated with the document.

When the German people finally learned the terms of truce later that day, almost everyone was outraged. Few blamed the generals or the kaiser for the nation's defeat. Instead they placed the blame on the people who signed the armistice—the Social Democrats and the Catholic Center Party. Historian Richard Evans notes:

All of this was greeted with incredulous horror by the majority of Germans . . . Germany's international strength and prestige had been on an upward course since unification in 1871, so most Germans felt, and now, suddenly, Germany had been brutally expelled from the ranks of the Great Powers and covered in what they considered to be undeserved shame.<sup>2</sup>

Their anger only increased when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles were made public in May 1919 (see "Negotiating Peace" in Chapter 3). Many Germans felt that their nation had been humiliated by the further loss of territory and military power imposed by the treaty. According to Evans, the shock of the Treaty of Versailles united many Germans in "a grim determination to overthrow its central provisions, restore the lost territories, end the payment of reparations and re-establish Germany as the dominant power in Central Europe once more."<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What words would you use to describe Sebastian Haffner's feelings when he learned of Germany's defeat? Why would such news be especially difficult for an 11-year-old to understand?
2. Where did the "stab in the back" idea come from? How might it have become an accepted "truth"?
3. How do rumors, falsehoods, and half-truths take hold today, and how might we look at them critically?
4. Resentment, despair, and anger are powerful feelings that often emerge out of truly difficult circumstances and experiences. Must those feelings always lead to lashing out against others and a search for scapegoats? When can such feelings inspire us to work for positive, inclusive change and to reject more destructive or violent responses?

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 66.

3 Ibid., 72.

## Reading 3

# Creating a Constitutional Government

The Social Democrats and their allies in the Reichstag (the German legislature) faced an enormous task at the end of 1918: organizing a new government, one that would be responsible to the people rather than to a monarch. So in the midst of rioting at home and negotiations with peacemakers at Versailles, they arranged for the election of a National Assembly whose task would be writing a constitution for the new republic. The election took place in January 1919, and almost every eligible voter, including women and young people between the ages of 20 and 25—both groups that were voting for the first time—voted for parties that were supportive of democracy rather than those that favored other systems of government. The Social Democratic Party won the largest number of votes, and the Catholic Center Party, also a moderate group, came in second. Fear of extremist forces, particularly the Communists, created a basis for cooperation among moderate, conservative, and liberal groups in writing the constitution and organizing the new government.

The newly formed National Assembly met in the city of Weimar in order to avoid the turmoil in Berlin (see Reading 1, “The November Revolution”). Therefore, the government they created is known as the Weimar Republic. The assembly was made up of people with diverse beliefs, including a few who did not believe in democracy at all. In the constitution they drafted, they took care to divide power among the three branches of government. The people would elect the executive and legislative branches, while the judicial branch would be appointed. In choosing a president, German voters would select among several candidates. In electing members of the Reichstag, they would cast their ballots for a particular party rather than a particular candidate. As long as a party got 1% of the vote, it was entitled to a deputy in the legislature. The more votes a party received, the more deputies it got. For example, if the Social Democrats received 36% of the vote, they would get 36% of the seats in the Reichstag. But party officials, rather than the voters, would decide exactly who those representatives would be.

As head of the government, the president would appoint the nation’s chancellor. In a parliamentary system, the chancellor (or prime minister, in some countries) is in charge of the day-to-day operations of government

with the help of a cabinet of appointed advisors. During the first decade after World War I, the president usually appointed a chancellor from the political party that had the most deputies in the Reichstag.

Since no single party ever held a majority in the Reichstag during the years of the Weimar Republic, two or more parties often banded together to form a majority to run the legislature. But almost any controversy or disagreement between parties might break up such a coalition. Whenever that happened, the legislature would dissolve and a new election would be held, in hopes that the people would support parties that could work together to form a new coalition. In the 14 years between 1919 and 1933, the Weimar Republic had 20 different legislatures.

Adopted on August 11, 1919, the new Weimar Constitution began with a preamble:

The German people, united in all their racial elements and inspired by the will to renew and strengthen their Reich in liberty and justice, to preserve peace at home and abroad, and to promote social progress, have established the following constitution.<sup>1</sup>

The constitution spelled out the “basic rights and obligations” of government officials and the citizens they served. Most of those rights and obligations had not existed in Germany under the kaiser, including the following:

**Article 109:** All Germans are equal before the law. Men and women have the same fundamental civil rights and duties. Public legal privileges or disadvantages of birth or of rank are abolished. . . .

**Article 114:** Personal liberty is inviolable [cannot be destroyed]. . . .

**Article 115:** The home of every German is his sanctuary and is inviolable. Exceptions are permitted only by authority of law. . . .

**Article 117:** The secrecy of letters and all postal, telegraph, and telephone communications is inviolable. Exceptions are inadmissible except by national law.

**Article 118:** Every German has the right, within the limits of the general laws, to express his opinion freely by word, in writing, in print, in picture form, or in any other way. . . . Censorship is forbidden. . . .

**Article 123:** All Germans have the right to assemble peacefully and unarmed without giving notice and without special permission. . . .

**Article 124:** All Germans have the right to form associations and societies for purposes not contrary to criminal law. . . .

**Article 126:** Every German has the right to petition. . . .

**Article 135:** All inhabitants of the Reich enjoy full religious freedom and freedom of conscience. The free exercise of religion is guaranteed by the Constitution and is under public protection. . . .

1 From “The Constitution of the German Reich,” in Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 58.



**Article 137:** There is no state church. . . .

**Article 153:** The right of private property is guaranteed by the Constitution. . . .  
Expropriation of property may take place only . . . by due process of law. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Despite the inclusion of these rights in the Weimar Constitution, individual freedom was not fully protected. Old laws that denied freedoms that were promised in the new constitution were rarely revised, replaced, or even challenged in court. Among them were laws that discriminated against homosexual men and “Gypsies” (the name Germans gave to two groups of people called the Sinti and Roma). And Article 48 of the new constitution gave the president special powers. It states, in part:

In the event that public order and security are seriously disturbed or threatened, the Reich President may take the measures necessary for their restoration, intervening, if necessary, with the aid of the armed forces. For this purpose, he may temporarily suspend, wholly or in part, the basic rights laid down in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153.<sup>3</sup>

The president alone was to decide whether an emergency existed. Nevertheless, the Reichstag could regain power by calling for a new election.

## Connection Questions

1. What is democracy? How does the Weimar Constitution reflect democratic aspirations?
2. What does it mean to create a government responsible to the people? What measures did the Weimar Constitution take to make the new government accountable to the German people?
3. What do you think the preamble means when it says that the German people are united in their “racial elements”? What might be the consequences for nationhood, belonging, and universe of obligation when a nation thinks of itself as having “racial elements”?
4. Based on evidence from the reading, which rights guaranteed by the Weimar Constitution are also guaranteed in your country?
5. What did Article 48 allow the president to do? Is such an article necessary in a democracy? What are its benefits and dangers?

2 From “The Constitution of the German Reich,” in Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 61–63.

3 Ibid., 60.

## Reading 4

# In Search of Meaning

After World War I, European nations reduced the size of their militaries. In addition, the Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to limit the size of its military to 100,000 men (see “Negotiating Peace” in Chapter 3). Some soldiers returned to the lives they had led before 1914, but others were not able to do so because of physical or mental injuries they suffered in the war. Many returning soldiers were not ready to settle down and joined paramilitary groups like the *Freikorps* (Free Corps). A paramilitary group looks and acts like a military force but is not necessarily responsible to a national government. Immediately following World War I, a number of these groups in Germany were organized by extreme right-wing nationalists.



The culture of the Free Corps was violent, as many of its members had grown accustomed to the brutality of combat and were unable or unwilling to move from military to civilian life. Former army officers recruited veterans with ads that read, “What’s the use of studies, and what’s the good of business or a profession? Enemies within and beyond are burning down our house. Help us, in the spirit of comradeship and loyalty, to restore our power of national defense.” Free Corps units

**Free Corps soldiers during their efforts to overthrow the Weimar government and restore the monarchy in an attempted coup known as the Kapp Putsch in March 1920.**

were sometimes enlisted by the government to crush uprisings at home as well as protect the nation’s borders from the Poles and the Bolsheviks. However, members of the Free Corps saw themselves as loyal to the *Volk*—the German people as a whole—not to the Weimar Republic.

By 1920, the German government tried to disband the Free Corps units, but many of them responded by marching on Berlin and declaring that they had overthrown the government and replaced Chancellor Friedrich Ebert with a man named Wolfgang Kapp, who wanted to restore a monarchy in Germany. This event is known as the Kapp Putsch. (A *putsch* is a violent attempt to overthrow a government.) The leaders of the Weimar Republic regained control of the country by urging ordinary citizens to go on strike for a return to democracy. The strike paralyzed Berlin and was a stunning suc-

cess. Within days, Kapp was forced to resign and the republic had been restored. Historian Peter Fritzsche describes a conversation that a British officer had with a captain in the Free Corps about the Kapp Putsch:

When asked by a British officer why his men had marched on Berlin, one "astonished [Free Corps] captain replied, 'Why, because I told them to! Wasn't that enough?'" To be sure most volunteers hated the socialists [who led the government], but that enmity hardly added up to a political program. Did they want the exiled kaiser back? "A confused [captain] stammered, 'N-no, no. Not that, not that . . .' 'What was the sense of it all then?' The question embarrassed the [captain]. He repeated it to himself and decided: 'The sense? The sense? There is sense only in danger. Marching into uncertainty is sense enough for us, because it answers the demands of our blood.'"<sup>1</sup>

The men who joined the Free Corps did not necessarily long for "the good old days" when the kaiser ruled. "For them," Fritzsche writes, "war and revolution had fashioned a fantastic, horrible world that blocked any return" to the "good old days."

By the early 1920s, the Free Corps eventually began to disband and new paramilitary groups were being formed. Although these new groups were equally quick to "defend" the fatherland, they were now attached to particular political parties and were eager to literally go to battle against their party's enemies.

## Connection Questions

1. What were the aims of paramilitary groups like the Free Corps?
2. What motivated German men to join such groups?
3. How could the presence of armed groups that are not responsible to the government influence life in a town, city, or country?
4. Is it dangerous to allow paramilitary groups to form and operate in a democracy?

<sup>1</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Harvard University Press, 1998), 125.

## Reading 5

# Law and Disorder

Continual disorder and crisis marked the first four years (1919–1923) of the new Weimar Republic. Challenges from both the Communist left, which urged abolition of private property and control of the government by the workers, and the ultra-conservative forces of the right, who were angered by the Treaty of Versailles (see Reading 2, “Rumors of Betrayal,” and “Negotiating Peace” in Chapter 3) and blamed a “Jewish-Bolshevik” conspiracy for its signing, led to frequent outbreaks of violence.

The new constitution left the German military, civil service, and judiciary relatively unchanged. Judges who had been appointed by the kaiser kept their jobs, even though many of them opposed the idea of a republic and often placed the need for order and security above the law. As one judge explained, just as the army protects Germany from enemies beyond the nation’s borders, it is the court’s duty to protect the nation within those borders.

That spirit was reflected in the way judges handled two political upheavals immediately after the war. The first took place in April 1919 in the German state of Bavaria, where left-wing councils of soldiers and workers (similar to soviets in Russia; see “Russia Quits the War” in Chapter 3) took over the state government with the aim of creating a socialist republic. There were tensions between different rebelling groups, and the revolt was quickly and violently ended with the help of the conservative *Freikorps* (Free Corps). More than 1,000 people were killed in massacres and battles in the streets. And more than 2,000 other rebels, including revolutionary socialist Ernst Toller, were tried and convicted of treason; almost all of them served long prison terms.

On March 12, 1920, another uprising occurred, the Kapp Putsch (see Reading 4, “In Search of Meaning”). This time, conservative Free Corps units led by Wolfgang Kapp attempted to overthrow the national government and restore a monarchy in Germany. The uprising ended within days after supporters of the national government went on strike, bringing the city of Berlin to a standstill.

One might have expected the German government to treat the leaders of this uprising the same way they had treated the left-wing uprising in Bavaria a year earlier. The German government did not. Only a few of those involved in this conservative revolt were arrested, and most were never brought to trial. In fact, only one participant served a short prison sentence. Kapp fled to Sweden, where he was arrested and eventually returned to Germany. He died of cancer while awaiting trial.

The courts clearly did not consider all uprisings equal, and some judges had other biases as well. In 1923, the German Supreme Court allowed the use of the term “Jew Republic” to describe the Weimar government on

the grounds that “it can denote the new legal and social order in Germany which was brought about in significant measure by German and foreign Jews.”<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a worker who carried a communist banner saying, “Workers, burst your chains!” was arrested for inciting class warfare. So all speech was not equal. Neither were all murders.

Between 1919 and 1922, the Free Corps and other conservative paramilitary groups were responsible for over 2,000 assaults and 354 political assassinations. A paramilitary group is a private army often associated with a political party or movement. Although 50 Free Corps killers confessed, over half were acquitted. The 24 found guilty spent an average of just four months in jail. Communist groups were responsible for 22 political assassinations during the same period. All of those cases went to trial, and ten of the murderers were executed. The other 12 received an average prison term of 15 years.

Many judges had come to believe that “defense of the state” justified breaking the law. A German legal scholar was horrified at the idea that murder could be justified by a “national emergency.” He wrote: “Such a decision does more than merely damage legal order which judges are called upon to protect. This decision destroys it.”<sup>2</sup> The Social Democrats agreed. In 1924, they warned that “administration of justice in this manner presents a danger to the republic, insofar as it enables subversive and monarchist organizations to amass weapons without giving that part of the population which supports democracy the possibility to defend itself or to insist on respect for the law.”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What were some main similarities and differences between the two uprisings described in this reading? What were the aims of each? How did each end? What do the different fates of the Communist and conservative rebels suggest about Weimar society?
2. What is the role of judges and courts in a democracy? What is the significance of the fact that the judges in Weimar were held over from the monarchy?
3. What could be the consequences when the courts in a democracy treat groups differently?
4. The Weimar Constitution granted many new freedoms to individuals and groups, but it left some basic institutions like the judiciary and the educational system untouched. How much change can society endure at once? During such times of transition, is it better to leave some parts of society alone?

1 Quoted in Ingo Müller, *Hitler's Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 18.

2 Quoted in *ibid.*, 23.

3 Quoted in *ibid.*, 22–23.

## Reading 6

# Attitudes toward Life and Death

The enormous loss of life during and immediately after World War I made many people think differently about the value of human life. According to historian Doris Bergen, the war “seemed to many Europeans to prove that human life was cheap and expendable.”<sup>1</sup> That attitude may have prompted some individuals to embrace a new movement growing in Germany, England, and the United States to “improve the race” through eugenics. Eugenacists believed that they could “raise the present miserably low standard of the human race” by “breeding the best with the best” and eliminating so-called “racially defective” human beings.<sup>2</sup>

In 1920, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche published a pamphlet that built on these ideas from eugenics and sparked a national debate in Germany. Binding, a lawyer, stated what the two men saw as the problem: “There are living people to whom death would be a release, and whose death would simultaneously free society and the state from carrying a burden which serves no conceivable purpose, except that of providing an example of the greatest unselfishness.”<sup>3</sup>

The question was whether to permit the state to destroy those lives. Hoche, a psychiatrist, argued:

In the prosperous times of the past, the question of whether one could justify making all necessary provision for such dead-weight existences was not pressing. But now things have changed, and we must take it up seriously. Our situation resembles that of participants in a difficult expedition: the greatest possible fitness of everyone is the inescapable condition of the endeavor’s success, and there is no room for half-strength, quarter-strength, or eighth-strength members. For a long time, the task for us Germans will be the most highly intensified integration of all possibilities—the liberation of every available power for productive ends. Fulfilling this task is opposed by the modern efforts to maintain (as much as possible) every kind of weakling and to devote care and protection to all those who (even if they are not mentally dead) are constitutionally less valuable elements. These efforts have particular importance through the fact that, so far, preventing these defective people from *reproducing* has not even been seriously attempted. . . .

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 28.

2 William H. Tucker, *The Science and Politics of Racial Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 40–41.

3 Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, *Permitting the Destruction of Unworthy Life: Its Extent and Form* (1920), trans. Walter E. Wright and Patrick G. Derr, in *Issues in Law and Medicine* VIII, 2 (1992).



The next issue to explore is whether the selection of these lives, which have *finally* become worthless for the individual and for society, can be accomplished with such certainty that mistakes and errors can be *excluded*.

This concern can only arise among lay people. For physicians, there is not the slightest question that this selection can be carried out with one hundred percent certainty and, indeed, with a much higher degree of certainty than can be found in deciding about the mental health or illness of convicted criminals.

For physicians, there are many indisputable, scientifically established criteria by which the *impossibility of recovery* for mentally dead people can be recognized . . .

Naturally, no doctor would conclude with certainty that a two- or three-year-old was suffering permanent mental death. But, even in *childhood*, the moment comes when this prediction can be made without doubt.<sup>4</sup>

In 1920, most people in Germany did not agree that the needs of society should dictate who should live or die. But a growing number, including Adolf Hitler and members of his Nazi Party, were intrigued by the idea.

## Connection Questions

1. What argument do Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche make in defense of their position? How might the enormous loss of life on the battlefields of World War I have given credence to their ideas?
2. What do those ideas mean for a nation's universe of obligation?
3. Can a government and society whose highest ideal is the value of individual human life tolerate the ideas of Binding and Hoche?

<sup>4</sup> Binding and Hoche, *Permitting the Destruction of Unworthy Life*.

## Reading 7

# The Beginning of the Nazi Party



Watch **Hitler's Rise to Power: 1918–1933**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Thousands of men returned home from the war bitter and angry. Many blamed military leaders and politicians for wasting so many lives in the name of national pride. Others, believing in the “stab in the back” myth, were outraged over the nation’s defeat, the terms of the armistice, and the Treaty of Versailles (see Reading 2, “Rumors of Betrayal”).

Adolf Hitler, a corporal originally from Austria, was among those angry veterans. Like many of his comrades, he felt that fighting in the war had given him a sense of purpose and a way of distinguishing himself. Bitterly disappointed by the outcome of the war, many men like him vowed to continue the fight for Germany by entering politics. Some joined the Communists, while others, including Hitler, turned to various extreme nationalist parties. (Nationalists believe that their nation and its people are superior to all others and deserving of their undying devotion.) Hitler joined the German Workers’ Party.

By February 1920, the party had a new name and a platform. The new name was the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*—or *Nazi*, for short). The name was meant to convey nationalism and socialism at the same time, although the socialism in the Nazi platform benefited only the members of an ever-narrowing definition of the German nation. The platform, proclaimed by Hitler at the first large party gathering in Munich that month, included the following provisions:

### Nazi Party Platform

- We demand the unification of all Germans in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of national self-determination.
- We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and the revocation of the peace treaty of Versailles . . .
- We demand land and territory (colonies) to feed our people and to settle our surplus population.
- Only members of the nation may be citizens of the state. Only those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. Accordingly, no Jew may be a member of the nation.
- Non-citizens may only live in Germany as guests and must be subject to laws for aliens.

- The right to vote on the State's government and legislation shall be enjoyed by the citizens of the State alone. We demand therefore that all official appointments, of whatever kind, whether in the Reich, in the states or in the smaller localities, shall be held by none but citizens.
- We demand that the State shall make its primary duty to provide a livelihood for its citizens. If it should prove impossible to feed the entire population, foreign nationals (non-citizens) must be deported from the Reich.
- All non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after 2 November 1914 shall be required to leave the Reich forthwith.
- All citizens shall have equal rights and duties.
- In view of the enormous sacrifices of life and property demanded by a nation by any war, personal enrichment from war must be regarded as a crime against the nation. We demand therefore the ruthless confiscation of all war profits.
- We demand profit-sharing in large industrial enterprises.
- We demand the extensive development of insurance for old age.
- The state must consider a thorough reconstruction of our national system of education (with the aim of opening up to every able and hard-working German the possibility of higher education and of thus obtaining advancement). The curricula of all education establishments must be brought into line with the requirements of practical life. The aim of school must be to give the pupil, beginning with the first sign of intelligence, a grasp of the notion of the State . . .
- The State must ensure that the nation's health standards are raised by protecting mothers and infants, by prohibiting child labor, by promoting physical strength through legislation providing for compulsory gymnastics and sports, and by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical training of youth.
- . . . To facilitate the creation of a German national press we demand:
  - (a) that all editors of, and contributors to newspapers appearing in the German language must be members of the nation;
  - (b) that no non-German newspapers may appear without express permission of the State. They must not be printed in the German language;
  - (c) that non-Germans shall be prohibited by law from participating financially in or influencing German newspapers . . .
- We demand freedom for all religious denominations in the State, provided they do not threaten the existence nor offend the moral feelings of the German race.

The Party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, but does not commit itself to any particular denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and without us, and is convinced that our nation can achieve permanent health only from within on the basis of the principle: The common interest before self-interest. . . .<sup>1</sup>

1 Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader*, vol. 1: *The Rise to Power 1919–1934* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 15–16.

The Nazi Party platform was just one of many programs advanced by one political group or another. Yet by 1921, Hitler was attracting thousands of new members. One early member—who also belonged to the Nazis' paramilitary group, known as the SA (officially the *Sturmabteilung* or storm troopers)—explained the attraction:

We, oldtime National Socialists, did not join the S.A. for reasons of self-interest. Our feelings led us to Hitler. There was a tremendous surge in our hearts, a something that said: "Hitler, you are our man. You speak as a soldier of the front and as a man; you know the grind, you have yourself been a working man. You have lain in the mud, even as we—no big shot, but an unknown soldier. You have given your whole being, all your warm heart, to German manhood, for the wellbeing of Germany rather than your personal advancement or self-seeking. For your innermost being will not let you do otherwise." No one who has ever looked Hitler in the eye and heard him speak can ever break away from him.<sup>2</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. Summarize the points of the Nazi political platform. What does the party platform indicate about the Nazi universe of obligation? What parts of the document may have seemed the most reasonable? What parts of the document might have been most popular?
2. What elements of Hitler's biography and personality were attractive to people in Weimar Germany?
3. Do you agree or disagree that when a person supports a political party, they must agree with all of the party's beliefs? Why might someone support a political party even if they are uncomfortable with some of its proposals?
4. While the SA member's statement that "no one who has ever looked Hitler in the eye and heard him speak can ever break away from him" is not literally true, Hitler's personality played an important role in generating support for the Nazi Party. What is charisma? How does the power of a leader's personality shape the response to their message?

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1938; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 153.

## Reading 8

# The First Nazi Uprising

On the night of November 8, 1923, Adolf Hitler and a band of supporters dramatically burst into a Munich beer hall. Hitler ordered one of his men to fire a shot at the ceiling, and then he declared that German President Friedrich Ebert and the national government had been ousted. (This was not true.) The local police quickly restored order and, two days later, arrested Hitler. Indicted for plotting to overthrow the government, he believed the trial would bring his message to a national audience.

Throughout the court proceedings, Hitler and his followers openly showed their contempt for the Weimar Republic by calling it a “Jew government.” When the prosecution objected, the judge ruled that the Nazis could continue to use the term because they were “guided in their actions by a purely patriotic spirit and the noblest of selfless intentions.”<sup>1</sup> That view also guided the verdict. Although Hitler and his supporters were found guilty, the judge refused to deprive them of their privileges as citizens. Instead, he gave them the minimum sentence possible under the law—five years in prison.

In 1923, Hitler was still an Austrian citizen. As a foreigner convicted of a serious crime, he should have been deported. Indeed, the law required deportation, but the judge chose not to follow the law. He explained: “In the case of a man whose thoughts and feelings are as German as Hitler’s, the court is of the opinion that the intent and purpose of the law have no application.”<sup>2</sup> Hitler and his comrades served just nine months of their prison term. The rest of their term was suspended.

During his time in prison, Hitler and an ally, Rudolf Hess, worked on a book about Hitler’s life, his beliefs, and his plans for the future. Most of his ideas were based on antisemitic literature he had read before the war, lessons he had learned in the trenches, and observations made in the years that followed.

In Hitler’s book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), published in 1925, he maintained that conflict between the races is the catalyst of history. A *catalyst* makes things happen. In Hitler’s view, different races have different roles to play in society. Because he believed that the “Aryan” race was superior to all others (see “Creating the German Nation” in Chapter 2), he insisted that “Aryan” Germany had the right to incorporate all of eastern Europe into a new empire that would provide much-needed *Lebensraum*, or living space, for it. That new empire would also represent a victory over the

1 Quoted in Ingo Müller, *Hitler’s Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 15.

2 Richard A. Posner, *Overcoming Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 147.

Communists who controlled much of the territory Hitler sought. Hitler regarded them as enemies of the German people. He repeatedly connected the Communists to Jews, whom he also saw as an enemy, by claiming that the Jews were behind the teachings of the Communist Party. “Jewish Bolshevism” became the phrase he and his fellow Nazis used to link the two groups. (The Bolsheviks were the communist political group that gained power in Russia in the 1917 revolution and established the Soviet Union.)

The Jews, according to Hitler, were everywhere, controlled everything, and acted so secretly that few could detect their influence. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler declared that there was a hierarchy of groups. At the bottom were not only Jews but also “Gypsies” (Roma and Sinti) and Africans. Hitler was not interested in facts. Instead, he would repeat a false statement again and again; the constant repetition had an impact even on those who knew it was a lie. Hitler’s speeches often referred to a mythical time in the past when a community of “Aryans” lived peacefully together. He called upon the German *Volks* to restore that community by removing inferior races and eliminating the class hatred preached by the Communists. British historian A. J. P. Taylor once called Hitler’s ideas “a distorting mirror” of European thought. He saw Hitler as someone who took ideas that were widely held and carried them to an extreme.

Hitler’s trial and imprisonment made him a national figure in Germany. One war veteran who subsequently joined the Nazi Party recalled his impressions:

Then came a light in the darkness. A movement for freedom was founded in Munich. In 1923 we heard the name of Adolf Hitler for the first time. Who was the man? He was a simple front soldier, an Austrian who had fought and bled under the German flag. What did he want? The thoughts raced through my brain. Truth, honor, faith, discipline! What marvelous words! Unity of all people of German blood! . . . Here was a man of action! . . . Then treason did its work and the undertaking [the first Nazi uprising] collapsed. Trials followed in the courts. How that man Hitler spoke! Those days of his trial became the first days of my faith in Hitler. From that time on I had no thought of anyone but Hitler! His behavior moved me to give him my whole faith, without reserve. There was not much to weigh or study. All a man had to do was to think about the courage and heroism of his beginnings. The ideas of the leader cannot be got from books, be they ever so learned. The philosophy of National Socialism must take roots in one’s very heart! Ever since those days I have fought and striven for my Führer, Adolf Hitler. I shall readily give my all for him at any time he may demand it.<sup>3</sup>

By 1925, Hitler was out of prison and once again in control of the Nazi Party. The attempted coup had taught him an important lesson. Never again would he attempt an armed uprising. Instead, the Nazis would use the rights guaranteed by the Weimar Constitution—freedom of the press, the right to assemble, and freedom of speech—to win control of Germany.

3 Quoted in Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1938; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 69–70.



## Connection Questions

1. In what ways was the justice system biased toward Hitler and his allies after their attempt to overthrow the government? Why was this the case?
2. How did Hitler use earlier ideas about “us” and “them” in his autobiography, *Mein Kampf*? What policies did he advocate based on those ideas? How did the clarity or simplicity of Hitler’s ideas contribute to their acceptance?
3. Why was the war veteran quoted in this reading attracted to Hitler?
4. How did Hitler’s arrest, trial, and prison sentence change his beliefs about how to win control of Germany?

## Reading 9

# When Money Had No Value

Beginning in the fall of 1922, an extreme inflation, or hyperinflation, took hold of the German economy. During periods of inflation, prices rise continuously as the value of a currency drops sharply. Many European countries experienced inflation after the war, but nowhere did prices rise as rapidly as they did in Germany. On some days, the value of the mark (the unit of German currency) fell almost hourly.

What caused the hyperinflation? During the war, rather than raising taxes and risking public anger, the German government had printed increased amounts of paper money to pay soldiers and to purchase guns, ammunition, and other supplies. After the fighting ended, there was more currency in circulation than there were things to buy. In addition, when Germany failed to make reparations payments to France, the French occupied the Ruhr (an industrial region in Germany rich in coal and iron ore). To show their outrage at the occupation, the German people responded with a general strike. During that strike, they produced almost nothing. So the few goods still available became more valuable. Prices skyrocketed and the mark purchased less and less. The enormous supply of German currency in circulation and the scarcity of goods meant that basic items like milk or bread that normally cost a few marks suddenly cost dozens of marks, and then hundreds, thousands, millions, and more.

As a result of the inflation, Germans who had their savings in banks or were living on pensions or disability checks found themselves virtually bankrupt. Workers increasingly discovered that no matter how high their wages rose, they could not keep up with rapidly soaring prices. According to Sebastian Haffner, a journalist and author who lived through the period:

Anyone who had savings in a bank or bonds saw their value disappear overnight. Soon it did not matter whether it was a penny put away for a rainy day or a vast fortune. Everything was obliterated . . .

The cost of living had begun to spiral out of control . . . A pound of potatoes which yesterday had cost fifty thousand marks now cost a hundred thousand. The salary of sixty-five thousand marks brought home the previous Friday was no longer sufficient to buy a packet of cigarettes on Tuesday.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 55.



Roger-Viollet / The Image Works

**A woman takes a basket of banknotes to buy cabbage at a market during the 1923 hyperinflation in Weimar Germany.**

Artist George Grosz described what shopping was like in those days.

Lingering at the [shop] window was a luxury because shopping had to be done immediately. Even an additional minute meant an increase in price. One had to buy quickly because a rabbit, for example, might cost two million marks more by the time it took to walk into the store. A few million marks meant nothing, really. It was just that it meant more lugging. The packages of money needed to buy the smallest item had long since become too heavy for trouser pockets. They weighed many pounds. . . . People had to start carting their money around in wagons and knapsacks. I used a knapsack.<sup>2</sup>

The hyperinflation brought uncertainty to almost everyone. Victor Klemperer, a professor who kept a diary during those years, wrote in October 1923:

Germany is collapsing in an eerie, step-by-step manner. . . . The dollar stands at 800 million [marks]; it stands every day 300 million more than the previous day. All that's not just what you read in the paper, but has an immediate impact on one's own life. How long will we still have something to eat? Where will we next have to tighten our belts?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> George Grosz, *A Little Yes and a Big No: The Autobiography of George Grosz*, trans. L. S. Dorin (New York: Dial, 1946), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 107.

The government was able to bring the runaway inflation under control in 1924, but by then, prices in Germany had reached a billion times their pre–World War I levels.<sup>4</sup> And although there would be relative peace and prosperity in Germany for the next five years, the crisis had a lasting effect on many Germans. As one historian explains:

Hyperinflation became a trauma whose influence affected the behavior of Germans of all classes long afterwards. It added to the feeling in the more conservative sections of the population of a world turned upside-down, first by defeat, then by revolution, and now by economics.<sup>5</sup>

### Value of Germany Currency, 1919–1923

Date	Marks	US Dollars
1918	4.2	1
1921	75	1
1922	400	1
January 1923	7,000	1
July 1923	160,000	1
August 1923	1,000,000	1
November 1, 1923	1,300,000,000	1
November 15, 1923	1,300,000,000,000	1
November 16, 1923	4,200,000,000,000	1

### Connection Questions

1. Define inflation in your own words. How did inflation change daily life in Germany?
2. How does economic insecurity influence an individual's decision making?  
How might it change an individual's universe of obligation?

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 109.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 112.

## Reading 10

# Who Is to Blame for the Inflation?

During the year of hyperinflation, Germans looked for someone to blame for the crisis. There was a widespread feeling that a few people were growing rich while honest workers were starving. Who was responsible? To many people in Germany, the answer was the Jews, even though they suffered from the hyperinflation along with everyone else. After studying German census data, historian Donald L. Niewyk found that even though a few Jews were highly successful and wealthy in Germany at this time, the vast majority were not. He noted that “by the end of 1923, the Berlin Jewish Community had established nineteen soup kitchens, seven shelters, and an employment information and placement office for the destitute Jews of the city. Other big-city communities did the same.”<sup>1</sup>

Niewyk pointed out that the people who suffered most were Jewish refugees from Russia and countries in eastern and central Europe who had come to Germany after the war to escape persecution and upheavals in the countries of their birth. These Jews provided a convenient target for heightened antisemitism, and they were subject to “chronic unemployment, sporadic official harassment, and the resentment of both Jewish and non-Jewish Germans.”<sup>2</sup>

That growing resentment toward Jews turned violent on November 5, 1923, at a time when the German mark was almost worthless. For two days, an angry mob attacked a Berlin neighborhood that was home to many Jewish refugees and ransacked their homes and shops, as a newspaper reporter observed:

Everywhere in the side-streets a howling mob. Looting takes place under cover of darkness. A shoe-shop at the corner of Dragoon Street is ransacked, the shards of the window-panes are lying around on the street. Suddenly a whistle sounds. In a long human chain, covering the entire width of the street, a police cordon advances. “Clear the street!” an officer cries. “Go into your houses!” The crowd slowly moves on. Everywhere with the same shouts: “Beat the Jews to death!” . . . it is inflamed racial hatred, not hunger, that is driving them to loot. Young lads immediately follow every passer-by with a Jewish appearance, in order to fall upon him when the moment is right.<sup>3</sup>

1 Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 18.

2 Ibid., 15.

3 Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 151–52.

## Connection Questions

1. A scapegoat is a person or a group who is wrongly blamed for bad things that happen. How and why were Jews made into scapegoats for Germany's economic crisis?
2. Why were Jewish refugees initially more vulnerable than German Jews? What does this suggest about the society's universe of obligation at the time?



## Reading 11

# The Myth of a Jewish Conspiracy

In 1919, Erich Ludendorff, one of Germany's top military leaders, announced that Jews were one of several groups responsible for the nation's defeat. By 1922, he was focusing almost entirely on Jews as "the enemy." He wrote, "The supreme government of the Jewish people was working hand in hand with France and England. Perhaps it was leading them both."<sup>1</sup> As proof, he cited the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a document supposedly containing the minutes of a secret meeting of Jewish leaders—the so-called "Elders of Zion"—held at the turn of the twentieth century. At that supposed meeting, the "Elders" allegedly plotted to take over the world.

In fact, the *Protocols* is a forgery; Russian secret police wrote it in the early 1900s to incite hatred against Jews. At the time, few people paid much attention to the document, but after World War I, it became a worldwide sensation. Many believed that the *Protocols* explained seemingly "inexplicable" events—the war, the economic crises that followed the war, the revolutions in Russia and central Europe, even epidemics. Myths regarding a "Jewish conspiracy" had been around for centuries, but the *Protocols* gave them new life, even after the document was exposed as a hoax in 1921. For many people, the war and the earthshaking events that followed it confirmed the *Protocols'* authenticity, no matter what evidence was offered to the contrary.

In August 1921, the *Times* of London showed how the authors of the *Protocols* had copied long passages from several fictional works to create the document. As a result of that exposé, the British company that originally published the English version of the *Protocols* refused to print or distribute additional copies, and some newspapers no longer gave the document publicity. But neither action damaged the popularity of the *Protocols*. In recent years, studies have shown that efforts to debunk a lie often leave people more convinced than ever that the lie is true.<sup>2</sup>

In every country, the *Protocols* attracted a following long after the *Times* exposé. A Japanese edition was published in 1924. The next year, an Arabic translation appeared. The patriarch of Jerusalem (the head of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Palestine) urged church members to buy the book. Henry Ford, the American automobile manufacturer, went even further. In 1920, he serialized the document in a weekly newspaper he owned

1 Quoted in Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif Books, 1967), 149.

2 Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 303–30.



This Weimar campaign poster ("The Wire Puller," 1924) depicts an antisemitic caricature of a Jew with a manipulative personality, urging workers to vote for the Nationalist Party.

and then published dozens of articles and books based on its contents. Although Ford later withdrew his support for the *Protocols* as part of the settlement of a lawsuit against him, the damage was done. Hundreds of antisemites in the United States continued to publish and distribute the document long after Ford stopped doing so.

In the 1920s, Germany's 500,000 Jews accounted for less than 1% of the total population of about 61 million. Yet by focusing on Jews as "the enemy," antisemites made it seem as if Jews were everywhere and were responsible for everything that went wrong in the nation. Ludendorff and others spread the lie that Jews were responsible for the "stab in the back"

at the end of the war, the Treaty of Versailles, the Communist Party, and the founding of the Weimar Republic. Therefore, according to this view, the first step in “saving” Germany from a “Jewish conspiracy” must be the destruction of the Weimar Republic. A number of extremist groups hired thugs and organized private armies to kill supporters of the republic.<sup>3</sup>

The main target for many extremist groups was Germany’s foreign minister, Walter Rathenau, a wealthy Jewish businessman, writer, and thinker. During the war, he worked for the German War Ministry to ensure that the military had enough food and other resources. Without his efforts, Germany would probably have lost the war much sooner. Yet many Germans were outraged when he was appointed foreign minister in 1922. Never before had a Jew held such an important position in the German government.

On the morning of June 24, 1922, Rathenau was murdered on his way to work. The two gunmen and their co-conspirators were military veterans who belonged to extreme nationalist groups. In July, the police finally closed in on them and killed one of the assassins; the other died by suicide. The government then brought the 13 surviving conspirators to trial. The men did not deny that they had murdered Rathenau but insisted that the killing was justified because they believed Rathenau was a so-called “Elder of Zion.”

## Connection Questions

1. What claims about Jews did the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* make? What accounted for the popularity of the *Protocols*, even after the document had been exposed as a lie and a forgery?
2. In recent years, studies have shown that efforts to debunk a lie often leave more people convinced of its truth.<sup>4</sup> How difficult is it to “undo” a lie? Why do people sometimes find it easier to believe an outrageous lie than a simple truth?
3. A conspiracy theory is the belief that a group is secretly responsible for a circumstance or event. In what ways is the *Protocols* a conspiracy theory? Why might conspiracy theories be hard to refute?
4. Which do you think is more significant: (a) that Walter Rathenau, a Jew, was appointed to a high-ranking position in Germany’s government, or (b) that Rathenau was murdered after he achieved this position? What do these two facts tell us about the position of Jews in the Weimar Republic?

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 150.

<sup>4</sup> Nyhan and Reffer, “When Corrections Fail,” 303–30.

## Reading 12

# Voices in the Dark

Life in Weimar Germany was often unpredictable, as a former soldier, Henry Buxbaum, discovered one evening in the early 1920s:

The train was pitch-dark. The lights were out, nothing uncommon after the war when the German railroads were in utter disrepair and very few things functioned orderly. . . . That night, we were seven or eight people in the dark, fourth-class compartment, sitting in utter silence till one of the men started the usual refrain: "Those God-damned Jews, they are at the root of all our troubles." Quickly, some of the others joined in. I couldn't see them and had no idea who they were, but from their voices they sounded like younger men. They sang the same litany over and over again, blaming the Jews for everything that has gone wrong with Germany and for anything else wrong in this world. It went on and on, a cacophony of obscenities, becoming more vicious and at the same time more unbearable with each new sentence echoing in my ears. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer. I knew very well that to start up with them would get me into trouble, and that to answer them wasn't exactly the height of wisdom, but I couldn't help it. . . . I began naturally with the announcement: "Well, I am a Jew and etc., etc." That was the signal they needed. Now they really went after me, threatening me physically. I didn't hold my tongue as the argument went back and forth. They began jostling me till one of them . . . probably more encouraged by the darkness than by his own valor, suggested: "Let's throw the Jew out of the train." Now, I didn't dare ignore this signal, and from then on I kept quiet. I knew that silence for the moment was better than falling under the wheels of a moving train. One of the men in our compartment, more vicious in his attacks than the others, got off the train with me in Friedburg. When I saw him under the dim light of the platform, I recognized him as a fellow I knew well from our soccer club. . . . I would never have suspected this man of harboring such rabid, antisemitic feelings.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What role did the darkness play in the incident described in this reading? What role did the presence of a group of people who shared similar attitudes play?
2. Do you think the man from Henry Buxbaum's soccer club would have shared his antisemitic views openly if he had been able to see who else was on the train?
3. This reading suggests that anonymity can embolden some people to give voice to attitudes they might not otherwise share. Why might that be? Do you see this in your own experience? Is this the case when readers are invited to comment on news stories or social media posts online?

<sup>1</sup> Henry Buxbaum, "Recollections," in *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, trans. Stella P. Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 303–04.

## Reading 13

# Antisemitism and Jewish Identity

The growing antisemitism in Germany in the 1920s had a profound effect on Jews throughout the country. Many had taken pride in being German and saw their nationality as an integral part of their identity. Now antisemitism led many Jews to reassess their identity. Among those individuals was Ernst Toller, who wrote:

I was born and brought up in Germany; I had breathed the air of Germany and its spirit had molded mine; as a German writer I had helped to preserve the purity of the German language. How much of me was German, how much Jewish? I could not have said . . .

The words, "I am proud to be a German" or "I am proud to be a Jew," sounded . . . stupid to me. As well say, "I am proud to have brown eyes."

Must I then join the ranks of the bigoted and glorify my Jewish blood now, not my German? Pride and love are not the same thing, and if I were asked where I belonged I should answer that a Jewish mother had borne me, that Germany had nourished me, Europe had formed me, my home was the earth, and the world my fatherland.<sup>1</sup>

Influential psychologist Sigmund Freud also reassessed his identity. In 1926, the Austrian native told an interviewer, "My language is German. My culture, my attainments are German. I considered myself German intellectually, until I noticed the growth of antisemitic prejudice in Germany and German Austria. Since that time, I prefer to call myself a Jew."<sup>2</sup> It was a revealing comment from a man who did not believe in God or organized religion.

Arnold Schoenberg took an even stronger stand. Schoenberg was a world-famous composer who converted from Judaism to Christianity in 1898, when he was in his twenties. In 1923, artist Wassily Kandinsky sent him an invitation to join the faculty at the prestigious Bauhaus school of design in Weimar. Kandinsky noted in his letter that Jews were not normally welcome at the Bauhaus, but an exception would be made for Schoenberg. The outraged composer replied:

[W]hen I walk along the street and each person looks at me to see whether I'm a Jew or a Christian, I can't very well tell each of them that I'm the one that Kandinsky and some others make an exception of, although of course that man Hitler is

1 Ernst Toller, *I Was a German: The Autobiography of Ernst Toller* (Paragon House, 1991), 285–86.

2 Quoted in Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1998), 448.



not of their opinion. And then even this benevolent view of me wouldn't be much use to me, even if I were, like blind beggars, to write it around my neck for everyone to read. . . .

I ask: Why do people say that the Jews are like what their black-marketeers are like?

Do people also say that the Aryans are like their worst elements? Why is an Aryan judged by [great Germans like] Goethe, Schopenhauer and so forth? Why don't people say the Jews are like Mahler, Altenberg, Schoenberg and many others?<sup>3</sup>

Schoenberg then reprimanded Kandinsky for daring to "'reject me as a Jew.' Did I ever offer myself to you? Do you think that someone like myself lets himself be rejected! Do you think that a man who knows his own value grants anyone the right to criticize even his most trivial qualities? Who might it be, anyway, who could have such a right?"

Schoenberg ended his letter by warning, "But what is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence? Is it so difficult to imagine that? You are perhaps satisfied with depriving Jews of their civil rights. Then certainly Einstein, Mahler, I, and many others will have been got rid of. But one thing is certain: they will not be able to exterminate those much tougher elements thanks to whose endurance Jewry has maintained itself unaided against the whole of mankind for twenty centuries."<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Make an identity chart for Ernst Toller. How did he see himself? Where did he feel he belonged? How do you think his identity would have been seen by Nazi supporters?
2. How did the climate of antisemitism influence the ways Sigmund Freud and Arnold Schoenberg saw themselves?
3. What does Schoenberg mean when he writes, "But what is antisemitism to lead to if not to acts of violence?" How would you answer the question? How are racism and violence linked?
4. How can your environment lead you to prioritize different parts of your identity at different times? How does feeling like an outsider affect the way you define yourself?

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, quoted in Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets Without Honor: A Background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and Their World* (Holt, 1979), 175–76.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



## Reading 14

# From Unrest to Peace and Prosperity

Ilya Ehrenburg was a journalist from the Soviet Union. In the 1920s, he traveled extensively throughout Europe. In a memoir, he recalls his time in Germany:

In the autumn of 1923 everybody thought that Germany was on the eve of a civil war. There was shooting in Hamburg, in Berlin, in Dresden, in Erfurt. . . . Foreign correspondents hung on the telephones. The storm seemed inevitable. Faint peals of thunder rumbled. But nothing happened. The workers were discouraged, worn out. The small [shopkeeper] was completely bewildered; he no longer believed anyone; . . . and though slightly nervous of the guardians of the law, he longed at the same time for a stable and firm regime. The Social Democrats boasted of their exemplary organization. The Trade Unions methodically collected membership dues. But determination was weak. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Then, in 1924, the German economy began to improve, partly because German leaders like Chancellor Gustav Stresemann had persuaded the Allies to lower reparations payments. In 1926, Germany was admitted into the League of Nations; it was no longer considered an “outlaw” nation. Eventually, Ehrenburg wrote, “The factories could not cope with the flood of orders. The previously empty shops began to fill with customers.” By 1928, the country had recovered from the war and business was booming.

As a result, fewer Germans seemed interested in the kind of hatred that Hitler and his Nazi Party promoted. The same was true for other extreme nationalist groups. In the 1928 elections, the Nazis received only about 2% of the vote. Other conservative parties did better. So did the Communists. Ehrenburg wrote of this new prosperous Germany:

There is a vast literature on the transition from war to peace economy. It is just as difficult for an ordinary man to pass from a life overflowing with historic events to a humdrum existence. I had spent two years in Berlin with the constant feeling of a gathering storm, and suddenly I realized that the wind had died down. To tell the truth I was dismayed; I was not prepared for a peaceful life.<sup>2</sup>

1 Ilya Ehrenburg, *Memoirs: 1921–1941*, trans. Tatania Shebunina (The Universal Library, Grosset & Dunlap, 1963, 1966), 56–57.

2 Ibid., 57.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did support for the Nazis decline as economic prosperity rose? How are extremists dependent upon crisis to gain support?
2. Why might some Germans have felt dismayed, rather than relieved, by the return of peace and prosperity?

## Visual Essay

# Free Expression in the Weimar Republic

Weimar Germany was a center of artistic innovation, great creativity, and considerable experimentation. Article 114 of the Weimar Constitution gave every German “the right, within the limits of the general laws, to express his opinion freely by word, in writing, in print, in picture form, or in any other way.” In film, the visual arts, architecture, craft, theater, and music, Germans were at the forefront of the most exciting developments in modern art in the 1920s and early 1930s. The unprecedented freedom and widespread latitude for varieties of cultural expression led to an explosion of artistic production.

A mood of innovation and creativity infused Weimar art, but so did a pervasive feeling of anxiety and fear. In this way, the works in this visual essay reflect the same tensions that shaped the Weimar period as a whole. Some artists freely tested the boundaries of social norms. They experimented with ideas about gender and critiqued life in the modern city. The aftermath of World War I, an uncertain economy, and a violent, tumultuous political climate also influenced Weimar art, and artists offered unsparing, often disturbing portrayals of German life. Artists like George Grosz and Otto Dix challenged viewers to see their world as it really was, not as they would like it to be—a type of art they called the New Objectivity.

Weimar art was often a form of social criticism. When they painted unflattering portrayals of political leaders and economic elites or created images that pushed the boundaries of polite society, artists sometimes found themselves targeted by those in authority. Conservative and radical right-wing critics decried the new works of art as decadent and immoral. They denounced Weimar Germany as a new Sodom and Gomorrah and attacked American influences, such as jazz music, as contributors to the decay of their society. In 1924, a German judge considered Grosz’s work so disturbing that he found the artist guilty of “attacks on public morality.” It was not the first time Grosz and other artists were brought to court for criticizing Germany, and it would not be the last.

How could Grosz and other Germans be tried and punished if they had a constitutional right to freedom of expression? The answer lies in the phrase “within the limits of the general laws.” Old laws that denied such freedom remained on the books.

The art of this period has so influenced our contemporary world that when we see these images today, it can be difficult to understand why many Germans of the 1920s found them strange, unnerving, even offensive. We can better appreciate the unsettling impact of Weimar artists like Grosz, Dix, and filmmaker Fritz Lang if we compare their work to the traditional portraits and landscapes that were familiar to most Germans at the time. These more old-fashioned works continued to be produced by other artists throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and they were embraced by the Nazi leadership as “true German art.” Meanwhile, works of modern art from the Weimar era were exhibited only as “degenerate” art (see “Art and Politics” in Chapter 6).

### Connection Questions

1. Fritz Mackensen’s 1892 painting *Der Saeugling* (The Baby) is one example of the more traditional art that many Germans were familiar with before World War I. Compare and contrast this painting with the more modern Weimar-era works of art that follow in this visual essay. What differences do you notice? What might those differences reveal about tensions present within German society during the Weimar Republic?
2. What can we learn about history from artwork? How do the works of art here connect to what you have already learned about the Weimar era in Germany? How do they extend your knowledge of this era? How do they challenge your thinking about Weimar Germany?
3. Is freedom of expression important to a democracy? Under what conditions, if any, should such freedom be restricted?



Etich Lessing / Art Resource, NY

**Fritz Mackensen**

***Der Saeugling (The Baby)*, 1892**

Mackensen's work represents a more traditional style of art that many Germans were familiar with before World War I. This painting was featured in the 1937 Great German Art Exhibition in Munich, sponsored by the Nazis.





Hannah Höch  
*The Kitchen Knife*, 1919

Höch's work consists primarily of collages, often made from photographs. Höch was part of the Dada movement, which formed in part as a reaction to the death and destruction from World War I. Dada artists prized irrationality and considered their work "anti-art."





VG Bild-Kunst / Art Resource, NY

**Albert Birkle**

***Nächtliche Strasse (Street at Night)*, 1921**

Birkle's work represents the New Objectivity movement that encompassed much of the art produced in the Weimar Republic. Artists like Birkle challenged their viewers to see the world as it really was, rather than as they would like it to be.





bpk, Berlin / Staatliche Museen / Volker-H. Schneider / Art Resource, NY

**Otto Dix**

### ***Verwundeter (Wounded Soldier)*, 1924**

Dix was a New Objectivist artist known for the brutal realism of his paintings. He was wounded several times by Germans soldiers on the western front during World War I. He based his series *Der Krieg (The War)* on these experiences.





alg-images

Otto Dix

**Gross Stadt (Metropolis), 1928**

In addition to his depictions of World War I, Otto Dix was also known for his ruthless criticism of German society during the Weimar years.





The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

### ***The Triadic Ballet*, 1926**

*The Triadic Ballet* was created by Oskar Schlemmer, a painter, sculptor, designer, and choreographer who taught at the Bauhaus art school in Germany during the Weimar Republic. Schlemmer's ballet represented the Bauhaus style: uncluttered, modern, and geometric.



Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY

## **Metropolis Film Poster,**

**1927**

*Metropolis* is a silent film by Fritz Lang known for its futuristic style and special effects. One of the first science fiction feature films, it is set in a dystopian German city marked by an enormous gulf between the wealthy and the poor.





Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

**George Grosz**

### ***Der Agitator (The Agitator)*, 1928**

Grosz is one of the most important artists associated with the New Objectivity movement. His paintings and sketches often offered critical judgments of German society during the Weimar Republic.





MARKA / Alamy

## **Marlene Dietrich in *Blue Angel*, 1930**

*Blue Angel*, directed by Josef von Sternberg, was Germany's first full-length talkie, a motion picture with sound as opposed to a silent film. The film follows the story of college professor who is undone by his attraction to Lola-Lola, a cabaret dancer played by German-American Marlene Dietrich. The film made Dietrich an international film star, and she continued her acting career in the United States.

## Reading 16

# Women in the Weimar Republic

At the turn of the twentieth century, women throughout Europe and North America were demanding that their governments give them the right to vote. Germany was no exception; women began to hold demonstrations for women's suffrage there as early as 1910. They succeeded in 1919, when Article 109 of the Weimar Constitution stated that men and women have the same fundamental rights and duties as citizens, including the right to vote and to hold office. During the years of the Weimar Republic, the majority of the electorate was female, in part because so many men had died in the war or were so physically or psychologically wounded that they were unlikely to vote. In 1919, the first year women could vote in Germany, they held 10% of the seats in the Reichstag, and their numbers continued to rise throughout the next decade.



A crowd of women standing in line at a polling station in the Weimar Republic in 1919, the first year women were allowed to vote.

During and after the war, the position of women in the workforce also began to change. While the proportion of women who had jobs remained about the same as before the war, women began to take new kinds of jobs that had previously been dominated by men. For instance, they began to fill more jobs that were visible throughout society, such as tram conductor and department store clerk, as well as (in smaller numbers) factory worker, lawyer, and doctor. While many of these positions would return to men after the war, women also moved into professions that many would continue to associate with women in the years that followed, such as teaching, social work, and secretarial work. All in all, more than 11 million women were employed in Germany in 1918, accounting for 36% of the work force.<sup>1</sup>

As women gained more power in both society and government, their position in society began to change:

Social observers of all political persuasions—from journalists and sociologists to government experts and political leaders—detected the emergence of a “new woman” and a “new family” in the 1920s. Indeed, Weimar culture did produce a certain heady and intoxicating sense of freedom in the big cities, especially for some intellectual and professional women . . .<sup>2</sup>

Alice Rühle-Gerstel was one of these “new women” in the 1920s. As a psychologist, she closely followed the way that the role of women in society was changing. In 1933, she wrote about the changes she had observed during the previous decade:

Women began to cut an entirely new figure. A new economic figure who went out into public economic life as an independent worker or wage-earner entering the free market that had up until then been free only for men. A new political figure who appeared in the parties and parliaments, at demonstrations and gatherings. A new physical figure who not only cut her hair and shortened her skirts but began to emancipate herself altogether from the physical limitations of being female. Finally, a new intellectual-psychological figure who fought her way out of the fog of sentimental ideologies and strove toward a clear, objective knowledge of the world and the self.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, according to Rühle-Gerstel, the “new women” were “pioneers” who never constituted a majority and did not succeed in changing most Germans’ ideas about the role of women in society. She noted, “Before [the new woman] could evolve into a type and expand into an average, she once again ran up against barriers.”<sup>4</sup> Promises of economic gains and a stronger voice in politics were fulfilled slowly, if at all. War veterans had gradually returned to civilian life, reclaiming their jobs as well as their role as family breadwinner. Business leaders and politicians be-

1 Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 96–97; Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 127.

2 Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan, eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), 11–12.

3 Alice Rühle-Gerstel, “Back to the Good Old Days?,” in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg (University of California Press, 1994), 218.

4 Ibid.

gan to advocate that women return to the more traditional roles of wife and mother. Mother's Day was promoted as an important day of national celebration, along with the slogan *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* ("children, kitchen, church") as the right path for German women. Historians Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz write that many of Germany's major political parties believed that reinforcing the traditional roles of women and men in the family "would provide stability in a social world that seemed to be rapidly slipping from their control." They continue:

Instead of guaranteeing equality to women who chose to live outside this structure [of the traditional female role], they sought to make motherhood more attractive. Thus, *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* was upgraded from a responsibility to a calling through home economics courses, homemaker helper programs, and social work projects. In this way, politicians of the center and right endeavored to make traditional roles attractive to a new generation by underwriting the father's authority and the mother's responsibility within the family.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, some German women never fully embraced the "new woman" and continued to hold traditional views about their place in society, criticizing younger women who "preferred dance-halls to reading groups."<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the decade, when economic uncertainty once again gripped Germany (see Reading 18, "A New Economic Crisis"), an increasing number of women were turning toward conservative parties like the Nazis, who made *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* for women an integral part of their proposed program.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the role of women in German society change in the Weimar Republic? What barriers to sustaining those changes did women encounter?
2. Why might some people view the changing status of women as threatening, not only to men but to the nation as a whole? Why might some women also resist changes in women's roles?
3. How can a country be assured that rights accorded to women during a particular period are sustained? Are laws that grant new rights to women sufficient to change attitudes?

5 Bridenthal et al., *When Biology Became Destiny*, 43.

6 Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 129.



## Reading 17

# Youth and Belonging in the Weimar Republic

For many Germans born in the decade before World War I, the years of the Weimar Republic were a disorienting time. These young people were coming of age in a defeated country beset by turmoil, change, and the questioning of traditional values. According to one such person:

We were not spared anything. We knew and felt the worries in the house. The shadow of necessity never left our table and made us silent. We were rudely pushed out of our childhood and not shown the right path. The struggle for life got to us early. Misery, shame, hatred, lies, and civil war imprinted themselves on our souls and made us mature early.<sup>1</sup>

But Germany's schools remained centers of tradition. Most teachers were conservative, both in their way of teaching and in their politics, and many were anti-socialist and antisemitic. A young man known as Klaus describes his schooling in the 1920s:

We were taught history as a series of facts. We had to learn dates, names, places of battles. Periods during which Germany won wars were emphasized. Periods during which Germany lost wars were sloughed over. We heard very little about World War I, except that the Versailles peace treaty was a disgrace, which someday, in some vague way, would be rectified. In my school, one of the best in Berlin, there were three courses in Greek and Roman history, four in medieval history, and not one in government. If we tried to relate ideas we got from literature or history to current events, our teachers changed the subject.

I really don't believe that anyone was deliberately trying to evade politics. Those teachers really seemed to think that what went on in the Greek and Roman Empires was more important than what was happening on the streets of Berlin and Munich. They considered any attempt to bring up current political questions a distraction . . . because we hadn't done our homework.

And there was always a great deal of homework in a school like mine, which prepared students for the university. At the end of our senior year, we were expected to take a detailed and exceedingly tough exam called the *Abitur*. How we did on the exam could determine our whole future. Again, the *Abitur* concentrated on our knowledge of facts, not on interpretation or on the expression of personal ideas.<sup>2</sup>

1 Quoted in Peter H. Merk, *Political Violence under the Swastika: 581 Early Nazis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 236.

2 Ellen Switzer, *How Democracy Failed* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 62–63.



Some young people, seeking to escape from the boredom of traditional schooling, sought adventure and companionship in hiking clubs, which became popular. Others took advantage of new forms of music, art, and drama in the cities. For others, sports became a national pastime, as journalist Sebastian Haffner describes:

In the years 1924, 1925, and 1926, Germany suddenly blossomed into a great sporting nation. Never before had it been a land of games. Never had it been creative and inventive in sports, like England and America. In fact, the true spirit of sport, the self-effacing, playful absorption in a fantasy world with its own rules and regulations, is altogether foreign to the German mentality. Nevertheless, in those years the membership of sports clubs and the numbers of spectators at sports meetings multiplied tenfold at a stroke. Boxers and sprinters became national heroes, and the twenty-year-olds had their heads full of athletics results, the names of winners, and all those numerical hieroglyphs into which feats of speed and skill are translated by the press.

It was the last German mass mania to which I myself succumbed. For two years my mental life stood still. I trained doggedly as a medium- and long-distance runner and would have sold my soul to the devil without hesitation if I could once have run 800 meters in under two minutes. I went to every athletics meet, and I knew every runner and his best times, not to mention the list of German and world records which I would have been able to reel off in my sleep. The sports news played the same role as the army bulletins ten years before, athletics records and race times replacing the numbers of prisoners and quantity of booty. The headline "Houben Runs Zoo Meters in 10.6" evoked the same feelings as, in its day, "20,000 Russians Taken Prisoner"; and "Peltzer Wins English Championship and Breaks World Record" corresponded to events that the war, alas, had failed to produce: "Paris Falls," perhaps, or "England Sues for Peace." Day and night I dreamed of vying with Peltzer and Houben. I missed no sports meet. I trained three times a week, stopped smoking, and performed exercises before going to bed. I felt the utter joy of being in complete harmony with thousands, tens of thousands of people, yes, even with the entire world. There was no one of my age, however alien, uneducated, or unpleasant, with whom I could not at first meeting engage in prolonged, animated conversation—about sports, of course. Everyone had the same figures in their heads. Without the need to say a word, everyone had the same feelings about them. It was almost as grand as the war. It was the same sort of great game again. We all understood one another. Our spiritual nourishment was statistics, our souls perpetually aquiver with excitement: Would Peltzer beat Nurmi, too? Would Kornig do it in 10.3? Would one of our German 400-meter runners finally manage 48? We trained and ran our little races, our thoughts always with our "German champions" at the international athletics meet, just as we had fought our own little battles with small Tesching rifles and wooden swords in the streets and playgrounds during the war, our thoughts with Hindenburg and Ludendorff. What a simple, exciting life!<sup>3</sup>

3 Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 72–74.

Political parties in the Weimar Republic also competed for young people's interest and loyalty. Many created youth groups to attract young members to their parties. The Nazi Party established the Hitler Youth in the 1920s in an effort to win over young supporters, and they were especially successful by the end of the decade in attracting university students to another organization, the National Socialist German Students' League. One young man describes this way why the Nazis appealed to him:

I read Hitler's speeches, studied the program of the National Socialist party, and gradually I was practically reborn. Filled with a pure joy I realized that what my mother had once said was true after all—that it was a hallowed act to give up one's life for Germany as the soldiers at the front had done. . . . I became a National Socialist. No voice protested against it; my heart was not full of fear at the thought of National Socialism; there was only a joyous acknowledgement, a bright enthusiasm, a pure faith in Adolf Hitler and Germany.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What do the excerpts in this reading suggest to you about what it was like to be a young person in the Weimar Republic?
2. How would you describe the type of education Klaus received? What was emphasized or omitted? What attitudes and values were transmitted to Klaus at school? How were they transmitted?
3. What is the purpose of education in a democracy? What should students learn at school to best support a democratic society?
4. What was the attraction of sports for Sebastian Haffner? What needs did they fulfill for him? From his perspective, what role did sports play in Weimar society? What role do they play in your society?
5. Why did the Nazis appeal to the last young man quoted in this reading? Where else might young people have turned to fulfill the needs and desires that the Nazis fulfilled for this young man?

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Abel, *Why Hitler Came into Power* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1938; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 212.

## Reading 18

# A New Economic Crisis

In October of 1929, a worldwide depression began. A depression is a severe economic downturn that forces businesses to decrease production and lay off workers. Germany felt the effects of the depression almost immediately. By 1932, 6 million Germans were unemployed in a nation of about 60 million people. Among them were Lea Langer Grundig, who was a Communist, and her husband, Hans. Like other job seekers, they stood in long lines at labor exchanges day after day:

The misery years of unemployment colored everyone the same shade of gray. Work qualifications, special abilities, skills, and knowledge based on experience—these were all as outmoded as vanished snow. The radiance and color of particular occupations were lost in the gray of welfare misery. Endless conversations, discussions, resigned grumbling and cursing, simple, childish hopeful chatter, political arguments—all this was woven into the never-ending talk of those standing in line.

Unemployment became a tragedy for many. Not only because of the poverty that mutely sat at their table at all times. Not working, doing nothing, producing nothing—work that not only provided food, but also, despite all the harassment and drudgery, was satisfying, developed skills, and stimulated thinking; work, a human need—it was not available; and wherever it was lacking, decay, malaise, and despair set in. . . .

The grim poverty, the hopelessness, the laws governing the crisis that were incomprehensible for many, all these made people ripe for “miracles.” Sects shot out of the ground. Diviners of the stars or coffee grounds, palm readers, graphologists, speculators and swindlers, clairvoyants and miracle workers had a great time; they reaped rich harvests among the poor, who along with their poverty and idleness fell prey to foolishness.<sup>2</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What words and phrases does Lea Grundig use to describe the effect that the depression had on Germans?
2. Why did the depression make people “ripe for miracles”?
3. How might a depression change attitudes about “we” and “they”? How might it affect a country’s universe of obligation? Can such changes be prevented in a democracy? How?

<sup>2</sup> From Lea Grundig, “Visions and History,” in Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 97.

## Reading 19

# Violence in the Streets

Throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, dozens of political parties competed for the support of German citizens. In some elections for the Reichstag, ballots listed more than 30 parties to choose from. By the mid-1920s, many of those parties were supported by paramilitary groups, or private armies. As a result, political disagreements and arguments on the streets of Germany often turned violent. Historian Richard Evans writes about the constant clashes between rival paramilitaries in the Weimar Republic:

Even in the relatively stable years of 1924–9, it was claimed that 29 Nazi activists had been killed by Communists, while the Communists themselves reported that 92 “workers” had been killed in clashes with “fascists” [Nazis] from 1924 to 1930. Twenty-six members of the Steel Helmets [conservative paramilitary group] were said to have fallen in the fight against Communism and 18 members of the Reichsbanner [Social Democrats] in various incidents of political violence from 1924 to 1928. These were only the most serious consequences of the continual fighting between rival paramilitary groups; the same sources counted injuries sustained in the battles in the thousands, many of them more serious than mere bruises or broken bones.<sup>3</sup>

The numbers of deaths and injuries in clashes between paramilitaries continued to rise through 1932. As the Nazi paramilitary organization, the SA (storm troopers), marched through the streets of Berlin in 1928 and later, they chanted the popular “Song of the Storm Columns”:

We are the Storm Columns, we put ourselves about,  
We are the foremost ranks, courageous in a fight.  
With sweating brows from work, our stomachs without food!  
Our calloused, sooty hands our rifles firmly hold.  
So stand the Storm Columns, for racial fight prepared.  
Only when Jews bleed, are we liberated.  
No more negotiation; it’s no help, not even slight:  
Beside our Adolf Hitler we’re courageous in a fight.  
Long live our Adolf Hitler! We’re already marching on.  
We’re storming in the name of German revolution.  
Leap onto the barricades! Defeat us only death can.  
We’re Storm Columns of Hitler’s dictatorship of one man.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 269.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Connection Questions

1. What effect does an atmosphere of violence have on a democracy? How might a democratic society respond to violence in the name of politics?
2. What values are reflected in "Song of the Storm Columns"?



## Reading 20

# Hard Times Return

German leaders, like their counterparts in other countries, looked for ways to end the depression. And like other leaders in 1929, they failed. The chancellor of the Weimar Republic that year was Hermann Müller, a Social Democrat. When he was unable to steer the country toward prosperity, President Paul von Hindenburg named a new chancellor a year later. This time, he chose Heinrich Brüning of the Catholic Center Party.

Brüning convinced President Hindenburg to invoke Article 48 (see Reading 3, “Creating a Constitutional Government”) to suspend the constitution so that the chancellor would be able to act quickly and decisively, without consulting the Reichstag, to address the severe economic crisis. Even so, Brüning could not pull Germany out of the depression.

To an increasing number of Germans, democracy appeared unable to cope with the economic collapse, and only the most extreme political parties seemed to offer clear solutions to the crisis. The Communist Party won support with their argument that to end the depression, Germany needed a government like the communist one in the Soviet Union. They said that the government should take over all German land and industry from capitalists, who they claimed sought only their own profit. Communists promised to distribute German wealth according to the common good. The Nazis, on the other hand, blamed the Jews, Communists, liberals, and pacifists for the economic crisis in Germany. They promised to restore Germany’s standing in the world and Germans’ pride in their nation. They also promised an end to the depression, campaigning behind slogans such as “Work, Freedom, and Bread!”

Many saw the Nazis as an attractive alternative to democracy and communism. Among them were wealthy industrialists who were alarmed by the growth of the Communist Party. They liked the Nazis’ message: it was patriotic, upbeat, and energetic. Both the Communists and the Nazis made significant gains in the Reichstag elections in 1930.



Teach **Choices in Weimar Republic Elections**

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This German election poster from 1930 says, “Work, Freedom, and Bread—Vote National Socialist!”

## Number of Deputies in the Reichstag, 1928–1932

Party	1928	1930	July 1932	Nov. 1932
Social Democrat	153	143	133	121
Catholic Center	78	87	98	90
Communist	54	77	89	100
Nazi	12	107	230	196
German National	73	41	37	52

In 1932, Hitler became a German citizen so that he could run for president in that year's spring election. His opponents were Ernst Thälmann, the Communist candidate, and Paul von Hindenburg, the independent incumbent. In the election, 84% of all eligible voters cast ballots. One observer noted that as voters went to the polls, each saw the war behind him, "in front of him social ruin, to his left he is being pulled by the Communists, to his right by the Nationalists, and all around him there is not a trace of honesty and rationality, and all his good instincts are being distorted into hatred."<sup>1</sup>

Each voter had to figure out which party offered the best solution to the nation's problems. To understand those choices, compare the platforms of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party with that of the Nazi Party, which can be found in Reading 7, "The Beginning of the Nazi Party."

### Social Democratic Party Platform

We are committed to maintaining the Republic and a policy that will allow Germany to take its rightful place among the free governments of Europe.

- We will support the present German Republic so that freedom, democracy, and justice will live in the hearts of our German countrymen.
- We will honor all of Germany's obligations, political and financial, in order that Germany's honor and respect will not be decreased in the eyes of the world.
- We plan to create more jobs by undertaking an extensive program of public works.
- We will provide unemployment compensation for up to six months.
- We will cut government expenditures to lower taxes.
- We believe in the right of those who disagree with the party to speak and write on those issues without interference.

### Communist Party Platform

We are committed to the overthrow of the presently existing, oppressive Republic and all of its economic and social institutions. We favor:

- The abolition of private property.
- The establishment of land reform programs, so that the government can take over the land and distribute it for the common good.
- Government ownership of all industrial productive forces, so that they can be run for the benefit of the people rather than the capitalists.
- A foreign policy that regards the Soviet Union as an ally against capitalism.

To the German people: The cause of your misery is the fact that French, British, and American capitalists are exploiting German workers to get rich themselves. Germans, unite to get rid of this terrible burden.

<sup>1</sup> Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 142.

The German voters re-elected President Hindenburg, with Hitler finishing second. But in elections for the Reichstag held in the months after the presidential election, the Nazis' popularity increased even more.

## 1932 Presidential Election

Candidate	Party	Votes	Percentage
Paul von Hindenburg	Independent	19,359,983	53.0%
Adolf Hitler	Nazi	13,418,517	36.8%
Ernst Thälmann	Communist	3,706,759	10.2%

What issues decided the elections? In considering the question, historian Peter Fritzsche focuses on two kinds of lines—one of “anxious men in front of the labor exchange” and one of “storm troopers in parade formation.” In the first three months of 1930, 3.3 million people were unemployed; a year later, the number was nearly 5 million, and it jumped to 6.1 million in early 1932. In 1928, 800,000 voters supported the Nazi Party; the number jumped to 6.4 million in 1930 and then to 13.4 million in 1932. Fritzsche writes: “At the height of the crisis, in the winter of 1932, more than 40 percent of all workers in Germany were unemployed. Most of these had long since exhausted their claims to unemployment compensation and barely subsisted on the dole.”<sup>2</sup>

Was it only the depression that led increasing numbers of Germans to support the Nazis? Historian Richard Evans believes the appeal of the Nazis was more than their pledge to end the depression. He writes that German voters in 1930 were

protesting against the failure of the Weimar Republic. Many of them, too, particularly in rural areas, small towns, small workshops, culturally conservative families, older age groups, or the middle-class nationalist political milieu, may have been registering their alienation from the cultural and political modernity for which the Republic stood. . . . The vagueness of the Nazi programme, its symbolic mixture of old and new, its eclectic, often inconsistent character, to a large extent allowed people to read into it what they wanted to and edit out anything they might have found disturbing. Many middle-class voters coped with Nazi violence and thuggery on the streets by writing it off as a product of excessive youthful ardour and energy. But it was far more than that, as they were soon to discover for themselves.<sup>3</sup>

Having studied voting patterns in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s, historian Dick Geary writes: “The Nazi Party was . . . without doubt a *Volkspartei* [people’s party]: recruiting its members and its voters across a broad range of social groups, from both sexes and from the older as well as the younger generation.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, Geary notes, the Nazis were never able to win a majority of the seats in the Reichstag.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 155.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 265.

<sup>4</sup> Dick Geary, “Who voted for the Nazis?,” *History Today* 48, no. 10 (November 1998), accessed March 23, 2016.

## Connection Questions

1. Which political parties in Germany gained and lost seats between 1928 and 1932? Why did some parties become more appealing as the depression took hold?
2. Was the Weimar Republic a success in 1928? By whose standard? What does it mean to measure the success of a nation or its government?
3. Is it significant that the Nazis never held a majority of the seats in the Reichstag? How could other parties have worked together to keep the Nazis from controlling the government? Use the data in the charts in this reading to support your answer.

## Reading 21

# Hitler in Power

In April 1932, Paul von Hindenburg, at the age of 84, remained president by defeating Hitler and his other challengers. He began his new term in office that spring by naming a new chancellor—Franz von Papen, a close friend and member of the Center Party. Papen ran the country for the rest of the year. When he failed to end the depression, another of Hindenburg's friends, General Kurt von Schleicher, who belonged to no party, took over in December. He was also unable to bring about a recovery and was forced to resign.

Hindenburg and his advisors were all conservatives who represented wealthy landowners, industrialists, and other powerful people. As the depression persisted, their popular support was shrinking. So in January of 1933, they decided to make a deal with Hitler. He had the popularity they lacked, and they had the power he needed. They also agreed on a number of points, including a fierce opposition to communism, hostility to democracy, and eagerness for *Lebensraum*—additional land for the German Volk.

Hindenburg's advisors believed that the responsibility of being in power would make Hitler moderate his views. They convinced themselves that they were wise enough and powerful enough to "control" Hitler. Also, they were certain that he, too, would fail to end the depression. And when he failed, they would step in to save the nation. Hitler fooled them all.

On January 30, 1933, Hitler was sworn in as chancellor of Germany. Because the Nazi Party did not control a majority of the Reichstag, they joined with the German National People's Party to form a coalition government—that is, one run by multiple political parties, usually with different but overlapping agendas. Nevertheless, Hitler accepted the appointment as if he had been named emperor of Germany and ignored the wishes of the other party. He and his fellow Nazis boasted that they would soon restore the nation and the "Aryan race" to greatness by ending so-called "Jewish racial domination" and eliminating the Communist threat. The



Adolf Hitler talks to a young girl during his campaign for president of Germany in 1932. Hitler lost to incumbent Paul von Hindenburg.

Print Collector / Contributor / Getty Images



result would be a “third Reich” (*Reich* is the German word for “empire”). The Nazis considered the Holy Roman Empire (952–1806) the “first Reich” and the empire established after the unification of the German states in 1871 the “second.” Hitler was confident that his Third Reich would be the greatest of all, and it would last a thousand years.

### Connection Questions

1. Why did Hindenburg appoint Hitler chancellor? What advantages and disadvantages did he consider?
2. What kind of chancellor did Germany’s political leaders expect Hitler to be? What reasons did they have for those expectations?

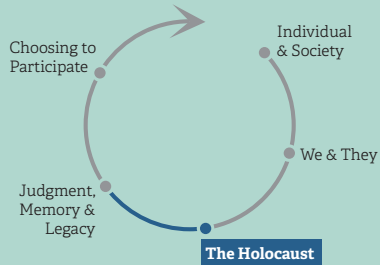
## Chapter 4 Analysis and Reflection

1. The Weimar era began with one of the most democratic constitutions that had existed up to that point. But by 1933, Germany was poised to become a dictatorship. Why did democracy in Germany fail? What were the roles of political parties, the judiciary, the educational system, the economy, and the beliefs and attitudes of citizens themselves? Does Weimar teach us anything about what is necessary to sustain and protect democracy?
2. Historian Peter Gay has written: "The excitement that characterized Weimar culture stemmed in part from exuberant creativity and experimentation; but much of it was anxiety, fear and a rising sense of doom."<sup>1</sup> How do the readings in this chapter help you understand his statement?
3. Historian Detlev Peukert has written that the fundamental problem of the Weimar Republic and the main reason for its eventual downfall was the failure of its government to achieve legitimacy, or the people's trust and acceptance of the government's authority.<sup>2</sup> What groups challenged the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic? What role did economic crises play in making some Germans see their government as illegitimate?
4. What is necessary in a democracy to ensure that its citizens have faith in their government?

<sup>1</sup> Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 3–18.

## Chapter 5



# The National Socialist Revolution

Hulton Archive / Springer / Getty Images





## Overview

On January 30, 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg named Adolf Hitler chancellor of Germany. Within days of Hitler's appointment, the Nazis began to target their political opposition and those they considered enemies of the state, especially Communists and Jews. Within months, they had transformed Germany into a dictatorship. This chapter chronicles the National Socialist revolution that swept through Germany in 1933, and it examines the choices individual Germans were forced to confront as a result.



## Essential Questions

- What made it possible for the Nazis to transform Germany into a dictatorship during their first years in power?
- What choices do individuals have in the face of an emerging dictatorship? What can they do to nurture democracy and help it survive?
- What roles do institutions—such as the media, law enforcement, schools, churches, and industry—play in sustaining democracy or enabling its destruction?



VIDEO

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Hitler's appointment as chancellor on January 30, 1933, thrilled some Germans and horrified others. Writing in 1939, journalist Sebastian Haffner said that when he read the news that afternoon, his reaction was "icy horror":

Certainly this had been a possibility for a long time. You had to reckon with it. Nevertheless it was so bizarre, so incredible, to read it now in black and white. Hitler Reich Chancellor . . . for a moment I physically sensed the man's odor of blood and filth, the nauseating approach of a man-eating animal—its foul, sharp claws in my face.

Then I shook the sensation off, tried to smile, started to consider, and found many reasons for reassurance. That evening I discussed the prospects of the new government with my father. We agreed that it had a good chance of doing a lot of damage, but not much chance of surviving very long . . .

. . . How could things turn out so completely different? Perhaps it was just because we were all so certain that they could not do so—and relied on that with far too much confidence. So we neglected to consider that it might, if worse came to worst, be necessary to *prevent* the disaster from happening . . .<sup>1</sup>

Few people expected the Nazi leader to remain in office for long. After all, in the 14 years since the creation of the Weimar Republic, Germany had had 14 chancellors, most of whom served for less than a year. Only two were in office longer, and not a single chancellor had held his post for three consecutive years. Therefore, many Germans, like Haffner and his father, set about the task of adjusting to life under a regime they thought would soon pass. The readings in this chapter, which focus on the Nazis' first two years in power, have been chosen to help answer the question Haffner asked several years later: How could things turn out so completely different?

The Nazis' swift actions in early 1933 began to establish a new order in German society, taking advantage of the weakness of the Weimar Republic to create a dictatorship. Individuals and institutions across the country were forced both to navigate the dangers the Nazis posed to dissenters and to weigh the incentives they offered to encourage acceptance of the new government. Each person had to figure out how to live in a society under National Socialism, and even whether that would be possible at all.

How did they do it? Some were true believers in Nazism, some calculated that the benefits to them of Nazi government outweighed the parts they found unsettling, some who could do so left the country, some learned to stay quiet and retreat into "internal exile," and some protested openly. All of these choices had consequences for the individuals who made them, for their neighbors, and for their nation.

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Haffner, "Street-Level Coercion," in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 118–19, excerpt from *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 106–08.



This chapter deepens the investigation of democracy begun in Chapter 4 by examining how the Weimar Republic crumbled in Germany and how the Nazis created a dictatorship to replace it. By focusing on Germany during the Nazis' first years in power, the readings in this chapter invite students to also think deeply about what it takes to sustain democracy in our own time. Teachers should select the readings and questions that seem most appropriate for their curricula and classrooms.

## Reading 1

# The Night of Hitler's Triumph



Watch **From Democracy to Dictatorship**  
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On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. That evening, members of the Nazi Party carried fiery torches as they paraded through the streets of Berlin. They were joined by thousands who had gathered to cheer for Paul von Hindenburg, the president of Germany, and Hitler. The two men responded to the crowd from separate windows—Hitler at the chancellery and Hindenburg at a hotel next door. Nearby was the French embassy, where Ambassador André François-Poncet watched from a window, later writing:

The torches . . . formed a river of fire . . . over the very heart of the city. From these brown-shirted, booted men, as they marched in perfect discipline and alignment, their well-pitched voices bawling war-like songs, there rose an enthusiasm and dynamism that were extraordinary.<sup>1</sup>

Melita Maschmann, then a 15-year-old Nazi supporter, watched the parade that evening. As an adult, she recalled, “Some of the uncanny feeling of that night remains with me even today. The crashing treads of [booted] feet, the somber pomp of the red and black flags, the flickering light from the torches on the faces and the songs with melodies that were at once aggressive and sentimental.”<sup>2</sup>

Many Germans followed the parade by listening to the radio. Bernt Engelmann was struck by the voice of a new announcer:

[His voice] was entirely different from the ones I was familiar with: no longer calm and objective, but full of fanatic fervor. . . . Many years later, when the Third Reich was a thing of the past, I dug around in the archives of the Cologne broadcasting station and found the very text read by the announcer that evening of January 30. As I perused it, I felt that same amazement and disgust that had filled me as a twelve-year-old boy.

There it was, in black and white, and the announcer had spoken the text as an overwhelmed eyewitness might describe the finish of the Monaco Grand Prix auto race. . . .

“And there, at his window, high above the cheering throngs and the sea of flaming torches stands Reich President von Hindenburg, the venerable field marshal. . . . He stands erect, stirred to the depths by the moment. And next door in the Reich Chancellery, the Führer—yes, it is the Führer! There he stands with his ministers,

1 André François-Poncet, *The Fateful Years: Memoirs of a French Ambassador in Berlin, 1931–1938*, trans. Jacques LeClercq (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), 48.

2 Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self*, trans. Geoffrey Strachan (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1965), 9.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-02985A

**On the night of January 30, 1933, SA men paraded with torches through Berlin to celebrate Hitler's appointment as chancellor.**

Adolf Hitler . . . the unknown soldier of the World War, the unyielding warrior, the standard bearer of freedom . . . !"<sup>3</sup>

Max von der Grün also heard the news over the radio. Two days later, he and his family listened as Hitler spoke to the nation on his first day in office.

Hitler proclaimed his new government officially in power. He did not do so before the Reichstag, the elected Parliament, but over the radio. The meaning was clear enough. . . .

Were the people clearly aware of his contempt for the parliament? I doubt it. In any case, my family considered it quite proper that Hitler had ceased to address . . . the deputies of the Reichstag, and had turned directly to the people.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Many of the people quoted in this reading wrote many years later about the day Hitler took office. Why do you think these people, as well as many other Germans alive in 1933, never forgot the events of that day? What clues can you find in the way they express their memories that indicate how they felt about those events as they looked back on them?
2. In learning about the past, what might be the benefits and the drawbacks of using sources that were written many years after the events they describe?
3. How did the Nazi leadership communicate with ordinary Germans? What messages were the leaders trying to send?
4. What tools do today's leaders use to communicate with citizens?

<sup>3</sup> Bernt Engelmann, *In Hitler's Germany: Everyday Life in the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken, 1988), 21–22.

<sup>4</sup> Max von der Grün, *Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), 59.

## Reading 2

# Hitler's First Radio Address



LESSON

Teach **Examining**  
**Hitler's First Radio**  
**Address**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

On February 1, 1933, two days after he was appointed chancellor, Hitler spoke over the radio to the German people about his vision for the future of the country:

Over fourteen years have passed since that unhappy day when the German people, blinded by promises made by those at home and abroad, forgot the highest values of our past, of the Reich, of its honor and its freedom, and thereby lost everything. Since those days of treason, the Almighty has withdrawn his blessing from our nation. Discord and hatred have moved in. Filled with the deepest distress, millions of the best German men and women from all walks of life see the unity of the nation disintegrating in a welter of egotistical political opinions, economic interests, and ideological conflicts.

As so often in our history, Germany, since the day the revolution broke out, presents a picture of heartbreaking disunity. We did not receive the equality and fraternity which was promised us; instead we lost our freedom. The breakdown of the unity of mind and will of our nation at home was followed by the collapse of its political position abroad.

We have a burning conviction that the German people in 1914 went into the great battle without any thought of personal guilt [for the start of the war] and weighed down only by the burden of having to defend the Reich from attack, to defend the freedom and material existence of the German people. In the appalling fate that has dogged us since November 1918 we see only the consequence of our inward collapse. But the rest of the world is no less shaken by great crises. The historical balance of power, which at one time contributed not a little to the understanding of the necessity for solidarity among the nations, with all the economic advantages resulting therefrom, has been destroyed.

The delusion that some are the conquerors and others the conquered destroys the trust between nations and thereby also destroys the world economy. But the misery of our people is terrible! The starving industrial proletariat [working class] have become unemployed in their millions, while the whole middle and artisan class have been made paupers. If the German farmer also is involved in this collapse we shall be faced with a catastrophe of vast proportions. For in that case, there will collapse not only a Reich, but also a 2000-year-old inheritance of the highest works of human culture and civilization.

All around us are symptoms portending this breakdown. With an unparalleled effort of will and of brute force the Communist method of madness is trying as a last resort to poison and undermine an inwardly shaken and uprooted nation. They

seek to drive it towards an epoch which would correspond even less to the promises of the Communist speakers of today than did the epoch now drawing to a close to the promises of the same emissaries in November 1918.

Starting with the family, and including all notions of honor and loyalty, nation and fatherland, culture and economy, even the eternal foundations of our morals and our faith—nothing is spared by this negative, totally destructive ideology. . . . One year of Bolshevism would destroy Germany. The richest and most beautiful areas of world civilization would be transformed into chaos and a heap of ruins. Even the misery of the past decade and a half could not be compared with the affliction of a Europe in whose heart the red flag of destruction had been planted. The thousands of injured, the countless dead which this battle has already cost Germany may stand as a presage of the disaster.

In these hours of overwhelming concern for the existence and the future of the German nation, the venerable World War leader [President Paul von Hindenburg] appealed to us men of the nationalist parties and associations to fight under him again as once we did at the front, but now loyally united for the salvation of the Reich at home. The revered President of the Reich having with such generosity joined hands with us in a common pledge, we nationalist leaders would vow before God, our conscience and our people that we shall doggedly and with determination fulfill the mission entrusted to us as the National Government.

It is an appalling inheritance which we are taking over.

The task before us is the most difficult which has faced German statesmen in living memory. But we all have unbounded confidence, for we believe in our nation and in its eternal values. Farmers, workers, and the middle class must unite to contribute the bricks wherewith to build the new Reich.

The National Government will therefore regard it as its first and supreme task to restore to the German people unity of mind and will. It will preserve and defend the foundations on which the strength of our nation rests. It will take under its firm protection Christianity as the basis of our morality, and the family as the nucleus of our nation and our state. Standing above estates [groups that make up society's social hierarchy] and classes, it will bring back to our people the consciousness of its racial and political unity and the obligations arising therefrom. It wishes to base the education of German youth on respect for our great past and pride in our old traditions. . . . Germany must not and will not sink into Communist anarchy.

In place of our turbulent instincts, it will make national discipline govern our life. In the process it will take into account all the institutions which are the true safeguards of the strength and power of our nation.

The National Government will carry out the great task of reorganizing our national economy with two big Four-Year Plans:

Saving the German farmer so that the nation's food supply and thus the life of the nation shall be secured.

Saving the German worker by a massive and comprehensive attack on unemployment.



In fourteen years the November parties have ruined the German farmer. In fourteen years they created an army of millions of unemployed. The National Government will carry out the following plan with iron resolution and dogged perseverance. Within four years the German farmer must be saved from pauperism. Within four years unemployment must be completely overcome . . .

. . . Our concern to provide daily bread will be equally a concern for the fulfillment of the responsibilities of society to those who are old and sick. The best safeguard against any experiment which might endanger the currency lies in economical administration, the promotion of work, and the preservation of agriculture, as well as in the use of individual initiative.

In foreign policy, the National Government will see its highest mission in the preservation of our people's right to an independent life and in the regaining thereby of their freedom. The determination of this Government to put an end to the chaotic conditions in Germany is a step towards the integration into the community of nations of a state having equal status and therefore equal rights with the rest. In so doing, the Government is aware of its great obligation to support, as the Government of a free and equal nation, that maintenance and consolidation of peace which the world needs today more than ever before. May all others understand our position and so help to ensure that this sincere desire for the welfare of Europe and of the whole world shall find fulfillment.

Despite our love for our Army as the bearer of our arms and the symbol of our great past, we should be happy if the world, by restricting its armaments, made unnecessary any increase in our own weapons.

But if Germany is to experience this political and economic revival and conscientiously to fulfill its duties towards other nations, a decisive act is required: *We must overcome the demoralization of Germany by the Communists.*

We, men of this Government, feel responsible to German history for the reconstitution of a proper national body so that we may finally overcome the insanity of class and class warfare. We do not recognize classes, but only the German people, its millions of farmers, citizens and workers who together will either overcome this time of distress or succumb to it.

With resolution and fidelity to our oath, seeing the powerlessness of the present Reichstag to shoulder the task we advocate, we wish to commit it to the whole German people.

We therefore appeal now to the German people to sign this act of mutual reconciliation. The Government of the National Uprising [the Nazi-led government] wishes to set to work, and it will work. It has not for fourteen years brought ruin to the German nation; it wants to lead it to the summit. It is determined to make amends in four years for the liabilities of fourteen years. But it cannot subject the work of reconstruction to the will of those who were responsible for the breakdown.

The Marxist parties [political parties including the Social Democrats] and their followers had fourteen years to prove their abilities. The result is a heap of ruins. Now, German people, give us four years and then judge us.

Let us begin, loyal to the command of the Field-Marshal. May Almighty God favor our work, shape our will in the right way, bless our vision and bless us with the trust of our people. We have no desire to fight for ourselves; only for Germany.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What picture does Hitler paint of Germany? What words does he use to describe the country?
2. What does he say about the past? How does he describe the future?
3. How does Hitler describe the work that must be done? What words or phrases does he use to describe it?
4. Why might people in Germany in 1933 have found his message attractive?
5. Based on this speech, who does Hitler place inside and outside of Germany's universe of obligation? Why do you think Hitler chose not to mention Jews in this speech?

<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader*, vol. 1: *The Rise to Power 1919–1934* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 131–34.

## Reading 3

# “The Battle for Work”

The Nazi Party’s popularity increased in the early 1930s partly because of its pledge to do what no other political party had been able to accomplish: pull Germany out of the Great Depression and put Germans back to work. In his first radio address as chancellor, Hitler promised to overcome unemployment in Germany within four years. This would be no small task. From mid-1929 to January 1933, the number of Germans who had full-time jobs fell from 20 million to 11.5 million; by the start of 1933, at least 6 million Germans were unemployed.<sup>1</sup> Could Hitler make good on his promise?

According to historian Richard Evans, “Hitler’s government was lucky in its timing,” because a variety of economic programs begun under previous chancellors were finally starting to put more Germans back to work by the time of Hitler’s appointment.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the Nazis manipulated the official statistics about unemployment in order to convince the public of their progress.<sup>3</sup>

Hitler’s government also put in place several new plans that would put Germans back to work. In 1933, the government announced two Laws for the Reduction of Unemployment, devoting millions of marks to encouraging the creation of new businesses and funding public-works construction projects, such as the highway system. Another policy encouraged working women to leave their jobs and stay home, lessening competition for jobs and improving unemployment statistics (see Reading 18, “Breeding the New German ‘Race’”). The Nazis also encouraged, and often coerced, unemployed workers to join the nation’s Volunteer Labor Service, where they were put to work on public land and construction projects.

But, as Evans explains, the Nazi job creation program was about more than economic recovery; it focused on rebuilding and rearming the nation’s military arsenal. By explaining rearmament as “job creation,” the Nazis attempted to conceal this violation of the Treaty of Versailles:

In 1933 Germany was more or less without an air force, without capital ships, without tanks, without the most basic items of military equipment, and restricted to an army of no more than 100,000 men. Already in February 1933 Hitler set a programme of rearmament in motion, where possible disguised as job creation . . .

The army drew up a register of 2,800 firms to which arms orders could be sent; in 1934 these accounted for over half of all iron and steel, engineering and motor vehicle inspection. . . . By 1935 there were 72,000 workers employed in aircraft construction, compared to fewer than 4,000 at the beginning of 1933. Similarly,

1 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 328.

2 Ibid., 329.

3 Ibid., 334–35.

Krupps embarked on the large-scale production of what were coyly described as “agricultural tractors” in July 1933; in reality they were tanks. In 1934, the Auto Union company launched another military vehicle production department. . . . In November 1933 the navy ordered over 41 million Reichsmarks’ worth of military equipment and another 70 million Reichsmarks’ worth of ships. Major firms such as Borsig, in Berlin, and the Bochumer Association, in Hanover, started up production of rifles and guns. All this had an immediate effect on employment. Already in January 1933 the Mauser rifle factory increased its workforce from 800 to 1,300; in the first four months of 1933, the Rhine Metal Company, which made howitzers and machine guns, took on 500 new workers too. Similar developments could be observed in hundreds of companies across Germany. All this feverish activity inevitably had a knock-on [secondary] effect on industry more broadly, as iron and steel, engineering, coal and mining companies stepped up production and hired additional labour to cope with the new and rapidly rising demand from the arms and arms-related sector.<sup>4</sup>

By the end of 1934, the government was touting its own statistics that claimed that the unemployment level was less than half of what it had been when Hitler was appointed chancellor. While rearmament certainly did create thousands of jobs, it also advanced the Nazis’ longer-term goal to re-establish Germany as a European military power. All in all, the program helped to increase public support for the Nazis, as Evans explains:

Hitler’s boast that he would solve the unemployment problem within four years of taking office seemed to have been triumphantly justified. Incessant Nazi propaganda boasting that the “battle for work” was being won gained widespread credence. It helped win over many doubters and sceptics to the government’s side from May 1933 onwards, and pumped new euphoria into the Third Reich’s supporters.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think Hitler focused on unemployment in the beginning of his time as chancellor? What factors do you think helped make the economy a priority? Base your answer on evidence from both this reading and previous ones.
2. Summarize the strategies Hitler used to improve employment in Germany. Which actions seem most justified, given the hardship caused by the Great Depression? Which actions are most troubling?
3. How might difficult economic times affect a person’s universe of obligation? How might a bad economy affect a person’s priorities when deciding which political leaders and parties to support?
4. Why do you think the Nazi “battle for work” might have convinced some who previously opposed the Nazis to change their minds?

4 Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 338–41.

5 Ibid., 333.

## Reading 4

# Outlawing the Opposition



Watch **Hitler's Rise to Power: 1933–1934**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Hitler's First Victims**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

While the Nazis were focusing on putting Germans back to work in the midst of the Great Depression, they also unleashed attacks on their political opposition as soon as Hitler became chancellor. On the evening of February 27, 1933, alarms suddenly rang out in the Reichstag as fire destroyed the building's main chamber. Within 20 minutes, Hitler was on the scene to declare: "This is a God-given signal! If this fire, as I believe, turns out to be the handiwork of Communists, then there is nothing that shall stop us now from crushing out this murderous pest with an iron fist."<sup>1</sup>

Marinus van der Lubbe was the man the Nazis captured that night. He confessed to setting the building ablaze but repeatedly insisted that he had acted alone. Adolf Hitler paid no attention to the confession. He saw a chance to get rid of what he considered the Nazis' most immediate rival—the Communists—so he ordered the arrest of anyone with ties to the Communist Party. Within days, the Nazis had thrown 4,000 Communists and their leaders into hastily created prisons and concentration camps. By the

end of March, 20,000 Communists had been arrested, and by the end of that summer more than 100,000 Communists, Social Democrats, union officials, and other "radicals" were imprisoned.<sup>2</sup> Were any of them responsible for the fire? The question was irrelevant to the Nazis. They had been given an opportunity to get rid of their enemies, and they took it.

The day after the fire, February 28, 1933, President Hindenburg, at Hitler's urging, issued two emergency decrees designed to make such arrests legal, even

those that had already taken place. Their titles—"For the Defense of Nation and State" and "To Combat Treason against the German Nation and Treasonable Activities"—reveal how Hitler used the fire to further his own goals. The



Germans look on as the Reichstag building burns on February 27, 1933.

<sup>1</sup> D. Sefton Delmer, *London Daily Express*, February 28, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 11.



two decrees suspended, until further notice, every part of the constitution that protected personal freedoms. The Nazis claimed that the decrees were necessary to protect the nation from the “Communist menace.”

On March 5, 1933, the government held an election for control of the Reichstag. The Nazis won 288 seats (43.9% of the vote). The Communists won 81 seats (12.3%), even though their representatives were unable to claim those seats—if they appeared in public, they faced immediate arrest. Other opposition parties also won significant numbers of seats.

The Social Democrats captured 119 seats (18.3%), and the Catholic Center Party won 73 seats (11.2%). Together, the Communist, Social Democratic, and Catholic Center Parties won nearly as many seats as the Nazis. But their members distrusted one another almost as much as they feared the Nazis. As a result, these parties were unable to mount a unified opposition to the Nazi Party.

Still under Nazi control, the Reichstag passed a new law on March 21, 1933, that made it a crime to speak out against the new government or criticize its leaders. Known as the Malicious Practices Act, the law made even the smallest expression of dissent a crime. Those who were accused of “gossiping” or “making fun” of government officials could be arrested and sent to prison or a concentration camp.

Then, on March 24, 1933, the Reichstag passed what became known as the Enabling Act by a vote of 141 to 94. It “enabled” the chancellor of Germany to punish anyone he considered an “enemy of the state.” The act allowed “laws passed by the government” to override the constitution. Only the 94 Social Democrats voted against the law. Most of the other deputies who opposed it were in hiding, in prison, or in exile.

That same day, Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler, then police commissioner for the city of Munich, held a news conference to announce the opening of the first concentration camp near Dachau, Germany. According to Himmler, the camp would have the capacity to hold 5,000 people, including Communist Party members and Social Democrats “who threaten the security of the state.” Himmler continued, according to a newspaper report:

On Wednesday, 22 March, the concentration camp at the former gunpowder factory received its first allocation of 200 inmates. . . . The occupancy of the camp will gradually increase to 2,500 men and will possibly be expanded to 5,000 men later. A labor service detachment recently prepared the barrack for the first 200 men and secured it for the time being with a barrier of triple barbed-wire. The first job of the camp inmates will be to restore the other stone buildings, which are very run-down. . . . The guard unit will initially consist of a contingent of 100 state



©Topfoto/The Image Works

**After the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933, Hitler ordered the arrest of anyone with ties to the Communist Party. By the end of March, approximately 20,000 people had been arrested.**

police, which are to be further reinforced by SA [storm trooper] auxiliary police guards. . . . *No visits are allowed at the Concentration Camp in Dachau.*<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the spring and early summer of 1933, the Nazis used the new laws to frighten and intimidate Germans. By May, they forced all trade labor unions to dissolve. Instead, workers could only belong to a Nazi-approved union called the German Labor Front.

Then, in June, Hitler outlawed the Social Democratic Party. The German Nationalist Party, which was part of Hitler's coalition government, dissolved after its deputies were told to resign or become the next target. By the end of the month, German concentration camps held 27,000 people. By mid-July, the Nazi Party was the only political party allowed in the country. Other organizations were also brought into line. As historian William Sheridan Allen has put it, "Whenever two or three were gathered, the *Führer* would also be present."<sup>4</sup>

Not everyone accepted the changes. Amid uncertainty about the future of the country under Nazi rule, thousands of Germans, including 63,000 Jews, fled the country. Most who left ended up in neighboring countries. The rest of the nation's 60 million people stayed, by choice or necessity, and adapted to life in the "new Germany."

## Connection Questions

1. Make a timeline of the important steps described in this reading that show Germany's change from a democracy to a dictatorship. Which action by the Nazis do you think was most damaging to democracy in Germany? Why?
2. What would ordinary Germans have witnessed in the days after the Reichstag fire? What range of responses might have been possible for them?
3. Rumors spread among some Germans in 1933 that the Nazis had set the Reichstag fire themselves. While this is difficult to confirm, some historians today believe that the evidence supports those rumors. If the Nazis set the fire, how would it change your interpretation of the Reichstag fire and the events that followed?
4. What were the results of the national election on March 5, 1933? What opportunities seemed to exist after the election for other political parties to counter the Nazis? Why were the Nazis' opponents unable to seize those opportunities?
5. How do people act in times of fear and crisis? What sorts of choices are they likely to make?

3 "The Former Gunpowder Factory in Dachau a Concentration Camp for Political Prisoners," trans. Sally Winkle, in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 145.

4 William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930–1935* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1973), 214.

## Reading 5

# Enabling Dictatorship

In response to the fire in its building, within a month the Reichstag passed a series of laws, including the one below, which historians refer to as the Enabling Act.

**March 24, 1933**

### **Law to Remove the Distress of the People and the State**

The Reichstag has passed the following law, which is, with the approval of the Reichsrat [a legislative body whose members were appointed by German states], herewith promulgated, after it has been established that it meets the requirements for legislation altering the Constitution.

**Article 1.** National laws can be enacted by the Reich Cabinet as well as in accordance with the procedure established in the Constitution. This also applies to the laws referred to in Article 85, Paragraph 2, and in Article 87 of the Constitution.

**Article 2.** The national laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet may deviate from the Constitution as long as they do not affect the position of the Reichstag and the Reichsrat. The powers of the President remain undisturbed.

**Article 3.** The national laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet shall be prepared by the Chancellor and published in the *Reichsgesetzblatt* [Reich Legal Gazette]. They come into effect, unless otherwise specified, the day after their publication. Articles 68–77 of the Constitution do not apply to the laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet.

**Article 4.** Treaties of the Reich with foreign states which concern matters of national legislation do not require the consent of the bodies participating in legislation. The Reich Cabinet is empowered to issue the necessary provisions for the implementation of these treaties.

**Article 5.** This law becomes effective on the day of its publication. It becomes invalid on April 1, 1937; it also becomes invalid if the present Reich Cabinet is replaced by another.

Reich President von Hindenburg

Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler

Reich Minister of the Interior Frick

Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs Baron von Neurath

Reich Minister of Finances Count Schwerin von Krosigk<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Law to Remove the Distress of the People and the State (The Enabling Act)," available from German History in Documents and Images (German Historical Institute), from translation reprinted in US Department of State, Division of European Affairs, National Socialism (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 217–18.

## Connection Questions

1. What is the relationship of the title of this law to its contents? Why do you think historians choose to refer to this law as the “Enabling Act” rather than by its official title?
2. How does this law change how future laws would be enacted in Germany? Who does this text say can enact new laws? What relationship would those future laws have with Germany’s constitution?
3. Many historians argue that this law established the legal basis for dictatorship in Nazi Germany. What parts of this law do you think undermine democracy and help to establish a dictatorship?

## Reading 6

# Storm Troopers, Elite Guards, and Secret Police

Nazi politician Wilhelm Murr expressed the Nazis' attitude toward their opponents: "We do not say an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. No, he who knocks out one of our eyes will get his head chopped off, and he who knocks out one of our teeth will get his jaw bashed in."<sup>1</sup> According to Rudolf Diels, the chief of the political department of the Berlin police, that attitude could clearly be seen on city streets: "Not only Communists but anyone who had ever expressed himself against Hitler's movement was in danger."<sup>2</sup>

In order to intimidate, attack, or arrest their opponents, the Nazis employed their own paramilitary groups and secret police. A paramilitary group is an organized military-style force that is loyal to a political party or private organization instead of a government. Chief among these organizations were the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, which translates to "storm detachment"), the SS (*Schutzstaffel*, which translates to "protection squadron"), and the Gestapo (an acronym of the first letters of *Geheime Staatspolizei*, or "secret state police").

The SA had been around almost as long as the Nazi Party itself. SA members were known as "storm troopers" or "Brown Shirts" (because of their brown uniforms). They marched and brawled in the streets, intimidating opponents of the Nazis, during the years of the Weimar Republic (see "Violence in the Streets" in Chapter 4). Now that the Nazis were in charge, the SA continued to operate outside the law, and it encountered very little opposition in early 1933. Indeed, many people openly supported its efforts. In a short story, Christopher Isherwood, a British writer living in Berlin around this time, describes some Germans' response to the storm troopers:

They smiled approvingly at these youngsters in their big, swaggering boots who were going to upset the Treaty of Versailles. They were pleased because it would soon be summer, because Hitler had promised to protect the small tradesmen, because their newspapers told them that the good times were coming. They were suddenly proud of being blond. And they thrilled with a furtive, sensual pleasure, like schoolboys, because the Jews, their business rivals, and the Marxists, a vaguely defined minority of people who didn't concern them, had been satisfactorily found guilty of the defeat and the inflation and were going to catch it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Joachim C. Fest, *Hitler* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 400.

<sup>2</sup> Ingo Müller, *Hitler's Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 50.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories* (New York: New Directions, 1945), 179.



The SS, too, had been created by the Nazis during the years of the Weimar Republic. At first, its members were Hitler's personal bodyguards. Because he believed they were especially loyal to him, Hitler expanded the SS into the Nazi Party's elite guard. Heinrich Himmler, as head of the SS, believed that its members ought to represent not only Germany's military elite but also the nation's "racial elite." Each recruit was carefully screened, and each had to prove his family was "Aryan" dating back to at least 1750. Not only did every member of the SS have to pass the test but so did his prospective bride. The SS would grow to become one of the chief agents of terror and mass murder under the Nazi regime. The SS operated the concentration camp at Dachau that was opened in 1933, as well as the camps the Nazis built over the next 12 years. The SS also established an intelligence unit that spied on Germans and arrested, interrogated, and often imprisoned those they considered enemies of the nation.

Like the SS intelligence unit, the Gestapo spied on Germans to identify political opponents and dissenters and to arrest and question them. This secret police force was created on April 26, 1933, under the leadership of Hermann Göring. The Gestapo was authorized to "protect public safety and order" by using methods that ranged from interrogation to sending people to "private prisons" and later to concentration camps. Historian Richard Evans writes that the Gestapo became a symbol of Nazi terror, known for brutal interrogation techniques: "From the very beginning of the Third Reich, interrogations by the police and the Gestapo often resulted in prisoners being returned to their prison cells beaten, bruised, and badly injured to a degree that could not escape the attention of defending lawyers, relatives and friends."<sup>4</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How does Christopher Isherwood's account help to explain the enthusiasm some Germans felt for the Nazis when they came to power? How do you explain this enthusiasm?
2. How important were the SA, the SS, and the Gestapo in Germany's transformation from democracy to dictatorship? In what ways did the actions of each organization contribute to the transformation?

<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 75.

## Reading 7

# Shaping Public Opinion

As the Nazis eliminated civil liberties in Germany and opened the first concentration camps to imprison “enemies of the state,” they were also trying to win public approval for their government. According to historian Robert Gellately,

Hitler and his henchmen did not want to cower the German people as a whole into submission, but to win them over by building on popular images, cherished ideals, and long held phobias in the country. . . . [The Nazis] aimed to create and maintain the broadest possible level of popular backing. They expended an enormous amount of energy and resources to track public opinion and to win over people.<sup>1</sup>

The Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda played a key role in the Nazis’ efforts to cultivate favorable public opinion. *Propaganda* is biased or misleading information that is used to influence public opinion (see the visual essay in Chapter 6, “The Impact of Propaganda”). Hitler created the new ministry on March 13, 1933, and put Joseph Goebbels in charge. It was his job “not just to present the regime and its policies in a positive light, but to generate the impression that the entire German people enthusiastically endorsed everything it did.”<sup>2</sup>

To generate excitement and enthusiasm for the Nazi Party and for Hitler himself, Goebbels and his ministry created new festivals and holidays, such as the celebration of Hitler’s birthday on April 20. They changed street names and other public signage to erase reminders of the Weimar Republic. They organized party rallies and dramatic torch-lit parades to demonstrate public support.

Writing in 1939, journalist Sebastian Haffner described these demonstrations and recalled the effect they had on many Germans.

[O]ne was permanently occupied and distracted by an unending sequence of celebrations, ceremonies, and national festivities. It started with a huge victory celebration before the elections on March 4 [see Reading 4, “Outlawing the Opposition”] . . . There were mass parades, fireworks, drums, bands, and flags all over Germany, Hitler’s voice over thousands of loudspeakers, oaths and vows—all before it was even certain that the elections might not be a setback for the Nazis, which indeed they were. These elections, the last that were ever held in prewar Germany, brought the Nazis only 44 percent of the votes (in the previous elections they had achieved 37 percent). The majority was still against the Nazis.

1 Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vii.

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 121.

A week later, Hindenberg abolished the Weimar national flag, which was replaced by the swastika banner and a black, white, and red “temporary national flag.” There were daily parades, mass meetings, declarations of gratitude for the liberation of the nation, military music from dawn to dusk, awards ceremonies for heroes, the dedication of flags. . . . Hitler swearing loyalty to something or other for the nth time, bells tolling, a solemn procession to church by the members of the Reichstag, a military parade, swords lowered in salute, children waving flags, and a torchlight parade.

The colossal emptiness and lack of meaning of these never-ending events was by no means unintentional. The population should become used to cheering and jubilation, even when there was no visible reason for it. . . . Better to celebrate, howl with the wolves, “*Heil, Heil!*” Besides, people began to enjoy doing so. The weather in March 1933 was glorious. Was it not wonderful to celebrate in the spring sunshine, in squares decked with flags? To merge with the festive crowds and listen to high-sounding patriotic speeches, about freedom and fatherland, exaltation and holy vows?<sup>3</sup>

Goebbels and his ministry also set out to coordinate every form of expression in Germany—from music to radio programs to textbooks, artwork, newspapers, and even sermons—crafting language and imagery carefully to praise Nazi policies and Hitler himself, and to demonize those the Nazis considered enemies. While the ministry’s work included censoring much German art and media, the Nazis also created an environment in which many artists, newspaper editors, and filmmakers censored themselves in order to gain favor with the regime, avoid punishment, or escape the Nazis’ attention altogether.<sup>4</sup>

Victor Klemperer, a college professor who was born to Jewish parents and converted to Christianity, kept a diary of life in Nazi Germany that describes the way the Nazis gave new meanings to hundreds of words and phrases, as in this set of entries from 1933:

**27 March.** New words keep turning up, or old ones acquire new specialist meanings, or new combinations are formed which rapidly [harden] into stereotypes. . . . Foreign Jews, particularly those from France, England, and America, are today referred to as “global Jews” . . . Equally prevalent is the term “international Jewry” . . . with the global Jew and global Jewry . . . presumably constituting the German version. This is an ominous translation into German: does this mean that Jews are to be found everywhere on earth, except, that is, in Germany? And where are they within Germany itself? The global Jews disseminate “atrocious propaganda” and spread “horror stories,” and if we report so much as a scrap of what happens here every day then we too are guilty of disseminating atrocious propaganda and are punished accordingly. Meanwhile the boycott of Jewish shops and doctors is in the offing. The distinction between “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” governs everything. One could draw up a dictionary of the new language. . . .

3 Sebastian Haffner, “Street-Level Coercion,” in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 122, excerpt from *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), 128–29.

4 Doris Bergen to Facing History and Ourselves, comment on draft manuscript, December 23, 2015.

**10 April.** You are [“alien”] if you have 25 percent non-Aryan blood. “In borderline cases a ruling will be made by an expert in racial research. . . .”

**20 April.** Yet again a new opportunity for celebration, a new national holiday for the people: Hitler’s birthday. The term “*Volk* (people)” is now as customary in spoken and written language as salt at table, everything is spiced with a [touch] of *Volk*: *Volkfest* (festival of the people), *Volksgenosse* (comrade of the people), *Volksgemeinschaft* (community of the people), *volksnah* (one of the people), *volksfremd* (alien to the people), *volksenstammt* (descended from the people). . . .<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think that public opinion was important to the Nazis? How did they go about winning support from the German public?
2. Historian Doris Bergen writes, “It must have been a lonely and terrifying experience to be on the outside of a torchlight march looking in. What chance would one feel one had against that monolith of power?”<sup>6</sup> Compare and contrast Bergen’s statement with Sebastian Haffner’s description of how Nazi demonstrations affected Germans. What emotions did the Nazis’ public demonstrations generate in members of the German public? Which emotions were useful to the Nazis in building acceptance and support for their regime?
3. How did the Nazis use language to shape public opinion? How did they try to influence what Germans thought about, remembered, or forgot through their choice of words? What part did the truth play in these efforts?
4. What do the results of the March 5, 1933, elections tell you about the Nazis’ popularity in the first weeks of Hitler’s chancellorship? According to Haffner, how did the Nazis attempt to influence the outcome of the elections?
5. How do the actions and opinions of your peer group influence your own actions and opinions? How can you tell the difference between when people are “going along with the crowd” and when they really believe in what they do and say?

<sup>5</sup> Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich*, trans. Martin Brady (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 29–31.

<sup>6</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 67.

## Reading 8

# Working Toward the Führer

Beginning in the 1920s, Hitler used the title *Führer* to refer to his position within the Nazi Party. *Führer* means “leader,” but to Hitler the Führer was not an ordinary leader of a political party or nation. He modeled his idea of the Führer on the leadership of Benito Mussolini, who led the Fascist movement in Italy and became that country’s dictator in the 1920s. Fascists were extreme nationalists who believed in the necessity for the absolute unity of the population behind a single charismatic leader and the supremacy of the good of the nation over the rights of individuals. Fascism originated in Italy but influenced political movements and governments around the world in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler believed that, as with all dictators, the Führer’s word was law; when he changed his mind, public policy changed. But the Führer’s charismatic leadership, his ability to express the will of the nation and to satisfy the desires of the masses, gave him a special ability to win followers and a duty to solve the nation’s problems and lead it to greatness. In the 1920s, Hitler described to one of his opponents within the Nazi Party the relationship he expected to have with party members: “For us the Idea is the Führer, and each party member has only to obey the Führer.”<sup>2</sup> In the 1930s, the Nazis tried to establish the same relationship between the Führer and the German people.

The Nazis carefully and relentlessly constructed Hitler’s public image. They spread pictures of Hitler in heroic poses in posters and in newspapers throughout the country. Hitler rehearsed his speeches, including his posture and gestures, to project strength and determination. As a result of these and other efforts, the Nazis were able to create “the adulation of Hitler by millions of Germans who may otherwise have been only marginally committed to the Nazi ideology.”<sup>3</sup> As historian Ian Kershaw explains,

For the thirteen million Germans who voted Nazi in 1932, Hitler symbolized—chameleon-like—the various facets of Nazism which they found appealing. In his public portrayal, he was a man of the people, his humble origins emphasising the rejection of privilege and the sterile old order in favour of a new, vigorous, upwardly-mobile society built upon strength, merit, and achievement. He was seen as strong, uncompromising, ruthless. He embodied the triumph of true Germanic

1 Robert Soucy, “Fascism,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/fascism>.

2 Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader*, vol. 1: *The Rise to Power 1919–1934* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 66.

3 Ian Kershaw, “The Hitler Myth,” *History Today* 35, no. 11 (November 1985), accessed March 15, 2016.



virtues—courage, manliness, integrity, loyalty, devotion to the cause—over the effete decadence, corruption, and effeminate weakness of Weimar society. Above all, he represented “struggle”—as the title of his book *Mein Kampf* advertised: struggle of the “little man” against society’s “big battalions”, and mortal struggle against Germany’s powerful internal and external enemies to assure the nation’s future.<sup>4</sup>

Once Hitler was in power, his public persona as the Führer of the German people encouraged both government officials and other Germans to take initiative on their own to help the nation realize the goals he expressed. In fact, he left it to others to figure out how to carry out policies and govern Germany. In a 1934 speech, a government official from the ministry of food explained:

Everyone who has the opportunity to observe it knows that the Führer can hardly dictate from above everything which he intends to realise sooner or later. On the contrary, up till now everyone with a post in the new Germany has worked best when he has, so to speak, worked towards the Führer. Very often and in many spheres it has been the case—in previous years as well—that individuals have simply waited for orders and instructions. Unfortunately, the same will be true in the future; but in fact it is the duty of everybody to try to work towards the Führer along the lines he would wish. Anyone who makes mistakes will notice it soon enough. But anyone who really works towards the Führer along his lines and towards his goal will certainly both now and in the future one day have the finest reward in the form of the sudden legal confirmation of his work.<sup>5</sup>

The dynamic this government official described occurred throughout the German government. Hitler stated goals and provided guidelines, and then he either appointed specific individuals to ensure that his goals were realized, or he let government bureaucrats and Nazi Party officials figure it out themselves. According to Kershaw, this process of “working toward the Führer” played out not just within the government but also across German society:

Individuals seeking material gain through career advancement in party or state bureaucracy, the small businessman aiming to destroy a competitor through a slur on his “aryan” credentials, or ordinary citizens settling scores with neighbors by denouncing them to the Gestapo were all, in a way, “working towards the Führer”. . . . Time after time, Hitler set the barbaric tone, whether in hate-filled public speeches giving a green light to discriminatory action against Jews and other “enemies of the state”, or in closed addresses to Nazi functionaries or military leaders. . . . There was never any shortage of willing helpers, far from being confined to party activists, ready to “work towards the Führer” to put the mandate into operation.<sup>6</sup>

4 Kershaw, “The Hitler Myth.”

5 Speech by Werner Willikens, State Secretary in the Ministry of Food, February 21, 1934, in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader*, vol. 2: *State, Economy and Society 1933–1939* (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 207.

6 Ian Kershaw, “‘Working Towards the Führer’: Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship,” *Contemporary European History* 2, no. 2 (July 1993): 117.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the Nazis create a public image of Hitler that won the support of so many Germans? What qualities did they emphasize? Why do you think those qualities were so appealing to Germans?
2. What does the phrase “working toward the Führer” mean? How does it explain the relationship between Hitler and his associates and followers? Who made choices and took specific actions to bring about the transformation of Germany, according to Nazi ideology?
3. What is *obedience*? Is obedience possible in the absence of a direct order to follow?
4. According to Ian Kershaw, Hitler was the “linchpin” of the Nazi regime, and Nazism could not survive without him.<sup>7</sup> What evidence from this reading supports this view?
5. Who spells out the goals for a community to which you belong? What opportunities do you and others have to help shape those goals or disagree with them? What roles do you and other members of the community play in achieving those goals?

<sup>7</sup> Kershaw, “Working Towards the Führer,” 110.

## Reading 9

# Targeting Jews

From the start, Adolf Hitler and his fellow Nazis were determined to resolve the so-called “Jewish question.” In Hitler’s words, Nazi leaders were to bring it up “again and again and again, unceasingly. Every emotional aversion, however slight, must be exploited ruthlessly.” Julius Streicher, the publisher of an antisemitic newspaper known as *Der Stürmer* (the word means “attacker”), led the way in creating that kind of propaganda, claiming:

The same Jew who plunged the German people into the bloodletting of the World War, and who committed on it the crime of the November Revolution [Weimar Republic] is now engaged in stabbing Germany, recovering from its shame and misery, in the back. . . . The Jew is again engaged in poisoning public opinion.<sup>1</sup>

Propaganda was not the only weapon the Nazis used against the Jews. They also relied on terror. On March 9, 1933, just a few days after the elections, Nazi SA storm troopers in Berlin imprisoned dozens of Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. In Breslau, they attacked Jewish lawyers



SA members in 1933 stand in front of a barricaded Jewish shop, holding signs in both German and English that urge the boycott of Jewish businesses.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933–1945* (New York: Schocken, 1973), 46.

and judges. On March 13 in Mannheim, they forced Jewish shopkeepers to close their doors. In other towns, they broke into Jewish homes and beat up the people living there.

Although these events were rarely reported in the German press, the foreign press wrote about them regularly. In the United States, many Jews and non-Jews were outraged by the violence. Some called for a boycott of German goods. Their outburst gave the Nazis an excuse for a “defensive action against the Jewish world criminal” on April 1, 1933.

That action—a boycott of Jewish-owned businesses—was the first major public event that specifically targeted Jews not as Communists or Social Democrats but as Jews. It was not a huge success. In some places, Germans showed their disapproval of the boycott by making a point of shopping at Jewish-owned stores on April 1.

Even in places where the boycott took place as planned, the Nazis quickly discovered that it was not always easy to decide if a business was Jewish-owned. There was no legal definition of who was a Jew and who was not. Also, many Jews had non-Jewish business partners, and nearly all had non-Jewish employees. Were those businesses to be closed as well? For example, Tietz, a chain of department stores in Berlin owned by Jews, had more than 14,000 employees, almost all of whom were non-Jews. At a time when unemployment was high and the economy fragile, did the Nazis really want to put those workers out of a job? In the end, the Nazis allowed Tietz to remain open—at least for the time being. A few years later, the owners were forced to turn over their stores to “Aryan” businessmen.

The boycott did succeed, however, in one of its goals: it terrorized Jews throughout Germany. Edwin Landau described what it was like in his hometown in West Prussia. On the Friday before the boycott, he recalled, “one saw the SA [storm troopers] marching through the city with its banners: ‘The Jews are our misfortune.’ ‘Against the Jewish atrocity propaganda abroad.’” He wrote about the day of the boycott:

In the morning hours the Nazi guards began to place themselves in front of the Jewish shops and factories, and every shopper was warned not to buy from the Jews. In front of our business, also, two young Nazis posted themselves and prevented customers from entering. To me the whole thing seemed inconceivable. It would not sink in that something like that could even be possible in the twentieth century, for such things had happened, at most, in the Middle Ages. And yet it was the bitter truth that outside, in front of the door, there stood two boys in brown shirts, Hitler’s executives.

And for this nation we young Jews had once stood in the trenches in cold and rain, and spilled our blood to protect the land from the enemy. Was there no comrade any more from those days who was sickened by these goings-on? One saw them pass by on the street, among them quite a few for whom one had done a good turn. They had a smile on their face that betrayed their malicious pleasure. . . .

I took my war decorations, put them on, went into the street, and visited Jewish shops, where at first I was also stopped. But I was seething inside, and most of all I would have liked to shout my hatred into the faces of the barbarians. Hatred, hatred—when had it become a part of me? — It was only a few hours ago that a change had occurred within me. This land and this people that until now I had loved and treasured had suddenly become my enemy. So I was not a German anymore, or I was no longer supposed to be one. That, of course, cannot be settled in a few hours. But one thing I felt immediately: I was ashamed that I had once belonged to this people. I was ashamed about the trust that I had given to so many who now revealed themselves as my enemies. Suddenly the street, too, seemed alien to me; indeed, the whole town had become alien to me. Words do not exist to describe the feelings that I experienced in those hours. Having arrived at home, I approached the one guard whom I knew and who also knew me, and I said to him: “When you were still in your diapers I was already fighting out there for this country.” He answered: “You should not reproach me for my youth, sir . . . I’ve been ordered to stand here.” I looked at his young face and thought, he’s right. Poor, misguided young people!<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was the Nazis’ goal in calling for the boycott? Did it succeed? Why or why not?
2. Make a list of choices you think ordinary Germans could have made in response to the boycott. What might have been the consequences of ignoring the boycott? What might have influenced people to go along with the boycott?
3. What do you think the Nazis learned from the boycott about the attitudes of the German public toward Jews? What do you think they learned about the willingness of the public to obey Nazi policies?
4. When might a boycott be used to express disapproval or to resist a particular policy or practice? In what ways was the boycott of Jewish businesses in Germany different?
5. How did the boycott affect the way Edwin Landau thought about his identity?

2. Edwin Landau, “My Life before and after Hitler,” in *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, trans. Stella P. Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 310–12.



## Reading 10

# “Restoring” Germany’s Civil Service

The boycott of Jewish-owned businesses set the stage for another step in carrying out Adolf Hitler’s “racial” policies. People were whispering about the new plans for some time before they were made public on April 7, 1933. On April 4, soon after the rumors reached President Paul von Hindenburg, he wrote a letter to Hitler:

Dear Mr. Chancellor!

Recently, a whole series of cases has been reported to me in which judges, lawyers, and officials of the Judiciary who are disabled war veterans and whose record in office is flawless, have been forcibly sent on leave, and are later to be dismissed for the sole reason that they are of Jewish descent.

It is quite intolerable for me personally . . . that Jewish officials who were disabled in the war should suffer such treatment, [especially] as, with the express approval of the government, I addressed a Proclamation to the German people on the day of the national uprising, March 21, in which I bowed in reverence before the dead of the war and remembered in gratitude the bereaved families of the war dead, the disabled, and my old comrades at the front.

I am certain, Mr. Chancellor, that you share this human feeling, and request you, most cordially and urgently, to look into this matter yourself, and to see to it that there is some uniform arrangement for all branches of the public service in Germany.

As far as my own feelings are concerned, officials, judges, teachers and lawyers who are war invalids, fought at the front, are sons of war dead, or themselves lost sons in the war should remain in their positions unless an individual case gives reason for different treatment. If they were worthy of fighting for Germany and bleeding for Germany, then they must also be considered worthy of continuing to serve the Fatherland. . . .

On April 5, Hitler replied to Hindenburg.

Dear Mr. President!

In a most generous and humane manner you, Mr. Field Marshal, plead the cause of those members of the Jewish people who were once compelled, by the requirements of universal military service, to serve in the war. . . .

But, with the greatest respect, may I point out that members and supporters of my movement, who are Germans, for years were driven from all Government positions,

without consideration for their wives and children or their war service. . . . Those responsible for this cruelty were the same Jewish parties which today complain when their supporters are denied the right to official positions, with a thousand times more justification, because they are of little use in these positions but can do limitless harm . . .

Nevertheless, . . . the law in question . . . will provide consideration for those Jews who either served in the war themselves, were disabled in the war, have other merits, or never gave occasion for complaint in the course of a long period of service.

In general, the primary aim of this cleansing process is only to restore a certain sound and natural balance, and, secondly, to remove from official positions of national significance those elements to which one cannot entrust Germany's survival. . . .

I beg you, Mr. President, to believe that I will try to do justice to your noble feelings as far as is possible. I understand your inner motivations and myself, by the way, frequently suffer under the harshness of a fate which forces us to make decisions which, from a human point of view, one would a thousand times rather avoid.

Work on the law in question will proceed as quickly as possible, and I am convinced that this matter, too, will then find the best possible solution.<sup>1</sup>

On April 7, the new law, known as the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, went into effect. The only Jews to keep their positions were veterans, their fathers, and their sons. Similar laws dismissed all Jewish prosecuting attorneys and Jewish doctors who worked in the national health system.

## Connection Questions

1. What was Hindenburg's specific objection to the proposed civil service law? What does Hindenburg's letter indicate about who he believed should be protected as part of Germany's universe of obligation?
2. Many Germans hoped that Hindenburg would be able to stop Hitler from carrying out his most extreme and discriminatory policies. What does the exchange between the two leaders reveal about whether or not these hopes were realistic?
3. What effect does granting specific exceptions to a discriminatory policy like the new civil service law have on public support for the law? Do you think exceptions strengthen or weaken opposition?

<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1987), 37–39.

## Reading 11

# A Test of Loyalty

Jews were not the only people in Germany affected by the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. The government could now dismiss any civil servant who would not “support the national state at all times and without reservation.” Indeed, the government no longer needed a reason to dismiss a worker. It could now do so without cause.

Civil servants had to accept the new rules or lose their jobs. Joachim Fest described how his father—a devout Catholic and the headmaster of an elementary school—responded to the law:

On April 20, 1933, my father was summoned to Lichtenberg Town Hall . . . and informed by Volz, the state commissar responsible for the exercise of the business of the borough mayor, that he was suspended from public service, effective immediately. When my father asked what he was accused of, the official responded in a sergeant-majorish manner: “You will be informed of that in due course!” But he was a civil servant, objected my father, to which Volz replied, “You can tell our Führer that. He’ll be very impressed.” . . .

As he was on his way to the exit, all at once the building he knew so well seemed unfamiliar. It was the same with the staff, some of whom he had known for years; suddenly, one after the other, their eyes were avoiding his. At his school, to which he went immediately, it was no different, even in his office; everything from the cupboards to the stationery already seemed to have been replaced. The first person he bumped into was his colleague Markwitz who had clearly already been informed. “Fest, old man!” he said, after my father had spoken a few explanatory words. “Did it have to be like this?” And when my father replied, “Yes, it had to be!,” Markwitz objected: “No, don’t tell me that! It’s something I learned early: there’s no ‘must’ when it comes to stupidity!”

On April 22, a good two weeks after the passage of the Law for the Restoration of a Professional Civil Service, my father was summoned again. Remaining seated and without offering my father a chair, the temporary mayor, reading from a prepared text, formally notified him that he was relieved of his duties as headmaster of the Twentieth Elementary School and was suspended until further notice. Given as grounds for the suspension were his senior positions in the [Catholic Center] party and in the Reichsbanner [a pro-democracy group founded during the Weimar years], as well as his “public speeches disparaging the Führer and other high-ranking National Socialists” . . . Under the circumstances there was no longer any guarantee that he would “at all times support without reservation the national state,” as the law put it. “Is the authority aware that this is a breach of the law?” asked my father, but Volz retorted that he couldn’t discuss legal matters with every man who came in off the street. “Because from now on you are not much more than that, Herr Fest, and no longer any colleague of mine!” As he spoke these

curt words, he continued leafing through my father's file and one of the pages fell to the floor—no doubt intentionally, thought my father. Volz clearly expected my father to pick it up. My father, however, remained motionless, as he later reported; not for one moment did he consider going down on his knees in front of the mayor.

Volz then continued in a noticeably sharper tone. As well as being summarily suspended, my father was required within two days to formally transfer charge of the school to his successor, Markwitz. He would be informed in writing of the details. With a gesture that was part dismissal, part shooing away to the door, the provisional mayor added that for the time being my father was not allowed to take up any employment. Everything proceeded as if according to a plan, said my father, when he came to talk about what happened.<sup>1</sup>

Joachim Fest's father was one of the few civil servants to challenge the new rules. Most government employees chose not to do so. Journalist Horst Krüger, then a schoolboy, recalled how his father protected his job in the government:

All his life he left home for the ministry at 8:23 A.M., traveling second class. At home, he read the old-line newspaper and the local daily, never joined the party, . . . never subscribed to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi party organ—but for twenty minutes, until the train pulled into Friedrichstrasse Station, he held it up before his face so that others might recognize his loyalty to the new people's state. At Friedrichstrasse he left the paper behind. . . .

All his life, he came home at 4:21 P.M., always on the same train, always in the same second-class compartment, if possible always at the same corner window, always holding a briefcase full of work in his right hand, with his left showing his monthly commutation ticket—he never jumped off the moving train. He had achieved his goal; he was a German civil servant. And no matter whether the government was headed by Noske or Ebert, Scheidemann or Brüning, Papen or Hitler, he was obligated to faith and loyalty. His office was his world.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Create identity charts for Joachim Fest's father and Horst Krüger's father. What do the stories of these two men reveal about why many people supported the Nazi Party, or at least chose not to dissent?
2. How was each man similar to or different from the bureaucrats in *The Bear That Wasn't* (Chapter 1)? How do bureaucrats help a government function? To what extent is it their responsibility to follow the rules established by the government's leaders? What options do they have when they believe the rules are unjust?
3. Can you think of a time when you were part of a larger organization? How did the goals or rules of the organization influence your choices?

1 Joachim Fest, *Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: Other Press, 2006), 46–48.

2 Horst Krüger, *A Crack in the Wall: Growing Up Under Hitler* (New York: Fromm International Publishing Corp., 1982), 19–20.

## Reading 12

# Controlling the Universities

Germany's 1933 civil service law applied to university professors as well as elementary and secondary-school teachers. It was not difficult for the Nazis to win the support of many university professors, administrators, and students. At the time, a majority of them backed conservative political parties that were hostile to the Weimar Republic. Many university professors immediately welcomed the Nazi-led government in 1933. Many student fraternities and other student groups already banned Jews and regularly protested against professors they believed did not support supposed traditional German values.<sup>1</sup> Scholars who were Jewish or supported left-leaning parties struggled to find research and teaching positions in public, government-supported German universities and often worked in private ones instead. With the passage of the new law, the Nazis attempted to root out any dissent to their policies and ideology that remained in German higher education.

Peter Drucker, an Austrian economist, was then a lecturer at Frankfurt University. Fearful of Hitler's plans for Germany, he was prepared to leave the country but hoped that it would not be necessary to do so. The first Nazi-led faculty meeting at the university convinced him otherwise.

Frankfurt was the first university the Nazis tackled, precisely because it was the most self-confidently liberal of major German universities, with a faculty that prided itself on its allegiance to scholarship, freedom of conscience, and democracy. The Nazis knew that control of Frankfurt University would mean control of German academia. And so did everyone at the university.

Above all, Frankfurt had a science faculty distinguished both by its scholarship and by its liberal convictions; and outstanding among the Frankfurt scientists was a biochemist-physiologist of Nobel-Prize caliber and impeccable liberal credentials. When the appointment of a Nazi commissar was announced . . . and every teacher and graduate assistant at the university was summoned to a faculty meeting to hear this new master, everybody knew that a trial of strength was at hand. I had never before attended a faculty meeting, but I did attend this one.

The new Nazi commissar wasted no time on the amenities. He immediately announced that Jews would be forbidden to enter university premises and would be dismissed without salary on March 15; this was something that no one had thought possible despite the Nazis' loud antisemitism. Then he launched into a tirade of abuse, filth, and four-letter words such as had been heard rarely even in the barracks and never before in academia. . . . [He] pointed his finger at one department

<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 422–28.



chairman after another and said, "You either do what I tell you or we'll put you into a concentration camp." There was silence when he finished; everybody waited for the distinguished biochemist-physiologist. The great liberal got up, cleared his throat, and said, "Very interesting, Mr. Commissar, and in some respects very illuminating; but one point I didn't get too clearly. Will there be more money for research in physiology?"

The meeting broke up shortly thereafter with the commissar assuring the scholars that indeed there would be plenty of money for "racially pure science." A few of the professors had the courage to walk out with their Jewish colleagues, but most kept a safe distance from these who only a few hours earlier had been their close friends. I went out sick unto death—and I knew that I was going to leave Germany within forty-eight hours.<sup>2</sup>

Other professors chose a different course. Martin Heidegger, an influential philosopher, told his students and colleagues that Germany's soul needed fresh air to breathe and National Socialism would provide it. As the Nazis came to power, he argued that freedom of inquiry and free expression were negative and selfish ideas. Instead, he encouraged his students to live up to their obligations to the national community in both "thought and deed." Heidegger's fellow professors at Freiburg University voted him head of the university in April 1933. In May, he officially joined the Nazi Party, and he told his students: "The Führer himself and he alone *is* the German reality, present and future, and its law. Study to know; from now on, all things demand decision, and all action responsibility. Hail Hitler!"<sup>3</sup>

According to historian Richard Evans, 15% of university teachers had lost their jobs by fall 1933. Most were fired because of their political beliefs, while a third of those fired were dismissed because they were Jewish. Several world-famous German scientists were fired or left their positions at universities and research institutions across the country. Most notable among them was Albert Einstein. He had revolutionized modern physics while working in Berlin for 20 years, but he left Germany in 1933 and spent the rest of his career at Princeton University in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What choices were available to the non-Jewish members of the Frankfurt University faculty who disapproved of the new civil service law? How did they choose to respond? How do you explain their choice?
2. When is it risky to intervene on behalf of others? Under what conditions might you be willing to take that risk?
3. What are freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression? Why do you think Martin Heidegger and the Nazis would call them negative and selfish ideas? How do you think eliminating freedom of inquiry and expression would change education?

<sup>2</sup> Peter F. Drucker, *Adventures of a Bystander* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 161–62.

<sup>3</sup> Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich*, 421.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 422–23.

## Reading 13

# A Wave of Discrimination

In addition to the April boycott (see Reading 9, “Targeting Jews”) and the civil service law (see Reading 10, “‘Restoring’ Germany’s Civil Service”), a wave of discriminatory actions were taken across Germany in order to “purify Germany of the Jewish spirit” after the Nazis took power.<sup>1</sup> According to historian Alon Confino, the Nazis and other Germans made 1,448 laws, policies, and decrees designed to remove Jews from the country’s political, economic, and cultural life between January 31, 1933, and August 31, 1939. In 1933 alone, 316 anti-Jewish measures were taken in Germany by the national, state, regional, and local governments as well as by civic associations throughout the country. The following is a partial list of the anti-Jewish laws, policies, and decrees made in 1933.

- Berlin: Jewish physicians are excluded from the list of doctors approved to receive patients under welfare and health insurance plans.
- Prussia: Jewish judges and lawyers working at courts are immediately removed from office; the percentage of licensed Jewish lawyers should be equal to the percentage of Jews in the population; Jewish lawyers cannot represent the state.
- Cologne: Jews cannot use the city’s sports facilities.
- Frankfurt: Jews must submit their passports for verification.
- Cologne: Jews cannot be employed in the city public administration.
- The German Boxing Association expels its Jewish members and will not work with Jewish entrepreneurs to organize events.
- The Law for the Reestablishment of the Professional Civil Service removes Jews from government service.
- The Law on the Admission to the Legal Profession forbids the admission of Jews to the bar.
- The Law Against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities limits the number of Jewish students in public schools.
- Bavaria: Jews cannot be admitted to medical school.
- Palatinate: Jews who are arrested for political reasons can be released from jail only when one of their guarantors or a physician who attests to their poor health will replace them.
- Baden: Yiddish cannot be spoken in the cattle markets.
- The Law on Editors bans Jews from editorial posts.
- When sending a telegram by phone, it is prohibited to use Jewish names for spelling.

<sup>1</sup> Alon Confino, *A World without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 50–51.

- Zweibrücken: Jewish businesses are forbidden to participate in the next annual market.
- Jews cannot own land sold by peasants.
- District of Bütow: Peasants are prohibited from selling their products to Jewish merchants.
- The following organizations expel their Jewish members: German teachers' associations, gymnastic and sports associations, the Association of German Blind Academics, the German Chess League, the Reich League of German Authors, and singing associations.
- Jewish newspapers from abroad are prohibited.
- Jewish students must have a yellow card instead of the regular brown student card.
- Jews are prohibited from practicing pharmaceuticals.
- Jews are prohibited from visiting the following beaches: Berlin-Wannsee, Fulda, Beuthen, Speyer, and others.
- Jews cannot be part of the lottery sector.
- Jews cannot be jockeys.
- The mentioning of Jewish holidays in official and business calendars is prohibited.
- Jewish businesses are prohibited from displaying Christian symbols at Christmas.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. In what ways do these laws and policies exclude Jews from German society? Which laws in this list are most troubling to you? Which ones are most puzzling?
2. What does this list suggest about the ways in which Nazi goals and objectives were carried out throughout German society? How does this list provide evidence of Germans "working toward the Führer" (see Reading 8, "Working Toward the Führer")?
3. What do you think might have been the cumulative effect on Germans of the hundreds of discriminatory measures against Jews being enacted in a single year? How might this onslaught of laws, policies, and decrees have changed how individual Germans thought about Jews? How might it have changed individuals' universes of obligation?

<sup>2</sup> Confino, *A World without Jews*, 50–51.

## Reading 14

# Learning to Be a Good German



Watch **Friendship and Betrayal**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Ellen Switzer was nine years old when Hitler became chancellor in Germany. Here, she recalls a classmate during the first years of Nazi rule who seemed to embody the qualities the Nazis valued most.

[Ruth's] most appealing qualities were her total sincerity and her willingness to share whatever she had with a classmate in need. If the school was cold . . . Ruth would always lend you her sweater; she insisted that the cold air made her feel more alive. If you forgot your lunch, Ruth shared hers; she was not very hungry that day. Out of the same generosity that prompted her to share her clothing and her food, she also shared her ideas. Ruth was a totally dedicated Nazi.

She always had a large number of pamphlets, booklets, newsletters, and other materials in her book bag, along with her school supplies. If one wanted to discuss clothes or one's problems with a teacher or a parent with Ruth, she was always willing to do so. But somehow, the discussion tended to turn political. . . . "Here, take this booklet, it will explain what I'm talking about," she would often say, pressing into our hands yet another piece of literature, which often seemed surprisingly relevant to the problem we had been discussing. . . .

Some of us, especially those of us who were called "non-Aryan" (and therefore, thoroughly evil) in Ruth's booklets, often asked her how she could possibly have friends who were Jews or who had a Jewish background, when everything she read and distributed seemed to breathe hate against us and our ancestors. "Of course, they don't mean *you*," she would explain earnestly. "You are a good German. It's those other Jews, pacifists, socialists, and liberals who betrayed Germany that Hitler wants to remove from influence." . . .

When Hitler actually came to power and the word went out that students of Jewish background were to be isolated, that "Aryan" Germans were no longer to associate with "non-Aryans" (i.e., those who were either Jewish or who had one Jewish ancestor, even though they themselves were Christians), Ruth actually came around and apologized to those of us to whom she was no longer able to talk. "The whole thing may be a misunderstanding," she explained, "Maybe it will be straightened out later. But meanwhile, Hitler must know what he is doing, and I'll follow orders." Not only did she no longer speak to the suddenly ostracized group of classmates, she carefully noted down anybody who did, and reported them.<sup>1</sup>

1 Ellen Eichenwald Switzer, *How Democracy Failed* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 89–91.

## Connection Questions

1. In what ways was Ruth a good friend? How did she reconcile her kindness to her friends with her Nazi beliefs?
2. How did Ruth's universe of obligation change when the Nazis came to power? What factors do you think caused her universe of obligation to change?
3. After World War II, in talking to a headmistress of her school about Ruth, Ellen Switzer learned that Ruth had served as a nurse in a concentration camp where "so-called experiments were carried out on helpless inmates." The headmistress said of Ruth: "She was not really a bad person, she was what I call an ideologue. Once she had come to believe in an idea—no matter how perverted, illogical and evil—she couldn't let go. She's now in prison and she's probably still sure that what she believed was right."<sup>2</sup> Do you agree with that assessment of Ruth?

<sup>2</sup> Switzer, *How Democracy Failed*, 89–91.



## Reading 15

# Where They Burn Books . . .

"Where they burn books, they will also ultimately burn people." So wrote Heinrich Heine, one of Germany's greatest poets, who was of Jewish origin. He lived in the early 1800s, at a time when nationalistic students displayed their "patriotism" by tossing "un-German" books into huge bonfires (see "Creating the German Nation" in Chapter 2). Few believed it could happen in the twentieth century until May 6, 1933. That day, the German Student Association announced a nationwide "Action against the Un-German Spirit."



Keystone / Stringer / Getty Images

Students contribute anti-German books to be destroyed at a Berlin book-burning on May 10, 1933. About 40,000 people attended the event.

At one gathering, Joseph Goebbels told a cheering crowd, “The soul of the German people can again express itself. Those flames not only illuminate the final end of an old era; they light up the new!”<sup>1</sup> Lilian T. Mowrer, an American journalist in Germany, describes what happened next:

I held my breath while he hurled the first volume into the flames: it was like burning something alive. Then students followed with whole armfuls of books, while schoolboys screamed into the microphone their condemnations of this and that author, and as each name was mentioned the crowd booed and hissed. You felt Goebbels’s venom behind their denunciations. Children of fourteen mouthing abuse of Heine! Erich Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* received the greatest condemnation . . . it would never do for such an unheroic description of war to dishearten soldiers of the Third Reich.<sup>2</sup>

The mobs also burned the books of Helen Keller, an American author who was a socialist, a pacifist, and the first deaf-blind person to graduate from college. Keller responded: “History has taught you nothing if you think you can kill ideas. . . . You can burn my books and the books of the best minds in Europe, but the ideas in them have seeped through a million channels and will continue to quicken other minds.”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was “un-German” about the various books burned by the Nazis?
2. What message did the Nazis convey by publicly burning books? Who did they hope would receive that message?
3. Have you heard of books being restricted or destroyed where you live? In what ways is that similar to or different from publicly burning books?
4. Was Helen Keller right, or can education, law, or policy destroy an idea?

1 William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 241.

2 Quoted in *Witness to the Holocaust*, ed. Azriel Eisenberg (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 79.

3 Quoted in Rebecca Onion, “‘God Sleepeth Not’: Helen Keller’s Blistering Letter to Book-Burning German Students,” *The Vault* (blog), Slate.com, May 16, 2013, accessed March 16, 2016, [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_vault/2013/05/16/helen\\_keller\\_her\\_scathing\\_letter\\_to\\_german\\_students\\_planning\\_to\\_burn\\_her.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_vault/2013/05/16/helen_keller_her_scathing_letter_to_german_students_planning_to_burn_her.html).

## Reading 16

# An Agreement with the Catholic Church

In 1933, almost 40% of Germany's population was Roman Catholic. As a minority in a country with a Protestant majority, Catholics had always felt vulnerable to accusations that they were not "true Germans" because of suspicions that they "took orders from Rome." Over the years, they had protected their rights by organizing and supporting the Catholic Center Party. Now, as the Nazis were outlawing opposing political parties (see Reading 4, "Outlawing the Opposition"), Catholics had to decide whether to continue to support the party.

Church leaders and clergy held a range of opinions about National Socialism. Some Catholic leaders welcomed Hitler's call to "overcome the un-Germanic spirit" and feared that "atheistic communism" was more of a threat to the Catholic Church than the Nazis were. Others opposed the Nazis. According to historian Doris Bergen, "Many German Catholic clergy were initially suspicious of Nazism. They saw Nazi ideas as anti-Christian, especially the emphasis on race and blood and the obvious disrespect for human life . . . some priests had refused to administer the sacrament of communion to church members in Stormtrooper or SS uniforms."<sup>1</sup> Some who opposed the Nazis also urged great caution; they were fearful of attacks on priests and nuns. That concern prompted officials of the Vatican to discuss with Hitler the possibility of an agreement: the Church would pledge to abstain from political activity in Germany in exchange for the Reich's promise not to persecute the Catholic Church and its members.

As word of these talks spread, Edith Stein wrote an urgent letter to the pope. Stein, born a Jew, had converted to Catholicism in 1922 and had become a nun and a respected Catholic educator. In her letter, she argued:

Everything that happened [in Germany] and continues to happen on a daily basis originates with a government that calls itself "Christian." For weeks not only Jews but also thousands of fearful Catholics in Germany, and, I believe, all over the world have been waiting and hoping for the Church of Christ [the Roman Catholic Church] to raise its voice to put a stop to this abuse of Christ's name. Is not this idolization of race and governmental power which is being pounded into the public consciousness by the radio open heresy? . . . Is not all this diametrically opposed to the conduct of our Lord and Savior, who, even on the cross, still prayed for his persecutors?<sup>2</sup>

Pope Pius XI did not respond to Edith Stein, nor did his successor, Cardinal Pacelli, who became Pope Pius XII in 1939. As for the Nazis, they consid-

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 68.

2 "Letter of Saint Edith Stein to Pope Pius XI in 1933," Carmelite Nuns of Baltimore, February 23, 2003, accessed March 24, 2016.

ered her a Jew despite her conversion to Christianity; she was eventually murdered in a death camp as part of the Holocaust.

In July 1933, Hitler and Pope Pius XI signed a concordat, or treaty. Historian Fritz Stern explains:

On the face of it, the Vatican had scored a great triumph. No government under Weimar had been willing to sign such a concordat, which would recognize the principal rights of the church—rights that presumably would render it immune from the kind of persecution it had suffered [in the past]. By the terms of the concordat the church renounced all political activities and in turn the state guaranteed the right to free worship, to circulate pastoral epistles, to maintain Catholic schools and property. The Vatican had reason to be satisfied: Catholic rights had been put on a new basis and at the same time a regime had been strengthened that seemed to correspond to the Vatican's sense that Mussolini and Hitler were indispensable bulwarks against Bolshevism.

Hitler had even more reason to be satisfied. The concordat was his first international agreement, and it vastly enhanced his respectability in Germany and abroad. A great moral authority had trusted his word. But did the Vatican . . . really believe that National Socialism would abide by the concordat, was there really much likelihood that the regime would leave untouched a rival organization with its own dogmas and with such sweeping power over education?<sup>3</sup>

In the months and years after the concordat was signed, the Nazis regularly violated the agreement by shutting down some Catholic organizations, confiscating church property, interfering with Catholic newspapers, and imprisoning or murdering clergy and other Church leaders. But the pope did not openly criticize the Nazis until 1937. By then it was too late. Roman Catholic opposition at this point was limited to isolated individuals who could easily be removed from their positions and lacked the support of their Church. According to Bergen: "The Concordat pulled the rug out from under potential Catholic opposition in Germany. How could parish priests criticize a chancellor who had been recognized by their pope?"<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. A *concordat* is a formal agreement or pact. It comes from the Latin word meaning "harmony." What did the Catholic Church hope to gain from the concordat it signed with Germany? What compromises did the pope make?
2. What did Hitler hope to gain? What compromises did he make? What effect did the concordat have on opposition to the Nazis within Germany? What effect did it have on the way other nations perceived the Nazi government?
3. The Catholic Church kept its side of the bargain. What did the Church do when Hitler broke his promises? What other options did it have? What were the short-term consequences of those options? What were the long-term consequences?

3 Fritz Stern, *Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 169.

4 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 68.

## Reading 17

# Protestant Churches and the Nazi State



Watch **The Confessing Church**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Awakening Conscience: The Pastor Niemoller Story**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Acting on Faith**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Catholics in Germany were united in one church. Germany's 45 million Protestants were not. Most were members of the Lutheran, Reformed, or United Churches. In each German state, the members of these denominations joined together to form a regional Protestant church. Protestants in Germany differed not only in their religious practices but also in their political views. A few openly opposed the Nazis, while others saw themselves as neutral. Still others actively supported Nazism, calling themselves "storm troopers of Jesus Christ." As a result, as Protestant churches responded to National Socialism, some struggled to preserve the independence of their churches from politics and government, while others sought to claim a central place for Christianity in Nazi Germany.

The Nazi government ushered in key changes to the Protestant churches in Germany. First, the Nazi leadership supported the German Christian movement, a group of Protestants who wanted to combine Christianity and National Socialism into a movement "that would exclude all those deemed impure and embrace all 'true Germans' in a spiritual homeland for the Third Reich."<sup>1</sup> Second, the Nazi leadership urged Protestants to unite all regional churches into a national church under the centralized leadership of Ludwig Müller, a well-known pastor and Nazi Party member, who was appointed as Reich bishop. Many German Protestants embraced these changes. By supporting the German Christian movement and Müller, they could continue to practice their faith and at the same time show support for Hitler. In a national vote by Protestants taken in July 1933, the German Christians were supported by two-thirds of voters, and Müller won the national election to lead them.

The German Christian movement made significant changes to German Protestantism to bring it in line with Nazi racial ideology. Instead of classifying people as Christians or Jews based on their faith, as the Protestants had always done, German Christians began to classify people by racial heritage, as the Nazis did. Therefore, church leaders whose parents or grandparents had converted from Judaism to Christianity were considered Jewish and, according to the 1933 civil service law, no longer officially permitted to serve in those positions. Although the state never enforced this law in the churches, some German Christians forced out non-Aryan clergy to show their commitment to the regime. By January of 1934, Müller was vowing to purge Protestant churches of all "Jewish influence," includ-

<sup>1</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4.

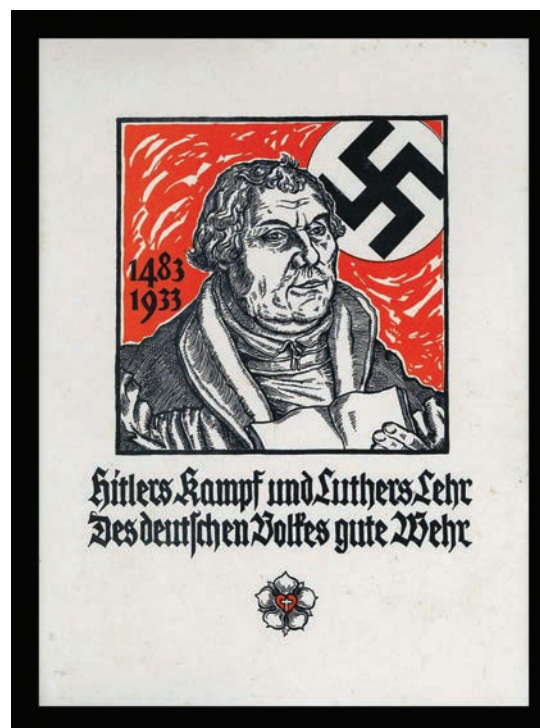


ing removing the Old Testament from their bible because it is based on the Hebrew bible. A public appeal released by German Christian leaders claimed that “the eternal God created for our nation a law that is peculiar to its own kind. It took shape in the Leader Adolf Hitler, and in the National Socialist state created by him. This law speaks to us from the history of our people. . . . It is loyalty to this law which demands of us the battle for honor and freedom . . . One Nation! One God! One Reich! One Church!”<sup>2</sup>

Not all Protestants in Germany agreed with the German Christian movement and the changes it instituted. In response to the growing power of the German Christians, another Protestant faction was formed called the Confessing Church. Its slogan was “Church must remain church,”<sup>3</sup> and its members sought to protect their religion from the grasp of politics and the Nazi government. For instance, the Confessing Church considered that anyone baptized in the faith was a Christian, regardless of their racial descent. Also, the members of the Confessing Church opposed the German Christian movement’s changes to the bible.

Despite their opposition to the German Christian movement, the Confessing Church did not object to most elements of Nazism, and some people within the movement were Nazi Party members. The disagreement between the two groups was focused on how much influence the Nazi government should have over how they practiced their faith. Early on, Confessing Church member Martin Niemöller and two Protestant bishops met with Hitler and his top aides. The religious leaders reaffirmed their support for Hitler’s domestic and foreign policies and asked only for the right to disagree on religious matters. Hitler did not compromise, and after the meeting both bishops signed a statement of unconditional loyalty to Hitler; Niemöller did not. As a result, Niemöller was increasingly targeted by the Nazis and was eventually imprisoned for seven years in concentration camps.<sup>4</sup>

Although about 7,000 of the nation’s 16,500 Protestant clergymen openly supported the Confessing Church, they limited their opposition to defending church teachings against Nazi influence. One member of the Confessing Church, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, did resist the actions of the Nazis more broadly. In April 1933, he professed sympathy for Jewish victims of Nazism and argued that National Socialism and Christianity were incompatible. He later became an important symbol of resistance to Nazi Germany and was executed for his role in a plot to assassinate Hitler in 1945.



This propaganda poster from 1933 reads, “Hitler’s fight and Luther’s teaching are the best defense for the German people.”

2 “Directives of the Church Movement German Christians (Movement for a National Church) in Thuringia, 1933,” in *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History*, ed. Joachim Remak (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1990), 95–96.

3 Doris L. Bergen, *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 12.

4 “Martin Niemöller: Biography,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum website, last modified January 9, 2016, accessed May 9, 2016.



In general, Protestants in Germany found a way to be both believers in Christianity and supporters of Nazism. In contrast, Jehovah's Witnesses struggled under the new regime. Initially, some leaders of this small religious group (which numbered about 20,000 in Germany in the 1930s) tried to make peace with the Reich. But their faith often prevented them from serving in the army, swearing allegiance to the state, or uttering the words "Heil Hitler," by this time a common way of saying hello and goodbye. Hitler was not interested in this unpopular minority, and the Nazis targeted the Jehovah's Witnesses for persecution. The Nazis destroyed their national headquarters, outlawed their church, and sent many thousands to concentration camps or prisons, where more than 1,000 were killed.

### Connection Questions

1. What was the difference between the German Christian and the Confessing Church movements? What did each believe should be the relationship between Protestant churches and the Nazi government?

2. According to historian Paul Bookbinder,

While it is clear that many in the Confessing Church acted bravely, and some ended up in concentration camps, it is important to note what they didn't do. Martin Niemöller later said that he deeply regretted not standing up for Jews as Jews. He spoke out only for Jews who had converted to Christianity.<sup>5</sup>

What does this suggest about the complexity of the groups that resisted the Nazis? Based on the information in this reading, how would you describe the universe of obligation of both the German Christian and the Confessing Church movements in 1933 Germany?

3. Why did the Nazis target Jehovah's Witnesses?
4. What message would most German Protestants have received from the leaders of their churches about the legitimacy of the Nazi-led government? Did the responses of their churches make them more likely or less likely to accept Nazi rule of Germany?
5. Can we be inspired when people and groups resist and speak out and also be disappointed or angry when they do not go far enough? What can we learn from the steps those groups take—and from those they don't?

<sup>5</sup> Paul Bookbinder to Facing History and Ourselves, comment on draft manuscript, December 7, 2015.

## Reading 18

# Breeding the New German “Race”

In 1925, Adolf Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, “Everything we admire on this earth today—science and art, technology and inventions—is only the creative product of a few peoples and originally perhaps one race [the “Aryans”]. On them depends the existence of this whole culture. If they perish, the beauty of this earth will sink into the grave with them.” From the start, the Nazis were determined to ensure the strength and purity of the “Aryan” race. They believed, according to historian Richard Evans, that “the strong and the racially pure had to be encouraged to have more children, the weak and the racially impure had to be neutralized by one means or another.”<sup>1</sup>

One way the Nazis encouraged “strong and pure” Aryans to have more children was through the “marriage loan” program. Beginning in June 1933, the government made interest-free loans of up to 1,000 marks available to young couples who intended to get married, provided that they met certain criteria. One criterion was that both the man and woman could prove their “Aryan” heritage. Another criterion was that the bride had to have been employed for six months in the two years preceding the marriage, and she had to promise to leave her job and stay home until the loan was paid off. This requirement was intended to encourage working women to leave the job market and make more jobs available to men. Finally, for each child born to the couple, a quarter of the loan amount was forgiven. Therefore, if the couple had four children, they would not have to repay any of the original loan amount. In this way, the program encouraged healthy “Aryan” couples to have more children and reinforced what the Nazis believed was the proper role of women in society.<sup>2</sup>

The Nazis regarded the breeding of a superior race, encouraged by policies such as the marriage loan program, as “positive eugenics” (see “Breeding Society’s ‘Fittest’” in Chapter 2). They also practiced “negative eugenics” by preventing people they considered genetically inferior from reproducing. A new law announced in July 1933 was the first step in that process. It permitted the government to sterilize anyone who suffered from so-called “hereditary” illnesses such as “feeble-mindedness,” schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, genetic epilepsy, Huntington’s chorea, genetic blindness, deafness, and some forms of alcoholism.

The idea was not a new one. Sterilization laws existed in several other countries at the time, including the United States. Between 1907 and 1930,

1 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 506.

2 *Ibid.*, 330–31.



This poster from a eugenics exhibition in the 1930s reads, “Sterilization is Liberation, Not a Punishment.” Three handicapped children are also pictured with the caption, “Who would want to be responsible for this?”

29 US states passed compulsory sterilization laws, and about 11,000 women were sterilized. Many states also had laws that banned marriages between white people and people of color—including African Americans, Native Americans, and Asians. Both sets of laws were prompted by a desire to eliminate “strains that are a burden to the nation or to themselves, and to raise the standard of humanity by the suppression of the progeny of the defective classes.”<sup>3</sup> (See “Attitudes toward Life and Death” in Chapter 4.) The Nazis took that goal much further than Americans ever did.

Gregor Ziemer, an American educator, observed the results of the law when he toured a German hospital where sterilizations took place. A guide informed him that the patients were “the mentally sick, women with low resistance, women who had proven through other births that their offspring were not strong. They were women suffering from defects . . . some were sterilized because they were political enemies of the State.” He was told, “We are even eradicating color-blindness in the Third Reich. . . .” When Ziemer asked who made the decisions, the guide boasted, “We have courts. It is all done very legally, rest assured. We have law and order.”<sup>4</sup>

To enforce the law, the Nazis created health office departments for “gene and race care” and set up “genetic health courts.” There, doctors and lawyers worked together to decide who would be sterilized. The individual had no say in the decision. In the first four years after the law was passed, the Germans sterilized over 50,000 people. By the end of the Nazi regime in 1945, they had sterilized nearly 360,000.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. After studying government-sanctioned violence, sociologist Irving Horowitz concludes, “The precondition for mass extermination was engineered dehumanization: the conversion of citizens into aliens.”<sup>6</sup> What is dehumanization? What evidence of the intentional process of dehumanization can you find in this reading?
2. How do you think old prejudices about the disabled and “less worthy races” affected the way people responded to the new sterilization law? How do you think the fact that the law was the work of doctors and professors affected the way people responded to it? How might the language used to describe such laws have influenced the way people responded to them?
3. What was the purpose of the sterilization law? What is the danger in giving the government the power to control who can have children?

3 Franz Boas, “Eugenics,” *Scientific Monthly* 3, no. 5 (1916): 476–77.

4 Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1941), 19.

5 Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 508.

6 Irving Louis Horowitz, *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power*, 3rd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1980), 302.

## Reading 19

# No Time to Think

Milton Mayer, an American journalist and educator, wanted to find out how a variety of people had reacted to Hitler's policies and philosophy. Seven years after the end of World War II, he interviewed German men from a cross-section of society. One of them, a college professor, had this to say about his experience of that period:

[The study of] Middle High German was my life. It was all I cared about. I was a scholar, a specialist. Then, suddenly, I was plunged into all the new activity, as the university was drawn into the new situation; meetings, conferences, interviews, ceremonies, and, above all, papers to be filled out, reports, bibliographies, lists, questionnaires. And on top of that were demands in the community, the things in which one had to, was "expected to" participate that had not been there or had not been important before. It was all rigmarole, of course, but it consumed all one's energies, coming on top of the work one really wanted to do. You can see how easy it was, then, not to think about fundamental things. One had no time.

. . . The dictatorship, and the whole process of its coming into being, was above all *diverting*. It provided an excuse not to think for people who did not want to think anyway. I do not speak of your "little men," your baker and so on; I speak of my colleagues and myself, learned men, mind you. Most of us did not want to think about fundamental things and never had. There was no need to. Nazism gave us some dreadful, fundamental things to think about—we were decent people—and kept us so busy with continuous changes and "crises" and so fascinated, yes, fascinated, by the machinations of the "national enemies," without and within, that we had no time to think about these dreadful things that were growing, little by little, all around us. Unconsciously, I suppose we were grateful. Who wants to think?

One doesn't see exactly where or how to move. Believe me, this is true. Each act, each occasion, is worse than the last, but only a little worse. You wait for the next and the next. You wait for one great shocking occasion, thinking that others, when such a shock comes, will join with you in resisting somehow. You don't want to act, or even talk alone; you don't want to "go out of your way to make trouble." Why not?—Well, you are not in the habit of doing it. And it is not just fear, fear of standing alone, that restrains you; it is also genuine uncertainty.

Uncertainty is a very important factor, and, instead of decreasing as time goes on, it grows. Outside, in the streets, in the general community, "everyone" is happy. One hears no protest, and certainly sees none. You know, in France or Italy there would be slogans against the government painted on walls and fences; in Germany, outside the great cities, perhaps, there is not even this. In the university community, in your own community, you speak privately to your colleagues, some of whom certainly feel as you do; but what do they say? They say, "It's not so bad" or "You're seeing things" or "You're an alarmist."

And you *are* an alarmist. You are saying that *this* must lead to *this*, and you can't prove it. These are the beginnings, yes; but how do you know for sure when you don't know the end, and how do you know, or even surmise, the end? On the one hand, your enemies, the law, the regime, the Party, intimidate you. On the other, your colleagues pooh-pooh you as pessimistic or even neurotic. You are left with your close friends, who are, naturally, people who have always thought as you have.

But your friends are fewer now. Some have drifted off somewhere or submerged themselves in their work. You no longer see as many as you did at meetings or gatherings. Informal groups become smaller; attendance drops off in little organizations, and the organizations themselves wither. Now, in small gatherings of your oldest friends, you feel that you are talking to yourselves, that you are isolated from the reality of things. This weakens your confidence still further and serves as a further deterrent to—to what? It is clearer all the time that, if you are going to do anything, you must *make* an occasion to do it, and then are obviously a trouble-maker. So you wait, and you wait.

But the one great shocking occasion, when tens or hundreds of thousands will join with you, never comes. *That's* the difficulty. If the last and worst act of the whole regime had come immediately after the first and smallest, thousands, yes, millions, would have been sufficiently shocked—if, let us say, the gassing of the Jews in '43 had come immediately after the "German Firm" stickers on the windows of non-Jewish shops in '33. But of course this isn't the way it happens. In between come all of the hundreds of little steps, some of them imperceptible, each of them preparing you not to be shocked by the next. Step C is not so much worse than Step B, and, if you did not make a stand at Step B, why should you at Step C? And so on to Step D.

And one day, too late, your principles, if you were ever sensible of them, all rush in upon you. The burden of self-deception has grown too heavy, and some minor incident, in my case my little boy, hardly more than a baby, saying "Jewish swine," collapses it all at once, and you see that everything has changed and changed completely under your nose. The world you live in—your nation, your people—is not the world you were born in at all. The forms are all there, all untouched, all reassuring, the houses, the shops, the jobs, the mealtimes, the visits, the concerts, the cinema, the holidays. But the spirit, which you never noticed because you made the lifelong mistake of identifying it with the forms, is changed. Now you live in a world of hate and fear, and the people who hate and fear do not even know it themselves; when everyone is transformed, no one is transformed. Now you live in a system which rules without responsibility even to God. The system itself could not have intended this in the beginning, but in order to sustain itself it was compelled to go all the way.

You have gone almost all the way yourself. Life is a continuing process, a flow, not a succession of acts and events at all. It has flowed to a new level, carrying you with it, without any effort on your part. On this new level you live, you have been living more comfortably every day, with new morals, new principles. You have accepted things that your father, even in Germany, could not have imagined.



Suddenly it all comes down, all at once. You see what you are, what you have done, or, more accurately, what you haven't done (for that was all that was required of most of us: that we do nothing). You remember those early morning meetings of your department in the university when, if one had stood, others would have stood, perhaps, but no one stood. A small matter, a matter of hiring this man or that, and you hired this one rather than that. You remember everything now, and your heart breaks. Too late. You are compromised beyond repair.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the professor accept the Nazis' policies? How did he evaluate, years later, the choices he made or did not make? How do you evaluate them? Why does he emphasize the small steps in the transformation of Germany?
2. Draw an identity chart for the professor. What aspects of his identity may have influenced the decisions he made in 1933?
3. Is it important that the interview with this professor took place seven years after the end of World War II? How might this affect the way you interpret and analyze his account?
4. What elements in the professor's choices not to act were based on particular circumstances of his time and place? What elements in his choices may reflect more universal human tendencies?
5. Can you think of a time when you didn't speak out or act against what you thought was wrong? What kept you from acting?

<sup>1</sup> From Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933–45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 167, 169, 171.

## Reading 20

# The Night of the Long Knives



Watch **Night of the Long Knives**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Adolf Hitler was determined to put down all opposition—including opposition within his own party. By June 1934, he was convinced that the SA—the Nazis’ own storm troopers, often called Brown Shirts—and Ernst Röhm, their leader, had outlived their usefulness. Known as intimidating street brawlers, the Brown Shirts were regarded as “a bunch of thugs” by a growing number of Germans. The nation’s military leaders were also critical of the SA. Many of them resented the fact that the Treaty of Versailles had limited the army to 100,000 men while the SA, as the Nazis’ main paramilitary force, numbered more than 2 million. They also feared Röhm’s ambition to take charge of the military. As Hitler planned to soon increase the size of the German armed forces, he needed to solidify the support of these military leaders. Rich industrialists also did not approve of the violence they associated with the storm troopers. Some were also bothered by the fact that Röhm was homosexual. Homosexuality was illegal and widely considered immoral in German society. The widespread awareness of Röhm’s sexual orientation made it harder for the Nazis to build ties to conservatives and church leaders.

On June 30, Hitler ordered the SS (the Nazis’ elite guard) and the regular army to murder more than 200 SA leaders, including Röhm. They also killed Kurt von Schleicher and his wife. Schleicher, a friend of President Paul von Hindenburg, had been chancellor of Germany just before Hitler took over in 1933, and he had no connections to Röhm or the SA.

Most people did not know about the events of June 30 until days later. The news came out only when Hitler’s cabinet declared the killings “legal” after the fact. The newspapers reported that Hindenburg had congratulated Hitler on his “courageous personal intervention.” Two weeks later, Hitler justified the murders in a speech broadcast on the radio: “If anyone approaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice then all I can say to him is this: in this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme Justiciar [judicial officer] of the German people. . . . And everyone must know for all future time that if he raises his hand to strike the State, then certain death is his lot.”<sup>1</sup>

According to historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz, the massacre was misunderstood within Germany as well as outside the nation. She explains that instead of realizing that the country was being run by “a gang of criminals,”

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 37–38.

"many Germans believed that the purge of the SA represented Hitler's wish to halt the arbitrary terror of the SA in the streets and to restore a measure of legality to the country."<sup>2</sup>

Christabel Bielenberg, a British woman who had become a German citizen after her marriage to a German, was among those interpreting the events this way. She was out of the country on June 30. When she returned, she found growing support for Hitler:

It was considered that . . . with the murder of Röhm and the eclipse of his storm troopers (although the manner in which it had been carried out had not been exactly savory), the Revolution had to all intents and purposes become respectable. Once everything distasteful had been neatly swept under the carpet, there was something almost touching about the anxious childlike pleasure with which so many tried to share in what they seemed to hope was a newly discovered respectability. Unpleasantnesses, of course there were unpleasantnesses; but such things, if talked about at all, must be seen in perspective. There were so many more positive aspects of the regime to chat about.<sup>3</sup>

Many army officers celebrated with bottles of champagne. One general told his fellow officers that he wished he had been there to see Röhm shot. A retired captain named Erwin Planck was among the few who thought the rejoicing was out of place. He told an officer, "If you look on without lifting a finger, you will meet the same fate sooner or later."<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What happened on the "Night of the Long Knives"? How did Hitler justify the actions taken that night?
2. Why did some people feel the massacre turned Hitler's regime from "a gang of criminals running the country" to one with "a newly discovered respectability"?
3. Would the Night of the Long Knives have been possible in February 1933? What earlier events prepared the nation to accept Hitler's version of what happened that night? How did the Night of the Long Knives help to create a dictatorship out of a democracy?

<sup>2</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 82.

<sup>3</sup> Christabel Bielenberg, *Christabel* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 27–28.

<sup>4</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 508, 41.

## Reading 21

# Isolating Gay Men

**Note:** In earlier times, referring to members of the gay community as “homosexuals” was common. While not offensive in the past, today the term is outdated and inappropriate when used as a noun, unless one is reading aloud directly from a historical document.

After the Night of the Long Knives, the Nazis increased their attacks on gay men. Many Germans applauded the move. Homophobia was not uncommon in German society; gay men had long been the target of bigotry and discrimination. In 1871, Germany had enacted a provision in the criminal code, known as Paragraph 175, that made sexual acts between men a crime. (Several other nations had similar laws at the time.) That law was still on the books, and many gay men were harassed or arrested by police throughout the years of the Weimar Republic. Nevertheless, in Berlin and a few larger German cities, tolerance increased in the 1920s and 1930s, and gay culture flourished. Many gay men were able to live their lives openly without hiding their sexual orientation. The Reichstag was even considering abolishing Paragraph 175 before the Nazis came to power.<sup>1</sup>

The Nazis believed that gay men were “defective” and an obstacle to the goal of creating a master “Aryan” race. They did not embody, in the Nazis’ view, the masculinity of the ideal German man. The Nazis also feared that if gay men held leadership positions in the Nazi Party or government (like Ernst Röhm; see Reading 20, “The Night of the Long Knives”), they would be vulnerable to manipulation or blackmail by anyone who threatened to expose their sexual orientation. The Nazis were not nearly as concerned about lesbians, who, as women, they presumed would be passive and could be forced to have children.<sup>2</sup>

When Hitler took over in 1933, enforcement of Paragraph 175 was stepped up. A man who lived near Hamburg recalled:

With one blow a wave of arrests of homosexuals began in our town. One of the first to be arrested was my friend, with whom I had had a relationship since I was 23. One day people from the Gestapo came to his house and took him away. It was pointless to inquire where he might be. If anyone did that, they ran the risk of being similarly detained, because he knew them, and therefore they were also suspect. Following his arrest, his home was searched by Gestapo agents. Books were taken away, note- and address books were confiscated, questions were asked among the neighbors. . . . The address books were the worst. All those who figured in them,

1 Geoffrey J. Giles, “Why Bother About Homosexuals? Homophobia and Sexual Politics in Nazi Germany,” lecture, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Washington, DC, May 30, 2001, accessed March 18, 2016.

2 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 57.

or had anything to do with him were arrested and summoned by the Gestapo. Me, too. I was summoned by the Gestapo and interrogated at least once every fourteen days or three weeks. . . . After four weeks my friend was released from investigative custody. The [Nazis] could not prove anything against him either. However, the effects of his arrest were terrifying. Hair shorn off, totally confused, he was no longer what he was before. . . . We had to be very careful with all contacts. I had to break off all relations with my friend. We passed each other by on the street, because we did not want to put ourselves in danger. . . . We lived like animals in a wild game park, always sensing the hunters.<sup>3</sup>

In June 1935, the Nazis strengthened the law to make it easier to arrest any man presumed to be gay.

## Connection Questions

1. What beliefs and circumstances motivated the Nazis to target gay men? How did their attitudes toward gay men differ from their attitudes toward lesbians?
2. How did the Nazis' arrests change relationships between partners, friends, and neighbors?
3. How did the Nazis use fear to maintain some control over individuals' decisions?

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933–1945* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 194.



## Reading 22

# Pledging Allegiance

Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy



German military recruits swear allegiance to Adolf Hitler.

When German president Paul von Hindenburg died on August 2, 1934, Hitler combined the positions of chancellor and president. He was now the Führer and Reich chancellor, the head of state, and the chief of the armed forces. In the past, German soldiers had taken this oath:

I swear loyalty to the Constitution and vow that I will protect the German nation and its lawful establishments as a brave soldier at any time and will be obedient to the President and my superiors.

Now Hitler created a new oath.

I swear by God this sacred oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people,

Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.

In his book *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William Shirer, an American journalist, writes that the new oath “enabled an even greater number of officers to excuse themselves from any personal responsibility for the unspeakable crimes which they carried out on the orders of the Supreme Commander whose true nature they had seen for themselves. . . . One of the appalling aberrations of the German officer corps from this point on rose out of this conflict of ‘honor’—a word . . . often on their lips. . . . Later and often, by honoring their oath they dishonored themselves as human beings and trod in the mud the moral code of their corps.”<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Summarize the two oaths. What is the main difference between the two? How important is that difference? What are the implications of swearing an oath to an individual leader rather than to a nation?
2. How might taking an oath affect the choices a person makes? How does an oath affect the level of responsibility a person has for their actions? Is following an oath an acceptable explanation for making a choice that a person later regrets?
3. What oaths do people take today? For what reasons? How do such oaths affect people’s choices? How should they?

<sup>1</sup> William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 227.

## Reading 23

# Do You Take the Oath?

Soldiers were not the only ones required to take the new oath that pledged allegiance to Hitler. One German recalled the day he was asked to pledge loyalty to the regime:

I was employed in a defense plant (a war plant, of course, but they were always called defense plants). That was the year of the National Defense Law, the law of "total conscription." Under the law I was required to take the oath of fidelity. I said I would not; I opposed it in conscience. I was given twenty-four hours to "think it over." In those twenty-four hours I lost the world. . . .

You see, refusal would have meant the loss of my job, of course, not prison or anything like that. (Later on, the penalty was worse, but this was only 1935.) But losing my job would have meant that I could not get another. Wherever I went I should be asked why I left the job I had, and when I said why, I should certainly have been refused employment. Nobody would hire a "Bolshevik." Of course, I was not a Bolshevik, but you understand what I mean.

I tried not to think of myself or my family. We might have got out of the country in any case, and I could have got a job in industry or education somewhere else.

What I tried to think of was the people to whom I might be of some help later on, if things got worse (as I believed they would). I had a wide friendship in scientific and academic circles, including many Jews, and "Aryans," too, who might be in trouble. If I took the oath and held my job, I might be of help, somehow, as things went on. If I refused to take the oath, I would certainly be useless to my friends, even if I remained in the country. I myself would be in their situation.

The next day, after "thinking it over," I said I would take the oath with the mental reservation, that, by the words with which the oath began, "*Ich schwöre bei Gott*," "I swear by God," I understood that no human being and no government had the right to override my conscience. My mental reservations did not interest the official who administered the oath. He said, "Do you take the oath?" and I took it. That day the world was lost, and it was I who lost it.

First of all, there is the problem of the lesser evil. Taking the oath was not so evil as being unable to help my friends later on would have been. But the evil of the oath was certain and immediate, and the helping of my friends was in the future and therefore uncertain. I had to commit a positive evil there and then, in the hope of a possible good later on. The good outweighed the evil; but the good was only a hope, the evil a fact. . . . The hope might *not* have been realized—either for reasons beyond my control or because I became afraid later on or even because I was afraid all the time and was simply fooling myself when I took the oath in the first place.

But that is not the important point. The problem of the lesser evil we all know about; in Germany we took Hindenburg as less evil than Hitler, and in the end, we got them both. But that is not why I say that Americans cannot understand. No, the important point is—how many innocent people were killed by the Nazis, would you say? . . . Shall we say, just to be safe, that three million innocent people were killed all together? . . . And how many innocent lives would you like to say I saved? . . . Perhaps five, or ten, one doesn't know. But shall we say a hundred, or a thousand, just to be safe? . . . And it would be better to have saved all three million, instead of only a hundred, or a thousand? There, then, is my point. If I had refused to take the oath of fidelity, I would have saved all three million. . . .

There I was in 1935, a perfect example of the kind of person who, with all his advantages in birth, in education, and in position, rules (or might easily rule) in any country. If I had refused to take the oath in 1935, it would have meant that thousands and thousands like me, all over Germany, were refusing to take it. Their refusal would have heartened millions. Thus the regime would have been overthrown, or indeed, would never have come to power in the first place. The fact that I was not prepared to resist in 1935 meant that all the thousands, hundreds of thousands, like me in Germany were also unprepared, and each one of these hundreds of thousands was, like me, a man of great influence or of great potential influence. Thus the world was lost. . . .

These hundred lives I saved—or a thousand or ten as you will—what do they represent? A little something out of the whole terrible evil, when, if my faith had been strong enough in 1935, I could have prevented the whole evil. . . . I did not believe that I could “move mountains.” The day I said, “No,” I had faith. In the process of “thinking it over,” in the next twenty-four hours, my faith failed me. So, in the next ten years, I was able to remove only anthills, not mountains.

My education did not help me, and I had a broader and better education than most have had or ever will have. All it did, in the end, was to enable me to rationalize my failure of faith more easily than I might have done if I had been ignorant. And so it was, I think, among educated men generally, in that time in Germany. Their resistance was no greater than other men's.<sup>1</sup>

Not everyone was willing to take the oath and pledge allegiance to Hitler. Among those who refused was Ricarda Huch, a 70-year-old poet and writer. She resigned from the prestigious Prussian Academy of Arts with this letter:

Heidelberg, April 9, 1933

Dear President von Schillings:

Let me first thank you for the warm interest you have taken in having me remain in the Academy. I would very much like you to understand why I cannot follow your wish. That a German's feelings are German, I would consider to be just about self-evident, but the definition of what is German, and what acting in a German manner means—those are things where opinions differ. What the present government prescribes by way of patriotic convictions is not my kind of Germanism. The

<sup>1</sup> From Milton Mayer, *They Thought They Were Free: The Germans 1933–45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 177–81.

centralization, the use of compulsion, the brutal methods, the defamation of those who hold different convictions, the boastful self-praise—these are matters which I consider un-German and disastrous. As I consider the divergence between this opinion of mine and that being ordered by the state, I find it impossible to remain in an Academy that is a part of the state. You say that the declaration submitted to me by the Academy would not prevent me from the free expression of my opinions. But “loyal cooperation, in the spirit of the changed historical situation, on matters affecting national and cultural tasks that fall within the jurisdiction of the Academy” requires an agreement with the government’s program which in my case does not exist. Besides, I would find no newspaper or magazine that would print an opposition opinion. Thus the right to free expression of opinion would remain quite theoretical. . . .

I hereby resign from the Academy.

S. Ricarda Huch<sup>2</sup>

The Nazis would not allow Huch to publish her letter. Few knew that it existed until after the war. So she and other dissenters lived in Germany throughout the Nazi era as silent dissenters in “internal exile.”

## Connection Questions

1. What were the factors that the defense plant worker considered when deciding whether or not to take the oath?
2. What do you think the defense plant worker meant by the words, “That day the world was lost, and it was I who lost it”? Find evidence in his narrative to explain why he feels “the world was lost” and “it was I who lost it.”
3. What does the term “lesser evil” mean? What did this man think about the advantages and the costs of choosing the “lesser evil” in his situation?
4. Is it an understandable choice, as this man argues, to “commit a positive evil there and then, in the hope of a possible good later on”? When do we today face similar dilemmas in our own lives?
5. Why did Ricarda Huch refuse to take the oath? How is Huch’s definition of what it means to be German different from the Nazis’ definition?
6. What does it mean to go into exile? How is it different from “internal exile”? Can dissent be silent?

2 Ricarda Huch, “‘Not My Kind of Germanism’: A Resignation from the Academy,” in *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History*, ed. Joachim Remak (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1969), 162.

## Reading 24

# The Empty Table

For years, Marta Appel had been getting together at a restaurant once a month with a group of friends she had known since high school. In 1933, she stopped coming to the lunches, mainly because she did not want to embarrass her non-Jewish friends. She recalls:

One day on the street, I met one of my old teachers, and with tears in her eyes she begged me: "Come again to us; we miss you; we feel ashamed that you must think we do not want you anymore. Not one of us has changed in her feeling toward you." She tried to convince me that they were still my friends, and tried to take away my doubts. I decided to go to the next meeting. It was a hard decision and I had not slept the night before. I was afraid for my gentile friends. For nothing in the world did I wish to bring them trouble by my attendance, and I was also afraid for myself. I knew I would watch them, noticing the slightest expression of embarrassment in their eyes when I came. I knew they could not deceive me; I would be aware of every change in their voices. Would they be afraid to talk to me?

It was not necessary for me to read their eyes or listen to the changes in their voices. The empty table in the little alcove that had always been reserved for us spoke the clearest language. It was even unnecessary for the waiter to come and say that a lady phoned that morning not to reserve the table thereafter. I could not blame them. Why should they risk losing a position only to prove to me that we still had friends in Germany?<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What influenced Marta Appel's choice to re-join her friends for lunch? Do you think her decision was courageous or a mistake?
2. What influenced Appel's friends to choose to cancel the lunch? Do you think their choice was an act of cowardice or a sensible decision? How does Appel explain their action? Was she right to not blame them for making that choice?

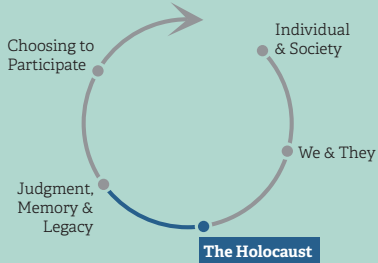
<sup>1</sup> Marta Appel, "Memoirs," in *Jewish Life in Germany: Memoirs from Three Centuries*, ed. Monika Richarz, trans. Stella P. Rosenfeld and Sidney Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 351.

## Chapter 5 Analysis and Reflection

1. What attracted some people to Nazism? What did some people regard as problematic or unacceptable? What influenced so many to accept the Nazi regime despite ideas and actions they found objectionable? Use the readings in this chapter to make a list of the different ways in which Germans responded to the Nazi-led government in 1933 and 1934. What factors influenced each of the responses in your list?
2. Make a timeline of important events from this chapter. What events seem most important or most pivotal to the experiences of individual Germans? Were there choices available in 1933 that were no longer available in 1935?
3. Many writers quoted in this chapter speak of feeling suddenly alienated and unfamiliar in places where they had once been at home. What factors contributed to this sense that their world had been transformed around them? What does it take to transform a society?
4. This chapter describes Germany's transformation from a struggling democracy to a dictatorship. What factors seem most important in bringing about that change? What opportunities for resistance were missed? How do the readings in this chapter help you understand not only what undermines democracy but also what it might take to protect and strengthen it?
5. How did the actions taken by the Nazis in their first year in power change Germany's universe of obligation? What effect did the Nazis' actions have on the universes of obligation of the individual Germans you read about in this chapter? How do you explain these changes?



## Chapter 6



FPG / Staff / Getty Images

# Conformity and Consent in the National Community





## Overview

By 1934, Hitler considered the National Socialist revolution in Germany complete. In control of the nation, the Nazis turned their attention to creating a racially pure “national community” in which Nazism was not revolutionary but normal. This chapter focuses on the methods the Nazis used to get individuals to conform, if not consent, to their vision for German society. It also focuses on the consequences faced by those who did not fit into the “national community” the Nazis envisioned.



## Essential Questions

- In what ways did the Nazis use laws to create “in” groups and “out” groups in German society? How did they also appeal to people’s hearts and minds?
- What were some of the reasons that the Nazis’ idea of a “national community” appealed to many Germans? Why did it appeal to particular groups, like young people?
- What did it mean to be an outsider or even a dissenter in an otherwise “racially pure and harmonious national community”? What did it mean to be an insider?

By 1934, Germany was firmly under Nazi control. After President von Hindenberg’s death in August of that year, Adolf Hitler declared himself not only the nation’s chancellor but also its Führer. The revolution was over, he told his closest associates. It was now time to consolidate power and normalize life in the “new Germany” they had created. The Nazis were determined to create a *Volksgemeinschaft*—a “national community” or, literally, a “people’s community.”

The term had become popular during World War I as a way of rallying support for the conflict. At that time, it simply meant that all Germans, regardless of class, religious, and social differences, would work together to achieve a national purpose—winning the war. But the Nazis interpreted its meaning differently. They used the word to advance the idea of a racially pure and harmonious national community united in its devotion to the German people, their nation, and their leader. In the words of a popular Nazi slogan, the goal was “*Ein Volk! Ein Reich! Ein Führer!*” (“One People! One Empire! One Leader!”)

As the slogan suggests, the Nazis viewed National Socialism as more than a set of political ideas. Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s minister of propaganda, called it a “total and all-encompassing general perspective on all public matters.” It was an *ideology*—a system of closely related ideals and beliefs. Goebbels said of Nazi ideology:

We hope that the day will come when nobody needs to *talk* about National Socialism any more, since it has become the air that we breathe! . . . People must get used *inwardly* to this way of behaving; they must make it into their *own* set of attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler described the foundation for the national community in his book *Mein Kampf*:

If one were to divide mankind into three species: the culture-creators, the culture-bearers, and the culture-destroyers, the Aryan would fit the first definition. It is to him that we must trace the foundations and the walls of all that human beings have created.

. . . The most powerful [opposite] to the Aryan is the Jew . . . The Jew possesses no culture-creating ability whatever, since he does not, and never did have that quality without which man cannot truly develop toward a higher order: idealism. Therefore, his intellect will never act as a constructive force. . . . He is and remains the typical parasite, a sponger who, like a malign bacillus, spreads more and more as long as he will find some favorable feeding ground.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 221.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Joachim Remak, ed., *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), 34.

While the Nazis were clear about their ultimate goal of creating a “racially pure” state, they were also conscious of public opinion. They worked to cultivate consensus in German society even as they suppressed dissent. They established organizations for workers, women, young people, and other groups to build a feeling of connection to the Nazi government. They produced all kinds of propaganda designed to create allegiance to Nazi ideas. In an effort to avoid the appearance of lawlessness to order-minded Germans, they wrote most of their policies into new laws. They encouraged Germans to police their own behavior, and that of their neighbors, in accordance with those laws. And through their policies and propaganda, they set out to prepare Germans for war to acquire the “living space” that the “Aryan” race needed in order to grow and expand. Chapter 6 examines the Nazis’ efforts to create a *Volkgemeinschaft* and the important questions those efforts raise about obedience and conformity, persuasion and dissent.

## Reading 1

# The Common Interest before Self-Interest

Six years before Hitler took power in Germany, Joseph Goebbels, the National Socialist Party's propaganda expert, published a pamphlet that would be reprinted many times during the Nazi years. It spelled out the goals of National Socialism:

What is the first commandment of every National Socialist?

*Love Germany more than anything and your fellow Germans more than yourself!*

What is the aim of the National Socialist idea of liberty?

*To create the national community of all honestly creative Germans!*

What is the content of that national community?

*Freedom and bread for every German!*

Who is a fellow German, a racial comrade?

*Every honestly creative German is, provided his blood, his customs, his culture are German and provided he speaks the German tongue!*

What is the basic economic principle with which National Socialism wishes to replace the present economic warfare of all against all?

*The Common Interest before Self-Interest!*<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How does this pamphlet define what it means to be German? What do you think Goebbels meant by the phrase "national community"? What might he have meant by "honestly creative German"?
2. What did National Socialism offer to these "honestly creative" Germans? What did it ask of them?
3. Why do you think this pamphlet was repeatedly reprinted? Why would a government want to encourage the values expressed in the pamphlet?
4. How does this pamphlet define the relationship between the individual and society?

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Joachim Remak, ed., *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), 39.

## Reading 2

# Spying on Family and Friends

As the Nazis worked to consolidate their power and build a cohesive “national community,” suppression of dissent played a key role. In 1933, the Nazis issued a decree that required Germans to turn in anyone who spoke against the party, its leaders, or the government (see “Outlawing the Opposition” in Chapter 5). That decree, “For the Defense against Malicious Attacks against the Government,” stated:

1. Whoever purposely makes or circulates a statement of a factual nature which is untrue or grossly exaggerated or which may seriously harm the welfare of the Reich or of a state, or the reputation of the National government or of a state government or of parties or organizations supporting these governments, is to be punished, provided that no more severe punishment is decreed in other regulations, with imprisonment of up to two years and, if he makes or spreads the statement publicly, with imprisonment of not less than three months.
2. If serious damage to the Reich or a state has resulted from this deed, penal servitude may be imposed.
3. Whoever commits an act through negligence will be punished with imprisonment of up to three months, or by a fine.<sup>1</sup>

To enforce the decree, the Nazis set up special courts to try people who were accused of “malicious attacks.” In December 1934, the government replaced the decree with the “Law against Malicious Attacks on State and Party,” adding a clause that criminalized “malicious, rabble-rousing remarks or those indicating a base mentality” against the Nazi Party or high-ranking government or party officials.

Alfons Heck, then a member of the Hitler Youth, recalled the effects of the law. In 1938, he was living with his grandparents when his father came to visit.

In retrospect, I think it was the last time my father railed against the regime in front of me. . . . He wasn’t much of a drinker, but when he had a few too many, he had a tendency to shout down everyone else, not a small feat among the men of my family. “You mark my words, Mother,” he yelled, “that goddamned Austrian housepainter is going to kill us all before he’s through conquering the world.” And then his baleful eye fell on me. “They are going to bury you in this goddamned monkey suit [his Hitler Youth uniform], my boy,” he chuckled, but that was too much for my grandmother.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919–1945*, vol. 1 (New York: Schocken, 1984), 478.



"Why don't you leave him alone, *Du dummer Narr* [you stupid fool]," she said sharply, "and watch your mouth; you want to end up in the KZ [the German abbreviation for *concentration camp*]?"

He laughed bitterly and added: "So, it has come that far already, your own son turning you in?" My grandmother told me to leave the kitchen, but the last thing I heard was my father's sarcastic voice. "Are you people all blind? This thing with the Jews is just the beginning."

In thinking about the incident, Heck wrote:

My grandmother had every reason to warn him about talking loosely, for his classification as "politically unreliable" surely would have sent him to a KZ had anyone reported his remarks, even within the family. But there were also two of our farmhands at the table, and Hans, the younger of the two, had recently announced his decision to apply for party membership. He had ambitions to attend an agricultural school and knew full well [that] party membership would help him get in. Perhaps luckily for my father, Hans was getting pretty drunk himself, although I doubt he would have reported my father had he been stone sober. Despite the fact that I later attained a high rank in the Hitler Youth, which required me to be especially vigilant, I never considered my father to be dangerous to our new order. I merely thought him a fool who had long since been left behind.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What kinds of actions did the "Malicious Attacks" law forbid? What policies did the government put in place to enforce the law? Why do you think the government made this law?
2. How does Alfons Heck describe the effect of the law on his family? To what extent did the law succeed in changing their behavior? To what extent did it fail?
3. What do you think the overall impact of the law might have been in German society as a whole?
4. What are some examples of political criticism or dissent that you have seen? What were the effects? What were the consequences?

<sup>2</sup> Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika* (Renaissance House Publishers, 2001), 29–30.

## Reading 3

# Speaking in Whispers

Victor Klemperer was a German professor who kept a diary for much of his life. He was born the son of a rabbi but later converted to Protestant Christianity and married a non-Jewish woman. In August 1933, he wrote: “Everyone cringes with fear. No letter, no telephone conversation, no word on the street is safe any more. Everyone fears the next person may be an informer.”<sup>1</sup> After a visit to Germany three years later, W. E. B. Du Bois, an African American sociologist, reached a similar conclusion. He portrayed Germany as “silent, nervous, suppressed; it speaks in whispers; there is no public opinion, no opposition, no discussion of anything; there are waves of enthusiasm, but never any protest of the slightest degree.”<sup>2</sup>

Was there really an informer on every street corner and a tap on every phone? The Gestapo, Germany’s secret police, certainly gave that impression with its talk of destroying Social Democrats, Communists, Jews, and other “undesirables.” And yet, the Gestapo was a relatively small organization. For example, in Berlin, then a city of 4.5 million people, the Gestapo never had more than 800 officers—one for approximately every 5,600 people. How, then, was the Gestapo able to keep a close watch on everyone?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that the Gestapo encouraged members of the Nazi Party to “turn in” anyone who spoke against the state. As a result, they received more tips and denunciations than they could respond to. The Gestapo particularly relied on a group of Nazi officials known as cell and block wardens. Every cell warden supervised four to eight block wardens. Each block warden, in turn, was responsible for keeping a close watch on approximately 40 to 60 households. An article published in 1935 in a Nazi journal for cell and block wardens explained how they gathered information about those households:

Occasionally one hears a block warden or a cell warden complain: “Our duties are too menial—selling tickets and badges and running errands, that’s all!” That’s all? No, those who say that have no proper understanding of their duties. Rightly understood, the duties of a cell or block warden are far more important and far broader. Their primary task is to anchor the party members of their cell or block ever more firmly to the party, and to win those who live in their cell or block more and more to National Socialist thinking.

After the last referendum, in which 38 million voted “yes” and only about 4 million voted “no,” the Führer himself said in his fiery speech that the task was now to win over that last 4 million to National Socialism. It would be wrong to sit around

1 Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933–1941* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 30–31.

2 W. E. B. Du Bois, “What of the Color-Line?” in *Travels in the Reich, 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany*, ed. Oliver Lubrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 146.

and wait to see what the government would do to achieve that goal. No, each individual National Socialist has the duty to use all his strength to help. The cell and block wardens are called to the task, and are in an excellent position to do it.

Can there be better or more varied tasks? They offer opportunity for independent and extraordinarily varied activities that are gratifying and satisfying.

This requires that the cell warden, and even more so the block warden, knows very well all the party members and non-party members in his district. He must know about their families and jobs, as well as all other personal relationships. He must know their concerns, whether large or small. He must know their political and social opinions. This all requires a good measure of tact and sensitivity, and cannot of course be learned overnight. The often underestimated activities of selling tickets and badges, as well as errand running, offer good opportunities for this. Showing friendliness and concern to both party members and non-party members, sharing and understanding their joys and sorrows, must and will help to win the confidence of our people's comrades such that in time they come to see the cell or block leader as a kind of political pastor.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How do Victor Klemperer and W. E. B. Du Bois describe the mood in Germany in the mid-1930s? How do their descriptions compare to the impression of Germany offered in the pamphlet for cell and block wardens? How might Klemperer and Du Bois's identities as outsiders have influenced their perspectives?
2. What were cell and block wardens encouraged to do to "win over" Germans to National Socialism? What is stated directly in the pamphlet? What can you infer about the impact the cell and block wardens might have had?
3. What does the term "political pastor" imply about the relationship between the block warden and the people who live in that block?

<sup>3</sup> Oscar Schweichler, "Duties of the Cell and Block Warden" (1935), trans. Randall Bytwerk, German Propaganda Archive, 2004, <http://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/blockleiter.htm>.

## Reading 4

# Political Prisoners

Throughout the 1930s, the German people witnessed the arrest of Communists, Social Democrats, Jews, and others considered “politically unreliable.” They were herded from their homes and workplaces onto trucks and taken to makeshift prisons and concentration camps, often without a trial or even a hearing. Some were imprisoned for a few months and then released without explanation; others were murdered. By 1935, the makeshift prisons were being replaced or remodeled according to new rules and regulations: the Nazis hoped this would “prove” to foreign critics that detainees were being treated “humanely.”

Lina Haag and her husband, Alfred, belonged to the German Communist Party; the couple was among those arrested in the large roundups after the Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933 (see “Outlawing the Opposition” in Chapter 5). Alfred spent the next seven years in a concentration camp. Lina was released in December 1933 but then rearrested in 1935 after refusing to give the names of other Communists to the Gestapo. She spent the next four years in various prisons, including Lichtenburg, a camp for women. When she was finally released, she wrote about her experiences in a series of unmailed letters to her husband. One letter contains a description of her incarceration in Lichtenburg, a name that literally means “bright castle”:

The Lichtenburg is . . . a massive medieval castle with many towers, wide courtyards, dark dungeons, and endless halls, a daunting gigantic structure with mighty walls. Not a bright castle, it is the ideal concentration camp.

We are lined up in one of the courtyards. About thirty women: political prisoners, Jews, criminals, prostitutes, and Jehovah’s Witnesses. Female guards from the SS circle us like gray wolves. I see this new ideal type of German woman for the first time. Some have blank faces and some have brutal looks, but they all have the same mean expression around their mouths. They pace back and forth with long strides and fluttering gray capes, their commanding voices ring shrilly across the court, and the large wolfhounds with them strain threateningly at their leashes. They are preposterous and terrifying, reminiscent of old sagas, merciless and probably even more dangerous than the brutal SS henchmen because they are women. Are they women? I doubt it. They could only be unhuman creatures, creatures with gray dogs and with all the instincts, viciousness, and savagery of their dogs. Monsters. . . .

The inspections are the worst, or rather the days preceding them. Washing, brushing, scrubbing goes on for hours. Punishment rains down at the slightest infraction. We are bellowed at if there is a wrinkle in the bed sheet, or if a tablespoon is not lying straight in the locker. It’s always the same show, no matter who comes. The door is shoved open; we jump up from our seats; the visitor comes in and shouts a cheerful greeting; enthusiasm glows in the eyes of the female warders; the visitor

looks benevolently over at us; then he turns to Commandant Kögel with a silly remark, such as “A very nice room” or “They seem to be in good health.” Of course Kögel happily agrees and repeatedly gives assurance that no one is subjected to hardships, which the visitor has never doubted. Then with ebullient “Heil Hitler” he turns to go. The entourage respectfully makes way, eager hands throw open the door, and the visitor leaves.

Once even [Heinrich] Himmler [the chief of the German police] appears, in order to see his German reeducation project. He looks insignificant; we had visualized this Satan personified differently, but he is in good spirits and friendly, he laughs a lot and grants several early releases. Acts of mercy by a despot in a good mood. Even the so-called Women’s Leader [Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the head of the main Nazi association for women] manages an inspection visit. She too is cheerful, friendly, enthusiastic, and happy that we are doing so well. She says she has a very special, a womanly understanding for us and for our situation, and to hear her talk, she almost envies us. She most likely will not visit the dark isolation cells nor will she observe a flogging. That probably would not interest her so much, although both are essential educational methods in this New German institution. The camp commandant assures her, too, that there are no hardships—we stand there and listen with fixed expressions. No one steps forward and says: No, that’s not true; the truth is that we are beaten on the slightest pretext. For the beating we are tied naked to a wooden post, and Warder Mandel flogs us with a dog whip as long as she can keep it up. No one steps forward to say this. Because everyone wants to live. . . .<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. According to Lina Haag, a stated purpose of Lichtenburg was “reeducation.” What did prisoners like Haag learn in that camp? How did they learn it?
2. Why did Nazi officials visit the camp? What did they see there? Why might the visiting Nazi officials want to seem benevolent during their visits? What effect did their visits have on Lina Haag and other prisoners?
3. What picture do Haag’s words paint of her time in Lichtenburg? How is this different from what the visiting Nazi officials likely witnessed? Why do you think she wrote these letters even though she never mailed them?
4. How does Haag describe the female guards at the prison? Why does she “doubt” that they are women? Why might she think that they are more dangerous than male guards?

<sup>1</sup> Lina Haag, “A Handful of Dust,” in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 146–47.

## Reading 5

# The Nuremberg Laws

Violence was a crucial tool of the Nazi government, but its leaders were also eager to show that they were acting within the framework of the law. As they worked to consolidate power and reshape Germany according to their racial ideals, Nazi leaders passed a number of new laws that redefined citizenship and laid the groundwork for a “racial state.”

On September 15, 1935, at a party rally in Nuremberg, the Nazis announced two new laws that changed who could be a German citizen. The Reich Citizenship Law required that all citizens have German “blood.” As a result, Jews and others lost their rights to citizenship, which not only stripped them of the right to vote but also made them stateless. This meant that they could not get a valid passport for travel between countries or acquire a visa to leave Germany.



In 1933, Jewish businessman Oskar Danker and his girlfriend, a Christian woman, were forced to carry signs discouraging Jewish-German integration. Intimate relationships between “true Germans” and Jews were outlawed by 1935.

The second law was called the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, which stated the following:

Moved by the understanding that purity of German blood is the essential condition for the continued existence of the German people, and inspired by the inflexible



determination to ensure the existence of the German nation for all time, the Reichstag has unanimously adopted the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

#### **ARTICLE 1**

1. Marriages between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood are forbidden. Marriages nevertheless concluded are invalid, even if concluded abroad to circumvent this law.
2. Annulment proceedings can be initiated only by the state prosecutor.

#### **ARTICLE 2**

Extramarital relations between Jews and subjects of the state of German or related blood are forbidden.

#### **ARTICLE 3**

Jews may not employ in their households female subjects of the state of German or related blood who are under 45 years old.

#### **ARTICLE 4**

1. Jews are forbidden to fly the Reich or national flag or display Reich colors.
2. They are, on the other hand, permitted to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the state.

#### **ARTICLE 5**

1. Any person who violates the prohibition under Article 1 will be punished with a prison sentence.
2. A male who violates the prohibition under Article 2 will be punished with a jail term or a prison sentence.
3. Any person violating the provisions under Articles 3 or 4 will be punished with a jail term of up to one year and a fine, or with one or the other of these penalties.

#### **ARTICLE 6**

The Reich Minister of the Interior, in coordination with the Deputy of the Führer and the Reich Minister of Justice, will issue the legal and administrative regulations required to implement and complete this law.<sup>1</sup>

The two new laws announced at Nuremberg made sharp distinctions between the rights and privileges of Germans and Jews. They also raised an important question: What determined who was and who was not a Jew? According to most Jewish teachings, an individual was defined as a Jew if they were born to a Jewish mother or formally converted to Judaism. If a Jew converted to Christianity, they were no longer considered Jewish by most Jews. The Nazis did not accept that definition. They regarded Jews as members of neither a religious group nor an ethnic group (defined by their cultural heritage). Instead, they regarded Jews as members of a separate and inferior "race." Since, according to Nazi logic, "race" was not altered by conversion, people who were born Jewish would always be Jews regardless of their religious beliefs or practices.

<sup>1</sup> "Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935," trans. by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last updated January 26, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007903>.

Though the Nazis believed that identity was biological, something “carried in the blood,” this idea had no scientific reality. Whether someone was German or Jewish could not be determined by medical or scientific tests. The question of defining German and Jewish identity was further complicated by the fact that there had been a great deal of intermarriage between the two groups, and there were thousands of people of mixed Jewish and non-Jewish ancestry, known to the Nazis as *Mischlinge* (“half-breeds” or “mixed-blood”).

On November 14, 1935, the Nazi government officially defined who was a German and who was a Jew through an additional decree called the First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law. (Debates about how to classify *Mischlinge* went on for years and were never completely resolved.) It stated:

#### ARTICLE 1

1. Until further regulations regarding citizenship papers are issued, all subjects of German or kindred blood, who possessed the right to vote in the Reichstag elections at the time the [Nuremberg] Citizenship Law came into effect, shall for the time being possess the rights of Reich citizens. The same shall be true of those to whom the Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy of the Führer, has given preliminary citizenship.
2. The Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy of the Führer, can withdraw the preliminary citizenship.

#### ARTICLE 2

1. The regulations in Article 1 are also valid for Reich subjects of mixed Jewish blood.
2. An individual of mixed Jewish blood is one who is descended from one or two grandparents who were racially full Jews in so far as he or she does not count as a Jew according to Article 5, paragraph 2. One grandparent shall be considered as full-blooded if he or she belonged to the Jewish religious community.

#### ARTICLE 3

Only the Reich citizen, as bearer of full political rights, exercises the right to vote in political affairs or can hold public office. The Reich Minister of the Interior, or any agency empowered by him, can make exceptions during the transition period, with regard to occupation of public office. The affairs of religious organizations will not be affected.

#### ARTICLE 4

1. A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He has no right to vote in political affairs and he cannot occupy public office.
2. Jewish [government] officials will retire as of December 31, 1935. If these officials served at the front in the world war, either for Germany or her allies, they will receive in full, until they reach the age limit, the pension to which they were entitled according to the salary they last received; they will, however, not advance in seniority. After reaching the age limit, their pensions will be calculated anew, according to the salary last received, on the basis of which their pension was computed.

3. The affairs of religious organizations will not be affected.
4. The conditions of service of teachers in Jewish public schools remain unchanged until new regulations for the Jewish school systems are issued.

#### ARTICLE 5

1. A Jew is anyone who is descended from at least three grandparents who are racially full Jews. Article 2, para. 2, second sentence will apply.
2. A Jew is also one who is descended from two full Jewish parents, if (a) he belonged to the Jewish religious community at the time this law was issued, or joined the community later, (b) he was married to a Jewish person, at the time the law was issued, or married one subsequently, (c) he is the offspring of a marriage with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, which was contracted after the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor became effective, (d) he is the offspring of an extramarital relationship with a Jew, according to Section I, and will be born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.

#### ARTICLE 6

1. Requirements for the pureness of blood as laid down in Reich Law or in orders of the NSDAP [the Nazi Party] and its echelons—not covered in Article 5—will not be affected.
2. Any other requirements for the pureness of blood, not covered in Article 5, can be made only by permission of the Reich Minister of the Interior and the Deputy Führer. If any such demands have been made, they will be void as of January 1, 1936, if they have not been requested by the Reich Minister of the Interior in agreement with the Deputy Führer. These requests must be made by the Reich Minister of the Interior.

#### ARTICLE 7

The Führer and Reich Chancellor can grant exemptions from the regulations laid down in the law.<sup>2</sup>

In time, the Nazis extended the Nuremberg Laws, as these laws institutionalizing Nazi racial theory came to be known, to include marriages between “Aryans” and other “racially inferior” groups. Nazi officials interpreted the wording to mean that relations between “those of German or related blood” and “Gypsies,” Afro-Germans, or their offspring were also forbidden. Some people within the Nazi government considered requiring “Aryans” to divorce their Jewish spouses, but they did not go through with this plan.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Documents on Nazism 1919–1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 463–67.

## Connection Questions

1. How do the Nuremberg Laws define what makes someone a “German”? How do they define Germany’s universe of obligation?
2. How do the Nuremberg Laws reflect earlier ideas about racial difference and hierarchies (see Chapter 2)? How do they reflect what you have already learned about Nazi ideology?
3. Why do you think Article 3 was included in the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor? What idea might the law be implying?
4. How did the Nuremberg Laws make it necessary for the Nazis to issue the First Regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law two months later? Why might it have been so complicated to figure out who was “Jewish” without these laws?
5. The Nuremberg Laws meant that Jews could no longer define their identities for themselves. What does it mean to lose the right to define yourself? How was the problem confronting Germans of Jewish descent in 1935 similar to that faced by the Bear in *The Bear That Wasn’t* in Chapter 1? How do the two differ?
6. What happens when a government says that one part of your identity is more important than other parts?

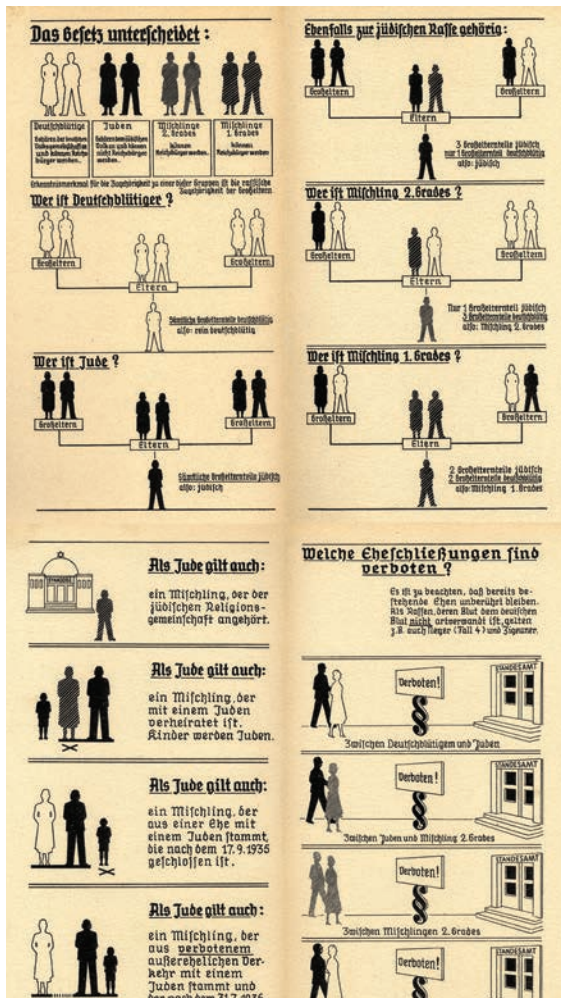
## Reading 6

# Discovering Jewish Blood

The Nuremberg Laws turned Jews from German citizens into “residents of Germany.” Technically, the law made intermarriage between Jews and German citizens a criminal offense, but existing marriages were not dissolved or criminalized, perhaps in order to maintain public support.

The laws transformed the lives of Jews all over Germany, including thousands of people who had not previously known their families had Jewish heritage. Among them were Marianne Schweitzer and her siblings.

Stadtarchiv Bielefeld



This chart was designed to help Germans determine their racial status as outlined by the 1935 Nuremberg Laws.

I was happy to be able to stay in school and glad not to be eligible to join Hitler Youth. . . .

Although we were not a churchgoing family, we observed Christmas and Easter in the traditional ways and belonged to the Lutheran church. My parents, my three siblings and I were all baptized and I took confirmation classes with Martin Niemöller, the former U-boat commander and his brother who substituted when Martin was in prison for anti-Nazi activities.

It was in 1932 that my [older] sister Rele provoked my father to reveal our Jewish ancestry for the first time. She played the violin and rejected a violin teacher because he “looked too Jewish.” Our father had responded in a rather convoluted way by saying, “Don’t you know that your grandmother came from the same people as Jesus . . . ?”

Our mother’s side, the Körtes, were “Aryan” by Hitler’s standards. But our father’s parents, Eugen Schweitzer and Algonde Hollaender were Jews born in Poland who had been baptized as adults. My father and his two brothers were considered Jews by Hitler’s laws. Though all were married to non-Jewish wives, our lives were dramatically changed. The whole family was devastated and worried about our future. My mother’s “Aryan” side stood by my father. My Körte grandmother said, “If Hitler is against Ernst [my father], I am against Hitler.”

We heard no anti-Jewish remarks at home, but the antisemitism of that time was so pervasive and the images in periodicals such as *Der Stürmer* so ugly, that Rele later wrote of her shock at learning her relation to “monsters.” She considered herself “the typical German girl with blond, curly hair.” I took the news more in stride.

In September of 1935, the Nuremberg Laws were introduced. My “Jewish” father was barred from treating “Aryan” patients, employing “Aryans,” attending concerts or the theater, or using public transportation. Rele had passed her *Abitur*, the certification of completing a high school degree, but as a Mischling, was ineligible to attend university. She couldn’t marry her “Aryan” boyfriend Hans, a medical student.<sup>1</sup>

The Schweitzers were certainly not the only Germans to be penalized for having “Jewish blood.” By 1935, explains historian Martin Gilbert,

The search for Jews, and for converted Jews, to be driven out of their jobs was continuous. On 5 September 1935 the SS newspaper published the names of eight half-Jews and converted Jews, all of the Evangelical Lutheran faith, who had been “dismissed without notice and deprived of any further opportunity of acting as organists in Christian churches.” From these dismissals, the newspaper commented, “It can be seen that the Reich Chamber of Music is taking steps to protect the church from pernicious influence.”<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did the passage of the Nuremberg Laws affect the lives of Marianne Schweitzer and her family?
2. The Nuremberg Laws meant that Jews could no longer define their identities for themselves. What does it mean to lose the right to define yourself?
3. How was the problem confronting Germans of Jewish descent in 1935 similar to that faced by the Bear in *The Bear That Wasn’t*? How do the two differ? How is the dilemma similar to that faced by Susie Phipps (see “Defining Race” in Chapter 1)? How does it differ?
4. What did it mean in Germany in 1935 to be told that you were no longer a citizen? What rights and protections would you have lost? What would it mean to be told such a thing where you live today?

1 Marianne Schweitzer, afterword to Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self*, trans. Geoffrey Strachan (Cambridge, MA: Plunkett Lake Press, 2013).

2 Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (New York: Holt, 1985), 47.



## Reading 7

# Can a National Socialist Have Jewish Friends?

The Nuremberg Laws and other anti-Jewish measures placed Jews outside Germany's "universe of obligation"—those people who a society believes deserve respect and whose rights are worthy of protection. What does it mean to place an entire group of people outside that "circle"? Melita Maschmann, a classmate of Marianne Schweitzer (see Reading 6, "Discovering Jewish Blood"), explained her behavior toward Jews in letters she wrote to Schweitzer after the war. In one letter, she wrote:

Rosel Cohn was a Jewish classmate of ours, but I did not really connect her with "the Jews." *Those* Jews were and remained something mysteriously menacing and anonymous. They were not the sum of all Jewish individuals, who included yourself or old Herr Lewy [a Jewish neighbor]; they were an evil power, something with the attributes of a spook. One could not see it, but it was there, an active force for evil.

As children we had been told fairy stories which sought to make us believe in witches and wizards. Now we were too grown up to take this witchcraft seriously, but we still went on believing in the "wicked Jews." . . . This wickedness was directed against the prosperity, unity, and prestige of the German nation, which we had learned to love at an early age. The antisemitism of my parents was a part of their outlook which was taken for granted. . . .

My parents certainly grumbled about the Jews, but this did not stop them from having a genuine liking for the Lewys and having social relations with my father's Jewish colleagues.

For as long as we could remember, the adults had lived in this contradictory way with complete unconcern. One was friendly with individual Jews whom one liked, just as one was friendly as a Protestant with individual Catholics. But while it occurred to nobody to be ideologically hostile to *the* Catholics, one was, utterly, to *the* Jews. In all this no one seemed to worry about the fact that they had no clear idea of who "*the* Jews" were. They included the baptized and the Orthodox, Yiddish-speaking, second-hand dealers and professors of German literature, Communist agents, and First World War officers decorated with high orders, enthusiasts for Zionism and . . . German nationalists. . . .

In preaching that all the misery of the nations was due to the Jews or that the Jewish spirit was [disloyal] and Jewish blood was corrupting, I was not compelled to think of you or old Herr Lewy or Rosel Cohn: I thought only of the bogey-man, "*the Jew*." And when I heard that Jews were being driven from their professions and homes and imprisoned in ghettos, the points switched automatically in my

mind to steer me around the thought that such a fate could also overtake you or old Lewy. It was only *the Jew* who was being persecuted and “made harmless.”<sup>1</sup>

After joining the Nazi League of German Girls, Maschmann cut off her friendships with Jewish classmates. She saw it as her “duty” to do so “because one could only do one of two things: either have Jewish friends or be a National Socialist.” Historian Richard J. Evans has observed that although Maschmann did not actually take part in the many violent acts committed against Jews or the boycotts in Berlin, she considered those acts “justified”:

[She] told herself: “The Jews are the enemies of the new Germany . . . If the Jews sow hatred against us all over the world they must learn that we have hostages for them in our hands.” Later on, she suppressed the memory of the violence she had seen on the streets, and “as the years went by . . . grew better and better at switching off quickly in this manner on similar occasions. It was the only way.”<sup>2</sup>

Evans notes, “A similar process of rationalization and moral editing must have taken place with many others too.”

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think Melita Maschmann didn’t see Rosel Cohn, who was a Jew, as one of “*the Jews*”? What ideas or feelings influenced Maschmann to later choose National Socialism over her relationship with her friend?
2. Maschmann describes the “contradictory way” she and her parents viewed Jews. How was it possible for them to maintain this attitude? How did this “contradictory” attitude shape her reactions when laws were passed to target German Jews?
3. What does historian Richard Evans mean by “moral editing”? Why does Maschmann say it was “the only way”? What kinds of circumstances might make someone use this kind of “moral editing”?

1 Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self*, trans. Geoffrey Strachan (Cambridge, MA: Plunkett Lake Press, 2013).

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 549–50.

## Visual Essay

# The Impact of Propaganda



Teach **Analyzing Nazi Propaganda**  
facinghistory.org/hhb-media

LESSON

The readings in this chapter describe the Nazis' efforts to consolidate their power and create a German "national community" in the mid-1930s. Propaganda—information that is intended to persuade an audience to accept a particular idea or cause, often by using biased material or by stirring up emotions—was one of the most powerful tools the Nazis used to accomplish these goals.

Hitler and Goebbels did not invent propaganda. The word itself was coined by the Catholic Church to describe its efforts to discredit Protestant teachings in the 1600s. Over the years, almost every nation has used propaganda to unite its people in wartime. Both sides spread propaganda during World War I, for example. But the Nazis were notable for making propaganda a key element of government even before Germany went to war again. One of Hitler's first acts as chancellor was to establish the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, demonstrating his belief that controlling information was as important as controlling the military and the economy. He appointed Joseph Goebbels as director. Through the ministry, Goebbels was able to penetrate virtually every form of German media, from newspapers, film, radio, posters, and rallies to museum exhibits and school textbooks, with Nazi propaganda.

Whether or not propaganda was truthful or tasteful was irrelevant to the Nazis. Goebbels wrote in his diary, "no one can say your propaganda is too rough, too mean; these are not criteria by which it may be characterized. It ought not be decent nor ought it be gentle or soft or humble; it ought to lead to success."<sup>1</sup> Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that to achieve its purpose, propaganda must "be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan. As soon as you sacrifice this slogan and try to be many-sided, the effect will piddle away."

Some Nazi propaganda used positive images to glorify the government's leaders and its various activities, projecting a glowing vision of the "national community." Nazi propaganda could also be ugly and negative, creating fear and loathing by portraying the regime's "enemies" as dangerous and even sub-human. The Nazis' distribution of antisemitic films, newspaper cartoons, and even children's books aroused centuries-old prejudices against

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich: Portraits of the Nazi Leadership* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), 90.

Jews and also presented new ideas about the racial impurity of Jews. The newspaper *Der Stürmer* (The Attacker), published by Nazi Party member Julius Streicher, was a key outlet for antisemitic propaganda.

This visual essay includes a selection of Nazi propaganda images, both “positive” and “negative.” It focuses on posters that Germans would have seen in newspapers like *Der Stürmer* and passed in the streets, in workplaces, and in schools. Some of these posters were advertisements for traveling exhibits—on topics like “The Eternal Jew” or the evils of communism—that were themselves examples of propaganda.

## Connection Questions

1. As you explore the images in this visual essay, consider what each image is trying to communicate to the viewer. Who is the audience for this message? How is the message conveyed?
2. Do you notice any themes or patterns in this group of propaganda images? How do the ideas in these images connect to what you have already learned about Nazi ideology? How do they extend your thinking about Nazi ideas?
3. Based on the images you analyze, how do you think the Nazis used propaganda to define the identities of individuals and groups? What groups and individuals did Nazi propaganda glorify? What stereotypes did it promote?
4. Why was propaganda so important to Nazi leadership? How do you think Nazi propaganda influenced the attitudes and actions of Germans in the 1930s?
5. Some scholars caution that there are limits to the power of propaganda; they think it succeeds not because it persuades the public to believe an entirely new set of ideas but because it expresses beliefs people already hold. Scholar Daniel Goldhagen writes: “No man, [no] Hitler, no matter how powerful he is, can move people against their hopes and desires. Hitler, as powerful a figure as he was, as charismatic as he was, could never have accomplished this [the Holocaust] had there not been tens of thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands of ordinary Germans who were willing to help him.”<sup>2</sup> Do you agree? Would people have rejected Nazi propaganda if they did not already share, to some extent, the beliefs it communicated?
6. Can you think of examples of propaganda in society today? How do you think this propaganda influences the attitudes and actions of people today? Is there a difference between the impact of propaganda in a democracy that has a free press and an open marketplace of ideas and the impact of propaganda in a dictatorship with fewer non-governmental sources of information?

2 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, interview with Richard Heffner, “Hitler’s Willing Executioners, Part I,” *The Open Mind* (TV program), PBS, July 9, 1996, <http://www.pbs.org/video/1512022073/>.



## Nazi National Welfare Program

This 1934 propaganda poster in support of the national welfare program reads: "National health, national community, child protection, protection of mothers, care for travelers, are the tasks of the NS-Welfare Service. Join now!"





Glasshouse Images / Alamy

## Nazi Recruitment Propaganda

This mid-1930s poster says, "The NSDAP [Nazi Party] protects the people. Your fellow comrades need your advice and help, so join the local party organization."





alg-images

### **Nazi Youth Propaganda**

This 1935 poster promotes the Hitler Youth by stating: "Youth serves the Führer! All ten-year-olds into the Hitler Youth."



## Nazi Propaganda Newspaper

An issue of the antisemitic propaganda newspaper *Der Stürmer* (The Attacker) is posted on the sidewalk in Worms, Germany, in 1935. The headline above the case says, "The Jews Are Our Misfortune."





Roger Viollet / Contributor / Getty Images

## ***Triumph of the Will***

Leni Riefenstahl's documentary-style film *Triumph of the Will* glorified Hitler and the Nazi Party. It was shot at the 1934 Nazi Party congress and rally in Nuremberg.



Sueddeutsche Zeitung Photo / Alamy

## Propaganda Portrait of Hitler

This portrait, *The Standard Bearer*, was painted by artist Hubert Lanzinger and displayed in the Great German Art Exhibition in Munich in 1937.





### ***The Eternal Jew***

This 1938 poster advertises a popular antisemitic traveling exhibit called *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew).

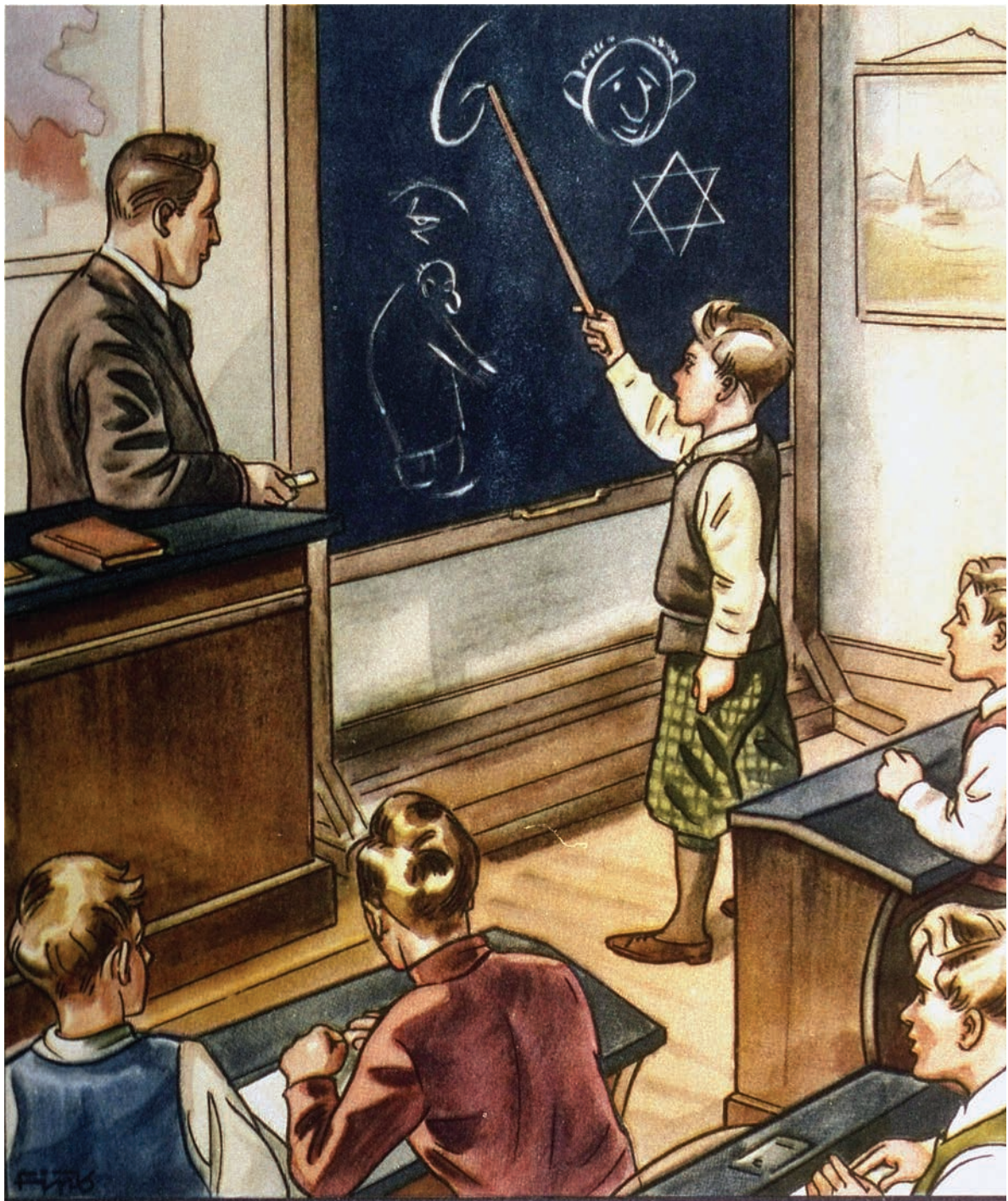


Ullstein Bilderdienst / Yad Vashem

## Antisemitic Display at *Der Ewige Jude*

Women examining a display at the *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) exhibition in the Reichstag building in November 1938.





„Die Judennase ist an ihrer Spitze gebogen. Sie sieht aus wie ein Sechser...“

## Antisemitic Children's Book

From the 1938 antisemitic children's book *The Poisonous Mushroom*.  
The boy is drawing a nose on the chalkboard, and the caption reads:  
"The Jewish nose is crooked at its tip. It looks like a 6."

## Reading 9

# Art and Politics

Nazi leaders used all kinds of propaganda—in newspapers and posters, on the radio and in films—to win support for their ideology and policies. The arts, too, became a tool for expressing Nazi ideas about national identity and racial purity, about who belonged in the “national community” and who was a dangerous enemy. In the worlds of music, painting, and sculpture, Nazis celebrated what they perceived as “authentic” German culture and tried to eliminate what Joseph Goebbels and others referred to as “degenerate” art.

A letter to a painter in 1937 from the president of the National Chamber of Fine Arts revealed the consequences for an artist of being labeled “degenerate”:

In connection with the task, entrusted to me by the Führer, of eradicating the works of degenerate art from our museums, no fewer than 608 paintings of yours had to be seized. A number of these paintings were displayed at the exhibits of Degenerate Art in Munich, Dortmund, and Berlin.

This fact could leave no doubt in your mind that your paintings did not contribute to the advancement of German culture in its responsibility toward people and nation.

Although you must also have been aware of the policy-setting speech of the Führer at the opening of the Great German Art Exhibit in Munich, the recent paintings of yours, which you have now submitted to us, indicate that even at this date, you are still far removed from the cultural foundations of the National Socialist state.

On the basis of these facts, I am unable to grant that you possess the necessary reliability for belonging to my Chamber. On the basis of Paragraph 10 of the first Executive Order implementing the Law Concerning the National Chambers of Culture of November 1, 1933 (Official Gazette, I, 797) I hereby expel you from the National Chamber of Fine Arts and forbid you, effective immediately, any activity—professional or amateur—in the field of graphic arts.

Membership Book No. M 756 issued in your name is no longer valid, and you are requested to send it back to me by return mail.<sup>1</sup>



**This painting, *Working Maidens* by Leopold Schmutzler, was showcased by the Nazis at the 1940 Great German Art Exhibition in Munich.**



Watch **Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art)**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Complicity and Cultural Figures in the Third Reich**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Joachim Remak, ed., *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1969), 66–67.





This display from a 1937 “degenerate art” exhibit is entitled “German Peasants—From a Jewish Perspective.” It includes paintings by German Expressionist artists Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Pechstein, and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.

The two art exhibitions referred to in the letter were sponsored by the Nazis in 1937. The first featured works labeled as “degenerate.” The second showed “true German art.” The more popular of the two was the exhibit of “degenerate art.” It traveled from Berlin to 12 other cities between 1937 and 1941 and attracted more than 3 million visitors. The exhibition carefully arranged art the Nazis considered “degenerate” alongside drawings done by people described as “insane” or deranged” and photographs of men and women who were physically deformed. In doing so, the exhibition claimed it was merely highlighting the “diseased, Jewish-Bolshevist, inferior” character of the artwork. In a building nearby, the public could see the opposite of this art in the Great German Art Exhibition. Much of it featured idyllic landscapes and happy blonde “Aryan peasants.”

In 1938, the Nazis arranged a similar exhibition showing *Entartete Musik*—“degenerate music.” It targeted popular music, including jazz and swing, as well as works by Jewish composers. The show included photographs, caricatures, musical scores, negative reviews of performances, and quotations from Hitler as well as special booths that allowed visitors to actually hear the music of such “degenerate composers” as Igor Stravinsky, Kurt Weill, and Ernst Toch. To the Nazis’ dismay, so many visitors mobbed the booth that played music from Weill’s *The Threepenny Opera* that it had to be closed.

The Nazis eventually destroyed many of the works of “degenerate” art. Some were sold to foreign museums.

### Connection Questions

1. What does the term “degenerate” mean? What did Nazi officials mean by “degenerate art”? What kind of art was given this label? Why was such art thought to be threatening?
2. Many Germans attended the “degenerate art” exhibits. Why do you think they went? Do you think that everyone who attended agreed with the Nazis’ opinion of the art that was displayed?
3. What is the role of art in forming a community? Is art ever dangerous?
4. What criteria are used to decide what kinds of art and music are “acceptable” for the public today? Who decides? How does art play a role in opening up or shutting down discourse in a society?

## Reading 10

# Propaganda at the Movies



Watch **Triumph of the Will**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

During World War I, the British discovered the power of films to shape public opinion (see “The Western Front at the Cinema” in Chapter 3). The Soviets made a similar discovery in the 1920s. Joseph Goebbels learned from both. He began with the newsreels, short film-based news reports that in those days were played before feature films. In Germany, those newsreels showed the nation as the Nazis wanted it to be seen—rich and powerful in comparison to its neighbors. But propaganda was not limited to newsreels; other kinds of movies made in Nazi Germany also expressed the government’s political and social views.

Some films, like *Triumph of the Will* by director Leni Riefenstahl, glorified Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. The documentary-style film was shot at the 1934 Nazi Party congress and rally in Nuremberg. American Journalist William L. Shirer was new to Germany at the time, and that rally was his first. He describes it this way:

Like a Roman emperor Hitler rode into this medieval town [Nuremberg] at sundown, past solid phalanxes of wildly cheering Germans who packed the narrow streets. . . . Tens of thousands of Swastika flags blot out the Gothic beauties of the place, the facades of the old houses, the gabled roofs. The streets, hardly wider than alleys, are a sea of brown and black uniforms. . . .

About ten o’clock tonight I got caught in a mob of ten thousand hysterics who jammed the moat in front of Hitler’s hotel, shouting: “We want our Führer.” I was a little shocked at the faces, especially those of the women, when Hitler finally appeared on the balcony for a moment. . . . They looked up at him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman.<sup>1</sup>

That was the scene that Leni Riefenstahl captured on film, and her movie became an immediate sensation. It was popular not only in Germany but also in France, where it received an award for “artistry” at the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris.

Other films were not designed to glorify the Nazis but to dehumanize, criminalize, and demonize vulnerable minorities—particularly Jews. Goebbels even issued special instructions on how such movies were to be described. Following these instructions, a brochure that announced the release of the antisemitic film *Jud Süß* (“Süss, the Jew”) claimed it was “historically accurate” and summarized the plot:

<sup>1</sup> William Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934–1941* (New York: Knopf, 1940), 17–18.



Clean-shaven and dressed like a gentleman, the Jew Süß Oppenheimer contrives to be appointed Finance Minister to the Duke of Württemberg . . . Matching one another in treachery, the court Jew and Minister Süß Oppenheimer and his secretary outbid one another in tricks and intrigue to bleed the people of Württemberg. . . . The Jew Süß Oppenheimer violates the beautiful Dorothea Sturm, an outrageous act which confirms the extent of his guilt. . . . Jew, hands off German women!

Another antisemitic film, *Der ewige Jude* ("The Eternal Jew"), was praised as a documentary but contained such blatant lies that parts of it had to be omitted from the version shown in other countries. Officials feared the hostile tone might damage the film's "credibility." Marion Pritchard, then a graduate student in the Netherlands, recalled seeing the film:

We went to see this movie and sat and made smart remarks all the way through and laughed at it because it was so outrageous. And yet when we came out of the movie, one of my Gentile friends said to me, "I wish I hadn't seen it. I know that it was all ridiculous and propaganda, but for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us—Jews and Gentiles. I'm going to do everything I can to help them, but I wish I didn't have this feeling."<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did the Nazis use film to create an image of their ideal "national community"? How did they use film to create an image of who would be excluded from this community?
2. What did Marion Pritchard's friend mean when she said, "I know that it was all ridiculous propaganda, but for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us—Jews and Gentiles"? How do you explain her statement?
3. Why does film have the power to engage our emotions? How do television shows or films today help to shape an ideal image of ourselves and our society? Give examples.
4. What is a documentary film? How is a documentary film different from a propaganda film? If possible, watch a clip from *Triumph of the Will*. Based on the description in this reading, or on the clip you viewed, do you think that *Triumph of the Will* should be considered a documentary film?
5. While this reading highlights films with a direct connection to propaganda, the German film industry was very active during the Nazi years, also creating "entertainment" movies like romances and comedies. In what ways might those also have had a role as propaganda? What purpose can entertainment in the media serve for a government?

2 Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 28.

## Reading 11

# Women and the National Community

As they worked to create the “national community,” Nazi leaders envisioned a special role for women. During World War I and in the Weimar years, women’s traditional roles had been transformed by the wartime economy and by an expansion of women’s rights in the Weimar Constitution (see “Women in the Weimar Republic” in Chapter 4). In the Nazi worldview, which rejected these changes, women had a special status and responsibility for the *Volksgemeinschaft*, or “national community,” but their importance would be demonstrated through their traditional roles as wives and mothers. The National Socialist Women’s League was created in 1931. After the Nazi Party came to power in 1933, it issued a list of “Principles and Organizational Guidelines” for the league. The guidelines began with these three points:

1. We want an awakening, a renewal, and a reeducation of women to equip them for the task as guardians of the nation’s source of life: sexual life, marriage, motherhood and family, blood and race, and youth and nationhood. A woman’s entire education, development, vocational pursuit, and position within Volk and state must be directed toward the physical and spiritual task of motherhood.
2. We recognize that the great transformational process of women’s lives over the last fifty years, due to the machine age, has brought about a certain necessity, and we accept the education and official integration of the female workforce in the interest of the nation, unless this prohibits them from performing their duty within the Volk, in terms of marriage, family and motherhood.
3. We reject the misguided direction of the democratic-liberalistic-international women’s movement because they have not discovered new paths based on God and nationhood, and which are rooted in women’s souls; instead they represent the point of view that women are competitive with [or equal to] men, and in the demands they have raised they have elevated temporary stopgap measures to the position of a fundamental principle. This has resulted in the creation of a womanhood that has misplaced its energies and that has not understood its task in Germany’s time of need . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “The National Socialist Women’s League,” in Benjamin Sax and Dieter Kuntz, eds., *Inside Hitler’s Germany: A Documentary History of Life in the Third Reich* (Toronto: D. C. Heath, 1992), 264–65.

Many women welcomed the Nazis' ideas. In 1936, Emilie Müller-Zadow, a member of the National Socialist Women's League, wrote:

There is a growing recognition that mothers carry the destiny of their people in their hands and that the success or ruin of the nation depends on their attitude toward the vocation of motherhood.

Nation and race are facts of creation, which we, too, are called upon to share in forming and preserving. Therefore a national leadership that respects and honors its mothers is on a sound and healthy path . . .

. . . The place that Adolf Hitler assigns to woman in the Third Reich corresponds to her natural and divine destiny. Limits are being set for her, which earlier she had frequently violated in a barren desire to adopt masculine traits. The value and sanctity of goals now being set for her have been unrecognized and forgotten for a long time; and due respect is now being offered to her vocation as mother of the people, in which she can and should develop her rich emotions and spiritual strengths according to eternal laws. This wake-up call of National Socialism to women is one more indication that in Germany today it is not arbitrary laws that are being issued, but rather a nation is returning to essential, eternal rules of order.

It is therefore not at all surprising that the state and party claim the education of mothers as exclusively their task and insist that all training be carried out only by National Socialists and according to the principles of National Socialism. For the way a mother sees her child, how she cares for, teaches, and forms him, the principles that she instills in him, the attitude that she demands of him, all of this is crucial for the national health, for a German morality, and for the unified overall mind-set of the future nation.<sup>2</sup>

While many women did continue to work outside the home and the birthrate never rose as high as Hitler hoped it would, the Nazis continued to promote their ideas about the national and racial significance of women. In 1938, they created the German Mother's Cross, a prize annually bestowed on mothers who had had four or more children. Those with four children received a bronze cross, those with six received a silver cross, and those with eight or more received a gold cross. These prizes were awarded in local ceremonies on the second Sunday in May, which became a national Mother's Day holiday in 1934. One newspaper printed the speech given at such a ceremony in Eutin, a German city:

Our mothers will always be our guiding stars. Just as a man risks his life in battle, so too does the mother bravely and faithfully offer her life for the nation when she fulfills her sacred duty. . . . The mother is ready to give children to the Führer in the numbers our people need for survival. To offer herself for the sake of the nation so that the nation might have eternity, that is the life purpose of the German mother, and that is why we must return to the eternal laws of blood and race.<sup>3</sup>

2 Emilie Müller-Zadow, "Mothers Who Give Us the Future" (1936), trans. Sally Winkle, in Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 185.

3 "Mothering Sunday," in Sax and Kuntz, eds., *Inside Hitler's Germany*, 265–67.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the Nazi government define the ideal role of women? How was their vision different from the roles some women had played before the Nazis came to power?
2. What does this vision of women ask women to do and to be? What does it offer them in return?
3. Why was increasing the population so important to the Nazis?
4. What words and phrases from the primary sources in this reading stand out to you? How did this language help to gain women's attention and build support for the "national community" the Nazis were trying to create?

## Reading 12

# Joining the Hitler Youth

In his book *Mein Kampf*, written in the 1920s, Hitler said, “Whoever has the youth has the future.” Even before they came to power in 1933, Nazi leaders had begun to organize groups that would train young people according to Nazi principles. By 1936, all “Aryan” children in Germany over the age of six were required to join a Nazi youth group. At ten, boys were initiated into the *Jungvolk* (Young People), and at 14 they were promoted to the Hitler Youth. Their sisters joined the *Jungmädel* (Young Girls) and were later promoted to the League of German Girls. Hitler hoped that “These young people will learn nothing else but how to think German and act German. . . . And they will never be free again, not in their whole lives.”<sup>1</sup>

Although membership in the Hitler Youth organizations was compulsory, many young people did not have to be forced to join. In fact, they were eager to do so, drawn by the sense of belonging and importance they felt as members of these groups. In 1938, a boy named Hans Wolf wrote a story about his experiences in the Hitler Youth that was published in a school textbook. The story was called “Comradeship.” It begins:

It was a hot day and we had far to march. The sun was burning down on the heath, which was bereft of trees. The sand was glistening, I was tired. My feet were hurting in those new walking shoes, every step was hurting and all I could think about was rest, water, and shade. I clenched my teeth to keep walking. I was the youngest, and this was my first outing. In front of me strode Rudolf, the leader. He was tall and strong. His backpack was heavy and pressed down on his shoulders. Rudolf carried the bread for us six boys, the cooking pot, and a pile of books, from which he would read us wonderfully thrilling stories, at night in the hostel. My backpack only contained a shirt, a couple of sneakers, washing utensils, and some cooking gear, apart from a tarpaulin for rainy days and straw beds. And yet I thought I could not lug this backpack any longer. My comrades all were somewhat older and had camping experience. They hardly felt the heat and hardship of the march. Every now and then they would sigh and drink lukewarm coffee from their canteens. More and more, I remained behind, even though I tried to make up for my slack by running. Suddenly Rudolf turned around. He stopped and watched me crawling up to him from a distance, while our comrades continued in the direction of a few trees on the horizon. “Tired?” Rudolf asked me, kindly. Ashamed, I had to say yes. Slowly, we walked side by side. I was limping. But I did not want to let on to Rudolf.



Bundesarchiv Bild 146-1973-060-72

**Hitler Youth groups educated young people according to Nazi principles and encouraged comradeship and physical fitness through outdoor activities.**

1 Max von der Grün, *Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany* (New York: W. Morrow, 1980), 118–19.





Hoover Institution Archives

**The League of German Girls was the girls' wing of the Nazi Party youth movement. A typical activity for members was to go on walks while their mothers were working.**

When we got to a juniper bush, the leader sat down and said: "For a little rest!" Relieved, I threw myself down. I did not want to talk, for I was shy. Rudolf gave me something to drink. I thanked him and leaned back comfortably, glad to be able to stretch my aching feet, and before I knew it I was sleeping. . . . When we resumed our march, my feet hurt much less and my backpack did not press down on me so. I was very glad about that.<sup>2</sup>

Like Hans Wolf, Alfons Heck was an enthusiastic participant in the Nazi Youth organizations. In a memoir written many years after World War II, Heck reflected on what made him want to join:

Far from being forced to enter the ranks of the *Jungvolk*, I could barely contain my impatience and was, in fact, accepted before I was quite 10. It seemed like an exciting life, free from parental supervision, filled with "duties" that seemed sheer pleasure. Precision marching was something one could endure for hiking, camping, war games in the field, and a constant emphasis on sports. . . . To a degree, our pre-war activities resembled those of the Boy Scouts, with much more emphasis on discipline and political indoctrination. There were the paraphernalia and the symbols, the pomp and the mysticism, very close in feeling to religious rituals. One of the first significant demands was the so-called . . . "test of courage," which was usually administered after a six-month period of probation. The members of my *Schar*,

<sup>2</sup> Hans Wolf, "Comradeship," trans. Michael H. Kater, in Michael H. Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 13–14.

a platoon-like unit of about 40–50 boys, were required to dive off the three-meter board—about 10 feet high—head first in the town’s swimming pool. There were some stinging belly flops, but the pain was worth it when our *Fahnleinführer*, the 15-year-old leader of *Fahnlein* (literally “little flag”), a company-like unit of about 160 boys, handed us the coveted dagger with its inscription Blood and Honor. From that moment on we were fully accepted.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think the Nazi leadership wanted all young people to belong to a Nazi youth group? What were the young boys in this reading being prepared for through their participation?
2. Why would the authorities want to include Hans Wolf’s story in a school textbook? What values does the story communicate?
3. How are the two excerpts (by Hans Wolf and Alfons Heck) different? Looking back, what does Heck see that he might not have been aware of at the time?
4. How do the Nazi youth organizations and their symbols connect with the idea of a “national community”? How do they connect with the vision of a nation ready for battle?
5. When is it appealing to join a group? Why might some young people have joined even if they didn’t fully agree with Nazi policies?

<sup>3</sup> Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika* (Phoenix, AZ: Renaissance House, 1985), 9.

## Reading 13

# The Birthday Party

In 1938, writer Erika Mann published a book called *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis*. The daughter of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Thomas Mann, she had emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1937. Her book was written as an indictment of the Nazis' efforts to shape young people. Here, she tells what happened when the parents of a 12-year-old boy celebrated his birthday.

They gave him a birthday party, with ordinary, normal, "civilian" presents: a paint-box, a picture puzzle, a shining new bicycle—and lit twelve candles on his birthday cake. How they looked forward to that party! And it went off like a political conference. Six boys had been invited, and five of them came right on time.

"Who's missing?" the mother asked.

"Can't you see?" said the boy, "HE's missing—Fritzekarl!"

"What a pity!" she answered. That it should be just Fritzekarl. Two years older than her son, he was the leader in the *Jungvolk*, and his presence at the party was of great importance. If he did not appear, it was a sign of disfavor; the whole thing would be spoiled.

The boys, in their Hitler Youth uniforms, stood around the birthday table, not knowing quite what to do with the toys. The bicycle pleased all of them, with its bell (which they took turns ringing) and its rubber tires, which were so hard to get nowadays, and which the father had finally been able to obtain after using all of his contacts in the Party, paying a high cash price, and emphasizing the fact that this was a wheel for a boy, a *Jungvolk* boy, and not for a girl who would never go to war! Now it stood there, complete with instructions and a copy of the *German Cyclist*, saying, "Boys on bicycles must try to remember the names of towns, rivers, mountains, and lakes as well as the material and type of architecture of bridges, etc. They may be able to make use of this knowledge for good of the Fatherland."

The bell rang, and the son dashed to the front door. A sharp voice came through, crying "Heil Hitler!" and the five boys at the table turned on their heels as the answer came in a voice already breaking, "Heil Hitler!" Their superior officer was received with the "German salute," five hands raised, great composure, solemn faces. Solemnly, Fritzekarl gave the host his birthday present—a framed photograph of the Leader of the Reich Youth, Baldur von Schirach, with a facsimile autograph. The son clicked his heels as he received it.

"I wish to speak to your father," Fritzekarl said curtly.

The mother answered in her friendly voice, "My husband is not free just now—he's upstairs working."

Fritzekarl attempted to keep the note of military command in his shrill young voice. "Just the same, madam, I should prefer to speak to your husband for a moment . . . in the interest of your son."

His manner was correct, in spite of his tone. He bowed slightly to the mother as he finished his masterful little speech.

"Fourteen years old!" she thought, "but the mechanism of power backs him up and he knows it."

The son was blushing violently. "For goodness' sake *call him!*" he said, stepping toward his mother.

The father came down at once.

"Heil Hitler!" cried Fritzekarl.

"Heil Hitler!" repeated the man. "What can I do for you, Lieutenant?"

"Pardon me," says Fritzekarl, who doesn't get the joke, and retains his martial stare, "but your son was absent from our last practice exercises. . . ."

"Yes I know," the father interrupts at this point, "he had a cold."

"It was at your suggestion that he absented himself," Fritzekarl continues, his voice breaking and going hoarse over the phrase. "You wrote me some sort of excuse, to say that he was staying home at your wish."

The father put his weight first on one foot and then on the other. "As a matter of fact, it is my wish that he stay home when he has such a severe cold."

"Oh, I didn't have such a bad cold at all," the son breaks in. He is leaning on the handlebars of the bicycle that his father had to fight for. "I could have gone, perfectly well."

The man looks at his son, a long look of surprise and pain and the resignation he has learned. "Well," he says, and moves toward the door.

But Fritzekarl stops him. "A moment, please," he insists, but politely. "Your son was in school on that day and the following day. So he cannot have been really ill. Let me call your attention to the fact that he should have been present at practice and that it is my duty to report the absence!"

"Oh, please—" the boy was speaking for his father, quickly, bargaining, "don't do that, please? It won't ever happen again—will it, father?—really, never again!"

The father wanted to protest; he felt the despairing look of his wife, the outrage and embarrassment of the scene. "How dare you speak to me like that!" was what he was repeating in his mind. But he knew the consequences of such an argument, for himself, and for his son. Even if he could convince the Nazi authorities of his own part, and Fritzekarl's rudeness, his son would still have to face the *Jungvolk*, paying for his father's moment of "courage." And so he only said, hesitatingly and stiffly, "No—it certainly will never happen again!"

"I thank you," replied the fourteen-year-old superior of the treasonable son. The father was dismissed.

He cannot air his resentment; he has to expect eavesdroppers and spies everywhere. His wife tells their son everything—not out of malice, but in the mistaken hope of reclaiming him this way. And the new maid is a person to be feared. She listens at doors, reads everything that’s lying around the house, and she happens to be having an affair with a *Blockwart* [block warden]; he could destroy a family single-handed. The boy would hardly denounce his own father, the man reflects, but if he repeats some remark to the maid, she will run to her *Blockwart*, the Gestapo (Secret State Police) will have it right away, and the doom will begin to move on them. Or, if they decide to dismiss the maid, her vengeance hanging over their heads may even be worse.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What does this reading add to your thinking about why young people may have been enthusiastic about belonging to the *Jungvolk*, Hitler Youth, or other Nazi youth organizations?
2. After reading this story, a boy said, “This is like a world upside down—the children have the power.” Do you agree? Did the children really have power? If so, what was the source of their power?
3. The boy’s mother hoped to “reclaim” her son. How was he lost? The father wanted to protest but feared the consequences. What might have been those consequences? What did he mean when he thought that his son would have to pay for the father’s “courage”?
4. Why does the son contradict his father and insist that he could have gone to the *Jungvolk* meeting? What is the role of the particular historical context in his choice? What role do peer pressure and the desire to fit in play?

<sup>1</sup> Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014), 32–35.



## Reading 14

# Models of Obedience

For many young people in Nazi Germany, membership in groups like the Hitler Youth offered a feeling of excitement, belonging, and even power, and they participated with enthusiasm. Obedience, conformity, and the desire to please parents, teachers, and group leaders also influenced young people's choices. Hede von Nagel grew up in Nazi Germany. She wrote of her childhood:

As my parents' second daughter, I was a great disappointment to my father, who wanted to produce sons for the Führer and the nation—and, because he was of the nobility, to carry on the family name.

He was furious that, unlike my fair-haired older sister, who looked so Nordic, I had been cursed with auburn hair and dark brown eyes. Then came a third child, this time a male, but he was a dark-eyed redhead—another let down for my patriotic father. Only when another son was born and proved to be the very model of a tow-headed, blue-eyed Aryan was my father satisfied. "At last," he said, "the child I wanted."

Our parents taught us to raise our arms and say "Heil Hitler" before we said "Mama." This type of indoctrination was universal. Children experienced it in kindergarten, at home—everywhere. We grew up believing that Hitler was a super-god, and Germany an anointed nation. . . .

At the same time, our parents and teachers trained my sister and me to be the unquestioning helpmates of men; as individuals, we had no right to our own opinion, no right to speak up.<sup>1</sup>

A former member of the Hitler Youth had similar memories:

[It's] especially easy to manipulate children at that age. . . . If you can drill the notion into their heads, you are from a tribe, a race that is especially valuable. And then you tell them something about the Germanic tribes, their loyalty, their battles, how Germanic women let themselves be hitched up to carts to fight against the Romans. . . . Then there were the songs . . . "Before the foreigner robs you of your crown, O Germany, we would prefer to fall side by side." Or "The flag is dearer than death." . . . The flag, the people—they were everything. You are nothing, your people everything. Yes, that's how children were brought up, that's how you can manipulate a child.<sup>2</sup>

1 Hede von Nagel, "The Nazi Legacy—Fearful Silence for Their Children," *Boston Globe*, October 23, 1977.

2 Quoted in Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 216.

Alfons Heck believed there was more to it than propaganda:

Traditionally, the German people were subservient to authority and respected their rulers as exalted father figures who could be relied on to look after them. A major reason why the Weimar Republic, despite its liberal constitution, did not catch on with many Germans was the widespread impression that no one seemed to be firmly in charge. Hitler used that yearning for a leader brilliantly. From our very first day in the *Jungvolk*, we accepted it as a natural law—especially since it was merely an extension of what we had learned in school—that a leader’s orders must be obeyed unconditionally, even if they appeared harsh, punitive, or unsound. It was the only way to avoid chaos. This chain of command started at the very bottom and ended with Hitler.

I still recall with wonder that [our leader] once marched all 160 of us in his *Fahnlein* [unit] into an ice-cold river in November because our singing had displeased him. We cursed him bitterly under our breath, but not one of us refused. That would have been the unthinkable crime of disobeying a “direct order.” During the war, such a refusal could be used—and frequently was—to put the offender before a firing squad.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did each of the Germans quoted in this reading believe they acquired their attitudes and values? How do you think you acquired yours?
2. How did each of these Germans explain what the role was of obedience and conformity in Nazi Germany?
3. Why is it important that a child be taught to obey? At what point does obedience become dangerous? What is the difference between obedience and conformity?
4. All three sources are written by adults looking back on their youth in Nazi Germany. How might hindsight affect their feelings about their participation?
5. According to Alfons Heck, why might a strong leader have been attractive to Germans in the 1930s? What evidence have you found while studying this history that some Germans either tolerated or welcomed a strong governmental authority figure?

3 Alfons Heck, *A Child of Hitler: Germany in the Days When God Wore a Swastika* (Phoenix, AZ: Renaissance House, 1985), 33–34.

## Reading 15

# Disillusionment in the Hitler Youth

Hitler hoped that by conditioning young people in groups like the Hitler Youth, they would “never be free again, not in their whole lives.”<sup>1</sup> Many young people were deeply influenced by these groups, but support for the Hitler Youth was never as widespread and strong as Nazi leaders would have liked. Young people skipped some meetings and activities, even though attendance was compulsory, and their loyalty could be inconsistent. Their reasons for losing enthusiasm for Hitler Youth activities were not always political or moral; sometimes young people grew tired of the many requirements or just got bored. In 1939, the Social Democratic Party, which had been outlawed by the Nazis and was operating in secrecy, published a report on German youth that described some of this discontent. It said that “young people are starting to feel particularly burdened by the lack of freedom and the mindless drills practiced by National Socialist organizations. So it is no wonder that signs of fatigue would be particularly prominent in their ranks.”<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to Hitler’s hopes, membership in the Hitler Youth did not make all boys and girls ardent Nazis for life. Hans Scholl, who later founded the White Rose resistance movement with his sister Sophie and was executed by the Nazis, was at one point a member of the Hitler Youth (see “Protests in Germany” in Chapter 9). His sister Inge Scholl describes how Hans slowly became disillusioned with the group:

Hans had assembled a collection of folk songs, and his young charges loved to listen to him singing, accompanying himself on his guitar. He knew not only the songs of Hitler Youth but also the folk songs of many peoples and many lands. How magically a Russian or Norwegian song sounded with its dark and dragging melancholy. What did it not tell us of the soul of those people and their homeland!

But some time later a peculiar change took place in Hans; he was no longer the same. Something disturbing had entered his life. . . . His songs were forbidden, the leader had told him. And when he had laughed at this, they threatened him with disciplinary action. Why should he not be permitted to sing these beautiful songs? Only because they had been created by other peoples? He could not understand it, and this depressed him, and his usual carefree spirit began to wane.

At this particular time he was given a very special assignment.

1 Max von der Grün, *How! Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany* (New York: W. Morrow, 1980), 118–19.

2 “Sopade: Reports on German Youth” (1938), in *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Sander L. Gilman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 252.

He was to carry the flag of his troop to the party's national rally at Nuremberg. He was overjoyed. But when he returned we hardly dared trust our eyes. He looked tired, and on his face lay a great disappointment. We did not expect an explanation, but gradually we learned that the youth movement which had been held up to him as an ideal image was in reality something totally different from what he had imagined the Hitler Youth to be. Their drill and uniformity had been extended into every sphere of personal life. But he had always believed that every boy should develop his own special talents. Thus through his imagination, his ingenuity, his unique personality, each member could have enriched the group. But in Nuremberg everything had been done according to the same mold. There had been talk, day and night, about loyalty. But what was the keystone of all loyalty if not to be true to oneself? My God! There was a mighty upheaval taking place in Hans.

One day he came home with another prohibition. One of the leaders had taken away a book by his most beloved writer, *Stellar Hours of Mankind* by Stefan Zweig. It was forbidden, he was told. Why? There had been no answer. He heard something similar about another German writer whom he liked very much. This one had been forced to escape from Germany because he had been engaged in spreading pacifist ideas. Ultimately it came to an open break.

Some time before, Hans had been promoted to standard-bearer. He and his boys had sewn themselves a magnificent flag with a mythical beast in the center. The flag was something very special. It had been dedicated to the Führer himself. The boys had taken an oath on the flag because it was the symbol of their fellowship. But one evening, as they stood with their flag in formation for inspection by a higher leader, something unheard-of happened. The visiting leader suddenly ordered the tiny standard-bearer, a frolicsome twelve-year-old lad, to give up the flag. "You don't need a special flag. Just keep the one that has been prescribed for all." Hans was deeply disturbed. Since when? Didn't the troop leader know what this special flag meant to its standard-bearer? Wasn't it more than just a piece of cloth that could be changed at one's pleasure?

Once more the leader ordered the boy to give up the flag. He stood quiet and motionless. Hans knew what was going on in the little fellow's mind and that he would not obey. When the high leader in a threatening voice ordered the little fellow for the third time, Hans saw the flag waver slightly. He could no longer control himself. He stepped out of line and slapped the visiting leader's face. From then on he was no longer the standard-bearer.<sup>3</sup>

3 Inge Scholl, *Students Against Tyranny: The Resistance of the White Rose, Munich, 1942–1943*, trans. Arthur R. Schultz (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1970), 7–10.

## Connection Questions

1. What do you think appealed to Hans Scholl about the Hitler Youth? What was the “mighty upheaval” that later took place in him? What caused it? What choices did he make?
2. Why did other young people begin to drop out of the Hitler Youth? How do you account for their feelings?
3. How did Hans define “loyalty”? How did other young Germans whose stories you read in this chapter define “loyalty”?
4. Were Hans’s actions acts of resistance? If so, resistance against what? What difference did his actions make?
5. Can we be inspired when people and groups resist or speak out, and also be disappointed or angry when they don’t go far enough? What can we learn from the actions those groups take, and from those they don’t?



## Reading 16

# Rejecting Nazism

Not all young people willingly participated in Nazi youth groups. Some, like Hans Scholl (see Reading 15, “Disillusionment in the Hitler Youth”), became disillusioned and dropped out. In the late 1930s, as Hitler Youth activities began to focus less on leisure activities and more on military drills and preparation for war, other young people formed their own groups in

which they could more freely express their own interests and ideas. One of these groups was the Edelweiss Pirates. Members of the group, both boys and girls, would gather from time to time for weekend camping trips. They would pitch tents in the forest, sing, talk, and fight Hitler Youth patrols. The group’s slogan was “Eternal War on the Hitler youth.” One Edelweiss Pirate explained his choice to join the group by saying, “It’s the Hitler Youth’s own fault . . . every order I was given contained a threat.” The group’s resistance to the Nazis continued throughout World War II.<sup>1</sup>



A 1938 photo of a group of Edelweiss Pirates, an unofficial youth group that emerged in response to the strict regimentation of the Hitler Youth.

Other young people who refused to join Nazi youth organizations defined themselves through their favorite music. They called themselves the *Swing-Jugend* (“swing kids”). The swing kids didn’t make open political statements, but their love of foreign music, their wild style of dancing, and their acceptance of Jews and other outsiders were a strong contrast to the disciplined, formal culture encouraged by the Nazi Party. Historian Richard Bessel describes the “swing kids”:

The swing youth were not anti-fascist in a political sense—their behavior was indeed emphatically anti-political—both Nazi slogans and traditional nationalism were of profound indifference to them. They sought their counter-identity in what they saw as the “slovenly” culture of . . . England and America. They accepted Jews and “half-Jews” into their groups . . . and gave ovations to visiting bands from Belgium and Holland.

The very disgust shown by the authors of the Nazi reports . . . indicate that Nazi officialdom felt attacked at the heart of its concept of itself and the state. This is the only way, too, to explain the reaction of Heinrich Himmler, who wanted to put the

1 Richard Bessel, *Life in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 30–31.

“ringleaders” of the swing movement into concentration camps for at least two or three years of beatings, punitive drill and forced labor.<sup>2</sup>

The kind of behavior that so upset Himmler is described in a Hitler Youth report on a 1940 swing festival attended by 500 to 600 teenagers in Hamburg.

The dancers made an appalling sight. None of the couples danced normally; there was only swing of the worst sort. Sometimes two boys danced with one girl; sometimes several formed a circle, linking arms and jumping, slapping hands, even rubbing the backs of their heads together; and then, bent double, with the top half of the body hanging loosely down, long hair flopping into the face, they dragged themselves round practically to their knees. When the band played a rumba, the dancers went into wild ecstasy. They all leaped around and mumbled the chorus in English. The band played wilder and wilder numbers; none of the players was sitting any longer, they all “jitterbugged” on the stage like wild animals. Frequently boys could be observed dancing together, without exception with two cigarettes in the mouth, one in each corner . . .<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think the young people who questioned Nazism formed their own groups? Why did Nazi officials believe these groups were dangerous?
2. To what extent were the activities of these alternative youth groups motivated by political opposition to the Nazis? To what extent were they motivated by teenage rebellion?
3. What do the two groups suggest about the successes and failures of Nazi ambitions to control the youth of Germany?
4. What do the descriptions of these groups suggest about the power of art and music? How can listening to or performing music be a form of rebellion? How can dancing be a form of rebellion?

<sup>2</sup> Bessel, *Life in the Third Reich*, 39.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 37.

## Reading 17

# “Heil Hitler!”: Lessons of Daily Life

In 1938, writer Erika Mann published a book called *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis*. (See Reading 13, “The Birthday Party,” for another excerpt from Mann’s book.) Mann had emigrated from Germany to the United States in 1937. Her book criticized the Nazis’ efforts to shape young people’s ideas and feelings. In it, she describes how daily life in Germany was a kind of “school” that educated children in accordance with Nazi ideals:

Every child says “Heil Hitler!” from 50 to 150 times a day, immeasurably more often than the old neutral greetings. The formula is required by law; if you meet a friend on the way to school, you say it; study periods are opened and closed with “Heil Hitler!”; “Heil Hitler!” says the postman, the street-car conductor, the girl who sells you notebooks at the stationery store; and if your parents’ first words when you come home for lunch are not “Heil Hitler!” they have been guilty of a punishable offense and can be denounced. “Heil Hitler!” they shout in the *Jungvolk* and Hitler Youth. “Heil Hitler!” cry the girls in the League of German Girls. Your evening prayers must close with “Heil Hitler!” if you take your devotions seriously.

Officially—when you say hello to your superiors in school or in a group—the words are accompanied by the act of throwing the right arm high; but an unofficial greeting among equals requires only a comparatively lax lifting of the forearm, with the fingers closed and pointing forward. This Hitler greeting, this “German” greeting, repeated countless times from morning to bedtime, stamps the whole day.

*Heil* really means salvation, and used to be applied to relations between man and his God; one would speak of *ewiges Heil* (eternal salvation), and the adjective “holy” derives from the noun. But now there is the new usage. . . .

You leave the house in the morning, “Heil Hitler” on your lips; and on the stairs of your apartment house you meet the *Blockwart* [block warden]. A person of great importance and some danger, the *Blockwart* has been installed by the government as a Nazi guardian. He controls the block, reporting on it regularly, checking up on the behavior of its residents. It’s worth it to face right about, military style, and to give him the “big” Hitler salute, with the right arm as high as it will go. All the way down the street, the flags are waving, every window colored with red banners, and the black swastika in the middle of each. You don’t stop to ask why; it’s bound to be some national event. Not a week passes without an occasion on which families are given one reason or another to hang out the swastika. Only the Jews are exempted under the strict regulation. Jews are not Germans; they do not belong to the “Nation,” they can have no “national events.”

You meet the uniforms on the way to school, the black [uniformed] S.S. men, the men of the Volunteer Labor Service, and the Reichswehr soldiers [German army]. And if some of the streets are closed, you know that an official is driving through town. Nobody has ever told you the high officials of other countries pass without the precautions of closed streets.

And here, where a building is going up, the workmen are gone—probably because of the “national event.” But the sign is on the scaffolding. “We have our Führer to thank that we are working here today. Heil Hitler!” The familiar sign, seen everywhere with men at work, on roads, barracks, sports fields. What does it mean to you? Do you think of a world outside with workers who need not thank a Führer for their jobs? Certainly not—what you have imprinted on your mind is the sentence, deep and accepted as an old melody.

There are more placards as you continue past hotels, restaurants, indoor swimming pools, to school. They read “No Jews allowed” — “Jews not desired here” — “Not for Jews.” And what do you feel? Agreement? Pleasure? Disgust? Opposition? You don’t feel any of these. You don’t feel anything, you’ve seen these placards for almost five years. This is a habit, it is all perfectly natural, of course Jews aren’t allowed here. Five years in the life of a child of nine—that’s his life, after four years of infancy, his whole personal, conscious existence.

Through the Nazi street walks the Nazi child. There is nothing to disturb him, nothing to attract his attention or criticism. The stands sell Nazi newspapers almost exclusively; all German papers are Nazi; foreign newspapers are forbidden, if they do not please the men at the top. The child won’t be surprised at their huge headlines: “UNHEARD-OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST GERMANY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA!” “JEWISH GANGSTERS RULE AMERICA!” “THE COMMUNIST TERROR IN SPAIN SUPPORTED BY THE POPE!” “150 MORE PRIESTS UNMASKED AS SEXUAL CRIMINALS!”

“That’s how it is in the world,” the child thinks. “What luck we’re in, to have a Führer. He’ll tell the whole bunch—Czechs, Jews, Americans, Communists, and priests—where to get off!”

There are no doubts, no suspicion at the coarse and hysterical tone of the dispatches, no hint that they may be inexact or false. No, these things are part of the everyday world of the Nazis, like the *Blockwart*, the swastika, the signs reading “No Jews allowed.” They add up to an atmosphere that is torture, a fuming poison for a free-born human being.

The German child breathes this air. There is no other condition wherever Nazis are in power; and here in Germany they do rule everywhere, and their supremacy over the German child, as he learns and eats, marches, grows up, breathes, is complete.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 1938), 21–24.

## Connection Questions

1. What does this reading reveal about children's daily life in Nazi Germany? What might children have learned even before they arrived at school? How were the streets themselves a kind of "school" for Nazi ideas?
2. Why would the Nazis focus on controlling the lives of young people?
3. Are there messages about ourselves and others that we hear so often today in our daily lives that we don't even think about them?
4. Erika Mann concludes: "The German child breathes this air." What is in the "air" we breathe? How do we figure out what messages in our society are coming from a place of authority? How do we figure out what they mean?



## Reading 18

# Youth on the Margins

In her book *School for Barbarians*, Erika Mann describes how greeting others with the Nazi salute and the words “Heil Hitler” became a common, constant practice in Germany, infusing daily life and social interactions with an expression of political loyalty (see Reading 17, ““Heil Hitler!': Lessons of Daily Life”). The “Heil Hitler” greeting was also an important part of the school day, posing difficult and even dangerous dilemmas for some students.

When Elizabeth Dopazo and her brother were very young, their parents were sent to concentration camps because of their religious beliefs; they were Jehovah’s Witnesses whose faith required that they pledge allegiance only to God. Jehovah’s Witnesses therefore refused to say “Heil Hitler” as a matter of religious conviction. After their parents were arrested, seven-year-old Elizabeth and her six-year-old brother went to live with their grandparents. Elizabeth later recalled:

We had to quickly change our way of speaking so maybe we wouldn’t be so noticeable. In school right away it started, you see. We had to raise our right arm and say “Heil Hitler” and all that sort of thing and then we didn’t do it a few times. A few times was all right. You can drop a handkerchief, you can do a little something, but quickly they look and they say, “Ah, you’re different and you’re new in the school.” So you’re watched a little more closely. You might get one or two children who’d tell on you but it was rare. The teacher would bring you to the front of the class and say “Why don’t you say Heil Hitler?” and you were shaking already because you knew, unlike other children, if you told them the real reason there’d be trouble. For us to say “Heil Hitler” and praise a person would be against our belief. We shouldn’t because we had already pledged our allegiance to God and that’s it. So we could stand and be respectful to the government, but we were not to participate in adulation for political figures. . . .

My brother and I talked about all these things at home after school. We had a little attic we used to go in and discuss what would be best. We grew up very fast. We never really had a childhood. . . .

Later, around age twelve or thirteen, we joined the Hitler Youth, which we actually didn’t want to do, but the Gestapo came to my grandparents’ house, just like you’ve seen in the movies with the long leather coats on and they stood at the front door and they were saying, “Your grandchildren have to join the Hitler Youth and if they don’t by Thursday we will take stronger measures.” After they’d left we told our grandparents we’ll join tomorrow, even if we hate all that stuff. They agreed we’d better do it and we very quickly donned those uniforms. . . .



Watch **Changes at School under the Nazis**

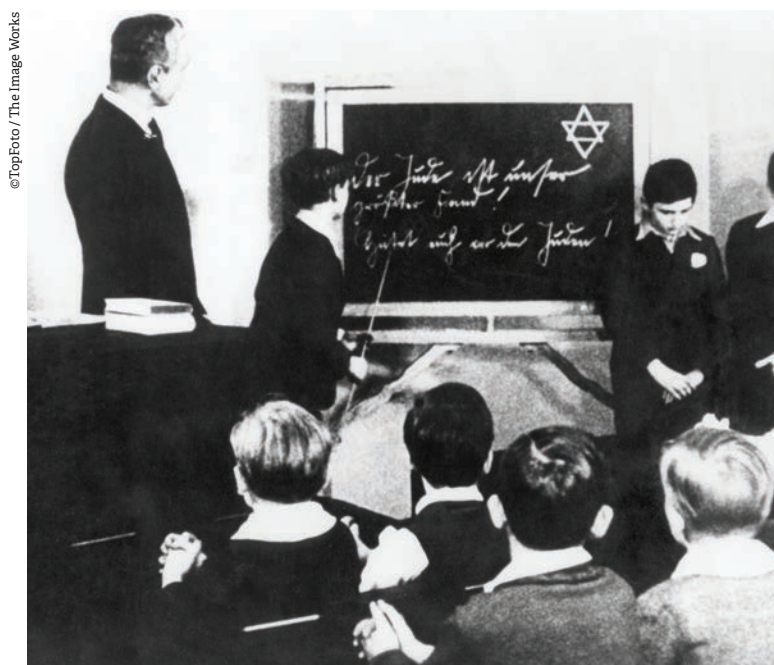
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

As time went on, my brother, when he was thirteen or fourteen, sort of was swayed. You know, you have to believe in something. He wanted to be a German officer and said our father had been wrong all along and that we went to the dogs for our father's beliefs. He [our father] died for his ideals and where are we? [My brother] was very angry. I was too, but not as much. I was torn between what would be the good thing to do and what would not. . . .

We were not allowed to go to higher education because we were a detriment to others. So you can image how he felt when the war was finished. He was all disillusioned and shattered.<sup>1</sup>

Daily life in school was even more difficult for a boy named Frank, one of two Jewish students in a school in Breslau in the mid-1930s. He recalled:

People started to pick on me, "a dirty Jew," and all this kind of thing. And we started to fight. . . . There was my friend, and he was one class above me, he fought in every break. . . . I started to fight, too, because they insulted too much or they started to fight, whatever it was.



While this classroom studied "race science," Jewish students were forced to stand at the front of the room. The blackboard says, "The Jew is our greatest enemy."

We were very isolated, and one order came after another. . . . [One] order says all Jews must greet with the German greeting. The German greeting was "Heil Hitler" and raising your hand. Then the next order came out, and it says the Jews are not allowed to greet people with the "Heil Hitler" signal. Okay, so, in Germany you had to greet every teacher. When you see a teacher on the street, you had to respect them and you had to greet him—you had to bow down. . . .

Now we were in an impossible situation, because when we went up the stairs and we saw one teacher, and we said "Heil Hitler." And he turned around. "Aren't you a Jew? You're not allowed to greet me with 'Heil Hitler.'" But if I didn't greet him at all, then the next teacher would say "Aren't you supposed to greet [me with] 'Heil Hitler'?" And this was always accom-

panied with a punishment. . . . Not all of them but some of them, the teachers that knew me and would pick on me—they'd punish me, put me in a corner, or humiliate me in one way or another. . . .

You had to raise your hand and salute when the flag passed and Jews weren't allowed to do it. . . . If you don't salute, you immediately were recognized as a Jew, and you really were left to the mercy of the people who saw you, what they would do with you. They could perfectly well kill you on the street and, you know, nobody really said anything because there was no such thing as a court and after all, it was only a Jew. . . . We were at the mercy of people.<sup>2</sup>

1 Elizabeth Dopazo, "Reminiscences," unpublished interview, 1981, Facing History and Ourselves Foundation.

2 *Childhood Experiences of German Jews* (New Haven, CT: Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, ca. 1987), VHS, <https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/childhood-experiences-german-jews?destination=node/4022>.

## Connection Questions

1. What dilemmas did Elizabeth Dopazo, her brother, and Frank face? How did they respond to those dilemmas? What choices were available to Elizabeth that were not available to Frank?
2. Compare and contrast the experiences of Hans Wolf and Alfons Heck (see Reading 12, "Joining the Hitler Youth") with those of Elizabeth and Frank described in this reading. Were there any similarities? What are some of the key differences? How were these children affected by growing up in Nazi Germany in the 1930s? Do these readings express experiences and emotions that might also be typical of children everywhere?
3. Do you think it is more important for teens to feel as if they belong than for people of other ages to feel that way? Why or why not? Why might the experience of being an outsider be more painful for a teenager than for others?

## Reading 19

# Schooling for the National Community

Nazi leaders worked to influence young people in youth groups, in their families, and on the streets. Schools also had a key role to play. After the Nazis came to power in 1933, they quickly passed new laws to make public education reflect and teach their nationalist and racial ideologies. Jewish teachers were fired from their posts, and other teachers were encouraged to join the National Socialist Teachers League; by 1936, over 97% of teachers were members. Nazi leaders also created new curricula and textbooks to be used throughout the country.

Gregor Ziemer was a teacher and headmaster at the American School in Berlin (a school for the children of American citizens living in Germany) for most of the 1930s. During this time, Ziemer toured German schools and eventually wrote a book called *Education for Death*, which was first published in 1941. In it, Ziemer describes the schools he visited:

A teacher is not spoken of as a teacher (*Lehrer*) but an *Erzieher*. The word suggests an iron disciplinarian who does not instruct but commands, and whose orders are backed up with force if necessary.

Matters of the spirit are frankly and energetically belittled. Physical education, education for action, is alone worthy of the Nazi teacher's attention. All else can be dismissed as non-essential . . .

The Nazi schools are no place for weaklings. All children must, of course, finish the primary school before they are ten; but after that the schools are proving-grounds for the Party. Those who betray any weakness of body or have not the capacities for absolute obedience and submission must be expelled. . . .

The regime draws a sharp distinction between girls, inherently weak, and boys, natural exponents of strength. Boys and girls have nothing in common. Their aims, their purposes in life, are fundamentally different. Boys will become soldiers; girls will become breeders. Co-educational schools are manifestations of decadent democracies and hence are taboo.

[Dr. Bernhard Rust, the Nazi Minister of Education] decrees that in Nazi schools the norm is physical education. After that, German, biology, science, mathematics, and history are for the boys; eugenics and home economics for the girls. Other subjects are permissible if they are taught to promote Nazi ideas. Spiritual education is definitely unimportant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941), 15–16.

History and science were the subjects most influenced by Nazi ideology. Soon after Hitler took power, a new course in “race science” was added to the curriculum in every German school. The Nazi minister of education outlined the objectives of the course:

1. Give pupils an insight into the relationship, causes and effects of all basic facts having to do with the science of heredity and race.
2. Impress the pupils with the importance of the science of heredity and race for the future of the nation and the purposes of the government.
3. Awaken in the pupils a sense of responsibility toward the nation, as represented by both its ancestry and its posterity; imbue the pupils with pride in the fact that the German people are the most important exponent of the Nordic race. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Racial instruction was not limited to a single course. It was included in all classes, even arithmetic. One book, titled *Germany's Fall and Rise—Illustrations Taken from Arithmetic Instruction in the Higher Grades of Elementary School*, asks, “The Jews are aliens in Germany—in 1933 there were 66,060,000 inhabitants of the German Reich, of whom 499,682 were Jews. What is the percentage of aliens?”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. According to Gregor Ziemer, what were the most important subjects in Nazi schools? What does that suggest about the values of society at the time?
2. What was the role of girls and women in the Nazis’ ideology? What was the role of boys and men? Today, many people would strongly disagree with the Nazis’ decision to make gender the basis for extreme differences in schooling. What stereotypes about girls and boys did the Nazi program rely on?
3. Why do you think the Nazis added the new course on race science to the school curriculum? How did this new course, based on “science,” reflect the ideas about “science” and race that you learned about in Chapter 2?
4. To what extent should school be designed to meet the needs of the individual? To what extent should it be designed to meet the needs of the community or the state?

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians: Education Under the Nazis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2014), 77–78.

<sup>3</sup> Ziemer, *Education for Death*, 16.



## Reading 20

# Even If All Others Do—I Do Not!

Only a few parents dared to challenge the education their children received. Among them was Johannes Fest (see “A Test of Loyalty” in Chapter 5). Near the end of 1936, he called his sons Joachim and Wolfgang into his study. Joachim, who was ten years old at the time, later recalled:

He wanted to talk to us about a subject, he began, that had been giving him a headache for some months now. He had been prompted by one or two differences of opinion with our mother, who was terribly worried and hardly able to sleep anymore. . . . He knew what his responsibilities were. But he also had principles, which he wasn't going to let anyone call into question. Least of all the “band of criminals” in power.

He repeated the words “band of criminals,” and if we had been a little older we would no doubt have noticed how torn he was. He had discussed what he was about to say with my mother and they had with some effort reached an agreement. From now on there would be a double evening meal: an early one for the three younger children and another one as soon as the little ones were in bed. We belonged to the later sitting. The reason for this division was very simple; he had to have a place in the world where he could talk openly and get his disgust off his chest. Otherwise life would be worth nothing. At least not for him. With the little ones he would have to keep himself in check, as he had done for two years now whenever entering a shop, in front of the lowliest counter clerk, and—by force of law—every time he picked up his children from school. He was incapable of doing that, he said, and concluded with the words, more or less, “A state that turns everything into a lie shall not cross our threshold as well. I shall not submit to the reigning mendacity [lies], at least within the family circle.” That, of course, sounded a little grand, he said. As it was, he only wanted to keep the enforced hypocrisy at bay.

He took a deep breath, as if he had got rid of a burden, and walked back and forth between the window and the smoking table a few times. In doing this, he began again, he was turning us into adults, so to speak. With that came a duty to be extremely cautious. Tight lips were the symbol of this state: “Always remember that!” Nothing political that we discussed was for others to hear. Anyone with whom we exchanged a few words could be a Nazi, a traitor, or simply thoughtless. In a dictatorship, distrust was not only a commandment, it was a virtue.

And it was just as important, he continued, never to suffer from the isolation which inevitably accompanied opposition to the opinion on the street. He would give us a Latin maxim for that, which we should never forget; it would be best to write it down, then brand it in our memory and throw away the note. . . . He put a piece

of paper in front of each of us and dictated: *Etiam si omnes—ego non!* [Even if all others do—I do not!] “It’s from the Gospel According to St. Matthew,” he explained, “the scene on the Mount of Olives.” He laughed when he saw what was on my piece of paper. If I remember rightly, I had written something like *Essi omnis, ergo no*. My father stroked my head and said, consolingly, “Don’t worry! There’s time enough for you to learn it!” My brother, who was already at Gymnasium [secondary school], had written the sentence correctly.

That, more or less, was how the hour in the study passed. . . . After we returned to our room, Wolfgang repeated, with all the superiority of an older brother, that we were adults now. He hoped I knew what that meant. I nodded solemnly, although I didn’t have a clue. Then he added that all of us together now formed a group of conspirators. He proudly pushed against my chest: “Us against the world!” I nodded once again without having the faintest idea what it meant to be against the world. I simply felt myself to be favored in some indefinable way by my father, with whom in the recent past I had increasingly got into arguments because of some piece of cheek or other. The way he sometimes acknowledged me from then on with a passing nod, I also interpreted as approval. That evening after the parental “Good night,” my mother came into our room once more, sat down for a few minutes on Wolfgang’s bed, and later on mine. “I only say cheerful things—or prefer to say nothing,” she had once declared. . . . She stuck to that now. But she looked depressed.

It was an adventure, as I often, in the weeks that followed, happily persuaded myself before falling asleep. Who had opportunity of entering upon such an enterprise with his father? I was determined not to disappoint him. . . .

Only when I was older did I understand the horror of the situation, in which constant watchfulness was required as a kind of law for parents as for children, mistrust was a rule of survival and isolation a necessity—where the mere clumsiness of a child could lead literally to death and ruin. Fifteen years later, when I asked my father about the dark side of his afternoon talk, his expression again immediately revealed just how worried he had been then. He recovered himself and replied that at the time he had been very conscious of the risk to which he exposed himself and his family. Perhaps he had gone too far. But he had hoped to God it would turn out well. And, indeed, the gamble had paid off. At any rate, neither we nor Winfried [a younger brother], who had been allowed to join the second sitting of the evening meal later on, had ever caused him any embarrassment. And, just as he had wished, none of us had ever forgotten the maxim which, he remembered, he had bequeathed us. Indeed, the fine Latin maxim “Even if all others do—I do not!” belonged to every truly free life.<sup>1</sup>

1 Joachim Fest, *Not I: Memoirs of a German Childhood*, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: Other Press, 2012), 71–75.

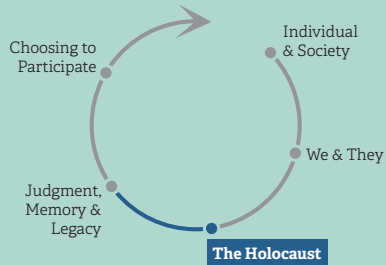
## Connection Questions

1. What was Johannes Fest's dilemma? Why did he insist on having a "double evening meal"?
2. Why did the talk with his father have such an impact on Joachim? How did he understand it at the time it happened, and what did he come to see many years later? What did Johannes Fest teach his sons?
3. Were Johannes Fest's choices courageous? Could they be seen as resistance? Why or why not?
4. What does the line "Even if all others do—I do not!" mean to you? When might that quote help to explain a decision you've made in your own life?

## Chapter 6 Analysis and Reflection

1. How did the Nazis attempt to build a “racially pure and harmonious national community”? What were the roles of law, propaganda, the media, arts, education, and family? How do the readings in this chapter illustrate the power and the limits of each of these influences?
2. What difficult choices were young people faced with—at home, in school, and in their communities—during this period? How did these choices challenge the way these young people saw themselves and understood their identities?
3. What kinds of resistance to the Nazi government between 1933 and 1938 are described in this chapter? Which of these examples seemed most successful?
4. How do the readings in this chapter help you understand what the Nazis meant by a *Volksgemeinschaft*, or “national community”? How do these readings help you understand what it was like to live in such a state?
5. How did Germany’s universe of obligation change from 1933 to 1938? What factors were most important in bringing about this change?

## Chapter 7



# Open Aggression and World Responses

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## Overview

Between 1935 and 1939, Nazi Germany began taking aggressive steps toward rebuilding the German military and expanding the Third Reich across Europe. At the same time, Nazi hostility toward Jews within the Reich intensified, culminating in the 1938 pogroms known as *Kristallnacht*. This chapter explores the open aggression of Nazi Germany in the late 1930s toward both neighboring countries and individuals within its borders, as well as the dilemmas faced by leaders around the world in response.



### Essential Questions

- What choices were available to world leaders in response to Nazi Germany's aggression toward other countries and toward groups of people in the late 1930s? What factors influenced the choices these leaders made? Could the Nazi march toward European war have been stopped?
- What choices were possible for individuals in response to Nazi Germany's aggression? In what ways could individuals influence the actions of governments? In what ways could they make a difference on their own?
- What are the consequences when a nation removes a group of people from its universe of obligation?
- At what point does a nation have a right or even a duty to intervene in the affairs of other nations?

While the Nazis were consolidating their power in Germany and attempting to transform German society according to their ideas about race, they were also preparing the country for war. In fact, Hitler believed that creating a “racial” state and fighting wars were firmly linked; through war, the nation would conquer new territory that would allow the German “race” to expand, and it could then grow the food and extract the resources it would need to expand even more.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as soon as they took power in 1933, the Nazis began a program to rearm Germany—a program largely kept secret from the rest of the world in order to hide the violations of the Treaty of Versailles that resulted. This program also had the effect of increasing employment rates and improving the German economy, which was suffering during the Great Depression.

After 1935, Hitler's efforts to rebuild the German military forces became public, and Germany began taking aggressive steps toward expanding the Third Reich across all of Europe. The first steps included annexing Austria and the part of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland, territories inhabited by so-called “true Germans” who Hitler believed ought to be part of the Reich. With each new step, Hitler watched closely to see what the response of the world community would be.

The German annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland increased the number of Jews affected by Nazi restrictions, while at the same time those restrictions intensified to the point that Jews were effectively removed from German public life. This meant that Germany's aggressive steps to expand its borders touched off both an international political crisis, as world leaders scrambled to avoid war, and a humanitarian refugee crisis, as hundreds of thousands of people, mostly Jews, sought safety from the Nazis. But in the 1930s, Western nations were accustomed to the presence of persecution and discrimination against minority groups, given their histories of imperialism, slavery, discrimination, and religious persecution. Perhaps partially because of that history, the international community did not immediately deliver forceful, concrete responses in opposition to the early laws and actions taken by the Nazis. However, by the late 1930s, the persecution of Jews and others in the Third Reich was reaching new and unimaginable levels, becoming a violation of human life and dignity difficult to ignore. World leaders would soon be forced either to come up with a response or to make the deliberate choice not to intervene.

This chapter explores how the choices made by world leaders affected the lives of countless individuals, even those who lived thousands of miles and across oceans from the homes of those leaders. The ineffective international response, both to German aggression and to the refugee crisis it created, deepened the peril in which Jews in the Reich found themselves, which

<sup>1</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 35.

finally boiled over in November 1938 in what was called *Kristallnacht*—the most open and dangerous attacks on Jews by the Nazi regime up to that time. Yet even the widespread outrage caused by *Kristallnacht* was not enough to make the rest of the world act to head off disaster. Indeed, by then it may have been too late. Nevertheless, as this chapter also shows, some individuals did act, often in spite of the governments of their countries, and managed to save lives.

Examining why some people took action in defiance of Nazi Germany's increasing aggression during these years while so many others, including world leaders and their governments, did not act provides an opportunity to talk about the range of human behavior throughout history.

Within that range of human behavior are the roles of *perpetrator*, *victim*, *bystander*, and *upstander*, which can be assumed by individuals, groups, or even nations. But it can be difficult to define each term clearly. For example, under the label *upstander*, we often list those who take a variety of actions, including resistance and rescue. However, upstanders might also include those who are able to maintain a part of their identity despite opposition, such as people who continue to secretly practice their religious faith or others who refuse to give up hope. The term *bystander* can be even more complicated. In most dictionaries, it means a person who is simply “standing by” or who is present without taking part in what is going on—a passive spectator. But some scholars, like psychologist Ervin Staub, believe that even passive spectators play a crucial role in defining the meaning of events by implicitly approving the actions of perpetrators.<sup>2</sup> The choice not to act or speak up is still a choice.

It is important to recognize that it is not these labels themselves, as words, that matter; it is the way we think and talk about the actions (or inactions) of others that helps us both understand history and make connections to the choices we all make in the present. In addition, it is important to remember that individuals and groups usually do not fit into only one category. Instead, they may move into and out of these roles throughout their lives.

But studying history with these terms in mind, despite those limitations, allows us to think about the agency of individuals, groups, and nations—their ability to recognize the options available to them and make choices that impact their own lives, the lives of others, and the course of history. By reflecting on the agency of individuals, groups, and nations in historical context, we can better understand the possibility and power of the choices available to us today.

2. Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 86–87.

## Reading 1

# Rearming Germany

Between 1933 and 1935, Hitler focused on solidifying the Nazi Party's control of Germany and building support among its people. He also began to rebuild Germany's military, keeping it secret because he didn't know how the world would react to this apparent violation of the Versailles treaty of 1919 (see "Negotiating Peace" in Chapter 3). By March 1935, however, it was no longer a secret, as Hitler publicly announced his intentions to rebuild the German air force, reinstate conscription (the draft), and rearm the nation. He assured other world leaders that these were not violations of the Treaty of Versailles but purely "defensive" measures. In a speech to the Reichstag, he said, "The principal effect of every war is to destroy the flower of the nation. Germany needs peace and desires peace." He promised that "the German government is ready to agree to any limitation which leads to the abolition of the heaviest arms, especially suited for aggression, such as the heaviest artillery and the heaviest tanks." And he warned, "Whoever lights the torch of war in Europe can wish for nothing but chaos."<sup>1</sup>

The speech was praised both at home and abroad. The American journalist William L. Shirer, one of Hitler's earliest critics, recalled in his memoir many years later that he had "left the Reichstag that evening convinced that Hitler, despite all my reservations about him, really wanted peace and had made the West, at least, a serious offer."<sup>2</sup> A German schoolteacher wrote in her diary that this was

the day that we have longed for since the disgrace of 1918. . . . We would never have experienced Versailles if such actions had always been taken, such answers always given . . . General conscription is to serve not war but the maintenance of peace. For a defenceless country in the midst of heavily armed people must necessarily be an invitation and encouragement to maltreat it as territory to march into or to plunder.<sup>3</sup>

One year later, on March 7, 1936, German soldiers marched into the Rhineland as German fighter planes roared overhead. The Treaty of Versailles had set aside the Rhineland, a strip of land 31 miles wide, as a buffer zone between Germany and France. Although it was officially part of Germany, the nation was not allowed to fortify it or station troops there. Now Hitler had broken that agreement.

Most German generals had opposed the move into the Rhineland. They feared that the French would defeat their half-trained, inadequately

1 Quoted in William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 287.

2 William L. Shirer, *The Nightmare Years: 1930–1940*, vol. 2, *20th Century Journey: A Memoir of a Life and the Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 223.

3 Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 627.



equipped army within hours. But Hitler, always watching for reaction inside and outside of Germany, was convinced that neither France nor Britain would intervene. He was right. The French public was worried about entering into another war, and the French government feared that the German forces marching into the Rhineland were larger and stronger than they actually were. In England, the public was indifferent to the German occupation of the Rhineland, making it difficult for any British leaders who wanted to punish Germany to find support. Historian Richard Evans writes that from the perspective of the French and British, "What had happened, after all, was only a recovery of Germany's sovereignty over its own territory, and no one thought that was worth risking a general war."<sup>4</sup>

Within Germany, members of the Nazi Party celebrated, while many others responded with cautious approval.

Some businessmen were admittedly pleased because they thought things would now improve for them. Most people indeed quietly approved of the remilitarization. Young people in particular were enthusiastic in some places. "It's our country, after all," declared one worker. "Why shouldn't we be allowed to have any military there?" But there were also widespread fears that the action would lead to war. Many active Nazis responded to them by pointing to Hitler's professions of pacific [peaceful] intent. Only a few boasted that they would welcome a war. People were proud of the recovery of national sovereignty, but at the same time, they were desperately worried about the dangers of a general war, about the prospect of mass bombing of German cities and about a repeat of the death and destruction of 1914–18.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. In what ways did Hitler break the Treaty of Versailles? What might you expect the consequences to be? What were the actual consequences?
2. How did Hitler's actions attempt to reassert the power of Germany? How did he justify his actions? Why was the appearance of legality important to Hitler?
3. Why were so many European leaders reluctant to challenge Hitler's actions to rebuild Germany's military and occupy the Rhineland?
4. How did Germans respond to Hitler's plans for rearmament and remilitarization? Why would businesspeople be particularly pleased?
5. This reading includes quotations from four different reflections on Hitler's "actions": a diary, a memoir, a speech by Hitler, and a summary by a modern historian. How does each source help us to better understand a different aspect of the historical moment? What might be the limitations of each source?

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 635.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



## Reading 2

# The “New Germany” on the Olympic Stage

In August 1936, Germany hosted the summer Olympic Games. The international event gave the Nazis a chance to show the world the “new Germany,” and they took full advantage of the moment. To prevent criticism from foreigners, the signs that read “No Jews Allowed” were taken down and Germans were warned to be respectful of visitors regardless of their “race.”

Americans Charles and Anne Lindbergh were among the visitors to the Olympics. He was a world-famous aviator, the first to fly solo nonstop between the United States and France; she was a noted author. The Nazis welcomed the couple with tours of German aircraft facilities and dinners with top officials. In a letter to her mother, Anne described the “shock of seeing in person” the bias in “the strictly puritanical view at home that dictatorships of necessity are wrong, evil, unstable, and no good can come of them, combined with the funny-paper view of Hitler as a clown.” She wrote: “In truth, there is no question of the power, unity, and purposefulness of Germany. It is terrific. I have never in my life been so conscious of such a directed force. It is thrilling when seen manifested in the energy, pride, and morale of the people—especially the young people.”<sup>1</sup>

And yet Anne Lindbergh did have some reservations. The unity she admired was in the hands of one man. And she also pointed out a number of things she disliked about the new Germany, including “their treatment of the Jews” and “their brute-force manner.” But on the whole, she insisted that Germany could be “a force for good in the world” if only the world would accept Germany’s new rulers so they could turn “in the right direction.”<sup>2</sup>

For the Nazis, the Olympics also presented an opportunity to show the superiority of the “Aryan” race. German athletes won medal after medal at the Olympics. And yet the most admired athlete that year was not a German but an African American. Max von der Grün, who was ten years old that summer, recalled:

Although it was drummed into our heads every day that anything or anyone non-German was completely worthless, a black man became our idol. . . . In the playing field we used to play at being Jesse Owens; whoever could jump the farthest or run the fastest or throw some object the greatest distance became Jesse Owens.

1 Quoted in Andrew Nagorski, *Hitlerland: American Eyewitnesses to the Nazi Rise to Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 206.

2 Ibid.

When our teachers heard us, they forbade us to play such games, but they never replied to our question of how a black man, a member of an “inferior” race, could manage to be such a consummate athlete.<sup>3</sup>

Marion Freyer Wolff was also ten that summer. As a Jew living in Berlin, she was particularly struck by the changes the Olympics brought to Germany:

Hitler was so eager to have them in Germany that he was willing to make some minor compromises: stores and restaurants removed their We Don’t Serve Jews signs for the duration of the event, and Jewish athletes participated in the games. Three Jewish women, representing Hungary, Germany, and Austria, won medals in fencing and received them from the hand of Hitler himself! . . .

The success of the Jewish athletes received no notice in the German press, but nobody could hide the fact that Jesse Owens, the Black American sprinter, had earned four gold medals. I wondered how Hitler, who fancied himself a member of the super race, must have felt when he met this “inferior” non-Aryan again and again in the winner’s circle. To the Jewish kids of Berlin, Jesse Owens became an instant idol and morale booster.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think Hitler wanted the 1936 Olympics to be in Germany?
2. Why do you think the Nazis removed some signs during the Olympics? What does that imply about their concern for public opinion? Why would Germany have been sensitive to how other countries felt about their treatment of Jews?
3. How did the Lindberghs respond to what they saw in Germany? What was visible to them? What was not visible?
4. There were debates in some countries—including the United States, Great Britain, France, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and Denmark—about possibly boycotting the Olympics, but in the end all of those countries sent teams. By 1936, Nazi ideology and racial policy were clear to the world. Based on that fact, do you think these countries should have boycotted the games? What difference might that have made?

<sup>3</sup> Max von der Grün, *Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany*, trans. Jan van Heurck (New York: William Morrow, 1980), 107.

<sup>4</sup> Marion Freyer Wolff, *The Shrinking Circle: Memories of Nazi Berlin, 1933–1939* (UAHC Press, 1989), 21.

## Reading 3

# “The George Washington of Germany”

After a trip to Germany in September 1936, David Lloyd George, who had been the prime minister of Britain during World War I, wrote an article titled “I Talked to Hitler” in the *Daily Express* newspaper. It appeared just six months after the Germans militarized the Rhineland and one month after the Olympics.

I have now seen the famous German Leader and also something of the great change he has effected.

Whatever one may think of his methods — and they are certainly not those of a parliamentary country — there can be no doubt that he has achieved a marvellous transformation in the spirit of the people, in their attitude towards each other, and in their social and economic outlook. . . .

There is for the first time since the war a general sense of security. The people are more cheerful. There is a greater sense of general gaiety of spirit throughout the land. It is a happier Germany. I saw it everywhere and Englishmen I met during my trip and who knew Germany well were very impressed with the change. . . .

As to his popularity, especially among the youth of Germany, there can be no manner of doubt. The old trust him; the young idolise him. It is not the admiration accorded to a popular Leader. It is the worship of a national hero who has saved his country from utter despondency and degradation. . . .

He is as immune from criticism as a king in a monarchical country. He is something more. He is the George Washington of Germany — the man who won for his country independence from all her oppressors. . . .

Hitler fought in the ranks throughout the war, and knows from personal experience what war means. . . .

It is now an avowed part of the Hitler policy to build up an army which will be strong enough to resist every invader from whatever quarter the attack may come. I believe he has already achieved that measure of immunity. . . .

There is no attempt to conceal these facts. Re-armament proceeds quite openly, and they vaunt it.<sup>1</sup>

1 David Lloyd George, “I Talked to Hitler,” *The Daily Express*, September 17, 1936.

## Connection Questions

1. What does David Lloyd George admire about Hitler? Why does he call Hitler “the George Washington of Germany”? Would you agree?
2. How does the former British prime minister describe Hitler’s achievements in Germany?
3. What facts must Lloyd George have either ignored or not known about in order to conclude, “There is a greater sense of general gaiety of spirit throughout the land. It is a happier Germany”? Whose perspectives does his conclusion leave out?
4. In this article, what is Lloyd George’s tone? Does this article help to explain why Hitler was not, at this time, challenged by many European leaders? If so, how?

## Reading 4

# Intervention in Spain

In July 1936, a civil war began in Spain when a group who called themselves the Nationalists, led by General Francisco Franco, used force to overturn the left-wing government of the Spanish republic. Like Hitler, Franco admired Italy's Benito Mussolini, and the dictatorship Franco sought to create in Spain was modeled in part on Mussolini's fascist dictatorship. Only a few nations took sides in the conflict: the Soviet Union's Communist government backed the Republicans, while Italy and Germany supported Franco's Nationalists. Although most nations did not take sides, some of their citizens did. Nearly 3,000 Americans, known collectively as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, joined about 40,000 volunteers from 52 countries to serve in international fighting units that supported democracy.

Franco's forces did receive military help from Germany and Italy, which both sent army and air-force units. For Hitler, in particular, the war offered a chance both to attack a government allied with communism and to try out new ways of fighting that would prove nearly overwhelming in future conflicts. One such new technique was the bombing of civilians and cities in attacks designed to bring terror, which is what happened in the Spanish town of Guernica.



Outraged by reports and photos of the German air force's bombing of civilians during the Spanish Civil War, Pablo Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 in response to the destruction of the town of that name.

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain / Bridgeman Images



British journalist George Steer broke the news of a large-scale attack on civilians in the London *Times* and the *New York Times* on April 27, 1937.

Guernica, the most ancient town of the Basques [an ethnic minority in Spain] and the center of their cultural tradition, was completely destroyed yesterday afternoon by insurgent air raiders. The bombardment of this open town far behind the lines occupied precisely three hours and a quarter, during which a powerful fleet of aeroplanes consisting of three German types . . . did not cease unloading on the town bombs weighing from 1,000lb. downwards and, it is calculated, more than 3,000 two-pounder aluminium incendiary projectiles. The fighters, meanwhile, plunged low from above the centre of the town to machine-gun those of the civilian population who had taken refuge in the fields . . .

At 2 a.m. today when I visited the town, the whole of it was a horrible sight, flaming from end to end. The reflection of the flames could be seen in the clouds of smoke above the mountains from 10 miles away. Throughout the night houses were falling until the streets became long heaps of red impenetrable debris. . . .

In the form of its execution and the scale of the destruction it wrought, no less than in the selection of its objective, the raid on Guernica is unparalleled in military history. Guernica was not a military objective. A factory producing war material lay outside the town and was untouched. So were two barracks some distance from the town. The town lay far behind the [battle] lines. The object of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralization of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race.<sup>1</sup>

The newspaper story raised disturbing questions about Germany's involvement in the Spanish Civil War and its motives for attacking unarmed civilians. At the time, no outsider, including Steer, was aware that the bombing had been planned by a German officer—Wolfram von Richthofen—who would later devise the air attacks that set off World War II. At first Richthofen vehemently denied that German airmen had even been involved in the bombing. But there were too many witnesses to the attack who recognized the bombers as belonging to the German air force to continue making that claim for long, so his story changed. He acknowledged Germany's involvement in the attack but insisted that the strike was accidental. At the same time, he secretly boasted to his superiors in Berlin that "the concentrated attack on Guernica was the greatest success." He and his superiors saw the assault in Spain as an opportunity to try out a new military tactic—the blanket bombing of civilians to demoralize the enemy.

To the Germans' dismay, Steer's story was reprinted in newspapers everywhere. The *New York Times* wrote an editorial condemning the "wholesale arson and mass murder, committed by Rebel airplanes of the German type." Several hundred prominent Americans published an "Appeal to the Conscience of the World" in response to the bombings. And on May 1, more than a million French protesters flooded the streets of Paris to voice their outrage.

1 George Steer, "The Tragedy of Guernica," *The Times*, April 27, 1937, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/europe/article2601941.ece>.

Artist Pablo Picasso, a Spaniard who was living in Paris at the time, was stunned not only by Steer's account but also by the photographs that accompanied the story. Appalled, the artist began work on a painting that would become his most powerful political statement. He called it *Guernica*.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did Germany become involved in the Spanish Civil War?
2. Why was the attack on the town of Guernica disturbing to so many observers outside of Spain? How and why did such observers speak out?
3. Does the bombing of Guernica support or refute David Lloyd George's depiction of Hitler and his goals (see Reading 3, "'The George Washington of Germany'")? After the bombing of civilians in Guernica, what do you think world leaders and citizens of other countries had learned about Hitler and Germany?
4. Analyze the painting *Guernica* using the following process:
  - First, look carefully, observing shapes, colors, and the positions of people and objects.
  - Second, write down what you observe without making any interpretation about what the image is trying to say.
  - Third, make a list of questions this image raises for you that you need answers to before you can interpret its meaning. Share and discuss your questions with another person, and try to find some answers.
  - Finally, given the historical context you have learned about, describe what you think the artist, Pablo Picasso, is trying to say. Who is the intended audience, and what does Picasso want the audience to think and feel?
5. How can art influence our understanding of an event? Why might a famous painter's depiction of the attack on Guernica have been meaningful to those outside of Spain who were trying to understand the event?

## Reading 5

# A Decline in Public Enthusiasm

The remilitarizing of the Rhineland, the Berlin Olympics, and German participation in the Spanish Civil War all kept Adolf Hitler in the international news. While some praised Hitler for re-energizing Germany, many diplomats and reporters who were stationed in Germany had a very different view of the man and his party. Among those diplomats was Raymond H. Geist. His letters to his superiors at the US State Department described what he believed were Germany's foreign policy goals. As early as 1934, he saw a nation unified in its preparation for war.

Geist believed that most Germans supported efforts to once again make their nation a world power. He noted that many young Nazis were enthusiastic about the idea and the militarization it involved: "They speak of gas war, of bacteriological war, of the use of death-dealing rays. They boast that airplanes will not pass the German frontiers. Their ideas of Germany's invincibility and Germany's power in 'the next war' are really fantastical."<sup>1</sup>

Geist also expressed concern over the way the German government was promoting militarism: "It is one of the amazing things of modern history that the Government of a great power should definitely teach its children to cherish ideas of valor, heroism, self-sacrifice, unrelieved by any of the virtues which modern civilization has come to place above brute force. . . . [War] may not be imminent, but it is very difficult to foresee how the [warlike] spirit here can be restrained and directed into permanent channels of peace towards the end of this present decade."<sup>2</sup>

Yet by 1937, some Germans were not as enthusiastic about the Nazi government as they had been just a few years before. Apart from the members of the Nazi Party, who increasingly included the youth of the nation, most Germans simply went on with their daily lives. Though they went along with Nazi programs, many began to grow indifferent toward and even tired of the constant propaganda, parades, and other public Nazi displays. Historian David Bankier found evidence of this in the reports by local Nazi officials that were sent from all over Germany to party headquarters in Berlin. He described one such report:

A Nazi official in Berlin had stated that the contributions in his district to Hitler's birthday present were very bad. "Of over 4,000 potential subscribers, only half

1 Quoted in J. Robert Moskin, *American Statecraft: The Story of the U.S. Foreign Service* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2013), 371.

2 Quoted in Robert H. Gillette, *The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalhimer and a Rescue from Nazi Germany* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2011), 32.

had contributed anything; of course the remainder would be forced to pay up, but the fact that they had not done so voluntarily revealed a bad spirit.” The Italian ambassador went so far as to claim that Hitler had little genuine popularity in Berlin, a judgment which seemed to be confirmed by the lukewarm crowds at Hitler’s birthday celebrations. This public mood expressed itself in reluctance to take part in party ceremonies and parades, even in the party conference celebrations, which were naturally of a political nature. Whereas in the early years of Nazi rule the participants in party celebrations were received with applause when marching through the streets, in 1937 the enthusiasm virtually disappeared. People claimed that the ceremonies were boring and the speeches too familiar; the party was no longer seen as a redeeming force. It proved difficult to recruit people to travel to the Nuremberg rally. The only ones whose faith was still strengthened by these rallies were the fanatics.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How does Raymond H. Geist’s description of Germany differ from that of the Lindberghs (see Reading 2, “The ‘New Germany’ on the Olympic Stage”)?
2. From their experience during World War I, Germans knew how devastating war could be. Why might they have supported a leader who seemed to be preparing for another war?
3. Why do you think both Geist and David Lloyd George (see Reading 3, “‘The George Washington of Germany’”) commented on Hitler’s effect on young people? Why might that have been surprising to both observers? What might it have signaled to them?
4. What does the police report reveal about the mood in Germany in 1937? How might such feelings have affected Nazi leaders’ decisions about the next steps in expanding their rule?

<sup>3</sup> David Bankier, *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion Under Nazism* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1992), 57.

## Reading 6

# Taking Austria

In his 1925 book *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler wrote about Austria, his country of birth:

German-Austria must return to the great German motherland, and not because of economic considerations of any sort. No, no: even if from the economic point of view this union were unimportant, indeed, if it were harmful, it ought nevertheless to be brought about. Common blood belongs in a common Reich. As long as the German nation is unable even to band together its own children in one common State, it has no moral right to think of colonization as one of its political aims. Only when the boundaries of the Reich include even the last German, only when it is no longer possible to assure him of daily bread inside them, does there arise, out of the distress of the nation, the moral right to acquire foreign soil and territory.<sup>1</sup>

In July of 1934, a pro-Nazi group tried to overthrow the Austrian government. The coup was planned in Germany, with Hitler's approval and assistance from German officials. But although the group assassinated Austria's chancellor, the attempt failed when Austrian military leaders did not support the coup as the Nazis hoped.<sup>2</sup> Then, despite his previous words and actions, Hitler said in a May 21, 1935, speech to the Reichstag: "Germany neither intends nor wishes to interfere in the internal affairs of Austria, to annex Austria, or to conclude an *Anschluss* [union with Austria]." <sup>3</sup>

But on February 12, 1938, Hitler changed course again. He arranged a meeting with the new Austrian chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, who was appointed after his predecessor's assassination. Hitler demanded that von Schuschnigg appoint members of Austria's Nazi Party to his cabinet and give full political rights to the party or face an invasion by the German army. Fearful that Hitler intended to take over Austria, von Schuschnigg called for a national plebiscite, or vote, to take place on Sunday, March 13, so that Austrians could decide for themselves whether they wished their nation to remain independent or become part of the Third Reich. When Hitler heard this news, he decided to invade Austria immediately to prevent the vote. By Friday morning, March 11, von



The German military parades through Vienna, Austria, on March 15, 1938, after the Anschluss.

1 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), 3, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/meinkampf-f035176mbp>.

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 621–22.

3 William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 296.



Schuschnigg was aware of the coming invasion. That afternoon, he canceled the plebiscite and offered to resign to avoid bloodshed. Hitler immediately demanded that the president of Austria, Wilhelm Miklas, appoint an Austrian member of the Nazi Party as the nation's next chancellor. When the president refused to do so, Hitler ordered that the invasion begin at dawn the next day.

Around midnight, the president gave in and named Hitler's choice as chancellor. Nevertheless, early on Saturday, March 12, German soldiers in tanks and armored vehicles crossed the border into Austria, encountering no resistance.

The Nazis justified the invasion by claiming that Austria had descended into chaos. They circulated fake reports of rioting in Vienna and street fights caused by Communists. German newspapers printed a phony telegram supposedly from the new Austrian chancellor saying that German troops were necessary to restore order.

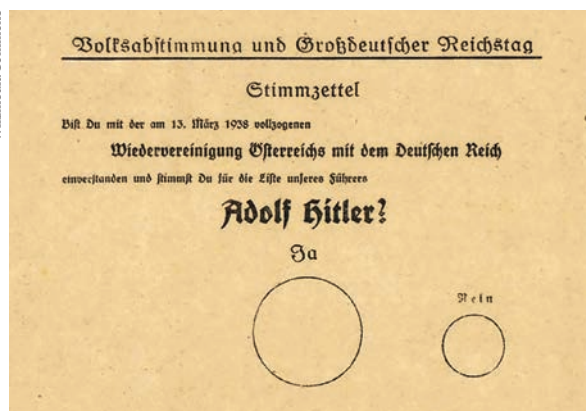
As his troops rushed toward Vienna, Hitler decided to accompany them to his birthplace at Braunau am Inn on the south bank of Austria's Inn River and then on

to Linz, where he had attended school. There he called for an immediate Anschluss. The next day, Austria's parliament formally approved the annexation. Austria no longer existed as a nation; it was now a province of Germany.

After returning to Germany, Hitler issued a new call for a plebiscite on the annexation of Austria. It took place on April 10 under the supervision of the German army. That day, more than 99.75% of Austrian voters supported a union with Germany. Historian Evan Burr Bukey suggests four reasons "for the euphoria with which most Austrians greeted the loss of their country's independence":

First, there can be no doubt that the initial enthusiasm was both genuine and spontaneous . . . Second, it is clear that the populace was profoundly relieved that bloodshed had been avoided . . . The sight of well-equipped Landsers [German soldiers] marching through the country revived memories of wartime solidarity and evoked a sense of satisfaction that the humiliations of 1918 had at last been overcome. Third, nearly all hoped for a dramatic improvement in the material conditions of everyday life; most Austrians were aware of Hitler's economic achievements and had good reason to believe that their expectations would soon be fulfilled. Fourth, there can be little doubt that millions of people welcomed the Anschluss as a chance to put an end to the so-called Jewish Question. The antisemitic violence that followed . . . was perpetrated by the Austrian Nazis and their accomplices, not by the German invaders. That the new regime openly sanctioned persecution and Aryanization, in other words, could only enhance its popularity.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria: Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 35.



**On April 10, 1938, Austrians were asked whether they supported the March 13 Anschluss. 99.75% of voters said that they supported Germany's annexation of Austria into the Third Reich.**

Most Germans were also supportive: Bukey notes that “even sections of society that had been cool towards Hitler up to this point, or rejected him, were now carried along by the event and admitted that Hitler was after all a great and clever statesman who would lead Germany upwards again to greatness and esteem from the defeat of 1918.”<sup>5</sup> Earlier, Benito Mussolini, the leader of Italy, had publicly defended Austria’s independence. Now he backed Hitler. Other world leaders were silent; they seemed to feel that Austria was not worth fighting for. In Britain, for example, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain reminded Parliament that their country had no treaty obligations with Austria. Only Winston Churchill, then a member of Parliament, disagreed. In a speech to the British government, he declared:

The gravity of the event of March 12 cannot be exaggerated. Europe is confronted with a program of aggression . . . unfolding stage by stage, and there is only one choice open, not only to us but to other countries who are unfortunately concerned—either to submit, like Austria, or to else take effective measures while time remains to ward off the danger and, if it cannot be warded off, to cope with it.<sup>6</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What is Hitler’s reasoning, at this point in history, for incorporating Austria into the German Reich? In the excerpt from *Mein Kampf*, what is the larger plan that he suggests the Anschluss is part of?
2. Why did Hitler want to prevent the vote planned by von Schuschnigg in March? Why did he then plan his own vote in April?
3. Why did so many Austrians support the Anschluss? Why did Germans support it?
4. Winston Churchill warned that it was time for countries to take “effective measures” to respond to Germany’s aggression. What choices do you think were available to other countries? What might have been among these countries’ reasons for not intervening as Hitler took over Austria?

<sup>5</sup> Evans, *The Third Reich in Power*, 663.

<sup>6</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 244.

## Reading 7

# A Refugee Crisis

The incorporation of Austria into the Third Reich spelled terror for the 200,000 Jews in that country, as an account in a London newspaper reported:

It is the heartless, grinning, soberly dressed crowds on the Graben and the Karntnerstrasse [streets in Vienna] . . . fluffy Viennese blondes, fighting to get closer to the elevating spectacle of an ashen-faced Jewish surgeon on his hands and knees before half a dozen young hooligans with Swastika armlets and dog-whips, that sticks in my mind. His delicate fingers, which must have made the swift and confident incisions that had saved the lives of many Viennese, held a scrubbing brush. A storm trooper was pouring some acid solution over the brush—and his fingers. Another sluiced the pavement from a bucket, taking care to drench the surgeon's striped trousers as he did so. And the Viennese—not uniformed Nazis or a raging mob, but the Viennese Little Man and his wife—just grinned approval at the glorious fun.<sup>1</sup>

Within weeks of the Anschluss, foreign journalists in Austria were reporting hundreds of similar antisemitic incidents throughout the nation. Some noted a sharp increase in suicides, as thousands of Jews tried desperately to emigrate only to encounter roadblocks wherever they turned. Their difficulty in leaving “Greater Germany” was not with the Nazis, who, faced with the problem of including an additional 200,000 Jews in the Reich, were eager to see Jews leave the country as long as they left their money and other possessions behind. The problem was with other nations, most of whom had no interest in accepting thousands of penniless Jewish refugees.

Between 1,500 and 3,500 Austrian Jews applied for immigration visas to come to the United States in the days following the Anschluss. President Franklin Roosevelt was sympathetic to their plight but believed he did not have the public's support to ask Congress to change the quota system under which immigrants were admitted. A poll published in *Fortune* magazine in 1938 reveals much about public opinion in the United States (see table below).<sup>2</sup>

1 Quoted in Giles MacDonogh, *1938: Hitler's Gamble* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 46.

2 Ishaan Tharoor, “What Americans thought of Jewish refugees on the eve of World War II,” *Washington Post*, November 17, 2015, accessed June 29, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/11/17/what-americans-thought-of-jewish-refugees-on-the-eve-of-world-war-ii/>.

## Attitudes toward Allowing German, Austrian, and Other Political Refugees into the United States, July 1938

We should encourage their arrival even if our immigration quotas are raised.	4.9%
We should allow their arrival but not raise our immigration quotas.	18.2%
Given our current conditions, we should keep them out.	67.4%
I don't know.	9.5%

Source: *Fortune* magazine, July 1938.

Acting on his own, Roosevelt did combine the Austrian and German quotas that, together, would allow more than 7,000 Jewish refugees to enter. In addition, Roosevelt called for an international conference to discuss the growing refugee crisis. Many nations were reluctant to attend, even though the Americans assured them that no country would be expected to “receive a greater number of emigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation.”<sup>3</sup>

Canada was among those reluctant nations. Prime Minister Mackenzie King wrote in his diary, “We must . . . seek to keep this part of the Continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood.” In his view, nothing was to be gained “by creating an internal problem in an effort to meet an international one.”<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, in July 1938, delegates from 32 nations, including Canada, met in Evian, France. They were joined by representatives from dozens of relief organizations and other groups, as well as hundreds of reporters. At the conference, each delegate formally expressed sorrow over the growing number of “refugees” and “deportees,” boasted of his nation’s traditional hospitality, and lamented that his nation was unable to do more in the “present situation.”

The British, noting that many refugees wanted to go to Palestine, which was then under British rule, said they would like to admit more refugees, but in view of the ongoing conflict between Arabs and Jews, it was not a practical solution. The French claimed that their country had already done more than its fair share. The Americans noted that Congress would have to approve any change in the nation’s immigration laws—legislation that set a limit on the number of immigrants the United States would accept from each country each year.

3 Quoted in Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948* (New York: Random House, 1983), 17.

4 Ibid.

Historians Richard Breitman and Allan Lichtman describe the responses of other countries at the conference:

Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Panama stated that they wanted no traders or intellectuals, code words for Jews. Argentina said it had already accommodated enough immigrants from Central Europe. Canada cited its unemployment problem. Australia said that it had no “racial problems” and did not want to create any by bringing in Jewish refugees. Imperial countries such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands said that their tropical territories offered only limited prospects for European refugees. League of Nations High Commissioner Sir Neill Malcolm was openly hostile to the idea of a new refugee organization . . . *The Washington Post* headlined one story on the conference, “YES, BUT—.” It noted, “it has been a disappointment, if not altogether a surprise . . . that delegates take the floor to say, We feel sorry for the refugees and potential refugees but—.”<sup>5</sup>

The Dominican Republic was the only country that agreed to accept Jewish immigrants. In 1937, the nation’s leader, Rafael Trujillo, had ordered his soldiers to massacre thousands of Haitians at the Dominican border. Historians believe he hoped that accepting Jewish refugees might repair his image internationally. He also hoped that Jews would marry local inhabitants and “lighten” the population. He granted visas to a thousand Jews who were to live in Sosúa, a special community established for them.

Only M. J. M. Yepes of Colombia addressed the real issue at the Evian conference. Yepes was a professor who also served as the legal advisor to his country’s permanent delegation to the League of Nations. He told delegates that there were two central questions that they must confront. One was a question of fact that each nation had to answer for itself: How many refugees would it admit? The other question involved a matter of principle: “Can a State, without upsetting the basis of our civilization, and, indeed, of all civilization, arbitrarily withdraw nationality from a whole class of its citizens, thereby making them Stateless Persons whom no country is compelled to receive on its territory?”<sup>6</sup>

Yepes went on to say that as long as that central problem was not decided, the work of the conference would not be lasting and a dangerous example would be set—an example that in his view would make the world “uninhabitable.” But most delegates did not want to deal with either issue.<sup>7</sup>

The Jewish observer from Palestine, Golda Meyerson, who would become prime minister of Israel many years later (as Golda Meir), was not allowed to speak. She wrote:

I don’t think that anyone who didn’t live through it can understand what I felt at Evian—a mixture of sorrow, rage, frustration, and horror. I wanted to get up and scream at them, “Don’t you know that these so-called numbers are human beings, people who may spend the rest of their lives in concentration camps, or wandering

5 Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 109.

6 Debórah Dwork and Robert Jan van Pelt, *Flight from the Reich: Refugee Jews, 1933–1946* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 100.

7 Ibid.



around the world like lepers if you don't let them in?" Of course, I didn't know then that not concentration camps but death camps awaited the refugees whom no one wanted.<sup>8</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did the Anschluss lead to a refugee crisis?
2. How did other countries respond to the refugee crisis? What reasons did they give? What determined whether or not countries were willing to accept Jewish refugees?
3. How would you interpret the *Fortune* poll taken in July 1938? What does it suggest about the United States' universe of obligation at the time?
4. What is the significance of being a "stateless person"? What does it mean for a nation to withdraw nationality from a group? What are the consequences for individuals when they no longer belong to any nation?
5. What responsibility do countries have to refugees coming from outside their borders? What factors should the leaders of countries consider when deciding how to respond to a refugee crisis?

<sup>8</sup> Golda Meir, *My Life* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 158.

## Reading 8

# Crisis in Czechoslovakia

After taking over Austria, Hitler turned his attention to Czechoslovakia—a country created in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles that was home to 3 million people of German descent as well as many of other nationalities. Most of the German-speaking Czechs lived in a western part of the country called the Sudetenland, which bordered Germany. (The map on the next page shows the location of the Sudetenland and illustrates Germany's expansion before World War II.) In 1938, with help from the Nazis, many Germans in the Sudetenland agitated for “a return to the Reich.” By summer, Hitler was openly supporting their demands. By September, when the annual Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg was held, Germany was preparing its military for another invasion. Journalist William L. Shirer wrote about the growing crisis in his diary:

**Prague, September 11**— All quiet here, but you can cut the tension with a knife. Reports that the Germans have massed two hundred thousand troops on the Austro-Czech border. . . . [A]ll awaiting Hitler's speech tomorrow.

**Prague, September 12**— The Great Man has spoken. And there's no war, at least not for the moment. That is Czechoslovakia's first reaction to Hitler's speech at Nuremberg tonight. Hitler hurled insults and threats at Prague. But he did not demand that the Sudetens be handed over to him outright. . . . He insisted, however, on “self-determination” for the Sudetens. . . .

**Prague, September 13–14 (3 a.m.)**— War very near, and since midnight we've been waiting for the German bombers, but so far no sign. Much shooting up in the Sudetenland. . . . A few Sudeteners and Czechs killed and the Germans have been plundering Czech and Jewish shops. So the Czechs very rightly proclaimed martial law this morning in five Sudeten districts. About seven this evening we learned that [Konrad] Henlein [the leader of the Sudeten Germans] had sent a six-hour ultimatum to the government. . . . It demanded: repeal of martial law, withdrawal of Czech police from the Sudetenland, “separation” of military barracks from the civilian population. Whether it is backed by Hitler we do not know. . . . Anyway, the Czech government has turned it down. It could not have done otherwise. . . . We wait now for Hitler's move. . . .

**Prague, September 14 (evening)**— Drove two hundred miles through Sudetenland. The fighting is all over. The revolt, inspired from Germany with German arms, has been put down. And the Czech police and military, acting with a restraint that is incredible, have suffered more casualties than the Sudeten Germans. Unless Hitler again interferes, the crisis has passed its peak. . . .

## The Growth of Nazi Germany



Between 1933 and 1939, Greater Germany expanded significantly as a result of the Third Reich's annexations and conquests in eastern Europe.

Some time after dinner a newsboy rushed into the lobby of the Ambassador [Hotel] with extra editions of a German-language [news]paper. . . . The headlines said: [British Prime Minister Neville] Chamberlain to fly to Berchtesgaden tomorrow to see Hitler! The Czechs are dumbfounded. They suspect a sell-out and I'm afraid they're right. . . .

**Prague, September 16**— . . . Berlin reports Hitler has demanded—and Chamberlain more or less accepted—a plebiscite [vote] for the Sudeteners. The government here says it is out of the question. But they are afraid *that* is what happened at Berchtesgaden.

**Prague, September 18**— The Czechs are stiffening as it becomes evident that Chamberlain is readying to support Hitler's demands for taking over Sudetenland and indeed, in effect, Czechoslovakia. . . .

**Later.**— I must go to Germany. At midnight [journalist Edward R.] Murrow phoned from London with the news. The British and French have decided they will not fight for Czechoslovakia and are asking Prague to surrender unconditionally to Hitler and turn over the Sudetenland to Germany.

**Berlin, September 19**— The Nazis, and quite rightly too, are jubilant over what they consider Hitler's greatest triumph up to date. "And without bloodshed, like all the others," they kept rubbing it in to me today. As for the good people in the street, they're immensely relieved. They do not want war. The Nazi press full of hysterical headlines. All lies. Some examples: WOMEN AND CHILDREN MOWED DOWN BY CZECH ARMoured CARS, or BLOODY REGIME—NEW CZECH MURDERS OF GERMANS. . . .

No word from Prague tonight as to whether the Czechs will accept Chamberlain's ultimatum.

**Berlin, September 26**— Hitler has finally burned his last bridges. Shouting and shrieking in the worst state of excitement I've ever seen him in, he stated in the Sportpalast [arena] tonight that he would have his Sudetenland by October 1— next Saturday, today being Monday. If [President of Czechoslovakia Edvard] Beneš doesn't hand it over to him he will go to war, this Saturday. . . .

**Munich, September 30**— It's all over. At twelve thirty this morning—thirty minutes after midnight—Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain, and [French Prime Minister Édouard] Daladier signed a pact turning over Sudetenland to Germany. The German occupation begins tomorrow, Saturday, October 1. . . . [Hitler] gets everything he wanted, except that he has to wait a few days longer for *all* of it. His waiting ten short days has saved the peace of Europe—a curious commentary on this sick, decadent continent. . . .

Czechoslovakia, which is asked to make all the sacrifices so that Europe may have peace, was not consulted here at any stage of the talks. Their two representatives . . . were told at one thirty a.m. that Czechoslovakia would *have* to accept, told not by Hitler, but by Chamberlain and Daladier!<sup>1</sup>

The Czechs were outraged by the agreement. And it worried at least one of the leaders who had negotiated the deal. When Daladier returned to Paris, he fully expected to be attacked for his failure to stand up to the Germans. Instead he received a hero's welcome. He shook his head and muttered that those who rejoiced at the pact were fools.

Chamberlain knew that the alternative to the agreement was a European war, for which Britain was simply not ready. In anticipation of the kind of bombing that had already been used in the Spanish Civil War, gas masks were issued to the civilian population in Britain. Chamberlain declared in a radio broadcast to the British people, "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing."<sup>2</sup> After he returned to Germany from Czechoslovakia to announce the agreement, Chamberlain was greeted as the leader who had prevented war. Thousands of Germans lined the streets of Munich to cheer the British leader as he traveled to the airport. When he landed in London, a crowd gathered to applaud his promise that the pact would bring "peace for our time." He added that it would be a "peace with honor."

1 William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934–1941* (New York: Knopf, 1941), 120–47.

2 Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 672.

In Germany, too, there was widespread relief that war had been avoided. But although he enjoyed strong support for bringing the Sudetenland Germans into the Reich, Hitler was disappointed that war had been avoided. To him, war was an inevitable and welcome part of the struggle between races that drove history forward. For Hitler, war was “a key instrument of policy; not the last resort, but in some instances the preferred approach.”<sup>3</sup> His willingness to go to war meant that Hitler was unlikely ever to compromise. He would demand time and again that his opponents give in completely to his demands.

### Connection Questions

1. What were the underlying reasons for Hitler’s demand that the Sudetenland become part of the German Reich? What turned this demand into an international crisis?
2. Evaluate the agreement that was made about the Sudetenland. Which parties had to give something up? Which parties gained something in return?
3. Historians often refer to this agreement as “appeasement.” What does it mean to appease? When might one nation try to “appease” another? What could be the benefits of such a policy? What might be the dangers?

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 37.



## Reading 9

# Beyond Any Nation's Universe of Obligation

Throughout 1938, Hitler and his top officials accelerated their campaign against Jews, continually adding restrictions on how they could live their lives. Jews were no longer allowed to own a business in Germany. All Jewish-owned companies therefore had to be sold to "Aryans," usually at a fraction of their value. In June, the Nazis rounded up Jews who had been previously convicted of crimes in order to remove the so-called criminal element from the population, although most of those arrested had been guilty of nothing worse than a traffic violation. About 500 men described as anti-social were sent to a concentration camp at Buchenwald, a town near Weimar, Germany.

Keystone / Stringer / Getty Images



Thousands of Polish Jews were expelled by Germany and turned away by Poland in the fall of 1938, leaving them trapped and living in unsuitable conditions along the German-Polish border.

In August, a new law required that by January 1, 1939, all Jews must have a name easily recognized as Jewish. If one's first name did not appear on an approved list of names of supposedly Jewish origin, the Nazis would add "Israel" to the man's first name and "Sarah" to the woman's. In September, the government announced that Jewish lawyers could no longer practice their profession. A month later, Switzerland, which had an open border with Germany that many Jews trying to leave Germany wanted to cross, asked the German government to distinguish between Jews and non-Jews on their passports.

Jewish passports were marked with the letter J. After that, only Germans carrying a passport without the letter were admitted into Switzerland.

The Nazis then turned their attention to so-called foreign Jews—Jews who, after World War I, had moved to Germany from other countries. Not allowed to become German citizens, they remained citizens of the countries from which they or their families had migrated. By autumn of 1937, the Nazis were expelling all Jews who were citizens of the Soviet Union. Poland's antisemitic government feared that Germany would expel Polish Jews next. Therefore, in autumn of 1938, the Polish government issued a

decree that citizens living outside Poland had to revalidate their passports in order to have the right to return to the country. The decree gave Poland control over how many Jews could return. Although few of them wanted to return to Poland, they needed valid passports to immigrate to any other nation. German officials, worried that Polish Jews would be trapped in Germany, responded to the Polish decree by immediately expelling 14,000 Jewish residents who were Polish citizens. They were brutally transported to the border, where they waited for weeks as neither country accepted them. After Jews already living in Poland agreed to shelter them, the Polish government finally relented and allowed them to enter.<sup>1</sup>

Hugo Moses, a German Jew, recalled the day in October 1938 when the Polish Jews were expelled:

The Gestapo suddenly appeared at the homes of all Jews of Polish ancestry in every city in Germany and told them to vacate their apartments within five hours, taking all their moveable goods with them. The unfortunate people packed up the most indispensable of their meager possessions and gathered, weeping and lamenting, at their assembly points. In the city where I was employed, the poor gathered on the busiest square in the middle of the city. The children had been taken out of school and picked up by officials; hungry, frightened and crying loudly, they ran to their parents. The cordoning officials had great difficulty holding back the excited and shouting people who had gathered around the square. A few Aryan men and women who had expressed their criticisms too loudly were led away. An Aryan doctor took out of the crowd a Polish woman who was about to give birth and accompanied her to the hospital. Two days later the child was born.

The others were led away to the railway station and there loaded onto cattle wagons, and we Jewish men used lorries [trucks] and cars to help them load their few possessions until our hands were bleeding in the freezing air. A girlfriend of my daughter's later wrote to her from a camp on the Polish border: "Had the train run off the rails and killed us all, we would have been better off."<sup>2</sup>

Zindel Grynszpan, a tailor from Hanover, and his family were taken to the railroad station as the streets filled with people shouting, "The Jews to Palestine." He recalled:

When we reached the border, we were searched to see if anybody had money, and if anybody had more than ten marks, the rest was taken from him. . . .

The SS were giving us, as it were, protective custody, and we walked two kilometers on foot to the Polish border. . . . The SS men were whipping us, and hit those who lingered and blood was flowing on the road. . . .

Then a Polish general and some officers arrived. They examined our papers and saw that we were Polish citizens. . . . It was they who decided to let us enter Poland. They took us to a village [Zbaszyn] of about six thousand people, even though we

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 107–08.

2 Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf, eds., *The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 21.

were twelve thousand. The rain was driving hard, people were fainting. . . . There was no food.<sup>3</sup>

Grynszpan's daughter sent her 17-year-old brother, Herschel, who was living in France at the time, a postcard describing the family's experiences. Angry and frustrated at being unable to help his family, he walked into the German embassy in Paris on November 7 and shot Ernst vom Rath, a Nazi diplomat. Herschel was immediately arrested. When the diplomat died two days later, the Nazis vowed to avenge his death.

### Connection Questions

1. How did the Nazis' campaign against Jews in Germany intensify in 1938? What events and actions before 1938 had made these new laws possible?
2. Describe the dilemma faced by Jews in Germany in 1938. How was the dilemma the result of Nazi policies? How was it the result of decisions made by other countries?
3. What does this reading suggest about the consequences of being outside any nation's universe of obligation?

<sup>3</sup> "The Trial of Adolf Eichmann," Session 14, April 25, 1961, The Nizkor Project, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/e/eichmann-adolf/transcripts/Sessions/Session-014-01.html>.

## Reading 10

# The Night of the Pogrom

The night of November 9–10, 1938, brought the worst outbreak of terror and violence against Jews all over Germany since the Nazis came to power. It was later called *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), a night during which, according to the Nazis' propaganda, "the German people" took revenge on all Jews for the murder of a Nazi diplomat in Paris by a young Jew named Herschel Grynszpan (see Reading 9, "Beyond Any Nation's Universe of Obligation"). In reality, the violence had been planned and organized by the Nazis, with strict orders issued to state police on the morning of November 9 by Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller:

Actions against the Jews and in particular against their synagogues will occur in a short time in all of Germany. They are not to be hindered. However, it is to be made certain, in agreement with the ordinary police, that plundering and similar law-breaking will be held to a minimum. . . .

The seizure of 20 to 30 thousand Jews in the Reich is to be prepared. Wealthy Jews above all are to be chosen. More detailed directives will appear in the course of this night.

If in the course of this action Jews are found in possession of arms, the sharpest measures are to be employed. Special troops of the SS as well as of the general SS can be drawn into the action.<sup>1</sup>

Other Nazi groups also received orders in preparation for the destruction of Jewish property that evening. By the morning of November 10, Germans had destroyed thousands of Jewish homes and businesses, and they had set fire to 191 synagogues, the centers of Jewish social and spiritual life, in every part of Greater Germany. Fire departments were instructed not to put out the fires but merely to stand by and make sure that adjacent property did not go up in flames. Although the exact figure is not known, it is likely that anywhere from 1,500 to 3,000 Jews died as a result of the violence and 30,000 others were afterward sent to concentration camps.

Joseph Goebbels, Germany's minister of propaganda, held a press conference the next day. He lied to reporters, telling them that *Kristallnacht* was not a government action but a "spontaneous" expression of German anger with Jews. Two days later, the German government fined the Jewish community one billion marks for "property damaged in the rioting."



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<sup>1</sup> Office of the US Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Vol. III (US Government Printing Office, 1946), 277 (Doc. 374-PS).

Hugo Moses (see Reading 9, "Beyond Any Nation's Universe of Obligation") described what he experienced that night and in the days that followed:

On the evening of 9 November 1938, the SA brown-shirts and the SS black-shirts met in bars to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of [the Nazis'] failed putsch in Munich (see "The First Nazi Uprising" in Chapter 4). Around eleven o'clock in the evening, I came home from a Jewish aid organization meeting and I can testify that most of the "German people" who a day later the government said were responsible for what happened that night lay peacefully in bed that evening. Everywhere lights had been put out, and nothing suggested that in the following hours such terrible events would take place.

Even the uniformed party members were not in on the plan; the order to destroy Jewish property came shortly before they moved from the bars to the Jewish houses. (I have this information from the brother of an SS man who took an active part in the pogroms.)

Stadtarchiv Dortmund



**What remained of the synagogue in Dortmund, Germany, after the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938.**

At 3 a.m. sharp, someone insistently rang at the door to my apartment. I went to the window and saw that the streetlights had been turned off. Nonetheless, I could make out a transport vehicle out of which emerged about twenty uniformed men. I recognized only one of them, a man who served as the leader; the rest came from other localities and cities and were distributed over the district in accordance with marching orders. I called out to my wife: "Don't be afraid, they are party men; please keep calm." Then I went to the door in my pajamas and opened it.

A wave of alcohol hit me, and the mob forced its way into the home. A

leader pushed by me and yanked the telephone off the wall. A leader of the SS men, green-faced with drunkenness, cocked his revolver as I watched and then held it to my forehead and slurred: "Do you know why we've come here, you swine?" I replied, "No," and he went on, "Because of the outrageous act committed in Paris, for which you are also to blame. If you even try to move, I'll shoot you like a pig." I kept quiet and stood, my hands behind my back, in the ice-cold [draft] coming in the open door. An SA man, who must have had a little human feeling, whispered to me: "Keep still. Don't move." During all this time and for another twenty minutes, the drunken SS leader fumbled threateningly with his revolver near my forehead. An inadvertent movement on my part or a clumsy one on his and my life would have been over. If I live to be a hundred, I will never forget that brutish face and those dreadful minutes.



In the meantime, about ten uniformed men had invaded my house. I heard my wife cry: "What do you want with my children? You'll touch the children over my dead body!" Then I heard only the crashing of overturned furniture, the breaking of glass and the trampling of heavy boots. Weeks later, I was still waking from restless sleep, still hearing that crashing, hammering, and striking. We will never forget that night. After about half an hour, which seemed to me an eternity, the brutish drunks left our apartment, shouting and bellowing. The leader blew a whistle and as his subordinates stumbled past him, fired his revolver close to my head, two shots to the ceiling. I thought my eardrums had burst but I stood there like a wall. (A few hours later I showed a police officer the two bullet holes.) The last SA man who left the building hit me on the head so hard with the walking stick he had used to destroy my pictures that a fortnight later the swelling was still perceptible. As he went out, he shouted at me: "There you are, you Jewish pig. Have fun." . . .

Towards dawn, a police officer appeared in order to determine whether there was any damage visible from the outside, such as broken window glass or furniture thrown out into the street. Shaking his head, he said to us, as I showed him the bullet holes from the preceding night: "It's a disgrace to see all this. It wouldn't have happened if we hadn't had to stay in our barracks." As he left, the officer said, "I hope it's the last time this will happen to you."<sup>2</sup>

Two hours later, another police officer appeared and told Moses, "I'm sorry, but I have to arrest you."

I said to him, "I have never broken the law; tell me why you are arresting me." The officer: "I have been ordered to arrest all Jewish men. Don't make it so hard for me, just follow me." My wife accompanied me to the police station. . . .

At the police station, the officers were almost all nice to us. Only one officer told my wife: "Go home. You may see your husband again after a few years of forced labor in the concentration camp, if he's still alive." Another officer, who had been at school with me, said to his comrade: "Man, don't talk such nonsense." To my wife he said: "Just go home now, you'll soon have your husband back." A few hours later my little boy came to see me again. The experiences of that terrible night and my arrest were too much for the little soul, and he kept weeping and looking at me as if I were about to be shot. The police officer I knew well took the child by the hand and said to me: "I'll take the child to my office until you are taken away. If the boy saw that, he'd never forget it for the rest of his life."<sup>3</sup>

After several weeks in prison, Moses was released, thanks to the wife of an "Aryan" acquaintance. Soon after, he and his family managed to leave Germany. Moses told his story for the first time in 1940, just a year and a half after the pogrom. He refused to reveal the name of his town or the identities of those who helped him, because he did not want to endanger those left behind.

2 Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf, eds., *The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 21–23.

3 Ibid., 23.



Jewish men are arrested by the SS during Kristallnacht in Baden-Baden, Germany, and forced to march through the streets to a nearby synagogue to see it destroyed.

For most non-Jewish people in Germany, Kristallnacht was the first time they were confronted with such a savage outbreak of violence against the Jews. Many objected, citing the dangers of mob violence and the wasteful destruction of property. One anonymous letter sent to Goebbels pointed to the damage to Germany's international reputation:

One could weep, one must be ashamed to be a German, part of an Aryan noble people . . . a civilized nation guilty of such a cultural disgrace. Later generations will compare these atrocities with the times of witch-trials. And nobody dares to say a word against them, though 85 per cent of the population is angry as never before. Poor Germany, wake up properly at last.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What did Jews in Germany experience during and immediately after Kristallnacht? What do you imagine other Germans would have seen and experienced that night?
2. What choices did Germans face on the night of Kristallnacht? What choices did they face in its aftermath?
3. To what extent was Kristallnacht similar to what had come before? How was Kristallnacht different?
4. Why would the Nazis use the murder of one man in Paris to incite violence against an entire group in Germany?

<sup>4</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem: International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem, 2008), 179.

## Reading 11

# Opportunism during Kristallnacht

Despite Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller's instructions to state police that plundering be held to a minimum (see Reading 10, "The Night of the Pogrom"), the theft of goods, property, and money from Jews by German police, SS members, and civilians amid the chaos of Kristallnacht was widespread.

German newspapers reported the looting of and theft from Jewish-owned businesses. According to Berlin's *Daily Herald* newspaper, "The great shopping centers looked as though they had suffered an air raid . . . Showcases were torn from the walls, furniture broken, electric signs smashed to fragments." The *News Chronicle* newspaper, also from Berlin, reported looters "smashing with peculiar care the windows of jewellery shops and, sniggering, stuffing into their pockets the trinkets and necklaces that fell on the pavements."<sup>1</sup>

In Vienna, Helga Milberg, who was eight years old during Kristallnacht, recalled that all of the goods and equipment from her father's butcher shop were stolen during the pogrom. "My father saw that the other storekeepers had helped themselves to everything," she wrote.<sup>2</sup> According to historian Martin Gilbert, when a British reporter asked a Nazi official about the widespread theft of goods from Jewish businesses during Kristallnacht in Vienna, the official responded:

"We began seizing goods from Jewish shops because sooner or later they would have been nationalised [confiscated by the government] anyway." The goods thus seized, the official added, "will be used to compensate us for at least part of the damage which the Jews have been doing for years to the German people."<sup>3</sup>

Gilbert also describes how Kurt Fuchsl's family lost their home.

Seven-year-old Kurt Fuchsl was bewildered by the events of Kristallnacht, and by being forced to leave home with his family early on the morning of November 10. He later recalled: "What happened, as recounted to me by my Mother, was that an interior decorator had taken a picture of our beautiful living room and displayed the picture of our apartment in his shop window. A Frau [Mrs.] Januba saw the picture and heard that we were Jewish. She came around to the apartment and asked if it was for sale. She was told it wasn't, but a few days later, on the morning of Kristallnacht, she came back with some officers and said, 'This apartment is now mine.' She showed a piece of paper with a swastika stamped on it and told us that we would



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<sup>1</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Kristallnacht: Prelude to Destruction* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 46–47.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

have to leave by six that evening." Kurt Füchsl's mother protested to the officers who were accompanying Frau Januba that she had a sick child at home who was already asleep. "All right," they told her, "but you have to get out by six in the morning."<sup>4</sup>

German officials also stole cash from Jewish businesses and families. Two weeks after Kristallnacht, Margarete Drexler wrote the following letter to the Gestapo, requesting the return of the money officials had taken from her home in Mannheim, Germany:

Mannheim, 24 November 1938

Margarete Drexler, Landau Pfalz Suedring St. 10

To the Secret State Police Landau (Pfalz) The sum of 900 Marks in cash was confiscated from me in the course of the action of 10 November. I herewith request to act for the return of my money, as I need it urgently for me and my child's livelihood. I hope that my request will be granted, as my husband died as a result of his injuries during the war — he fought and died for his fatherland with extreme courage — and I am left without any income. Until recent years you could have found a photo of my husband on the wall next to the picture of Generalfeldmarschall [Paul] von Hindenburg in the canteen of the 23 Infantry regiment in Landau. This was done to honour his high military performance. His medals and decorations prove that he fought with great courage and honour. He received: The Iron Cross First Class, The Iron Cross Second Class, The Military Order of Merit Fourth Class with swords. The Military Order of Sanitation 2 class with a blue-white ribbon. This ribbon is usually bestowed only upon recipients of the Max Joseph Order, which accepts only members of the nobility. I can only hope that as a widow of such a man, so honoured by his country, my request for the return of my property will not be in vain.

With German greetings,

(signed) Frau Margarete Drexler

Widow of reserve staff surgeon

Dr. Hermann Drexler<sup>5</sup>

In 1940, Drexler was arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp in France, where she died.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the chaos of Kristallnacht present opportunities for German officers and civilians to take property from Jews? Why did they defy orders not to plunder?
2. Why do you think Margarete Drexler described her husband's military service and honors when she requested that the Gestapo return her money?
3. Why might incidents of chaos and violence lead people to make impulsive and even illegal decisions? Have you heard of more recent instances of plundering and disregard for property during periods of violence and unrest?

<sup>4</sup> Gilbert, *Kristallnacht*, 62.

<sup>5</sup> Yad Vashem, "Looting during 'Crystal Night,'" accessed June 29, 2016, [http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203238.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203238.pdf).

## Reading 12

# A Family Responds to Kristallnacht

Marie Kahle (a teacher), her husband (a university professor and Lutheran pastor), and their sons witnessed the events of Kristallnacht in the city of Bonn and the effects those events had on their Jewish neighbors and colleagues. Marie Kahle wrote about the choices she and her family made the next day:

On 10 November, 1938, at 11:30 in the morning, the wife of a Jewish colleague came to me and reported that both the synagogues in Bonn had been set on fire and that SS men had destroyed the Jewish shops, to which I replied: "That can't be true!" She gave me a manuscript to keep, her husband's life work. Then one of my sons brought the same news.

My third son immediately went, without my knowing it, to a Jewish clockmaker's shop, helped the man's wife hide a few things and brought home a chest with the most valuable jewelry and time-pieces. Then he went to a chocolate shop, warned the owner and helped her move tea, coffee, cocoa, etc. to a room in the very back of the building. While three SS men were destroying everything in the front of the shop, he slipped out the back door with a suitcase full of securities and rode home with it on his bicycle. Later on, he spent weeks selling these hidden things to our acquaintances and thus made money for the two shop owners that the Gestapo knew nothing about. A Jewish colleague of my husband's stayed with us all day long on 10 November and thus avoided being arrested.

From 11 November on, my sons worked furiously to help the Jewish shopkeepers clear out their shops. I couldn't take part in this myself because I did not want to endanger my husband's position. I could only visit the poor people. During one of these visits, my eldest son and I were surprised by a policeman, who wrote down my name. The consequence was a newspaper article . . . for 17 November 1938 headed "This is a betrayal of the people: Frau Kahle and her son help the Jewess Goldstein clear out."

On the basis of this newspaper article, my husband was immediately suspended and he was forbidden to enter . . . the university buildings. My eldest son was also forbidden to enter the university. He was convicted by a disciplinary court. . . . During the night, our house was attacked. Window panes were broken, etc. . . . The police came a short time later but went away again immediately. One of the policemen advised me to look out into the street: there, we found written in large red letters on the pavement: "Traitors to the People! Jew-lovers!" We washed the writing away with turpentine.



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However, since the people were constantly coming back in their car, I openly rode away on my bicycle. I did not want to be beaten to death in front of my children and I was also only a danger to my family. I found shelter in a small Catholic convent, where the nuns were kind enough to look after me and my youngest child. During the interrogation by the Gestapo a few days later, I was asked whether I knew the license number of the car whose occupants had made the attack. When I said "no", I was released. As I came out of the Gestapo building, this same car stood in front of the door. I even recognized the driver.

Particularly important in this whole period was a visit in 1939 by a well-known neurologist who, as Reich Education Director . . . was well up on Jewish matters. He told me, on two afternoons when we were alone, what would happen to me and my family along the lines of "Jews and friends of Jews must be exterminated. We are exterminating friends of Jews and all their offspring." Then he said that I could not be saved, but my family could. When I asked what I should do, he gave his answer in the form of a couple of stories in which the wife committed suicide and thereby saved her family. Then he asked: "How much Veronal [a sleeping pill] do you have?" When I answered, "Only two grams," he wrote me a prescription for the quantity that I was lacking. I carried the Veronal around with me for a few days, but then decided not to die, but instead to try to escape abroad with my family.

In four months, only three of my husband's colleagues dared to visit us. I was not allowed to go out during the day. When one evening I met a colleague's wife and complained that no friends or acquaintances had dared to visit me, she said: "That's not cowardice; we are just facing facts."<sup>1</sup>

Soon after, the family left Germany.

## Connection Questions

1. What did members of the Kahle family do to help their Jewish neighbors in the days after Kristallnacht? How might you describe their roles? Were they bystanders? Upstanders?
2. What were the risks and consequences of the Kahles' actions? According to Marie Kahle's account, did they stop to consider the possible consequences before acting?

<sup>1</sup> Marie Kahle, in *The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht*, ed. Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 88–90.

## Reading 13

# Thoroughly Reprehensible Behavior

Wilhelm Kahle, Marie Kahle's eldest son (see Reading 12, "A Family Responds to Kristallnacht"), was a student at the University of Bonn. He was called before the university's disciplinary court for helping a Jewish storekeeper restore order to her shop after Kristallnacht. His "crimes" are spelled out in this "Disciplinary Judgment."

The student of musicology Wilhelm Kahle will be punished, because of behavior unworthy of a student in regard to the protest action against Jewish businesses, by dismissal from the university and denial of credit for the semester's work.

On 10 November 1938, there occurred in Bonn, as a result of the murder of the legation councilor vom Rath, a demonstration against Jews, in which the corset shop owned by the Jewess E. Goldstein was affected. On the late afternoon of 12 November 1938, the accused went with his mother to this shop, in which the latter had earlier made purchases. When they arrived at the shop, around 6 or 6:30 p.m., three Jewish females were leaving it. In the shop they met the owner and another Jewish person named Herz. The shop owner was busy putting boxes back on the shelves. After they had been there for about three minutes, Police Sergeant Peter Stammen entered the shop and wrote down the names of the Jewish persons and then also the name of the student Kahle's mother, and in doing so had some difficulties with the latter. He then turned to the student Kahle, who was putting the boxes that were on the counter back on the shelves, and asked him whether he was an interior decorator. The student said he was not, and then gave his name.

Contrary to the charge, the Disciplinary Court has not been able to determine that the accused intended from the outset . . . to go to the Jewish shop. It is more of the opinion that no preconceived intention lay behind this visit, but rather that the visit took place only on the occasion of passing by the demolished shop. Further, the Disciplinary Court has not derived from the proceedings the impression that the student helped the Jewess put her merchandise back on the shelves but sees the student's actions simply as an effort, without any special intention, to help the Jewess in her work or to support her in some way.

Nonetheless, the student's behavior is thoroughly reprehensible. By finding it justifiable to enter a Jewish shop after the given incidents, he seriously endangered the reputation and dignity of the university and thereby violated his academic duties. Articles II and III of the Disciplinary Code for Students, 1 April 1935. He was to be penalized.

The accused's behavior requires a vigorous atonement. Since the accused seemed to be a little inept and awkward during the proceedings and was obviously under



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the influence of his mother, the Disciplinary Court has decided in mitigation merely to dismiss him from the university and deny him the credit for the entire semester's work.

In imposing this punishment, which is mild in relation to the offense, the Disciplinary Court has acted on the basis of the expectation that the student will pursue his further education at a greater distance from his parents' home, so that in the future he can mature into a more independent, more self-confident and more responsible person.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How does the disciplinary report extend your understanding of the Kahles' actions, as described in Reading 12, "A Family Responds to Kristallnacht"?
2. How were Wilhelm Kahle's actions seen by his university?
3. Why might the Nazis have wanted young people to separate from their families?
4. The disciplinary court's report concludes with hope that Wilhelm Kahle will become a more "responsible" person. According to the court, what would make Kahle more responsible? What does it mean to you to be a responsible person?

<sup>1</sup> Uta Gerhardt and Thomas Karlauf, eds., *The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2012), 90–91.

## Reading 14

# A Visitor's Perspective on Kristallnacht

René Juvet, a Swiss merchant, was visiting friends in the countryside during the events of Kristallnacht. The next morning he drove to the town of Bayreuth, where he saw people watching as houses burned to the ground. At one point, he got out of his car to take a closer look at a crowd gathered in front of a warehouse where dozens of Jews were being held.

I was reluctant to add myself to the assembled crowd but I had to see with my own eyes what was happening there. Through the great windows you could see perhaps fifty people in a bleak, empty hall. Most of them stood against the wall, staring gloomily, a few walked restlessly about, others were sitting—in spite of the severe cold—on the bare floor. Almost all of them, incidentally, were inadequately dressed; some only had thrown on a topcoat over their nightclothes. The SA people who had picked them up during the night had apparently not allowed them time to put on more clothing. Compared to what happened later, this was only a small beginning.

At the end of his description of Kristallnacht, Juvet writes:

To the credit of my [non-Jewish German colleagues] I can report that they—with the exception of Neder, who took part in the operation in his role as an SA Führer—disapproved of the excesses. Some more, others less. Waldmeyer said nothing, but he was very thoughtful in ensuing days; Hoffmann, who could almost count himself as one of the old guard, made no attempt to conceal his horror from me. I also heard that the workers were outraged. . . .

A little while after this I met our Nuremberg representative, a harmless and industrious person. He was a member of the SA but was, by chance, kept away from home that evening. . . .

"I am happy I was not in Nuremberg that evening, it certainly would have rubbed me the wrong way," said our representative.

I asked him whether he would have taken part if he had been there. "Of course," he said, "orders are orders."

His words clarified a whole lot of things for me.<sup>1</sup>



LESSON

Teach **Understanding**  
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<sup>1</sup> René Juvet, "Kristallnacht," in *Travels in the Reich, 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany*, ed. Oliver Lubrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 176–78.

## Connection Questions

1. What words and phrases do René Juvet and his acquaintances use to describe Kristallnacht? What attitudes does their language convey?
2. An SA member tells Juvet that even though he did not like the violence on Kristallnacht, he would have participated if called upon to do so, because “orders are orders.” What do you think Juvet means by writing, “His words clarified a whole lot of things for me”? What did the SA man’s words clarify for Juvet? What do the SA man’s words suggest to you? How might they help us understand why some people chose to participate?
3. Why might people participate in violence even if they don’t fully support its goals?



## Reading 15

# World Responses to Kristallnacht

Newspapers around the world reported the events of Kristallnacht. The following story by Otto D. Tolischus of the *New York Times* was typical of many.

A wave of destruction, looting and incendiaries [fires] unparalleled in Germany since the Thirty Years War and in Europe generally since the Bolshevik revolution, swept over Greater Germany today as National Socialist cohorts took vengeance on Jewish shops, offices and synagogues for the murder by a young Polish Jew of Ernst vom Rath, third secretary of the German Embassy in Paris.

Beginning systematically in the early morning hours in almost every town and city in the country, the wrecking, looting and burning continued all day. Huge but mostly silent crowds looked on and the police confined themselves to regulating traffic and making wholesale arrests of Jews "for their own protection."

All day the main shopping districts as well as the side streets of Berlin and innumerable other places resounded to the shattering of shop windows falling to the pavement, the dull thuds of furniture and burning shops and synagogues. Although shop fires were quickly extinguished, synagogue fires were merely kept from spreading to adjoining buildings.<sup>1</sup>

People everywhere were outraged. As the archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang, wrote in a November 12 letter to the editor of the *London Times*, "There are times when the mere instincts of humanity make silence impossible." Thousands of Americans agreed. They showed their outrage at huge rallies held in support of German Jews. In reporting these events to Berlin, the German ambassador expressed a fear that such protests might jeopardize the agreement concerning the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia.

Leaders in Britain and France were very careful in how they responded. When members of Britain's Parliament asked Neville Chamberlain to condemn the pogrom, he simply said that newspaper reports were "substantially correct." He also expressed "deep and widespread sympathy" for those who were "to suffer so severely" for the "senseless crime committed in Paris."<sup>2</sup>

Similar comments from French leaders led the editor of a newspaper called *La Lumière* to warn, "In the past, when we protested against massacres in Ethiopia, China, Spain, we were told, 'Silence! You are warmongering.' When we protested against the mutilation of Czechoslovakia, we were told



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1 Otto D. Tolischus, "The Pogrom," *New York Times*, November 19, 1938.

2 "Chamberlain Deplores Nazi Pogroms; Acts to Aid British Jews in Reich," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, November 14, 1938, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.jta.org/1938/11/15/archive/chamberlain-deplores-nazi-pogroms-acts-to-aid-british-jews-in-reich>.

'Keep quiet! You are a war party.' Today, when we protest against the contemptible persecution of defenseless Jews and their wives and children, we are told, 'Be silent! France is afraid.'"<sup>3</sup>

Condemnation from leaders in the United States was broad-based and widespread. Clergymen of all faiths spoke out against the burning of synagogues; politicians of all parties—Republicans and Democrats, isolationists and interventionists—denounced the violence against Jews and their houses of worship. The only world leader to take a stand was President Franklin

D. Roosevelt. On November 15, six days after the pogrom, he opened a press conference by stating, "The news of the last few days from Germany has deeply shocked public opinion in the United States. Such news from any part of the world would produce a similar profound reaction among American people in every part of the nation. I myself could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth-century civilization."

But Roosevelt's response had to take into account widespread isolationist and antisemitic feelings in his administration, in Congress, and in the country. At his press conference, Roosevelt announced that the United States was withdrawing its ambassador to Germany, but he did not offer to help the thousands of Jews who were trying desperately to leave the Third Reich.

Despite the outrage against the violence in Germany, there was not much support for lifting or modifying immigration restrictions. Since the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, Americans had been worried

about unemployment, the economy, and coping with labor unrest. They had been unwilling to confront racism in their own country and fearful of being drawn into foreign conflicts in which they felt their country had no interest. All these matters seemed much more important than the problem of stateless Jews in Europe. Although many were willing to accept a few famous writers, artists, and scientists who happened to be Jews, they were not willing to let in thousands of other Jews.

Few Americans were violently antisemitic, but many felt that Jews should be "kept in their place." Enforcement of the nation's immigration laws reflected these views. The United States could legally admit 27,000 immigrants from Germany each year. Yet in 1934, the State Department had allowed only about 5,000 to enter the country. Approximately 6,000 were permitted to enter in 1935 and less than 11,000 in 1936.

In February 1939, Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts sponsored a bill based on a popular British program. Between 1938 and 1939, the British admitted 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish children from "Greater Germany" as part of a program known as the Kindertransport (children's transport). Wagner and

### MAYFLOWER



In the *Chicago Daily News* for November 23, 1938, the cartoonist Cecil Jensen pleaded for world leaders to help Europe's Jews.

3 Quoted in Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Kristallnacht: The Unleashing of the Holocaust* (New York: Peter Bedrick Books, 1989), 155.

Rogers wanted Congress to temporarily admit 20,000 Jewish children until it was safe for them to return home. The first 10,000 would arrive in 1939 and the remaining 10,000 in 1940. Most of these children were too young to work, so they would not take away jobs from Americans. Furthermore, their stay would not cost taxpayers a penny because various Jewish groups had agreed to assume financial responsibility for the children.

Yet the bill encountered strong opposition. In January 1939, Gallup, a polling organization, began asking Americans the following question: "It has been proposed to bring to this country 10,000 refugee children from Germany—most of them Jewish—to be taken care of in American homes. Should the government permit these children to come in?"<sup>4</sup> In response, 61% said that the government should not permit the children to come into the country, 30% said that the children should be permitted to come, and 9% said that they had no opinion.<sup>5</sup>

Why, some opponents asked, were Christian children from countries threatened by the Nazis or Chinese children (Japan had invaded China in 1935) not included? Others made openly antisemitic remarks. The wife of the US commissioner of immigration (and the cousin of President Roosevelt) warned that those "20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults."<sup>6</sup> The bill was never passed.

In the summer of 1940, after World War II had begun and the Germans were bombing British cities, the US Congress did vote to accept thousands of British children, mostly non-Jewish, into the country.<sup>7</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How do foreign leaders' responses to Kristallnacht compare to their responses to Germany's aggressive expansion into Austria and the Sudetenland?
2. How did the editor of *La Lumière* describe the difference between the response to Kristallnacht and the response to other nations' massacres?
3. How would you interpret the Gallup poll taken in January 1939? What does it suggest about the United States' universe of obligation at the time?
4. The archbishop of Canterbury wrote, "There are times when the mere instincts of humanity make silence impossible." What does he mean by "the mere instincts of humanity"? When are those times?
5. Does a nation have the right and the responsibility to interfere in the internal events of another country when it believes those events are wrong?

4 Ishaan Tharoor, "What Americans thought of Jewish refugees on the eve of World War II," *Washington Post*, November 17, 2015, accessed June 29, 2016.

5 Frank Newport, "Historical Review: Americans' Views on Refugees Coming to U.S.," Gallup, last modified November 19, 2015, accessed June 29, 2016.

6 Marc Lee Raphael, *Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 297.

7 Judith Tydor Baumel, *Unfulfilled Promise: Rescue and Resettlement of Jewish Refugee Children in the United States, 1934–1945* (Juneau, AK: Denali Press, 1990), 34, 38.

## Reading 16

# Diplomatic Responses: The Smallbones Scheme



Robert Smallbones, a British diplomat who created a visa program that enabled Jews to escape Nazi-occupied Germany, and his wife, Inge.

World leaders responded to the events of Kristallnacht from a distance, but their ambassadors, consuls, and other diplomats had to deal firsthand with the aftermath. Most carried out the wishes of their superiors without complaint, but others refused to do so. When Feng-Shan Ho, the Chinese consul general in Vienna, was ordered to stop issuing visas to China, he ignored the order and continued to issue them to anyone who asked for one. He was aware that Jews could leave Germany *only* if they had a visa to enter another nation.

Robert Smallbones, the British consul-general in Frankfurt, Germany, also tried to help as many Jews as possible, but he went about it in a different way:

On *Kristallnacht*, I happened to be in London. Inga (my grandmother) telephoned me the next morning [from Frankfurt] that hundreds of Jews had besieged the consulate and that she had allowed all who sought refuge to spend the night as best they could in the house. She, Irene (my mother) and the servants had been up all night supplying them with food—and trying to console them. She asked me to do something to help. The Home Office is the department dealing with immigration and I went to see a senior official there who dealt with this question. He had seen in the newspapers what was going on in Germany and I asked him what they proposed doing about it. He replied: “Nothing. What can we do? We cannot let them come and cause unemployment amongst our own people. Have you got an idea?” I said that I had, and he summoned a few of his colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

The consul’s idea—later known as the Smallbones Scheme—was based on US immigration laws. The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of newcomers allowed entry into the United States each year. The government set the maximum number, or quota, of immigration visas issued to individuals from each country each year; the number was 2% of the total number of people from that particular country who had lived in the United States in 1890. According to that law, the United States could allow no more than 27,000 immigrants from Germany each year, even though 309,000 German, Austrian, and Czech Jews applied for visas in the first six months of 1939.

<sup>1</sup> British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Commemorating Diplomats” (2008), 19–20, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.sarachi.org/commemorating-diplomats.pdf>.

Smallbones knew that Britain's immigration laws were more flexible and could be expanded in an emergency, and an emergency clearly existed in Germany. Smallbones asked the Home Office to provide a temporary haven for Jews who would eventually go to the United States under the quota system. They could wait in Britain for their turn to enter the United States. After a brief discussion, officials in the Home Office agreed that Smallbones's plan had potential. They asked him to work out the details. According to Smallbones,

I telephoned to Otto Schiff of the Jewish Relief organization and asked him to lunch at the Savoy Hotel with some of his collaborators. We drafted [a document] to be given by the applicant for the British visa not to seek employment in the United Kingdom and a guarantee to be given by a bank or a responsible person in the United Kingdom that he would not become a charge on public funds. We also worked out the details of the procedure with the American consular authorities in Germany to make sure that the applicant would eventually be admitted to the United States of America. I submitted this at once to the Home Office and was authorized that same afternoon to introduce this system in my district. The Foreign Office was to be asked to send corresponding instructions to the Passport Control Officer at Berlin and to all my colleagues in Germany.<sup>2</sup>

Smallbones returned to Frankfurt that night; the next morning, he went to see the head of the local Gestapo to arrange for the release of Jews from concentration camps based on the promise of a British visa.

[The local head of the Gestapo] said they could be released if, in addition, they had all their German emigration papers in order, passports, exit visas, certificates from the inland revenue that they had paid income and other taxes, etc. I replied that this was an impossible condition as they could not themselves attend to these formalities while locked up and as the Jewish lawyers who could act for them were also interned; few Aryan lawyers would risk importuning the authorities on their behalf. We had a fierce argument and I started shouting in the proper German manner. When I jumped up and said that my proposal to help Germany to be rid of some of their Jews was off, and that I would report by telegram to my Government, the Gestapo bully collapsed and we made an agreement in the sense desired by me. I know of no case in which a promise of a visa given by me did not lead to the immediate release of the interned.<sup>3</sup>

Every one of the visas Smallbones issued had to be typed and then signed by him or a member of his staff.

I usually worked about eighteen hours a day. The longest stretch I remember was from early in the morning until midnight when I fell asleep for a few minutes on my desk. . . . I went to bed. . . . After two hours sleep my conscience pricked me. The feeling was horrible that there were people in a concentration camp whom I could get out and I was comfortable in bed. . . . I returned to my desk and stayed there until the next midnight. I had a nervous breakdown after a few months. . . . The last

<sup>2</sup> "Commemorating Diplomats," 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21–22.



straw that broke my back was the case of a person who died in a concentration camp because one of my staff had failed to get my signature and to dispatch the promise of a visa which was in order.<sup>4</sup>

Smallbones issued visas until September 3, 1939, the day the British declared war on Germany. After his return to Britain, he learned that about 48,000 individuals had benefited from the Smallbones Scheme and that another 50,000 cases had been under consideration when the war broke out. Few people knew of Smallbones's efforts. British officials feared an outcry if the public knew how many people had been admitted to the country under the scheme. Aware of feelings of both antisemitism and isolationism in Britain, they insisted that Smallbones and others involved in the scheme keep it a secret. It was not revealed until 2009.

### Connection Questions

1. How were Robert Smallbones and Feng-Shan Ho able to make a difference? What was the role of ingenuity? What was the role of circumstance? What other factors played a role in their choices and in the results of those choices?
2. What does Britain's insistence on secrecy reveal about public opinion of the refugee crisis in that country at the time?
3. Does a nation's failure to help mean that an individual from that nation also has no responsibility? What can an individual accomplish that a nation may not be able to? Are there any issues in the world today that individuals are trying to address despite the unwillingness or inability of governments to respond?

<sup>4</sup> "Commemorating Diplomats," 22.

## Reading 17

# Two Who Dared

Despite an isolationist mood in the United States and official policies that discouraged Americans from getting involved in the refugee crisis after Kristallnacht, some individual Americans felt a sense of responsibility toward European refugees and found ways to act on their behalf. For Waitstill and Martha Sharp, a Unitarian minister and his wife living in Wellesley, Massachusetts, that sense of responsibility began in their religious community and ultimately drew them into dangerous missions in Europe on the edge of war.

One quiet Sunday evening in January 1939, the Sharps received a phone call that would change their lives. American Unitarians—members of a liberal, free-thinking faith with roots in Christianity—had been following the refugee crisis in Czechoslovakia, where there was a large Unitarian community. Church leader Everett Baker was now calling to ask the Sharps to travel to Prague and lead an emergency relief mission that he described as “the first intervention against evil undertaken by the denomination.”<sup>1</sup> This work included assessing the crisis—there were already an estimated 250,000 refugees who had fled the German Reich for the Czech capital—providing food, shelter, and support, and ultimately helping hundreds of Czech citizens as well as refugees to get out of Europe. The vulnerable included not only Jews but also communists, dissidents, cultural figures, and Czech political leaders who were opposed to Nazism. Baker had already approached 17 other couples, and all had refused his request.

Waitstill immediately wanted to say yes. He had been preaching against the evils of Nazism for years and saw Baker’s request as an opportunity to take concrete action. Martha wasn’t so sure. They had two children, only three and eight years old, and Martha was reluctant to leave them behind. She later recalled, “I was torn between my love and duty to my children and to my husband.”<sup>2</sup> When a good friend offered to take care of the children, Martha agreed to the mission.

The Sharps arrived in Prague in February 1939 with thousands of dollars donated by American Unitarians in hand and the promise of more to come. Just a few weeks later, German troops marched into the city and took control of the entire country, creating new waves of fear among refugees who had already fled the Reich once and thought they would be safe in the Czech capital. In an atmosphere of danger and violence, the Sharps spent seven months aiding refugees. Waitstill wrote to the congregation in Wellesley, “Our last sight as we sailed down the [New York] Harbor is still

1 Artemis Joukowsky, *Defying the Nazis: The Sharps’ War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), 2.

2 Ibid., 8.

very vivid in our minds, a great lighted statue—a monument to an ideal—towering into the night. We live and work very much in its shadow.”<sup>3</sup>

What began as an operation to distribute food to and provide medical care for refugees soon turned into a rescue mission. The Sharps helped refugees escape from the country by arranging connections with employers and sponsors abroad, by compiling the complicated files of documents necessary for emigration, and by carefully attending to the tedious but essential job of timing visas to coordinate with ship and train tickets. Several times, Martha accompanied groups of refugees as they fled Czechoslovakia, her American passport and government connections providing a measure of cover at dangerous border crossings. Waitstill began a complex money-laundering scheme to evade Nazi restrictions on bringing currency into or out of the country. He devised a system that allowed refugees to leave their Czech savings with him in Prague, where the money was used for relief efforts; meanwhile, an equivalent amount of American aid money deposited in London, Paris, and other free European cities would be available to the refugees if they succeeded in escaping. Waitstill gave the poorest refugees the best rate of exchange. He later said, “I knew it was illegal, but I did it because I had no other choice. I was beyond the pale of civilization. I owed no ethics to anybody. I owed no honesty to anybody at all if I could save imperiled human lives.”<sup>4</sup>

The Sharps were constantly followed by Nazi police and had to learn how to avoid wiretapped telephones, use codes for important documents, and evade Gestapo patrols. Their offices were ransacked, and they faced arrest when the Nazis ordered all refugee aid and assistance to stop. Despite these increasing dangers, the Sharps remained in Prague until August 1939, when they heard a rumor that they were to be arrested the very next day. Arrest would certainly mean indefinite detention within a brutal system that allowed foreigners no rights; it could also mean violence or even death. The Sharps decided to leave Prague, and World War II officially began while they were sailing to New York. Martha later recalled that after returning home, “We were back in another world. Love, children’s arms, plentiful food, and the only thing that concerned Americans that September seemed to be which team would win the World Series.”<sup>5</sup>

Martha and Waitstill stayed in Wellesley with their children for several months before accepting another mission from the newly formed Unitarian Service Committee. They spent most of 1940 working in war-torn France, where they helped intellectuals, Jews, and others who were at risk flee the country and provided aid to still more refugees. For their work in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia and France, the Sharps have been recognized as Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem—the highest recognition accorded by the state of Israel to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during World War II. They are two of only five Americans to be so honored.

3 Joukowsky, *Defying the Nazis*, 12.

4 Ibid., 83.

5 Ibid., 100.

## Connection Questions

1. What questions did the Sharps face in deciding whether to do relief work in Europe? How do you account for the choices they made?
2. How did being American shape the Sharps' choices and the opportunities they had to help? Why do you think their universe of obligation differed from that of so many other Americans?
3. What shapes our decision making when we have to choose between personal responsibilities and commitments to people, groups, or causes beyond our immediate circle? Has there been a time in your life when your role as a family member or friend has been in conflict with your obligations and responsibilities to your community or the world at large? Describe the situation, the choices you made, and the reasons you made them.

## Reading 18

# The Narrowing Circle



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Antisemitic Violence**  
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Millions of non-Jewish Germans, though shocked by the events of Kristallnacht, continued to go about their daily lives. But German leaders were worried about the public outcry that had followed the violence. On November 11, 1938, the day after the pogrom, Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels called a press conference where he told reporters that Kristallnacht was not a government action but a “spontaneous” expression of German dissatisfaction with the Jews.

He declared, “It is an intolerable state of affairs that within our borders and for all these years hundreds of thousands of Jews still control whole streets of shops, populate our recreation spots and, as foreign apartment owners, pocket the money of German tenants, while their racial comrades abroad agitate for war against Germany and gun down German officials.”<sup>1</sup>

Most government officials, however, were opposed to Kristallnacht and other “undisciplined individual actions.” Indeed, Kristallnacht was the last occasion when street violence of anywhere near that size and intensity took place in Germany.

In the weeks that followed, key Nazi officials—led by Heinrich Himmler, the chief of the German police and the head of the SS—saw to it that measures against the Jews were accomplished through bureaucratic and legal means. At the same time, they began harsh but disciplined actions that would continue to increase the exclusion of Jews from German public life and further endanger their safety. On November 15, the government excluded all Jewish children from state schools. By December 6, Jews could no longer walk or drive in certain parts of every major city; Jews who lived in those areas had to have a police permit to go home. Jews were advised to move and perhaps even exchange homes with “Aryans” who lived in Jewish sections of town.

At about the same time, the government announced that Jews could no longer attend German universities. A few days later, Himmler prohibited them from owning or even driving a car. Jews were also banned from theaters, movie houses, concert halls, sports arenas, parks, and public swimming pools. The Gestapo even went door to door confiscating radios owned by Jewish families, thus depriving them of a vital source of information.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Ben Cosgrove, “After Kristallnacht: An Infamous Press Conference ‘Justifies’ Terror, 1938,” *Time*, October 13, 2013, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://time.com/39932/kristallnacht-photos-from-a-1938-goebbels-press-conference-justifying-terror/>.



## Connection Questions

1. How did life for Jews in Germany change after Kristallnacht?
2. For what reasons were some German officials opposed to the events of Kristallnacht?
3. How did the Nazis use laws to restrict the rights of Jews? Why would the Nazis want to rely on law instead of street violence to target or exclude Jews?

## Reading 19

# Mocking World Leaders

On January 30, 1939, six years after he became chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler made a speech to the Reichstag that set forth his vision of the world's future. He began by saying that other nations were hypocritical when they complained that Germany was mistreating Jews.

In connection with the Jewish question I have this to say: it is a shameful spectacle to see how the whole democratic world is oozing sympathy for the poor tormented Jewish people, but remains hard-hearted and obdurate when it comes to helping them which is surely, in view of its attitude, an obvious duty. . . . For this is what they say:

1. "We," that is the democracies, "are not in a position to take in the Jews." Yet in these empires there are not 10 people to the square kilometer. While Germany, with her 135 inhabitants to the square kilometer, is supposed to have room for them!

2. They assure us: We cannot take them unless Germany is prepared to allow them a certain amount of capital to bring with them as immigrants. For hundreds of years Germany was good enough to receive these elements, although they possessed nothing except infectious political and physical diseases. What they possess today, they have by a very large extent gained at the cost of the less astute German nation by the most reprehensible manipulations.

Today we are merely paying this people what it deserves. When the German nation was, thanks to the inflation instigated and carried through by Jews, deprived of the entire savings which it had accumulated in years of honest work, when the rest of the world took away the German nation's foreign investments, when we were divested of the whole of our colonial possessions, these philanthropic considerations evidently carried little noticeable weight with democratic statesmen. . . .

. . . In the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it. During the time of my struggle for power it was in the first instance the Jewish race which only received my prophecies with laughter when I said that I would one day take over the leadership of the State, and . . . that I would then among many other things settle the Jewish problem. . . . Today I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hitler, Speech to Reichstag, January 30, 1939, Yad Vashem, accessed May 24, 2016, [http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20201988.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20201988.pdf).

Less than two months later, German troops occupied all of Czechoslovakia. World leaders were generally silent. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Britain spoke out only when Hitler threatened Poland. He vowed to come to that nation's aid in case of an attack. President Roosevelt expressed greater concern. In April 1939, he asked Mussolini and Hitler to promise not to attack 30 specific countries. In another speech to the Reichstag two weeks after Roosevelt's request, Hitler mockingly recited the list of those countries, to the laughter of everyone listening. He pointed to the irony of America suggesting that international disputes be settled through conferences, when it was the country that had refused to participate in the League of Nations. He ended the speech by demanding that the city of Danzig and part of Poland be returned to Germany and vowing once again that this would be his last territorial claim in Europe.

### Connection Questions

1. What was the purpose of Hitler's speech to the Reichstag in January 1939?
2. Why did Hitler call himself a "prophet"? What did he predict?
3. How had Germany's position in Europe and the world in January 1939 changed since Hitler had been appointed chancellor in 1933? How does Hitler's speech excerpted here reflect this change?

## Reading 20

# The Voyage of the *St. Louis*



Watch **Turned Away on the M.S. *St. Louis***  
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By 1939, nearly half of the 1933 Jewish population of Germany had left the country. Now, after Kristallnacht, the remaining Jews were desperate to get out. To do so, they needed visas to enter another country. Among those who had the “right papers” were the 937 men, women, and children who boarded a ship, the *St. Louis*, in Hamburg, Germany, on May 14. Each had paid \$150—a significant sum of money in 1939—for written permission to enter Cuba. But only a few people on the ship wanted to stay in Cuba. Most were on a very long waiting list to immigrate to the United States.

As the *St. Louis* neared Cuba, the Cuban government, in response to pressure from Cubans opposed to increased Jewish immigration, suddenly canceled the landing permits of all Jewish passengers. When the ship docked in Havana, only about 30 passengers were allowed ashore (all were non-Jews or Jews with special visas). The rest were forbidden to enter the country. While the ship remained in the harbor, two passengers attempted suicide, and one of them succeeded. To prevent other attempts, the crew lowered lifeboats and shone lights on the waters around the ship. Special patrols were added after the captain heard rumors of a mass suicide pact among the passengers.

When news of the first suicide attempt reached the United States, many Americans demanded that their government accept the passengers immediately. Others sent the Cuban government telegrams of protest, but neither nation was willing to reconsider its refusal to admit the *St. Louis*’s passengers. As a result, the ship was forced to leave Cuban waters on June 2 with all but 30 passengers still on board. Unsure of where to take the remaining passengers, the captain marked time while Jewish organizations tried desperately to find a country willing to accept the refugees. Within two days, every country in Latin America had refused to do so.

As the ship slowly headed north, a number of prominent Canadian citizens asked Prime Minister Mackenzie King to help the *St. Louis* passengers. He quickly made it clear that he was “emphatically opposed” to allowing them to enter Canada. Immigration Minister Frederick Blair agreed. He pointed out that “if these Jews were to find a home [in Canada] they would likely be followed by other shiploads.” The line, he insisted, “must be drawn somewhere.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 63–64.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

**Passengers aboard the *St. Louis*, seeking refuge from Nazi-occupied Europe, wait to find out if they will be allowed entry into Cuba in June 1939.**

On June 7, the captain had no choice but to return to Germany with most of his passengers still on board. The Nazis turned the incident into propaganda. They claimed that it demonstrated that Jews were universally disliked and distrusted. On June 10, Belgium accepted 200 passengers from the *St. Louis*. Two days later, the Netherlands promised to take in 194. Britain and France admitted the rest.

Furious at the role the US government had played in the crisis, a resident of Richmond, Virginia, wrote:

[The] press reported that the ship came close enough to Miami for the refugees to see the lights of the city. The press also reported that the U.S. Coast Guard, under instructions from Washington, followed the ship . . . to prevent any people landing on our shores. And during the days when this horrible tragedy was being enacted right at our doors, our government in Washington made no effort to relieve the desperate situation of these people, but on the contrary gave orders that they be kept out of the country. . . . The failure to take any steps whatsoever to assist these distressed, persecuted Jews in their hour of extremity was one of the most disgraceful things which has happened in American history and leaves a stain and brand of shame upon the record of our nation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Arthur Morse, *While Six Million Died: A Chronicle of American Apathy* (New York: Overlook Press, 1985), 280.



## Connection Questions

1. What was the reason given by each country that refused to receive the refugees on the *St. Louis*? What were some consequences of their refusals?
2. From the story of the *St. Louis* and the controversy over the children's immigration bill sponsored by Senator Robert Wagner and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (see Reading 15, "World Responses to Kristallnacht"), what conclusions can you draw about the universe of obligation of the United States in 1939? How do the words included in this reading from the resident of Virginia add to or complicate your answer?
3. In 2015, millions of refugees from a civil war in Syria tried to flee to safety in Europe. The government of Iceland initially agreed to accept 50 refugees. One Icelandic citizen posted the following statement to Facebook:

Refugees are human resources, experience and skills. Refugees are our future spouses, best friends, our next soul mate, the drummer in our children's band, our next colleague, Miss Iceland 2022, the carpenter who finally fixes our bathroom, the chef in the cafeteria, the fireman, the hacker and the television host. People who we'll never be able to say to: "Your life is worth less than mine."

Compare this response to the one from the person in Richmond, Virginia. How are they similar and different? What ways are available to individuals today to help others in need in far-away places?

## Reading 21

# Refugee Blues

In 1939, W. H. Auden wrote a poem called “Refugee Blues” that expressed his opinion of the plight of Jewish refugees from Greater Germany. It was reprinted in a number of newspapers.

Say this city has ten million souls,  
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:  
Yet there’s no place for us, my dear, yet there’s no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,  
Look in the atlas and you’ll find it there:  
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,  
Every spring it blossoms anew;  
Old passports can’t do that, my dear, old passports can’t do that.

The consul banged the table and said:  
“If you’ve got no passport, you’re officially dead”;  
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;  
Asked me politely to return next year:  
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:  
“If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread”;  
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;  
It was Hitler over Europe, saying: “They must die”;  
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,  
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:  
But they weren’t German Jews, my dear, but they weren’t German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,  
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:  
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;  
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:  
They weren’t the human race, my dear, they weren’t the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,  
A thousand windows and a thousand doors;  
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;  
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:  
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Who is the speaker of the poem? To whom is the poem addressed?
2. What do you think Auden wants his readers to think about? What imagery does he use to communicate his message?
3. How does the poem add to your thinking about the refugee crisis in the 1930s? Is the poem's impact different from that of the other types of sources you've encountered in this chapter (such as in Reading 20, "The Voyage of the *St. Louis*")?
4. Is the message of Auden's poem relevant to any events in the world today? If so, which ones, and why?
5. Can you think of a song, poem, or other work of art that has influenced your thinking about history or current events?

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Auden, "Ten Songs," in *Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 263–64.

## Reading 22

# A Pact with the Soviet Union

By the summer of 1939, war in Europe seemed inevitable. As people braced themselves, many wondered how the Soviet Union would respond. For years, Hitler had targeted the Soviet Union and the Communist Party as Germany's primary enemy. Joseph Stalin held similar views of Germany and the Nazi Party.

To the surprise of almost everyone, the two dictators announced a nonaggression pact on August 23, 1939. The two men agreed that their countries would not to attack each other, either independently or along with other nations. They also vowed to consult each other in order to provide information or raise questions concerning their common interests and also to resolve any differences through negotiation or arbitration. The pact would be in effect for ten years, with an automatic extension for another five years unless either party gave notice to end it.<sup>1</sup>

The treaty startled people everywhere. Both Stalin and Hitler knew that their internal propaganda machines would have to work hard to change current public opinion within their nations and also to change the negative perceptions that each country had been cultivating about the other. According to historian Roger Moorhouse:

[T]he tone of public and cultural life in the Soviet Union shifted after the signing of the pact. From one day to the next, the newspapers stopped criticizing Nazi Germany and instead began lauding German achievements. As Kravencho (a factory director) noted . . . "The Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries instantly discovered the wonders of German *Kultur*. Visiting Moscow on business, I learned that several exhibits of Nazi art, Nazi economic achievements and Nazi military glory were on view or in the process of organization. In fact, everything Germanic was in vogue."<sup>2</sup>

In Germany, people were equally surprised. As in the Soviet Union, official propaganda reversed itself quickly after its years of attacks on Soviet communism. According to Moorhouse:

Public discourse was uniformly positive about the pact, with German newspapers immediately altering the tone with which they reported Soviet current affairs or Russian culture. Where reporters and editors had once been unable to resist inserting—at the very least—a derogatory adjective or a critical aside, they now



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<sup>1</sup> "Treaty of Nonaggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," The Avalon Project (Yale Law School), last modified 2008, accessed April 26, 2016, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/nonagres.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/nonagres.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Roger Moorhouse, *The Devils' Alliance: Hitler's Pact with Stalin, 1939–1941* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 119.

reported events with scrupulous evenhandedness. On the morning of the pact's announcement, the newspapers seemed desperate to make the case for the new arrangement. Every title carried almost verbatim reports and commentaries, scripted under Goebbels's supervision, rejoicing at the restoration of the "traditional friendship between the Russian and the German peoples." In the Nazi Party newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, [German Foreign Minister] Ribbentrop congratulated himself by lauding his achievement as "one of the most important turning points in the history of our two peoples." Even the in-house newspaper of the SS, *Das Schwarze Korps*, toed the optimistic line, reminding its readers, in a gallop through Russian and Soviet history, that the empire of the tsars had originally been a Germanic state, that it had twice "saved" Prussia, and that it had "paid dearly" for its enmity with Germany in World War I. Echoing Ribbentrop, the newspaper concluded that the two countries had always flourished when they were friends and so looked forward to a new era of collaboration.<sup>3</sup>

At the time, only a handful of diplomats from both countries knew that the treaty contained a set of secret clauses in which Germany and the Soviet Union divided Poland and other parts of eastern Europe between them. The clauses were not made public until much later.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the Soviet Union and Germany enter into a nonaggression pact? What was in the secret clauses that might have convinced them to sign the pact?
2. What changes in propaganda did German leaders have to make after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet pact? What changes were also necessary in the Soviet Union?
3. Historian Gerhard Weinberg has argued that for Hitler, the primary objective of treaties was "either the immediate gain of space by the partitioning of third countries or the postponement of troubles considered dangerous at the moment until they could be faced with safety. In either case, treaties were temporary instruments to be broken as soon as they were no longer useful."<sup>4</sup> How does this reading support that argument?

<sup>3</sup> Moorhouse, *The Devils' Alliance*, 125–26.

<sup>4</sup> Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 37.



## Reading 23

# Targeting Poland

On August 31, 1939, the Nazis faked an attack on a radio station in Gleiwitz, a German town on the Polish border. The Gestapo kidnapped and killed a man, dressed him in a Polish military uniform, and left his body at the station to create the impression that Poland was behind the attack.<sup>1</sup> The next morning, the Germans marched into Poland in retaliation for the Polish “attack on Gleiwitz.” That evening, relatives and neighbors gathered around the radio in the home of Max von der Grün’s grandparents as Hitler declared war.

No one cheered . . . not even my aunt who had always cheered for Hitler; no one cried “Heil!” or turned somersaults with joy. . . . No one spoke. . . .

My grandfather wept. I could scarcely believe that I was seeing this old, worn-out man crying. No one asked him why he was crying. . . .

No one displayed any enthusiasm. Not in school, not on the streets, not in the shops, not even among the Hitler Youth. No one dared to look anyone else in the face for fear that he might be asked what he thought about the war.

Of course, not everyone felt this way. A few of the boys in my class . . . regretted that they were not older, for then they could have volunteered to join the Army; meanwhile I consoled myself with the thought that the war would be over by the time I got out of school. . . . Three days after Hitler attacked Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.<sup>2</sup>

Journalist William Shirer observed a similar reaction in Berlin on September 3, 1939:

In 1914, I believe, the excitement in Berlin on the first day of the World War was tremendous. Today, no excitement, no hurrahs, no cheering, no throwing of flowers, no war fever, no war hysteria. There is not even any hate for the French and British—despite Hitler’s various proclamations . . . accusing the “English warmongers and capitalistic Jews” of starting this war.<sup>3</sup>

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 130.

2 Max von der Grün, *Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), 173–74.

3 William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934–1941* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 201.

## Connection Questions

1. How do you account for the reactions in Max von der Grün's village to news of Germany's invasion of Poland?
2. In what ways do Max von der Grün's and William Shirer's accounts of the outbreak of the war differ? How does the response of German people to this outbreak of war differ from the response at the beginning of World War I described in Chapter 3 (see "War Fever in Vienna")?

## Reading 24

# The Hangman

### The Hangman

By Maurice Ogden



Watch **The Hangman**  
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1.

Into our town the Hangman came  
Smelling of gold and blood and flame—  
And he paced our bricks with a diffident air  
And built his frame on the courthouse square.

The scaffold stood by the courthouse side,  
Only as wide as the door was wide;  
A frame as tall, or little more,  
Than the capping sill of the courthouse door.

And we wondered, whenever we had the time,  
Who the criminal, what the crime,  
The Hangman judged with the yellow twist  
Of knotted hemp in his busy fist.

And innocent though we were, with dread  
We passed those eyes of buckshot lead;  
Till one cried: "Hangman, who is he  
For whom you raise the gallows-tree?"

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye,  
And he gave us a riddle instead of reply:  
"He who serves me best," said he,  
"Shall earn the rope on the gallows-tree."

And he stepped down, and laid his hand  
On a man who came from another land.  
And we breathed again, for another's grief  
At the Hangman's hand was our relief.

And the gallows-frame on the courthouse lawn  
By tomorrow's sun would be struck and gone.  
So we gave him way, and no one spoke,  
Out of respect for his hangman's cloak.

2.

The next day's sun looked mildly down  
On roof and street in our quiet town  
And, stark and black in the morning air,  
The gallows-tree on the courthouse square.

And the Hangman stood at his usual stand  
With the yellow hemp in his busy hand;  
With his buckshot eye and his jaw like a pike  
And his air so knowing and businesslike.

And we cried: "Hangman, have you not done,  
Yesterday, with the alien one?"  
Then we fell silent, and stood amazed:  
"Oh, not for him was the gallows raised . . ."

He laughed a laugh as he looked at us:  
" . . . Did you think I'd gone to all this fuss  
To hang one man? That's a thing I do  
To stretch the rope when the rope is new."

Then one cried "Murderer!" One cried "Shame!"  
And into our midst the Hangman came  
To that man's place. "Do you hold," said he,  
With him that's meant for the gallows-tree?"

And he laid his hand on that one's arm,  
And we shrank back in quick alarm,  
And we gave him way, and no one spoke  
Out of fear of his hangman's cloak.

That night we saw with dread surprise  
The Hangman's scaffold had grown in size.  
Fed by the blood beneath the chute  
The gallows-tree had taken root.

Now as wide, or a little more,  
Than the steps that led to the courthouse door,  
As tall as the writing, or nearly as tall,  
Halfway up on the courthouse wall.

3.

The third he took—and we had all heard tell—  
Was a usurer and infidel. And:  
"What," said the Hangman, "have you to do  
With the gallows-bound, and he a Jew?"

And we cried out: "Is this one he  
Who has served you well and faithfully?"  
The Hangman smiled: "It's a clever scheme  
To try the strength of the gallows-beam."

The fourth man's dark, accusing song  
Had scratched out comfort hard and long;  
And "What concern," he gave us back,  
"Have you for the doomed—the doomed and black?"

The fifth. The sixth. And we cried again:  
"Hangman, Hangman, is this the man?"  
"It's a trick," he said, "that we hangmen know  
For easing the trap when the trap springs slow."

And so we ceased and asked no more,  
As the Hangman tallied his bloody score;  
And sun by sun, and night by night,  
The gallows grew to monstrous height.

The wings of the scaffold opened wide  
Till they covered the square from side to side;  
And the monster cross-beam, looking down,  
Cast its shadow across the town.

4.

Then through the town the Hangman came  
And called in the empty streets my name,  
And I looked at the gallows soaring tall  
And thought: "There is no one left at all

For hanging, and so he calls to me  
To help him pull down the gallows-tree."  
And I went out with right good hope  
To the Hangman's tree and the Hangman's rope.

He smiled at me as I came down  
To the courthouse square through the silent town,  
And supple and stretched in his busy hand  
Was the yellow twist of the hempen strand.

And he whistled his tune as he tried the trap  
And it sprang down with a ready snap—  
And then with a smile of awful command  
He laid his hand upon my hand.

"You tricked me, Hangman!" I shouted then,  
"That your scaffold was built for other men . . .  
And I no henchman of yours," I cried.  
"You lied to me, Hangman, foully lied!"

Then a twinkle grew in the buckshot eye:  
"Lied to you? Tricked you?" he said, "Not I.  
For I answered straight and I told you true:  
The scaffold was raised for none but you."

"For who has served me more faithfully  
Than you with your coward's hope?" said he,  
"And where are the others that might have stood  
Side by your side in the common good?"

"Dead," I whispered: and amiably,  
"Murdered," the Hangman corrected me;  
"First the alien, then the Jew . . .  
I did no more than you let me do."

Beneath the beam that blocked the sky,  
None had stood so alone as I—  
And the Hangman strapped me, and no voice there  
Cried "Stay!" for me in the empty square.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. In the poem, what choices are open to the townspeople when the Hangman arrives? What choices are left by the time he has finished his work in the town? Was there a way to stop the Hangman? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. How does the poem relate to Germany and the world of the 1930s? How does it relate to society today? What does it suggest about the challenges of speaking out and taking action in the face of complacency and uncertainty?
3. What is the meaning of the Hangman's riddle: "'He who serves me best,' said he, 'shall earn the rope on the gallows-tree'"?
4. In 1933, Martin Niemöller, a leader of the Confessing Church, voted for the Nazi Party. By 1938, he was in a concentration camp. After the war, he is believed to have said, "In Germany, the Nazis came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak for me." How is the point Niemöller makes similar to the one that the poet Maurice Ogden makes in "The Hangman"?

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Ogden, "The Hangman" (Regina Publications), 1951.

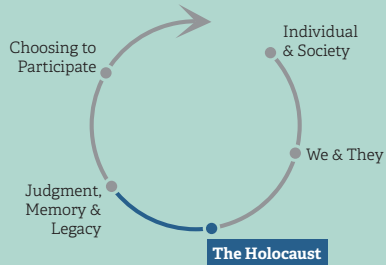


## Chapter 7 Analysis and Reflection

1. Create a timeline representing the key events presented in this chapter, and then consider the following questions:
  - Historians have identified Kristallnacht as a key turning point in this period of history. Based on what you've learned, do you agree with this assessment? What other events from this chapter seem especially important to you?
  - How did life in Germany change between 1935 and 1939? How did Germany's position in the world change between 1935 and 1939?
2. How did world leaders respond to Nazi aggression in Germany and beyond? What priorities guided their thinking? Why did foreign leaders fail to recognize the dangers that the Nazi regime posed?
3. When does a country have a right or duty to intervene in the affairs of other countries? What events in this chapter have most influenced your thinking about this question?
4. We often use the following terms to describe the range of human behavior in times of crisis: *perpetrator*, *victim*, *bystander*, *upstander*. How would you define each of these roles? What dilemmas and choices faced by individuals, groups, and countries described in this chapter have influenced your thinking about these roles?
5. Historian Ian Kershaw has described the feelings of most Germans toward the restrictions on Jews during the 1930s as "indifference," by which he means not "neutrality" but rather "turning one's back on an evil in recognition that nothing can be done about it and . . . feeling that other concerns are more pressing or overwhelming." To strengthen his argument, Kershaw later added such qualifying terms as "lethal indifference" and "moral indifference."

How would you evaluate Kershaw's argument in light of the readings in this chapter? What does indifference have to do with morality? How might indifference be lethal?

## Chapter 8



Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo

# A War for Race and Space



## Overview

By 1939, Nazi Germany was ready for the next phase of Hitler's racial program, which called for *Lebensraum*, or "living space," for the Aryan race. The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 both set this quest for "race and space" in motion and began World War II in Europe. This chapter explores the Nazis' plans to impose a new order on Europe, based on their racial ideology, in the first two years of World War II.





## Essential Questions

- How did the Nazis' beliefs about "race and space" influence Germany's violent aggression toward other nations, groups, and individuals in the first years of World War II? Who benefited from this aggression? Who suffered because of it?
- What influenced many Germans to continue supporting the Nazi government even as their nation started a new war and began murdering portions of both the German population and the populations of other countries?
- How did the war change the opportunities for dissent or resistance against the Nazi regime? What were the consequences of protest?

Adolf Hitler believed that the driving force of history was a struggle between races, a struggle that would only end when the superior race—the Aryan race, in Hitler's view—achieved supremacy over all of the other supposed races. Aryans were a mythical race from whom many Germans and other northern Europeans believed they had descended (see "Breeding Society's 'Fittest'" in Chapter 2). Previous chapters have explored the Nazis' racial ideology and the ways that many Germans embraced, or at least accepted, that worldview in the 1920s and 1930s. Chapter 7 also documented Germany's annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland, with the goal of expanding the Reich and uniting ethnic Germans—people of German descent, sharing supposed "German blood"—into one nation. Emboldened by success in Austria and the Sudetenland, in 1939 the Nazis and many Germans were ready to fight for additional "living space" for their nation. Historian Doris Bergen writes, "For Hitler, these two notions of race and space were intertwined. Any race that was not expanding, he believed, was doomed to disappear. Without living space—land to produce food and raise new generations of soldiers and mothers—a race could not grow."<sup>1</sup>

Hitler believed that the quest for "living space" for the Aryan race would ultimately lead to war, a consequence he welcomed. He believed that war was inevitable until the racially fittest nation achieved complete supremacy.<sup>2</sup> The European war ignited by Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 soon combined with ongoing wars in Asia to create a truly global conflict, the largest and most destructive in human history. World War II was fought between the Allies—which included the United Kingdom, France, and eventually the Soviet Union and the United States—and the Axis powers, Germany, Italy, and Japan. Historians estimate that 55 million people died as a result of this war, a majority of whom were civilians. One country alone, the Soviet Union, suffered the deaths of more than 8 million soldiers and 14 million civilians.<sup>3</sup> The war ended with Germany's defeat and surrender in May 1945 and Japan's surrender, after the United States dropped two atomic bombs, in August of that year.

But in the early years of the war, Germany's defeat was anything but certain. By December 1941, Germany had conquered most of mainland Europe, from France in the west to the outskirts of Moscow in the Soviet Union in the east. This conquest brought about what Hitler saw as a "New Order" in Europe. According to historian Peter Hayes, "Driven by two

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 52.

2 Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 36.

3 "World War II: In Depth," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified January 29, 2016, accessed April 6, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007314>.

central principles—racism and economic exploitation—this New Order inflicted enormous violence and suffering on the subject populations, including even some Germans.”<sup>4</sup>

The consequences of the New Order the Nazis imposed on Europe included enhanced national and racial pride for many Germans, both civilian and military, and material gains for German citizens in the form of cheap goods, as well as new jobs, homes, and land in conquered countries. For non-Germans, consequences of the Nazi plans for “race and space” were economic loss, horrible suffering, and the death of millions in the newly conquered territories who the Nazis believed could not be productive members of the Reich. These groups included mentally and physically disabled people, whose murder the Nazis justified as a necessity of war. They also included members of what the Nazis considered to be inferior races—such as Poles, Slavs, Roma, and Sinti—who were taken from their homes and often confined to camps and murdered, as well. And of course the Nazi “race and space” worldview involved special contempt for Jews, who were killed in increasing numbers as the war wore on. This chapter introduces the extensive network of ghettos and camps in eastern Europe in which the Nazis imprisoned, and eventually murdered, millions of people, including 6 million Jews. The next chapter examines these camps in more detail, as well as the mobile killing units that followed the German army’s eastward advance.

4 Peter Hayes, “The New Order in Europe: Introduction,” in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 257.

## Reading 1

# Isolated and Demonized

By the time World War II began in September 1939, Hitler and his fellow Nazis had excluded or expelled most of the people they considered “dangerous,” particularly Jews. More than half of Germany’s Jewish population had left the nation between 1933 and 1939. About 200,000 Jews remained in Germany, mostly concentrated around Berlin and too old, too young, too ill, or too poor to travel far from home.<sup>1</sup> And yet, throughout the war, the Nazis continued to pass new laws that further humiliated, isolated, and demonized Jews.

The Nazis issued 55 new anti-Jewish laws and decrees in the last four months of 1939 and an additional 101 in 1940. They added 135 more laws in 1941 and 169 in 1942. One law passed in 1942 made it a crime for a Jew to buy a cake. Historian Alon Confino has listed some of the laws enacted between 1939 and 1942:

Jews are prohibited from participating in air-raid drills. Jews should build and finance their own air-raid shelters. Atonement fine: Jews are fined 250 million Reichsmarks needed for the armament industry. Minister of education: Writers of doctoral dissertations should avoid citing Jewish authors. 1940: Jews are placed under night curfew and are prohibited from being out in the streets from 9:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. during the summer and between 8:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. during the winter. Ration cards for Jews are marked by an additional *J*. Jews are excluded from private medical insurance plans.<sup>2</sup>

Those laws placed Jews further outside of Germany’s universe of obligation—the circle of individuals and groups whom the government protected, for whose benefit laws were written and enforced, and in whose name justice was sought.

1 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 67–68.

2 Alon Confino, *A World Without Jews* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 170.



## Connection Questions

1. How would you characterize the new restrictions placed on Jews in Germany as World War II began? How did the Nazis define the relationship between Jews and the war effort?
2. Why do you think the Nazis went to such lengths to enact so many laws to discriminate against Jews?
3. While more than half of German Jews had left the country by the beginning of the war, how do you account for the 200,000 Jews who were still there? For what reasons might people find it difficult to leave their homes, even when those homes have become unpleasant, unwelcoming, or dangerous? How might war complicate someone's efforts to leave?

## Reading 2

# Targeting the Sinti and Roma



LESSON

Teach **Confronting the Suffering Caused by the Nazis**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



VIDEO

Watch **We Call Ourselves "Roma"**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



VIDEO

Watch **Tackling Discrimination against Roma in Schools**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

**Note:** This reading includes dehumanizing language. We have chosen to include it in order to honestly communicate the harmful language of the time; however, dehumanizing language should not be spoken or read aloud during class.

The fate of the Sinti and Roma was similar to that faced by Jews in Germany during World War II. Like the Jews, the Sinti and Roma had lived in Germany and other European countries for a very long time. The Sinti are believed to have settled in Germany about 600 years ago. The Roma, a term often used to describe all "Gypsies," came to Germany from Hungary and other parts of eastern Europe between 80 and 150 years earlier than the Sinti.

For centuries, Europeans had feared and mistrusted the Sinti and, later, the Roma. For a variety of reasons, probably including the fact that they were not fully accepted into European societies, many Sinti and Roma did not settle in specific communities but instead remained nomadic. This helped to strengthen their image as outsiders. They were often accused of every conceivable crime and stereotyped as "anti-social" and "work-shy." During World War I, they were regarded in Germany as potential spies and required to register with the police so that their movements could be monitored. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they paid little attention to the Sinti and Roma until local and state authorities began applying the nation's new "racial laws" to the 26,000 "Gypsies" in Germany. Local governments used the new laws to take action on long-held enmities and stereotypes.

In 1933, some Sinti and Roma were forcibly sterilized under the Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring, and in 1935 they were included in the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor (see "Breeding the New German 'Race'" in Chapter 5). By 1936, some Sinti and Roma were being sent to concentration camps. In 1938, Heinrich Himmler, the chief of the German police and head of the SS, issued a decree called "The Fight against the Gypsy Menace." It required that all Sinti and Roma register with the police; it also kept foreign Sinti and Roma from entering the country.

The next step was mass deportation to various concentration camps. One Sinti, then a boy known as Bubili, recalled his arrival at one of those camps:

[On June 28, 1939,] the train stopped just outside the gates of Dachau. We waited, locked in the airless boxcar for about three quarters of an hour. Then we heard a shout as thirty or forty young SS men unlocked the bolts and threw open the doors. "Austrian pigheads," they screamed. "Out, out. Run, you Congo n---s, run." Their whips fell on us, killing two men as we ran toward the gates of Dachau.

... The whole square was filled prisoners in striped uniforms. Many of them wore yellow stars on their shirts [indicating that they were Jews]. The others had different colored triangles on their uniforms [indicating that they were Sinti, Roma, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, or political prisoners].

We stood on the assembly place, the sun beating down on us from early morning until three in the afternoon. If someone dropped, we were not allowed to pick him up. Then an SS man with a whip drove us into a building.

"Sit down," the guard said. He held a board with my name and number 34016 across my chest. The photographer snapped my picture. With his foot, the photographer pushed a lever that punched a nail into my rear. Like a trained monkey, I jumped through the small window leading to the property room. Why couldn't they just tell us to get up instead of punching us with a nail?

In the property room, the guards shouted at us, "Take off all your clothes. Put everything else in the two baskets—your jewelry, your papers, your money." We stood there naked as the guards led us toward the showers. It was after the shower I lost my hair. I wondered what more could the Nazis do to us?

The prisoners in charge of the clothing laughed as they threw it at us. If you were tall, you got striped pants that were too short. If you were short, you got striped pants that were too long. I could not look any more ridiculous. I "found" thread and shortened my pants.

The shoes were even worse. Only the *kapos*, the prisoners in charge of other prisoners, and the block "elders" had leather shoes. . . . It was summer, and we were taken out to help the farmers bring in crops. At the risk of my life, I smuggled potatoes in my shirt into camp. The big commodity was schnapps (whiskey). By bartering, I got schnapps which someone had stolen from the SS. The schnapps I traded for leather shoes.<sup>1</sup>

In 1939, "Gypsies," Jews, and other prisoners thought that the concentration camps were the last step in the process of isolation and dehumanization. Few imagined that the worst was yet to come.



**An elderly Sinti woman walks down a German street with her grandchildren in the 1930s.**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Rita Prignone

## Connection Questions

1. How and why did the Nazis target Sinti and Roma people?
2. What effects did the laws described in this reading have on Sinti and Roma? What effects might they have had on other Germans?
3. What is the meaning and purpose of "dehumanizing" a group of people? What are examples in this reading of such dehumanization?

<sup>1</sup> From "Bubili: A Young Gypsy's Fight for Survival," in Ina R. Friedman, *The Other Victims: First-Person Stories of Non-Jews Persecuted by the Nazis* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 18–19.

## Reading 3

# “Unworthy to Live”



LESSON

Teach **Confronting  
the Suffering Caused  
by the Nazis**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

As Adolf Hitler consolidated his power at home in anticipation of war, he moved not only against Jews, Sinti, and Roma but also against those Aryans whom he considered “unworthy of life”—people with epilepsy, alcoholism, birth defects, hearing loss, mental illnesses, and personality disorders, as well as those who had vision loss or developmental delays or who even suffered from certain orthopedic problems. Hitler viewed them as “marginal human beings” who had to make a case for their own survival at a time when the nation was preparing for war.

The first to be eliminated were too young to speak on their own behalf. In fall 1938, the parents of a severely disabled infant petitioned Hitler for the right to kill their child. He granted the petition and saw in the request an opportunity to encourage what he called “mercy killings” or “euthanasia.” In fact, according to science historian Robert N. Proctor, the goal was not to provide mercy to the victims but to improve the “Aryan” race and make hospital beds and personnel available for the coming war.<sup>1</sup> Hitler also thought that the war might minimize protests from Germans who learned of the deaths. According to Hitler’s chief medical officer, “The Führer was of the opinion that such a program could be put into effect more smoothly and rapidly in time of war, and that in the general upheaval of war, the open resistance anticipated from the church would not play the part it might in other circumstances.”<sup>2</sup>

The following spring, Hitler set up a committee of physicians to prepare for the murder of mentally and physically disabled children. Known as the Reich Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Diseases, the group was told to keep its mission secret. In August 1939, just two weeks before the invasion of Poland, committee members asked doctors and midwives to fill out a questionnaire that would identify children born with various deformities or disabilities. Initially, the focus was on children under the age of three. The committee claimed it was using the information “to clarify certain scientific questions.” In fact, it was used to determine which children would be allowed to live.

The committee relied entirely on the questionnaires in making its decisions. Members did not examine a single child, consult with other physicians, or speak to the families involved. Once a decision was made, the committee told the child’s parents only that their baby was being placed in a special hospital to “improve” treatment. There, death came quickly. After the war, a physician involved in the program told Robert Jay Lifton, an

1 Robert N. Proctor, “Culling the German Volk,” in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 261.

2 Quoted in *ibid.*, 261.

American psychiatrist, "According to the thinking of that time, in the case of children, killing seemed somehow justifiable . . . whereas in the case of the adult mentally ill, that was definitely murder."<sup>3</sup>

The physician went on to describe how nurses were ordered to give the children sedatives that were harmless in small amounts but deadly in large doses. The doctor noted, "And with these sedatives . . . the child sleeps. If one does not know what is going on, he [the child] is sleeping. One really has to be let in on it to know that . . . he really is being killed and not sedated." Lifton added:

While Dr. F. admitted that one might wonder about a child, "Why is he sleeping so much?" he insisted (quite erroneously) that one could ignore that inner question because "the death rate of [those killed] wasn't much above the regular death rate with such children." He stressed the absence of either a direct command ("If I get the order to kill . . . [I think I] would refuse . . . but certainly there was no such order . . .") or of manifest homicide ("I mean if you had directed a nurse to go from bed to bed shooting these children . . . that would not have worked"). As a result, "there was no killing, strictly speaking. . . . People felt this is not murder, it is a putting-to-sleep."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the use of drugs, victims were murdered by a variety of other methods, including poisoning, starvation, being left to die of exposure in unheated buildings, and gassing.

The operation was later expanded to include not only children but also teens and adults, and it was given the codename "T-4." One "euthanasia expert" excused the murders by arguing: "The idea is unbearable to me that the best, the flower of our youth, must lose its life at the front, in order that feeble-minded and asocial elements can have a secure existence in the asylum." Another suggested that a physician's duty is to rescue the "fit" for the future by weeding out the "unfit" in the present.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Nazis considered the "euthanasia" program top secret, it was a difficult secret to keep. Some Germans were certain to notice the sudden deaths of large numbers of disabled people at various institutions in their communities, and Nazi officials struggled to find satisfactory explanations. In addition, family members often grew suspicious of the sudden deaths of patients soon after their transfer to new facilities, which were in fact killing centers. The Nazis also made bureaucratic mistakes in their notifications to the families of victims, sometimes claiming a cause of death that seemed unlikely, if not impossible (such as claiming that a burst appendix caused the death of a child whose appendix had already been removed). According to scholar Carol Poore, by the late summer of 1940, the "euthanasia" program had become common knowledge among Germans and in other countries.<sup>6</sup>

3 Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 57.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 87.

Among Germans who knew of the euthanasia program, many supported it. In some cases, the parents of mentally or physically disabled children “were eager to rid themselves of the stigma of having ‘defective children.’”<sup>7</sup> Racial ideology and propaganda in the 1930s had also helped to build support in Germany for eliminating mentally ill adults. In addition, according to Proctor:

Doctors were never *ordered* to murder psychiatric patients and handicapped children. They were *empowered* to do so, and fulfilled that task without protest, often on their own initiative. Hitler’s original memo . . . was not an order, but an empowerment, granting physicians permission to act.<sup>8</sup>

In some places, doctors used mobile gassing vans to carry out the killings. By June 1940, the vans were being replaced with gas chambers that resembled showers. Proctor adds: “By August 24, 1941, when the first phase of this ‘adult operation’ was brought to an end, over 70,000 patients from more than one hundred German hospitals had been killed.” The operation would turn out to provide a model for the subsequent murder of millions of Jews, Roma and Sinti, and others in gas chambers.<sup>9</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What is suggested by the terms “mercy killing” and “euthanasia”? Was either of these the goal of the Nazi program? Who decided who would live and who would die? Does it matter who makes that decision?
2. How did the war influence both the justification for and the timing of the “euthanasia” program?
3. What is the difference between being ordered and being empowered to do something? What factors may have motivated doctors to carry out the killings of mentally and physically disabled people?
4. What distinction does the doctor that Robert Jay Lifton interviewed make between murder and “putting to sleep”? How does he distinguish between the killing of young children and the killing of adults? Do you think euphemisms (gentle expressions used to describe unpleasant things) made the killings easier to justify? Why or why not?
5. What should be the role of doctors in society? What ethical standards should guide their behavior?

7 Proctor, “Culling the German Volk,” 268.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., 260.



## Reading 4

# Bystanders at Hartheim Castle

While the Nazis loudly proclaimed the campaigns to demonize and isolate Jews and “Gypsies” (the name Germans gave to two ethnic groups known as the Sinti and Roma) in newspapers and magazines, on billboards, and over the radio, they attempted to keep secret the program to murder mentally and physically disabled “Aryans.” And yet by the end of 1940, most Germans were aware of some if not all aspects of the killings (see Reading 3, “‘Unworthy to Live’”).<sup>1</sup> As historian Gordon J. Horwitz investigated the history of Mauthausen, a small Austrian town 90 miles from Vienna, he uncovered evidence of what the residents of a nearby village had known about the “euthanasia,” or medical killing, program taking place there.

Soon after Austria became part of the Third Reich in 1938, the Germans built a labor camp for political prisoners in Mauthausen. As the camp expanded, German officials took over buildings in a number of nearby villages. One of those buildings was Hartheim Castle, which was a home for mentally handicapped children. In researching the history of Hartheim Castle, Horwitz discovered a letter written by a man he identified as “Karl S.” The letter recalls events in 1939.

[The] house of my parents was one of the few houses in Hartheim from which one could observe several occurrences. After Castle Hartheim was cleared of its inhabitants (around 180 to 200 patients) in the year 1939, mysterious renovations began which, to an outsider, however, one could hardly divine, since no [local] labor was used for it, and the approaches to the castle were hermetically sealed. Following completion of the renovation work, we saw the first transports come and we could even recognize some of the earlier residents who showed joy at returning to their former home.

Karl S. watched the buses arrive from a window in his father’s barn. He recalled that groups of two or three buses came as frequently as twice a day. Soon after they arrived, “enormous black clouds of smoke streamed out of a certain chimney and spread a penetrating stench. This stench was so disgusting that sometimes when we returned home from work in the fields we couldn’t hold down a single bite.”<sup>2</sup>

A woman called Sister Felicitas, who had formerly worked with children kept in the castle, had similar memories:

My brother Michael, who at the time was at home, came to me very quickly and confidentially informed me that in the castle the former patients were burned.

1 Carol Poore, *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 87.

2 Quoted in Gordon J. Horwitz, *In the Shadow of Death: Living Outside the Gates of Mauthausen* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 59.

The frightful facts which the people of the vicinity had to experience first hand, and the terrible stench of the burning gases, robbed them of speech. The people suffered dreadfully from the stench. My own father collapsed unconscious several times, since in the night he had forgotten to seal up the windows completely tight.<sup>3</sup>

Horwitz notes, "It was not just the smoke and stench that drew the attention of bystanders. At times human remains littered parts of the vicinity. In the words of Sister Felicitas, 'when there was intense activity, it smoked day and night. Tufts of hair flew through the chimney onto the street. The remains of bones were stored on the east side of the castle and in ton trucks driven first to the Danube [River], later also to the Traun.'"<sup>4</sup>

As evidence of mass murders mounted, Christian Wirth, the director of the operation, met with local residents. He told them that his men were burning shoes and other "belongings." When they asked about the strong smell, he told them it came from a device that turned old oil and oil byproducts into a water-clear, oily fluid that was of "great importance" to German submarines. Wirth ended the meeting by threatening to send anyone who spread "absurd rumors of burning persons" to a concentration camp.<sup>5</sup> The townspeople took him at his word. They did not break their silence.

The castle at Hartheim was one of six facilities, most of which were hospitals, that the Nazis outfitted with gas chambers and ovens in 1940 and 1941 in order to murder physically and mentally disabled people and burn their remains. Between May 1940 and May 1941, 18,269 patients were murdered at Hartheim.<sup>6</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What did people who lived near Hartheim observe? What did they know about what was happening there? Why did they keep silent about what they knew?

2. Professor Ervin Staub believes that bystanders play a critical role in society:

Bystanders, people who witness but are not directly affected by the actions of perpetrators, help shape society by their reactions. . . . Bystanders can exert powerful influences. They can define the meaning of events and move others toward empathy or indifference. They can promote values and norms of caring, or by their passivity of participation in the system, they can affirm the perpetrators.<sup>7</sup>

According to Staub, what choices do bystanders have? What choices did people who lived near Hartheim Castle make? What were the consequences?

3. Who was part of this town's universe of obligation?

3 Quoted in Horwitz, *In the Shadow of Death*, 60.

4 Ibid., 60–61.

5 Ibid.

6 Robert N. Proctor, "Culling the German Volk," in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 267.

7 Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 86–87.

## Reading 5

# Protesting Medical Killing

From time to time, as the Nazi “euthanasia,” or medical killing, program continued, families, religious leaders, or hospital personnel raised awkward questions about the fate of the disabled in hospitals, asylums, and institutions. The government either denied wrongdoing or refused to answer questions because of the need for secrecy in wartime. But the silence of both medical and political officials could not stop the gossip or the speculation.

As knowledge of the “euthanasia” program spread, a few people began to take a stand against it. Among them were Friedrich von Bodelschwingh and Paul Gerhard Braune. Both men were ministers in the Confessing Church (see “Protestant Churches and the Nazi State” in Chapter 5) and also heads of institutions that served disabled adults. The “euthanasia” program relied on questionnaires filled out by the administrators and medical professionals at such institutions to identify targets for medical killing (see Reading 3, “‘Unworthy to Live’”). Once Bodelschwingh and Braune realized how the questionnaires were being used, they refused to fill them out. They stated their objections to key Nazi officials and stalled other officials as long as possible to keep their patients alive.

Both men were afraid that if they took a public stand, their patients might be endangered. So they worked behind the scenes to get the policy of “euthanasia,” or medical killing, changed. In July 1940, Braune sent top government officials a long report with detailed evidence of the murders. In it, he asked:

How far does one want to go with the extermination of so-called lives unworthy of life? The mass actions up to now have shown that many people have been taken who were in large part clear and of sane mind. Where does the limit lie? Who is abnormal, anti-social, who is hopelessly ill? . . . It is a dangerous venture to abandon the integrity of the person without any legal foundation. . . . Will it not endanger the ethics of the entire population, when human life counts for so little?<sup>1</sup>

A month later, Braune was imprisoned for “sabotaging measures of the regime in an irresponsible manner.” His fellow pastors in the Confessing Church gave him very little support. Most wanted more proof before they were willing to take a stand. The few who spoke out were from villages and small towns, and they were not heard beyond their own communities.

Since Bodelschwingh was a well-known and respected Protestant leader both within and outside of Germany, the Nazis did not arrest him. But in September 1940, a German aircraft bombed Bodelschwingh’s Bethel



Watch **Bishop von Galen and the War against the Disabled**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 110–11.

Hospital, killing 11 handicapped children; the Nazis blamed the bombing on the British. Bodelschwingh continued to try to protect his patients from the Nazis throughout the war.<sup>2</sup>

In May 1941, the Reich Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Hereditary and Congenital Diseases began sending questionnaires to homes for the elderly. A few months later, Clemens August Graf von Galen, the Catholic bishop of Münster, asked his congregation, “Do you or I have the right to live only as long as we are productive?” If so, he argued, “then someone has only to order a secret decree that the measures tried out on the mentally ill be extended to other ‘nonproductive’ people, that it can be used on those incurably ill with a lung disease, on those weakened by aging, on those disabled at work, on severely wounded soldiers. Then not a one of us is sure anymore of his life.”<sup>3</sup>

Bishop von Galen’s sermon generated outrage against the “euthanasia” program. He had it printed and read from the pulpit in Catholic churches in Germany. The British broadcast portions of the sermon on radio stations that could be heard by Germans, and they printed it on leaflets and dropped them across Germany and other countries in Europe.<sup>4</sup> Three weeks later, Hitler responded to the outrage by signing an order officially ending the “euthanasia” program. In fact, however, it did not end but continued quietly throughout the war and may have claimed 100,000 more lives.

### Connection Questions

1. What do you think inspired Braune, Bodelschwingh, and von Galen to ask questions and speak out when most of their fellow Germans either supported the Nazi medical killing policies or remained silent?
2. Through his sermon, how does von Galen define his universe of obligation? What argument does he use to justify his beliefs about who is deserving of care and protection?
3. What does the reading indicate about the Nazi government’s concern for public opinion, even after years of propaganda and terror?
4. When a few people spoke out, why do you think others chose not to join them in protesting the deaths of innocent people?

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 92–93.

3 Quoted in Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 117.

4 Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 97–99.

## Reading 6

# The War against Poland: Speed and Brutality

While the Nazis carried out their plan to strengthen the German “race”—purging the Reich of Jews, Sinti and Roma, the mentally and physically disabled, and others they considered defective or racially inferior—the invasion of Poland marked the start of the next phase of the Nazi racial program: the acquisition of *Lebensraum*, or “living space.” According to historian Doris Bergen, the Nazi policies concerning “race” and “space” were closely related:

Hitler was obsessed with two notions: that humanity was engaged in a giant struggle between “races,” or communities of “blood”; and that “pure Germans,” members of the so-called Aryan race, needed space to expand . . . Any race that was not expanding, he believed, was doomed to disappear.<sup>1</sup>

In August 1939, just days before the invasion of Poland, Adolf Hitler spoke to his generals about the coming war:

Our strength lies in our speed and our brutality. Genghis Khan hunted millions of women and children to their deaths, consciously and with a joyous heart. History sees in him only the great founder of a state. . . . I have issued a command—and I will have everyone who utters even a single word of criticism shot—that the aim of the war lies not in reaching particular lines but in the physical annihilation of the enemy. Thus, so far only in the east, I have put my Death’s Head formations at the ready with the command to send every man, woman and child of Polish descent and language to their deaths, pitilessly and remorselessly. . . . Poland will be depopulated and settled with Germans.<sup>2</sup>

The message was clear: the aim of the war in Poland was to conquer “living space” for Germans, so it was to be waged against the people of Poland as well as the Polish army. A German pilot known only as Pohl who was captured later in the war described his actions in the early days of the war in a conversation with Meyer, a fellow prisoner:

Pohl: On the second day of the Polish war I had to drop bombs on a station at Posen. Eight of the 16 bombs fell on the town, among the houses, I did not like that. On the third day I did not care a hoot, and on the fourth day I was enjoying it. It was our before-breakfast amusement to chase single [Polish] soldiers over the fields with [machine gun] fire and to leave them lying there with a few bullets in the back.

Meyer: But always against soldiers?



LESSON

Teach **Confronting the Suffering Caused by the Nazis**

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VIDEO

Watch **Hitler’s Ideology: Race, Land, and Conquest**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

1 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 52.

2 Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 11.

Pohl: People (civilians) too. . . . I was in the "Kette" (a flight made of three aircraft). The leader bombed the street, the two supporting machines the ditches, because there are always ditches there. . . . You should have seen the horses stampe!

Meyer: Disgusting that with the horses . . .

Pohl: I was sorry for the horses, but not at all for the people. But I was sorry for the horses up to the last day.<sup>3</sup>

Pilots attack their targets from a distance; soldiers come face to face with theirs. Gerhard M., a storm trooper, wrote this in his diary on September 7, 1939:

Burning houses, weeping women, screaming children. A picture of misery. But the Polish people didn't want it any better. In one of the primitive peasant houses we even surprised a woman servicing a Polish machine-gun. The house was turned over and set alight. After a short while the woman was surrounded by flames and tried to get out. But we stopped her, as hard as it was. Soldiers can't be treated any differently just because they're in skirts. Her screaming rang in my ears long after. The whole village burned. We had to walk exactly in the middle of the street because the heat from the burning houses on both sides was too great.<sup>4</sup>

In the midst of this violence, General Walther von Brauchitsch, the commander in chief of the German army, was troubled by the lack of "manly discipline" displayed by his German soldiers in Poland. Threatening dishonorable discharge for "officers who continue to disobey orders and enrich themselves," he wrote:

There are a considerable number of cases of officers illegally driving people from their homes, confiscating items without permission, enriching themselves by failing to report or stealing goods, mistreating or threatening their inferiors, partly in states of excitement and irresponsible drunkenness, failing to carry out orders with grave consequences for the troops under their command, and committing sexual offenses against married women. The image that results is that of a pack of marauding mercenaries who cannot be reprimanded sharply enough. Whether they are acting consciously or not, these officers are parasites who have no business in our ranks.<sup>5</sup>

Because the German army was supposed to "live off the land" during its conquest of Poland, von Brauchitsch permitted soldiers to confiscate Polish property without penalty. But he continued to issue new regulations until the end of 1939 in order to maintain discipline in the ranks.

3 Quoted in Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldiers: German POWs on Fighting, Killing, and Dying* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 47–48.

4 Quoted in Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 20–21.

5 Quoted in Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldiers*, 53.



## Connection Questions

1. How did Nazi beliefs about "race and space" affect how Germans fought the war against Poland? How was their conquest of Poland different from what many people in 1939 expected from war?
2. How did the pilot Pohl's feelings about carrying out bombings change during the first few days of the war? How do you explain the change?
3. What do the sources in this reading suggest about the motivations of German soldiers who treated Polish civilians brutally?
4. What did Walther von Brauchitsch find disturbing about the behavior of German soldiers toward Polish civilians? How did he respond?

## Reading 7

# Dividing Poland and Its People



Watch **Hitler's Ideology: Race, Land, and Conquest**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

When the Germans invaded and then occupied Poland in September 1939, they did not take over the entire country. They honored a secret clause in a pact they had signed with the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939, a little over a week before the invasion (see “A Pact with the Soviet Union” in Chapter 7). The pact gave eastern Poland to the Soviet Union, and on September 17, the Soviets took over that territory. In June 1940, they moved on to the Baltic States—Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

From the start, Hitler made no secret of how he felt about the people of Poland. He considered Poles, the ethnic majority in Poland, to be “sub-human.” Alfred Rosenberg, a leading proponent of Nazi ideology, summed up a conversation he had with Hitler in a diary entry dated September 1939:

The Poles: a thin Germanic layer, underneath frightful material. The Jews, the most appalling people one can imagine. The towns thick with dirt. He's [Hitler] learned a lot in these past weeks. Above all, if Poland had gone on ruling the old German parts for a few more decades everything would have become lice-ridden and decayed. What was needed now was a determined and masterful hand to rule.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the invasion, Germany divided its portion of Poland into two parts: the Warthegau, which bordered Germany, and the General Government of Poland, which consisted of the rest of Germany's portion of the country. The Warthegau was annexed into Germany itself; the General Government was treated like a colony and placed under the control of Hans Frank, one of Hitler's chief advisors. To “Aryanize” the Warthegau, the Nazis expelled hundreds of thousands of Poles, Jews, and Sinti and Roma from that territory to the General Government.

In Hitler's view, the only “racially valuable” inhabitants of Poland were the so-called “ethnic Germans”—those of German descent. To underscore that idea, the Germans established rules and regulations designed to make the Poles and other “undesirable groups” in Poland (both in the Warthegau and the General Government) understand “that they are the conquered and we are the conquerors and those who act against . . . regulations, expose themselves to the most severe punishment.” As a result, Poles were required to “leave the pavement free” for their conquerors (and walk in the street or gutter); they had to serve Germans first in shops; and they were to tip their hats to “important personalities of State, Party and armed forces”—but they were not allowed to say “Heil Hitler!” That greeting was to be used only by Germans.<sup>2</sup>

1 Quoted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919–1945*, vol. 2 (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 927.

2 Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 282.

Educated Poles were now subject to arbitrary arrest. In early November 1939, the Nazis shipped 167 professors from Kraków University to Sachsenhausen, a concentration camp outside Berlin. Later that week, they arrested a thousand Polish intellectuals. In December, Hitler issued a special decree that said that anyone considered a threat to German security could “vanish without a trace into the night and fog.”<sup>3</sup>

On October 7, 1939, Hitler had appointed Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, to a new position—Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom. Seven months later, Himmler wrote:

The non-German population of the eastern territories [areas of Poland conquered by Germany] must not receive any education higher than that of an elementary school with four [grades]. The objective of this schooling must simply be to teach: simple arithmetic up to 500 at the most, how to write one’s name; and to teach that it is God’s commandment to be obedient to the Germans and to be honest, hard working and well-behaved. I consider it unnecessary to teach reading. . . .

Parents who wish to provide their children with a better education both in the elementary school and later in a secondary school, must make an application to the Higher SS and Police Leader. . . . If we recognize such a child as being of our blood, then the parents will be informed that the child will be placed in a school in Germany and will remain in Germany indefinitely . . .

The parents of these children of good blood will be given the choice of either giving up their child . . . or they would have to agree to go to Germany and become loyal citizens there.<sup>4</sup>

Following these directives, the Nazis shipped about 200,000 “racially valuable” children to Germany to be turned into “true Aryans.” The boys were trained as soldiers and the girls for motherhood.

## Connection Questions

1. What were the Nazis’ plans for Poland? How did they divide the country and its people?
2. How did Poles fit into the Nazis’ beliefs about a racial hierarchy?
3. After the German invasion of Poland, what did the Nazis do to show Poles that “they are the conquered and we are the conquerors”? Why did the Nazis believe this was important?
4. What is the significance of Himmler’s title, “Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of Germandom”?
5. Why would the Nazis specifically target educated Poles and Polish intellectuals? Why would they restrict access to education? What does this suggest about the power of education?

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century*, 287.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Noakes and Pridham, eds., *Nazism*, 933.

## Reading 8

# Colonizing Poland



LESSON

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Only a few months after the invasion of Poland, Germany was working quickly to claim its new “living space” by removing those people the Nazis considered to be of inferior races from the Warthegau, the territory of western Poland that had been annexed to the German Reich. The Nazis then sent in settlers who they believed were German enough to take possession of the land, homes, and businesses. In a December 1939 report, an observer describes how this took place:

As ethnic Germans . . . come pouring into the new Reich territories . . . an equivalent number of Poles from matching occupations are being evacuated at the same rate. Depending on the number of German farmers, traders, skilled tradesmen, etc., who are registered with the immigration offices, a corresponding number of jobs, houses, and farms previously held or occupied by Poles must be made available for them. If, for example, an incoming batch of immigrants from the Baltic states contains twenty German master bakers, then twenty Polish bakeries in Posen and the rest of the Warthegau must be evacuated. The German immigrants then move into these premises . . . Initially the evacuation of residents from the towns was not carried out selectively, but simply block by block. This often meant that railway workers and other persons working in vital industries were evacuated, causing economic disruption. Today evacuations are carried out on the basis of specially prepared lists. Polish intellectuals are evacuated as a matter of priority. Polish agricultural workers, domestic staff and factory workers are allowed to remain.<sup>1</sup>

A Polish woman identified as “Mrs. J. K.” described her expulsion from her home by the Nazis:

On 17 October 1939, at 8 A.M., I heard someone knocking at the door of my flat. As my maid was afraid to open it, I went to the door myself. I found there two German gendarmes [police], who roughly told me that in a few hours I had to be ready to travel with my children and everybody in the house. When I said that I had small children, that my husband was a prisoner of war, and that I could not get ready to travel in so short a time, the gendarmes answered that not only must I be ready but that the flat must be swept, the plates and dishes washed and the keys left in the cupboards, so that the Germans who were to live in my house should have no trouble. In so many words, they further declared that I was entitled to take with me only one suitcase of not more than 50 kilograms [110 pounds] in weight and a small handbag with food for a few days.

At 12 noon they came again and ordered us to go out in front of the house. Similar groups of people were standing in front of all the houses. After some hours waiting, military lorries [trucks] drove up and they packed us in one after the other,

<sup>1</sup> Götz Aly and Suzanne Heim, “Rearranging Populations,” in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 273–74.

shouting at us rudely and also striking us. Then they took us to the railway station, but only in the evening did they pack us into [boxcars], the doors of which they then bolted and sealed. In these [cars], most of which were packed with forty people, we spent three days, without any possibility of getting out. I hereby affirm that in my [car] there were six children of under ten years of age and two old men, and that we were not given any straw, or any drinking utensils, that we had to satisfy our natural needs in the tightly packed [car], and that if there were no deaths in our transport it was only because it was still comparatively warm and we spent only three days on the journey. We were unloaded, half dead at Czeszochowa [in the General Government part of Poland] where the local population gave us immediate help, but the German soldiers who opened the truck exclaimed, "What! Are these Polish swine still alive?"<sup>2</sup>

The process was much the same everywhere. In the city of Posen, 88,000 Poles and Jews were arrested and then loaded onto unheated rail cars in December 1939. When those cars reached Kraków, German officials discovered the bodies of 40 children who had frozen to death on the journey.

Those who survived their expulsion from the Warthegau to the General Government were divided into groups. One group, made up of the strongest and fittest Polish men, was immediately shipped to Germany as forced labor. The other Poles were left to fend for themselves. The Jews were placed in ghettos—closely guarded sections of cities where only Jews could live. Altogether, more than a million people were displaced; two-thirds of them were ethnic Poles.

The people who moved in after the Poles, Jews, and other groups deemed inferior were expelled from the Warthegau were ethnic Germans. These German colonists came from Germany itself, as well as from Baltic countries that contained ethnic German populations before the war. Upon arrival in Poland, the colonists were often housed first in asylum and hospital buildings (emptied of residents by the Nazi "euthanasia" program) and transit camps until enough homes had been emptied of their Polish owners. A German observer described how the colonists were introduced to their new homes after that:

I was particularly impressed by the way the resettlement in Janowice . . . was organized. The resettlement unit sent a car for me at 4:30 a.m. . . . Our first destination was the transit camp in Zgierz. Parked outside the gate was a line of brown buses normally used to take German workers on vacation trips. The luggage was just then being put on board. The new colonists were sitting in a school hall eating



**An exhibit at a Berlin school persuades Germans to help colonize the Warthegau area of Poland. The exhibit says "The land calls you!" and the painting shows a settler's car passing by a Polish border sign that has been knocked down.**

2 Quoted in Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts, 1919–1945*, vol. 2 (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 937–38.

breakfast. The head of every family had a piece of white paper hung around his neck with the number of his farm written on it (and already the numbering ran from 1441 upwards) . . . The people are put on the buses in the order of their farm numbers. . . . At a farm halfway there we meet up with a police unit of 50 or so men who have been working there during the night. Janowice comes into view up ahead. . . . Then the first carts arrive. No. 1441. A pale, elderly farmer in a poor state of health. "This is your farm," the SS man tells him. It's a small, blue-painted Polish cottage. It seems to me that the farmer turns a shade paler. He slowly approaches the high wooden gate. His wife stays on the cart, as if rooted to the spot. "And the second farm over there, the neighboring one, that's yours as well . . ." continues the SS man. "Now that's more like it," he seems to be thinking. I accompany the people as they tour the house. They wander slowly from room to room, examining everything closely. Nobody says a word. Now and then the farmer points to an object and says to his wife, "Look!" We wish the people luck and go over to the next house.<sup>3</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How were the Nazis' beliefs about race and their quest for "living space" related?
2. How do the individual stories in this reading help you understand the consequences of the Nazi policies in Poland that were based on these beliefs?
3. Who benefited from the Nazi plan to rearrange the population of Poland? Who suffered as a result of the plan?
4. What insight does this reading provide about the factors that encouraged Germans to support the war effort?

3. Aly and Heim, "Rearranging Populations," 279–80.



## Reading 9

# “Cultural Missionaries”

For many young Germans, the “Aryanization” of the Warthegau provided an opportunity to serve their country. Melita Maschmann, who was then in her early 20s and held a leadership position in the BDM (the German initials of the League of German Girls), was among the first to work in the east. She recalled:

My colleagues and I felt it was an honor to be allowed to help in “conquering” this area for our own nation and for German culture. We had all the arrogant enthusiasm of the “cultural missionary.” . . .

How could young people, in particular, fail to enjoy such a life? It is true that if one visited the eastern parts of the Warthegau it was impossible to imagine oneself to be standing on lost German soil which had simply to be reclaimed for the Reich. This country was Polish through and through. Hitler had not reclaimed it but conquered it in battle. We knew that might had triumphed over right there. In those days we should probably have agreed that “the right of the strongest” had triumphed in the struggle for *Lebensraum*. . . .

Our existence at that time was for us like a great adventure. . . . All through our childhood the lament over Germany’s defeat in the First World War and her misery in the postwar years had never ceased. I believe that growing up in a country where people’s minds are dominated by such a mood has a fateful effect. Young people do not want to be ashamed of their fatherland. They depend more than older people on being able to honor, admire and to love it.

The fact that we were allowed to perform a kind of “colonization work” in “advanced posts” there healed the wounds which our sense of honor had suffered in our childhood and early youth. Germany required us not merely to do a job of work but to give our entire selves. This feeling rose on many occasions to a sensation of intoxication. . . .

It goes without saying that in this situation we were inclined to romanticize our existence in the “front line,” and developed much of the colonial’s presumptuous arrogance towards the “stay at homes.” . . .

I was the first Reich German B.D.M. leader to be sent to the Warthegau, and for a long time I was the only one. It is true that I had no leadership task—I had simply come to Posen to run the press department for the Regional leadership of the Hitler Youth—but I quickly made close contact with the local . . . B.D.M. leaders and was drawn into their work.<sup>1</sup>



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**After Germany conquered the Warthegau region of Poland, members of the League of German Girls moved there to help colonize and spread German culture.**

<sup>1</sup> Melita Maschmann, *Account Rendered: A Dossier on My Former Self* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1965), 73.

Although Maschmann was at times troubled by the behavior of her fellow “cultural missionaries,” she found ways to rationalize or make excuses for their actions. A former teacher drafted into the Germany army in August 1939 found it harder to do so. Wilhelm Hosenfeld, like Maschmann, was a committed member of the Nazi Party. In October 1939, he was appointed the commanding officer of a camp for Polish prisoners. From the start, he was troubled by what he saw and heard there. By December, he was raising questions in his diary about the expulsions from the Warthegau:

Why are these people being torn away from their dwellings when it is not known where else they can be accommodated? For a whole day long they are standing in the cold, sitting on their bundles, their meager belongings, they are given nothing to eat. There’s system in it, the intention is to make these people sick, poor, helpless, they are to perish.<sup>2</sup>

In a letter to his wife, Hosenfeld wrote that he was “sometimes ashamed” to be a German soldier. But although he secretly aided some of the prisoners in his labor camp, he did not protest to his superiors about their treatment. The same was true of Herbert Mochalski, a pastor in the Confessing Church who served as a German soldier during the invasion of Poland. He told an interviewer many years later, “I saw horrible things. . . . It is nonsense when a German soldier says . . . that he never saw anything, that the soldiers didn’t know anything. It’s all simply not true!” He went on:

We sat on our trucks and saw it. . . . All right, we could, we should, have protested then, but how? We couldn’t have changed anything. I mean, all that is no excuse. Indeed, we all failed in this respect, that things went that far at all, isn’t that so? And that is the awful thing that weighs on all of us, up to today.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Melita Maschmann asks, “How could young people, in particular, fail to enjoy such a life?” Why did living and working in the Warthegau appeal to Maschmann and other young people?
2. Why would Maschmann use the term “colonization work” to describe their efforts? How is that connected to the history of imperialism (see “Expansion Was Everything” in Chapter 2)? How might it be connected to the term “cultural missionary”?
3. Do you think that Wilhelm Hosenfeld and Herbert Mochalski experienced the same “sensation of intoxication” as Melita Maschmann? How were their responses to the troubling things they saw similar? How were they different?

2 Quoted in Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 30.

3 Quoted in Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 164.

## Reading 10

# The War on Jews in Poland

The German invasion of Poland was devastating not only for Poles but also for the more than 3.5 million Jews who lived there in 1939. In Germany, Jews were about 1% of the population; in Poland they made up 10%, and the proportion of Jews was often much higher in Polish cities such as Warsaw. In the first few days of the invasion, Jacob Birnbaum discovered how he and his fellow Jews would be affected by German occupation:

On Tuesday, September 5, at 4:00 in the afternoon, German ground troops entered [the town of] Piotrkow and conquered the city after two hours of street fighting. That same day they set out on a search for Jews in the almost deserted city, found twenty, among them Rabbi Yechiel Meir Fromnitsky, and shot them in cold blood. Thus it began.

The next day, September 6, the Germans set fire to a few streets in the Jewish quarter and shot Jews trying to escape from their burning homes. . . . Both individually and in groups the Germans invaded the Jewish community and stole virtually everything they feasibly could—clothes, linen, furs, carpets, valuable books. They often invited the Poles on the streets to take part in the looting, after which they would fire bullets into the air to give the impression that they were driving away the Polish “thieves.” These scenes were photographed by the Germans to demonstrate for all that they were protecting Jewish property from Polish criminals.

Jews, many of them elderly, were kidnapped and sent to forced labor camps where they were tortured and beaten—often to the point of loss of consciousness. These kidnappings took place during the days preceding Rosh Hashanah [the Jewish new year], as well as on the holy day [Yom Kippur] itself. Jewish men hid themselves in cellars, attics, and elsewhere, yet most were caught. The worst fate was that of the Jews sent to the SS Precinct. The main objective of the work there was torture, not productivity. Jews were forced, for instance, to do “gymnastics” while being beaten and subjected to various other forms of humiliation. . . .

One common insult suffered by the Jews during the early days under the new regime was their being chased away or beaten as they tried to wait in line for food together with other citizens. All Jews who attempted to resist were gunned down immediately.

During the holy days of Rosh Hashanah, as Jews hurriedly gathered to pray in the synagogues and private homes, still more torture was inflicted upon them. Several German officers entered the Great Synagogue stirring up much confusion among the worshipping Jews, many of whom attempted to escape. Twenty-nine worshippers were beaten brutally and taken away to prison, among them the lay leader of the congregation. The news of this event spread rapidly through the city, causing a



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great deal of fright, consternation, and anxiety. There were no worshippers in the synagogue on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

Two days before Yom Kippur [the Jewish day of atonement], German officers and troopers entered the shut synagogue, broke up the furnishings, and completely demolished the beautifully ornamented eastern wall.<sup>1</sup>

As the fighting in Poland continued, Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the Reich Central Security Office, called a meeting in Berlin of the leaders of several SS units known as the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads made up primarily of German SS and police personnel). At the meeting, Heydrich distinguished between “the final aim (which will require extended periods of time)” and “the stages leading to the fulfillment of this final aim (which will be carried out in short periods).” He began by ordering that Jews be forcibly moved from the countryside to large cities. Jewish communities with less than 500 persons were to be dissolved and their residents transferred to the nearest “concentration center.”

By the end of 1939, all Jews in occupied Poland aged ten and above had to wear yellow stars on their sleeves to indicate that they were Jews. Jewish-owned shops had to display signs in their windows. Also, Jews could be treated only by Jewish physicians.<sup>2</sup> Failing to obey these or any of the other laws the Nazis imposed could mean ten years in prison. The Germans established at least 1,100 ghettos and hundreds of forced labor camps in occupied Poland. Historian Richard Evans writes that in the General Government, “if Poles were second-class citizens, then Jews scarcely qualified as human beings at all in the eyes of the German occupiers, soldiers and civilians, Nazis and non-Nazis alike.”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What questions do you have about the individual stories in this reading? What stood out to you the most?
2. What does Jacob Birnbaum’s description of the events in Piotrkow tell you about Nazi policy in Poland?
3. The Nazis enacted measures to isolate Jews in Germany over the course of six years, but in 1939 they isolated Jews in Poland in just a few months. What measures did they take to isolate Jews in Poland? What might have been the impact of implementing those measures so quickly?

1 Jacob Birnbaum, “Account of the Piotrkow Ghetto,” unpublished document available from the Facing History and Ourselves Resource Center.

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 51–52.

3 Ibid., 48.

## Reading 11

# The Jewish Ghettos: Separated from the World

Beginning in 1939, Jews throughout German-controlled Poland were forced to move into ghettos—specific areas of cities and towns that were separated from the rest of the population. Jews had to leave behind their homes and most of their possessions when they moved to ghettos; while families were generally able to stay together, space was crowded, with multiple families sharing one apartment. In Warsaw, Jewish resident Chaim Kaplan wrote in his diary, “We have entered into a new life, and it is impossible to imagine the panic that has arisen in the Jewish Quarter. Suddenly we see ourselves penned in on all sides. We are segregated and separated from the world and the fullness thereof, driven out of the society of the human race.”<sup>1</sup>

The ghettos created by the Nazis were not the first in Europe: the term *ghetto* actually originated in Venice, Italy, where Jewish homes and businesses were confined to a designated part of the city beginning in 1516. Over the next 200 years, rulers in Rome, Prague, Frankfurt, and other cities also established ghettos, though by the late 1800s Jews were no longer legally required to live in them. But as the German army conquered territory in Poland and farther east in the early years of World War II, the Germans created ghettos throughout this area; historians estimate that during the war there were more than 1,100 Jewish ghettos. The map “Jewish Ghettos in Eastern Europe” in Chapter 9 shows the location of these ghettos throughout Europe. They were not all alike: some ghettos were tiny, less than the size of a city block, while others, such as the Łódź ghetto, were vast areas almost like small cities themselves. Some ghettos, like Warsaw’s, were sealed off from the outside world by walls, barbed wire, and guards. Others were more open, and Jewish residents were able leave the ghetto to work, most often as forced laborers for the Nazis or companies that supported the Third Reich. Some ghettos existed only for brief periods of just a few weeks, as places where Jews could be contained before deportation or murder; other ghettos were active for years.

Anxiety about deportation to concentration camps and the struggle to find enough food were part of daily life in most ghettos. In the Łódź ghetto,



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United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

German postcard showing the entrance to the Łódź ghetto in Poland. The sign reads, “Jewish residential area—entry forbidden.”

<sup>1</sup> Chaim Aron Kaplan and Abraham Isaac Katsh, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 225.



located in a part of Poland that had been incorporated into the German Reich, residents were particularly isolated from the surrounding population and had to exist on the small rations provided by the Germans.<sup>2</sup> Smuggling of food and medicine—a lifeline for other ghettos—was nearly impossible in Łódź. In early 1942, a young girl living in the Łódź ghetto kept a diary of her experiences. Her name remains unknown, but her diary entries evoke the fear and suffering of life in the ghetto:

[No Date]

There is no justice in the world, not to mention in the ghetto. Right now they are deporting people on welfare. People are in a state of panic. And this hunger. A struggle against death from starvation. Life is terrible, living conditions are abominable, and there is no food . . .

Wednesday March 11, 1942

This ration is much worse than the previous one. Terrible hunger is awaiting us again. I got the vegetable ration right away. There is only vinegar and ice in the beets. There is no food, we are going to starve to death. All my teeth ache and I am very hungry. My left leg is frostbitten. I ate almost all the honey. What have I done? I'm so selfish. What are they going to put on their bread now, what will they say? Mom, I'm unworthy of you. You work so hard. Besides working in the workshop, she also moonlights for a woman who sells clothes in the street. My mom looks awful, like a shadow. She works very hard . . .

Today I had a fight with my father. I swore at him, even cursed him. It happened because yesterday I weighed twenty decagrams of *zacierki* [egg noodles] and then sneaked a spoonful. When my father came back, he immediately noticed that some *zacierki* were missing. My father started yelling at me and he was right. But since the chairman [Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the head of the Jewish Council of Łódź] gave out these *zacierki* to be cooked, why can't I have some? I became very upset and cursed my father. What have I done? I regret it so much, but it can't be undone. My father is not going to forgive me. How will I ever look him in the eyes? He stood by the window and cried like a baby. Not even a stranger insulted him before. The whole family witnessed this incident. I went to bed as soon as possible, without dinner. I thought I would die of hunger, because we have our meal only in the evening. I fell asleep and woke at twelve. My mom was still working at the sewing machine. I couldn't stand the hunger, so I got up and took a piece of meal. We would be a happy family, if I didn't fight with everybody. All the fights are started by me. I must be manipulated by some evil force. I would like to be different, but I don't have a strong enough will. There is nobody I can talk to. Why isn't there anybody who would guide me, why can't anyone teach me? I hate my sister. She is a stranger to me. God, show me what is right. Today there was a ration of eight kilograms of briquettes for those who don't get provisions in the kitchen.

Saturday March 14, 1942

. . . O freedom! Will I have to stay behind this barbed wire forever? Will that sign be on the big board forever, [Entering Jewish residential area forbidden]? Will there

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 227.



always be a booth with a German guard who has a rifle on his shoulder? Has it always been like this? Will it stay like this? Oh, no! But who is going to live through it? I miss freedom. Especially on a warm sunny day. O sun! It's you who make me yearn for freedom. My heart is bleeding and my eyes are full of tears. Someone reading this in the future may sneer at me, say I'm an idiot. But my hand is writing this involuntarily. I would like to stand there for days and feast my eyes on this sight. I came home at seven o'clock, had dinner, and went to bed at nine.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was the purpose of isolating Jews in ghettos? In what ways did the Nazi policy build on examples of societies confining people in ghettos from earlier in history? In what ways was it different?
2. What was the impact of isolating Jews in ghettos? What details in the diary entries of the anonymous girl from Łódź help you to understand how living in ghettos affected individuals and families?
3. What do the anonymous girl's diary entries suggest about the purpose and power of writing?
4. Alexandra Zapruder, who edited a collection of young writers' diaries from the Holocaust called *Salvaged Pages*, wrote of the diaries, "Perhaps most important of all, they stand as markers of people in time, those who wrote themselves into existence when the world was trying to erase their presence. As such, they are tools for pedagogy [teaching], to be sure, but they are also a reminder of the singular power of the written word."<sup>4</sup> What does this suggest about why we should read diaries like that of the anonymous girl from Łódź? What do you think we can learn from sources like this diary?

<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 230–40.

<sup>4</sup> Facing History and Ourselves, *A Guide to the MTV Film "I'm Still Here: Real Diaries of Young People Who Lived During the Holocaust"*, online PDF, 6, <https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/publications/Salvaged%20Pages.pdf>.

## Reading 12

# The Jewish Councils

As German forces occupied Poland and territories farther east, they forced each community of Jews to elect a Jewish Council, or *Judenrat*, which would enforce Nazi orders. Caught in an impossible position between the violent demands of Nazi officials and the overwhelming needs of Jews in the ghettos, most Jewish Council members struggled to do what was best for the people they were responsible for. In ghettos, the Jewish Councils were given responsibility for organizing and maintaining everyday life in a community oppressed by scarcity, violence, and uncertainty. Jewish Councils were authorized to distribute food rations and supplies, manage access to medical care, and organize housing. Under German orders, Jewish Councils were also required to establish a Jewish police force that would carry out Nazi directives within the ghetto, including deportations from the ghetto to camps and killing sites. Often, the councils themselves were responsible for choosing which residents of the ghetto would be selected for work, deported to concentration camps, or sent to death camps (see Chapter 9). Sometimes, members of the Jewish Councils and Jewish police forces had “privileges” not available to other ghetto inhabitants, such as access to more food for their families. Some residents of ghettos bitterly accused Jewish Council members of collaborating with the Nazis in exchange for such privileges.

Minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Council in Vilna in October 1942 reflect the tremendous burden and unthinkable choices that were forced on these councils. Jacob Gens, head of the Vilna council, reported to his fellow council members on what happened when he was ordered to reduce the population of the nearby ghetto of Oszmiana:

Gens: Gentlemen, I asked you to come here today in order to relate to you one of the most terrible tragedies in the life of Jews—when Jews led Jews to their death. Once more I have to speak openly to you.

A week ago Weiss of the SD [an official from the Nazi security police] came to us in the name of the SD with an order that we were to travel to the Oszmiana. There were about 4,000 Jews in the Oszmiana ghetto and it was not possible to keep so many persons there. For that reason the ghetto would have to be made smaller—by picking out the people who did not suit the Germans, to take them away and shoot them. The first to go should be children and women whose husbands were taken away last year by the “snatchers.” The next to be taken would be women and families with a large number of children. When we received this order we replied: “At your command.”



**Jews wearing Star of David badges in the Łódź ghetto. The Germans crowded 160,000 Jews from the Polish city, more than a third of its population, into the ghetto, which was established in 1940.**

Mr. Dessler [another member of the Jewish Council] and Jewish Police went to Oszmiana. After two or three days the Jewish Police observed . . . that, first of all, the women whose men had been taken away last year were now working and could not be taken away, and, secondly, that there were no families with 4 or 5 children. The largest were families of two children. There were only a few [families] with three children. So that would also not work. (I forgot to say that no fewer than 1,500 persons had to be taken away.) We said that we could not provide such a number. We started to bargain. When Mr. Dessler arrived with the report from Oszmiana, the number dropped to 800. When I went to Oszmiana with Weiss, the number dropped again to 600. In reality the situation was different. We argued about the 600 and during this time the question of the removal of women and children was dropped. There remained the question of old people. In reality, 406 old people were collected in Oszmiana. These old people were handed over.

When Weiss came the first time and spoke about the women and children, I told him that old people should be taken. He answered: "The old people would die off in any case during the winter and the ghetto has to be reduced in size now."

The Jewish Police saved those who must live. Those who had little time left to live were taken away, and may the aged among the Jews forgive us. They were a sacrifice for our Jews and for our future.

I don't want to talk about what our Jews from Vilna have gone through in Oszmiana. Today I only regret that there were no Jews [i.e., Jewish Police] when the Aktion was carried out in Kiemieliszki and in Bystrzyca. Last week all the Jews were shot there, without any distinction. Today two Jews from Swieciany (Old-Swieciany) [a town near Vilna] came to me and asked me to save them. The Jews from Swieciany, Widze and other small places in the neighborhood were [collected]

there. And today I ask myself what is to happen if we have once more to carry out a selection. It is my duty to tell them: my good Jews, away with you; it is not my wish to soil my hands and send my Police to do the dirty work. Today I shall say that it is my duty to soil my hands, because terrible times have come over the Jewish people. If five million people have already gone it is our duty to save the strong and the young, not in years only, but in spirit, and not to indulge in sentimentality. When the Rabbi in Oszmiana was told that the number of persons required was not complete and that five elderly Jews were hiding in a maline (hiding place), he said that the maline should be opened. That is a man with a young and unshaken spirit.

I don't know whether everybody will understand this and defend it, and whether they will defend it after we have left the ghetto, but the attitude of our police is this—rescue what you can, do not consider your own good name or what you must live through.

All these things that I have told you do not sound sweetly to our souls nor yet for our lives. These are things one should not have to know. I have told you a shocking secret which must remain locked in our hearts. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Gens was not the only Jewish Council leader asked to make decisions about which Jews would live and which would die. Historian Doris Bergen writes:

Faced with such dilemmas Jewish Councils responded in different ways. Some refused to cooperate and were killed by the Germans and replaced with more compliant men. Some committed suicide. Others tried to bribe or negotiate with the Germans, in the hope that sacrificing some Jews would save others. Many tried first to protect their own families, friends and the people who worked for them, especially the Jewish police. In the end, most members of Jewish Councils were killed, like other people in the ghettos.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What were the roles and responsibilities of the Jewish Councils? Why did the Nazis want to create these councils to carry out their orders?
2. What dilemmas did members of the Jewish Councils face? How did Jacob Gens think through the moral dilemma that he faced?
3. What did Gens mean when we wrote, "All these things that I have told you do not sound sweetly to our souls nor yet for our lives. These are things one should not have to know. I have told you a shocking secret which must remain locked in our hearts"?

1 Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem and Oxford: Yad Vashem and Pergamon Press, 1987), 440–44.

2 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 150.

## Reading 13

# Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto

In ghettos, the struggle simply to avoid death could be all-consuming. Yet even as Jews labored to find food, fend off sickness, and avoid deportation, many also sought ways to defy their German overlords. Some residents took great risks to smuggle food, supplies, and information into ghettos; some attempted to sabotage production at their slave-labor factory jobs. Others, especially younger people and those without children, were able to escape from ghettos; some went into hiding and others found ways to join armed resistance groups, known as “partisans,” that were active in eastern Europe beginning in 1941. Jews organized armed resistance in over 100 ghettos—most famously in the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943.

In the degrading, dehumanizing system of the ghettos, the struggle to maintain a sense of identity, dignity, faith, and culture was also a form of defiance, known today as “spiritual resistance.” In many ghettos, Jews organized secret schools, prayed and observed religious holidays, participated in clubs and cultural life, and worked with organizations set up to help others in the ghetto.

In the Warsaw ghetto, from 1940 to 1943, a group called Oyneg Shabes (meaning “joy of the Sabbath” in Yiddish, a reference to the group’s practice of meeting on Saturdays) conducted research and secretly assembled an archive that documented both Nazi crimes and also residents’ brave efforts to maintain life in the face of death. Gustawa Jarecka, a member of Oyneg Shabes, wrote: “The record must be hurled like a stone under history’s wheel in order to stop it. . . . One can lose all hopes except the one—that the suffering and destruction of this war will make sense when they are looked at from a distant, historical perspective.”<sup>1</sup> Under the leadership of historian Emanuel Ringelblum, the group gathered writings, assembled statistics, and collected artwork, photographs, and objects of daily life, over 35,000 pages in all. Historian Peter N. Miller describes the archive:

We find samples from the underground press, documents, drawings, candy wrappers, tram tickets, ration cards, theater posters, invitations to concerts and lectures. The archive preserves copies of complex doorbell codes for apartments housing dozens of tenants, and also restaurant menus advertising roast goose and fine wines. There were hundreds of postcards from Jews in the provinces about to be deported into the unknown, and there was the ghetto poetry of Wadysaw Szlengel and Yitzhak Katznelson. There is the entire script of a popular ghetto comedy called



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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 7.

"Love Looks for an Apartment." There are long essays on ghetto theaters and cafes alongside school primers and reports from orphanages. The first cache of tin boxes also contained photographs, seventy-six of which survived, showing street scenes, starving children, Jewish police, the building of the walls, smugglers throwing sacks of flour over the walls, people listening to loudspeakers in the street, and so on. Last inserted were German posters announcing the deportation . . .

In the *Oyneg Shabes* Archive, the individual remains intact and central, unobscured and unvarnished. This is a record of human beings, with human voices, in an inhuman existence. There are many essays in the archive written by parents memorializing their dead children. What on this earth could be more personal than that?<sup>2</sup>

Collected in tin boxes and aluminum milk crates, the documents were buried secretly in the ghetto in 1942 and 1943, in three places known only to a few people. Miller describes the burial of the first set of documents:

On August 3, 1942, with the Germans only a block away from the building at 68 Nowolipki Street, under which he was to bury the first cache of the archive, Israel Lichtenstein hurriedly deposited his testament—and in that instant gained his eternity. "I do not ask for any thanks, for any memorial, for any praise. I only wish to be remembered. . . . I wish my wife to be remembered, Gele Sekstein. . . . I wish my little daughter to be remembered. Margalit is 20 months old today. . . . She too deserves to be remembered." Working with him were two teenagers, David Graber and Nahum Grzywacz. They, too, left little reminders of themselves in the archive that they were burying. Grzywacz was eighteen years old, and when he heard that the Germans had blockaded his parents' building, he wrote, "I am going to run to my parents and see if they are all right. I don't know what's going to happen to me. *Remember, my name is Nahum Grzywacz.*" The emphasis is in the original.<sup>3</sup>

Of approximately 60 people who worked with Oyneg Shabes, only three survived. After the war, they worked with other survivors to find the buried archives. Two sets of documents were uncovered, in 1946 and 1950. The third has never been found.

## Connection Questions

1. Why, in a time of such desperation and struggle, would the members of Oyneg Shabes devote precious energy and resources to creating an archive?
2. What was the value of creating the archive for the members of Oyneg Shabes? What is the value of the archive for students and historians today?
3. How might our understanding of the Holocaust be different if archives like that created by Oyneg Shabes had not been preserved?
4. How would you describe "spiritual resistance"? In what sense was the work of Oyneg Shabes a form of resistance?

2 Peter N. Miller, "What We Know About Murdered Peoples: A review of Samuel D. Kassow's book on the Warsaw Ghetto," *The New Republic*, April 9, 2008, accessed April 27, 2016, <https://newrepublic.com/article/64732/what-we-know-about-murdered-peoples>.

3 Ibid.



## Reading 14

# The Battle for Western Europe

Although Nazi plans to create a thousand-year Reich were centered on the conquest of “living space” to Germany’s east, Hitler knew that countries in western Europe might stand in his way. He was especially concerned about France, which bordered Germany and could force it to fight on western and eastern fronts simultaneously. Assuming that France would go to great lengths to prevent Germany from becoming too big and powerful, the Nazis decided that they must defeat the French before pushing farther eastward from Poland.<sup>1</sup>

They had other reasons for this decision. Germany had a history of military conflict with France, and the Nazis detested the French political ideals of equality and liberty. Nazi leaders also resented the presence of soldiers from African colonies in the French military forces and saw them as a threat to European racial purity.<sup>2</sup>

France and Britain responded to the invasion of Poland by declaring war on Germany on September 3, 1939. But they did not engage in a major battle with Germany until spring 1940, when the French, especially, found little success in halting the German advance in western Europe. Bolstered by a powerful air force and a new tactic, the Blitzkrieg (“lightning war”), in which ground forces broke through enemy lines with rapid and overwhelming force, Germany conquered much of western Europe in a few months. In April 1940, the Nazis invaded the neutral countries of Denmark and Norway in order to protect their supply of steel and other resources from Scandinavia. Then, in May, Germany invaded the Netherlands. By May 17, the Germans had overrun that nation and half of Belgium, and they were fighting their way to France. On June 14, the Germans captured Paris, and the French military was on the verge of defeat.

On June 22, France and Germany signed an armistice agreement in the same railroad car in the middle of France’s Compiègne Forest where the World War I armistice of November 11, 1918, had been signed. (In fact, at Hitler’s request, German soldiers brought the rail car from a local museum to the forest so that it could be used at the ceremony.) The armistice divided France into two zones. One zone, which included northern France and an area along the Atlantic Ocean, was occupied by the German military; the other zone, which included most of southern France,



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1 Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II: Essays in Modern German and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 43.

2 Ibid., 33–34.



German troops parade past the Arc de Triomphe in Paris after they occupied the city in June 1940.

remained unoccupied. According to the terms of the armistice, a French government based in the southern town of Vichy and headed by Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain, an 83-year-old French war hero, and Pierre Laval, a French politician, would govern France. While the Vichy government governed autonomously in the unoccupied zone, its power was subordinate to German military commanders in the occupied zone. The Nazis put in place a variety of arrangements to govern the other western European countries it

defeated. Some, like the Netherlands, were governed by a Nazi-appointed civilian governor, while others, like Belgium, were governed by the German military.

After the conquest of France, Hitler turned his attention to Britain, which possessed a powerful navy and an empire spanning the globe. At first Germany offered peace. Recalling Hitler's previous false promises of peace, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had succeeded Neville Chamberlain two months earlier, did not accept Hitler's offer. The Battle of Britain began in July 1940 with massive German air attacks designed to wipe out the British air force and expose its naval fleet. Every day for the next two months, hundreds of planes fought in the skies over Britain. Despite their best efforts, the Germans were unable to defeat the British, partly because the British did not fight alone. They had the support of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, as well as South Africa and other parts of their empire. In fact, if Britain had fallen to the Germans, the British government had made arrangements to continue the war from Canada. The British were also aided by refugees from German-occupied Europe. Poland, France, Norway, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia were among the occupied nations that set up governments-in-exile in Britain—each determined to carry on the struggle to the end.

### Connection Questions

1. Why was it important to the Nazis' plans for "race and space" for them to defeat western European nations, especially France?
2. Why do you think Hitler insisted on signing the armistice agreement with France in the same railway car where the World War I armistice was signed?

## Reading 15

# Waging a Racial War

By the summer of 1940, the Germans occupied almost all of northern and western Europe and were eyeing a number of countries besides Poland to the south and the east. In every country they conquered, “race” mattered. Notions of racial superiority and inferiority shaped the choices Germans made on the battlefields and in their occupation of other countries.

During the invasion of France, the Germans captured thousands of French soldiers. Among these prisoners of war (POWs) were men from all parts of France’s empire, including French West Africa. “Race” determined how the Germans treated those POWs. In German prison camps, at least 3,000 African POWs were separated from their white counterparts and then murdered. Some were shot by German soldiers, while others were blown up with grenades. Historian Raffael Scheck writes that their treatment echoed German behavior in Poland in 1939 and foreshadowed the massacres of millions of Soviet prisoners of war that began in the summer of 1941.<sup>1</sup> Perceived differences between “German” and “foreign” blood also often determined how civilians fared under the Germans. For instance, Poles were treated with contempt and brutality, while Danes were treated with some respect, because Germans believed them to be racially similar to themselves.

In every country they conquered, the Nazis regarded Jews as the greatest enemy of the German people. Almost everywhere, Jews were required to register with local police so that they could be kept under surveillance. Marion Pritchard, then a graduate student in Amsterdam, recalled the way Germans used the registries to separate Jews from “Aryans” in the Netherlands:

Gradually the Germans instituted and carried out the necessary steps to isolate and deport every Jew in the country. They did it in so many seemingly small steps, that it was very difficult to decide when and where to take a stand. One of the early, highly significant measures was the Aryan Attestation: all civil servants had to sign a form stating whether they were Aryans or not. Hindsight is easy; at the time only a few enlightened people recognized the danger and refused to sign. Then followed the other measures: Jews had to live in certain designated areas of the towns they lived in, and the curfew was stricter for them than for the general population. Jews over the age of six had to wear yellow stars on their clothing. Jewish children could not go to school with gentile children; Jews could not practice their professions, use public transportation, hire a taxicab, shop in gentile stores, or go to the beach, the park, the movies, concerts, or museums. The Jewish Committee was instructed by the Germans to publish a daily newspaper in which all these

1 Raffael Scheck, *Hitler’s African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 155.

measures were announced; the regular Dutch press was not allowed to print anything about Jewish affairs.<sup>2</sup>

A similar process took place in almost every occupied nation. On May 27, 1941, after witnessing the roundup of Jews in Paris, Germaine Ribière, a French student, wrote in her diary:

For the past two weeks the sky has become more and more overcast. The Church, the hierarchy, remains silent. They allow the truth to be profaned. Father Lallier [a priest in charge of the Catholic student movement in Paris] told me that there are more urgent things for me to worry about than the Jews . . .

The tide is rising, rising. I am afraid that one of these days, when we wake up, it will be too late and we shall all have become Nazis. I am afraid, because people are asleep. Those who should keep watch are the ones who put others to sleep. We must shout the truth no matter what the cost. But who will do it? I know that there are Christians who are willing to accept martyrdom if necessary; but they do not know what is happening. They wait for a voice, and the voice does not speak. We must pray that it will speak.

France has betrayed her soul, and now Nazism is gaining the upper hand. All genuine values are dragged in the dust. We no longer have any honor. Pétain has become the French Hitler. The great dance has begun and the world is blind. It is blind because it is afraid of death. The clergy remains passive. As in Austria, they accept what is happening.<sup>3</sup>

More than a year passed after these roundups before the Catholic Church took a stand. In August 1942, Archbishop Jules-Gérard Saliège of Toulouse told Catholics:

That children, that women, that men, that fathers and mothers should be treated like a vile herd, that members of the same family should be separated from one another and sent to an unknown destination—this sad spectacle it was reserved for our times to see. . . . These Jews are men; these Jewesses are women; these aliens are men and women. You cannot do whatever you wish against these men, against these women, against these fathers and mothers. They are part of humankind. They are our brothers, as are so many others. No Christian can forget that.<sup>4</sup>

2 Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 28–29.

3 Quoted in Eva Fleischner, "Can the Few Become the Many? Some Catholics in France Who Saved Jews during the Holocaust," Montclair State College, unpublished paper, 3.

4 Quoted in Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry, 1933–1945* (New York: Schocken, 1973), 435.

## Connection Questions

1. How did Germany's treatment of prisoners and civilians reflect the Nazi racial ideology?
2. In describing the "Aryan attestation" that all civilians were asked to sign, Marion Pritchard notes, "Hindsight is easy; at the time only a few enlightened people recognized the danger and refused to sign." How does one become "enlightened"? What is the danger of judging decisions in history based on hindsight?
3. How does Germaine Ribi  re describe the climate in France at this time? What does her writing suggest about what some people knew in France? What does it suggest about the role of the Catholic Church?
4. What is the connection between fear and silence? What motivates people to speak out in spite of fear?

## Reading 16

# Advice for German-Occupied Nations

Soon after the German occupation of France, 51-year-old Jean Texcier, who worked at the French Ministry of Trade, created a list of tips for the “occupied population.” He printed his advice on flyers that were later stuffed into mailboxes, slid under doors, and placed on chairs in cafes and restaurants:

- Street sellers offer [the Germans] maps of Paris and phrasebooks; buses pour out incessant waves of them in front of Notre-Dame and the Panthéon; there is not one of them who has not got a camera to his eye. Be under no illusion: they are not tourists.
- They are the victors. Act correctly with them. But don’t go beyond their desires. Don’t go out of your way.
- If one of them speaks to you in German, make a sign of impotence [non-comprehension], and without remorse be on your way.
- If they ask for a light, offer your cigarette. Never, not for a long time, have we refused a light to anyone—not even to our most mortal enemy.
- If they think it useful to spread defeatism among the citizens by offering concerts in public places, you are not obliged to go. Stay at home, or go to the countryside to listen to the birds.
- Reading our newspapers has never been good if one wanted to learn how to express oneself correctly in French. Today, the Parisian daily newspapers no longer even think in French.
- Act with total indifference; but nurture secretly your anger. It will be useful [in the future].
- You moan because they ask you to return home at 11 P.M. Don’t you understand that this means you can listen to English radio?<sup>1</sup>

A group of young people created a similar flyer in Poland at about the same time. It included the following advice:

Polish is your mother tongue. You shall not learn the language of the enemy under the knout. Even if you speak his language, you should not use it. Do not make the aggressor’s unwanted stay in your Fatherland any easier. Answer all questions in Polish: “I don’t understand.” You should not give the enemy an address nor show him the way (unless it is wrong). Restrain your inborn Polish courtesy and hospitality. For you, the occupying soldier, the enemy official, and the occupier’s celebrations should not exist. Maintain reserve and seriousness on the streets and in public places, do not laugh or talk loudly: you might end up in one of the enemy’s perfidious propaganda films. . . . You are expected neither to deal with nor to

<sup>1</sup> Jean Texcier, “Advice to an Occupied Population” (*Conseils à l’occupé*), July 1940.



provoke the invader. You should be calm and collected. No laughing. You should never forget for a moment who has destroyed your country; who has robbed and murdered your compatriots, who has kicked and abused your brothers and sisters.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Compare the two sets of advice given to the occupied populations. Do they have similar goals?
2. Historian David Drake refers to Texcier's suggestions for how to live under German occupation as acts of "passive resistance." What do you think that means? What might "passive resistance" accomplish? What is the difference between "passive" and "active" resistance?
3. What do these pamphlets suggest about the pressures of living in an occupied country? What do they suggest about the differences between living in occupied France and occupied Poland?
4. What elements of the pamphlets most stand out to you? In what ways do the authors of the pamphlets suggest resistance? In what ways do they suggest that individuals should accommodate the German occupiers by adjusting their own behavior?

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 414.

## Reading 17

# The Invasion of the Soviet Union



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Territories within the Soviet Union were crucial to Nazi plans to acquire Lebensraum, or prime “living space” for “Aryan” Germans. With continental western Europe firmly under German control, Hitler was ready for war with the Soviets in the summer of 1941. For Hitler, according to historian Wendy Lower, “the ultimate aim of this *Vernichtungskrieg* (war of destruction) against the Soviet Union was to make a ‘Garden of Eden’ out of the newly won territories in the East.”<sup>1</sup> Germany planned to colonize western parts of the Soviet Union, especially the resource-rich lands of the Ukraine, as it had colonized the Warthegau in Poland. This would involve expelling the supposedly inferior “races” of Slavs and Jews who lived there and settling ethnic Germans in their place.<sup>2</sup>

Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union, which was code-named Operation Barbarossa, on June 22, 1941, deliberately breaking the non-aggression pact that the two countries had signed two years before. The invasion was the largest German military operation of World War II. Battle victories came quickly throughout the rest of 1941, as Germany conquered Soviet-controlled Poland, the Baltic states, and Ukraine. A month after the invasion began, Hitler described his vision for the lands Germany would conquer from the Soviet Union:

The German colonist ought to live on handsome, spacious farms. The German services will be lodged in marvelous buildings, the governors in palaces. . . . What India was for England, the territories of Russia will be for us. If only I could make the German people understand what this space means for our future! Colonies are a precarious possession, but this ground is safely ours. Europe is not a geographic entity, it's a racial entity.<sup>3</sup>

From the Nazis' point of view, in order to establish Europe as a “racial entity,” Operation Barbarossa would need to be fought as a “racial war” against the Jewish and Slavic “races.” Therefore, according to historian Richard Evans, German military officers believed they “were not just officers but also leaders in a racial struggle against ‘Jewish Bolshevism [Communism].’”<sup>4</sup> In May 1941, German General Erich Hoepner issued the following orders to his soldiers:

1 Wendy Lower, *Nazi Empire-Building and the Holocaust in Ukraine* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 13.

2 Ibid., 24.

3 Adolf Hitler et al., *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941–1944: His Private Conversations* (New York: Enigma Books, 2008), 21.

4 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 176.

The war against Russia is a fundamental part of the German people's struggle for existence. It is the old struggle of the Germans against the Slavs, the defence of European culture against the Muscovite, Asiatic deluge, the defence against Jewish Bolshevism. This struggle must aim to smash the Russia of today into rubble, and as a consequence it must be carried out with unprecedented harshness.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of those orders and similar ones issued by other German generals, many Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) were shot and killed immediately after being captured, in violation of long-standing international agreements. In July 1941, General Hermann Reinecke, the officer in charge of prisoner affairs in the Armed Forces High Command, allowed security forces to screen Soviet POWs for "politically and racially intolerable elements." Who were those "elements"? They were "intellectuals," "fanatic Communists," and Jews. Their executions did not take place in POW camps. Instead, prisoners were transferred to a remote area and shot.

Not all Soviet POWs were executed. But many others died in POW camps as a result of malnutrition and starvation as well as typhus and other diseases that went untreated. The chart below shows the percentage of deaths in the POW camps of various nations.

## Deaths of POWs in Prisoner-of-War Camps during World War II<sup>6</sup>

Soviet POWs held by Germans	57.5%
British POWs held by Germans	3.5%
German POWs held by Soviets	35.8%
German POWs held by British	0.03%
German POWs held by French	2.58%

The Germans fought their "racial war" not only against Soviet soldiers but also against Soviet civilians. Attacks on civilians were carried out by four SS units, known as the Einsatzgruppen, that trailed the German army as it advanced eastward into the Soviet Union. Each of the four units had its own assigned territory: unit A served in the north, unit B along the central Russian front, unit C in northern Ukraine, and unit D in southern Ukraine, the Caucasus, and Crimea. Each had orders to murder anyone the Nazis considered an "enemy of the state," eventually including hundreds of thousands of Jews, officials of the Soviet Communist Party, Sinti and Roma, and others. According to historian Doris Bergen, "Officially their goal was to secure conquered territory by combating bolshevism and preventing guerrilla warfare. In fact, during the summer of 1941, they began to inter-

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Evans, *The Third Reich at War*, 176.

<sup>6</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Prisoner Taking and Prisoner Killing in the Age of Total War: Towards a Political Economy of Military Defeat," *War in History* 11, no. 2 (2004): 186.

pret their primary job as slaughter of all Jews, including women, children, and old people.”<sup>7</sup> (See “Mobile Killing Units” and “Reserve Police Battalion 101” in Chapter 9.)

### Connection Questions

1. What part did the territory controlled by the Soviet Union in early 1941 play in the Nazis’ plans for “race and space”?
2. How did Hitler try to persuade his listeners of the importance of his plan for the Soviet Union?
3. What do you think is the difference between a “geographical entity” and a “racial entity”? How did viewing Europe as a “racial entity” affect the way Germans treated Soviet soldiers and civilians after the invasion of the Soviet Union?
4. What rules or standards should be followed by a country in its treatment of prisoners of war and civilians? Why do such rules and standards exist? What might be the consequences of breaking them?

<sup>7</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 195.

## Reading 18

# Reaping the Benefits of War

As the German Reich expanded throughout Europe in the first two years of World War II, the German government began to exploit the resources of its newly acquired empire to meet the needs of the German military and the citizens at home. Wars often cause shortages of goods and resources that are usually available to governments and individuals in times of peace. As supplies become scarce, governments must send them first to the military and soldiers, which often leaves civilians at home to face considerable hardship, even hunger. Therefore, in order to supply its military and also to maintain support from its citizens, Germany confiscated large portions of the food, raw materials, and manufactured goods produced in the newly conquered territories.

German leaders also encouraged soldiers to send food and other goods home from the countries where they were stationed. New German policies were designed to make buying goods in conquered countries as easy and inexpensive as possible for soldiers. First, a high exchange rate was set for the Reichsmark against other currencies, which increased the amount of goods that could be bought in occupied countries with German money. Then, German soldiers' pay was increased and limits on how much they could ship or transport home to their families in Germany were abolished. In order to afford the pay raises, the Nazis forced the occupied countries to pay for the cost of the German occupation, a cost that Germany alone would determine.

These policies led to massive shipments of foreign goods from soldiers to their families in Germany:

The letters written by German soldiers are full of reports and promises of goods, looted or purchased with their German Reichsmarks, being sent to their families in Germany. . . . Mothers and wives sent money in the post to their sons in France and Belgium, Latvia and Greece, intended for them to buy supplies to take or send home. Soldiers seldom returned to Germany without carrying bags and suitcases of presents, purchased or purloined. After the regime lifted restrictions on how much could be taken or sent home in this way, the number of packages from France to Germany by military post soon ran at more than three million a month.<sup>1</sup>

1 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 334.

Soldiers not only bought goods but also plundered, or stole, items to send home. They took possessions from other countries' soldiers and civilians alike, living or dead. Kurt Dreyer, a German soldier, sent the following letter to his wife and son in Germany, accompanied by a pair of boots:

Krasnystaw, 18 November 1942

My dear Mommy, my dear Hans-Jürgen,

Thank you very much for your lovely letters of 10, 11 and 14 November and the many newspapers, all of which I received yesterday because the mail was delayed again. What is it going to be like in winter? All the trains here are constantly delayed by hours. The old Polish tempo still reigns here. I haven't experienced anything in these days and haven't done much aside from one day of watch. A large number of comrades went out and arrested quite a few members of the Polish resistance movement, but I also don't think that they would have undertaken anything against us. The days of rest will probably be over again soon, though, and I think that we'll already be heading out again tomorrow. . . . On Saturday I took the long boots off of a dead Jewish woman, approximately size 35. Maybe the boy can wear them if new heels are put under them. They are very good, high boots. Tommy [nickname for the British military] is probably leaving you alone a bit; he has enough to do in Africa. We should hope that he soon obtains a powerful defeat there. We're following further events in Africa with great excitement. You can now expect my vacation in mid-January if there's not too much snow by then so that the trains can still come back. I'll have a lot to tell then. I send many heartfelt greetings to Trudi and thank the Becker family for their regards that were passed on. My best wishes to both of you for a healthy reunion soon at home.

From your loving

Pappi [Daddy]<sup>2</sup>

Geschichtsort Villa ten Hompel Stadt Münster



**Kurt Dreyer, a German soldier who fought in World War II.**

*Brief vom 18.11.1942*



**Kurt Dreyer's son wears the boots his father sent him from Poland during World War II. *Meine Stiefel* means "my boots."**

*"meine Stiefel"*



Geschichtsort Villa ten Hompel Stadt Münster

<sup>2</sup> Letter by Kurt Dreyer, November 18, 1942, Geschichtsort Villa ten Hompel Münster, EV Geschichte am Jürgensplatz Düsseldorf.



Dreyer's family wrote back and sent him a photograph of young Hans-Jürgen wearing the boots his father had sent.

Historian Götz Aly writes that the massive transfer of goods, and therefore wealth, back to Germany from the occupied countries increased support for the war from German soldiers and their families alike:

The zeal of whole divisions of bargain hunters, family providers, and insatiable opportunists considerably alleviated the hardships of war. It fostered a sense of material connection between the battlefield and the home front. The calculated policy of allowing soldiers to personally enrich themselves at the expense of foreign peoples gave rise to the feeling that their interests were being watched over from above and that small oases of pleasure were possible within the larger war. "Do you know," [soldier Heinrich] Böll wrote to his wife, "how happy it makes me to be able to send you something?" On another occasion, he rhapsodized: "It was the source of truly indescribable joy for me to supply you with butter." . . . The Bölls—a Catholic family disinclined to sympathize with Nazism—were basically satisfied with their lot. Their money wasn't sitting around uselessly. It was being transformed in France . . . into practical necessities and luxury items.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did the German government make it easier for soldiers to buy and ship foreign goods to their families in Germany? Why did the government want to encourage such purchases?
2. What did Kurt Dreyer report to his family about his experience? Where did Dreyer get the boots included with the letter? What did his family do with them? How might packages like the one Dreyer sent to his family have affected the attitudes of German civilians toward the war?
3. Historian Götz Aly writes that "everyday people, acting on ordinary calculations of self-interest, could become complicit in a government-driven program of larcenous genocide."<sup>4</sup> What does it mean to be complicit? Do you agree with Aly? How does this reading suggest that "everyday people" might become complicit in crimes committed by their government?

<sup>3</sup> Götz Aly, *Hitler's Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War, and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

## Reading 19

# The United States Enters World War II

While the Nazis took control of Germany and planned for war in Europe, Japan aggressively expanded its control of territory in east Asia by invading Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937. In 1940, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, creating World War II's Axis powers. While the United States had remained neutral in the war, it responded to Japan's aggression in Asia with economic sanctions that caused severe shortages of natural resources that the Japanese needed for their war effort. In an attempt to prevent American interference in the Pacific war, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the US naval station in Hawaii, in a surprise attack on December 7, 1941.<sup>1</sup>

On December 8, Joseph Goebbels described Adolf Hitler as “exceptionally happy” when he learned the news. Goebbels wrote:

On the basis of the Tripartite Pact we will probably not [be able to avoid] a declaration of war on the United States. But now this isn't so bad anymore. We are now to a certain extent protected on our flanks. The United States will probably no longer make aircraft, weapons, and transport available to England so carelessly, as it can be assumed that they will need these for their own war against Japan.<sup>2</sup>

On December 9, 1941—two days after the attack—US President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the American people on the radio. He said, in part:

The course that Japan has followed for the past ten years in Asia has paralleled the course of Hitler and Mussolini in Europe and in Africa. Today, it has become far more than a parallel. It is actual collaboration so well calculated that all the continents of the world, and all the oceans, are now considered by the Axis strategists as one gigantic battlefield. . . .

In these past few years—and, most violently, in the past three days—we have learned a terrible lesson.

It is our obligation to our dead—it is our sacred obligation to their children and to our children—that we must never forget what we have learned.

And what we all have learned is this: There is no such thing as security for any Nation—or any individual—in a world ruled by the principles of gangsterism. . . .

1 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “World War II in the Pacific,” last modified July 2, 2016, accessed July 6, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005155>.

2 Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher*, ed. Elke Fröhlich, pt. 11, vol. 2 (K. G. Saur), 497–99, trans. Rod Stackelberg, in *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook*, ed. Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle (London: Routledge, 2002), 292.

We are now in the midst of a war, not for conquest, not for vengeance, but for a world in which this Nation, and all that this Nation represents, will be safe for our children. We expect to eliminate the danger from Japan, but it would serve us ill if we accomplished that and found that the rest of the world was dominated by Hitler and Mussolini.

We are going to win the war and we are going to win the peace that follows. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Two days later, on December 11, 1941, Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States, and Benito Mussolini of Italy followed suit. Hours later, the United States declared war on both countries. In his address to the Reichstag, Hitler said: "If it is the will of Providence that the German people not be spared this struggle, then I will be grateful to Providence for having appointed me leader in a historic contest, which for the next five hundred or one thousand years, will decisively affect not only German history but also the history of Europe, and indeed all of mankind."<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why was Hitler happy that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor? How did the bombing of Pearl Harbor lead to the entry of the United States into a war against Germany?
2. What is "gangsterism"? Why do you think Roosevelt compared the Germans to gangsters?
3. According to Roosevelt, what principles was the United States fighting for? How did the country's reasons for fighting the war, as articulated by Roosevelt, differ from those of Germany?

<sup>3</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat, December 9, 1941," The American Presidency Project, accessed May 31, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Max von der Grün, *Howl Like the Wolves: Growing Up in Nazi Germany*, trans. Jan van Heurck (New York: William Morrow, 1980), 208–09.

## Reading 20

# Europe in Germany's Grasp

By December 1941, Germany had conquered most of mainland Europe, from France in the west to the outskirts of Moscow in the Soviet Union in the east. When the United States entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that month, World War II became a truly global war. On one side were the Axis powers, led by Germany, Japan, and Italy. On the other side were the Allied powers, led by Great Britain (and other members of the United Kingdom), the Soviet Union, and the United States. The maps in this reading show both Europe and the world in December of 1941, when Germany controlled its largest territory.

Germany had expected a “lightning” victory in the Soviet Union, and the Germans believed they would be marching into Moscow, the capital, before the winter of 1941. But in spite of the early success of Operation Barbarossa, German forces were unable to capture Moscow. The Soviets stopped the German eastward advance at the city’s outskirts. Unprepared for the brutal winter they did not expect to have to fight through, German forces began to suffer defeats on the eastern front. Historian Doris Bergen writes that the Nazis fell victim to their own false beliefs:

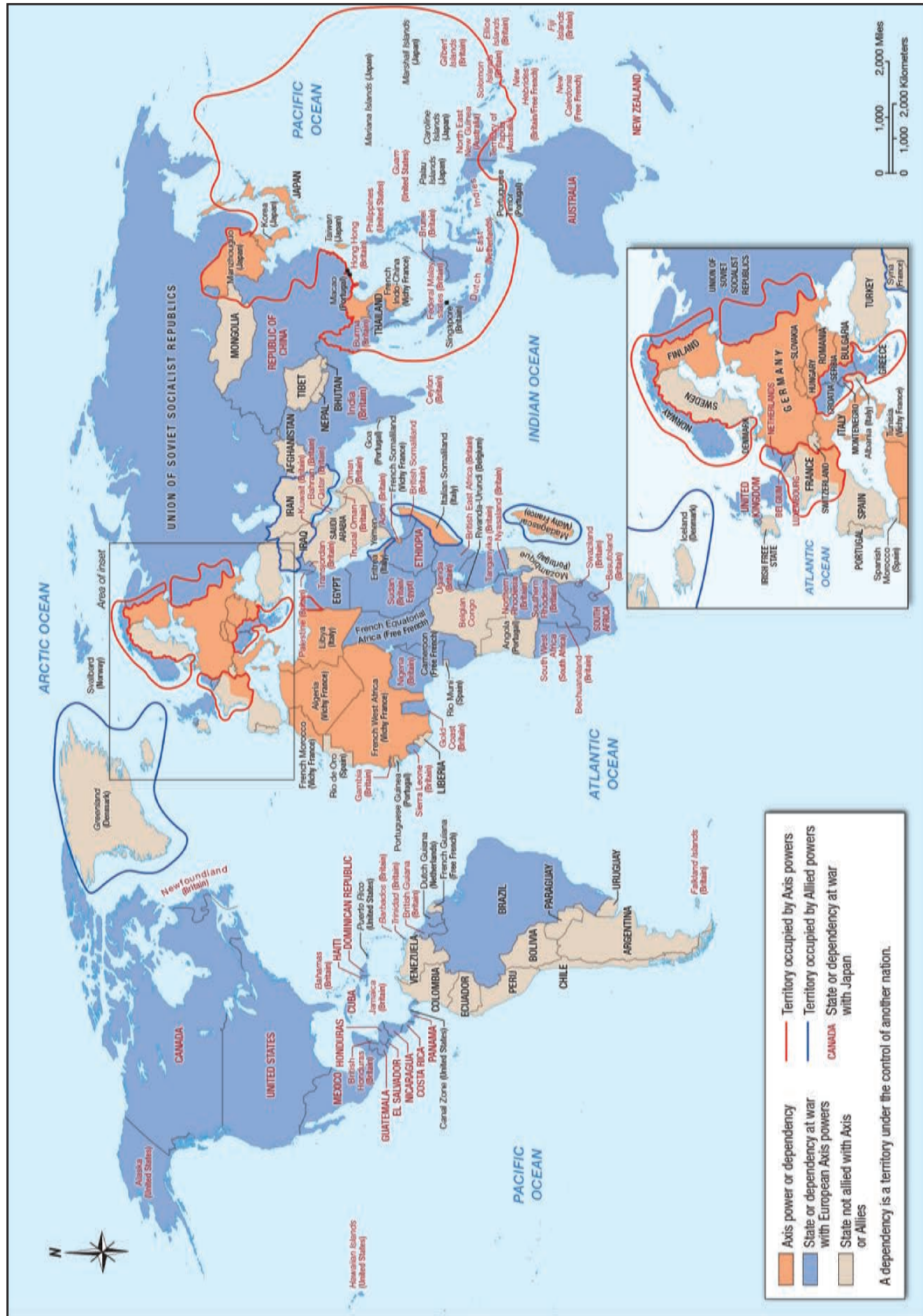
Hitler expected the campaign against the Soviet Union to be easy for the Germans. In this regard, he and his military planners were caught in their own racial and ethnic stereotypes. They thought of Slavs as stupid and incompetent and believed that the Communist Soviet Union was in the grip of Jews, whom they viewed as cowardly and perfidious. Such attitudes caused the German leaders to make some severe miscalculations.

The German invasion did not turn out as planned. The Soviets were better equipped than German planners had thought; the Germans themselves were overextended and unprepared for winter.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the German conquest of eastern Europe would begin to stall in the Soviet Union in the following year, and the consequences for those the Nazis considered “racial enemies” would grow even more dire.

<sup>1</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 194.

# World War II, 1941



After Japan attacked the United States in December 1941, World War II became truly global, with battles between the Axis and the Allies occurring on nearly every continent.



## Europe and the Middle East, 1941



Facing History and Ourselves

By the end of 1941, Germany and its allies, the Axis powers, had conquered most of continental Europe, from the eastern border of Spain to the outskirts of Moscow.

### Connection Questions

1. Who were Germany's allies? What might have been the benefits of forming an alliance with Germany in World War II? What might have been the dangers?
2. Using what you have learned about the Nazi plan for "race and space," locate on these maps the areas that the Nazis sought for Lebensraum, or "living space." By December 1941, had they achieved their goals? What threats or challenges to their plans for "race and space" do these maps suggest?
3. What advantages do these maps suggest that the Allied powers had in their fight against Germany and the other Axis powers? What challenges stood in the Allies' way?

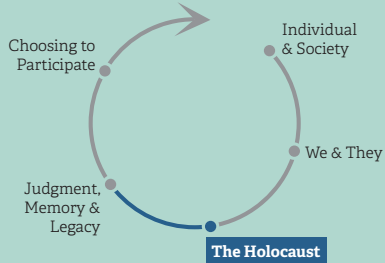


## Chapter 8 Analysis and Reflection

1. How were Nazi beliefs about “race” and the Nazis’ desire for “living space” connected? How did these beliefs about “race and space” influence Germany’s aggression toward other nations, groups, and individuals in the first years of World War II?
2. Historian Peter Hayes writes that the “New Order” the Nazis had established in Europe by the end of 1941 was driven by two central principles: racism and economic exploitation. Find examples in this chapter of both of these principles in action. Which examples are most striking to you?
3. Who benefited from German racism and economic exploitation during World War II? Who suffered? What evidence does this chapter provide to help explain why many Germans continued to support the Nazi regime? Were those who benefited complicit in their country’s violent aggression and mass murder?
4. How were Jews further targeted and isolated by the Nazis during the first two years of the war? What choices remained available to Jews during this period? What dilemmas were they forced to confront? In what ways were they able to resist?
5. Who protested actions taken by the Nazi regime during the events described in this chapter? What, specifically, did they protest? What reasons did they offer for their dissent? What were the consequences?

## Chapter 9

# The Holocaust



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## Overview

As the Third Reich reached the height of its power in Europe, the Nazis began to murder unfathomable numbers of Jews and others of so-called inferior races. This chapter examines events and human behavior that both unsettle us and elude our attempts to explain them. The readings force us to confront the shocking violence of the Holocaust and reflect on the range of human behavior revealed in the choices of perpetrators, bystanders, resisters, and rescuers.



## Essential Questions

- What is the Holocaust?  
How did the earlier choices of individuals, groups, and entire nations help to make it possible?
- What choices did individuals and nations make during the Holocaust?  
What factors shaped their universes of obligation?
- What can we learn about human behavior from confronting this history?  
What can we learn about ourselves? What new questions does this history raise for us in the twenty-first century?



Watch **Step by Step: Phases of the Holocaust**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Facing History Scholar Reflections: The Holocaust**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Holocaust survivor Sonia Weitz begins her poem “For Yom Ha’Shoah” with these lines: “Come, take this giant leap with me / into the other world . . . the other place / where language fails and imagery defies, / denies man’s consciousness . . . and dies / upon the altar of insanity.”<sup>1</sup> To study the history in this chapter is to take Weitz’s “giant leap.” Learning about the Holocaust requires us to examine events in history and examples of human behavior that both unsettle us and elude our attempts to explain them. The previous chapter examined the brutality of the war for “race and space” that Nazi Germany began in 1939. This chapter delves even further into the shocking violence and mass murder of the Holocaust, as well as the choices made by perpetrators, bystanders, resisters, and rescuers as the Nazis carried out their “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.”

Although the Nazis’ program of mass murder was horrifying and the small number of people who tried to resist it or rescue those who were targeted is disturbing, this is a history that needs to be confronted. The accounts in this chapter force us to consider the full range of human behavior, the worst and the best that we are capable of as human beings. And the choices described in these accounts force us to think deeply about what leads one person and not another to do the right thing, regardless of the consequences. The accounts in this chapter also show the importance of honoring human dignity by showing us what can happen when it is taken away and what can be prevented when it is preserved.

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, its goal was to claim “living space” for the “Aryan” race that the Nazis had long wanted. But in order for Germans to settle in the territory of eastern Europe conquered from the Soviet Union in 1941 and 1942, they would have to empty it of so-called inferior races, including the millions of Jews who lived there. Early in the war, the Germans had forced Jews from the territories they conquered into ghettos and concentration camps and killed scores of Jews in mass shootings by mobile killing units. They had also considered plans to move the populations of Jews and other “non-Aryans” to far-off places like Madagascar or Siberia. Eventually, however, the Nazi leadership decided that these plans would be too impractical or expensive; they chose instead a policy to annihilate all of the Jews of Europe. Historians believe this decision was made by Hitler and his advisors toward the end of 1941. As mobile killing units continued to operate throughout eastern Europe, the Nazis began to establish death camps—camps designed for the purpose of murdering large numbers of victims, primarily in gas chambers, as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The readings in this chapter show the evolution of Nazi methods of mass murder, and they rely on the troubling and provocative testimony of many

<sup>1</sup> Sonia Schreiber Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., 2012), 66, <https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/i-promised-i-would-tell>.

who witnessed or were targeted by those methods. These stories reveal a range of human behavior in response to the Holocaust. The Nazis persuaded or forced thousands to participate in the mass murder of millions of people. Many others participated willingly; they did not need to be persuaded. This chapter includes the testimonies of people who murdered as members of mobile killing units, coordinated trains to transport victims to their deaths in death camps, and, as Jewish prisoners in the camps, were forced to help operate the gas chambers.

This chapter also includes the stories of individuals who, in spite of the danger, violence, and suffering around them, resisted the Nazis' program of dehumanization and murder. Some individuals imprisoned in the concentration camps made enormous efforts to preserve human dignity for themselves and others. A small percentage of prisoners in camps and ghettos found ways to carry out armed resistance. At the same time, some individuals, groups, towns, and even entire nations risked their own safety to protect, hide, or evacuate Jews and members of other targeted groups from the Nazis and their collaborators. However, opportunities to resist or rescue were not available to everyone, and among those who had such opportunities, many did not seize them. These efforts, therefore, were the exception rather than the rule. Historian Peter Hayes explains:

A few diplomats rose to the occasion, but most did not. More clergy accepted the challenge, but a majority did not. Minority group members expressed solidarity with Jews more frequently than the surrounding population, but not reliably or uniformly. Cosmopolitan residents of Warsaw may have been more inclined to aid Jews than Poles in the countryside, but not dependably so. Rescue was always the choice of the relatively few.<sup>2</sup>

Hayes adds that "at most, 5 to 10% of the Jews who survived the Holocaust in Europe did so because a non-Jew or non-Jewish organization . . . concealed and sustained them."<sup>3</sup> In the end, the Nazis succeeded in murdering 6 million of the estimated 9 million Jews who lived in Europe in 1939.

While the stories and testimonies of perpetrators, bystanders, resisters, and rescuers are woven throughout this chapter, the readings are loosely grouped according to theme and chronology. After Sonia Weitz's poem "For Yom Ha'Shoah," Readings 2 through 5 confront the mass shootings perpetrated by the mobile killing units in eastern Europe. The next seven readings, Readings 6 through 12, provide an account of the Nazis' shift toward "industrializing" murder through the creation of gas chambers and death camps. The rest of the readings unfold in a loose chronology, describing the dilemmas and choices that individuals, groups, and nations faced in response to the knowledge of German atrocities against Jews and other targeted groups. The chapter's final three readings look at the end of the war and the last efforts of the Nazis to murder their victims and conceal their crimes.

2 Peter Hayes, "Rescuing Jews—Means and Obstacles: Introduction," in *How Was It Possible? A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 647.

3 *Ibid.*, 645



Because of the disturbing violence described in many of the readings in this chapter, teachers should take special care to select readings that are appropriate for their students. They should also offer students frequent opportunities to process their responses privately, perhaps in a journal, and together as a class. See Teaching Emotionally Challenging Content in the “Get Started” section for further guidance on confronting this history with students.



## Reading 1

# Take This Giant Leap

Sonia Weitz was born in Kraków, Poland. She was 11 years old when her family and other Polish Jews were herded into ghettos by the Nazis. Of the 84 members of her extended family, she and her sister Blanca were the only survivors of years in ghettos and concentration camps during the Holocaust. At an early age, she turned to poetry to help her cope with her emotions. Years after the Holocaust, Weitz wrote the poem "For Yom Ha'Shoah." *Yom Ha'Shoah* is Hebrew for "Day of Holocaust Remembrance."

Come, take this giant leap with me  
into the other world . . . the other place  
where language fails and imagery defies,  
denies man's consciousness . . . and dies  
upon the altar of insanity.

Come, take this giant leap with me  
into the other world . . . the other place  
and trace the eclipse of humanity . . .  
where children burned while mankind stood by  
and the universe has yet to learn why  
. . . has yet to learn why.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What does this poem mean to you? What questions does it raise for you?
2. Sonia Weitz has been called "a survivor with a poet's eye." How can poetry deepen one's study of the Holocaust? What can we learn from poetry that more traditional historical accounts might not capture?
3. Re-read the poem and highlight the verbs Weitz uses. How do the verbs help to intensify her description of "the other world"?
4. Do you think that Weitz believes it is possible to understand the horrors of the Holocaust? What can we gain by studying the brutality of the Holocaust?

<sup>1</sup> Sonia Schreiber Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., 2012), 66, <https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/i-promised-i-would-tell>.

## Reading 2

# Mobile Killing Units



Watch **Surviving a Massacre**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Designing Destruction**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Explore **Shot by Shot: The Holocaust in German-Occupied Soviet Territory**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

The German war for “race and space” intensified in 1941 after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, breaking the nonaggression pact between the two countries (see “The Invasion of the Soviet Union” in Chapter 8). Nearly 4 million German soldiers advanced through Soviet-occupied territory from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and into the Soviet Union itself. The German army was followed by *Einsatzgruppen* A, B, C, and D—four special mobile killing units, each made up of about a thousand men from the security police and the German intelligence service.

In a document issued on July 2, 1941, Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the security police, instructed the *Einsatzgruppen* units to execute Communist officials, Jews employed by the Soviet government, and “other radical elements (saboteurs, propagandists, snipers, assassins, inciters, etc.).”<sup>1</sup> Historian Richard Evans notes that despite these official instructions, “German forces treated all Jewish men as Communists, partisans, saboteurs, looters, dangerous members of the intelligentsia, or merely ‘suspicious elements’, and acted accordingly.”<sup>2</sup> By late July, mass murders by *Einsatzgruppen* had expanded to include thousands of Jewish women and children.<sup>3</sup>

When possible, *Einsatzgruppen* leaders attempted to incite pogroms—organized massacres of Jews—by local communities in the Baltic states so that widespread murders of Jews could be blamed on the local populations instead of German units. Existing antisemitism among Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians was exacerbated by the belief of many who had been persecuted during the Soviet occupation that Jews had supported the Soviets. Even when the Nazis failed to incite pogroms, they often tried to make it appear as if the murders of Jews were the result of spontaneous uprisings by local people.<sup>4</sup>

Lithuanian physician Y. Kutorgene, who was not Jewish, witnessed the German invasion of the Baltic nations. She wrote in her diary, “Thousands of people humiliated, without any protection, worse than animals, and that because they have ‘other blood.’” On October 30, 1941, Dr. Kutorgene wrote about what had happened in Kovno the previous day:

On [October 29] there was an announcement that everybody [every Jew] must come at six in the morning to the big square in the ghetto and line up in rows, except workers with the documents which were recently distributed to specialists and foremen. . . . The square was surrounded by guards with machine guns. It

1 Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margaliot, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem and Oxford: Yad Vashem and Pergamon Press, 1987), 376–78.

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 219.

3 Ibid., 226–27.

4 Ibid., 218.

was freezing. The people stood on their feet all through that long day, hungry and with empty hands. Small children cried in their mothers' arms. Nobody suspected the bitter fate that awaited them. They thought that they were being moved to other apartments. . . . [There] was a rumor that at the Ninth Fort . . . prisoners had been digging deep ditches, and when the people were taken there, it was already clear to everybody that this was death. They broke out crying, wailed, screamed. Some tried to escape on the way there but they were shot dead. . . . At the Fort the condemned were stripped of their clothes, and in groups of 300 they were forced into the ditches. First they threw in the children. The women were shot at the edge of the ditch, after that it was the turn of the men. . . . All the men doing the shooting were drunk. I was told all this by an acquaintance who heard it from a German soldier, an eyewitness, who wrote to his Catholic wife: "Yesterday I became convinced that there is no God. If there were, He would not allow such things to happen."<sup>5</sup>

Mass shootings like the one the doctor described took place throughout the territory Germany conquered from the Soviet Union. Although she did not know it, the largest massacre had already occurred at Babi Yar, a ravine two miles from the center of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, on September 29, 1941—just a month earlier. A few days after the Germans captured Kiev, they ordered that all Jews gather near the Jewish cemetery and warned that "failure to appear is punishable by death." Fritz Hoefler, a German who later testified at the Einsatzgruppen war crimes trials, described what happened next:

One day I was ordered to drive my truck out of town. I had a Ukrainian with me. . . . On our way, we passed Jews marching in columns in the same direction we were going. They were carrying their belongings. There were whole families. The farther we drove away from the town, the more people we saw in the columns. There were piles of clothes in a wide open field. My job was to fetch them.

I stopped the engine nearby, and the Ukrainians standing around started loading the car with this stuff. From where I was, I saw other Ukrainians meeting the Jews who arrived, men, women and children, and directing them to the place where, one after another, they were supposed to remove their belongings, coats, shoes, outer garments and even their underwear.

. . . Everything happened very quickly. . . .

I did not watch for long. When I approached the edge, I was so frightened of what I saw that I could not look at it for a long time. . . .

Apart from . . . two machine gunners, there were two other [policemen] standing near each passage into the ravine. They made each victim lie down on the corpses,



**A member of Einsatzgruppe D, a mobile killing unit, about to shoot a man kneeling by a mass grave in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, in 1942.**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Sharon Paquette

5 Y. Kutorgene, "Kaunaski Dnievnik (Kovno Diary) 1941–1942," *Druzhiba Narodov* ("Amity of Nations"), VIII, 1968, 210–11, in Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman, and Abraham Margalit, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, trans. Lea Ben Dor (Lincoln and Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 1999), 405–06.

so that the machine gunner could shoot while he walked by. When victims descended into the ravine and saw this terrible scene at the last moment, they let out a cry of terror. But they were grabbed by the waiting [police] right away and hurled down onto the others. . . .

The Ukrainians paid no attention to the noise and just kept forcing people through the passages into the ravine.<sup>6</sup>

The German executioners reported to officials in Berlin that they had “liquidated”—murdered—33,771 children, women, and men at Babi Yar in two days (September 29 and 30, 1941). In the months that followed, the Germans killed thousands more there, including not only Jews but also Roma, Communists, and Soviet prisoners of war. The total number buried there will never be known, but estimates range as high as 100,000.<sup>7</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Who carried out the massacres of Jews described in these sources? What role was played by Germans? By local people? Why did the Germans want to hide their role in inciting these massacres?
2. How did Dr. Kutorgene find out about the massacre in Kovno? What does this suggest about who knew about such supposedly secret massacres and how people may have learned of them?
3. What happened at Babi Yar? Who were the victims? Who were the perpetrators? Why might the perpetrators have participated in the horrific murders of so many people?
4. Accounts like those in this reading are disturbing and painful to read. They prompt us to ask many questions, some of which may be unanswerable. What questions do these accounts raise for you about history and human behavior?
5. A German eyewitness to the massacre in Kovno wrote, “Yesterday I became convinced that there is no God. If there were, He would not allow such things to happen.” Why might this event have made people doubt the existence of God?

6 “Babi Yar: Witness and Survivor Accounts of the Mass Murder in Kiev,” Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, last modified 2008, accessed May 16, 2016, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/einsatz/babiartest.html>.

7 Karel C. Berkhoff, “Babi Yar: Site of Mass Murder, Ravine of Oblivion” lecture, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, February 9, 2011, last modified 2012, accessed April 22, 2016, [https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication\\_OP\\_2011-02.pdf](https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Publication_OP_2011-02.pdf).

## Reading 3

# Reserve Police Battalion 101

What kind of person kills civilians, including old people and even babies, all day long? To find answers to such questions, historian Christopher Browning studied courtroom testimony made in the 1960s and 1970s by 210 men who served in the German Reserve Police Battalion 101 and were later charged with war crimes.

In the mid-1930s, the Nazis began to provide military-style training to uniformed police, and after 1939 they sent dozens of police battalions east to support the war against “Jewish Bolshevism” being waged by the German army and the Einsatzgruppen. Reserve Police Battalion 101 was made up of the German equivalent of city policemen and county sheriffs. It was assigned to the district of Lublin in Poland.

Like the National Guard in the United States, these German battalions were organized regionally. Most of the men in Battalion 101 came from working- and lower-middle-class neighborhoods in Hamburg, Germany. Major Wilhelm Trapp, a 53-year-old career police officer who had come up through the ranks, headed the battalion. He had joined the Nazi Party in 1932 but was not a member of the SS, the Nazi elite guard assigned to solve the so-called “Jewish Problem.” The battalion’s first killing mission took place on July 13, 1942. Browning reports:

Just as daylight was breaking, the men arrived at the village [of Jozefow] and assembled in a half-circle around Major Trapp, who proceeded to give a short speech. With choking voice and tears in his eyes, he visibly fought to control himself as he informed his men that they had received orders to perform a very unpleasant task. These orders were not to his liking either, but they came from above. It might perhaps make their task easier, he told the men, if they remembered that in Germany bombs were falling on the women and children. Two witnesses claimed that Trapp also mentioned that the Jews of this village had supported the partisans. Another witness recalled Trapp’s mentioning that the Jews had instigated the boycott against Germany. Trapp then explained to the men that the Jews in Jozefow would have to be rounded up, whereupon the young males were to be selected out for labor and the others shot.

Trapp then made an extraordinary offer to his battalion: if any of the older men among them did not feel up to the task that lay before him, he could step out. Trapp paused, and after some moments, one man stepped forward. The captain of 3rd company . . . began to berate the man. The major told the captain to hold his tongue. Then ten or twelve other men stepped forward as well. They turned in their rifles and were told to await a further assignment from the major.



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Trapp then summoned the company commanders and gave them their respective assignments. Two platoons of 3rd company were to surround the village; the men were explicitly ordered to shoot anyone trying to escape. The remaining men were to round up the Jews and take them to the market place. Those too sick or frail to walk to the market place, as well as infants and anyone offering resistance or attempting to hide, were to be shot on the spot. Thereafter, a few men of 1st company were to accompany . . . Jews selected at the market place, while the rest were to proceed to the forest to form the firing squads. The Jews were to be loaded onto battalion trucks by 2nd company and shuttled from the market place to the forest.

Having given the company commanders their respective assignments, Trapp spent the rest of the day in town, mostly in a schoolroom converted into his headquarters but also at the homes of the Polish mayor and the local priest. Witnesses who saw him at various times during the day described him as bitterly complaining about the orders he had been given and “weeping like a child.” He nevertheless affirmed that “orders were orders” and had to be carried out. Not a single witness recalled seeing him at the shooting site, a fact that was not lost on the men, who felt some anger about it. Trapp’s driver remembers him saying later, “If this Jewish business is ever avenged on earth, then have mercy on us Germans.”<sup>1</sup>

Browning notes, “While the men of Reserve Police Battalion 101 were apparently willing to shoot those Jews too weak or sick to move, they still shied for the most part from shooting infants, despite their orders. No officer intervened, though subsequently one officer warned his men that in the future they would have to be more energetic.”<sup>2</sup>

As the killing continued, some officers reassigned anyone who asked, while others pressed their men to continue despite reservations. By midday, the men were being offered bottles of vodka to “refresh” them. Nevertheless, a number of soldiers broke down. Yet the majority continued to the end. After the massacre ended, the battalion was transferred to the northern part of the district and platoons were divided up, each stationed in a different town. All of the platoons took part in at least one more shooting action. Most found that these subsequent murders were easier to perform.

In drawing conclusions from the testimonies, Browning focused on the choices open to the men he studied.

Most simply denied that they had any choice. Faced with the testimony of others, they did not contest that Trapp had made the offer but repeatedly claimed that they had not heard that part of his speech or could not remember it. A few who admitted that they had been given the choice and yet failed to opt out were quite blunt. One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades. Another—more aware of what truly required courage—said quite simply: “I was cowardly.” A few others also made the attempt to confront the question of choice but failed to find the words. It was a different time and place, as if they had been on another political planet, and the political vocabulary and values of the 1960s were helpless to explain the situation in which they found themselves in 1942. As

1 Christopher R. Browning, “One Day in Jozefow: Initiation to Mass Murder,” in *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 174–75.

2 Ibid., 179.



one man admitted, it was not until years later that he began to consider that what he had done had not been right. He had not given it a thought at the time.<sup>3</sup>

Browning also points out:

[It is] doubtful that they were immune to “the influence of the times,” . . . to the incessant proclamation of German superiority and incitement of contempt and hatred for the Jewish enemy. Nothing helped the Nazis to wage a race war so much as the war itself. In wartime, when it was all too usual to exclude the enemy from the community of human obligation, it was also all too easy to subsume the Jews into the “image of the enemy.”<sup>4</sup>

The men who did not take part were more specific about their motives. Some attributed their refusal to their age or to the fact that they were not “career men.” Only one referred to personal connections to Jews to explain his refusal. Browning writes:

What remained virtually unexamined by the interrogators and unmentioned by the policemen was the role of antisemitism. Did they not speak of it because antisemitism had not been a motivating factor? Or were they unwilling and unable to confront this issue even after twenty-five years, because it had been all too important, all too pervasive? One is tempted to wonder if the silence speaks louder than the words, but in the end—the silence is still silence, and the question remains unanswered.<sup>5</sup>

Some historians point out that members of the battalion could have exposed themselves to more severe criminal charges in the German legal system at the time of the trials by mentioning antisemitism as part of their motivation in the killings. Browning continues:

Was the incident at Jozefow typical? Certainly not. I know of no other case in which a commander so openly invited and sanctioned the nonparticipation of his men in a killing action. But in the end the most important fact is not that the experience of Reserve Police Battalion 101 was untypical, but rather that Trapp’s extraordinary offer did not matter. Like any other unit, Reserve Police Battalion 101 killed the Jews they had been told to kill.<sup>6</sup>

3 Browning, “One Day in Jozefow,” 181–82.

4 Ibid., 186.

5 Ibid., 183.

6 Ibid.

## Connection Questions

1. What details in the text help you understand how Major Wilhelm Trapp felt about the killings? What choices did Trapp make? How do you explain his choices?
2. What role did “following orders” play in the choices made by Trapp’s men? To what degree might conformity (the desire to fit in with a group’s attitudes, beliefs, or behavior) have played a role? What other factors may have influenced their participation?
3. Scholar Daniel Goldhagen examined this same story and reached a conclusion different from Browning’s. Goldhagen believes that antisemitism, rather than conformity, is a more convincing explanation for why so many men participated in the massacre at Jozefow. He argues that the men decided to kill when they could have opted out because they truly believed that killing Jews was the right thing to do; to Goldhagen, any explanation other than what he calls “eliminationist antisemitism” is inadequate. Do you agree? Is the desire to conform enough to explain why people would participate in such violence? Or must they also feel hatred for their victims?
4. In what ways, according to Browning, were the experiences of Police Battalion 101 “untypical”? Despite the unusual nature of these events, how can they help us understand the larger history of the Holocaust? How can the experiences and choices of these men help us understand human behavior?
5. Browning writes of the men who took part in the murders, “A few who admitted that they had been given the choice and yet failed to opt out were quite blunt. One said that he had not wanted to be considered a coward by his comrades. Another—more aware of what truly required courage—said quite simply: ‘I was cowardly.’” Why might some men have felt that their decision to participate was cowardly? What is needed to make someone take an action that is different from the actions of the rest of a group?
6. Is it important to know the motives of perpetrators such as the members of Police Battalion 101? Is it possible to fully understand their motives? To what extent can we trust their own explanations years after the murders?

## Reading 4

# A Matter of Obedience?

Three decades before Christopher Browning completed his study of Police Battalion 101 (see Reading 3, “Reserve Police Battalion 101”), a psychologist at Yale University named Stanley Milgram also tried to better understand why so many individuals participated in the brutality and mass murder of the Holocaust.

In the 1960s, Milgram conducted an experiment designed “to see how far a person will proceed in a concrete and measurable situation in which he is ordered to inflict increasing pain on a protesting victim.”<sup>1</sup> Joseph Dimow was one of the people who unknowingly took part in that experiment. In 2004, he described the experience:

Like many others in the New Haven area, I answered an ad seeking subjects for the experiment and offering five dollars, paid in advance, for travel and time. At the Yale facility, I met a man . . . in a white coat and horn-rimmed glasses. He led me into a room filled with an impressive display of electrical equipment. A second man was introduced to me as another subject for the experiment, and together we were told that the experiment was to test the widely held belief that people learn by punishment. In this case, one of us would be a “learner” and the other a “teacher.” The teacher would read a list of paired words . . . and then repeat the first word of the pair. If the learner did not respond with the correct second word, the teacher would deliver a “mild” electric shock to the learner as punishment. . . .

The “professor” said we would draw straws to see which of us would be the learner. He offered the straws to the other man [and] then [the man] announced that he had drawn the short straw and would be the learner . . .

The learner, said the professor, would be in an adjoining room, out of my sight, and strapped to a chair so that his arms could not move—this so that the learner could not jump around and damage the equipment or do harm to himself. I was to be seated in front of a console marked with lettering colored yellow for “Slight Shock” (15 volts) up to purple for “Danger: Severe Shock” (450 volts). The shocks would increase by 15-volt increments with each incorrect answer.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the “learner” was an actor hired by Milgram. Dimow, the “teacher,” was the person Milgram and his team were studying. Social scientists Nestar Russell and Robert Gregory explain how the experiment was set up:



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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 3–4.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Dimow, “Resisting Authority: A Personal Account of the Milgram Obedience Experiments,” *Jewish Currents* (January 2004), accessed June 18, 2016, <http://www.jewishcurrents.org/2004-jan-dimow.htm>.

Once the experiment has started, the participant [the “teacher”] is soon required to deliver shocks of increasing intensity. In fact, no shocks at all are being administered, though the participant does not know this. As the “shocks” increase in intensity, the ostensible pain being experienced by the learner also becomes increasingly apparent by way of shouts and protests (actually via a tape recording) emanating from behind a partition that visually separates the teacher from the learner. For example, at 120 volts the learner is heard to say “Ugh! Hey, this really hurts!” Typically, the participants express their concern over the learner’s well-being. Yet the experimenter continues to insist “The experiment requires that you continue,” “You have no other choice, you must go on.” Such commands were designed to generate feelings of tension—what Milgram called strain—within the participant. If the participant continued to obey these strain-producing commands to the 270-volt level, the learner, in obvious agony, was heard to scream, “Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out. Do you hear? Let me out of here!” At the 300-volt level, the learner refuses to answer and instead responds with agonized screams. The experimenter commands the participant to treat further unanswered questions as incorrect and accordingly to inflict the next level of shock. After a 330-volt shock has been administered, the learner suddenly falls silent. The participant is again ordered to treat any further unanswered questions as incorrect and to continue administering shocks of increasing voltage. Once the participant has administered three successive shocks of 450 volts, the experimenter stops the process.<sup>3</sup>

After a session of the experiment was complete, Milgram’s team revealed to the participant that they had been deceived, and they brought the “learner” into the room so that the participant could see that he had not been harmed. Regardless, this deception, in which the subject of an experiment is tricked into believing that they are harming another individual, is widely considered to be unethical today. At the time, when Milgram described this experiment to a group of 39 psychiatrists, the psychiatrists predicted that one participant in 1,000 would continue until they delivered the most severe shock, 450 volts. In reality, 62.5% of participants did.

By varying the setup of his experiment, Milgram observed a relationship between the distance separating the teacher and learner and the willingness of the teacher to generate more severe shocks. When the teacher was required to touch the learner by forcing the learner’s hand onto the plate from which the shock was delivered, 30% of the teachers proceeded to the most severe shock. When the teacher did not touch the learner but remained in the same room, obedience to go all the way increased to 40%. When the teachers were placed in a separate room from which they could hear the voice of the learner but not see him, obedience increased to 62.5%. When the learner did not speak but only banged on the wall to indicate distress, obedience increased to 65%. When the teacher could neither see nor hear the learner at all, obedience reached almost 100%.<sup>4</sup> Milgram tested other variations in which the distance between the experimenter and the teacher changed. He found that the farther the distance

3 Nestar Russell and Robert Gregory, “Making the Undoable Doable: Milgram, the Holocaust, and Modern Government,” *American Review of Public Administration* 35, no. 4 (December 4, 2005), 328–29.

4 Ibid., 330.

between experimenter and teacher, the less likely the teacher was to obey. Milgram concluded that the experiment forced the teacher to decide between two stressful situations: inflicting pain on another person and disobeying authority. The closeness of the learner and the experimenter to the teacher affected the teacher's choice: "In obeying, the participants were mainly concerned about alleviating their own, rather than the learner's, stressful situation."<sup>5</sup>

In interpreting the implications of Milgram's research, many, including Milgram himself, focused on the effect of physical closeness between perpetrator and victim on the willingness of one person to harm another. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes:

It is difficult to harm a person we touch. It is somewhat easier to afflict pain upon a person we only see at a distance. It is still easier in the case of a person we only hear. It is quite easy to be cruel towards a person we neither see nor hear.<sup>6</sup>

But others who study Milgram's work argue that focusing primarily on physical distance leaves out other important factors suggested by the experiment. Russell and Gregory argue that "emotional distance" is an equally important factor. In their analysis of the Milgram experiments, they write:

Although the . . . learner was deliberately chosen as a likable, middle-aged man, and although many participants expressed strong concern about his apparent plight—and were relieved to be reconciled with him at the end of the experiment—he was a stranger to them. Milgram speculated that obedience rates may have been even higher had the learner been presented as "a brutal criminal or a pervert"; but obedience rates may also have been much lower overall had the learner been a loved member of the participant's family, a friend, or even an acquaintance. So Milgram confirmed what most people instinctively know—that it is far easier to maltreat others if they are personal strangers, even easier to do so if they are cultural strangers, and especially if we engage in rationalization processes of self-deception that serve to dehumanize them.<sup>7</sup>

Russell and Gregory also believe that the way the harm is inflicted would affect the willingness of individuals to do it. In their analysis of the Milgram experiments, they point out that the shock generator was a technological and indirect way for the teacher to inflict pain; in most variations, teachers flicked a switch rather than using "direct physical force." Russell and Gregory ask: "How far would Milgram's participants have gone if they had been required personally to beat, bludgeon, or whip the learner, ultimately to the point of unconsciousness or beyond?"<sup>8</sup>

Milgram's experiments provide insights that help us understand the choices and motivations of many who participated in the Nazi programs of persecution and mass murder. But many historians and social scientists who have studied the Holocaust say that Milgram's work does not fully explain the behavior of perpetrators in the Holocaust. While many acted in response

<sup>5</sup> Russell and Gregory, "Making the Undoable Doable," 331.

<sup>6</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013), 155.

<sup>7</sup> Russell and Gregory, "Making the Undoable Doable," 332.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 333–34.

to orders from authority figures, some perpetrators chose to go beyond the orders they were given. Others chose to act out of their own hatred or for their own material gain without being asked to do so. Even within the German government and military, leaders and bureaucrats took initiative and devised creative methods to achieve larger goals, not in response to orders but in an effort to “work toward the Führer” (see “Working Toward the Führer” in Chapter 5).

## Connection Questions

1. What encourages obedience? What factors do the Milgram experiments suggest? What factors do these experiments leave out?
2. How do the Milgram experiments explain aspects of perpetrators’ actions in the Holocaust? What do the experiments fail to explain?
3. What situation caused “feelings of tension” in participants in the Milgram experiments? What role did the distance between “teacher” and “learner” play in creating these feelings? What role did the distance between “teacher” and “experimenter” play?
4. What is the difference between physical distance and “emotional” distance? According to Russell and Gregory, what difference might the emotional distance between “teacher” and “learner” make in the willingness of the “teacher” to harm the “learner”? What might have created emotional distance between perpetrators and victims during the Holocaust?
5. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman writes: “The most frightening news brought about by the Holocaust and by what we learned of its perpetrators was not the likelihood that ‘this’ could be done to us, but the idea that we could do it.”<sup>9</sup> Do you agree that everyone has the potential to become a perpetrator? What do the Milgram experiments suggest about the aspects of human behavior that could make it possible for us to willingly inflict pain on others?
6. Some who played a role in mass murder during the Holocaust later tried to explain their actions by saying that they were simply obeying the orders of authority figures. Historian Daniel Goldhagen warns that this sort of “blind obedience” is not a sufficient explanation, because it leaves out the extreme form of antisemitism that he believes motivated the German killers. He writes that individuals will only obey orders that are consistent with the values and morals they already hold.<sup>10</sup> What does he mean? What is he suggesting about the moral values and beliefs of perpetrators, such as the members of Police Battalion 101? Based on what you have learned so far, do you agree or disagree with Goldhagen?

9 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 152.

10 Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (London: Knopf, 1996), 383.



## Reading 5

# “Proving Oneself” in the East

“In the Nazi imagination,” writes historian Wendy Lower, “the eastern Lebensraum, an Aryan living space abroad, was a frontier where anything was possible—a place where mass-murder factories could be constructed alongside utopian German-only colonies.” It was a place, she continues, where “ethnic Germans appeared in Nazi photographs in wagon trains while . . . SS policemen crossed the plains straddling motorcycles like cowboys astride horses.”<sup>1</sup>

Those images had a profound influence on Germans who settled in the “Wild East.” Among them was Erna Petri, who came east, like many other women, with her husband and their two young children. On a summer day in 1943, she noticed six Jewish children crouched along the side of a road. She realized that they had probably jumped out of one of the many boxcars transporting Jews to “the East.” Lower writes:

The children were terrified and hungry. Petri . . . calmed them and gained their trust by bringing them food from her kitchen. All Jews who were roaming the countryside were supposed to be captured and shot; she understood that. Horst [her husband] was not at home at the time. She waited, but Horst did not return, so she decided to shoot the six children herself. She led them to the same pit in the woods where other Jews had been shot and buried. She brought a pistol with her, one that her father had kept from World War I and given to her as a parting gift as she left for the “wild east” of Ukraine.

Petri killed the six children. Lower continues,

Erna was alone when she committed this crime, but she was far from alone at the estate. Besides her husband, her two small children lived at Grzenda. . . . Her mother-in-law and an uncle were visiting . . . and in addition she was surrounded by peasants working the fields. The best view of the area was from the hilltop villa’s second-floor balcony, where Erna . . . served [coffee and cake] to Horst’s colleagues in the military and the SS and police. While pouring coffee Erna had overheard the men speaking about the mass shootings of Jews. She had learned that the most effective way to kill was a single shot to the back of the neck. When she led those children to the mass grave on the estate, she knew exactly what to do.<sup>2</sup>

1 Wendy Lower, *Hitler’s Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2013), 35.

2 Ibid., 132.

Petri later tried to explain her behavior:

In those times, as I carried out the shootings, I was barely 23 years old, still young and inexperienced. I lived among men who were in the SS [the Nazi elite guard] and carried out shootings of Jewish persons. I seldom came into contact with other women, so that in the course of this time I became more hardened, desensitized. I did not want to stand behind the SS men. I wanted to show them that I, as a woman, could conduct myself like a man. So I shot 4 Jews and 6 Jewish children. I wanted to prove myself to the men. Besides, in those days in this region, everywhere one heard that Jewish persons and children were being shot, which also caused me to kill them.<sup>3</sup>

When asked how she, as a mother of two young children, could shoot innocent Jewish children, Petri replied:

I am unable to grasp at this time how in those days that I was in such a state as to conduct myself so brutally and reprehensibly—shooting Jewish children. However earlier [before arriving in Ukraine] I had been so conditioned to . . . the racial laws, which established a view toward the Jewish people. As was told to me, I had to destroy the Jews. It was from this mindset that I came to commit such a brutal act.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Accounts like those excerpted here are disturbing and painful to read. They prompt us to ask many questions, some of which may be unanswerable. What questions do these accounts raise for you about history and human behavior?
2. How does Erna Petri try to explain her behavior? How do you think it can be explained?
3. The readings in this chapter describe many different troubling instances when Jews were killed during the Holocaust. How is the story of Erna Petri different from those other examples? Does it share anything with them?
4. According to Petri, what role did her gender play in her actions? What role might it play in our response to her actions?

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 155.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 156.

## Reading 6

# The Wannsee Conference

The Nazis did not record the exact date of their decision to annihilate all of the Jews in Europe, but historians believe this decision had been made by Hitler and the highest-ranking Nazi leaders by the end of 1941. Once the goal had been established and approved by Hitler, it was up to other German leaders to coordinate the details necessary to make it happen.

In January 1942, German officials, including representatives from the SS [the Nazis' elite guard], the Einsatzgruppen, the Justice Ministry, the Office of the Governor General of Poland, and the Foreign Office, met in a lake-side neighborhood of Berlin called Wannsee. They had come to discuss the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question." The highest-ranking German leaders—Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Hermann Göring, and Joseph Goebbels—did not attend. Himmler's deputy, Reinhard Heydrich, led the meeting.

Adolf Eichmann, the head of the Department for Jewish Affairs, prepared the minutes of the meeting based on a transcript made by a stenographer. He later revealed that the words he used to write up the minutes were not the words the participants had actually used. They spoke "in blunt terms" with "no mincing of words," unlike Eichmann, who relied on euphemisms in the minutes:

In the course of this final solution of the European Jewish Problem, approximately 11 million Jews are involved. . . .

Under proper direction the Jews should now in the course of the Final Solution be brought to the East in a suitable way for use as labor. In big labor gangs, with separation of the sexes, the Jews capable of work are brought to these areas and employed in road building, in which task undoubtedly a great part will fall out through natural [means].

The remnant that finally is able to survive all this—since this is undoubtedly the part with the strongest resistance—must be treated accordingly since these people, representing a natural selection, are to be regarded as the germ cell of a new Jewish development. (See the experience of history.)

In the program of the practical execution of the Final Solution, Europe is combed through from the West to the East.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis were already killing Jews in enormous numbers and by a variety of methods. Now that the destruction of European Jewry had become official German policy, the purpose of the Wannsee Conference, according to historian Doris Bergen, was to coordinate the details and establish the central role the SS would play:



VIDEO

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of Wannsee Conference, 20 January, 1942, NG-2586, *Trial of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals*, XIII (Washington, DC, 1952), 212–13.

The SS, Heydrich made clear, was in charge of destroying Jews, but other agencies and offices also had key roles to play. Moreover, by their very presence those bureaucrats, party functionaries, and occupation authorities demonstrated that they understood what was going on and endorsed it . . .

No one at the conference objected to the policy and practice of annihilation, although it was presented openly, starting with the announcement that Estonia was now “free of Jews.” Instead participants spent their time on practical matters, above all on who would be included in the category of Jews to be “evacuated to the East” for killing. . . . This was the bureaucratic face of genocide, people’s lives and deaths reduced to categories and lists.<sup>2</sup>

In 1942, the Nazi mass murder, especially of Jews, became more efficient. By spring of that year, the killing centers—camps designed not for imprisonment or forced labor but only for mass murder—were operating. By summer, Polish Jews living in ghettos were being transported to the killing centers. By the middle of 1943, Polish Jewry was mostly annihilated. Scholar Michael Berenbaum points out, “As these fifteen men gathered at Wannsee, four of five Jews who were to be murdered in the Holocaust were still alive; fifteen months later in the spring of 1943, four of five were already dead.”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was the purpose of the Wannsee Conference? How does it illustrate the concept of “working toward the Führer” (see “Working Toward the Führer” in Chapter 5)?
2. Adolf Eichmann uses the term “Final Solution” in his conference minutes to describe the task of killing the Jews of Europe. What does this term make clear? What does it tend to hide? What other euphemisms does he use?
3. Many widely read accounts of the Wannsee Conference claim that it was where the Nazis decided to murder the Jews of Europe. Historians disagree, pointing to evidence that the decision had been made before the meeting at Wannsee. Why, then, was the meeting significant? What effect did it have on the “Final Solution”?

2 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 209.

3 Michael Berenbaum to Facing History and Ourselves, memorandum, January 4, 2016.

## Reading 7

# Establishing the Killing Centers

After watching the murders of 100 Jews by his unit in fall 1941, an Einsatzgruppen commander said to Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS, “Look at the eyes of the men in this *Kommando*, how deeply shaken they are! These men are finished for the rest of their lives. What kind of followers are we training here? Either neurotics or savages!”<sup>1</sup> The mass murder of Jews by shooting had begun to have a strong psychological effect on many of the men who did the shooting. Some of these men called that effect *Seelenbelastung*, a “burdening of the soul.”<sup>2</sup> It threatened the soldiers’ morale and undermined their effectiveness. By the end of 1941, Nazi leaders were planning to annihilate all Jews in Europe, but they realized that they would need to use different methods that would increase the distance between the perpetrators and their victims.

Some Nazis had already begun experimenting with these alternate methods of mass murder. Two years earlier, the Germans had used poison gas (carbon monoxide) as part of their program to kill people they considered “unworthy of life” (see “‘Unworthy to Live’” in Chapter 8). In summer 1941, Rudolf Höss, the commandant at Auschwitz—then a prison camp for Polish resisters and Soviet prisoners of war—began to experiment with a different poison gas, a pesticide called Zyklon B (hydrogen cyanide), on 600 Soviet prisoners of war and 250 other inmates considered “unfit for work.”

By the end of 1941, the Germans were using poison gas to kill Jews at a camp in occupied Poland near the town of Chelmno. Chelmno would be the first camp to be transformed into a “killing center.” Killing centers were different from concentration camps. While many were murdered in concentration camps, those camps were designed primarily for the imprisonment and forced labor of those targeted by the Nazis. But killing centers, also called “death camps” or “extermination camps,” were designed exclusively for the mass murder of human beings as efficiently and quickly as possible.<sup>3</sup> The map “Main Nazi Camps and Killing Sites” that follows shows the locations where millions were imprisoned and killed by the Nazis, including the sites of massacres by mobile killing units, facilities where medical murders occurred as part of the Nazi “euthanasia” program, concentration camps, and killing centers.

1 Robert Jay Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 159.

2 Nestar Russell and Robert Gregory, “Making the Undoable Doable: Milgram, the Holocaust, and Modern Government,” *American Review of Public Administration* 35, no. 4 (December 4, 2005): 336–37.

3 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Killing Centers,” last modified July 2, 2016, accessed July 8, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007327>.

## Main Nazi Camps and Killing Sites



Facing History and Ourselves

Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis established more than 40,000 camps for the imprisonment, forced labor, or mass killing of Jews, Sinti and Roma, Communists, and other so-called “enemies of the state.”

At Chelmno, on December 7, 1941, the Germans herded 700 Jews, in groups of 80, into vans previously used in the Nazis’ “euthanasia,” or so-called mercy killing, program. By the end of the day, all 700 were dead from carbon monoxide poisoning. Six weeks later, in January 1942, the Nazis ordered 1,600 Jews in the Polish town of Izbica Kujawska to assemble in the town square. Suspicious of the reason for the order, the community’s Jewish Council urged people to flee to the nearby forests. Hundreds did so, and in retaliation, the Nazis killed all members of the council and then sent every other Jew they could find to Chelmno. One of them, Yakov Grojanowski, described a vehicle that was unlike any he had seen before:

The inner walls were of steel metal. There weren’t any seats. The floor was covered by a wooden grating, as in public baths, with straw mats on top. Between the driver’s cab and the rear part were two peepholes. With a [flashlight] one could observe through these peepholes if the victims were already dead.



Under the wooden grating were two tubes about fifteen centimeters thick which came out of the cab. The tubes had small openings from which gas poured out. The gas generator was in the cab, where the same driver sat all the time. He wore a uniform of the SS death's head units and was about forty years old. There were two such vans.

... The leader of the guard detail was a high-ranking SS man, an absolute sadist and murderer.

He ordered that eight men [not including Grojanowski] were to open the doors of the lorry [van]. The smell of gas that met us was overpowering. The victims were Gypsies from Lodz. Strewn about the van were all their belongings: accordions, violins, bedding, watches, and other valuables.

After the doors had been open for five minutes orders were screamed at us, "Here! You Jews! Get in there and turn everything out!" The Jews scurried into the van and dragged the corpses away.

The work didn't progress quickly enough. The SS leader fetched his whip and screamed, "The devil, I'll give you a hand right away!" He hit out in all directions on people's heads, ears, and so on, till they collapsed. Three of the eight who couldn't get up again were shot on the spot.<sup>4</sup>

Grojanowski and several other men were kept in a special barracks at night and then bused to the location of the gas vans each day to bury the dead. One day while on the bus, Grojanowski realized that he and the other men in his group would be the next to die. He decided to escape by jumping out of the window of the bus in which he was being held.

When I hit the ground I rolled for a bit and scraped the skin off my hands. The only thing that mattered to me was not to break a leg. I would hardly have minded breaking an arm. The main thing was that I could walk in order to reach the next Jewish settlement. I turned round to see if they had noticed anything on the bus but it continued its journey.<sup>5</sup>

Chelmno, which opened in December 1941, was the first "killing center" the Germans created to kill Jews, but it was not the last. They built three more in parts of Poland conquered from the Soviet Union: Belzec, Treblinka, and Sobibór. Those camps were at the heart of Operation Reinhard—the code name for a plan to murder all the Jews in Poland. The operation began in earnest in 1942 and ended in 1943. During those two years, 1.7 million Jews were removed from ghettos in Poland and taken to gas chambers. Only a few people are known to have survived Belzec and Chelmno. Fewer than 70 lived through Treblinka, and about the same number survived Sobibór before the four camps were closed in 1943. By then the vast majority of the Jews of Poland were dead.

4 "Grojanowski Report" (1942), quoted in Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe During the Second World War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1987), 255–56.

5 Ibid., 256.

## Connection Questions

1. How did the murder of Jews in mass shootings affect the men who did the killing? What do you think they meant by the phrase “burdening of the soul”?
2. Why did the Nazis turn to more industrial methods of murder? What advantages did they perceive in replacing mass shootings with gas chambers?
3. How do the results of the Milgram experiments (see Reading 4, “A Matter of Obedience?”) help to explain why gas chambers, rather than mass shootings, may have made it easier for Germans to participate in mass murder?
4. Look closely at the map “Main Camps and Killing Sites during the Nazi Era.” What patterns do you notice in the locations of the camps and killing sites? Where did the Nazis build most camps and killing centers? Why do you think they chose these locations?

## Reading 8

# The “Special Trains”

In summer 1942, the Germans increased their efforts to identify and round up Jews in all the countries and territories across Europe that were now under their control, shoving them into cattle cars and eventually transporting them to newly opened killing centers in occupied Poland. This process involved thousands of civilians—policemen, accountants, clerical workers, and managers. For his documentary film *Shoah* (1985), director Claude Lanzmann interviewed Walter Stier, the man responsible for the so-called “special trains.”

*What’s the difference between a special and a regular train?*

A regular train may be used by anyone who purchases a ticket. Say from Krakow to Warsaw. Or from Krakow to Lemberg. A special train has to be ordered. The train is specially put together and people pay group fares. . . .

*But why were there more special trains during the war than before the war or after?*

I see what you’re getting at. You’re referring to the so-called resettlement trains. . . . That’s what they were called. Those trains were ordered by the Ministry of Transport of the Reich. . . .

*But mostly, at that time, who was being “resettled”?*

No! We didn’t know that. Only when we were fleeing from Warsaw ourselves, did we learn that they could have been Jews, or criminals, or similar people.

*Jews, criminals?*

Criminals. All kinds.

*Special trains for criminals?*

No, that was just an expression. You couldn’t talk about that. Unless you were tired of life, it was best not to mention that.

*But you knew that the trains to Treblinka or Auschwitz were—*

Of course we knew. I was the last district; without me these trains couldn’t reach their destination. . . . So I had to . . .

*Did you know that Treblinka meant extermination?*

Of course not!

*You didn’t know?*

Good God, no! How could we know? I never went to Treblinka. I stayed in Krakow, in Warsaw, glued to my desk.

*You were a . . .*  
I was strictly a bureaucrat!<sup>1</sup>

Stier told Lanzmann how the “special trains” were financed:

. . . Jews were going to be shipped to Treblinka, were going to be shipped to Auschwitz, Sobibor or any other destination so long as the railroads were paid by the track kilometer, so many pfennigs per mile. The rate was the same throughout the war. With children under ten going at half-fare and children under four going free. Payment had to be made for only one way. The guards, of course, had to have return fare paid for them because they were going back to their place of origin.

*Excuse me, the children under four who were shipped to the extermination camps, the children under four . . .*  
. . . went free.

*They had the privilege to be gassed freely?*

Yes, transport was free. In addition to that, because the person who had to pay, the agency that had to pay, was the agency that ordered the train—and that happened to have been the Gestapo, Eichmann’s office—because of the financial problem which that office had in making payment, the Reichsbahn [the National Railway] agreed on group fares. The Jews were being shipped in much the same way that any excursion group would be granted a special fare if there were enough people traveling. The minimum was four hundred, a kind of charter fare. Four hundred minimum. So even if there were fewer than four hundred, it would pay to say there were four hundred and in that way get the half-fare for adults as well. And that was the basic principle. Now of course if there were exceptional filth in the cars, which might be the case, if there was damage to the equipment, which might be the case because the transports took so long and because five to ten percent of the prisoners died en route. Then there might be an additional bill for that damage. But in principle, so long as payment was being made, transports were being shipped. . . . Mittel Europäisch Reisebüro (The Middle Europe Travel Agency) would handle some of these transactions—the billing procedure, the ticketing procedure—or if a smaller transport was involved, the SS would . . .

*It was the same bureau that was dealing with any kind of normal passenger?*

Absolutely. Just the official travel bureau. Mittel Europäisch Reisebüro would ship people to the gas chambers or they will ship vacationers to their favorite resort, and that was basically the same office and the same operation, the same procedure, the same billing.

*No difference?*

No difference whatsoever. As a matter of course, everybody would do that job as if it were the most normal thing to do . . . This was a self-financing principle. The SS or the military would confiscate Jewish property and with the proceeds, especially from bank deposits, would pay for transports.

<sup>1</sup> Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Acclaimed Holocaust Film* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 123–26.

*You mean that the Jews themselves had to pay for their death?*

You have to remember one basic principle. There was no budget for destruction. So that is the reason confiscated property had to be used in order to make the payments.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. According to the interview in this reading, how did Walter Stier define his role and responsibilities? What do Stier's responses reveal about what was most important to him?
2. In your opinion, was Stier a perpetrator or a bystander?
3. How does this reading increase your understanding of what was required to carry out the mass killing of Jews? What role did someone like Stier play in the Holocaust?
4. According to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, mass murder on the enormous scale of the Holocaust depended on a bureaucracy. In other words, it required a large number of people to perform specific, individual jobs that, when everyone's work was effectively organized and coordinated, together could achieve a larger goal. Bauman writes that the Nazis' plans for mass murder relied on "those skills and habits, in short, which best grow and thrive in an atmosphere of the office."<sup>3</sup> What point is Bauman making? What does Stier mean when he says, "I was strictly a bureaucrat"? How does Stier's account of his role as a "bureaucrat" support Bauman's argument?
5. In some fields, like medicine and law, professionals take oaths to follow certain ethical principles. Do you think workers in all kinds of jobs have an obligation to consider the ethical consequences of their work and its impact on others? What factors make it possible for people to consider the ethical implications of their jobs? What factors might make it difficult to do so?

<sup>2</sup> Lanzmann, *Shoah*, 134.

<sup>3</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013), 15.

## Reading 9

# Auschwitz

In 1940, the Nazis built a camp called Auschwitz, located about 37 miles west of Kraków, Poland, to imprison Soviet prisoners of war and Polish resisters. In October 1941, the Nazis built a second camp there, known as Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau. With four large crematoria (including gas chambers and ovens to cremate victims' bodies), Auschwitz-Birkenau became the largest of the killing centers built by the Nazis. Jews from all over Europe were sent to Auschwitz to be murdered. Some have said that the system of killing there resembled an industrial production line, but at Auschwitz, the goal of the process was not the production of goods but the deaths of millions of people.

The process began when Jews were ordered out of the trains that brought them to the death camp and made to stand in line for the "selection," in which a Nazi doctor or other official would quickly decide which prisoners could serve as slave laborers and which would be killed right away. Small children and women with children were not considered for labor and automatically selected to be killed. Those not selected for labor were told that they would first undress and go into a special room for a shower and disinfection, after which they would be given food and new clothing. In reality, the shower rooms were gas chambers.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Yad Vashem

**Jewish women and children from Subcarpathian Rus, a region of Ukraine, who have been selected for death at Auschwitz-Birkenau walk toward the gas chambers.**



Some Jews were deliberately kept alive to assist with the killing process. Formed into *Sonderkommandos*, or special detachments, they were the ones who told the new arrivals to undress and then led them to the “shower room.” The *Sonderkommandos* were under strict orders to say nothing to the victims about what really awaited them. After the poison gas was released into the chambers and everyone inside was dead, the *Sonderkommandos* removed the bodies and transported them to specially built crematoria to be burned. Every few months, the *Sonderkommandos* were themselves murdered and replaced by a new group of prisoners.



Yad Vashem

One of the few members of the *Sonderkommandos* who survived Auschwitz described the killing site:

It was surrounded with a fence of sorts, made from piles of logs, two meters high, so you wouldn't notice a thing from the outside. Around the crematorium was an electric fence. There was an entrance that led to a large yard. The yard was about twenty meters long and it led to the building where the furnaces were. We led the victims to the left side, where there were stairs, and then down to the undressing hall. Over the undressing hall [and gas chamber] there was no other floor. There were just four openings through which the SS men threw in the gas in order to kill the people. To keep air from coming in, they would close the lids above the openings. . . . Next to the corner of the undressing hall and the gas chamber, there were two floors—the furnaces downstairs and the living quarters [for the *Sonderkommando*] upstairs. A tall chimney, at least twenty meters high, rose from the roof of the building. The smoke billowed through it. . . . [The building] looked like an ordinary factory. There was nothing unusual about it. A simple building.<sup>1</sup>

**Hungarian Jews arrive at Auschwitz in 1944. More than 400,000 Jews from Hungary were deported to Auschwitz that year.**

Another former *Sonderkommando* member described the killing process, beginning with the undressing hall:

The people walked into the room and once they were all inside they began to undress. . . . From the undressing room the people went down a narrow corridor to the gas chamber. At the entrance, there was a sign: “To the Disinfection Room.” . . . [T]he men waited naked until the women were in the gas chamber, and then they went in. . . . When a large transport with lots of people came, the people were beaten to force them to enter the room. . . . Only when they were already in the gas chamber did they sense that something was out of whack. When the gas chamber filled up, the Germans stood at the door with dogs and continued to pack the people in so that more than were already inside could be gassed. Those who hadn't gone in yet began to shout. The Germans responded with murderous beatings. The

<sup>1</sup> Gideon Greif, *We Wept Without Tears: Testimonies of the Jewish Sonderkommando from Auschwitz* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 95.

people were already naked and defenseless, so they were pushed in by force. . . . The moment the gas chamber filled up the SS man closed the door. Right after that, SS men drove over in a car that carried the emblem of the Red Cross. The cans of gas were taken out of the car, opened, and their contents were thrown into the gas chambers through the opening of the wall. . . . Some time later, the SS doctor determined the death of the people in the chamber by saying "It's all over." Then he drove away in the "Red Cross" car.<sup>2</sup>

As historians and survivors have struggled to describe and understand the nature of death camps like Auschwitz, they have also emphasized the near impossibility of conveying what it was like to people who were not there. Historian Gideon Greif, who edited a book of Sonderkommando accounts, writes:

Many former prisoners explained in their testimonies that everyday life in the Nazi camps was based on a total reversal of all moral standards. Power was associated solely with the license to oppress and torture. Values such as mercy and compassion were regarded as extreme, negative and perverse. . . . It gave rise to an upside-down world or, as the writer and Auschwitz survivor K. Tzetnik put it, "another planet," a place that functioned on different, unknown principles. . . . Auschwitz constituted a reality that had never before existed and had never been known, let alone experienced.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Reading about the details of murder in the Holocaust requires us to slow down in order to try to understand the magnitude of this atrocity. After reading this account, take a few minutes to process your thinking about this history and human behavior by writing in a journal or elsewhere.
2. Scholars often refer to the Nazi killing centers as places of "industrialized murder." What does that mean? How was the method of murder in killing centers like Auschwitz "industrial"?
3. How do the prisoners quoted in this reading describe the process of killing at Auschwitz? Who was involved in the killing? Why do you think the Nazis forced other prisoners (the Sonderkommandos) to assist in the murders? Why were Sonderkommandos killed and replaced every few months?
4. Killing at the camps was different from the mass shootings perpetrated by the Einsatzgruppen. How did the new use of gas chambers change the distance between perpetrator and victim? What effect might this distance have had on the perpetrators?

<sup>2</sup> Greif, *We Wept Without Tears*, 153–55.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53.

## Reading 10

# Choiceless Choices

Nothing in the prisoners' previous experience prepared them for the concentration camps and killing centers. Although some were luckier than others, no inmate had any control over their life. Survivor and author Primo Levi wrote extensively about what life in the camps was like. He described the searing experiences of the Sonderkommandos, or "special detachments" (see Reading 9, "Auschwitz"), Jewish prisoners who were kept alive and forced to help the German guards murder other prisoners. The Sonderkommandos had several tasks: "to maintain order among the new arrivals (often completely unaware of the destiny awaiting them) who were to be sent into the gas chambers, to extract the corpses from the chambers, to pull gold teeth from jaws, to cut women's hair, to sort and classify clothes, shoes, and the contents of the luggage, to transport the bodies to the crematoria and oversee the operation of the ovens, to extract and eliminate the ashes. . . ." <sup>1</sup> The Sonderkommandos in Auschwitz had, at various times, from 700 to 1,000 active members. Despite their "special" jobs, they did not escape the fate of other prisoners. On the contrary, the SS took extra care to prevent any man who had been a Sonderkommando member from surviving and telling.

After the war, some people criticized the Sonderkommandos for their actions in the camps. But Levi concluded that people in the Sonderkommandos were not collaborators but victims. Although they exerted power over other prisoners, Sonderkommando members had no meaningful choices available to them. Scholar Lawrence Langer argues that behavior in the camps "cannot be viewed through the same lens we used to view normal human behavior since the rules of law and morality and the choices available for human decisions were not permitted in these camps for extermination. As important as it is to point out situations of dignity and morality which reinforce our notions of normal behavior, it is all the more important here to try to convey the 'unimaginable,' where surviving in extremity meant an existence that had no relation to our system of time and space and where physical survival under these conditions resulted in 'choiceless choices'!" <sup>2</sup>

1 Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 50.

2 Lawrence L. Langer introduced the idea of "choiceless choice" into Holocaust discourse in an essay called "The Dilemma of Choice in the Deathcamps," *Centerpoint: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 1 (Fall 1980): 53–58.

## Connection Questions

1. What is a "choiceless choice"? How does this concept add to your understanding of the experiences of victims and survivors of the Holocaust?
2. How do Primo Levi and Lawrence Langer believe we should view the actions of the Sonderkommandos?
3. How does Langer's description of the universe of the camps compare to the one offered by Sonia Weitz in her poem "For Yom Ha'Shoah"?

## Reading 11

# A Commandant's View

In 1971, journalist Gitta Sereny interviewed Franz Stangl, who had been the commandant of the death camp at Sobibór and, later, the camp at Treblinka.

*"Would it be true to say that you were used to the liquidations?"*

He thought for a moment. "To tell the truth," he then said, slowly and thoughtfully, "one did become used to it."

*"In days? Weeks? Months?"*

"Months. It was months before I could look one of them in the eye. I repressed it all by trying to create a special place: gardens, new barracks, new kitchens, new everything: barbers, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters. There were hundreds of ways to take one's mind off it; I used them all."

*"Even so, if you felt that strongly, there had to be times, perhaps at night, in the dark, when you couldn't avoid thinking about it."*

"In the end, the only way to deal with it was to drink. I took a large glass of brandy to bed with me each night and I drank."

*"I think you are evading my question."*

"No, I don't mean to; of course, thoughts came. But I forced them away. I made myself concentrate on work, work, and again work."

*"Would it be true to say that you finally felt they weren't really human beings?"*

"When I was on a trip once, years later in Brazil," he said, his face deeply concentrated and obviously reliving the experience, "my train stopped next to a slaughterhouse. The cattle in the pens, hearing the noise of the train, trotted up to the fence and stared at the train. They were very close to my window, one crowding the other, looking at me through that fence. I thought then, 'Look at this; this reminds me of Poland; that's just how the people looked, trustingly, just before they went into the tins . . .'"

*"You said tins," I interrupted. "What do you mean?" But he went on without hearing, or answering me.*

" . . . I couldn't eat tinned meat after that. Those big eyes . . . which looked at me . . . not knowing that in no time at all they'd all be dead." He paused. His face was drawn. At this moment he looked old and worn and sad.

*"So you didn't feel they were human beings?"*

"Cargo," he said tonelessly. "They were cargo." He raised and dropped his hand in a gesture of despair. Both our voices had dropped. It was one of the few times in



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those weeks of talks that he made no effort to cloak his despair, and his hopeless grief allowed a moment of sympathy.

*"When do you think you began to think of them as cargo? The way you spoke earlier, of the day when you first came to Treblinka, the horror you felt seeing the dead bodies everywhere—they weren't 'cargo' to you then, were they?"*

"I think it started the day I first saw the *Totenlager* [death camp] in Treblinka. I remember [Christian Wirth, the man who set up the death camps] standing there next to the pits full of blue-black corpses. It had nothing to do with humanity—it couldn't have; it was a mass—a mass of rotting flesh. Wirth said, 'What shall we do with this garbage?' I think unconsciously that started me thinking of them as cargo."

*"There were so many children; did they ever make you think of your children, of how you would feel in the position of those parents?"*

"No," he said slowly, "I can't say I ever thought that way." He paused. "You see," he then continued, still speaking with this extreme seriousness and obviously intent on finding a new truth within himself, "I rarely saw them as individuals. It was always a huge mass. I sometimes stood on the wall and saw them in the tube. But—how can I explain it—they were naked, packed together, running, being driven with whips like . . ." The sentence trailed off.

. . . *"Could you not have changed that?" I asked. "In your position, could you not have stopped the nakedness, the whips, the horror of the cattle pens?"*

"No, no, no. This was the system. . . . It worked. And because it worked, it was irreversible."<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What was Franz Stangl's role in the death camps? What impact did his role have on him? Why does he say that "the only way to deal with it was to drink"?
2. What words and phrases from Stangl's interview describe how he saw his victims?
3. After the war, Stangl escaped to Brazil. He was captured in 1970, tried in Germany, and convicted. He was interviewed by Sereny after his trial, while he waited in prison for the results of his appeal. How might the passage of time have influenced the way he answered her questions? Might he have answered those questions differently during the war, as the events he describes were taking place?
4. What information does this reading add to help us understand how the Holocaust was possible?
5. How do you respond to Stangl's account? What other questions might you have asked him?

<sup>1</sup> Gitta Sereny, *Into that Darkness: An Examination of Conscience* (London: Pan Books, 1977), 200–02.



## Reading 12

# Identity in the Camps

Primo Levi was an Italian Jew who survived Auschwitz. A scientist, he also went on to write powerful poems and memoirs about his experiences in the camp. In the following passage, he describes his first days as a prisoner in Auschwitz.

In a moment, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so. Nothing belongs to us any more; they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair; if we speak, they would not listen to us, and if they listen, they will not understand. They will even take away our name: and if we want to keep it, we will have to find ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name something of us, of us as we were, still remains.

We know that we will have difficulty in being understood, and this is as it should be. But consider what value, what meaning is enclosed even in the smallest of our daily habits, in the hundred possessions which even the poorest beggar owns: a handkerchief, an old letter, the photo of a cherished person. These things are part of us, almost like limbs of our body; nor is it conceivable that we can be deprived of them in our world, for we immediately find others to substitute for the old ones, other objects which are ours in their personification and evocation of our memories.

Imagine now a man who is deprived of everyone he loves, and at the same time of his house, his habits, his clothes, in short, of everything he possesses: he will be a hollow man, reduced to suffering and needs, forgetful of dignity and restraint, for he who loses all often easily loses himself. He will be a man whose life or death can be lightly decided with no sense of human affinity, in the most fortunate of cases, on the basis of a pure judgment of utility. It is in this way that one can understand the double sense of the term "extermination camp," and it is now clear what we seek to express with the phrase: "to lie on the bottom."

*Häftling* [prisoner]: I have learnt that I am Häftling. My number is 174517; we have been baptized, we will carry the tattoo on our left arm until we die.

The operation was slightly painful and extraordinarily rapid; they placed us all in a row, and one by one, according to the alphabetical order of our names, we filed past a skillful official armed with a sort of pointed tool with a very short needle. It seems that this is the real, true initiation: only by "showing one's number" can one get bread and soup. Several days passed, and not a few cuffs and punches, before we became used to showing our number promptly enough not to disorder the daily operation of food-distribution; weeks and months were needed to learn its sound



LESSON

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in the German language. And for many days, while the habits of freedom still led me to look for the time on my wristwatch, my new name ironically appeared instead, a number tattooed in bluish characters under the skin.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What stands out to you in this account of being imprisoned in Auschwitz? Why is it important to hear the voices of survivors?
2. According to Primo Levi, what happened to the identities of prisoners in the camps? What connections do you see between the themes of identity that are explored in Chapter 1, "The Individual and Society," and Levi's observations about identity in this reading?
3. How did being imprisoned in Auschwitz change the identity of Levi and other prisoners? What is the significance of losing one's name and becoming a number?
4. What might Levi mean by "the double sense of the term 'extermination camp'"? Who or what was exterminated in these camps?

<sup>1</sup> Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 26–28.

## Reading 13

# Seizing Property

Germany created a massive bureaucracy to collect, catalog, and redistribute or sell the possessions the Nazis seized from the people they imprisoned or murdered in ghettos and camps. Historian Lucy Dawidowicz describes the agencies and procedures involved in redistributing the property the Nazis took from the nearly 2 million Jews who lived in the General Government in Poland who were murdered as part of Operation Reinhard between 1941 and 1943:

All cash proceeds in German notes were to be deposited to the Reichsbank account of the SS's Economic and Administrative Main Office (WVHA) . . . Foreign currency . . . , precious metals, jewelry, precious or semiprecious stones, pearls, dental gold, and scrap gold were to be delivered to the WVHA for immediate transmittal to the Reichsbank. All timepieces, alarm clocks, fountain pens, mechanical pencils, hand- or electric-operated shavers, pocket knives, scissors, flashlights, wallets, and purses were to be sent to a WVHA installation for cleaning and price estimation, and then forwarded, for sale, to the combat troops. Men's underwear, men's clothing, including footwear, were first to fill staff needs at the concentration camps and then to be sent, for sale, to the troops as an undertaking of the Ethnic German Welfare Office (VOMI). The proceeds were to go to the Reich. Women's clothing, underwear, and footwear and also children's clothing and underwear were to go to VOMI for cash. Pure silk underwear was assigned to the Ministry of Economy. Eiderdowns, quilts, blankets, dress materials, scarves, umbrellas, canes, thermos bottles, ear muffers, baby carriages, combs, handbags, leather belts, shopping bags, tobacco pipes, sunglasses, mirrors, cutlery, knapsacks, leather and synthetic-material suitcases were to go to VOMI, with specific provisions for payment. Bed linens, sheets, pillowcases, handkerchiefs, washcloths, tablecloths were delivered to VOMI for cash. All kinds of eyeglasses and spectacles were assigned to the Public Health Office for sale. High-class furs, dressed or undressed, were to be delivered to WVHA; cheaper fur goods (neckpieces, hare and rabbit furs) were to be delivered to the Clothing Works of the Waffen-SS at Ravensbrück.<sup>1</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How does Lucy Dawidowicz's list of the types of property the Nazis took from their victims help to illustrate the reality of the lives that were lost?
2. How did Germany benefit materially from the mass murder of Jews, Sinti and Roma, prisoners of war, and others?
3. What does Dawidowicz's description of the bureaucracy that was necessary to process all of the seized possessions suggest about the number of people who must have known about what was happening in the ghettos and camps?

<sup>1</sup> Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 197–98.

## Reading 14

# What Did Jews in the Ghettos Know?

The Nazis did not publish the minutes of the January 1942 conference at Wannsee (see Reading 6, “The Wannsee Conference”). Nor did they announce the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” How, then, did Jews learn about the massacres in distant places and the gassings in the death camps? After all, almost all Jews in occupied Poland were in ghettos in 1942 with little or no access to newspapers or radio broadcasts. (The map on the next page shows the location of these ghettos throughout Europe.) They did, however, hear stories and rumors, often based on reports from the few Jews who managed to escape from deportation trains, shooting sites, and killing centers. They sometimes sent couriers to other ghettos to find out if the rumors were true and to report on events in their own community.

Those couriers were more than messengers who carried a few letters from one city to another. They also smuggled documents, underground newspapers, and even weapons into the sealed ghettos of Poland. Many of them were women, mainly because most Jewish men were circumcised, unlike non-Jews, and so were easily identified as Jews. The women and teenaged girls who acted as couriers were known as *kashariyot*, from the Hebrew word *kesher*, meaning “connection.”<sup>1</sup>

After Gusta Davidson Draenger, a courier in Kraków known by her Polish alias, Justyna, was captured, she wrote her story on pieces of paper smuggled into her prison cell. She described the harrowing trips she and the other couriers made:

For Gentiles, a train trip was an uncomfortable experience, but for a Jew every step outside the barbed wire [of the ghetto walls] was like passing through a hail of bullets. It was like standing at the front line of a battle. The only thing that could save you was chance, chance and inner strength. To develop that toughness, you have to put yourself through a psychological ordeal, from which you would emerge either pure and high-principled or base and depraved.<sup>2</sup>

When they heard about mass shootings or death camps, Jews in ghettos struggled to figure out how to respond. Many Jews who heard these stories simply could not believe them or assumed that the escapees who told them had lost their minds. Most believed that Jews who had disappeared or been arrested had been sent to labor camps, not murdered.

1 Sheryl Ochayon, “Female Couriers During the Holocaust,” Yad Vashem, accessed May 17, 2016, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/newsletter/18/couriers.asp>.

2 Gusta Davidson Draenger, *Justyna's Narrative*, ed. Eli Pfefferkorn and David H. Hirsch, trans. Roslyn Hirsch and David H. Hirsch (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 54.

## Jewish Ghettos in Eastern Europe



Historians estimate that about 1,100 Jewish ghettos were established by the Nazis and their allies in Europe between 1933 and 1945. This map shows the locations of the largest ghettos.

In 2001, Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum interviewed two Jews who lived in the Warsaw ghetto in 1942—Marek Edelman and Simcha Rotem (or Kazik, as he was then known). Berenbaum asked what Edelman, Kazik, and other Jews had known about the fate of Jews who were deported from the ghetto. Were they aware of Treblinka, a killing center only 80 miles from Warsaw that opened in 1942 Berenbaum recounts:

Edelman corrected me. The issue was not Treblinka. It was Chelmno, where gassing began . . . a full eight and one-half months *before* the deportations [from

Warsaw]. Two men escaped from Chelmno, and they reported . . . mobile gas vans killing people with exhaust fumes. Warsaw Judenrat [Jewish Council] leader Adam Czerniakow knew what was happening. But he suspected, or so Edelman was told, that . . . "it was impossible that such a thing could happen in Warsaw" . . .

The “street,” to use Edelman’s terms for the ghetto, was not convinced about gasings at Chelmo. . . . “There is a war,” they were saying. “Germans need a big labor force. Jews are a free labor force. There is no reason to kill them.” In short, logic dictated that Jews be kept alive. But the killing of the Jews was ideological, which overrode the logic of the war.

Nevertheless, I pressed on Treblinka.

Kazik’s recollection was specific. . . . When the deportations [from Warsaw] of July 22 [1942] began, [the Jewish resistance movement] was anxious . . . to learn about Treblinka, the destination of the transports leaving the ghetto. Zygmunt Frydrych, a member of the resistance who had connections with railway men . . . was able to board one of the trains and to head toward Treblinka. He could not enter the camp, but rather reached the Malinka stop, where he proceeded to speak with the railway men. Trains were arriving daily, he was told. This bit of information he already knew. The trains were filled with Jews. That, too, he knew. They arrived in the station filled; they left empty. No food was brought into the camp, and no wells had been dug to provide water. This information was new. . . .

The trains were arriving full, leaving empty, with no provisions made for the passengers . . . who had arrived at their destination. They were being left without food and water. At best, they would be starving. . . . Starvation was passive violence, eliminating those who were unfit without being forced to take any direct action.

“The camp was silent,” Frydrych was also told. Tens of thousands arrive. They enter. There are no provisions for their survival, and they make no noise.

In retrospect, we clearly know how to piece together each bit of information, but Frydrych’s assignment was to learn what had happened to the Jews, to do so directly so that he could be clear . . . in his report to the ghetto about the fates of those who had been forcibly evacuated. Still, he had not seen with his own eyes what was happening. . . .

Early the next morning, as Kazik described it, Frydrych wandered around Malinka and saw a dazed man in his underwear, walking around, yet wearing no clothes.

Edelman added, “It turned out that [the man] was his friend . . . ; his name was Walach.” Walach told of his escape from Treblinka on one of the trains that had brought Jews to the camp. He described in detail the gassing and the killing, so Frydrych had finally gotten his eyewitness report. Still he wanted more.

How was he to know what had happened, to know directly, to convince those who were skeptical back in Warsaw or those so desperate that they would still then deny what was happening?

“Take a deep breath,” Frydrych was told. The smell of burning flesh was unmistakable, undeniable. Frydrych had his confirmation. With this, he could return home to bear witness, to assume the task of convincing colleagues that resettlement was death and Treblinka was an extermination center.<sup>3</sup>

3 Michael Berenbaum, “Some Clarifications on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” in *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. Eric J. Sterling (Syracuse University Press, 2005), 18–20.



## Connection Questions

1. How did Jews in ghettos learn about events in the world outside? What risks did couriers and others take to bring them news?
2. Why was Zygmunt Frydrych so determined to “see with his own eyes” what was happening at Treblinka?
3. What dilemmas did Jews in ghettos face when they learned about mass killings and death camps? Were any meaningful choices available to them?

## Reading 15

# Survival in Hiding



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Many Jews went into hiding to avoid capture by the Nazis and their collaborators. Some concealed only their Jewish identity and continued to live in the open, using false identification papers. Others physically hid in attics, cellars, or other shelters. For most, hiding was a difficult decision that involved extraordinary risks. Many families, like Anne Frank's, attempted to hide together. But often children were sent into hiding first because more people were willing to take in a child than an adult.

Nearly all Jews who went into hiding relied on others to help them, and they often felt that they were totally dependent on their helpers—for food and water, for news from the outside world, and especially for a willingness to continue to keep their secret. Usually, those in hiding gave their helpers money to pay for food and other supplies and to reward the helpers for making such a dangerous commitment. Sometimes Jews were hidden by neighbors or former employees whom they knew, and sometimes they were helped by strangers, but the risks of hiding changed the nature of even the closest and most trusted relationships.

Otto Wolf was 15 years old when his family went into hiding in the forest of a small Moravian town called Tršice, in occupied Czechoslovakia. In the summer of 1942, the Wolf family was ordered to report to a nearby city for deportation, but they chose not to do so. With the help of a family friend named Slávek, who was in love with Otto's older sister Felicitas (known as Lici), they lived in shelters built in the woods near the town. Over the next three years, the family moved from various shelters in the forest to the homes of acquaintances, as each location became dangerous. Otto kept a diary throughout this period.<sup>1</sup>

**September 19, 1942, Saturday, 13th week.** We sleep until ten, and then pray. We have bread with jam for lunch. I and Lici go for water. We are depressed, wondering how things will go. Who will give us sanctuary? [. . .] We have cheese and bread for dinner. They go to the bushes at 8 P.M. and wait for Slávek until half past ten, but in vain. Slávek does not come. We don't know why, and hope that he will come tomorrow.

**July 6, 1943, Tuesday, 55th week.** We return to the forest at half past three. [. . .] Around five-thirty in the afternoon, we hear rustling. I climb a little higher up and see a person. He straightens up and sees me. When he recognizes me, he comes straight to us. It is Pluhař. He promises not to tell anyone, not even his wife. Then he leaves. We theorize extensively, and are really concerned that he went to turn us in. We wait to see what will happen next. The women are down below, and

<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Zapruder, ed., *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers' Diaries of the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 122–29.

Dad and I go into the clearing. We hear more rustling around 8 P.M. and conclude that he is returning with a policeman. What a surprise! He comes with a loaf of bread and a little schmaltz [chicken fat]. He is assuming that we are hungry. What an outstanding deed! Dad gives him his black pants, and he is very happy. He says that he will return in the morning and bring milk and cigarettes. We are overjoyed and thank God that that's the way things turned out. At ten, we go cooking. There is bread as well as laundry soap there. We make caraway soup with bread. The sky is glowering.

In early 1945, the Wolfs moved to a hiding place in the home of Mařenka Zbořilová, who had been their maid before the war. Her husband was uncomfortable that they were there.

**March 4, 1945, Sunday, 141st week.** Mařenka brings us breakfast upstairs, and we eat. Mr. Zbořil is carrying on like a madman: he does not want us here, and so forth. He goes to church, and we venture downstairs. For lunch, we have noodle soup. Mr. Zbořil comes home at noon, raging. He looks like a beast. We therefore think it wiser to retreat upstairs. Mařenka goes out to borrow a newspaper. When she returns, he rips the paper out of her hand and bellows that we had better be gone by morning. He even comes up to the attic to tell us that we must go, everyone in all the huts allegedly knows about us. [. . .] We can't even eat dinner. Tonight, I sleep with my parents. During the night, Mr. Zbořil was out in the yard three times, cursing like a sailor.

On April 18, 1945, Soviet prisoners of war who were helping the German army conducted a raid on the village where the Wolfs were hiding. Searching for resistance fighters, they captured Otto Wolf and 22 other men. Otto's family left the village to hide in the forest. His sister Felicitas immediately took over writing in the diary, believing that Otto would one day return.

**April 20, 1945, Friday.** We wake up at quarter after five and go to a clearing to move our feet a little since it has been dreadfully cold during the night. We have no blankets. We then pray: it is Yom Kippur Qatan. We fast until 1 p.m. At noon, I take the basket and go back to the Oheras' for the most indispensable of indispensable items. When I get there, I find Mrs. Oherová running around as if she had lost her mind. She says that I must leave right away, that the criminal police have already been here twice and that they had left just before I arrived. [. . .] Each one of us has a tiny piece of bread with a little shmaltz for dinner. Before noon, an old woman roaming around the place scared us. We go to sleep at seven.<sup>2</sup>

After liberation, the remaining members of the Wolf family learned that Otto had been killed after a local man revealed that he was Jewish. Otto was tortured by the Gestapo but never revealed where his family was hiding or the names of the people who had helped them. Felicitas eventually emigrated to the United States and donated the diary to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

2 In Zapruder, *Salvaged Pages*, 132, 136, 152, 156.

## Connection Questions

1. How do these diary entries help you understand the challenges of surviving in hiding? What needs did the Wolf family have? How did they find ways to meet their needs?
2. How do Otto and Felicitas describe the intense stress that hiding created for their family? How did they cope?
3. Who were some of the people the Wolfs encountered while in hiding? How do you account for the range of responses to the Wolfs?

## Reading 16

# Difficult Choices in Poland

Throughout Europe, in occupied countries and in those that collaborated with Nazi Germany, people witnessed the persecution and murder of Jews. Some people spoke out or attempted to help Jews. Others helped the Nazi regime carry out its murderous activities. Between these two extremes were a range of responses. Some people did nothing in response to what they saw because they feared punishment for interfering or were preoccupied with their own wartime difficulties. Doing nothing could also indicate tacit approval of the persecution and killing of certain groups. Some people used the opportunities opened up by the war for revenge or personal gain. For instance, some people stole from the homes of victims, and many informed on their neighbors or colleagues for actions forbidden by the Germans, such as hiding Jews. The stories of Karolcia Sapetowa and Zygmunt Klukowski reveal some of the difficult choices people were forced to make in these circumstances.

Karolcia Sapetowa lived in a small village near the Polish city of Wadowice. Before the German occupation, she worked as a maid for a Jewish family, and once the Germans arrived she sheltered two of the family's children in her house. The rest of the family was confined in a ghetto and then deported to a concentration camp. Sapetowa's neighbors grew fearful of the Jewish children's presence in their neighborhood. It was very risky to protect Jews in Poland because the punishment could be death for the family or even the entire town. After the war, Sapetowa recalled:

At the beginning the children would go out of the house, but when relationships got more tense, I had to hide them inside. But even this did not help. Local people knew that I was hiding Jewish children, and threats and difficulties began from all directions—that the children should be handed over to the gestapo, that the whole village might be burned in reprisals, or murdered, etc. The village head was on my side, and this often gave me peace of mind. People who were more aggressive and insistent I appeased with an occasional gift, or paid them off.

But this did not last long. SS men were always looking around, and again protests started until a certain day they told me that we had to remove the children from this world, and they put together a plan to take the children to the barn and there, when they fell asleep, to chop their heads off with an ax.

I was walking around like mad. My elderly father completely stiffened. What to do? What am I to do? The poor miserable children knew about everything, and before going to sleep, they begged us: "Karolciu [sic], don't kill us yet today. Not

yet today." I felt that I was getting numb, and I decided that I would not give up the children at any price.

I got a brilliant idea. I put the children on a cart, and I told everybody that I was taking them out to drown them. I rode around the entire village, and everybody saw me and they believed, and when the night came I returned with the children . . . <sup>1</sup>

Zygmunt Klukowski was a doctor in the Polish city of Szczecbrzeszyn. He was a member of the Polish underground resistance and was hostile to the German occupiers. But when the Germans began to massacre Jews in his city on May 8, 1942, he had to choose whether or not to help the victims. He wrote about these events, and the dilemma he faced, in his diary:

May 8 [1942] Today we survived a terrible day. . . . The Jews are terrified. Women are crying and tearing their clothes. Men went with shovels to dig graves in the cemetery, and the dead were transported there by horse-drawn wagon. Dr. Bolotny, the only Jewish physician in town, came to me begging for help. He could not do the work alone with so many wounded, some critically. I am saddened that I had to refuse to give any help at all. I did this only because of strict orders by the Germans. This was against my own feeling and against a physician's duties. With my eyes I can still see the wagons filled with the dead, one Jewish woman walking along with her dead child in her arms, and many wounded lying on the sidewalks across from my hospital, where I was forbidden to give them any help.

May 9 [1942] I learned that yesterday's search of my hospital was because of a denunciation. A man named Wojtowicz told the Germans that I hid several Jews in the hospital. He even gave names. The way some Poles behave is completely out of line. During the massacre some even laughed. Some went sneaking into Jewish houses from the back, searching for what could be stolen.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How does this reading reveal the different ways that Poles responded to the persecution of Jews under German rule?
2. What dilemmas did Karolcia Sapetowa and Zygmunt Klukowski face? What forces shaped their responses to those dilemmas?
3. What role did fear play in the actions of the Poles described in this reading? What effect can fear have on a person's universe of obligation?

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Jan Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 107–08.

<sup>2</sup> Zygmunt Klukowski, *Diary from the Years of Occupation, 1939–44*, trans. George Klukowski (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 195–97.



## Reading 17

# Speaking Out “In the Face of Murder”

In the ghettos of eastern Europe, Jews heard rumors and firsthand accounts of the concentration camps, mass graves, and killing centers that awaited them after deportation (see Reading 14, “What Did Jews in the Ghettos Know?”). Many non-Jews also knew about Nazi persecution and murder of Jews. Some could see ghettos from their homes. Others witnessed round-ups and watched as trains crowded with Jews headed east day after day. Still others could smell the smoke from the crematoria.

They knew, but few dared to speak out. Zofia Kossak-Szczucka was an exception. She was an unlikely protestor—a well-known author of historical novels, a devout Catholic from a prominent family, and a strong Polish nationalist who was known as an antisemite. And yet in August 1942, after she witnessed mass deportations from the Warsaw ghetto, Kossak-Szczucka composed and secretly published a pamphlet titled “Protest.”<sup>1</sup> She wrote:

In the Warsaw ghetto, behind a wall that is cutting them off from the world, several hundred thousand condemned people await death. No hope of survival exists for them, and no help is coming from anywhere . . .

Just as in the Warsaw ghetto, since six months ago in larger and smaller Polish towns and cities, the same is happening. The total number of Jews killed is over one million, and this number is growing daily. All perish: the rich and poor, the old, the women, the men, the youth, the babies. . . .

The world looks upon this murder more horrible than anything that history has ever seen, and stays silent. The slaughter of millions of defenseless people is being carried out amid general sinister silence . . .

This silence can no longer be tolerated. Whatever the reason for it, it is vile. In the face of murder it is wrong to remain passive. Whoever is silent witnessing murder becomes a partner to the murder. Whoever does not condemn, consents.

Therefore we—Catholics, Poles—raise our voices. Our feeling toward the Jews has not changed. We continue to deem them political, economic, and ideological enemies of Poland. Moreover, we realize that they hate us more than they hate the Germans, and that they make us responsible for their misfortune. Why, and on what basis, remains a mystery of the Jewish soul. Nevertheless this is a decided fact. Awareness of fact, however, does not release us of the duty of damnation of murder.

1 Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 127.

... We have no means actively to counteract the German murders; we cannot help, nor can we rescue anybody. But we protest from the bottom of our hearts filled with pity, indignation, and horror. This protest is demanded of us by God, who does not allow us to kill. It is demanded by our Christian conscience. Every being calling itself human has the right to love his fellow man. The blood of the defenseless victims is calling for revenge. Who does not protest with us, is not a Catholic.<sup>2</sup>

Despite her feeling about Jews, Kossak-Szczucka helped to organize Żegota, a Polish resistance group that found places for Jews to hide from the Nazis, forged identity papers for them, paid off blackmailers, and provided medical assistance to Jews in hiding. Her underground work eventually led to her arrest; she was held in Auschwitz for a year. After her release, she continued to rescue Jews, particularly Jewish children.

### Connection Questions

1. Why do you think Kossak-Szczucka spoke out against the deportation and murder of Jews despite seeing Jews as the "political, economic, and ideological enemies of Poland"? What moved her to risk her life on their behalf?
2. Kossak-Szczucka writes in the pamphlet, "Whoever is silent witnessing murder becomes a partner to the murder. Whoever does not condemn, consents." What is she suggesting about the responsibility of those who witness? Do you think her judgment of other people's responses to what was happening is a fair one?
3. Does a protest like Kossak-Szczucka's make a difference? To whom?

<sup>2</sup> Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, "The Protest," quoted in Nechama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness: Christian Rescue of Jews in Nazi-Occupied Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 111–12.

## Reading 18

# We May Not Have Another Chance

Sonia Weitz was a young teenager in Poland when, in 1941, she and her family were forced to enter the Kraków ghetto. Her mother was taken from the ghetto and sent to the Belzec death camp, where she was killed. In 1943, Sonia, her older sister Blanca, and their father were sent to Płaszów, a slave labor camp south of Kraków.

During this time, Weitz kept a diary and wrote poetry. After the Holocaust, she continued to write as a way to cope with her emotions in the aftermath of the intense trauma she had experienced. In her book *I Promised I Would Tell*, she writes:

Although men and women lived in separate parts of the camp, the two groups did manage to have contact with each other. For example, on one occasion I was sent to the ghetto with a cleanup detail. While there I found a jacket, a precious warm jacket. I smuggled it back to Płaszów to my father. It was comforting to think that the jacket would keep him warm that winter. On another day, I sneaked into my father's barracks on the other side of the barbed wire fence. While I was there, I met a boy who was about my age—14 or 15. The boy was playing a harmonica, an offense punishable by death. My father and I listened to the music, and my father said to me, "You and I never had a chance to dance together" . . . and so we danced. It is such a precious image, a bizarre and beautiful gift.<sup>1</sup>

She also wrote a poem about this moment, which she called "Victory":

I danced with you that one time only.  
How sad you were, how tired, lonely . . .  
You knew that they would "take" you soon . . .  
So when your bunk-mate played a tune  
You whispered: "little one, let us dance,  
We may not have another chance."

To grasp this moment . . . sense the mood;  
Your arms around me felt so good  
The ugly barracks disappeared  
There was no hunger . . . and no fear.  
Oh what a sight, just you and I,  
My lovely father (once big and strong)  
And me, a child . . . condemned to die.

<sup>1</sup> Sonia Schreiber Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., 2012), 35, <https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/i-promised-i-would-tell>.

I thought: how long  
before the song  
must end

There are no tools  
to measure love  
and only fools

Would fail  
to scale  
your victory.<sup>2</sup>

Weitz and her sister were separated from their father soon after this moment. In December 1944, the two sisters were transferred to Auschwitz. They would never see their father again. The sisters were forced to march across Poland from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp in Germany. They were later transferred to two other camps and at last liberated from Mauthausen, in Austria, in May 1945 by US troops.

### Connection Questions

1. Why do you think Sonia Weitz titled her poem "Victory"?
2. How does reading the words of a Holocaust survivor add to your understanding of this history?
3. How can writing help people to process emotions and trauma?

<sup>2</sup> Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell*, 36.

## Reading 19

# A Basic Feeling of Human Dignity

Holocaust scholars believe that the Nazis established more than 40,000 camps and ghettos, where they imprisoned millions of people.<sup>1</sup> Some camps were created solely to serve as killing centers. Others were labor camps, where the prisoners were forced into slave labor. Still others were transit camps, where prisoners were held temporarily before being transferred to other concentration camps or killing centers. While all prisoners in every camp were subject to extreme hunger, deprivation, torture, abuse, and often death, their specific experiences varied widely because of the large number of camps and the variety of purposes they served.

Hanna Lévy-Hass was a Yugoslavian teacher imprisoned in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany. She was held in a part of the camp for “exchange prisoners”—prisoners that the Nazis thought they might be able to exchange for Germans held prisoner by other countries. The exchange prisoners included many children.

Lévy-Hass wrote in her diary about both the loss of human dignity she and others suffered and how they sought to restore it.

November 8, 1944

I would love to feel something pleasant, aesthetic, to awaken nobler, tender feelings, dignified emotions. It's hard. I press my imagination, but nothing comes. Our existence has something cruel, beastly about it. Everything human is reduced to zero. Bonds of friendship remain in place only by force of habit, but intolerance is generally the victor. Memories of beauty are erased; the artistic joys of the past are inconceivable in our current state. The brain is as if paralyzed, the spirit violated.

The moral bruises run so deep that our entire being seems atrophied by them. We have the impression that we're separated from the normal world of the past by a massive, thick wall. Our emotional capacity seems blunt, faded. We no longer even remember our own past. No matter how hard I strive to reconstruct the slightest element of my past life, not a single human memory comes back to me.

We have not died, but we are dead. They've managed to kill in us not only our right to life in the present and for many of us, to be sure, the right to a future life . . . but what is most tragic is that they have succeeded, with their sadistic and depraved methods, in killing in us all sense of a human life in our past, all feeling of normal human beings endowed with a normal past, up to even the very consciousness of having existed at one time as human beings worthy of this name.



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<sup>1</sup> Eric Lichtblau, “The Holocaust Just Got More Shocking,” *New York Times*, March 1, 2013, accessed July 7, 2016.

I turn things over in my mind, I want to . . . and I remember absolutely nothing. It's as though it wasn't me. Everything is expunged from my mind. During the first few weeks, we were still somewhat connected to our past lives internally; we still had a taste for dreams, for memories. But the humiliating and degrading life of the camp has so brutally sliced apart our cohesion that any moral effort to distance ourselves in the slightest from the dark reality around us ends up being grotesque—a useless torment. Our soul is as though caught in a crust that nothing can soften or break . . .

November 18, 1944

In spite of everything, my work with the children continues. . . . I cling desperately to every chance, however slight, to gather the children together to foster in them and in me even the slightest mental sharpness, as well as a basic feeling of human dignity.

It was decided in the camp that Saturdays will be devoted to children's entertainment, mostly of a religious nature. In our barracks, we are also taking advantage of Saturdays to provide the children with some amusement, but adapted mostly to the overall mentality of the people here: oral recitations, singing solo or in chorus, small theatrical productions. Given the total lack of books, I collect and write down the material for these performances based on the children's memories and my own and more often than not, we must resort to improvising texts or poetic lines. A whole throng of known tunes have been recovered thanks to the tireless efforts and concentration of all my students—but the words escape us as if they had been sucked into a pit. So we begin to invent lines, to rhyme, to create texts that affect us deeply, to invoke our distant homeland, glorious and heroic . . .

I carry out this task spontaneously, even instinctively I would say, through an irresistible need in my soul—in the rare moments when I manage to awaken it—and by an irresistible need that I can clearly sense coming from the children's souls. Because they take my lead, they get excited, they want to live, they want to rejoice, it's stronger than them. What heartbreak!<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What conditions are necessary for someone to be able to feel a "basic feeling of human dignity"? How did Germans deprive those imprisoned in the camps of this dignity?
2. What is most striking to you about Lévy-Hass's November 8, 1944, diary entry? What did she mean when she wrote, "We have not died, but we are dead"?
3. What role does memory play in your sense of dignity? What role does it play in your sense of identity? How are identity and dignity related?
4. To what are Saturdays devoted in the camp, according to Lévy-Hass's November 18, 1944, diary entry? How do those activities seek to build or restore a sense of human dignity for some of those imprisoned in Bergen-Belsen? Are the Saturday activities acts of resistance? Why or why not?

2 Hanna Lévy-Hass and Amira Hass, *Diary of Bergen-Belsen*, trans. Sophie Hand (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2009), 85–88.



## Reading 20

# The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Throughout their imprisonment in the ghettos, Jews had found ways to defy and resist Nazi conquerors: they organized mutual aid societies, they continued to practice their religion and educate their children, and they made heroic efforts to document their lives (see “Voices from the Warsaw Ghetto” in Chapter 8). In more than 100 ghettos, Jews formed underground movements with the goal of escaping the ghetto, joining partisan (armed resistance) groups, or organizing a revolt. Prisoners in several camps, including Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Sobibór, mounted revolts. In Vilna, Bialystock, and several other ghettos, Jews resisted deportations with force. The largest armed resistance by Jews against the Nazis occurred in the Warsaw ghetto.

In 1942, about 300,000 Jews had been deported from the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka. Only 55,000 remained, mainly men and women without children because children and the elderly had been deported. Some of the “remnants,” as they called themselves, formed the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa (ZOB), or Jewish Fighting Organization. They reached out to partisan groups and the Polish underground for weapons. They received very few such weapons but were determined to do as much as possible with what they had.

When a new round of deportations began in January 1943, the ZOB struck back, firing on German troops and helping other ghetto residents into prearranged hiding places. Nazi commanders retaliated by executing 1,000 Jews in the main square of the ghetto, but they also briefly stopped the deportations. Surviving Jews made preparations for a major revolt.

April 19, 1943, was the first day of the Jewish holiday of Passover and also the eve of Hitler’s birthday. German General Jürgen Stroop arrived in Warsaw ready to wipe out all opposition within a single day as a birthday gift to his Führer. Stroop had 2,100 soldiers with 13 heavy machine guns, 69 handheld machine guns, 135 submachine guns, several howitzers, and 1,358 rifles. The approximately 750 Jewish resisters had two submachine guns, a handful of rifles, and homemade explosives. But the resisters were able to fight off Stroop’s soldiers for the first few days, and they were able to hold out under siege for four weeks.



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USHMM, courtesy of National Archives and Records

**Jewish resistance fighters who fought against the SS and German army during the Warsaw ghetto uprising between April 19 and May 16, 1943, are captured.**



**Three members of the Jewish Fighting Organization caught after the Warsaw ghetto uprising. They worked in an underground workshop, making hand grenades and other explosives for the uprising.**

Simcha Rotem, a survivor, later told filmmaker Claude Lanzmann: "During the first three days of fighting, the Jews had the upper hand. The Germans retreated at once to the ghetto entrance, carrying dozens of wounded with them."<sup>1</sup> On April 23, Mordechai Anielewicz, commander of the ZOB, wrote:

What happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans fled twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held its position for forty minutes, while the other one lasted—upwards of six hours . . . My life's dream has become a reality. I have seen the Jewish defense of the ghetto in all its strength and glory.<sup>2</sup>

On April 26, Stroop reported to his superiors in Berlin:

The resistance put up by the Jews and bandits could be broken only by relentlessly using all our force and energy by day and night. On 23 April 1943 the Reichsführer SS issued through the higher SS and Police Fuhrer East at Cracow his order to complete the combing out of the Warsaw Ghetto with the greatest severity and relentless tenacity. I therefore decided to destroy the entire Jewish residential area by setting every block on fire, including the blocks of residential buildings near the armament works. . . . Not infrequently, . . . because of the heat and the fear of being burned alive [the Jews] preferred to jump down from the upper stories after having thrown mattresses and other upholstered articles in the street from the burning buildings. With their bones broken, they still tried to crawl across the street into blocks of buildings which had not yet been set on fire or were only partly in flames. Often Jews changed their hiding places during the night, by moving into the ruins of burnt-out buildings, taking refuge there until they were found by our patrols. Their stay in the sewers

also ceased to be pleasant after the first week. Frequently from the street, we could hear loud voices coming from the sewer shafts.<sup>3</sup>

Rotem described what happened once Stroop's men began to destroy the ghetto block by block:

The whole ghetto was ablaze. All life vanished from the streets and houses. We hid in the cellars and bunkers. From there we made our sorties. We went out at night. The Germans were in the ghetto mostly by day, leaving at night. They were afraid to enter the ghetto at night. . . .

I don't think the human tongue can describe the horror we went through in the ghetto. . . . Besides fighting the Germans, we fought hunger and thirst. We had no contact with the outside world; we were completely isolated, cut off from the world. We were in such a state that we could no longer understand the very meaning of why we went on fighting. We thought of attempting a breakout to the Aryan part of Warsaw, outside the ghetto.<sup>4</sup>

1 Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust; The Complete Text of the Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 197–98.

2 Quoted in "Fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto," Yad Vashem, accessed July 8, 2016, [http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/warsaw\\_ghetto\\_testimonies/fighters.asp](http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/warsaw_ghetto_testimonies/fighters.asp).

3 Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 368.

4 Lanzmann, *Shoah*, 197–98.

The Nazis finally put down the uprising on May 16 by destroying the ghetto and sending any survivors to death or labor camps. Anielewicz did not survive. Rotem and Marek Edelman were among the few to escape through the sewers to the “Aryan” part of Warsaw. Others took their own lives before the Nazis could reach them.

More than 70 years later, Holocaust scholar Michael Berenbaum told Edelman and Rotem that he and other historians had concluded that “resistance meant all but certain death for all within the ghetto . . . and the only issue was how to face the reality of impending death.” The conversation continued:

“Professor,” Edelman said with barely concealed disdain that fighters have toward those who have never been in combat, *“Professor, resistance was a choice with how to live in the moments before we died.”*

Death was a given. How to live in the interim was not. . . .<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What motivated members of the ZOB and other Jews in the Warsaw ghetto to take part in the armed resistance? How was their resistance similar to other examples of resistance that you have learned about in Chapters 8 and 9? How was it different?
2. Compare and contrast the accounts of the uprising given by General Jürgen Stroop and survivor Simcha Rotem. What does each reveal? How do they differ? How would our understanding of these events be different if we had only Stroop’s report?
3. Scholar Michael Berenbaum wrote that for those who resisted, “Death was a given.” With such terrible odds against them, why did so many Jews participate in the Warsaw ghetto uprising? Did their resistance matter?

<sup>5</sup> Michael Berenbaum, “Some Clarifications on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” in *Life in the Ghettos During the Holocaust*, ed. Eric J. Sterling (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 22–23.

## Reading 21

# Protests in Germany

By 1942, people living in Germany were increasingly aware of the mass murders in places to the east. As early as January, German Jewish professor Victor Klemperer was recording in his diary rumors of “evacuated Jews” being “shot in Riga [Latvia], in groups,” as they left the train.<sup>1</sup> On March

16, he mentioned Auschwitz for the first time and described it as the “most dreadful concentration camp.”<sup>2</sup> By October he was referring to the camp as “a swift-working slaughterhouse.”<sup>3</sup> Klemperer learned of these Nazi abuses despite living in near isolation, thanks to restrictions that had cost him his job, many of his friends, and even his library card.

Some of the first Germans to speak out against Nazi injustices were a group of students at the University of Munich. In winter 1942, Hans Scholl, his sister Sophie, and their friend Christoph Probst formed a small group known as the White Rose. Hans, a former member of the Hitler Youth (see “Disillusion-

ment in the Hitler Youth” in Chapter 6), had been a soldier on the eastern front, where he witnessed the mistreatment of Jews and learned about deportations. In 1942 and 1943, the White Rose published four leaflets condemning Nazism. The first leaflet stated the group’s purpose: the overthrow of the Nazi government. In the second leaflet, the group confronted the mass murders of Jews:

We do not want to discuss here the question of the Jews, nor do we want in this leaflet to compose a defense or apology. No, only by way of example do we want to cite the fact that since the conquest of Poland three hundred thousand Jews have been murdered in this country in the most bestial way. Here we see the most frightful crime against human dignity, a crime that is unparalleled in the whole of history. For Jews, too, are human beings—no matter what position we take with respect to the Jewish question—and a crime of this dimension has been perpetrated against human beings.<sup>4</sup>

alg-images



**Hans Scholl, Sophie Scholl, and Christoph Probst in June 1942. They were members of the White Rose, a resistance group that condemned Nazism.**

1 Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years, 1933–1941* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 5.

2 *Ibid.*, viii.

3 *Ibid.*, 155.

4 “The Second Leaflet,” The White Rose Society, accessed May 24, 2016, [http://www.whiterosesociety.org/WRS\\_pamphlets\\_second.html](http://www.whiterosesociety.org/WRS_pamphlets_second.html).



In February 1943, the Nazis arrested the Scholls and Probst and brought them to trial. All three were found guilty and were guillotined that same day. Soon afterward, others in the group were also tried, convicted, and beheaded.

In March 1943, German author Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen wrote in his diary:

The Scholls are the first in Germany to have had the courage to witness for the truth. . . . On their gravestones let these words be carved, and let this entire people, which has lived in deepest degradation these last ten years, blush when it reads them: . . . "He who knows how to die can never be enslaved." We will all of us, someday, have to make a pilgrimage to their graves, and stand before them, ashamed.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Nazis were able to destroy the White Rose by executing its members, they could not keep its message from being heard. Helmuth von Moltke, a German aristocrat, smuggled the group's leaflets to friends in neutral countries. They, in turn, sent them to the Allies, who made thousands of copies and then dropped them over German cities. As a lawyer who worked for the German Intelligence Service, von Moltke had been aware of the murders for some time but had taken no action. By late October, he was asking, "May I know this and yet sit at my table in my heated flat and have tea? Don't I thereby become guilty too?"<sup>6</sup>

In February 1943, the same month that the first members of the White Rose were arrested, Nazi leaders began to round up the last Jews still living in Berlin and elsewhere in the Reich, in mass arrests the Gestapo called the "Dejudaization of the Reich Territory Actions."<sup>7</sup> Thousands were arrested and most were married to non-Jews; as part of "mixed" families, they had not been targeted earlier. Most of Germany's Jews had already been deported and murdered, but these new arrests and detentions of about 2,000 Jewish men in intermarriages were the only ones to cause a significant protest.

When the arrested Jews did not return home, their "Aryan" relatives began to search for them and quickly discovered that their loved ones were being held at the Jewish administration building at Rosenstrasse 2-4. Within hours, relatives began to gather there. Most were women—the arrested men's wives. As relatives arrived, they began to loudly demand the release of their husbands. They feared that the men would be deported to killing centers; more than 10,000 other Berlin Jews who were not intermarried were deported to the East during the days of the protest at Rosenstrasse. When the guards refused to let the protesters enter the building, the group vowed to return every day in protest. They kept their word. The situation came to a head on March 5. Charlotte Israel, one of the protesters, recalled:

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Reck-Malleczewen, *Diary of a Man in Despair*, trans. Paul Rubens (New York: Collier Books, 1970), 179–81.

<sup>6</sup> Helmuth James von Moltke, *Letters to Freya, 1939–1945*, ed. and trans. Beate Ruhm von Oppen (New York: Knopf, 1990), 175.

<sup>7</sup> Wolf Gruner, *Widerstand in der Rosenstrasse: die Fabrik-Aktion und die Verfolgung der "Mischehen" 1943* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 2005), 55.

Without warning the guards began setting up machine guns. Then they directed them at the crowd and shouted: "If you don't go now, we'll shoot."

Automatically the movement surged backward. . . . But then for the first time we really hollered. . . .

Then I saw a man in the foreground open his mouth wide—as if to give a command. . . . I couldn't hear it. But then they cleared away. There was silence. Only an occasional swallow could be heard.<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of several days, the Gestapo released all but 25 of the "mixed-marriage" Jews from the Rosenstrasse prison. Those 25 were sent to the labor camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. But they were released within days and then sent to forced labor positions within Germany, where some died, but most survived the war. By releasing the men from detention at Rosenstrasse, the Nazis sought to end the protests and eliminate the appearance of dissent in Germany in order to maintain public support for the regime and its larger plans for the annihilation of European Jews.<sup>9</sup>

By 1944, it was clear to many Germans that their country was losing the war, and opponents of the regime began to take bolder action. Helmuth von Moltke, who had smuggled White Rose leaflets in 1943, gathered a group of prominent Germans for secret meetings at his country estate. There they plotted how to overthrow Hitler. Von Moltke did not support assassination, saying, "Let Hitler live. He and his party must bear responsibility."<sup>10</sup>

But by summer 1944, other members of von Moltke's circle were ready to act. On July 20, a member of the group, Claus von Stauffenberg, tried to kill Hitler and his top aides by placing explosives in their conference room. The plot failed.

Hitler and his staff retaliated by arresting and executing suspected conspirators and cracking down on anyone believed to oppose the regime. About 1,000 people either were executed by the Nazis or committed suicide before they could be arrested in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt.

8 Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton: 1996), 243.

9 Nathan Stoltzfus, *Hitler's Compromises: Coercion and Consensus in Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 260.

10 Quoted in Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 202.



## Connection Questions

1. What examples of protest and resistance does this reading describe? Who were the protesters, and what factors motivated them to speak out or take action?
2. What impact, if any, did these examples of protest and resistance have? Does this reading reveal anything about how much the Nazis cared about public opinion?
3. Compare the choices that might have been open in the 1920s and 1930s to individuals like Hans and Sophie Scholl, Helmuth von Moltke, Claus von Stauffenberg, and the "Aryan" wives of Jewish men with the choices available in the 1940s. What options were no longer possible? What choices were now more risky than they might have been in previous years of Nazi rule?
4. Why might the actions of the White Rose have made other Germans feel "ashamed," as Reck-Malleczewen suggests? Why do you think so few Germans spoke out against the Nazi regime?
5. Helmuth von Moltke asks, "May I know this and yet sit at my table in my heated flat and have tea? Don't I thereby become guilty too?" Why would von Moltke mention his heated flat and cup of tea? What do his words suggest about the responsibility of bystanders?
6. What is the responsibility of those who learn about atrocities taking place today? Is this question more complicated now than it was in the 1940s?

## Reading 22

# Deciding to Act



Watch **Life or Death in the Netherlands**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

In 1942, Marion Pritchard was a graduate student in German-occupied Amsterdam. She was not Jewish, but she observed what was happening to the Jews of her city (see “Waging a Racial War” in Chapter 8). One morning, while riding her bicycle to class, she witnessed a scene outside an orphanage for Jewish children that changed her life:

The Germans were loading the children, who ranged in age from babies to eight-year-olds, on trucks. They were upset, and crying. When they did not move fast enough the Nazis picked them up, by an arm, a leg, the hair, and threw them into the trucks. To watch grown men treat small children that way—I could not believe my eyes. I found myself literally crying with rage. Two women coming down the street tried to interfere physically. The Germans heaved them into the truck, too. I just sat there on my bicycle, and that was the moment I decided that if there was anything I could do to thwart such atrocities, I would do it.

Some of my friends had similar experiences, and about ten of us, including two Jewish students who decided they did not want [to] go into hiding, organized very informally for this purpose. We obtained Aryan identity cards for the Jewish students, who, of course, were taking more of a risk than we were. They knew many people who were looking to . . . “disappear,” as Anne Frank and her family were to do.

We located hiding places, helped people move there, provided food, clothing, and ration cards, and sometimes moral support and relief for the host families. We registered newborn Jewish babies as gentiles . . . and provided medical care when possible.<sup>1</sup>

The decision to rescue Jews often led to other difficult choices. Pritchard described what happened when she agreed to hide a Jewish family:

The father, the two boys, and the baby girl moved in and we managed to survive the next two years, until the end of the war. Friends helped take up the floorboards, under the rug, and build a hiding place in case of raids. . . . One night we had a very narrow escape.

Four Germans, accompanied by a Dutch Nazi policeman came and searched the house. They did not find the hiding place, but they had learned from experience that sometimes it paid to go back to a house they had already searched, because by then the hidden Jews might have come out of the hiding place. The baby had started to cry, so I let the children out. Then the Dutch policeman came back alone. I had a small revolver that a friend had given me, but I had never planned to use it. I felt I had no choice except to kill him. I would do it again, under the same circum-

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Marion Pritchard



**Marion Pritchard holds Erika Polak, one of the children she saved from the Nazis. Working with the Dutch resistance, Pritchard helped to save more than 150 children during World War II.**

<sup>1</sup> Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 29.

stances, but it still bothers me. . . . If anybody had really tried to find out how and where he disappeared, they could have, but the general attitude was that there was one less traitor to worry about. A local undertaker helped dispose of the body, he put it in a coffin with a legitimate body in it. . . .

Was I scared? Of course, the answer is "yes." . . . There were times that the fear got the better of me, and I did not do something that I could have. I would rationalize the inaction, feeling it might endanger others, or that I should not run a risk, because what would happen to the three children I was now responsible for, if something happened to me, but I knew when I was rationalizing.<sup>2</sup>

In reflecting on her choices and those made by others during the war, Pritchard was troubled by a "tendency to divide the general population during the war into a few 'good guys' and the large majority of 'bad guys.' That seems to me to be a dangerous oversimplification . . . The point I want to make is that there were indeed some people who behaved criminally by betraying their Jewish neighbors and thereby sentencing them to death. There were some people who dedicated themselves to actively rescuing as many people as possible. Somewhere in between was the majority, whose actions varied from the minimum decency of at least keeping quiet if they knew where Jews were hidden to finding a way to help when they were asked."<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What dilemmas did Marion Pritchard face? What choices did she make?
2. In his study of rescuers, Ervin Staub states, "Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born. Very often the rescuers made only a small commitment at the start—to hide someone for a day or two. But once they had taken that step, they began to see themselves differently, as someone who helps. What starts as mere willingness becomes intense involvement."<sup>4</sup> What inspired Marion Pritchard's willingness to help Jews? How did that willingness become "intense involvement"? Was Pritchard a hero?
3. What range of behaviors does Pritchard identify in her account? In what ways is Pritchard's own story difficult to categorize? What other stories of individuals or choices have you read that are also hard to categorize?
4. What is "dangerous" about oversimplification, according to Pritchard?

<sup>2</sup> Rittner and Myers, *The Courage to Care*, 29–31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 32–33.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Daniel Goleman, "Great Altruists: Science Ponders Soul of Goodness," *New York Times*, March 5, 1985, accessed May 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/03/05/science/great-altruists-science-ponders-soul-of-goodness.html?pagewanted=all>.

## Reading 23

# Le Chambon: A Village Takes a Stand



Watch **Weapons of the Spirit**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

All over Europe, a small number of individuals tried to save Jews. But in Le Chambon, a village in southern France, the entire community became involved in rescue. Le Chambon was a Protestant village in a predominantly Roman Catholic region, which before and even during the war was a center of tourism. Now its residents turned their tiny mountain village into a hiding place for Jews from every part of Europe. Between 1940 and 1944, Le Chambon and other nearby villages provided refuge for more than 5,000 people fleeing Nazi persecution, about 3,500 of whom were Jews.<sup>1</sup> Magda Trocmé, the wife of the local minister, explained how it began.

Those of us who received the first Jews did what we thought had to be done—nothing more complicated. It was not decided from one day to the next what we would have to do. There were many people in the village who needed help. How could we refuse them? A person doesn't sit down and say I'm going to do this and this and that. We had no time to think. When a problem came, we had to solve it immediately. Sometimes people ask me, "How did you make a decision?" There was no decision to make. The issue was: Do you think we are all brothers or not? Do you think it is unjust to turn in the Jews or not? Then let us try to help!<sup>2</sup>

Almost everyone in the community of 5,000 took part in the effort. Even the children were involved. When a Nazi official tried to organize a Hitler Youth camp in the village, the students told him that they "make no distinction between Jews and non-Jews. It is contrary to Gospel teaching."<sup>3</sup>

The majority of the Jewish refugees were children. The villagers provided them with food, shelter, and fake identity papers. They also made sure that those they sheltered were involved as much as possible in the life of the town, in part to avoid arousing suspicion from other visitors. Whenever residents of Le Chambon learned of an upcoming police raid, they hid those they were protecting in the surrounding countryside. The values of the village were perhaps expressed best by its minister, André Trocmé, who concluded his sermons with the words, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Go practice it."<sup>4</sup>

1 "Le Chambon-sur-Lignon," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified January 2016, accessed May 17, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007518>.

2 Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 102.

3 Philip Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* (London: Michael Joseph, 1979), 102.

4 Ibid., 170.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Jack Lewin

**Jews living at La Guespy children's home in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, with their director, Juliette Usach, 1941. The people of Le Chambon and surrounding villages hid nearly 5,000 people fleeing Nazi occupation.**

In February 1943, the police arrested André Trocmé and his assistant, Edouard Theis. Although they were released after 28 days, the Gestapo continued to monitor their activities. In summer 1943, the Gestapo offered a reward for André Trocmé's capture, forcing him into hiding for ten months. Many knew where he was, but no one turned him in.<sup>5</sup>

Historian Marianne Ruel Robins notes:

The fact that an entire community participated (or watched and said nothing) is remarkable indeed. The silence observed by the people of the Plateau was an important condition for its success, not simply because it sheltered Jews from external threats, but also because it minimized internal dissent. To refrain from talking meant that one would not shame one's neighbor for his lack of participation; it also meant that different rationales for behavior would not conflict with another, be they commitment to pacifism, nationalism, Christian charity or judeophilia. Silence did not necessarily imply that everyone implicitly agreed on the reasons for hiding Jews, but rather that most people came to agree that something ought to be done.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "Le Chambon-sur-Lignon," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

<sup>6</sup> Marianne Ruel Robins, "A Grey Site of Memory: Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and Protestant Exceptionalism on the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon," *Church History* 82, no. 2 (2013).

The rescuers of Le Chambon also drew support from people in other places. There was an extensive network of sympathizers throughout the region who could be called upon for help with communication and organization. Jewish rescue organizations brought Jewish children to the area for protection. Church groups, both Protestant and Catholic, helped fund their efforts. So did the World Council of Churches. Also, a group known as the Cimade led hundreds of Jews across the Alps to safety in Switzerland.

When Magda Trocmé reflected on her choices years after the war, she said, "When people read this story, I want them to know that I tried to open my door. I tried to tell people, 'Come in, come in.' In the end I would like to say to people, 'Remember that in your life there will be lots of circumstances where you will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision on your own, not about other people but about yourself.' I would not say more."<sup>7</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. Draw an identity chart for the people of Le Chambon. What parts of their identity might the people of Le Chambon have drawn upon when they chose to act?
2. What do you think allowed the people of Le Chambon to act successfully and decisively to help Jews even though, as Magda Trocmé says, they had "no time to think"? Compare Trocmé's description of having "no time to think" to that of the professor in "No Time to Think" in Chapter 5. He, too, says he had no time to think, but his response was very different from Trocmé's. How do you account for that difference?
3. In the reading, historian Marianne Ruel Robins mentions other factors that may have influenced individual villagers' choices to participate in the rescue of Jews, besides exceptional moral behavior. What were some of those reasons? Do they make the villagers' actions any less admirable?
4. Elie Wiesel has said, "Let us not forget, after all, that there is always a moment when the moral choice is made. Often because of one story or one book or one person, we are able to make a different choice, a choice for humanity, for life. And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them."<sup>8</sup> Why do you think Wiesel thinks we should remember these stories? What were the stories that might have inspired the people of Le Chambon to act? What stories do you know and value that could inspire you to act in a difficult time?

<sup>7</sup> Rittner and Myers, *The Courage to Care*, 107.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 2.



## Reading 24

# Diplomats and the Choice to Rescue

For every rescuer, from individuals like Marion Pritchard (see Reading 22, “Deciding to Act”) to groups in communities like Le Chambon, France (see Reading 23, “Le Chambon: A Village Takes a Stand”), the decision to help was shaped by a combination of will and circumstances. Diplomats stationed in Europe during World War II sometimes had unique opportunities to rescue vulnerable people from Nazi annihilation. As representatives of their countries’ governments, they had various tools available, including the power to issue or approve the papers Jews needed to enter other countries. Perhaps the most famous diplomat rescuer was Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish special envoy in Hungary, who is credited with saving tens of thousands of Jews by creating false papers and exit visas to allow them to emigrate, as well as establishing safe houses and a ghetto in Hungary to protect Jews from deportation. For Wallenberg and several other diplomats, opportunities to help involved serious risk, yet they chose to break the rules they had been asked to uphold and used their official status to find ways to help Jews and other victims escape.

In 1940, Chiune Sugihara was the Japanese consul in Lithuania. Like other international diplomats, he was based in Kaunas. The city was the capital of independent Lithuania and remained host to other countries’ consulates even after Lithuania fell into Soviet hands in June 1940. Kaunas was also home to a large Jewish population, which grew with the arrival of refugees fleeing persecution in Poland after the German invasion in 1939. As the Nazi army pushed across Europe in summer 1940, the Soviet Union ordered all foreign consulates and embassies to close down and move their diplomats to Moscow. At the same time, stateless Jewish refugees were asking these diplomats to help them get the necessary papers to flee to safety.

Amid this wartime confusion, Sugihara asked the Soviets for permission to stay in Lithuania a month longer. He was a striking exception: other diplomats obeyed the Soviet orders and quickly left. Sugihara received the extension and immediately put it to good use. He had been directed by the Japanese government not to issue any visas to Jews who lacked the proper documentation, but he decided to defy this order. Sugihara worked with a Dutch businessman and diplomat named Jan Zwartendijk, who provided the documents needed for travel to the Dutch-controlled island of Curaçao in the Caribbean. Sugihara then wrote thousands of transit visas that allowed people to travel out of Europe and pass through Japan en route to the island.

Sugihara's wife, Yukiko, was with him in Kaunas. She later described how her husband came to the decision to help refugees escape:

At first my husband refused. "Japan is Germany's ally and we cannot do this," he said. The representatives of the refugees were persistent. "Our lives are in danger," they said; "maybe it will be possible to issue some entry visas." My husband consulted me and afterwards said that he would try and send a telegram to the Japanese Foreign Office, although he was sure that nothing would come out of it. "We will see what happens," he said and sent the telegram. So my husband sent the telegram, but, as we had predicted, the answer was a flat no. "Negative, do not issue visas."

. . . I said to my husband that in spite of everything we must help these people. We could not sleep at night. We kept thinking and thinking what to do. In addition to that, I had a baby, we had three young children. If my husband issues the visas contrary to the Foreign Office instructions, then when we return to Japan, my husband would for sure lose his job. Or even worse, we might be in danger from the Nazis ourselves: they might arrest us, or we might have to flee from them because we had helped Jews. My husband, myself and the children.

We were thinking and thinking what to do. But the representatives of the refugees begged and begged: "Please give us the visas." Anyway, now there are only a few hundred, but thousands of Jews will arrive. My husband and I thought: these are the lives of thousands of human beings.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of 29 days, Sugihara worked around the clock to hand-write the transit visas. He was directly involved in the rescue of more than 3,000 Jews. His actions cost him his job and his pension; for a period after the war, he had to find work as a porter and door-to-door salesman before reestablishing himself in another career.

Selahattin Ülkümen, the Turkish consul on the Greek island of Rhodes, also chose to use his status as a diplomat to rescue Jews threatened with deportation and death. By July 1944, Germany was in control of Rhodes and announced a plan to round up the island's 1,700 Jews and send them to Auschwitz. Ülkümen was deeply distressed to learn of this plan. He had arrived in Rhodes in 1943 and was haunted by what he knew about German actions in Europe. Worried about the fate of Turkish Jews on the island, he decided to protect as many as he could.

When the roundups started, Ülkümen pointed out to the Germans that Turkey had signed a neutrality agreement with Germany; he told them that harming any Turkish citizen would violate this agreement and that the Turkish Jews on Rhodes deserved the full protection of Turkey and should not be detained or deported. He also argued for other Jews to be accepted as Turkish citizens if they were married to someone with a Turkish passport. Finally, Ülkümen announced that his government did not differentiate between Muslims, Jews, or Christians and that it viewed itself as responsible for the safety of all its citizens. Through his persistence, he

<sup>1</sup> Yukiko Sugihara, "USC Shoah Foundation Institute Testimony of Yukiko Sugihara," USC Shoah Foundation (interview video file, 1997), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum collections, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/vha35551>.

secured the release of 40 to 50 Jews who either had Turkish passports or were connected to family who did. Ülkümen's son Mehmet later recalled:

My father, Selahattin Ülkümen, and my mother, Mihrinissa, were witnesses to part of this great tragedy unfolding before their eyes on the island of Rhodes toward the end of World War II. They saw the betrayal of God, the treachery of man, and the fall of humanity. They also saw how man could kill his own neighbor simply because he was different. They also realized how it was possible for people to close their eyes to the truth because of their own hatred, cowardice, or simply their indifference.

My father could not simply stand by and watch; he did not close his eyes, nor did he acquiesce in the hatred or indifference which existed. Instead, with my mother's continuous support, he stood up, not as a hero, not as a diplomat, not as a Muslim, nor a Turk, but rather as a man, answering God's call to protect his brother, a call that would later claim the life of the dearest person to him, my mother.<sup>2</sup>

Although it isn't entirely clear why, German planes later bombed Ülkümen's residence, fatally injuring his pregnant wife and others. (Turkey by then had joined the Allied forces.) Ülkümen's unborn son, Mehmet, was saved by the doctors, but upon hearing the news of the death of Ülkümen's wife, her mother died by suicide.. The majority of Rhodes's 1,700 Jews were sent to Auschwitz, but those Ülkümen was able to save survived the war.

## Connection Questions

1. Because of their positions as diplomats, what opportunities were available to both Sugihara and Ülkümen to help them rescue Jews from the Nazis?
2. What dangers and obstacles did the Sugiharas and Ülkümens consider before making their decisions to help rescue Jews? What finally persuaded them to act? What consequences did they face as a result of their choices?
3. How did Sugihara and Ülkümen define their universes of obligation? What aspects of their identity may have influenced their choice to help?
4. Where is the line between duty and conscience? When should ethical considerations take precedence over diplomats' duties to carry out their governments' policies?
5. What circumstances or personal qualities may lead one person and not another to do the right thing, regardless of the consequences they may face?

<sup>2</sup> Mehmet Ülkümen, "Muslim Hero Saved Jews in Holocaust," speech given at the Geneva Non-Governmental Gathering for the First Annual UN International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, Geneva, Switzerland, January 27, 2006, YouTube, accessed May 20, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RTMoa0zgLAY>.

## Reading 25

# Denmark: A Nation Takes Action

By 1943, anyone in German-occupied Europe who wanted to know was aware of what was happening to Jews. For a variety of reasons—including fear, self-interest, passivity, and even sympathy with German policies—few in occupied nations acted to protect Jewish residents. Many government officials in the occupied countries turned over documents that allowed Germans to quickly identify Jews, and local police often helped Germans find and arrest those Jews. The exception was in Denmark.

After the Germans conquered Denmark in 1940, Hitler had allowed the prewar government to stay in power and kept only a token military force in the nation. German policy regarded Danes as members of a superior race, similar to Germans. Nevertheless, the Danes deeply resented the occupation of their country, and some fought back with acts of sabotage, riots, and strikes. In summer 1943, the Nazis decided to retaliate. They limited the power of King Christian X, forced the prewar Danish government to resign, and disbanded the Danish army. They also ordered the arrest of a number of Christian and Jewish leaders.

A few weeks later, the Danes learned that the Germans were planning to deport the nation's entire Jewish population. That news came from Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, a German diplomat in charge of overseeing shipping between Germany and Denmark. In the early 1930s, Duckwitz was drawn to the Nazis' ultranationalist propaganda and joined the party. However, as Hitler's violent intentions came to light, he became disillusioned with the party. And when the Germans took over Denmark, he sympathized with the hardships and challenges of the Danish people. When Duckwitz learned in late September of secret orders to prepare four cargo ships for transporting Danish Jews to Poland, he immediately passed on the information to leaders in the Danish resistance. They, in turn, informed the Danish people.

When leaders of the Danish church were told of the Germans' plan, they sent an open letter to German officials. On Sunday, October 3, 1943, that letter was read from every pulpit in the nation.

Wherever Jews are persecuted because of their religion or race it is the duty of the Christian Church to protest against such persecution, because it is in conflict with the sense of justice inherent in the Danish people and inseparable from our Danish Christian culture through the centuries. True to this spirit and according to the text of the Act of the Constitution all Danish citizens enjoy equal rights and responsibilities before the Law and full religious freedom. We understand religious freedom as

the right to exercise our worship of God as our vocation and conscience bid us and in such a manner that race and religion per se can never justify that a person be deprived of his rights, freedom or property. Our different religious views notwithstanding, we shall fight for the cause that our Jewish brothers and sisters may preserve the same freedom which we ourselves evaluate more highly than life itself.<sup>1</sup>

The Danes responded in the following weeks with a plan to keep Jews from being deported by hiding them until they could be evacuated to nearby Sweden, a neutral nation. It was a collective effort—organized and paid for by hundreds of private citizens, Jews and Christians alike. Fishermen, many of whom could not afford to lose even one day's pay, were paid to transport the Jews to Sweden. The money was also used for bribes. It was no accident that all German patrol ships in the area were docked for repairs on the night of the rescue.

Not every Jew was able to leave. Some were captured as they waited for a boat, while others were picked up at sea. But, in the end, the Nazis were able to deport only 580 of Denmark's 7,000 Jews to the Terezín camp-ghetto (see Reading 26, "Terezín: A Site for Deception"), and the Danish government constantly inquired about their status. No Danish Jews were shipped to a death camp, and with the exception of a few who died of illness or old age in Terezín, all of them returned safely to Denmark after the war.

## Connection Questions

1. What does the reading reveal about who was involved in the effort to save the Jews of Denmark? What motivated this effort?
2. What principles and convictions are expressed in the open letter that leaders of the Danish church sent to German officials? Why might this letter have been influential?
3. Why was the Danes' effort to rescue Danish Jews so successful?

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Leo Goldberger, ed., *The Rescue of the Danish Jews: Moral Courage Under Stress* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 6–7.

## Reading 26

# Terezín: A Site for Deception

As the war progressed, the Nazis wanted to deport more and more Jews to the east. To do so, they decided to convert Terezín, a former prison north of Prague, Czechoslovakia, into a transit ghetto-to-camp. Terezín, or

Theresienstadt, as the Germans called it, was unique in that it did not fit the definition of a concentration camp or a ghetto; it was used both as a way-station for those being sent to other camps farther east and as a place to house specific populations of Jews, including decorated veterans of World War I, the elderly, and prominent individuals whose disappearance might be widely reported or who would be unfit for forced labor. The inmates included a number of famous poets, painters, musicians, composers, and scholars. Partly for this

reason, Terezín had an unusual number of cultural activities for adults and children; some artwork and music created there survived the war.

In 1944, in response to pressure from Denmark after the deportation of Danish Jews to Terezín, the Nazis invited the Danish Red Cross, the Danish foreign minister, and the International Red Cross to inspect the camp. Before the visitors arrived, prisoners were ordered to pave streets, repair housing, build a playground, and even plant 1,200 rosebushes. The Nazis also deported 7,500 young men and women to Auschwitz to make the camp less crowded and to substantiate their claim that it was a ghetto for old people. In this way, Terezín became a propaganda tool to hide what was really happening to the Jews.

Arnošt Lustig, who was an inmate at Terezín at the time, later recalled:

For the Red Cross visit, even the SS Scharfuhrer [squad leader] Rudolph Haindl was nice to the children for the benefit of the camera . . . he posed for the camera, smiling, and not insisting that he be greeted by Jews from a distance of three steps, as he had demanded just the day before. The town was improved for the purpose of filming and also for the visit by the Danish Red Cross—a request that had been supported by the Swedish government. Jewish women even had to brush the pavement with their hair brushes to help get things ready. The city square, where once there had been only military parades, was transformed into a garden with a musical stage. The city temporarily took on the appearance of a seaside resort. Stores were filled with relatively nice things (not, of course, actually for sale—such

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***Facades for the International Commission*** by Bedřich Fritta, a prisoner at Terezín, depicts the “beautification” of the ghetto-camp undertaken by the SS before the Red Cross visit in 1944.



things were forbidden for prisoners). For a few days there was even a bank that looked like a real bank. The apartments of prominent Jews were furnished with new furniture. So that nothing would be spoiled the Nazis sent their own people as spies to mingle with Jews on the street, disguised as Jews, complete with yellow stars. Kitchens were painted. All types of cultural events were permitted: opera, concerts and operettas such as *Die Fledermaus* were performed . . . Nurses were given white uniforms . . .<sup>1</sup>

The visitors were suitably impressed, and the reports after the visit were positive. Pleased with their success, the Nazis decided to create a “documentary-style” film about Terezín in summer 1944. Kurt Gerron, an inmate who had been a well-known actor and director, was put in charge of the filming of *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*, but he was not allowed to edit the film or even view the developed footage. Two weeks after the movie was completed, he and other participants were sent to Auschwitz. Gerron was gassed soon after his arrival.



**Margit Koretzova painted *Flowers and Butterfly* while imprisoned at the Terezín ghetto-camp. She died at age ten.**

Despite the facade, Terezín was no paradise. During World War II, more than 140,000 Jews passed through Terezín. About 33,000 died there from malnutrition, disease, and overwork. Many of the rest were shipped to death camps. Fewer than 17,000 survived the war. After the war, some Germans claimed that all they knew about the concentration camps was what they had heard about Terezín.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the Nazis want to create a “model” ghetto-camp? Why did they want outsiders to see it? What changes did they make to Terezín in preparation for the visit from the International Red Cross?
2. Based on what you read about Denmark in Reading 25, “Denmark: A Nation Takes Action,” why do you think the Danish government was able to persuade the Nazis to let its representatives tour Terezín?
3. What impact did Terezín have on those who saw and heard about it?

1 *Seeing Through “Paradise”: Artists and the Terezín Concentration Camp*, exhibition catalog (Boston, MA: Massachusetts College of Art, 1991), 20–21.

2 Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 303.

## Reading 27

# A Transport to Bergen-Belsen



LESSON

Teach **Responding**  
to the Stories of  
**Holocaust Survivors**  
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As the German army suffered defeats at the hands of the Soviets in 1944, its forces fell back toward Germany. As they retreated, they also evacuated camps throughout eastern Europe, moving their captives to camps farther west. One destination was the Bergen-Belsen camp in northern Germany. Originally a camp primarily for prisoners of war, Bergen-Belsen was expanded in March 1944 to hold tens of thousands of prisoners moved from concentration camps in eastern Europe. German civilians witnessed the prisoners' arrival.

One of the prisoners who arrived in Bergen-Belsen in 1944 was Hanna Lévy-Hass, a Jewish woman from Yugoslavia (see Reading 19, "A Basic Feeling of Human Dignity"). A few weeks after her arrival, she described the journey in her diary.

September 8, 1944

. . . I am incapable at this time of recalling anything from the past except what we lived through most recently: the trip they made us take to get here. What an ordeal! Two weeks in cattle cars. Holed up, forty to sixty per car, men, women, the elderly, children. Hermetically sealed, with no air, no lights, no water, no food . . . we were suffocating in a tiny space saturated with filth, fumes, sweat, stench . . . ravaged by thirst and lack of space.

Only twice during those two weeks did they give us a little bit of water and some tins of food. We were lucky when we crossed Czechoslovakia. The Czech Red Cross treated us to nice warm soup. We almost fainted with delight . . . then they gave us some water. You had to see the expressions carved on the Czechs' faces as they watched us fighting over every drop. Who knows what they read in our eyes and on our faces!

And the distressing trip continued. The Germans refused to open the train cars for even the most basic needs . . .

. . . I didn't notice one single time, not once, the slightest indication of a human reaction, the slightest hint of difficulty or discomfort in these soldiers who were under orders to behave as they did. Nothing! Their faces didn't reveal anything human . . .

At night, under a torrent of gunfire and machine-gun fire, the train crossed regions under attack by partisans or airplanes. There was one air raid siren after another. The Germans would get out of the train and take shelter wherever they could while we remained, piled up in the box cars, very visible on the tracks, panic-stricken.

Inside, in the dark, the children screamed at the top of their voices, the women wailed, the men argued over space. Exasperated, driven mad, people didn't cease quarreling and telling each other to go to hell. We had an insane desire to stretch out and we couldn't. In these deplorable conditions, there was no question of falling asleep, since even breathing was impossible . . . It was Hell.

And when we finally arrived at our destination, not having the slightest idea where we were, and when we climbed out of our holes . . . it was like wild animals emerging from the shadows of death. Then the sad procession began: faded and yellow like the ground, starved, exhausted, pale, fever in our eyes, we dragged ourselves like worn-out rags along an endless road that led to the Bergen-Belsen Camp, dirty and sweating under the weight of what remained of our miserable possessions.

Frightening human shadows—mute, slow—moved along an unknown road. The inhabitants of the villages—women in coquettish summer dresses, passers-by on bikes or on foot, all fresh and properly dressed and groomed, with the calm that comes from a normal life engraved on their faces—would stop for a moment and look at us with curiosity . . . and with absolute indifference! Without ever letting go of their rifles, numerous soldiers walked along the columns we formed, doling out their club blows to whoever dared turn around or fall slightly behind.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What words does Hanna Lévy-Hass use to describe herself and the others arriving at Bergen-Belsen?
2. What words does she use to describe the soldiers in charge of the trains and camp? How does she describe the German civilians in the villages near the camp? How did they respond to her and the other prisoners?
3. Lévy-Haas says that the soldiers did not have "the slightest indication of a human reaction." What do you think she means? What might a "human reaction" have looked like in these circumstances?

<sup>1</sup> Hanna Lévy-Hass and Amira Hass, *Diary of Bergen-Belsen*, trans. Sophie Hand (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2009), 60–62.

## Reading 28

# What Did the World Know?

What did the rest of the world know about the Nazis' policies of annihilation during World War II and the terror and mass murder spreading across Europe as a result?

By summer 1941, British intelligence agents were listening in on classified German radio transmissions that described systematic mass murders in Lithuania, Latvia, and later Ukraine. News also came from the Soviets. On August 14, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill summarized the news in a broadcast to the public:

As [Hitler's] armies advance, whole districts are being exterminated. Scores of thousands, literally scores of thousands of executions in cold blood, are being perpetrated by the German police troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil. . . . And this is but the beginning. Famine and pestilence have yet to follow in the bloody ruts of Hitler's tanks.

We are in the presence of a crime without a name.<sup>1</sup>

Additional confirmation came in spring 1942, when American journalists stranded in Germany when the United States entered the war were exchanged for Axis nationals stranded in the United States. Historian Deborah Lipstadt describes the articles these journalists wrote after they returned home:

Glen Stadler, UP [United Press] correspondent in Germany, described what had happened to Jews in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania as an "open hunt." Some of the reporters estimated that more than 400,000 had already been killed by Hitler's "new order," including "upward of 100,000 [Jews who] met death in the Baltic states alone, and more than that . . . have been executed in Western Russia."

Joseph Grigg, also of the UP, reported: "One of the biggest slaughters occurred in Latvia in the summer of 1941 when, responsible Nazi sources admitted, 56,000 men, women and children were killed by S.S. troops and Latvian irregulars."<sup>2</sup>

News also filtered out of occupied Europe through government channels. Following Poland's defeat by Germany, Polish leaders had established a temporary "government in exile" in Britain. In June 1942, they received a secret report from occupied Poland confirming that the Germans were

1 "Prime Minister Winston Churchill's Broadcast to the World," August 24, 1941, British Library of Information, available from Ibiblio, accessed June 19, 2016, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410824a.html>.

2 Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 159–60.

murdering Jews throughout the country. Newspapers around the world carried the story.

The London *Times* reported:

MASSACRE OF JEWS—OVER 1,000,000 DEAD SINCE THE WAR BEGAN

The Montreal *Daily Star* stated:

“NAZI SLAUGHTERHOUSE” —GERMANS MASSACRE MILLION JEWS IN EXTERMINATION DRIVE

The *Los Angeles Times* wrote:

NAZIS KILL MILLION JEWS, SAYS SURVEY

The New York *Journal American* declared:

JEWS LIST THEIR DEAD AT A MILLION<sup>3</sup>

Recalling atrocity stories during World War I that later proved to be false, American journalists tended to be cautious about claims of mass murder. So even though they reported the news, their editors rarely featured those stories on the front page and were careful not to emphasize claims of atrocities. Nevertheless, on December 13, 1942, Edward R. Murrow of the CBS radio network bluntly reported, “What is happening is this. Millions of human beings, most of them Jews, are being gathered up with ruthless efficiency and murdered. The phrase ‘concentration camps’ is obsolete, as out of date as economic sanctions or non-recognition. It is now possible only to speak of extermination camps.”<sup>4</sup>

Four days later, the governments of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union issued a joint declaration that “the German authorities, not content with denying to persons of the Jewish race in all the territories over which their barbarous rule has been extended the most elementary human rights, are now carrying into effect Hitler’s oft-repeated intention to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe.” The declaration stated, in part:

Jews are being transported in conditions of appalling horror and brutality to Eastern Europe. In Poland, which has been made the principal Nazi slaughterhouse, the ghettos established by the German invaders are being systematically emptied of all Jews except a few highly skilled workers required for war industries. None of those taken away are ever heard of again. The able-bodied are slowly worked to death in labor camps. The infirm are left to die of exposure and starvation or are deliberately massacred in mass executions. The number of victims of these bloody cruelties is reckoned in many hundreds of thousands of entirely innocent men, women, and children.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief*, 163–65.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Bliss, Jr., ed., *In Search of Light: The Broadcasts of Edward R. Murrow, 1938–1961* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 56–57.

<sup>5</sup> “Declaration Regarding German Atrocities Against Jews in German Occupied Countries,” issued Dec. 17, 1942, *The United Nations Review* III, no. 1 (1943): 1.

The Allies believed that the best way to help the Jews was to win the war. They warned Nazi leaders that they would be held responsible for their crimes once Germany was defeated.

### Connection Questions

1. What information was available in Britain and the United States about massacres in the Baltic states and the USSR in the early 1940s? What information was available about the concentration camps and death camps in 1942?
2. Why did Churchill call the mass murders of 1941 "a crime without a name"? Why might it make a difference to have a name for a crime?
3. Why would articles about mass murder have failed to make the front pages of newspapers around the world? What forces might shape or determine the selection of the stories that newspapers feature today?



## Reading 29

# The Difference between Knowing and Believing

Jan Karski was one of the first people to share eyewitness accounts of ghettos and camps with Allied leaders outside Europe. Karski, a Catholic Pole who had worked for the Polish diplomatic service before the war, was a courier for the Polish resistance. In fall 1942, he was ordered to travel to London and give a report on the situation in occupied Poland to Polish government-in-exile leaders and other high-level officials, including the British foreign minister. Afterward, Karski traveled to the United States, where he met with President Franklin Roosevelt. To prepare his report, Karski met secretly with representatives of two large Jewish organizations. He recalled:

Both men were in despair. They were fully aware that the deportations from the Warsaw ghetto as well as from other ghettos in Poland would lead to the extermination of the Jewish people. . . . They both stressed that unless dramatic, extraordinary measures were immediately put into effect, the entire Jewish people would perish. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The two men also insisted that Karski should see for himself what was happening to Jews because his own eyewitness account would make his report more convincing.

As a result, before Karski traveled to London and the United States, he was smuggled into and out of the Warsaw ghetto and the Izbica transit camp. But even his firsthand accounts of what he witnessed there were not able to persuade many of the officials he later met:

It is not true, as sometimes has been written, that I was the first one to present to the West the whole truth of the fate of the Jews in occupied Poland. There were others. . . . The tragedy was that these testimonies were not believed. Not because of ill will, but simply because the facts were beyond the human imagination.

I experienced this myself. When I was in the United States and told [Supreme Court] Justice Felix Frankfurter the story of the Polish Jews, he said, at the end of our conversation, "I cannot believe you." We were with the Polish ambassador to the U.S., Jan Ciechanowski. Hearing the justice's comments, he was indignant. "Lieutenant Karski is on an official mission. My government's authority stands behind him. You cannot say to his face that he is lying." Frankfurter's answer was, "I am not saying that he is lying. I only said that I cannot believe him, and there is a difference."<sup>2</sup>

Among those who dismissed the reports of German atrocities as war



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1 Quoted in Maciej Kozłowski, "The Mission that Failed: A Polish Courier Who Tried to Help the Jews," in *My Brother's Keeper: Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, ed. Antony Polonsky (London: Routledge, 1990), 83.

2 Quoted in Kozłowski, "The Mission that Failed," 87–88.

propaganda was W. A. Visser 't Hooft, a Dutch theologian and the first secretary of the World Council of Churches. He changed his mind only after hearing an eyewitness account.

From that moment onward I had no longer any excuse for shutting my mind to information which could find no place in my view of the world and humanity. And this meant I had to do something about it.

A considerable number of people in Germany, in occupied countries, in the allied and neutral countries heard stories about mass killings. But the information was ineffective because it seemed too improbable.<sup>3</sup>

Visser 't Hooft believed that "people could find no place in their consciousness for such an unimaginable horror and that they did not have the imagination, together with the courage, to face it. It is possible to live in a twilight between knowing and not knowing. It is possible to refuse full realization of facts because one feels unable to face the implications of these facts."<sup>4</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What does this reading reveal about how leaders reacted to reports of mass killings by the Nazis? How did Frankfurter and Visser 't Hooft describe their ability to comprehend what was happening?
2. What does this reading suggest about some of the barriers to taking action when leaders heard reports of mass killings and death camps? What phrases or sentences from the reading highlight these barriers?
3. Jan Karski said, "The tragedy was that these testimonies were not believed. Not because of ill will, but simply because the facts were beyond the human imagination." What is "imagination"? How is the term used in this reading? What is the role of imagination in responding to atrocities like the Holocaust? What is the role of imagination in shaping an individual's universe of obligation?
4. Psychiatrist Robert J. Lifton coined the term "psychic numbing" to refer to "a general category of diminished capacity or inclination to feel." Writing about the "numbing of everyday life," he explains, "We are bombarded by all kinds of images and influences and we have to fend some of them off if we're to take in any of them, or to carry through just our ordinary day's work. . . ."<sup>5</sup> What is psychic numbing? Do you find the term useful in connection with this reading? Under what conditions might psychic numbing be helpful?
5. Think about a time when you may have experienced psychic numbing—when you may have felt numb to disturbing information and images. Why do you think you felt numb to this information? What could have been done, if anything, to get you to pay thoughtful attention to this information? When can it be harmful?

3 W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *Memoirs*, 2nd ed. (London: World Council of Churches, 1987), 166.

4 Ibid., 165.

5 "Evil, the Self, and Survival: Conversation with Robert Jay Lifton, M.D., Psychiatrist and Author," Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, November 2, 1999, accessed June 19, 2016, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Lifton/lifton-con3.html>.

## Reading 30

# A Report on the Murder of Jews

On January 13, 1944, US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, a close friend and advisor of President Franklin Roosevelt and one of the top Jewish officials in the administration, received a memo prepared by a Treasury Department lawyer, Josiah DuBois, and signed by his superior, Randolph Paul, that discussed the murder of the Jews in Europe. That memo stated, in part:

This [United States] Government has for a long time maintained that its policy is to work out programs to save those Jews of Europe who could be saved. I am convinced on the basis of the information which is available to me that certain officials in our State Department, which is charged with carrying out this policy, have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and willful failure to act, but even of willful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler. . . .

Unless remedial steps of a drastic nature are taken, and taken immediately, I am certain that no effective action will be taken by this Government to prevent the complete extermination of the Jews in German-controlled Europe, and that this Government will have to share for all time responsibility for this extermination.<sup>1</sup>

The full memo described actions by the State Department both before and during the war that had routinely kept Jewish refugees from entering the United States by demanding documents that were unobtainable in wartime and blocking any effort to “cut red tape” to allow more refugees into the nation (see “World Responses to Kristallnacht” in Chapter 7). The State Department had also discouraged religious and human rights groups that needed government support for their efforts to aid and rescue Jews.

Morgenthau condensed the report and sent it to Roosevelt. Then he brought a specific plan to the president at a private Sunday-morning meeting: he wanted the United States to actively pursue rescue. He did not have to remind the president that 1944 was an election year and the behavior of the State Department might be seen by voters as scandalous. A few days later, the president set up the War Refugee Board, under Morgenthau’s supervision. The War Refugee Board provided crucial support and coordination to Jewish organizations, diplomats, and resistance groups across Europe that were trying to rescue Jews and help those in concentration camps. In all, it saved about 200,000 Jews from annihilation.<sup>2</sup> John Pehle, Jr., the man who

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Richard Breitman and Alan Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 189.

<sup>2</sup> “The War Refugee Board,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified January 2016, accessed May 20, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/outreach/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007749>.

headed the board, later said that “what we did was little enough. It was late. Little and late, I would say.”<sup>3</sup>

Another action considered by the United States and the Allies in 1944 in response to the murder of Jews was to bomb the railroads leading to Auschwitz in order to interrupt the transport of Jews to that death camp. Jewish organizations in America urged President Roosevelt to order the bombing. The military and some civilian leaders, however, strongly advised against doing so, arguing that it would divert resources needed to fight the Nazis, and that defeating Germany in the war as quickly and decisively as possible was still the best course of action. In the end, the United States and the Allies decided against bombing the railroad lines.

### Connection Questions

1. What factors played a role in convincing President Roosevelt to establish the War Refugee Board? What difference did the War Refugee Board make?
2. The memo by Josiah DuBois and Randolph Paul stated, “Unless remedial steps of a drastic nature are taken, and taken immediately . . . this Government will have to share for all time responsibility for this extermination.” Do you agree with this statement? Would the US government, after learning about the mass murders committed by the Nazis, have become complicit in the Nazis’ crimes if it failed to act? Do you think the United States did enough?
3. How do you evaluate the American government’s decision not to bomb the railroad lines to Auschwitz?
4. What could or should a government do when it receives information about mass murder in another country? What limits, obstacles, or other existing concerns might keep a nation from acting?

<sup>3</sup> “The War Refugee Board,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

## Reading 31

# The Death Marches

By the winter of 1944 to 1945, German defeat in World War II was all but certain. Soviet forces were approaching from the east, pushing through Poland toward Berlin, while American and British soldiers had liberated Paris and Brussels in late summer 1944 and were advancing toward the Rhine River in western Germany. Although Nazi leaders and the German population were increasingly aware that the war was lost, the disintegrating Reich continued to murder its victims, including hundreds of thousands of Jews.

As Allied soldiers approached Auschwitz and other concentration and labor camps in the early months of 1945, German authorities feverishly worked to cover up the evidence of their mass killings of Europe's Jews by burning documents, buildings, and corpses. The Nazis moved thousands of prisoners, both Jews and non-Jews, from near the eastern battlefield to camps inside the Reich, away from the advancing enemy troops, where the healthier prisoners could continue to be used as slave labor for the German war effort.<sup>1</sup> The Germans called this process "forced evacuations." To the victims, they became known as death marches. Forced into open rail cars or marched by foot through mud and snow, sick and exhausted prisoners were moved from camp to camp, exposed to the elements and the violent behavior of SS guards, and shot if they fell behind. One survivor recalled:

No food had touched my lips all the day before. Others "snatched" whatever they could—grass, snails, potatoes left in the fields—but my throat was blocked, although my stomach was growling with hunger. I had nothing else, so I ate snow. My whole body shook with cold. . . .

The march went on for days and nights and nobody knew where we were being taken. If they want to mow us down somewhere with machine guns, why don't they do it immediately? Or, perhaps there are special installations for that? Perhaps they are taking us again to some new installations for killing by gas? But it seemed that there was no need for any of that; at least two-thirds of the prisoners were already lying lifeless by the roadside. In a few days all of us would suffer the same fate.<sup>2</sup>

The prisoner evacuations were chaotic. Once they left a camp, the columns of prisoners were under the total control of the German guards, but the guards themselves were often disorganized and gave confusing directions to prisoners about where to go. Also, the guards brought with them little food or supplies for the sick, wounded, and starving men and women as they walked through towns and villages on their way back to labor camps

1 Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), 83.

2 Beny Wirtzberg, *MiGai HaHariga LeShaar HaGai* [From the valley of death to the valley gateway] (Ramat Gan: Massada, 1967), 72–73, quoted in Blatman, *The Death Marches*, 87.

in Germany. Historian Daniel Blatman writes, "This state of havoc generated the conditions that transformed the evacuations into gruesome death marches. The aimless wandering that often characterized the evacuation gradually took on an absurd and threatening aspect."<sup>3</sup>

Often, faced with the chaos of the end of the war and the approach of the Allied forces, SS guards simply murdered all of their prisoners. Local Germans, coming face to face with "enemies" they hated and feared at a time when their world was crumbling around them, joined in massacres of Jews and other prisoners being marched through their towns and villages.<sup>4</sup> In all, some 250,000 prisoners of the concentration camp system were killed on death marches.

One of those prisoners was Hungarian Jewish poet Miklós Radnóti. Radnóti wrote poems during his imprisonment and evacuation from a forced labor camp in Yugoslavia. He was shot to death during a death march in November 1944 and buried in a mass grave. When the grave was exhumed months later, several poems were discovered in his clothing, including one now known as "Forced March."

A fool he is who, collapsed, rises and walks again,  
Ankles and knees moving alone, like wandering pain,  
Yet he, as if wings uplifted him, sets out on his way,  
And in vain the ditch calls him back, who dare not stay.  
And if asked why not, he might answer — without leaving his path —  
That his wife was awaiting him, and a saner, more beautiful death.  
Poor fool! He's out of his mind: now, for a long time,  
Only scorched winds have whirled over the houses at home,  
The wall has been laid low, the plum-tree is broken there,  
The night of our native hearth flutters, thick with fear.  
Oh if only I could believe that everything of worth  
Were not just in my heart — that I still had home on earth;  
If only I had! As before, jam made fresh from the plum  
Would cool on the old verandah, in peace the bee would hum  
And an end-of summer stillness would bask in the drowsy garden,  
Naked among the leaves would sway the fruit-trees' burden,  
And Fanni would be waiting, blonde, by russet hedgerow,  
As the slow morning painted slow shadow over shadow —  
Could it perhaps still be? The moon tonight's so round!  
Don't leave me friend, shout at me: I'll get up off the ground!<sup>5</sup>

3 Blatman, *The Death Marches*, 86.

4 Ibid., 420–23.

5 Miklós Radnóti, *Forced March: Selected Poems*, trans. Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri, rev. ed. (London: Enitharmon, 2003), 85.



## Connection Questions

1. Experiences like those described in this reading are disturbing and painful to encounter. They prompt us to ask questions, many of which may be unanswerable. What questions do these events raise for you about history and human behavior?
2. Why did the Nazis decide to evacuate the camps in the east and move prisoners west to camps inside Germany? What conditions made these evacuations especially brutal?
3. How does Miklós Radnóti's poem add to your understanding of this history?
4. How might the death marches have changed who was a participant in or bystander to Nazi brutality and killing?

## Reading 32

# As the War Ended



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Watch **The Red Army Enters Majdanek**  
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By spring 1945, the Americans and the British were entering Germany from the west as the Soviet army continued to advance from the east. A few days later, US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe, and US Generals Omar Bradley and George S. Patton, Jr., toured Ohrdruf, one of the first concentration camps the Americans liberated. Eisenhower later wrote, “I have never felt able to describe my emotional reactions when I first came face to face with indisputable evidence of Nazi brutality and ruthless disregard of every shred of decency. Up to that time I had known about it only generally or through secondary sources. I am certain, however, that I have never at any other time experienced an equal sense of shock.”<sup>1</sup> He went on:

I visited every nook and cranny of the camp because I felt it my duty to be in a position from then on to testify at first hand about these things in case there ever grew up at home the belief or the assumption that “the stories of Nazi brutality were just propaganda.” . . . I not only did so but as soon as I returned to . . . headquarters that evening, I sent communications to both Washington and London, urging the two governments to send instantly to Germany a random group of newspaper editors and representative groups from the national legislatures. I felt that the evidence should be immediately placed before the American and British publics in a fashion to leave no room for cynical doubt.<sup>2</sup>

Eisenhower insisted that Germans from a nearby town visit the camp to see what had been done in their name. In addition, he required American soldiers to tour the camp, so that they could see the evil they were fighting.

### Connection Questions

1. How does Eisenhower describe his reaction to seeing the concentration camps toward the end of the war?
2. Who did Eisenhower require to tour the concentration camps? Why was it important to him that each of those groups witnessed the camps?
3. How do the ideas in Reading 29, “The Difference between Knowing and Believing,” help you understand Eisenhower’s response to touring the camps, even though he had been previously informed of mass murder at the camps? How do the ideas in that reading help you understand why it was so important for the public to have evidence of Nazi atrocities?

1 Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 408–09.

2 Ibid., 409.

## Chapter 9 Analysis and Reflection

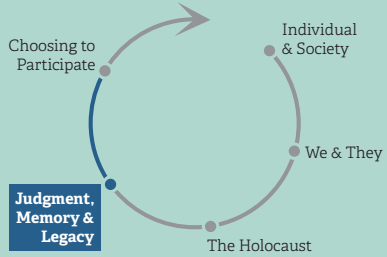
1. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, said about the Holocaust: "The experience lies beyond our reach. Ask any survivor, he will tell you: he who has not lived the event will never know it. And he who went through it will not reveal it, not really, not entirely. Between his memory and its reflection there is a wall and it cannot be pierced."<sup>1</sup>

How does the quote connect to your experience of studying this history so far? What things do you think are most important to share or to remember? What questions do you still have?

2. What is the meaning of human dignity? How did the Nazis seek to deprive their victims of basic human dignity? What examples did you find in this chapter of people attempting to preserve or reclaim human dignity?
3. In writing about the changes in Germany in the 1930s, historian Richard Evans points to the process of "rationalization and moral editing" that many Germans must have undertaken in order to justify the ways they participated in Nazi society (see "Can a National Socialist Have Jewish Friends?" in Chapter 6). In this chapter, what examples did you find of individuals engaging in "rationalization and moral editing" to explain their actions during the Holocaust?
4. What did it mean to resist the Nazis? What kinds of resistance were people (both Jews and non-Jews) able to carry out, according to the readings in this chapter? What made each form of resistance possible? How did the possibilities of resistance change as the war progressed?
5. What circumstances and opportunities made acts of rescue possible? What did it take for individuals to be willing and ready to take advantage of those opportunities and circumstances?
6. This chapter describes a range of choices that individuals made during the Holocaust. Were such choices available to all people who were part of this history? How does thinking about that range of choices give us insight into the particular history of the Holocaust? In what ways does thinking about the range of choices illuminate universal characteristics of human behavior?

<sup>1</sup> Elie Wiesel and Elliot Lefkowitz, *Dimensions of the Holocaust: Lectures at Northwestern University*, 2nd ed. (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1990), 7.

## Chapter 10



# Judgment and Justice

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## Overview

No procedures existed in international law for the Allies to use to seek justice for the destruction caused by World War II and the slaughter of millions of civilians by Nazi Germany. This chapter describes the Allies' efforts to hold Germany accountable and how those efforts raised important questions about how to restore order in the world, compensate victims, and prevent such violent chaos in the future. These efforts also raised questions about the very nature of justice itself.



### Essential Questions

- What is justice? Can justice be achieved after mass murder on the enormous scale of the Holocaust? How can we know whether or not justice has been achieved?
- What role, if any, do vengeance and forgiveness play in seeking justice after mass atrocities?
- What is the purpose of a trial? What role might trials play in achieving justice after war and genocide?
- Are there standards of right and wrong that are more important than the laws of any country?

What kind of justice is possible after mass murder on a scale never seen before? Legal scholar Martha Minow writes that seeking justice for war and mass atrocities like the Holocaust requires balance between two opposite responses: vengeance and forgiveness. Vengeance, in response to war and genocide, means revenge or retaliation against those who instigated the war and committed atrocities; it is usually carried out by the victims themselves, and it can perpetuate a cycle of violence. Forgiveness has the power to break the cycle of violence, but it often leaves the perpetrators unpunished and it may often be too much to ask of the victims of heinous crimes.<sup>1</sup> This chapter begins with an exploration of the impulse for revenge and ends with a reflection on whether forgiveness was or is possible after the Holocaust.

A spectrum of justice lies between the two poles of vengeance and forgiveness. Trials, like those held by the Allies in Nuremberg after the war, occupy one place on that spectrum. At a trial, a court with established rules and procedures is given the responsibility of responding to a crime, rather than the victims themselves. Evidence is presented to prove or disprove that defendants committed the crimes of which they are accused, and they have an opportunity to defend themselves. Perpetrators are punished, but only after their guilt has been proven. Minow writes, “Resisting revenge and the continuation of war, the [Nuremberg] tribunal turned to principle, fact-finding, and public debate.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet the Allies’ decision to establish a tribunal, or court, to prosecute the leaders of Nazi Germany led to additional dilemmas: Who, exactly, should be brought to trial? What crimes, specifically, should the defendants be charged with? Can defendants be held responsible for breaking international laws that did not yet exist when they broke them? After a war, can the victorious nations be trusted to conduct fair trials of the leaders of the nations they fought against and defeated?

The readings in this chapter show how the Allies, through the Nuremberg trials, responded to these dilemmas as they sought justice for World War II and the Holocaust. By 1949, more than 200 German officials, including the highest-ranking surviving Nazi leaders, members of the *Einsatzgruppen* mobile killing units, and dozens of physicians and industrialists, were brought to trial for their roles in the war and in the mass murder of civilians. The vast majority were convicted and sentenced to death or prison sentences of varying lengths.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 10–21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



The trials and the judgments that were reached after the war in courtrooms in Nuremberg, as well as in Tokyo and other cities, gave life to long-standing international laws and inspired new ones over time. Each of the trials was intended to give expression to the horror of the crimes and the pain of the victims. The trial proceedings were made public so that people could not only learn but also judge for themselves what had happened and whether justice was done. The evidence was recorded, and every judgment included the reasoning it was based on, so that the truth could be established and tested and retested over time.

US Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer has observed that when we learn about the Holocaust, “We think: There are no words. There is no compensating deed. There can be no vengeance. Nor is any happy ending possible.” But Nuremberg “reminds us of those human aspirations that remain a cause for optimism. It reminds us that after the barbarism came a call for reasoned justice.”<sup>3</sup> Studying this call and evaluating its successes and its difficulties allows us to reflect more deeply on the complexity of human behavior, the possibility of judging today the choices made by people in past generations, and the existence of universal standards of right and wrong.

3 Stephen Breyer, “Crimes Against Humanity: Nuremberg, 1946,” *New York University Law Review* 71, no. 5 (November 1996): 1164.

## Reading 1

# Revenge



LESSON

Teach **Exploring  
Justice after the  
Holocaust**

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As the war drew to an end, Germans feared the anger of their enemies. Even as the Allies discussed the best way to hold German leaders formally accountable, victorious troops were expressing that anger and taking revenge on German civilians. On April 26, 1945, Soviet troops entered Berlin. Jacob Kronika, a Danish journalist, watched as Soviet soldiers ransacked the city and terrorized its inhabitants. In this dangerous atmosphere, Kronika took refuge in a bomb shelter inside the Danish legation (a building that houses the offices of foreign diplomats). On May 3, a Soviet officer stormed into that shelter. Kronika recalled:

The Russian commissar [officer] spoke fluent German. He took a great interest in the German . . . employees in the Danish bunker. The younger women, who had been kept out of sight by curtains, empty cardboard boxes, and so on, were told to come out and take a spot on the mats with the men and children. I was requested to sit next to the commissar; I had no idea what his intentions were. He gave a fairly long speech:

"If I were to ask you individually, I am certain that not one person among you would be a Nazi. We know this already; now that the German army has been defeated, all Germans are suddenly opponents of Hitler and have always been anti-Nazi. . . . I am a Russian, a Communist, and a Jew. I have seen the German atrocities in my country. My mother and father were murdered by the SS, because they were Jews; my wife and my two children have disappeared; my home is destroyed. Millions of people have gone through what I and my family have gone through. Germany has murdered, raped, plundered, and destroyed. . . . What do you think we'd like to do now that we have defeated the German armed forces?"

The Germans crouched down, trembling with fear. The commissar stared at Carl's oldest son, a twelve-year-old boy. [Carl was the caretaker of the Danish legation.]

"Stand up!" he ordered. "How old are you?"

"Twelve years old," answered the boy.

"That's around the age my boy would have been today. The SS criminals took him from me . . ."

His hand disappeared under his uniform. He brought out a revolver and pointed it at the boy. Carl leaped up; his wife grabbed for the boy.

"But commissar, this boy cannot be made responsible . . ." I began. The tension was dreadful.



Yad Vashem

**After American soldiers liberated Dachau in 1945, an inmate of the camp attacks a German soldier.**

"No, no, ladies and gentlemen," continued the commissar. "I won't shoot. But you must admit, I'd have reason enough. So many people are crying out for revenge . . ."

He put the revolver back under his uniform.<sup>1</sup>

In Kronika's story, the Soviet commissar chose not to shoot. Often, however, victorious troops did choose to take revenge on the German civilian population.

## Connection Questions

1. Why does the commissar have the impulse to shoot the 12-year-old son of a German caretaker? Why does Jacob Kronika say that "this boy cannot be made responsible"?
2. What is the difference between justice and acts of revenge? Can revenge ever be part of justice?
3. What might be the consequences of widespread actions that are viewed as revenge? What would it take to prevent or limit such acts?
4. In what ways does this reading suggest what kinds of challenges were facing the world in the aftermath of the Holocaust?

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Kronika, "Cry for Vengeance," trans. Dean Krouk, in *Travels in the Reich, 1933–1945: Foreign Authors Report from Germany*, ed. Oliver Lubrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 347–48.

## Reading 2

# How to Bring Nazi Leaders to Justice?



LESSON

Teach **Exploring  
Justice after the  
Holocaust**

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Long before the war was over, the Allied powers began to discuss how to hold Germany accountable for its wartime actions. They agreed that Germany had violated several internationally accepted rules of war. These rules had evolved as a result of wars and international conferences in the 1800s and early 1900s, and breaking them was considered a “war crime.” Germany’s war crimes included its aggressive invasion of other countries, its violation of international treaties, and its inhumane treatment of prisoners of war, hostages, and civilians. As early as 1941, both US President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill of Great Britain had warned Nazi leaders that punishment for their murder of prisoners of war, hostages, and civilians would be a major goal of the war. On January 13, 1942, representatives of nine German-occupied nations signed a declaration, approved by the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, that not only those who ordered war crimes but also those who participated in them would be punished. A year and a half later, the Allies set up a commission to collect evidence of war crimes that could later be used in a trial.

During the war, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin discussed what it meant to hold Nazi leaders accountable and how they should be punished. Stalin suggested executing as many as 50,000 members of the German army. Churchill was in favor of executing high-ranking Nazi officials without a trial. There was debate about the question in the United States, as well. In September 1944, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., prepared a proposal for Roosevelt that stated what he believed should happen to a defeated Germany. In it, he wrote:

A list of the arch criminals of this war whose obvious guilt has generally been recognized by the United Nations [Allies] shall be drawn up as soon as possible and transmitted to the appropriate military authorities. The military authorities shall be instructed with respect to all persons who are on such list as follows:

(a) They shall be apprehended as soon as possible and identified as soon as possible after apprehension, the identification to be approved by an officer of the General rank.

(b) When such identification has been made, the person identified shall be put to death forthwith by firing squads made up of soldiers of the United Nations [Allies].<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bradley Smith, *The American Road to Nuremberg: The Documentary Record, 1944–1945* (Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1982), 28.

In response to Morgenthau's proposal, Secretary of War Henry Stimson argued for a very different plan. Stimson wrote to Roosevelt:

The method of dealing with [Nazi war criminals] requires careful thought and a well-defined procedure. Such a procedure must embody, in my judgment, at least the rudimentary aspects of the Bill of Rights, namely, notification to the accused of the charge, the right to be heard and, within reasonable limits, to call witnesses to his defense. I do not mean to favor the institution of state trials or to introduce any cumbersome machinery but the very punishment of these men in a dignified manner consistent with the advance of civilization, will have the greatest effect upon posterity. Furthermore, it will afford the most effective way of making a record of the Nazi system of terrorism and of the effort of the Allies to terminate the system and prevent its recurrence. I am disposed to believe that at least as to the chief Nazi officials, we should participate in an international tribunal [court] constituted to try them. They should be charged with offenses against the laws of the Rules of War in that they have committed wanton and unnecessary cruelties in conjunction with the prosecution of the war.<sup>2</sup>

Stimson's views were accepted, and the United States became committed to the idea of an international trial.

If the Nazi leaders were to be put on trial, however, the question was: What specific laws had they broken? The Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907, signed by the United States and all major European powers, had defined several laws of war, including how prisoners and populations of occupied countries must be treated, but there had been no agreement on punishment for those who violated such laws, and no procedures for conducting international trials had been established. In addition, the various rules provided in military manuals and treaties dealt only with crimes committed as part of a war. They did not deal with what Winston Churchill, in describing the mass murder of Jews and others, had called "the crime with no name," to which Raphael Lemkin was later to give the name *genocide* (see "Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention" in Chapter 11). In 1915, during World War I, the Allies had, in response to the massacre of the Armenians (see "Genocide under the Cover of War" in Chapter 3), formally accused Turkey's leaders of a "crime against humanity and civilization." Those leaders were to be tried in Turkey, but they had fled the country, so they had been tried without being present. Even though three Turkish leaders were found guilty and sentenced to death, they continued to live abroad and their trials never received much attention.

By the end of 1944, the United States was moving forward with plans for a trial after the war. A proposal sent by the War Department to President Roosevelt suggested that the German leaders should be tried for a "conspiracy to achieve domination of other nations and peoples by deliberate violation of the rules of war as they have been accepted and adhered to by the nations of the world, and violations of treaties and international conventions and customs, and mass extermination of peoples."<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt

<sup>2</sup> Smith, *The American Road to Nuremberg*, 30, 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

brought the proposal to a conference with Churchill and Stalin at Yalta, in Crimea, a peninsula on the Black Sea in Ukraine. Stalin, seeing the propaganda value that public trials would provide, enthusiastically supported the plan. The British, though worried that such trials would simply be seen as “victor’s justice,” eventually agreed, as well.

### Connection Questions

1. What are “war crimes”? What war crimes did the Allies accuse Germany of committing?
2. What options did the Allies consider for holding Germany accountable after the war? What arguments could be made for each option?
3. Why did US Secretary of War Henry Stimson argue in favor of holding international war crimes trials after the Allies defeated Germany? What did he think would be the advantages of having such trials?
4. What challenges did the Allies face once they agreed to bring Nazi leaders to trial?



## Reading 3

# Establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal

In June 1945, after Germany's surrender, delegations from the four Allied powers—the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union—met in London to write a charter. It established an international tribunal, or court, that would be responsible for conducting trials of Germany's leaders. Article 6 of the charter described the jurisdiction, or authority, of the tribunal:

The following acts, or any of them, are crimes coming within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal for which there shall be individual responsibility:

- (a) **CRIMES AGAINST PEACE:** namely, planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of any of the foregoing;
- (b) **WAR CRIMES:** namely, violations of the laws or customs of war. Such violations shall include, but not be limited to . . . murder, ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity;
- (c) **CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY:** namely, murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.

Leaders, organizers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit any of the foregoing crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any persons in execution of such plan.

Article 8 of the charter discussed a possible defense argument that might be used by the accused:

The fact that the Defendant acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior shall not free him from responsibility, but may be considered in mitigation of punishment if the Tribunal determines that justice so requires.

Article 9 declared that organizations could also be declared to be criminal, meaning that any member of that organization could be brought to trial for war crimes.<sup>1</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> "Nuremberg Trial Proceedings Vol. 1: Charter of the International Military Tribunal," The Avalon Project (Yale Law School), accessed June 23, 2016, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/imtconst.asp>.



**Nuremberg in August 1945, showing the effects of Allied bombing during World War II. The first Nuremberg trial began in this city three months later.**

Most individuals who had participated in the war and mass killings would never be brought to trial. Instead of trying to prosecute everyone who played a part, the tribunal decided to focus on the most prominent Nazi leaders. But among the top Nazis, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels,

the minister of propaganda, had died by suicide shortly before the Nazi surrender. Heinrich Himmler, the head of the SS who was in charge of implementing the "Final Solution," had tried to escape, but after being discovered and captured, he too killed himself. In October 1945, the tribunal identified and indicted, or charged, 24 of the remaining top Nazi officials for one or more of the crimes described in Article 6 of the charter. One of the 24, Robert Ley, the head of the Nazi labor movement, died by suicide before the trials began. And the tribunal ruled that Gustav Krupp, an industrialist, was too ill to stand trial. The remaining individuals were imprisoned in Nuremberg, the

German city in which the trials were to be held, and were given the opportunity to choose their own lawyers and to prepare their defense.

Even as the Allies were preparing the charter for the tribunal, some people argued that it was unfair to indict Nazi leaders for violating laws that had not yet existed at the time they committed the acts of which they were accused. This is called *ex post facto* ("after the fact") justice, and it is specifically forbidden by the US Constitution and the laws of many other nations. The Hague conferences that had defined rules of war in 1899 and 1907 had not imposed any limitation on a nation's right to go to war. Therefore, to indict an individual German leader after World War II for waging a war of aggression (Article 6a) could be seen as *ex post facto*.

The accusation, under Article 6, that German leaders had engaged in a conspiracy to commit crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity also created some disagreement. In a conspiracy, a group of people plot together to commit a crime. As in many legal systems, Article 6 of the Nuremberg tribunal charter states that each member of a conspiracy is responsible for any crimes committed by any of its members. The American delegation at Nuremberg believed that some German actions that had been taken before the war began could be defined as a conspiracy: they argued that the invasions of Poland and other countries and the murder of segments of their populations had been planned by Nazi government leaders long before those actions had taken place. But in international law, conspiracy had never been designated as a crime. Therefore, this accusation too could be seen as *ex post facto*.

Charles Wyzanski, a respected federal judge in the United States, was among those who, in the early months of the trial, worried that if the tri-

bunal allowed ex post facto justice, it would set a dangerous precedent. By the end of the trial, however, as the enormity of the Nazi crimes became evident, Wyzanski wrote that he had changed his mind and believed that the Nuremberg tribunal had the opportunity to set a very different and valuable precedent. He felt that it would become a principle of international law that those who committed crimes against humanity would be brought to justice by the international community:

[T]he reasons for my change are that the failure of the international community to attach the criminal label to such universally condemned conduct would be more likely to promote arbitrary and discriminatory action by public authorities and to undermine confidence in the proposition that international agreements are made to be kept, than the failure of the international community to abide by the maxim that no act can be punished as a crime unless there was in advance of the act a specific criminal law. . . .<sup>2</sup>

In 1950, the first General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously approved the legal principles established at Nuremberg. The four crimes named in the indictments, as well as the doctrine of individual responsibility in Article 8, became an established part of international law.

## Connection Questions

1. What crimes did the Allies decide to charge Nazi leaders with at the Nuremberg tribunal? Why did some people object to the Allies' plans?
2. Which specific indictments in Article 6 do you think would be most difficult to prove?
3. What does Article 8 say about the responsibility of individuals who committed a crime while following orders of their government or a superior? Do you think this is a fair response to those who defended themselves from accusations of wrongdoing during the war by claiming that they were following orders?
4. What does it mean to define an organization as criminal? Is it fair to define individuals as criminals just because of their membership in a particular organization?
5. Why did Judge Wyzanski initially believe that the Nuremberg trials set a "dangerous" precedent? Why did he change his mind by the end of the trials?

2 Charles E. Wyzanski, "Nuremberg in Retrospect," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1946, accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1946/12/nuremberg-in-retrospect/306493/>.

## Reading 4

# The First Trial at Nuremberg



Watch **Monsters and Men: The Nazis at Nuremberg**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

In November 1945, the trials began in Nuremberg. Robert Jackson, a justice of the US Supreme Court and a former US attorney general, was the chief American prosecutor for the trials. He had been appointed by Harry Truman, who had become president when Franklin Roosevelt died that April. Jackson opened the court proceedings with these words:

The privilege of opening the first trial in history for crimes against the peace of the world imposes a grave responsibility. The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant, and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated. That four great nations flushed with victory and stung with injury stay the hand of vengeance and voluntarily submit their captive enemies to the judgment of law is one of the most significant tributes that Power has ever paid to Reason. . . .

What these men stand for we will patiently and temperately disclose. We will give you undeniable proofs of incredible events. . . . They took from the German people all those dignities and freedoms that we hold natural and inalienable rights in every human being. The people were compensated by inflaming and gratifying hatreds toward those who were marked as "scapegoats." Against their opponents, including Jews, Catholics, and free labor, the Nazis directed such a campaign of arrogance, brutality and annihilation as the world has never witnessed since the pre-Christian ages. They excited the German ambition to be a "master race," which of course implies serfdom for others. They led their people on a mad gamble for domination. They diverted social energies and resources to the creation of what they thought to be an invincible war machine. They overran their neighbors. To sustain the "master race" in its war-making, they enslaved millions of human beings and brought them into Germany, where these hapless creatures now wander as "displaced persons."

Jackson went on to say,

Unfortunately, the nature of these crimes is such that both prosecution and judgment must be by victor nations over vanquished forces. The worldwide scope of the aggressions carried out by these men has left but few real neutrals. . . . We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow. To pass these defendants a poisoned chalice is to put it to our own lips as well. We must summon such detachment and intellectual integrity to our task that this Trial will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity's aspirations to do justice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Jackson, "Opening Statement before the International Military Tribunal," The Robert H. Jackson Center, accessed June 7, 2016, <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/opening-statement-before-the-international-military-tribunal/>.

Of the 22 men brought to trial, five were military leaders and the rest were prominent German government or Nazi Party officials. The following is a list of the defendants and their positions in the Third Reich.

## Defendants in the First Nuremberg Trial

<b>Martin Bormann</b> (tried in absentia)	Head of the Nazi Party Chancellery and Hitler's private secretary
<b>Karl Dönitz</b>	Supreme Commander of the Navy (1943) and German Chancellor after Hitler's suicide
<b>Hans Frank</b>	Governor General of Occupied Poland
<b>Wilhelm Frick</b>	Minister of the Interior
<b>Hans Fritzsche</b>	Head of the Radio Division of the Propaganda Ministry
<b>Walther Funk</b>	President of the Reichsbank (1939) and Reich Minister for Economic Affairs
<b>Hermann Göring</b>	Reich Marshall and Hitler's chosen successor
<b>Rudolf Hess</b>	Deputy Führer
<b>Alfred Jodl</b>	Chief of the Operations Staff of the Armed Forces
<b>Ernst Kaltenbrunner</b>	Chief of the Security Police and the Reich Security Main Office
<b>Wilhelm Keitel</b>	Chief of the High Command of the Armed Forces
<b>Konstantin von Neurath</b>	Minister of Foreign Affairs (1932–1938) and Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia [regions of Czechoslovakia controlled by Germany] (1939–1943)
<b>Franz von Papen</b>	Chancellor of Germany (1932)
<b>Erich Raeder</b>	Supreme Commander of the Navy (1928–1943)
<b>Joachim von Ribbentrop</b>	Reich Foreign Minister (1938–1945)
<b>Alfred Rosenberg</b>	Party Philosopher and Reich Minister for the Eastern Occupied Area
<b>Fritz Sauckel</b>	Plenipotentiary [Ambassador] for Labor Allocation
<b>Hjalmar Schacht</b>	Minister of Economics and President of the Reichsbank (1933–1939)
<b>Baldur von Schirach</b>	Führer [Leader] of the Hitler Youth
<b>Arthur Seyss-Inquart</b>	Minister of the Interior and Reich Governor of Austria
<b>Albert Speer</b>	Minister of Armaments and War Production
<b>Julius Streicher</b>	A Nazi Party leader and the founder of <i>Der Stürmer</i> , an antisemitic newspaper



The Nuremberg trials addressed all German crimes associated with World War II together, not the Holocaust in particular. In fact, at the time, the concept of the Holocaust as we now know it did not yet exist. The targeting for annihilation of specific groups, such as Jews, Sinti, and Roma, was not yet recognized as the specific crime of *genocide* (see “Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention” in Chapter 11); therefore, what we now

understand as the Holocaust was addressed at Nuremberg more broadly under the category of “crimes against humanity,” which included inhumane acts against any civilians.

As the trials proceeded, much of the evidence of the defendants’ crimes was provided by the Germans themselves, who had kept careful records of the war and the mass murders of Jews and others in reports, which were read in court. The final transcript of the proceedings was about 17,000 pages long. In

addition, films of the killing centers and camps made by their Allied liberators were shown to the defendants and the tribunal judges.

All of the defendants, however, submitted pleas of not guilty, and throughout the trial, they vehemently denied responsibility for the crimes. They argued either that they had simply followed orders (although that defense had already been rejected in Article 8 of the tribunal’s charter) or that whatever actions they had carried out were done with no knowledge or awareness that they were contributing to the mass killings.

On October 1, 1946, after months of testimony, examination and cross examination of the defendants, and deliberation by the judges from the four Allied powers who presided over the trials, the verdicts were announced. Twelve defendants received the death sentence (Bormann, Frank, Frick, Göring, Jodl, Keitel, Kaltenbrunner, Ribbentrop, Rosenberg, Sauckel, Seyss-Inquart, and Streicher). Three were sentenced to life in prison (Hess, Funk, and Raeder). Four received prison terms ranging from 10 to 20 years (Dönitz, von Neurath, Schirach, and Speer). In general, the decisions for prison sentences rather than execution were made because the judges felt either that certain circumstances surrounding a defendant’s actions warranted a more lenient punishment or that the evidence was not strong enough to support a death penalty. The sentences were carried out with two exceptions: Göring committed suicide shortly before he could be executed, and Bormann remained missing.



Justice Robert Jackson delivers his opening speech at the International Military Tribunal after World War II and the Holocaust, in December 1945.

Office of the U.S. Chief of Counsel, Charles Alexander. Courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library



Three of the defendants were acquitted—Schacht, von Papen, and Fritzsche. Schacht, who had been minister of economics, had played an important role in German rearmament in the 1930s, but there was no evidence that he had done so with the specific intention of waging war. There was no proof that von Papen, who had been the German chancellor before Hitler came to power, knew of Hitler's intentions and his plans to wage aggressive wars. Fritzsche, who had worked under Goebbels in the propaganda ministry, had helped arouse popular sentiment in support of Hitler and the war, but that in itself was not considered to be a war crime. All three were released when the trials ended.

The conviction and death sentence for Julius Streicher was particularly noteworthy. Streicher was convicted neither of planning the war nor of war crimes but only on the charge of crimes against humanity. In issuing the verdict, the president of the tribunal explained how he and the other judges had determined Streicher's guilt:

For his twenty-five years of speaking, writing, and preaching hatred of the Jews, Streicher was widely known as "Jew-Baiter Number One." In his speeches and articles, week after week, month after month, he infected the German mind with the virus of antisemitism and incited the German people to active persecution. Each issue of *Der Stürmer* [the newspaper Streicher edited], which reached a circulation of 600,000 in 1935, was filled with such articles, often lewd and disgusting.

. . . As early as 1938 he began to call for the annihilation of the Jewish race. Twenty-three different articles of *Der Stürmer* between 1938 and 1941 were produced in evidence, in which the extermination [of Jews] "root and branch" was preached. . . . Other articles urged that only when world Jewry had been annihilated would the Jewish problem have been solved, and predicted that fifty years hence the Jewish graves "will proclaim that this people of murderers and criminals has after all met its deserved fate." . . .

As the war in the early stages proved successful [in] acquiring more territory for the Reich, Streicher even intensified his efforts to incite the Germans against the Jews. In the record are twenty-six articles from *Der Stürmer*, published between August, 1941 and September, 1944, twelve by Streicher's own hand, which demanded annihilation and extermination in unequivocal terms. . . .

Streicher's incitement to murder and extermination at the time when Jews in the East were being killed under the most horrible conditions clearly constitutes persecution on political and racial grounds in connection with war crimes as defined by the Charter, and constitutes a crime against humanity.<sup>2</sup>

The pronouncement of the sentences ended the trial. Twelve more trials, involving 190 defendants, were held at Nuremberg. But the first trial and the principles of international law that it established remained the most important. Judge Charles Wyzanski (see Reading 3, "Establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal"), writing immediately after the trial ended, concluded:

2 "Judgement: Streicher," The Avalon Project (Yale Law School), accessed June 24, 2016, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/judstre.asp>.

[T]he outstanding accomplishment of the trial which never could have been achieved by any more executive action, is that it has crystallized the concept that there is inherent in the international community a machinery both for the expression of international criminal law and for its enforcement.<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What words and phrases in Robert Jackson's opening statement help you understand why he believed the Nuremberg trials were important? What did he mean when he said the trials are one of the most important tributes power has paid to reason?
2. Some people at the time believed that the Nazis should be judged by neutral parties instead of by representatives from the countries that defeated Germany in the war. How did Jackson respond to this possible criticism of the tribunal? Is his response persuasive?
3. The tribunal deliberately chose to prosecute the most prominent Nazi leaders in the first trial. Why might it have made that choice? Should other people who supported the Nazis have been brought to trial, even if they did not actively participate in the crimes?
4. Why did the tribunal convict Julius Streicher and sentence him to death? Should individuals who spread messages of hatred be held accountable for the actions their words inspire?

<sup>3</sup> Charles E. Wyzanski, "Nuremberg in Retrospect," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1946, accessed June 23, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1946/12/nuremberg-in-retrospect/306493/>.

## Reading 5

# Betraying the Youth

For Justice Robert Jackson, one of the purposes of the Nuremberg trials was to show the world exactly what the Nazis had done. The “undeniable proof of incredible events”<sup>1</sup> provided by the prosecutors during the trials would spell out the details. Some Germans claimed that only after hearing the evidence in the trials did they fully understand the crimes their nation had committed.

Alfons Heck (see “Joining the Hitler Youth” and “Models of Obedience” in Chapter 6), who became a high-ranking Hitler Youth leader during the war, was captured in Germany by the Allies in March 1945. When his captors confronted him with evidence of atrocities committed by Germans, he refused to believe it:

I was forced to look at documentary footage of concentration camps and death camps. And it was the first time that I was shown the atrocities committed by our nation. We looked at this, and I said to my friends, “What do they take us for? This stuff is staged!” And one of us began to snicker, and our captors became so incensed that they started yelling at us, “You Goddamned Nazi bastards! Do you think this is a comedy? This is what you have done!”

When Heck was released by the Allies in 1946, he went to Nuremberg. He said that what he learned there made him begin to believe what his captors had told him.

It was almost a year before I was able to accept the veracity of the films that I had seen. And it occurred at the war crimes trials in Nuremberg in 1946. . . . While I listened on the loudspeakers outside, I heard the full evidence of the accusations directed at the 22 top Nazis who were on trial. One of them was my leader, the former leader of the Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach. He was the principal reason why I came to Nuremberg. I wanted to know what he had to say, in particular, in regard to the activities of the Hitler Youth. Von Schirach told the Court, “It was my guilt that I have trained youth for a man who became a murderer a million times over.”

Baldur von Schirach received twenty years for crimes against humanity. That, in turn, implicated me too in the count [accusation] of mass murder because I had served Hitler as fanatically as von Schirach. I had an overwhelming sense of



**German soldiers are forced by the Allies after World War II to watch a film about the atrocities at German concentration camps.**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joseph Eaton

<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Jackson, “Opening Statement before the International Military Tribunal,” The Robert H. Jackson Center, accessed June 7, 2016, <https://www.roberthjackson.org/speech-and-writing/opening-statement-before-the-international-military-tribunal/>.

betrayal in Nuremberg and I recognized that the man I had adored was, in fact, the biggest monster in human history . . .

The experience of the Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany constitutes a massive case of child abuse. Out of millions of basically innocent children, Hitler and his regime succeeded in creating potential monsters.

Could it happen again today? Of course it can. Children are like empty vessels: you can fill them with good; you can fill them with evil; you can fill them with compassion. So the story of the Hitler Youth can be repeated.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did Alfons Heck first respond to evidence of concentration camps and death camps? Why do you think he responded this way?
2. What is Heck's view of his own responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis? What words and phrases help you to understand his perspective?
3. Why did Heck feel an "overwhelming sense of betrayal" at Nuremberg? Who had betrayed him? How?
4. What did Heck mean when he said, "The experience of the Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany constitutes a massive case of child abuse"? Do you agree with Heck that children are "empty vessels"?
5. What do Heck's remarks suggest about the value of the trial to the German people? Was it important for them to hear what had happened during the war in the perpetrators' own words?
6. Heck shared these reflections nearly 40 years after the events of World War II and the Holocaust. What are the limitations of using such a source to help us understand this history? What are the benefits?

2 Alfons Heck, *Heil Hitler: Confessions of a Hitler Youth* (documentary film), directed by Arthur Holch (Round Hill Productions, 1991).

## Reading 6

# Obeying Orders

After the first trial ended in October 1946, the United States held 12 other trials at Nuremberg under the authority of the International Military Tribunal. Among those brought to trial were

- 26 top military leaders;
- 56 high-ranking SS and other police officers, including 24 leaders of the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing units) and key officials in Heinrich Himmler's central office, which supervised the concentration camps and the extermination program;
- 23 doctors who participated in the Nazi medical killing program that targeted mentally and physically disabled people and conducted experiments on camp prisoners; and
- 14 officials of other Nazi organizations that engaged in racial persecution.

Few defendants at any of the trials denied the accusations made against them, and often their own testimony was used to convict them. Otto Ohlendorf, the former commandant of Einsatzgruppe D, was sentenced to death for the murder of about 90,000 Jews, Roma, and Sinti after admitting that he had ordered his men to kill children as well as adults. His defense was simple: he was just following orders. Another defendant, Rudolf Höss, the commandant at Auschwitz, used the same defense. He explained:

Don't you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things; it never even occurred to us. . . . We were all so trained to obey orders without even thinking that the thought of disobeying an order would simply never have occurred to anybody, and somebody else would have done just as well if I hadn't. . . . I really never gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity.<sup>1</sup>

The judges at Nuremberg rejected the "following orders" defense. They said that when an individual follows an order that is illegal under international law, he is responsible for that choice, except under certain circumstances. For instance, if the individual could prove that he was ignorant of the fact that the order was illegal, he would not be responsible. But the judges at Nuremberg maintained that it would have been impossible for members of Einsatzgruppen not to know that murdering civilians was both illegal and immoral. Another exception, the judges said, would be if a person obeyed an illegal order to avoid physical harm, torture, or death. In their judgment at the Einsatzgruppen trial, the judges wrote: "No court will punish a man who, with a loaded pistol at his head, is compelled to pull a lethal lever. Nor need the peril be that imminent in order to escape punishment. But were



Watch **A Plea for Humanity: The Einsatzgruppen on Trial**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Explore **Nanjing Atrocities: Crimes of War**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

<sup>1</sup> G. M. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship* (Ronald Press Co., 1950), 255.

any of the defendants coerced into killing Jews under the threat of being killed themselves if they failed in their homicidal mission?"<sup>2</sup>

While some perpetrators in the Holocaust claimed, and may have believed, that they would be physically harmed if they did not follow orders to participate in mass murder, historian Doris Bergen notes that the Nazis did not harm those who refused:

Germans were not forced to be killers. Those who refused to participate were given other assignments or transferred. To this day no one has found an example of a German who was executed for refusing to take part in the killing of Jews or other civilians. Defense attorneys of people accused of war crimes have looked hard for such a case because it would support the claim that their clients had no choice. The Nazi system, however, did not work that way. There were enough willing perpetrators so that coercive force could be reserved for those deemed enemies.<sup>3</sup>

The judges agreed that members of the Einsatzgruppen had not been threatened with physical harm if they did not murder their victims. Twenty Einsatzgruppen leaders were found guilty by the court, and four, including Ohlendorf, were eventually executed.

## Connection Questions

1. How did Ohlendorf and Höss defend their actions at their trial? Is their defense persuasive to you? What other motivations might have contributed to their participation in mass murder?
2. How does Doris Bergen's statement that the Nazis did not force people to be killers affect your opinion of the way Höss and Ohlendorf explain their choices?
3. Why might it be difficult to disobey the order of a superior or authority figure? What insights do the Milgram experiments (see "A Matter of Obedience?" in Chapter 9) provide about the way individuals acting on the orders of others perceive their responsibility for their actions?
4. Under what circumstances is it permissible or necessary for a person to disobey either an order from an authority figure or the law of a country?
5. Are there some basic moral teachings that are so fundamental that every person should be expected to know and try to follow them, no matter what society they live in?

2 International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, No. 21948-04-09, "The Einsatzgruppen Case, Case No. 9, United States v. Ohlendorf et al., Opinion and Judgment and Sentence" (1948), 480, accessed June 8, 2016, [http://www.worldcourts.com/imt/eng/decisions/1948.04.09\\_United\\_States\\_v\\_Ohlendorf.pdf#search=%22ohlendorf%22](http://www.worldcourts.com/imt/eng/decisions/1948.04.09_United_States_v_Ohlendorf.pdf#search=%22ohlendorf%22).

3 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 201–02.



## Reading 7

# The Technology of Mass Murder

In 1945, Germany's boundaries were redrawn, and the country was divided into four "zones of occupation." Each zone was governed by one of the Allied powers: the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. After the first trial at Nuremberg, each Allied power continued holding trials for former Nazis and their collaborators in their own zones of occupation.

Doctors who had carried out medical experiments on concentration camp inmates, as well as engineers and technicians who helped to create the technology of mass death, were among those tried by the Allies. Leo Alexander, a psychiatrist who was a consultant to the Office of the Chief Counsel for War Crimes in Nuremberg, summarized his findings about Nazi medical research:

A large part of [German] research was devoted to the science of destroying and preventing life. . . . In the course of this . . . research, methods of mass killing and mass sterilization were investigated and developed for use against non-German peoples or Germans who were considered useless.

. . . A rapid method developed for sterilization of females, which could be accomplished in the course of a regular health examination, was the intra-uterine injection of various chemicals. . . . The injections were extremely painful, and a number of women died in the course of the experiments. Professor Karl Clauberg reported that he had developed a method at the Auschwitz concentration camp by which he could sterilize 1,000 women in a day. . . .

The development of methods for rapid and inconspicuous individual execution was the objective of another large part of . . . research. . . . Poisons were the subject of many of these experiments. A research team at the Buchenwald concentration camp, consisting of Drs. Joachim Mrugowsky, Erwin Ding-Schuler and Waldemar Hoven, developed one of the most widely used means of individual execution under the guise of medication treatment—namely, the intravenous injection of phenol [a toxic chemical] or gasoline.<sup>1</sup>

Engineers worked to develop the technology for mass death. When the Soviets entered Auschwitz-Birkenau, they found records that detailed the construction of the crematoria, including precise information about costs as well as calculations of how many corpses each furnace could incinerate in a single day. The Russians captured four of the engineers who had designed and built the furnaces for a company called Topf and Sons and in-

1 Leo Alexander, "Medical Science Under Dictatorship," *New England Journal of Medicine* 241, no. 2 (July 14, 1949): 41, [https://www.mcgill.ca/prpp/files/prpp/leo\\_alexander\\_1949\\_---\\_medical\\_science\\_under\\_dictatorship.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/prpp/files/prpp/leo_alexander_1949_---_medical_science_under_dictatorship.pdf).

terrogated all four men. The interrogation of Kurt Prüfer, one of the four, included the following exchange:

Q. How often and with what aim did you visit Auschwitz?

A. Five times. The first time [was] at the beginning of 1943, to receive the orders of the SS Command, where the "Kremas" were to be built. The second time was in spring 1943 to inspect the building site. The third time was in autumn 1943 to inspect a fault in the construction of a "Krema" chimney. The fourth time [was] at the beginning of 1944 to inspect the repaired chimney. The fifth time [was] in September-October 1944 when I visited Auschwitz in connection with the intended relocation [from Auschwitz] of the crematoria, since the front was getting nearer. The crematoria were not relocated, because there were not enough workers. . . .

Q. Did you see a gas chamber next to the crematorium?

A. Yes, I did see one next to the crematorium. Between the gas chamber and the crematorium there was a connecting structure.

Q. Did you know that in the gas chambers and the crematoria there took place the liquidations of innocent human beings?

A. I have known since spring 1943 that innocent human beings were being liquidated in Auschwitz gas chambers and that their corpses were subsequently incinerated in the crematoria. . . .

Q. Why was the brick lining of the muffles so quickly damaged?

A. The bricks were damaged after six months because the strain on the furnaces was colossal.

Q. What motivated you to continue with the building of the other crematoria as senior engineer with Topf?

A. I had my contract with the Topf firm and I was aware of the fact that my work was of great importance for the national socialist state. I knew that if I refused to continue with this work, I would be liquidated by the Gestapo.<sup>2</sup>

The Russians also questioned Fritz Sander about the crematoria. He expressed concern about the strain on the furnaces.

I decided to design and build a crematorium with a higher capacity. I completed this project . . . and I submitted [it] to a State Patent Commission in Berlin.

The "Krema" was to be built on the conveyor belt principle. That is to say, the corpses must be brought to the incineration furnaces without interruption. When the corpses are pushed into the furnaces, they fall onto a grate, then slide into the furnace and are incinerated. The corpses serve at the same time as fuel for the heating of the furnaces. . . .

Q. Although you knew about the mass liquidation of innocent human beings in crematoria, you devoted yourself to designing and creating higher capacity incineration furnaces for crematoria—and on your own initiative.

2 Gerald Fleming, "Engineers of Death," *New York Times*, July 18, 1993.

A. I was a German engineer and key member of the Topf works and I saw it as my duty to apply my specialist knowledge in this way in order to help Germany win the war, just as an aircraft construction engineer builds airplanes in wartime, which are also connected with the destruction of human beings. [Sander's design was never carried out.]<sup>3</sup>

Sander died of a heart attack a few weeks after his interrogation. The Soviet Union sentenced Prüfer to 25 years in prison for "crimes against the civilian population and captive members of the Red Army." He died of a stroke in 1952. The other two engineers captured by the Soviets, Gustav Braun and Karl Schultze, were also sentenced to 25 years in prison, but they were released in 1955.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What roles did science, medicine, and engineering play in the mass murder perpetrated by the Nazis?
2. The trial of Nazi doctors at Nuremberg led to the creation of ethical guidelines for medical experiments conducted on humans. Known as the "Nuremberg Code," these guidelines established the principle of "informed consent," which means that researchers may not perform experiments on human subjects without their voluntary consent. Today, most physicians take a professional oath to follow certain ethical guidelines when they care for their patients. Do workers in other roles, such as engineers, have ethical obligations that are specific to their profession?
3. How did the engineers Prüfer and Sander perceive their task? Did they know the purpose of the crematoria they designed and helped build? What motivated them to do this work? To what extent were they responsible for the deaths of prisoners at Auschwitz?
4. Prüfer claimed that he would be "liquidated" by the Gestapo if he refused to "continue with this work." Today, scholars point out that there is no evidence of any German having been executed for refusing to participate in the murder of Jews.<sup>5</sup> Does Prüfer's belief that he would face death, even if mistaken, diminish his moral responsibility?
5. Sander said it was "my duty to apply my specialist knowledge in this way in order to help Germany win the war, just as an aircraft construction engineer builds airplanes in wartime, which are also connected with the destruction of human beings." Is there an ethical difference between constructing weapons for a military to use to kill soldiers and creating technology for the murder of civilians during wartime? To what extent are designers and engineers responsible for the tools and weapons they create and the ways in which those tools and weapons are used?

<sup>3</sup> Fleming, "Engineers of Death."

<sup>4</sup> "Topf & Sons - Builders of the Auschwitz Ovens," Topf & Sons Builders of the Auschwitz Ovens Place of Remembrance, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://topfundsoehne.info/cms-www/index.php?id=75&l=1>.

<sup>5</sup> Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 201–02.

## Reading 8

# Dogma Makes Obedient Ghosts

The trials of the engineers who designed and built the gas chambers and crematoria for Nazi camps (see Reading 7, “The Technology of Mass Murder”) raised universal questions about the relationship between science and human values. Until 1933, German scientists explored scientific questions from various perspectives. They were pioneers in the theory of tolerance, the idea that the world cannot be understood with complete certainty. In the absence of complete certainty, according to this theory, humans must make judgments about how the world works, judgments that might change in light of new evidence.

After 1933, German scientists, like most Germans, served the aims of National Socialism, and dogma became a substitute for truth. Dogma is a belief or set of beliefs that the leaders of a community or nation declare to be absolute truth. Dogma is not open to question, and it denies the existence of uncertainty. In a country dominated by Nazi dogma, German scientists developed gas chambers and crematoria. This technology of mass murder has often been described as a defining characteristic of the Holocaust (even though millions were also murdered in mass shootings and by other, less technological means).

In the documentary series *The Ascent of Man*, historian and scientist Jacob Bronowski explored the relationship between science and human values throughout human history. After visiting Japan at the end of World War II, Bronowski was troubled by the aftermath of the atom bombs the United States dropped on Japan in 1945, killing more than 120,000 people instantly and thousands more later from radiation exposure. While he did not compare the bombing to the crimes of the Holocaust, both raised concerns for him about the use of science for the destruction of human life on a massive scale. In the documentary, Bronowski bends over a pond at the site of Auschwitz, where several of his family members were killed, and discusses the role of technology in what he considers to be “the central dilemma of the twentieth century”:

One [part] is the belief that the end justifies the means. The push-button philosophy, that deliberate deafness to suffering, has become the monster in the war machine. The other is the betrayal of the human spirit: the assertion of dogma that closes the mind, and turns a nation, a civilization, into a regiment of ghosts—obedient ghosts, or tortured ghosts.

It is said that science will dehumanize people and turn them into numbers. That is false, tragically false. . . . This is the concentration camp and crematorium at Auschwitz. This is where people were turned into numbers. Into this pond were flushed the ashes of some four million people. And that was not done by gas. It was done by arrogance. It was done by dogma. It was done by ignorance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave. This is what men do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods.

Science is a very human form of knowledge. We are always at the brink of the known, we always feel forward for what is to be hoped. Every judgment in science stands on the edge of error, and is personal. Science is a tribute to what we can know although we are fallible. In the end the words were said by Oliver Cromwell: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."

I owe it as a scientist to my friend [physicist] Leo Szilard. I owe it as a human being to the many members of my family who died at Auschwitz, to stand here by the pond as a survivor and a witness. We have to cure ourselves of the itch for absolute knowledge and power. We have to close the distance between the push-button order and the human act. We have to touch people.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What is dogma? How might dogma close the mind, according to Jacob Bronowski?
2. According to Bronowski, what role did arrogance, dogma, and ignorance play in the deaths of millions at Auschwitz?
3. What is absolute knowledge? Does Bronowski believe it is possible to achieve, through science or any other means? What does he believe are the dangers of trying?
4. In *The Ascent of Man*, Bronowski says: "We have to close the distance between the push-button order and the human act." What does he mean? How do you think the history of the Holocaust and World War II led him to this perspective? How do we "close the distance"?

<sup>1</sup> Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (British Broadcasting, 1973), and accompanying book of same title (BBC Books, 1973), 284–85.

## Reading 9

# The Business of Slave Labor

Albert Speer, Hitler's favorite architect, was among the 22 Nazi leaders tried at the first Nuremberg trial. He had also been minister of armaments and munitions, a position that included the responsibility for assigning prisoners to prisoner-of-war, labor, and concentration camps. At the trial, Speer depicted himself as unaware of what had happened in the camps, and he described his partnership with Hitler as a pact with the devil. He told the tribunal, "The trial is necessary. There is a common responsibility for such horrible crimes, even in an authoritarian system." He insisted, however, that he could not be held accountable for the death camps because he did not know they existed.

Speer's testimony, along with records kept during the war by the Nazi government, led to the indictments at subsequent trials of other people—especially German businessmen who had used slave labor from the camps Speer administered—for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Among them were the top officials at I. G. Farben Company, the largest chemical company in the world at the time. Their indictment stated, in part:

Farben, in complete defiance of all decency and human considerations, abused its slave workers by subjecting them, among other things, to excessively long, arduous, and exhausting work, utterly disregarding their health or physical condition. The sole criterion of the right to live or die was the production efficiency of said inmates. By virtue of inadequate rest, inadequate food . . . many died at their work or collapsed from serious illnesses they contracted. With the first signs of a decline in production of any such workers, although caused by illness or exhaustion, such workers would be subjected to the well-known "Selektion." Selektion, in its simplest definition, meant that if, upon a cursory examination, it appeared that the inmate would not be restored within a few days to full productive capacity, he was considered expendable and was sent to the "Birkenau" camp at Auschwitz for the customary extermination.<sup>1</sup>

Twelve officials from Krupp, a major German arms manufacturer, were also put on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. At that trial, a man who had been forced to work for Krupp testified, "We were not slaves but less than slaves. We were deprived of freedom and became a piece of property which our masters drove to work. But here all similarity with any known form of slavery ends. . . . The machinery had to be operated with care, oiled, greased, and allowed to rest; its life span was protected. We, on the other

<sup>1</sup> *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10*, Nuremberg, October 1946 – April 1949: Case 6, U.S. v. Krauch (I. G. Farben Case), quoted in Benjamin Ferencz, *Less than Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 191.



hand, were like a bit of sandpaper, which, rubbed a few times, becomes useless and is thrown away to be burned with the garbage.”<sup>2</sup>

Benjamin Ferencz, who was an American prosecutor at Nuremberg, noted:

Well over half a million inmates were leased out by the SS to hundreds of German firms by the end of 1944. The workers included Germans . . . , Communists, Socialists, other political opponents of the Nazi regime, priests, Seventh Day Adventists, as well as homosexuals, “asocials,” and common criminals. . . . As a class, there can be no doubt that the Jews suffered most of all, but in focusing on their claims, I have not wished to minimize the suffering of all the others. . . . Jews were regarded as contagious vermin by their Nazi oppressors, and were treated accordingly. They were given the most strenuous and most dangerous work. Jews who could not work were either dead or about to die.<sup>3</sup>

Ferencz pointed out that although some industrialists were tried and convicted, most were free within a few years and richer than ever. Although some survivors sued German companies, settlements were very small.

After several decades had passed, some German companies hired professional historians to investigate their cooperation with the Nazis. In the late 1990s, Deutsche Bank, a major German bank, accepted “moral responsibility” for purchasing gold taken from concentration camp victims.<sup>4</sup> In the years since Deutsche Bank’s admission, other German companies, including automakers Volkswagen, Audi, and Daimler, have commissioned investigations into their past ties with the Nazis and admitted their use of slave labor.

## Connection Questions

1. Albert Speer claimed that no industrialist was ever forced to use concentration camp labor, and there is considerable evidence to support his claim. Why, then, did many choose to do so?
2. In what ways were the leaders of companies like I. G. Farben and Krupp participants in the Holocaust?
3. Some companies that collaborated with the Nazis and used slave labor continue to operate today. Some, including Volkswagen, Deutsche Bank, and Bayer, contributed to a fund that pays reparations to those who were forced into slave labor and also supports educational programs. How else should companies that collaborated with the Nazi regime acknowledge and respond to this history today?
4. Speer is often viewed as the only Nazi at Nuremberg to admit his guilt. But, late in his life, after he served a 20-year prison sentence, he said, “I did not admit guilt—I said I was responsible.”<sup>5</sup> What do you think he meant by this? Is there a difference between guilt and responsibility?

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Ferencz, *Less than Slaves*, 191.

<sup>4</sup> John Schmid, “Deutsche Bank Says It ‘Regrets’ Nazi Deals,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1998, accessed June 8, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/01/news/01iht-gold.t.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Mel London, “Letter to the Editor,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1981.

## Reading 10

# The Tokyo Trials



Watch **The Nanjing Atrocities: Crimes of War**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **The Tokyo Trial: An Introduction**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

In addition to the trials at Nuremberg in Germany, the Allies set up a tribunal to bring to trial the leaders of Japan, another member of the Axis powers in World War II. Japan's campaign to conquer or control Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean had begun in 1931 when its forces occupied the province of Manchuria in China. Six years later, Japan invaded the Shanghai-Nanjing region of China and occupied the city of Nanjing. There, Chinese civilians and prisoners of war were killed in a savage campaign of rape, torture, and mass murder by Japanese forces. Similar acts were committed by Japanese forces in other areas of China and during their wartime occupation of Manila in the Philippines.

At their final wartime conference, held in July 1945 at Potsdam, Germany, Allied leaders agreed on a policy for post-war Japan and stated their intention to hold the Japanese responsible for war crimes, including inhumane treatment of Allied prisoners:

There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world. . . . We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

After the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, the emperor of Japan issued a statement of unconditional surrender. General Douglas MacArthur of the United States was put in charge of the occupation of Japan, which lasted from 1945 to 1952. He established the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, with trials set to begin in May 1946 in Tokyo. Based on the precedents set at Nuremberg (see Reading 3, "Establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal"), the Far East tribunal indicted 28 Japanese military and civilian leaders for war crimes, crimes against peace (which included planning a war of aggression), and crimes against humanity.

But many others who might have been indicted were not. Historian John Dower describes the choices of whom to prosecute—choices that were later criticized:

[T]he absence of certain groups and crimes [in the Tokyo indictments] was striking. No heads of the dreaded Kempeitai (the military police) were indicted; no leaders of ultranationalistic secret societies; no industrialists who had profited from ag-

<sup>1</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 445.

gression and had been ultimately involved in paving “the road to war.” The forced mobilization of Korean and Formosan colonial subjects was not pursued as a crime against humanity, nor was the rounding up of many tens of thousands of young non-Japanese who were forced to serve as “comfort women” providing sexual services to the imperial forces. The Americans who controlled the prosecution chose to grant blanket secret immunity to one group of Japanese whose atrocious crimes were beyond question, namely, the officers and scientific researchers in Unit 731 in Manchuria who had conducted lethal experiments on thousands of prisoners (they were exempted from prosecution in exchange for sharing the results of their research with the Americans). The prosecution did not seriously pursue evidence concerning the Japanese use of chemical warfare in China.<sup>2</sup>

The most notable absence among those indicted was that of Emperor Hirohito, the leader of Japan throughout the entire pre-war and wartime period. The decision not to try him was made by General MacArthur; it reflected the American policy of leaving the emperor on the throne as a way of helping the Japanese people accept their defeat, the occupation, and the guiding principles that MacArthur would follow to turn Japan into a democracy.

The same concerns about ex post facto (“after the fact”) justice that were expressed about the Nuremberg trials (see Reading 3, “Establishing the Nuremberg Tribunal”) were raised about the Far East tribunal, but there, too, they were dismissed. One important difference, however, was that at the Tokyo trials, defendants were held responsible for crimes of omission—the failure to act to prevent war crimes from occurring or continuing. This played a significant part in the conviction and subsequent execution of two of the defendants: General Iwane Matsui, who directed the campaign to capture Nanjing, and Koki Hirota, who was Japan’s foreign minister at the time of the Nanjing atrocities. The prosecution presented evidence that both had known of the atrocities but had done nothing to stop them. The final judgment against Hirota read:

The tribunal is of the opinion that Hirota was derelict in his duty in not insisting before the Cabinet that immediate action be taken to put an end to the atrocities, failing any other action open to him to bring about the same result. He was content to rely on assurances which he knew were not being implemented while hundreds of murders, violations of women, and other atrocities were being committed daily. His inaction amounted to criminal negligence.<sup>3</sup>

Seven other defendants at the Tokyo trials were convicted of either crimes against peace or war crimes, and they were executed. The others were sentenced to prison terms; no one was acquitted.

In addition to criticisms made during and after the Tokyo trials that they were simply “victor’s justice,” some people also claimed that the tribunal and its indictments reflected a strong racial bias. Only three of the 11 judges presiding at the trials were Asian. Justice Radhabinod Pal, who was from India, noted that the Japanese leaders were being prosecuted and

<sup>2</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 464–65.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Brook, *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 264–65.

convicted for starting a war of conquest against countries like Indonesia (colonized by the Dutch), Indo-China (colonized by the French), and Malaysia (colonized by the British), all of which had been “acquired by such aggressive methods” as the Japanese were accused of using. Historian John Dower notes that Justice Pal

also commented, with no little sarcasm, on the ways in which the positive rhetoric of imperialism and colonialism of the Europeans and Americans became transmogrified [changed] when associated with Japan: “As a program of aggrandizement of a nation we do not like, we may deny to it the terms ‘manifest destiny’, ‘the protection of vital interests’, ‘national honour’ or a term coined on the footing of the ‘white man’s burden’, and may give it the name of ‘aggressive aggrandizement’ pure and simple.”<sup>4</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What similarities are there between the ways the tribunals in Nuremberg and in Tokyo were organized and the accusations they considered? What differences are noteworthy?
2. What is a crime of omission? Do you think that individuals who have the power to stop a crime from occurring also have the responsibility to do so? Do such individuals share in the responsibility for the crime if they fail to do so?
3. What is the meaning of “victor’s justice”? Why might Justice Pal (who, while never denying the wartime atrocities committed by Japan, still voted to acquit the defendants) have seen the Tokyo trials as “victor’s justice”?
4. Some people in Japan felt that the trials should have been conducted in Japanese courts, rather than by the International Military Tribunal. General MacArthur refused to allow that option. What might have been the arguments for and against doing so?

<sup>4</sup> Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 464–65.

## Reading 11

# The Last Chance for Justice

In July 2015, 94-year-old Oskar Gröning sat stooped in a German courtroom and listened as a judge found him guilty of aiding in the murder of 300,000 Jews at Auschwitz. Gröning was a German SS officer who worked as an accountant at Auschwitz, where he was responsible for confiscating prisoners' money and valuables. Though Gröning never committed murder directly, the court found him guilty because he was an essential part of the functioning of the camp, and he was sentenced to four years in prison. Gröning's trial is one of many attempts early in the twenty-first century to bring former Nazi criminals to justice, in what some have called a "last chance" to hold the guilty accountable while perpetrators and survivors of the Holocaust are still alive.



dpa picture alliance / Alamy Stock Photo

Though there were thousands of prosecutions after the war, only a tiny fraction of those responsible for the Holocaust have ever been brought to trial. The trials held by occupying Allied forces in Germany and Japan, described earlier in this chapter, ended in 1950. Others continued on and off in later decades, including the famous case of SS leader Adolf Eichmann, who fled to South America after the war but was arrested by Israeli agents, tried in Jerusalem, and executed for his crimes in 1962. German courts also held trials, convicting more than 6,000 Nazi war criminals since 1947, though most were sentenced to less than one year in prison.<sup>1</sup>

**Defendant Oskar Gröning, a former SS member, at a courtroom in Lüneburg, Germany, on April 21, 2015. Gröning, age 93, was found guilty of aiding in the murder of 300,000 Jews at Auschwitz and sentenced to four years in prison.**

After the Allied trials, the search for justice was hampered by many factors, both procedural and political. The German legal system refused to use accusations of genocide (see "Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention" in Chapter 11) or crimes against humanity, which were not law during World War II, arguing that it did not want to rewrite the legal code to suit its own purposes just as the Nazis had. Until recently, proving a charge of murder in German courts required a standard of evidence that was rarely available concerning people accused of participating in the mass murders of the Holocaust.

Some observers also thought that German courts did not really want to prosecute. Journalist Elizabeth Kolbert has recently suggested, "Just as ordinary Germans had looked away during the Holocaust, afterward they

<sup>1</sup> David Crossland, "Late Push on War Crimes: Prosecutors to Probe 50 Auschwitz Guards," *Spiegel* Online International, last modified April 8, 2013, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/german-prosecutors-to-investigate-50-former-auschwitz-guards-a-893123.html>.

looked away as those who had carried it out went unpunished. In the years immediately following the war, former Nazis found jobs in the civil service and also, in many cases, in prominent political offices. A list published a few years ago by the German Interior Ministry shows that, in the early years of the Bundesrepublik [West Germany], government officials who had been members of Nazi organizations included at least twenty-five Cabinet members and a President."<sup>2</sup>

As fewer and fewer of the Holocaust generation remained, prosecutors brought a renewed sense of urgency to finding and prosecuting perpetrators. But these efforts were controversial. Images of aged and infirm men standing trial in wheelchairs sometimes created sympathy for the defendants. A columnist for the London *Times* argued that "it is wise and humane to let the matter rest," and another journalist called the trials of elderly Nazis "a new and frankly distasteful blood sport. . . . There is a futility, a sterility, about continuing a search of vengeance beyond certain limits of time and space."<sup>3</sup> Some critics questioned the usefulness of using government money to try men with only a few years left to live, and others called the attempts simply too little, too late.

Yet many people have continued to insist that new trials are essential, no matter how long ago the crimes took place. Andreas Brendl, a German investigator, argued, "We have an obligation to the families of the victims and the victims themselves to pursue this. . . . That's indisputable. It doesn't matter to me whether the accused is 25 or 92. Do people honestly think we shouldn't pursue people who may have been part of the Nazi machinery?" Kurt Schrimm, head of a special prosecutor's office that concentrates on German war crimes in World War II, asks, "Are we supposed to abstain from prosecution now just because we weren't able to pursue them in the past?" Referring to Auschwitz transport lists that were used as key evidence in a case, Schrimm adds, "They included six-month-old infants as well as elderly people. The perpetrators at the time had absolutely no compassion, and it is fair to ask whether they themselves deserve any pity today."<sup>4</sup>

For Holocaust survivors who are witnesses for the prosecution, the trials have a special significance. Leon Schwarzbaum, a 95-year-old survivor who lost 35 members of his family in the Holocaust, was a witness at a 2016 trial of two former Auschwitz guards. "I want to know what their motivation was, why so many joined in killing millions of people," he said. "I just hope they all talk eventually. I want to hear it out of their mouths, what they did and why. I want them to tell the truth."<sup>5</sup>

2 Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Last Trial: A Great-Grandmother, Auschwitz, and the Arc of Justice," *New Yorker*, February 16, 2015, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/16/last-trial>.

3 Quoted in Efraim Zuroff, *Operation Last Chance: One Man's Quest to Bring Nazi Criminals to Justice* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 71.

4 Benjamin Schulz, "War Crimes Investigations: 'We Don't Pursue Nazis, We Pursue Murderers,'" *Spiegel* Online International, last modified February 21, 2014, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/germany-continues-investigations-into-suspected-auschwitz-helpers-a-954897.html>.

5 "Tell the truth", Auschwitz survivor urges accused in Nazi trials," Reuters, last modified March 30, 2016, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-nazi-trial-victims-idUSKCN0WV235>.



## Connection Questions

1. Why are trials of former Nazi perpetrators still taking place more than 70 years after World War II and the Holocaust?
2. What is the motivation for holding trials so long after the crimes took place? What are the challenges of doing so?
3. Why do some people argue that the trials are still necessary? For whose benefit are the trials being held?
4. How do the twenty-first-century trials of former Nazis add to your thinking about the purpose of trials? What do they show you about the complexity of holding individuals accountable for genocide and mass violence?

## Reading 12

# Choices that Define Us

Guido Calabresi, then the dean of Yale Law School, gave a graduation speech in 1988 in which he told four stories about individuals who made choices during World War II. Calabresi's stories reveal the complexity of human behavior and suggest how difficult it can be to make sweeping judgments about good and evil.

When I was growing up [In Italy], I wondered about whether I would have the courage to make the kind of choice my father made. My father became an extremely active anti-fascist and as a result of his being an active anti-fascist, he had to leave Italy and we had to come here and start all over again. But the decision to abandon a comfortable life for the life of an activist, of a revolutionary, which is what he was, though of the most mild of revolutionaries from the most traditional of backgrounds, always puzzled me. I wondered how this person had done it and one day I asked him about it. And he said to me, "Everyone speaks about the banality of evil and very few people speak about the banality of good. How did I become an active anti-fascist? To be an anti-fascist is relatively easy. What they were doing was wrong but how did I become an activist?"

When he was a college student, Calabresi's father was beaten and jailed for not applauding after a speech at his university given by the fascist minister of education. According to Calabresi,

[My father] sighed and said, "I was 21 years old, if I had known that going and not applauding would get me into trouble, maybe I would have stayed home. But I was there and I hadn't applauded before and now I was told I had to applaud and I was 21 years old, no I couldn't applaud. . . . After that the decision was made. I was not going to be a quiet anti-fascist. I was stamped for life, that was it." A non-choice then but yet an important one that changed his life.

Calabresi's second story also took place in Italy during World War II. It involved a cousin who, because he was Jewish, went into hiding with a Catholic family together with his wife and children:

They went there with their children, their oldest at the time 4 years old, and they all had assumed names. Sometime after, the villa was taken over to billet [lodge] German soldiers and the captain in charge of these soldiers was a perfectly dreadful person. He tried to steal things. He abused my father's cousin because he thought he was a draft dodger and that's why he was there. He behaved in every way appallingly, so appallingly that some evenings he would get drunk and try to break into the door of the room where my cousin's wife's sister slept to rape her and only the coming of other people would stop him. A dreadful man in every way—or so it seemed. One day, my cousin's son was playing by the villa and the German captain called him by the assumed name and the child forgot and didn't answer. The

German captain called him again and the child still didn't answer and the German captain went right up to him and said, "That isn't your name, is it?" And the little boy was frightened and said no. And the captain said, "That isn't your name because you're Jewish and you're having an assumed name," and the little boy said yes and ran off into the house to tell his parents what had happened. And a dreadful, dreadful silence took over as they waited because they could not escape and assumed they would be taken away. But slowly, they realized that nothing was going to happen. Indeed, the only thing that happened was that the German captain started being somewhat nicer to my cousin because he realized that he was there not as a draft dodger, but for other reasons. So somehow this dreadful man made a choice, a decision that he was not going to turn these people in. A decision which was made at the risk of his own life because if any of his soldiers had heard what he said, had heard the conversation with the boy as was very likely to be the case, and turned him in, he was dead. That choice didn't change the man, he continued to get drunk, he continued to steal, he continued to try to break the door down and yet it was a decision, a choice which was made that was an extraordinary one.

The third story was about a farmer who lived on land that belonged to Calabresi's family in Italy:

He had had the reputation that during the war he had hidden at the risk of his life allied servicemen who had been caught behind German lines and were escaping. Jews who were escaping from the Nazis. All the people on the right side of that conflict who were in trouble. But he had also the reputation that the moment things changed in 1944–1945, he hid the Germans who were running away. Now it wasn't at the risk of his life but when they came through, he hid them as well. And I went to see him because I was very young and I thought that this was terrible; that this was someone who did not understand the difference between right and wrong, that he couldn't distinguish between hiding people who deserved to be hidden and hiding criminals. I already sounded like a lawyer, I guess. And when I went to see him, I asked him and he said, "Politics, politics, I don't know anything about that. I don't know anything about those things. I don't care about them. When they came here, when they were running away, each one of them was in trouble. 'Eran tutti figli di mamma'—They were each the child of some mother somewhere. 'Tiriamo a campare'—We all struggle to live."

Calabresi's final story was about Hugo Black, the US Supreme Court justice who upheld the decision to imprison hundreds of thousands of people with Japanese ancestry in internment camps in the United States during World War II:

But the person who wrote the opinion upholding that program was Hugo Black, Justice Black, the person for whom I clerked in the Supreme Court. A person whom many of you know as a great hero, a great civil libertarian, a person who has been on the right side on almost all the causes. And when I clerked, I asked him about that and he said, "Oh well, it was war and the military said that it was necessary, and there were all sorts of reasons why this was important and all my clerks tell me I was wrong but you don't really understand what was going on." Then he added, "And besides, you know the other people who were in favor of that were Earl Warren, by then Chief Justice, who as Attorney General of California, supported

the program and Franklin Roosevelt supported the program totally." So here were dreadful choices, dreadful choices made by very good people.

Calabresi concluded,

Non-choice by a good person, dramatic choice by an evil person, wonderful and troublesome choice by a person who didn't think it was a choice at all and an evil choice by people who are good . . . There are many changes I could ring on these stories, but I guess I would like to leave you with just one thought. In one of these stories, a bad person made a dramatically good choice and we should remember that, both when we see someone we think of as bad, or equally so, when we think of ourselves that way. . . . But more important, some extraordinarily good people made a catastrophically bad decision and it is on this that I would focus. It is not that we are wrong in viewing Black and Warren and Roosevelt as good. The temptation is immediately to say, if they did that, there must have been something else wrong with them. They must have been in some ways bad.

No, I don't think so. If we do that, we're shirking. We're saying it's other people who do that. Rather, I think it is that all of us, I and you, are as subject to being careless, uncaring. We will all thoughtlessly, I and you, applaud at times when we shouldn't. Or even dramatically at times like Black and the others, mislead ourselves into following what seemed like good reasons, for a dreadful decision. Not one of these dreadful decisions which we will make will change us necessarily into bad people. And yet in time, these choices will define us. . . .<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What range of choices is reflected in Calabresi's stories? Why might these choices seem surprising or unexpected? Why do you think he chose to focus on these particular stories?
2. What factors may have shaped the choices made by the people in these stories? Why does Calabresi find it difficult to judge these individuals?
3. What do Calabresi's stories reveal about human behavior? What message does he have for those who listen to his stories?

<sup>1</sup> Guido Calabresi, "70th Commencement Address," speech given at Connecticut College, May 1, 1988, available from Digital Commons at Connecticut College, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/commence/24/>.

## Reading 13

# Moral Luck and Dilemmas of Judgment

Guido Calabresi's description of four people who made surprising decisions during World War II (see Reading 12, "Choices that Define Us") reveals how it can be difficult to judge the complex and often unexpected choices that people make. Historians and philosophers, too, have thought about the challenges of making moral judgments about the actions of others, especially the actions of people in the past.

A 2013 *BBC Magazine* article asks, "Should we judge people of past eras for moral failings?" It continues:

Assessing attitudes and behaviour in the past presents us with a puzzle. What we might regard as offensive today—sexist, or racist, or homophobic for example—might have once been orthodoxy [accepted as normal].

A moral relativist would say that our values today can't be compared with the values from another era. What was right for them was right for them. What is right for us is right for us.

The philosopher Miranda Fricker is not a moral relativist, but she thinks the test for blameworthiness is whether the person could have known any different. "The proper standards by which to judge people are the best standards that were available to them at the time."

It's unfair to blame people for failing to be moral pioneers, she says. "The attitude of blame presupposes that the person was in a position to have done better."

But if we can't blame people for abhorrent views, does that also mean we can't hold them responsible for these views?<sup>1</sup>

Fricker is suggesting that people's ideas about right and wrong are largely shaped by their environments. Can individuals be held responsible for beliefs and actions that are determined more by those individuals' circumstances than by their own free choice? Exploring this question, philosophers have written about a concept called "moral luck." Philosopher Peter Levine explains moral luck in this way:

It [is] very unlikely that I would become a Nazi, since I was born to a Jewish father in the United States decades after World War II. But if I had been born a gentile [non-Jewish] German in 1910, I probably would have been a Nazi supporter by 1939, because most were. If I had been born a slave in Virginia in 1850, I would have been passionately opposed to slavery, but if I had been born to a white slave-

<sup>1</sup> "Should we judge people of past eras for moral failings?," *BBC Magazine*, August 20, 2013, accessed June 24, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23772194>.

holder at that time, I would have supported slavery because my group and culture did. So it is morally lucky that I am now opposed to slavery and Nazism, but I may be morally unlucky to have all kinds of blinders that I do not recognize.<sup>2</sup>

But the idea of “moral luck” does not necessarily diminish the responsibility of people who did bad things in the past. For some philosophers, the test is whether or not there were people in the past who knew better. In other words, the existence of abolitionists (people who opposed slavery) in the United States in the 1850s and resisters to Nazism in the 1930s and 1940s shows that it was possible for individuals to recognize the immorality or outright evil of slavery and National Socialism. Others go further, saying that there are universal standards of right and wrong to which all people should be held regardless of their circumstances. Legal scholar Martha Minow writes: “By any measure of human decency, the Nazis’ efforts to exterminate the Jewish people of Europe, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, persons with disabilities, gypsies, and political opponents obviously violated any notion of duty, reasonableness, or fairness.”<sup>3</sup> According to these views, people like slaveholders and Nazi perpetrators are therefore indeed responsible for their beliefs and actions, even if they were in the majority. They could have, and should have, known better.

The BBC article on judging the past goes on to consider how people living today may be judged for our moral choices by those who come after us:

It may well be that the young or middle aged people of today will, in future decades, look back at views they once held and feel horrified and ashamed. And just as we judge [an earlier century], and identify its moral defects, so it is inevitable that the people of the 23rd Century will detect flaws in ours, the 21st. . . .

What else might our descendants condemn us for? If enough of us know the answer to that today, we really have no excuse but to act on it today.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What standards do you think we should use in judging the behavior of people of past eras? When is it fair to do so? When is it unfair?
2. What is “moral luck”? Calabresi, Fricker, and Levine all suggest that given certain circumstances, all humans have the capacity to make poor choices. How might that concept change the way you think about the choices you make?
3. Fricker and Levine both say that people’s ideas about right and wrong are shaped by their environments. Do you agree? Who or what has influenced your beliefs about right and wrong? Have your beliefs about right and wrong ever changed?

2 Peter Levine, email message to Facing History and Ourselves, January 10, 2016.

3 Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 32.

4 “Should we judge people of past eras for moral failings?,” *BBC Magazine*.



## Reading 14

# The Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness

This chapter traces the struggle to find an adequate response to the crimes of the Holocaust. In the aftermath of the war, many people wondered whether justice was possible for those who committed murder on such an enormous scale. Simon Wiesenthal, known as “the Nazi hunter,” was a Holocaust survivor who spent much of his later life tracking down Nazi war criminals so they could be held accountable for their actions. Yet Wiesenthal was also concerned with the question of forgiveness, an issue he explored in his book *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*.

In *The Sunflower*, Wiesenthal writes of an incident that occurred when he was a concentration camp inmate in Poland. One day, he was sent to clean a hospital for wounded German soldiers as part of a slave labor crew. As they worked, a nurse approached him and asked, “Are you a Jew?” When he answered yes, she took him to the bedside of Karl, a 22-year-old SS man who was dying. Karl’s head was completely covered in bandages and he was very weak. Karl wanted to tell Wiesenthal a story. As Wiesenthal listened silently, Karl confessed to participating in burning alive an entire village of Jews, at least 150 people. He expressed great remorse as he described throwing grenades into a house and watching as victims leapt from the burning building with their children in their arms. Karl said,

The pains in my body are terrible, but worse still is my conscience . . . I cannot die . . . without coming clean . . . In the last hours of my life you are with me. I do not know who you are. I only know you are a Jew and that is enough . . . In the long nights I have been waiting for death, time and again I have longed to talk about it to a Jew and beg forgiveness from him. Only I didn’t know whether there were any Jews left . . . I know that what I am asking is almost too much for you, but without your answer I cannot die in peace.<sup>1</sup>

Struggling inwardly, Wiesenthal chose not to answer, and he left the room without saying a word. The next day he learned that Karl had died.

At the end of his memoir, Wiesenthal addresses the reader directly:

The crux of the matter is, of course, the question of forgiveness. Forgetting is something that time alone takes care of, but forgiveness is an act of volition [a choice], and only the sufferer is qualified to make the decision.

<sup>1</sup> Simon Wiesenthal et al., *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*, rev. ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 2008), 54.

You, who have just read this sad and tragic episode in my life, can mentally change places with me and ask yourself the crucial question, "What would I have done?"<sup>2</sup>

While the details of Wiesenthal's story have never been verified, his tale still challenges readers to examine the nature of forgiveness, justice, and responsibility. The book also contains a collection of essays by religious leaders, scholars, journalists, and survivors of the Holocaust and other genocides, all responding to the question Wiesenthal poses at the end of his memoir.

Novelist Rebecca Goldstein suggests that forgiveness for the Nazis' crimes is impossible:

Yes, the SS man came to see, to some extent, his guilt, but not, I think, to the full extent in which that guilt exists and always will. For had he understood the enormity of his crimes, he would never have dared ask for forgiveness. Never. To have truly seen his guilt would have been to know himself as utterly dispossessed of all chances for forgiveness. It would have been to know himself as having forfeited forever any questionable right to "die in peace." Perhaps then, and only then, in knowing his absolute unforgivability, would it even be conceivable that he be granted forgiveness—and only by those burning souls, multiplied by millions.<sup>3</sup>

Author Cynthia Ozick also rejects forgiveness:

[F]orgiveness is pitiless. It forgets the victim. It negates the right of the victim to his own life. It blurs over suffering and death. It drowns the past. It cultivates sensitiveness toward the murderer at the price of insensitiveness toward the victim.<sup>4</sup>

Rabbi Harold Kushner has a different perspective:

Forgiving is not something we do for another person, as the Nazi asked Wiesenthal to do for him. Forgiving happens inside us. It represents a letting go of a sense of grievance, and perhaps most importantly a letting go of the role of victim. For a Jew to forgive the Nazis would not mean, God forbid, saying to them "What you did was understandable, I can understand what led you to do it and I don't hate you for it." It would mean saying "What you did was thoroughly despicable and puts you outside the category of decent human beings. But I refuse to give you the power to define me as a victim. I refuse to let your blind hatred define the shape and content of my Jewishness. I don't hate you; I reject you." And then the Nazi would remain chained to his past and to his conscience, but the Jew would be free.<sup>5</sup>

Minister and scholar Hubert Locke roots his response in Wiesenthal's silence:

You ask if your silence to the dying Nazi's pleas for forgiveness was right or wrong . . . No, I cannot answer your question of right and wrong, your silence was your answer and perhaps it should be ours as well. There is much that silence might teach us, if we could but learn to listen to it. Not the least of its lessons is that there may well be questions for which there are no answers and other ques-

2 Wiesenthal et al., *The Sunflower*, 97–98.

3 Ibid., 151–52.

4 Ibid., 216.

5 Ibid., 186.

tions for which the answers would remove the moral force of the question. There are matters that perhaps should always remain unanswered; questions which should lie like a great weight on our consciences so that we continually feel an obligation to confront their insistent urging. There are questions that are unanswerable queries of the soul, matters too awe-full for human response, too demonic for profound rational resolution. By our silence, perhaps we acknowledge as much; we own up to our humanness. We concede that we are not gods and that we lack, as much as we might be loath to admit it, the capacity to provide understanding and assurance for every inexplicable moment in life.<sup>6</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What is the dilemma for Simon Wiesenthal when Karl asks him for forgiveness? Why is this dilemma so difficult?
2. What range of responses to Wiesenthal's "crucial question" ("What would I have done?") is shown in the four excerpted essays? Which response is most like your own feelings on the question? Which response pushes your thinking in a new direction?
3. What is forgiveness? Who is forgiveness for? How has Simon Wiesenthal's story added to your thinking on this subject? What other stories and experiences have shaped your perspective on forgiveness?
4. What is the relationship between justice and forgiveness? What is the role of forgiveness in the aftermath of an atrocity?

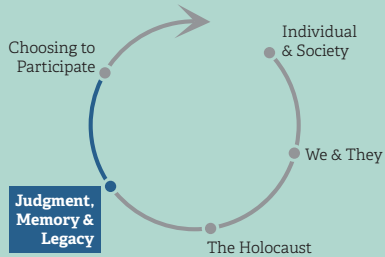
6 Wiesenthal et al., *The Sunflower*, 202–03.

## Chapter 10 Analysis and Reflection

1. How do you define justice? After reading this chapter, is your understanding of justice more complicated? Is justice in relation to the Holocaust possible?
2. What purpose did the Nuremberg trials serve? Who or what did they benefit? What difference did the trials make? What were they unable to achieve?
3. What objections did people make to the Nuremberg trials? What complicated the task of achieving justice? How did Allied leaders and others involved in the trials respond to those challenges?
4. Which readings in this chapter complicated your thinking about who was responsible for what happened during the Holocaust? Which readings complicated your thinking about human behavior?
5. What role does “moral luck” play in influencing the choices that individuals make in specific times and places? Does considering the idea of “moral luck” affect how you judge the actions of others, especially those who lived in the past? Does it affect how you evaluate your own choices and your own potential for good or evil?



## Chapter 11



3605 / Alamy Stock Photo

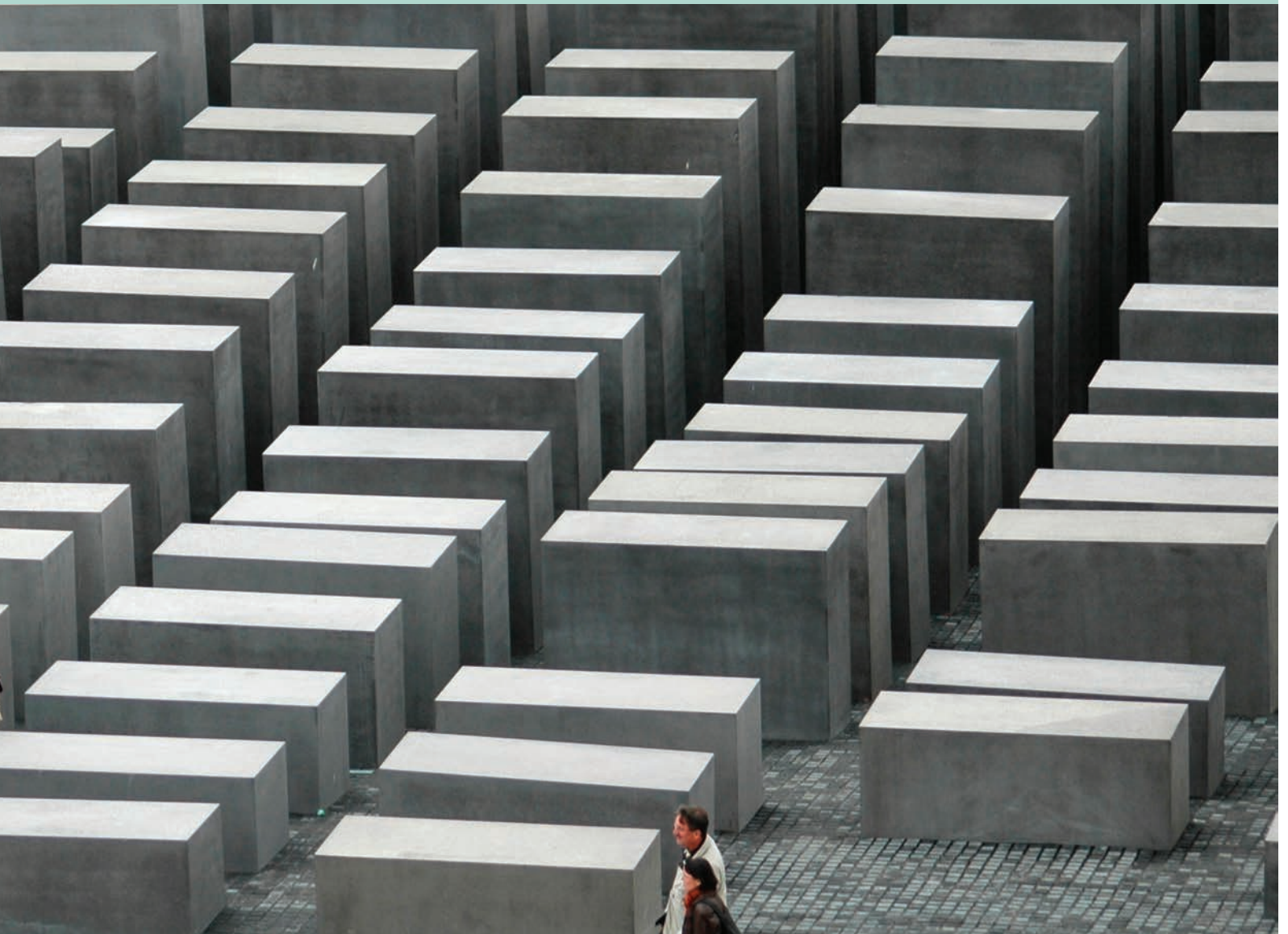
# Legacy and Memory





## Overview

The Holocaust and World War II left profound legacies—in the shape of the immediate aftermath of the war and the decades that followed, in the lives of individuals and the course of nations, and in the new ideas, laws, policies, and institutions that were developed in response to the death and destruction. This chapter explores some of those legacies, and it also considers what it means not just to learn about this history but also to remember it and acknowledge how it influences our lives today.



## Essential Questions

- What can individuals or nations do to repair, rebuild, and restore their societies after war, genocide, and mass violence?
- How should we remember the Holocaust?
- How does the past influence us as individuals and as members of society? Does the past influence us differently depending on our individual identities?
- Why is it important to remember the past? What are the consequences of not remembering?

Soon after Germany's surrender in May 1945, which ended World War II in Europe, the Allies began efforts to seek justice, to hold the guilty accountable, and to establish an international rule of law, a process that was explored in Chapter 10. The trials at Nuremberg were just the first attempt to respond meaningfully to the war and the systematic murders that we now call the Holocaust. This process of reckoning, or coming to terms, with the history of the Holocaust is one that continues today among historians, survivors and their descendants, politicians, citizens, and students. As American author James Baldwin has said, in writing about America's history of slavery:

History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do.<sup>1</sup>

Baldwin suggests that we won't really understand history or ourselves unless we consider how the past is "present" in our world. And the Holocaust—which historians describe as not merely a significant moment in history but a "collapse in human civilization"<sup>2</sup> and a "symbol of evil"<sup>3</sup>—exerts an especially powerful force. Author Eva Hoffman, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, has observed, "Sixty years after the Holocaust took place, our reckoning with this defining event is far from over. Indeed, as this immense catastrophe recedes from us in time, our preoccupation with it seems only to increase."<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the Nuremberg trials, new institutions, laws, policies, and ideas were developed in response to the death and destruction of World War II and the Holocaust. Among these were the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Criminal Court, and the concept of *genocide*—a new term to describe a crime that before was nameless. But the legacy of the Holocaust consists of more than institutions, laws, and ideas; what happened then has continued to have a profound influence on the lives of individuals to this day. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks has written, there is a difference between history and memory: "History is information. Memory, by contrast, is part of identity. . . . Memory is the past as present, as it lives on in me."<sup>5</sup> Survivors, witnesses, the descendants of those who lived this history, and all those who learn

1 James Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt," *Ebony*, August 1965, 47.

2 "The President's Commission on the Holocaust: Guiding Principles," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed June 1, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission/guiding-principles>.

3 Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), x.

4 Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), ix.

5 Jonathan Sacks, *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's Haggadah: Hebrew and English Text with New Essays and Commentary* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 29.

about it today face the question of how to remember the past and how that memory might shape our understanding of ourselves and our present world.

The readings in this chapter span the period from 1945 to the twenty-first century, reflecting ways that legacy and memory are made evident in the lives of individuals, in institutions, in memorials, and on city streets. Teachers should select readings that best match their aims and objectives as well as the questions and interests of their students.

## Reading 1

# The End and the Beginning

Wisława Szymborska is a Nobel Prize-winning poet who grew up in Poland in the years between the two world wars. In this poem, titled “The End and the Beginning,” she writes of the adjustments made in the aftermath of every war.

After every war  
someone has to tidy up.  
Things won’t pick  
themselves up, after all.

Someone has to shove  
the rubble to the roadsides  
so the carts loaded with corpses  
can get by.

Someone has to trudge  
through sludge and ashes,  
through the sofa springs,  
the shards of glass,  
the bloody rags.

Someone has to lug the post  
to prop the wall,  
someone has to glaze the window,  
set the door in its frame.

No sound bites, no photo opportunities,  
and it takes years.  
All the cameras have gone  
to other wars.

The bridges need to be rebuilt,  
the railroad stations, too.  
Shirtsleeves will be rolled  
to shreds.

Someone, broom in hand,  
still remembers how it was.  
Someone else listens, nodding  
his unshattered head.  
But others are bound to be bustling nearby  
who'll find all that  
a little boring.

From time to time someone still must  
dig up a rusted argument  
from underneath a bush  
and haul it off to the dump.

Those who knew  
what this was all about  
must make way for those  
who know little.  
And less than that.  
And at last nothing less than nothing.

Someone has to lie there  
in the grass that covers up  
the causes and effects  
with a cornstalk in his teeth,  
gawking at clouds.<sup>1</sup>



PhotosNormandie, CC BY-SA 2.0, flickr.com/photos/photosnormandie

**Two brothers look down at their devastated town in the French countryside, Agneaux, as an American military Jeep drives by. The brothers' father was executed by the Germans in 1944.**

## Connection Questions

1. What kinds of challenges face a society in the immediate aftermath of war or mass violence? What are some of the challenges for the generations who grow up in a post-war society?
2. What images does the poem evoke? What do you picture as you read different stanzas of the poem? What imagery best represents the way you picture Europe as it looked after World War II?
3. In what sense is the end of a war also a beginning?

<sup>1</sup> Wislawa Szymborska, "The End and the Beginning," in *View with a Grain of Sand: Selected Poems*, trans. Stanislaw Baranczak and Clare Cavanagh (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1995), 178–80.



## Reading 2

# Post-War: Chaos and Challenges



Watch **Reconciling Identities after the War**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Friendship before, during, and after the War**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Caring for Survivors**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

After the German surrender in May 1945, World War II ended in Europe. Its most immediate legacies were death, devastation, and misery. The scale and speed of the conflict had been unprecedented: the war ended up killing at least 19 million non-combatant civilians in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Of those, 6 million were Jews, a full two-thirds of the pre-war Jewish population of Europe. For all those who remained, Jews and non-Jews, the end of the war did not bring an end to their problems. Historian Doris Bergen explains:

The arrival of allied forces and the collapse of Nazi Germany were not miracles that could undo or even stop the spirals of violence and misery unleashed by years of brutality . . . Whether they had been victims, perpetrators, or bystanders in Nazi barbarity—and many Europeans had reason to count themselves in more than one of those categories—people faced the challenge of building lives for themselves and what was left of their families and communities with scarce resources and restricted freedom, and in a climate of distrust and grief.<sup>2</sup>

The victorious Allies were faced with difficult decisions. How would they treat Germany and other defeated Axis powers? What would they do about the millions of people displaced by the war who were now homeless and often starving? Would it be possible to rebuild peace and stability in Europe? In August 1945, the Allies issued a communiqué that said:

It is not the intention of the Allies to destroy or enslave the German people. It is the intention of the Allies that the German people be given the opportunity to prepare for the eventual reconstruction of their life on a democratic and peaceful basis. If their own efforts are steadily directed to this end, it will be possible for them in due course to take their place among the free and peaceful people of the world.<sup>3</sup>

The Allies were determined to destroy what remained of the Nazi Party and to hold its leaders accountable for their crimes (see Chapter 10). Germany would be disarmed, its boundaries redrawn, and the country divided into four “zones of occupation.” Each zone would be governed by one of the Allied powers: the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. At meetings between Allied leaders in 1945, they expressed a desire to restore democracy in Germany.<sup>4</sup> But the work of reconstruction in Europe would only become more complicated as the democratic western Allies and the

1 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 18.

2 Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 224.

3 “Joint Report with Allied Leaders on the Potsdam Conference” (August 2, 1945), Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/viewpapers.php?pid=98>.

4 “Berlin Potsdam Conference, 1945,” *American Experience: Truman* (PBS website), accessed July 11, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/truman-potsdam/>.



communist Soviet Union competed for influence on the continent and their rivalries later hardened into what became known as the Cold War.

As the Allies made their plans, more than 10 million Europeans were on the move. Doris Bergen writes, "World War II sparked the movement of the largest number of people in the shortest period of time that the world had ever known. Refugees, fugitives, displaced persons, deportees, and expellees jammed the roadways and waterways of Europe and spilled over into Central Asia and the Americas."<sup>5</sup>

As soon as the war ended, the Allies tried to send all of those displaced persons (DPs) home as quickly as possible. Each of the Allied nations took responsibility for displaced persons in their own sector of Germany. Until transportation became available, they set up emergency centers to provide food, shelter, and medical care for the refugees. The project was extraordinarily successful: millions of people were home within weeks of the war's end. Yet despite the Allies' efforts, about 1.5 million DPs were still in emergency centers six months after the war.

How the Allies treated DPs depended on the DPs' nationalities. Displaced persons from Allied nations received better treatment than those from Germany, Hungary, and other Axis nations. To many officials at the time, that policy seemed fair. To many Jews and other victims of the Nazis, it did not. It meant, for example, that German Jews recently liberated from concentration camps were treated as enemy aliens, not as survivors of an atrocity.

In February 1946, former American First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt visited displaced-persons camps in Germany. In her weekly newspaper column, she described some of what she saw:

There is a feeling of desperation and sorrow in this camp which seems beyond expression. An old woman knelt on the ground, grasping my knees. I lifted her up, but could not speak. What could one say at the end of a life which had brought her such complete despair?<sup>6</sup>

You can measure the extent of damage done to cities, you can restore water supplies, gas and electricity, and you can rebuild the buildings needed to establish a military government. But how to gauge what has happened to human beings—that is incalculable.<sup>7</sup>

These survivors often had already lost during the war years not only their homes and belongings but also much of what gave them their identity—their families, their physical appearance, their liberties, and their hopes. Displaced-persons camps were overcrowded and heavily guarded. Some were located in what had been Nazi concentration camps. Allied soldiers who managed DP camps were often bewildered or angered by the way Jewish survivors acted. Why did they sometimes fight for a loaf of bread

<sup>5</sup> Bergen, *War and Genocide*, 224.

<sup>6</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt, "February 16, 1946," *My Day*, *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers* digital edition, George Washington University, accessed June 1, 2016, [https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?\\_y=1946&\\_f=md000264](https://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1946&_f=md000264).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

or hoard food even when plenty was available? Why did some refuse to take showers or undergo de-lousing when other DPs did so without a fuss? The soldiers did not understand what was different about the Jewish DPs and how these survivors had been shaped by their experiences in Nazi camps. After hearing reports of poor camp conditions, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Allied military commander in Germany, agreed to create separate camps for Jewish DPs and to let Jewish relief agencies enter the camps so that they could work directly with survivors.

Many Jewish survivors tried to return to their pre-war homes and found that they were not welcome. Historian Tony Judt writes,

After years of anti-Semitic propaganda, local populations everywhere were not only disposed to blame 'Jews' in the abstract for their own suffering but were distinctly sorry to see the return of men and women whose jobs, possessions and apartments they had purloined. In the 4th arrondissement of Paris, on April 19, 1945, hundreds of people demonstrated in protest when a returning Jewish deportee tried to claim his (occupied) apartment. Before it was dispersed, the demonstration degenerated into a near-riot, the crowd screaming [*France for the French!*].<sup>8</sup>

The difficulty, even danger, of staying in Europe convinced many Jewish survivors to emigrate abroad. When they were able to obtain visas, they went to the United States, Latin America, South Africa, and to Jewish communities in Palestine. (The state of Israel was not established until 1948.)

The millions of displaced people within Europe also included Germans who had been settlers in lands conquered by the Third Reich during the war. As Nazi Germany claimed "Lebensraum," these settlers had taken over homes, land, and possessions from local people (see "Colonizing Poland" in Chapter 8). After the war, millions of German settlers were forcibly, even violently, expelled and sent back to Germany. Other ethnic Germans, whose families had lived in border regions like the Sudetenland for generations, also fled or were expelled. Allied opinion was divided about these expulsions. Joseph Stalin of the USSR saw them as a form of justice for Germany's crimes. Some British and American leaders were worried by the violence and the hardship caused by the expulsions, but they also feared that pent-up anger would lead to even greater violence against the settlers if they were not sent back to Germany. Leaders like Winston Churchill believed that the "mixture of populations" could cause "endless trouble."<sup>9</sup> Eventually, the German populations in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia had been expelled and returned to occupied Germany.

<sup>8</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 804–05.

<sup>9</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 406, col. 1483–4 (December 15, 1944), quoted in R. M. Douglas, *Orderly and Humane: The Expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 85.

## Connection Questions

1. What were some of the challenges facing the Allies at the end of World War II? What were some of the challenges faced by Jews and other survivors? What were some challenges facing Germans who had been defeated?
2. Who is responsible for refugees after a war?
3. What did Jewish survivors experience in the DP camps? Why was it important for authorities to recognize how these survivors' experiences differed from those of other people who had been displaced during the war?
4. What do you think about the expulsions of Germans from other European countries after the war? Were these expulsions a way of punishing Germans? A violation of rights? A necessary safety measure?

## Reading 3

# The Persistence of Antisemitism



Watch **Antisemitism after Liberation**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Within a few months of the end of the World War II, most people believed that in fact 6 million Jews had been murdered by Nazi Germany.<sup>1</sup> But the extraordinary violence that we now know as the Holocaust did not put an end to antisemitism in Europe.

Emil Draitser was born in Odessa, a city in Ukraine then under Soviet rule, just before the war. In 1945, when he and his mother returned from Uzbekistan (where they had hidden from the Germans), they quickly discovered that “the war was still giving off smoke in the hearts of those children who had grown up in it.” Draitser wrote:

For a long time after the war ended, in the quiet corners of Odessa streets, in the remote alleys of the parks, in the secluded places among the ruins, gangs of youngsters hunted for Jewish kids, survivors of the Holocaust, and harassed and beat them up, often till they bled.<sup>2</sup>

Antisemitism affected the way Jews were treated almost everywhere after the war, but feelings against Jews were especially strong in Poland. In the months after the war ended, more than 350 Jews were murdered there, and countless others were assaulted. Tensions between Polish Jews and non-Jewish Poles intensified after the Soviet Union, which had liberated Poland from the Germans, established a Communist government there. Poles increasingly saw themselves as victims of violence and oppression, first at the hands of the Nazis and now at the hands of the Soviets.

Concerned by the growing antisemitism in Poland, Joseph Tenenbaum, the president of the American-based World Federation of Polish Jews, met in June 1946 with Cardinal August Hlond, the head of the nation’s Catholic Church. Tenenbaum hoped to persuade the cardinal to take action to stop the violence. The cardinal refused. He insisted that Jews were being killed in retaliation for “the murder of the Christian population by the Jewish Communist-run Polish Government.”<sup>3</sup> This was just one example of the old stereotype of Jews as communists, which took on new life after the war as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) extended its influence over unwilling eastern European populations.

The need to help Polish Jews took on new urgency in July 1946. An eight-year-old boy in Kielce, a small city 120 miles south of Warsaw, had gone to

1 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 804.

2 Emil Draitser, *Shush! Growing Up Jewish under Stalin: A Memoir* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 16.

3 Joseph Tenenbaum, *In Search of a Lost People: The Old and the New Poland* (New York: Beechhurst Press, 1948), 238.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Leah Lahav

**Mourners in Kielce, Poland, gather around coffins after townspeople killed 42 Jews in an antisemitic rampage in 1946.**

visit friends in a nearby village without telling his family. His worried parents reported his disappearance to the police, and when he returned two days later, his father claimed that the boy had been kidnapped by Jews but had escaped. Soon, a rumor spread that other Christian children had been kidnapped and murdered.<sup>4</sup> Within hours, more than 1,000 angry protesters had surrounded a building owned by the Jewish community in Kielce and attacked every Jew inside. When the rampage ended, about 75 Jews were injured and 42 were dead, including a number of children.<sup>5</sup> Police officers and soldiers had both been on the scene, but none of them tried to stop the violence.

What caused the post-war violence against Jews, like the rampage in Kielce? Some think it arose from Poles' sense of guilt—for turning a blind eye to the murder of their neighbors, for helping the Germans, or for taking the belongings that Jews had left in their safekeeping. Some say it grew out of a long habit of antisemitism that predated Nazism by centuries. Others believe it was caused by fear that Jewish survivors would seek revenge on those who had betrayed them.

Even after such violence, many Europeans did not see Jews as worthy of special protection. Although they could not help knowing about the murder of millions of Jews, a consciousness of the significance of the Holocaust—and even the use of the term “Holocaust” itself—would not

<sup>4</sup> Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (New York: Random House, 2006), 83–84.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

emerge for decades. Jewish victims were subsumed into other national groups or such categories as “political deportees” or “victims of fascism,” if they were acknowledged at all. Most Europeans simply wanted to forget the years of the war and move on with their lives.

So, as historian Tony Judt writes,

After Germany’s defeat, many Jews in Eastern Europe pursued their wartime survival strategy: hiding their Jewish identity from their colleagues, their neighbors and even their children, blending as best they could into the post-war world and resuming at least the appearance of normal life. And not only in Eastern Europe. In France . . . taboos [against antisemitism] of a later generation had not yet taken hold, and behavior that would in time be frowned upon was still acceptable . . . In these circumstances, the choice for most of Europe’s Jews seemed stark: depart (for Israel once it came into existence, or America after its doors were opened in 1950) or else be silent and, so far as possible, invisible.<sup>6</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. How does this reading connect with the history you’ve already studied? In what ways does it surprise you or challenge your thinking?
2. Why do you think old myths, stereotypes, and hatred of Jews persisted after World War II, even after the Nazis were defeated and their ideas discredited?
3. In what ways might post-war life in Europe have activated antisemitism?
4. What choices did Jewish survivors face during this period? What options might have been available to them when they were confronted with antisemitism? Why might they have chosen not to identify themselves as Jews and as survivors?

<sup>6</sup> Judt, *Postwar*, 806–07.



## Reading 4

# The United Nations

In the midst of World War II, even as they struggled to defeat Germany and Japan, leaders of the Allied nations were also beginning to envision a new international institution that would ensure global peace and cooperation once the war ended. In 1941, before the United States had even entered the war, President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter, committing their countries to international collaboration and individual rights. At later meetings in Tehran, Yalta, and San Francisco, delegates from Allied nations developed a plan for a new organization that could replace the failed League of Nations.

## United Nations Founding Members



On June 26, 1945, 50 nations signed a charter to create the United Nations in order to promote international cooperation and human rights.

The Charter of the United Nations was signed on June 26, 1945, by leaders from 50 nations. President Harry Truman, who had taken office after Franklin Roosevelt's death that April, spoke at the closing ceremony. He called the UN Charter "a constitution—a charter for peace" and "a solid structure on which we can build a better world."<sup>1</sup>

The preamble to the UN Charter states:

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED

- to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and
- to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and
- to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples,

HAVE RESOLVED TO COMBINE OUR EFFORTS TO ACCOMPLISH THESE AIMS

Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, who have exhibited their full powers found to be in good and due form, have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations and do hereby establish an international organization to be known as the United Nations.<sup>2</sup>

The UN Charter went into effect on October 24, 1945; immediately afterward, it was ratified by a majority of the countries that had attended the San Francisco meeting. There were 51 founding member countries. The map on the previous page highlights these countries. By 2016, the United Nations included 193 countries—nearly all of the independent states on earth.

<sup>1</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Address in San Francisco at the Closing Session of the United Nations Conference" (June 26, 1945), The American Presidency Project, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=12188>.

<sup>2</sup> "Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations," United Nations, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/>.

## Connection Questions

1. What kind of community did the United Nations seek to create after the war? Create an identity chart for this community. How might this community define its universe of obligation? What tools might this community use to achieve its goals?
2. In what ways was the UN Charter a response to the atrocities of World War II? What parts of this vision do you think have become closer to reality? In what areas do we still have a long way to go?
3. The United States never joined the League of Nations, the international organization that was formed after World War I as part of the Treaty of Versailles. Why do you think the United States chose to join the United Nations after World War II? What might have changed?
4. Is there value in having an agreement whose goals may seem difficult or even impossible to achieve?

## Reading 5

# The Universal Declaration of Human Rights



RESOURCE

Explore **Fundamental Freedoms: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**  
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The devastation of World War II sparked an international desire for peace. It also encouraged the creation of a system of principles that could ensure the protection of basic human rights and dignity. Eleanor Roosevelt, the widow of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was one of the first American delegates to the United Nations. A longtime activist on behalf of minorities, women, workers, and refugees, Roosevelt became the chairperson of the UN Commission on Human Rights. She worked with a small group of representatives from countries around the world to define the most essential universal rights and establish them in an official document. On December 10, 1948, she urged the United Nations General Assembly to approve the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):

In giving our approval to the Declaration today, it is of primary importance that we keep clearly in mind the basic character of the document. It is not a treaty; it is not an international agreement. It is not and does not purport to be a statement of law or of legal obligation. It is a Declaration of basic principles of human rights and freedoms, to be stamped with the approval of the General Assembly by formal vote of its members, and to serve as a common standard of achievement for all peoples of all nations.

We stand today at the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind. This Universal Declaration of Human Rights may well become the international Magna Carta of all men everywhere. We hope its proclamation by the General Assembly will be an event comparable to the proclamation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man by the French people in 1789, the adoption of the Bill of Rights by the people of the United States, and the adoption of comparable declarations at different times in other countries.

At a time when there are so many issues on which we find it difficult to reach a common basis of agreement, it is a significant fact that 58 states have found such a large measure of agreement in the complex field of human rights. This must be taken as testimony of our common aspiration first voiced in the Charter of the United Nations to lift men everywhere to a higher standard of life and to a greater enjoyment of freedom. Man's desire for peace lies behind this Declaration. The realization that the flagrant violation of human rights by Nazi and Fascist countries sowed the seeds of the last world war has supplied the impetus for the work which brings us to the moment of achievement here today. . . .

This Declaration is based upon the spiritual fact that man must have freedom in which to develop his full stature and through common effort to raise the level of human dignity. We have much to do to fully achieve and to assure the rights set forth in this Declaration. But having them put before us with the moral backing of 58 nations will be a great step forward.<sup>1</sup>

## THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states fundamental rights and freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others.

We are all born free and equal.

Everyone is entitled to these rights no matter your race, religion, sex, language, or nationality.

Everyone has the right to life, freedom, and safety.

No one can take away any of your rights.

<p>No one has the right to hold you in slavery. </p>	<p>You have the right to seek asylum in another country if you are persecuted in your own. </p>	<p>Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage, and membership in a trade union. </p>
<p>No one has the right to torture you. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to a nationality. </p>	<p>You have the right to leisure and rest from work. </p>
<p>You have a right to be recognized everywhere as a person before the law. </p>	<p>All consenting adults have the right to marry and to raise a family. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family. </p>
<p>We are all equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law. </p>	<p>You have the right to own property. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to an education. </p>
<p>You have the right to seek legal help if your rights are violated. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to belong to a religion. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to freely participate in the culture and scientific advancement of their community, and their intellectual property as artist or scientist should be protected. </p>
<p>No one has the right to wrongly imprison you or force you to leave your country. </p>	<p>You have the right to think and voice your opinions freely. </p>	<p>We are all entitled to a social order in which we may enjoy these rights. </p>
<p>You have a right to a fair, public trial. </p>	<p>Everyone has the right to gather as a peaceful assembly. </p>	<p>Everyone's rights and freedoms should be protected unless they obstruct the rights and freedoms of others. </p>
<p>Everyone is innocent until proven guilty. </p>	<p>You have the right to participate in the governance of your country, either directly or by helping to choose representatives in free and genuine elections. </p>	<p>No State, group, or person can use this Declaration to deny the rights and freedoms of others. </p>
<p>You have the right to privacy. No one can interfere with your reputation, family, home, or correspondence. </p>	<p>You have the right to social security and are entitled to economic, social, and cultural help from your government. </p>	
<p>You have the right to travel. </p>		

This is a simplified version of the UDHR. For the complete text, visit [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

**The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948. It states the basic rights and freedoms to which all people are entitled.**

<sup>1</sup> From Eleanor Roosevelt, "On the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," in *Great Speeches by American Women*, ed. James Daley (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2008), 128–29.

The United Nations approved the declaration, but the work of the commission was only partially done. The UDHR, in Roosevelt's words, "would say to the peoples of the world 'this is what we hope human rights may mean to all people in the years to come.'" The second part of the commission's work was to be "a covenant which would be in the form of a treaty to be presented to the nations of the world." Every nation that ratified the treaty "would then be obligated to change its laws wherever they did not conform to the points contained in the covenant."<sup>2</sup> The commission thought a treaty might be worked out within the next few years, but this hope proved to be too optimistic. The work to secure human rights around the world remains an ongoing struggle.

### Connection Questions

1. How does the UDHR differ from an international agreement or a "statement of law"?
2. In what ways was the UDHR a response to the past? In what ways did it present a responsibility for future generations?
3. Are there individual human rights that take precedence over the policies or declarations of any nation? Are there communal needs that might take precedence over the rights of an individual?
4. What needs to happen for the ideals expressed in the UDHR to become a reality?
5. The idea that there is a set of "universal" rights for people everywhere in the world remains controversial. Look up the full text of the UDHR online. Do the rights enumerated in the UDHR seem to fit all of the diverse cultures and belief systems across the globe? What rights do you think should be enjoyed universally by all people?

<sup>2</sup> From Eleanor Roosevelt, "The Struggle for Human Rights," speech delivered September 28, 1948, in Paris, France, available from American Rhetoric, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/eleanorroosevelt.htm>.



## Reading 6

# Does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Matter?

What did the authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) achieve? Soon after the declaration was adopted in 1948, critics spoke up. Why had no binding legal agreement or covenant been created? Were the prospects for completing a successful covenant and for its enforcement bright or dim?

Eleanor Roosevelt, chair of the UN Commission on Human Rights, acknowledged that no part of the document could be enforced legally. But to place the emphasis on that fact was to underestimate the declaration's power. Roosevelt made it clear that she and her colleagues had "great belief . . . in the force of documents which do express ideals." They were aware that although words, ideas, and ideals may mean little by themselves, they hold great power when they are widely explained and accepted: "They carry no weight unless the people know them, unless the people understand them, unless the people demand that they be lived."<sup>1</sup>

A few years later, Eleanor Roosevelt gave a speech before the United Nations that she titled "Where Do Human Rights Begin?" In her view, human rights begin

in small places, close to home—so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.<sup>2</sup>

Three quarters of a century after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, the ideal of human rights is widely recognized, even as individuals' rights are routinely violated around the world. Still, there is evidence of progress. Language from the UDHR has been written into the constitutions of a number of countries. More than 80 international declarations and treaties trace their origins to the UDHR, including the

1 Eleanor Roosevelt, "Making Human Rights Come Alive," in *What I Hope to Leave Behind: The Essential Essays of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Allida M. Black (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995), 563.

2 Eleanor Roosevelt, "Where Do Human Rights Begin?," in *Courage in a Dangerous World: The Political Writings of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Allida M. Black (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 190.

Convention against Torture (1984) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). When countries ratify these and other treaties, they acknowledge human rights and accept a legal obligation to protect them. All United Nations member countries have ratified at least one of nine major human rights treaties, and many have ratified more.<sup>3</sup> The European Union has its own Court of Human Rights for citizens. The UDHR has also influenced the work of non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, just two of thousands of groups that work to promote and monitor human rights around the world. While human rights remain far from universally respected and protected, individuals today have access to ways of spelling out, claiming, and defending their rights that were unimaginable in the darkest moments of World War II.

### Connection Questions

1. What is the power or potential of a document like the UDHR? What has the UDHR accomplished? What are its limitations? Is there value in having an agreement whose goals may seem difficult or even impossible to achieve?
2. How might the UDHR influence the way countries define their universe of obligation?
3. Eleanor Roosevelt believed that human rights begin in “small places, close to home,” such as in neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. What meaning do human rights have for you in your everyday life? Are human rights valued and protected in your school and community? How do you know?

<sup>3</sup> “The Foundation of International Human Rights Law,” United Nations, accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/foundation-international-human-rights-law/index.html>.

## Reading 7

# Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention

At the end of World War II, leaders and activists set out to build new institutions, like the United Nations, that could foster international cooperation and safeguard peace. They also worked to establish new international standards, laws, and treaties in the hope of preventing future crimes like those perpetrated by Nazi Germany. But before World War II ended, the Polish Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin had already been working for decades to make the world recognize mass murder as an international crime. The scale of atrocities in World War II gave Lemkin's mission a new urgency.

Lemkin was a university student in the 1920s when he learned about the coordinated massacres of Armenians during World War I (see "Genocide under the Cover of War" in Chapter 3). He was horrified to find out that no international laws existed to prosecute the Ottoman leaders who had perpetrated these crimes. Lemkin asked, "Why was killing a million people a less serious crime than killing a single individual?"<sup>1</sup> Forty-nine members of Lemkin's own family were later murdered in the Holocaust. Lemkin himself had fled to the United States, where he struggled to draw attention to what Nazi Germany was doing to European Jews—massacres that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called "a crime without a name."<sup>2</sup> In 1944, Lemkin made up a new word to describe these crimes: *genocide*. Lemkin defined genocide as "the destruction of a nation or an ethnic group." He built the word, he said, "from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing), thus corresponding in its formation to such words as tyrannicide, homicide, infanticide, etc." He wrote, "Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group."<sup>3</sup> This was an important element of the definition of genocide: people were killed or excluded not because of anything they did or said or thought but simply because they were members of a particular group. For Lemkin, genocide was an international crime—a threat to international peace and to humanity's shared beliefs.

When World War II ended, Lemkin returned to Europe and served as an advisor to Justice Robert H. Jackson, the lead prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials (see "The First Trial at Nuremberg" in Chapter 10). Lemkin considered the Nuremberg trials only a partial success, for while they did punish some



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Watch **Raphael Lemkin: Watcher of the Sky (Introduction)**

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Watch **Raphael Lemkin: Watcher of the Sky (The Genocide Convention)**

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Explore **Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

1 Raphael Lemkin, "Genocide," *American Scholar* 15, no. 2 (1946): 228.

2 Winston Churchill, *Never Give In! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches* (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 300.

3 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, 2nd ed. (Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2008), 79.

of those who were guilty of genocide against European Jews, Nazi leaders were indicted on the broader charge of “crimes against humanity” and the Jewish identity of victims was not emphasized. Genocide still was not recognized in law as a crime. Lemkin wrote, “In brief, the Allies decided a case in Nuremberg against a past Hitler—but refused to envisage future Hitlers.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, after the trials, Lemkin devoted himself to persuading the newly formed United Nations to “enter into an international treaty which would formulate genocide as an international crime, providing for its prevention and punishment in time of peace and war.”<sup>5</sup>

Lemkin successfully persuaded the UN to act. On December 9, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, often called the Genocide Convention, which classified genocide as a crime under international law and incorporated many, though not all, of Lemkin’s ideas. (It did not offer protection for political groups, for example, as he had recommended.) The convention states, in part:

### Article I

The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and punish.

### Article II

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

### Article III

The following acts shall be punishable:

- (a) Genocide;
- (b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- (c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;

4 Raphael Lemkin, *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin*, ed. Donna-Lee Frieze (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 118.

5 Lemkin, “Genocide,” 230.

- (d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- (e) Complicity in genocide.

#### Article IV

Persons committing genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1950s, a sufficient number of countries had ratified the convention, and it entered into force (although the United States did not ratify it until 1986). In 1998, a permanent International Criminal Court was established, with jurisdiction over the most important international crimes, including genocide (see Reading 8, “The International Criminal Court”). Lemkin’s contribution was enormous, though he died before he could witness a conviction for the crime he was the first to name.

### Connection Questions

1. Raphael Lemkin spoke of the importance of envisaging “future Hitlers.” What did he mean? Why might it have been important to imagine “future Hitlers” even when leaders were still trying to address the crimes of the Nazis?
2. Numerous words that described mass killings were available to Lemkin, including “crimes against humanity,” “slaughter,” “race murder,” and others. He rejected all of them in favor of a word he made up himself. Does the word *genocide* convey something the other terms do not?
3. When a people is destroyed, what is lost in addition to their lives? How does the Genocide Convention address these losses?
4. Lemkin believed that new words must be created when new ideas or events “strike at our consciousness.” How can coining new words help us understand old issues? What is the role of language in dealing with social problems? How do innovations in language educate those who use the language?
5. Despite the existence of the Genocide Convention, the crime of genocide has continued to be perpetrated. Since the convention was entered into force in 1951, genocides have occurred in Cambodia, in Rwanda, in Bosnia, in Darfur, and in other places around the world. Each genocide is unique, but does the persistence of genocide suggest anything generally about the limitations of international law in preventing this crime? What other tools could be used to prevent genocide? What should happen when such crimes are not successfully prevented?

<sup>6</sup> “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” Prevent Genocide International, accessed October 3, 2005, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm>.

## Reading 8

# The International Criminal Court



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The prosecution of Nazi leaders at the Nuremberg trials in 1945 and 1946 marked the first time that an international criminal court was established. In the years after the Nuremberg trials, activists such as Raphael Lemkin fought to establish new international laws designed to prevent and punish the most significant crimes, like those committed by the Nazis (see Reading 7, “Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention”). But enforcement of such laws remained a problem because there was no permanent international court empowered to bring charges against violators. After mass violence, “ethnic cleansing,” and genocide took place in Yugoslavia and Rwanda during the 1990s, two temporary courts were created by the United Nations Security Council to bring perpetrators to trial. The precedent of Nuremberg laid the groundwork for these temporary tribunals.

The temporary nature of the international courts, along with continued violence around the world, raised several questions: Was it possible to create a more permanent international criminal court? Would such a court act as a deterrent for the worst atrocities? What crimes would come under the jurisdiction of an international criminal court? Under what conditions would an international court be able to supersede the authority of national courts? To address these questions, representatives from more than 160 countries gathered in Rome in June 1998 at a meeting called the Rome conference. Because the representatives came from diverse cultures with differing views on justice, reaching agreement about the structure of an international criminal court required careful negotiation and compromise. Despite these challenges, the document drafted at this conference, the Rome Statute, was eventually approved, establishing the International Criminal Court. As of 2015, 123 countries had officially recognized the authority of the court.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) began investigating its first cases in 2002. Unlike the temporary international tribunals, it is independent of the United Nations. The ICC is a “court of last resort” and can begin legal proceedings only when the courts of individual countries cannot or will not act. It can accept cases when a member country requests its help, when the UN Security Council directs it to investigate, or when its own chief prosecutor decides to do so. Since its establishment, the ICC has opened investigations of crimes in ten countries, including Uganda, Sudan (for the situation in Darfur), the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, and the Central African Republic. It has convicted two Congolese warlords of war



crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>1</sup> Fatou Bensouda, the chief prosecutor of the ICC in 2016, said:

During the previous century, millions of people, many of them children, were victims of unimaginable atrocities. The International Criminal Court symbolizes the hope that by ending impunity [lack of punishment] for such crimes, we might prevent their occurrence and contribute to the peace, security, and well being of the world.<sup>2</sup>

The hopes voiced by Bensouda may seem obvious, but in practice, the ICC has proved to be controversial. Many powerful nations, including the United States, China, India, and Russia, have never officially ratified the Rome Statute and do not participate in the court. (Individuals and groups within those countries, however, are allowed to support and even work for the ICC.) Many countries feared that signing the treaty would undermine their sovereignty and make them vulnerable to outside interference in their affairs. They were also reluctant to expose their citizens, especially those in the military, to prosecution by the ICC. Critics have argued that the work of the ICC doesn't always serve the best interests of oppressed people. Legal observer Ted Galen Carpenter claims that

threatening to prosecute dictators and other offenders creates a powerful incentive for them to cling to power, even when a diplomatic deal might get them to go quietly into exile. There may be difficult tradeoffs between securing justice for victims and hastening the end of a brutal regime, but I.C.C. supporters tend to ignore that dilemma.<sup>3</sup>

Supporters of the ICC highlight how much the court has accomplished in spite of the challenges it faces. Legal scholar Margaret deGuzman says,

What is surprising, therefore, is not that the ICC has been unable to overcome political realities, but that it has accomplished as much as it has in its relatively short life. It has garnered the support of most of the world's states, opened numerous investigations and concluded several trials . . . [W]e must remember that the court operates in a politically constrained world and celebrate its achievements as much as we lament its shortcomings. By prosecuting the recruitment of child soldiers and crimes of sexual violence, the ICC has sent strong messages that the world condemns such crimes.<sup>4</sup>

Benjamin Ferencz is one of many Americans who have tried to convince their government to ratify the Rome Statute and officially join the ICC. In 1946, he served as chief prosecutor of Nazi criminals at the Nuremberg trials. This experience had a profound influence on Ferencz. He has said, "Nuremberg taught me that creating a world of tolerance and passion would be a long and arduous task. And I also learned that if we did not

1 "Situations Under Investigation," International Criminal Court, accessed June 2, 2016, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/pages/situations.aspx?ln=en>.

2 *The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court* (documentary film), directed by Pamela Yates (Skylight Pictures, 2009).

3 Ted Galen Carpenter, "At I.C.C., Due Process Deficiencies Mar Credibility," *New York Times*, December 11, 2014, accessed June 2, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/11/do-we-need-the-international-criminal-court/at-icc-due-process-deficiencies-mar-credibility>.

4 Margaret M. DeGuzman, "The I.C.C. Deserves Our Full Support," *New York Times*, December 11, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/11/do-we-need-the-international-criminal-court/the-icc-deserves-our-full-support>.

devote ourselves to developing effective world law, the same cruel mentality that made the Holocaust possible might one day destroy the entire human race.”<sup>5</sup> After Nuremberg, Ferencz made the pursuit of international justice his life’s work. In a 2009 film, he points out,

When I went to school, there was no such thing as human rights law. Humanitarian law didn’t exist. So I have seen these changes coming in our lifetime. That’s a long life, I’m in my 87th year, but it’s . . . a blink in the eye of time, of historical time. We need several generations to continue working on it . . . So it can be done, and we should never be defeatist and say it can’t be done. It’s so obviously correct that law is better than war, and that it’s better to live in peace with human rights than to live in war . . . <sup>6</sup>

### Connection Questions

1. What impact might the ICC have on those who directly participate in its trials, including plaintiffs, victims, and witnesses? What effect might seeing individuals put on trial and punished by the ICC have on the choices of people—leaders and citizens—around the world?
2. Fatou Bensouda made a connection between “ending impunity” and the prevention of future crimes. What is impunity? What evidence, from history and our world today, suggests that crimes can be prevented if individuals believe they will be punished for committing them? Can you think of any evidence that demonstrates that the fear of “getting caught” and punished does not stop individuals from committing crimes? Can you think of any other measures that might prevent people, especially those in positions of power, from committing crimes?
3. In a documentary film about the International Criminal Court called *The Reckoning*, a young ICC lawyer confides that “working here has made me realize that justice is easier said than done.” What do you think she means? What does the history of the ICC suggest about the challenges of achieving justice even when laws and courts are in place?
4. Do you think it is possible for legal systems to prevent violent conflict? Can you identify any examples, from history or from your own experience, of situations in which rules have prevented violence? What kinds of laws would best help communities and nations to avoid violent conflict?

5 Benjamin B. Ferencz, “Biography,” Ben B. Ferencz website, accessed October 22, 2009, <http://www.benferencz.org/index.php?id=3>.

6 Quoted in *The Reckoning*, Skylight Pictures.

## Reading 9

# Christian Churches and Antisemitism: New Teachings

The death and devastation caused by World War II prompted nations to make the new commitments to justice and peace that were embodied in the Nuremberg trials, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Genocide Convention, the International Criminal Court, and the United Nations itself. The war and the antisemitism that persisted afterward also made many people begin to rethink age-old religious teachings about the relationship between Christians and Jews.

By summer 1947, many feared that antisemitism in Poland and other parts of eastern and central Europe had reached a crisis level. Among them were 65 religious leaders and scholars from 19 nations—both Christians and Jews. At a meeting in Seelisberg, Switzerland, they expressed their concerns:

We have recently witnessed an outburst of antisemitism which has led to the persecution and extermination of millions of Jews. In spite of the catastrophe . . . antisemitism has lost none of its force, but threatens to extend to other regions, to poison the minds of Christians, and to involve humanity more and more in a grave guilt with disastrous consequences.<sup>1</sup>

The gathering at Seelisberg was not the first interfaith conference. A few Jews and Christians had been meeting since the early 1900s. However, the Seelisberg conference was the first to examine the roots of antisemitism by using as its starting point a critique written by a Jew—Jules Isaac.

Before the war, Isaac had been France's inspector general for education and the respected author of textbooks on French and world history. But when the Germans invaded France in 1940, he and his family were forced into hiding. Most of his family was discovered and shipped to Auschwitz. Only Isaac and his son survived the Holocaust.

During his years in hiding, Isaac tried to figure out why so many people in German-occupied Europe collaborated with the Nazis. He believed that one answer was the long history of the "teaching of contempt" for Jews and Judaism in Christian churches (see "Anti-Judaism before the Enlightenment" in Chapter 2). With the help of several Christian scholars, Isaac studied hundreds of church documents while hiding from the Nazis. He traced early

<sup>1</sup> "10 Points of Seelisberg: International Council of Christians and Jews (1947)," Center for Christian and Jewish Understanding, Sacred Heart University, accessed June 2, 2016, <http://www.sacredheart.edu/faithservice/centerforchristianandjewishunderstanding/documentsandstatements/10pointsofseelisburginternationalcouncilofchristiansandjews1947/>.

Christian hostility toward Jews to the years after the death of Jesus, when Jesus's followers began to break away from their Jewish roots and to identify themselves as members of a separate, even superior, faith. Isaac explained:

Christian [teaching], once started in this direction, never stopped. Utterly convinced of its rights, it has repeated and [spread] these mythical arguments tirelessly, with methodical thoroughness, through all the powerful means that were—and still are—at its disposal . . . The result is that the myths . . . have eventually taken on the shape and consistency of facts, of facts that have become incontestable. They have ended up by being accepted as though they were authentic history. They have become an integral part of Christian thinking; nay, of the thinking of all educated people living in a traditionally Christian civilization.<sup>2</sup>

Isaac's analysis led some Christian leaders at the conference to reconsider their church's traditional teachings about Jews. They created a document called the "Ten Points" that offered revised, more historically accurate teachings about the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. The first four points reminded Christians that their faith is deeply rooted in Judaism: "One God speaks to us all through the Old and the New Testaments." They noted that "Jesus was born of a Jewish mother" and that the "first disciples, apostles and first martyrs were Jews." And they emphasized that "the fundamental commandment of Christianity, to love God and one's neighbor," came from Hebrew scripture and "is binding upon both Christians and Jews in all human relationships, without any exception."<sup>3</sup>

The six remaining points made it clear that Jews and Judaism must no longer be presented negatively in Christian teaching. For example, the fifth point warned against praising Christianity by disparaging or mocking Judaism.

Christian churches continued to confront their legacy of antisemitism in the decades that followed. In 1965, Vatican II, a council of leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, approved a new official teaching document called *Nostra Aetate* (a Latin phrase that means "in our time"). *Nostra Aetate* condemned antisemitism and renounced the myth that Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. It reaffirmed the Church's belief in the validity of the Jewish faith and in an "eternal covenant" between the Jewish people and God. Changes in church doctrine were reinforced by changes in religious practice. For example, many Roman Catholics no longer said prayers referring to "perfidious [treacherous] Jews" during services on Good Friday.

These revised teachings, and others that have been revised more recently, have been influential, though many old myths persist. The work of Christian-Jewish dialogue continues.

2 Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 42.

3 "10 Points of Seelisburg," Center for Christian and Jewish Understanding.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the events of World War II cause a reexamination of Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism?
2. What conclusions did Jules Isaac reach about why so many people in German-occupied Europe collaborated with the Nazis?
3. What were some of the ideas outlined in the "Ten Points" document and Nostra Aetate? Why might they be important for Christians who are trying to understand Judaism?
4. What does it take to stamp out myths and misinformation that have persisted for centuries? What role do the teachings of religious leaders play? What else is necessary?
5. What role might religion play in creating divisions in society? What might be the role of religion in healing divisions or building bridges?
6. Where and how does antisemitism persist today? What must be done to combat it?

## Reading 10

# Survivors and Memory



RESOURCE

Explore **Survivors and Witnesses: Using Testimony in the Classroom**

[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



RESOURCE

Explore **Illuminations: The Art of Samuel Bak**

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The legacy of World War II and the Holocaust is visible in the new laws, new international institutions, and even new religious teachings that were created after the end of the war. The memories and stories of those who lived through and survived the Holocaust form another kind of legacy, less tangible but equally important.

The voices of survivors have become a central part of how we understand the Holocaust. Today there are hundreds of memoirs on library shelves and thousands of hours of recorded audio and video testimony in archives. After the war, these stories emerged only slowly. Some survivors preferred to remain silent or were discouraged from speaking; for others, sharing their experiences was simply too painful. And for many survivors, the desire to tell their stories was outweighed by the belief that those who weren't "there"—in the ghetto, in hiding, in the camps—could never truly understand. Author Elie Wiesel has said, "Only those who were there will ever know, and those who were there can never tell."<sup>1</sup> Sonia Weitz, a poet who survived five camps, prefaced her memoir by asking, "But how does one bear witness to the unspeakable? . . . Normal standards do not apply to the Holocaust. Even language fails and words like *hunger*, *fear*, *hot*, *cold*, and *pain* lose their meaning. In fact, the Holocaust is a crime without a language."<sup>2</sup>

The Italian scientist and author Primo Levi, who survived Auschwitz, wrote of how "[t]he need to tell our story to 'the rest', to make 'the rest' participate in it, had taken on for us, before our liberation and after, the character of an immediate and violent impulse, to the point of competing with our other elementary needs."<sup>3</sup> But even when they could find the words to speak, there was the fear that no one would listen. In one of his memoirs, Levi describes a recurring dream from his time in Auschwitz:

This is my sister here, with some unidentifiable friend and many other people. They are all listening to me and it is this very story that I am telling: the [train] whistle of three notes, the hard bed, my neighbor whom I would like to move but whom I am afraid to wake as he is stronger than me. I also speak diffusely of our hunger and of the lice-control, and of the Kapo who hit me on the nose and then sent me to wash myself as I was bleeding. It is an intense pleasure, physical, inexpressible, to be at home, among friendly people and to have so many things to recount: but I cannot help noticing that my listeners do not follow me. In fact, they are com-

1 Quoted in Walter Laqueur and Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 208.

2 Sonia Schreiber Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, Inc., 2012), x, <https://www.facinghistory.org/books-borrowing/i-promised-i-would-tell>.

3 Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 9.







The Family by Samuel Bak / Image Courtesy of Pucker Gallery

**Samuel Bak, *The Family*, 1974. Holocaust survivor Samuel Bak, whose artwork reflects his experience of the Holocaust, dedicated this painting to the memory of the perished members of his family.**

pletely indifferent, they speak confusedly of other things among themselves, as if I was not there. My sister looks at me, gets up, and goes away without a word . . .

[I awake and] [m]y dream stands in front of me, still warm, and although awake I am still full of its anguish: and then I remember that it is not a haphazard dream, but that I have dreamed it not once but many times since I arrived here, with hardly any variation of environments or details. I am now quite awake and I remember that I have recounted it to Alberto [a friend] and that he confided to me, to my amazement, that it is also his dream and the dream of many others, perhaps of everyone. Why does it happen? Why is the pain of every day translated so constantly into our dreams, in the ever-repeated scene of the unlistened-to story?<sup>4</sup>

Levi's troubling dream that no one would listen to his story was a reality in the lives of many survivors, especially in the years immediately after the war. Sonia Weitz describes how she began to talk about her Holocaust experiences years after her emigration to the United States:

I was nineteen years old when I began a new life in the United States. At that time, most Americans did not want to hear about the experiences of Holocaust survivors. (The word Holocaust was not even part of the vocabulary.) And most survivors did not have the will to talk about it, except among themselves. When some of us did break the silence and speak out, no one truly listened. Later, much later, some did listen, but very few heard. And so, in the beginning, I did not speak out. I concentrated, instead, on building a normal life. But what constituted a "normal life" to a survivor of the Holocaust? The young people I met in 1948 came from another world. They had grown up with their families, lived in houses, slept in beds, eaten three meals a day, and gone to school. I, on the other hand, had been starved and

<sup>4</sup> Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, 60.

brutalized . . . During the 1950s and 1960s, I lived my life in much the same way as other American wives and mothers, at least to outward appearances. My inner world, however, differed dramatically. Over and over again, I heard my mother's final words to me, "Remember to tell the world." But how was I to do this? How was I to tell a world that did not want to listen? How was I to speak of the unspeakable—words that I myself did not want to hear? . . . <sup>5</sup>

In the late 1970s, Weitz became aware of groups that were denying that the Holocaust had ever taken place. Despite the volumes of evidence, historical writings, and the testimony of survivors, Holocaust denial was on the rise. Weitz was moved to speak out:

When I first learned that historical revisionists were promoting books which claimed that the Holocaust had not taken place, I thought, "This must be a joke. How could seemingly intelligent people deny an event that had been so thoroughly documented by the murderers themselves?" . . . Later, in desperation, I consulted a lawyer. He seemed to understand my outrage and seriously suggested that I sue for defamation of soul. I felt a little better. I calmed down. Then, I began to think about the indignity of having to defend an undeniable truth, and I decided against legal action. But I had to do something! I could not remain silent! "Well, I'll do it my way," I told myself. "After all, I do have a weapon. I am a survivor, an eyewitness, and it is about time that I speak out."<sup>6</sup>

Whether they share their stories or prefer to keep silent, survivors live with the memory of their experiences. Isabella Leitner, a Hungarian survivor of Auschwitz, wrote about what the month of May means to her each year:

May is such a "big" month . . . May 1st is my sister's birthday. There is something special about being born on May 1st, and dear little Rachel is special. There is something special about being born any time in May—May 1st, May 28th. The scent of spring is delicious. It permeates the air. It sings the song of birth, of life. All is drenched in sun. The earth smiles. It is happy you are here.

The world ended in May. I was born in May. I died in May. We started the journey of ugliness on May 29th. We headed for Auschwitz. We arrived on May 31st. The scent of spring wasn't delicious. The earth didn't smile. It shrieked in pain . . .

For more than twenty years I have walked zombie-like toward the end of May, deeply depressed, losing jobs, losing lovers, uncomprehending. And then June would come, and there would be new zeal, new life.

Now I am older, and I don't remember all the pain, and June hurts, and so does May. May laughs sometimes, and so does June, and now in May I bend down to smell the flowers, and for moments I don't recall the smell of burning flesh. That is not happiness, only relief, and relief is blessed. Now I want to reinstate the month of May. I want to reincarnate the month, reincarnate the dead. I want to tell my mother that I kept her faith, that I lived because she wanted me to, that the

<sup>5</sup> Schreiber Weitz, *I Promised I Would Tell*, 87.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 88–89.

strength she imbued me with is not for sale, that the god in man is worth living for, and I will make sure that I hand that down to those who come after me.<sup>7</sup>

Survivors did hand down their personal histories to their children and grandchildren, in ways that were planned, as Leitner describes, and also unplanned. Old photos of unknown family members, a mother's insistence that her children always finish their dinner, a tattooed number glimpsed on a grandfather's arm—these were some of the ways that survivors' descendants gained awareness of their family history. Author Eva Hoffman was born in Poland just after World War II ended, to parents who had survived the Holocaust. She writes:

In my home, as in so many others, the past broke through in the sounds of nightmares, the idiom of sighs and illness, of tears and the acute aches that were the legacy of the damp attic and of the conditions my parents endured during their hiding . . .

Many others who grew up in households like mine remember the torn, incoherent character of those first communications about the Holocaust, the speech broken under the pressure of pain . . . For it was precisely the indigestibility of these utterances, their fearful weight of densely packed feeling, as much as any specific content, that I took in as a child. The fragmentary phrases lodged themselves in my mind like shards, like the deadly needles I remember from certain fairy tales, which pricked your flesh and could never be extracted again.<sup>8</sup>

This emotional legacy of a parent's trauma could be a burden. Sara Greenberg, the granddaughter of survivors, describes how it could also be a treasured inheritance:

A family's history will echo from generation to generation as stories from the past are retold. My grandparents are survivors of the Holocaust . . . As a young child I had always noticed the number on my grandfather's arm. What did it mean? Why didn't other grandparents have a number? . . . It was important to him that I understand and that I learn from his story . . .

I have heard and told my grandfather's story numerous times. I have vowed to never forget his story. But watching my grandfather address a group of Israeli soldiers, his heroes, in [Auschwitz], a place where over a million Jews were annihilated, his story suddenly took on a new meaning. As the last living link to survivors of Auschwitz and the Holocaust, it is my generation's responsibility to tell the story of our grandparents. No other generation can ever touch a forearm branded with a numbered tattoo. No other generation can ever walk through the barracks of Auschwitz personally accompanied by stories of what it looked like, what it smelled like. We, the third generation, have the obligation to transmit our grandparents' stories to the world and to future generations. May we never forget.<sup>9</sup>

7 From Isabella Leitner and Irving A. Leitner, *Fragments of Isabella: A Memoir of Auschwitz* (New York: Crowell, 1978), 94.

8 Eva Hoffman, *After Such Knowledge: Memory, History, and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (Perseus Books, 2004), 9–11.

9 *B-2247: A Granddaughter's Understanding* (short film, 2012), directed by Sara Greenberg, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/b-2247-granddaughters-understanding?backlink=1>.

## Connection Questions

1. What do the survivors' testimonies in this reading suggest about how the experience of living through the Holocaust shaped these survivors' identities? How did it shape their children's and grandchildren's identities?
2. What has made many Holocaust survivors decide to talk about what they have experienced? What has telling their stories meant for them? Why might other survivors choose not to share their experiences?
3. Why do you think Primo Levi and his fellow prisoners dreamed so often of the "unlistened-to story"? What might that dream have to do with their experiences in the past? With their expectations of the future?
4. How does Samuel Bak's painting *The Family* echo the stories of loss and survival shared in this reading? How does it add to your understanding of what it might mean to be a survivor of the Holocaust?
5. Have you ever heard a Holocaust survivor speak? If so, what stood out to you in that experience? What would you want to ask a survivor if you had the chance?
6. What can we learn from the stories of survivors of the Holocaust or of the mass atrocities that have occurred since? How might their stories help us to better understand those moments of history? How might they help us to better understand human behavior?

## Reading 11

# Transitional Justice in Germany

One of the most profound and most difficult legacies of the Holocaust is the crime of genocide itself and the wounds it left individuals and whole societies with. The oppression, violence, and mass killings changed the lives of victims and survivors; they also left a legacy that perpetrators and bystanders had to live with. Chapter 10 explored the challenge of seeking justice after genocide through the Nuremberg tribunal and other trials whose goal was to hold leading Nazis accountable for their crimes during World War II. Trials like these may be a necessary part of the search for justice after mass violence, but they leave many questions unresolved. Can a nation as a whole be held responsible for crimes? Is it possible to make amends for genocide and crimes against humanity? What is owed to the victims? Is it possible to restore peace between different groups and to repair society? These questions are the focus of “transitional justice,” the term scholars use to describe the variety of actions a society can take as it emerges from a period of war, injustice, and mass violence and tries to move toward a better future.

Legal scholar Martha Minow has explored some of the dilemmas of transitional justice. She writes:

[S]ocieties have to struggle over how much to acknowledge, whether to punish, and how to recover. How to treat the continuing presence of perpetrators, and victims, and bystanders, after the violence has ended is a central problem, or better put, series of problems. A common formulation posits the two dangers of wallowing in the past and forgetting it. Too much memory or not enough; too much enshrinement of victimhood or insufficient memorializing of victims and survivors; too much past or too little acknowledgement of the past's staging of the present; these joined dangers accompany not just societies emerging from mass violence, but also individuals recovering from trauma.<sup>1</sup>

In the years since World War II and the Holocaust, Germany has had to face all of these difficult questions. Immediately after the war, the Allies required that all property seized by the Nazis or transferred to them by force be returned to its rightful owners. If the rightful owner had died and left no heir, the property was to be sold and the proceeds given to organizations that helped survivors of Nazi persecution. But while some property was returned to its owners, the policy was not widely enforced. A few years later, after Germany had split into two countries, with the eastern half controlled by

<sup>1</sup> Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), 2.

the Soviet Union, the new Federal Republic of Germany (also known as West Germany) adopted other policies to make restitution for wrongs committed during the war. The West German government declared that “unspeakable crimes had been committed in the name of the German people which entail an obligation to make moral and material amends.”<sup>2</sup> In 1953, it set up a special program to pay all those who had suffered injury or discrimination “because of the opposition to National Socialism or because of their race, creed, or ideology.”<sup>3</sup> The program is known in German as *Wiedergutmachung*, which means “to make good again.”

This program of financial reparations was controversial, complicated, and imperfect. To be eligible for reparations, an individual had to prove that they had been persecuted for racial, religious, or ideological reasons and had suffered injuries that were not only disabling but also the direct result of the persecution. Many victims found it difficult to meet the rigid requirements for proving persecution. Many others were excluded from the program, including Roma and Sinti victims, non-Jewish slave laborers, homosexual men who had been imprisoned, victims of forced sterilization, and families of those killed in the Nazi euthanasia program. Despite these restrictions, over the years the *Wiedergutmachung* program has paid more than \$60 billion in reparations.<sup>4</sup> Some of this money was paid directly to Israel, the country founded in 1948 as a primarily Jewish state. The money supported Holocaust survivors who had settled there and was also invested to grow the country’s economy. Other reparations money has gone to support programs that assist survivors, provide Holocaust education, and work for the return of stolen Jewish property. In addition, pensions are provided to individual survivors throughout the world.

As the *Wiedergutmachung* program began in the early 1950s, a survey found that just 5% of Germans admitted feeling “guilty” toward Jews, and only 29% agreed that Germany owed restitution to the Jewish people.<sup>5</sup> Journalist Ian Buruma describes the “moral anesthesia” that Germans experienced in the years immediately after the war: “They were numbed by defeat; their memories appeared to be blocked . . . They appeared to have completely forgotten that they had glorified a leader who caused the deaths of millions.”<sup>6</sup> By the mid-1960s, a new generation of Germans was more willing to face the past and even to condemn the actions and inactions of their parents’ generation. Victims and their supporters continued to demand justice, and as public awareness and acknowledgement of Nazi crimes grew over the years, so did efforts to offer restitution, to repair, and to remember. Industrial companies that had used slave labor agreed to pay reparations. The Nazi theft of Jewish property, including works of art, is the focus of court cases that have continued into the twenty-first century.

2 Christian Pross, *Paying for the Past: The Struggle over Reparation for Surviving Victims of the Nazi Terror* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 22.

3 Ibid.

4 “Claims Conference: History,” Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, accessed June 2, 2016, <http://www.claimscon.org/about/history/>.

5 Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 271.

6 Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1994), 24.



History classes about National Socialism and the Holocaust were mandated in all public schools in Germany. Individual towns and cities began their own projects, like the city of Berlin's program to offer former Jewish residents all-expenses-paid trips to visit the city and meet its mayor.<sup>7</sup>

The creation of museums and memorials has been another crucial element of coming to terms with the past in Germany. "Sites of memory," including concentration camps and Gestapo headquarters, have been preserved and turned into museums, and hundreds of memorials have been erected in large cities and small towns. In these places, history is publicly acknowledged and visitors have the opportunity to confront the country's past. (See the visual essay in this chapter for further discussion of memorials.) At a 2008 event commemorating the Holocaust and the liberation of Auschwitz, former Israeli ambassador to Germany Avi Primor asked, "Where in the world has one ever seen a nation that erects memorials to immortalize its own shame? Only the Germans had the bravery and the humility."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Germany's leaders have consistently worked to connect their nation's history with a sense of identity and responsibility. At a commemoration ceremony in 1985, then Chancellor Richard von Weizsäcker said,

The vast majority of today's population were either children then or had not been born. They cannot profess a guilt of their own for crimes that they did not commit. . . . But their forefathers have left them a grave legacy. All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it. The young and old generations must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep alive the memories. It is not a case of coming to terms with the past. That is not possible. . . . However, anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.<sup>9</sup>

For Germany, addressing that "grave legacy" has meant many things, including paying reparations, building memorials, and reforming education. These German efforts to make amends, to educate, and to remember are neither perfect nor complete. Not every German repudiates the crimes of World War II, and neo-Nazi groups still exist, even as the majority of people in Germany today are clearly committed to democracy and human rights. Buruma argues that contemporary Germany has changed in fundamental ways:

People are dangerous everywhere, when leaders acquire unlimited power and followers are given license to bully others weaker than themselves. Unbridled power leads to barbarousness, in individuals and mobs . . . But such is not the situation in the German Federal Republic, or indeed in Japan, today. Human nature has not changed, but politics have. In both countries, the rascals can be voted out. Those who choose to ignore that, and instead look for national marks of Cain, have learned nothing from the past.<sup>10</sup>

7 Nicholas Kulish, "Germany Confronts Holocaust Legacy Anew," *New York Times*, January 29, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/29/world/europe/29nazi.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/29/world/europe/29nazi.html?_r=0).

8 Ibid.

9 "Speech by President Richard von Weizsäcker to Bundestag, May 8, 1985," in *Sources of European History: Since 1900*, ed. Marvin Perry, Matthew Berg, and James Krukones (Cengage, 2010), 400.

10 Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt*, 307.

## Connection Questions

1. What does it mean to “make good again”? Do you think it’s possible to “make good again” after genocide?
2. What do you think Ian Buruma means by “moral anesthesia”? Why was it easier for some Germans to confront their history a generation after it happened?
3. Which of the policies adopted in Germany seem most promising? Do any of the policies raise questions for you?
4. Historian Tony Judt writes, “To ask each new generation of Germans to live forever in Hitler’s shadow, to require that they take on responsibility for the memory of Germany’s unique guilt and make it the very measure of their national identity, was the least that could be demanded—but far too much to expect.” How do Judt’s words connect with von Weizsäcker’s speech? Do you agree with Judt?
5. Does the definition of genocide (see Reading 7, “Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention”) offer any insight into what making amends for such a crime might look like? How do German attempts to “make good again” deal with different aspects of what was lost in the Holocaust? What other policies to help “make good again” can you imagine?
6. Would any of the tools of transitional justice be helpful in the society where you live? How?

## Reading 12

# Transitional Justice in South Africa

Germany is not alone in having had to navigate the transition from war to peace and from a society marred by hatred and discrimination to one striving for more democratic values. In the decades since the end of World War II, many other places—from South Africa to Northern Ireland, from Rwanda to Cambodia—have faced similar struggles. For a society that has been through a period marked by genocide or systematic violations of human rights, enormous challenges are involved in trying to achieve stability, justice, and peaceful coexistence.

The term “transitional justice” describes a set of approaches that communities can use to move toward a lasting peace. Transitional justice typically has three key elements: ensuring accountability for crimes and atrocities, establishing truth, and fostering reconciliation. What does transitional justice look like in practice? Judicial actions, like trials for war crimes and crimes against humanity, are a key part of seeking justice; so are reparations. Official apologies, government reforms, memorials, and education also have roles to play. Since the 1970s, truth commissions have become one of the most widespread components of transitional justice. Of the more than 40 such commissions dealing with violence and abuses of human rights, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is perhaps the best known.

In 1994, after nearly 50 years of apartheid and hundreds of years of racial violence and oppression, South Africa made a peaceful transition to a more democratically elected government, from one based on elections in which only whites were permitted to vote. Apartheid, created by the white National Party and based on the system of segregation that arose after Europeans colonized the area, affected every aspect of life, from where people lived and the conditions of their housing, to where they went to school and the kind of education they received, to whom they could marry. Apartheid meant total separation by color. Black South Africans had the worst of housing and health care and the lowest-paid jobs. Whites enjoyed a disproportionate share of resources, including access to the best living areas, access to the best and most well-equipped schools and best-trained teachers, and access to the best-paid jobs. Apartheid was enforced with brutal violence as well as shame and humiliation. Though it was run by the government, it required the participation of the white citizens. South African Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu described living under apartheid this way: “Your dignity is not just rubbed in the dust. It is trodden under-



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foot and spat on. Our people are being killed as if they were but flies. Is that nothing to you who pass by?"<sup>1</sup>

As the apartheid era ended, South Africa's interim constitution suggested the creation of some sort of reconciliation process as an alternative to prosecutions or trials. A truth commission was set up in 1995 to establish a public record of the apartheid years through the voices and experiences of both victims and perpetrators. Its sessions were widely covered by the media: newspapers, radio, television, and the internet brought the TRC into people's homes and into public spaces. The TRC was not intended to be the only way to bring to light and attempt to rectify the massive human-rights violations committed under apartheid, but it was a crucial one.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission focused on what had happened in South Africa between 1960 and 1994. This included political crimes of mass violence committed by Black South Africans along with the much larger number of abuses committed by white South Africans on behalf of the state. The TRC mandate said that "to achieve unity and morally acceptable reconciliation, it is necessary that the truth about gross violations of humans rights must be: established by an official investigation unit using fair procedures; fully and unreservedly acknowledged by the perpetrators; made known to the public, together with the identity of the planners, perpetrators, and victims."<sup>2</sup>

In a trial, the focus is on the perpetrator. At the TRC hearings, the focus was on the victims and their families. As TRC Commissioner Alex Bouraine said, "To ignore what happened to thousands of people who were victims of abuse under apartheid is to deny them their basic dignity. It is to condemn them to live as nameless victims with little or no chance to begin their lives over again."<sup>3</sup> For many victims of apartheid, testifying before the TRC was a transformative experience. Mzykisi Mdidimba, who was tortured at the age of 16, reflected on his experience with the TRC: "When I have told stories of my life before, afterward I am crying, crying, and I felt it was not finished. This time, I know that what they've done to me will be among these people and all over the country. I still have some sort of crying, but also joy inside."<sup>4</sup> According to a TRC report, "By the end of the Commission's lifespan, 21,000 people had come forward, women and men, old and young, and told the Commission about nearly 38,000 gross violations of human rights. In the process, the broad outlines of the past emerged with undeniable clarity. Ninety percent of those who came forward were Black. Most of them were women. The greatest number of these approached the Commission on behalf of dead men to whom they were related."<sup>5</sup>

1 Archbishop Desmond Tutu, speech to the United Nations, 1985, quoted in Facing History and Ourselves, *A Guide to "Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers"* (Brookline, MA: Facing History and Ourselves, 1999), 22.

2 "Explanatory Memorandum to the Parliamentary Bill," The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, accessed June 26, 2016, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/legal/bill.htm>.

3 Facing History and Ourselves, *A Guide to "Facing the Truth with Bill Moyers,"* 29.

4 Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), 68.

5 "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 1," South African Broadcasting Corporation, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://sabctrc.saha.org.za/originals/finalreport/volume1/volume1.pdf?>

The TRC offered amnesty (an official pardon) for individuals under specific conditions. Perpetrators had to make a full confession of their crimes and had to show that their crimes had been politically, not personally, motivated. The commission received 7,112 amnesty applications. Amnesty was granted in 849 cases and refused in 5,392 cases, while other applications were withdrawn.<sup>6</sup> In its use of amnesty, the TRC decided not to use trials like those at Nuremberg after World War II and suggested an alternative path that emphasized telling and hearing the truth rather than punishment or retribution.

The TRC brought the history of apartheid and the role of the government in enforcing it out into the open and made it harder to deny the truth of the past. Many South Africans agree that the work of the commission was critical and that it indeed played a vital role in a transition to democracy that all could participate in. But as writer Ariel Dorfman notes, “This creation of a shared history through the public airing of a harsh past does not, however, unavoidably lead to a true reconciliation. Other steps may be necessary to heal a divided community.”<sup>7</sup>

The TRC was not intended to be the only tool of transitional justice: reparations and prosecutions, for example, were expected to be used much more widely than they actually were. Also, the daily humiliations and more “ordinary” violence of apartheid were not addressed by the TRC. Nor was the participation in the system by average white South Africans and the ways that they benefited simply by being white—and the ways that whites continue to benefit today, even though apartheid is over. A new generation of South Africans is actively questioning how adequately the legacies of apartheid have been dealt with, when reforms of the economy, the judiciary, and the education system remain incomplete.

While truth commissions can’t reconcile societies all by themselves, they are increasingly seen as a crucial tool for transition. Despite its limitations, South Africa’s TRC helped to popularize and make legitimate the use of truth commissions at the national level, and in recent years countries as diverse as Nepal and Canada have used this tool. Cities, states, towns, and even schools have also adapted elements of truth commissions in their efforts to establish a common history, rebuild trust, and secure peace.

6 “Amnesty Hearing and Decisions,” The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/index.htm>.

7 “Eighth Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture: Ariel Dorfman talks about memory, justice and reconciliation,” Nelson Mandela Foundation, last modified July 31, 2010, accessed June 2, 2016, <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/eighth-nelson-mandela-annual-lecture-ariel-dorfman-talks-about-memory-justi>.

## Connection Questions

1. What are some key differences between trials and truth commissions? How might you figure out when it would be best to have a trial and when a truth commission would be best?
2. What aspects of South Africa's TRC seem to have had the greatest effect? What were some limitations of the TRC? Why might it be important to learn about even flawed examples of transition and reconciliation programs?
3. In 1935, American author W. E. B. Du Bois reflected on the purpose of history. He wrote, "Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable?"<sup>8</sup> How does Du Bois add to your thinking about the importance of establishing the truth about the past?
4. Do you think the country or community where you live could benefit from a "truth and reconciliation" process? What histories would you want to bring to light? What individuals or groups would you want to reconcile?
5. Some schools in the United States have started implementing truth commissions and other transitional justice practices to help address conflicts and discipline issues in their communities. Have you seen elements of these practices being used in your school? If so, how? If not, how might they be applied?

8 W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 1998), 714.



## Reading 13

# Facing the Past in Poland

How should a country remember its past? This universal question has been especially painful and complex in Poland, a country that suffered an extraordinarily brutal German occupation in World War II, followed by decades of Soviet Communist dominance that lasted until 1989. In the years after the war, Poles overwhelmingly viewed themselves as victims of Germany. Nazi ideology had portrayed Poles as subhuman *Untermenschen* ("inferior people"). During the war, German forces murdered at least 1.9 million non-Jewish Polish civilians and forced 1.5 million others into slave labor.<sup>1</sup> At least 3 million Jewish citizens of Poland were killed in the Holocaust. When the war ended in 1945, Poland's infrastructure was destroyed, its population was reduced by over 20%, and its capital of Warsaw was in ruins.<sup>2</sup> In their memories of the war years, Poles focused on their suffering, on stories of Polish resistance to German power, and on the heroism of Polish Catholics who risked their own lives to rescue Jews.

In the 1990s, as the era of Communist rule came to an end and Poland made the transition to democracy, new perspectives on Polish experiences in World War II began to emerge. Revisiting the history of the war years and drawing on new research, historians began to portray Poles not only as victims of Nazism but also as collaborators in its crimes. Historian Jan Gross wrote a controversial book, *Neighbors*, about the 1941 massacre of 1,600 Jewish men, women, and children in the Polish village of Jedwabne. The Jews of Jedwabne were killed not by Germans but by their Polish neighbors. Gross calls his work "a confrontation with ghosts in the consciousness of Polish society."<sup>3</sup>

This type of "confrontation" is painful and controversial. In 2016, as the conservative "Law and Justice" Party came to power in Poland, leaders took steps to emphasize once again the stories of Polish rescuers at new museums and historical sites. Some observers believed that these efforts were motivated not only by the desire to celebrate rescuers' heroism but also by the wish to counterbalance or even conceal the kind of Polish participation in crimes that Gross describes in his book.<sup>4</sup> Government officials also proposed a new law that would make it a criminal offense to use the

1 "Polish Victims," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified January 29, 2016, accessed June 3, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005473>.

2 Piotrowski, Tadeusz, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998), 1.

3 Alex Duval Smith, "Polish move to strip Holocaust expert of award sparks protests," *The Guardian*, last modified February 13, 2016, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/14/academics-defend-historian-over-polish-jew-killings-claims>.

4 Ofer Aderet, "Polish Museum Honoring Poles Who Saved Jews Arouses Controversy," *Haaretz* (Israel), March 22, 2016, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/.premium-1.710133>.

phrase “Polish death camps” in reference to German camps like Auschwitz, which were built within the boundaries of German-occupied Poland.<sup>5</sup>

Amid these debates about national shame and national pride, some educators and activists are helping young Poles learn something that has been absent from their history lessons: the stories of Jewish life that flourished in their country in the centuries before World War II. Jews once made up about 10% of the Polish population; in some villages, they were a majority of residents. But few Jews live in Poland today, and outside the major cities, traces of Jewish life have disappeared. The Forum for Dialogue, a Polish organization that works to foster relationships between Polish Jews and non-Jews, created a program called the “School of Dialogue” to help Polish young people discover the lost Jewish history of their own hometowns. Forum for Dialogue board member Zuzanna Radzik describes their work:

We come to schools and work to capture the young people’s interest. Together with them, we draw maps of the neighborhood—as it looks today and as it did before the war—so we can find out what the students know about history. Our instructors team up with the students to establish who used to live in the area. That is an opportunity for the young people to learn the meaning of words such as synagogue and *mikveh* [a bath used for Jewish ritual] and get to know what a Jewish cemetery looks like. In other words, they learn about the social and religious life of Jews. After the classes, the students can come up with their own projects to help commemorate Jewish history.

These projects, Radzik hopes, will help students understand that the Jewish heritage of their town is their history, too.<sup>6</sup>

Michael Gawenda, a descendant of Polish Jews who lives in Australia, visited the Polish town of Sandomierz with students from the School of Dialogue in 2013. In an article for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, he gave a very personal account of what the visit meant to him:

Sandomierz is a beautiful little town in south-eastern Poland surrounded by apple orchards and verdant green fields. Once, before the war, many of its inhabitants were Jews. As we walked along the streets that were once Jewish streets, this group of American and Australian Jews, there were no signs, nothing at all, to suggest that the Jews of Sandomierz had a history going back hundreds of years . . .

The past sat in my heart like a stone. On the once-Jewish streets of Sandomierz, in these well-kept and pastel-coloured apartment buildings, lived Poles. I wondered whether they knew what had happened to the people who once lived here and, if they did know, did the ghosts of the dead Jews ever come to disturb their sleep?

I had not come to Poland to reclaim the past. The past was settled. I had been to Poland in 1985 when the communists were still in control. I came as a journalist

5 “Nazi atrocities: Implying Polish guilt to become crime,” BBC News, last modified February 15, 2016, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35581708>.

6 Katarzyna Kaczmarek, “Promoting Polish-Jewish Dialogue,” *Warsaw Voice* Online, March 27, 2013, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.warsawvoice.pl/WVpage/pages/articlePrint.php/26022/article>.

and I met Solidarity leaders and leaders of the Polish democracy movement. Poland was alien. I felt no connection with the place. There was nothing to suggest that this had once been the home of millions of Jews, my parents included. I left knowing I would never return.

This time, at the front doors of the high school, we were greeted by the principal who ushered us into the staffroom, where we were offered tea. On the table were plates of Polish biscuits and small cakes. I knew the taste of these biscuits and these cakes.

Outside the room, the students we had come to see were waiting for us. They were holding posters and folios stuffed with papers and some of them were using their phones to take photos of us.

They were 16 and 17 years old and when they stood together at the front of their classrooms, in front of the portraits of Polish patriots who had fought for Polish freedom from the Russian and German occupiers who had divided Poland between them for centuries, I wondered how their parents and their grandparents, in particular, regarded the long-vanished Jews of Sandomierz.

In groups of two or three, the kids held up posters. On them were drawn maps of the streets where the Jews of their town had once lived. Some of the posters were photographs of buildings that had once been Jewish communal centres. Some of the kids leafed through bound folios of typed interviews with local people about the Jews of Sandomierz. What did they know about the Jews? Did they know what had happened to them?

These young people were full of a sort of defiant and boisterous joy, the sort that comes from discovering something that had been hidden from you. Lots of Jews had once lived here! Who were these people? What's a Jew anyway? And why did they leave?

Later, we walked with them through their town and they took us to the new markers of Jewish life in Sandomierz that I had thought did not exist. They stood in the rain to show us the places they had marked on their maps where the Jews had once lived.

They took me, these boys and girls unburdened by guilt or shame, to the archives office, where they had searched out the names of the Jews of their town. This building had once been the synagogue of Sandomierz and on the walls were what I thought were psalms in faded Hebrew lettering. The kids took photographs on their phones and when perhaps I looked too grim, a boy asked me to smile and I did smile and the stone in my heart felt smaller.

The rain came down harder on the walk to the little Jewish cemetery.

The graves were cracked and dirty grey, and in the centre of the cemetery there stood a sort of monument shaped like a pyramid that was constructed of old tombstones.

The kids had cleaned the tombstones and they had cleared the weeds from the paths. A girl called Agata came and stood beside me and asked if I would like to light a remembrance candle with her . . . perhaps I was just imagining this, but it

seemed that in that moment, we knew that we were both connected to this place. We stood together in front of a moss-covered grave, the lettering on the tombstone long faded.

Later, at the café where we ate local apples and the cakes the kids had baked for us, Agata asked me how come I understood some Polish words. I told her my parents had spoken Polish when I was a child and they didn't want me to understand what they were saying.

"Where did they come from?" she asked. I told her my mother was from Lodz and my father from a small town called Lowicz.

"So you are Polish," she said.

I didn't know what to say. My parents, whose families lived in Poland for many generations, did not consider themselves to be Polish. For them, Poland was no more than a place of death. It was not just the years of genocide that had embittered them, though those years had coloured—and yes, distorted—their view of Poles and Polish anti-Semitism.

"I guess I am Polish in a way," I said. "Do you think I am Polish?" I asked.

"Of course," she said, and smiled.

In schools across Poland, hundreds of kids are working on projects like the one in Sandomierz. I wondered what would last from these discoveries for these children who once had no inkling that Jews had lived in their towns. Their parents had never spoken to them about the Jews of their town. Neither had their grandparents. The communist regime had been determined to rid Poles of any memory of the country's Jews.

But as I travelled on in Poland, with the kids of Sandomierz somehow accompanying me, I thought that the past cannot be undone but perhaps it can be reclaimed.<sup>7</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think the Polish government has tried to influence how history should be remembered in Poland?
2. What is the purpose of the Forum for Dialogue's School of Dialogue? What impact did it have on Michael Gawenda? How did it shape his sense of identity and belonging? What impact did the School of Dialogue have on the students Gawenda met?
3. What does this reading suggest about the connection between history, national identity, and individual identity?
4. What is the value in learning the history of the place where you live, especially if that history is invisible or largely forgotten? What difference might knowing that history make?

<sup>7</sup> Michael Gawenda, "A Land of Ghosts," *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, Australia), January 18, 2014, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/a-land-of-ghosts-20140112-30pbe.html>.

## Reading 14

# Genocide Denied

The readings in this chapter describe the difficult struggles toward justice and reconciliation in the aftermath of war and mass violence. But what happens when those struggles never even begin? What happens to a history that has not been judged or even acknowledged?

In April 2015, people around the world marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Armenian Genocide (see “Genocide under the Cover of War” in Chapter 3). Yet in Turkey and the former lands of the Ottoman Empire, where the murder of more than a million Armenians took place, these events have never been officially accepted as true by the government. At the end of World War I, the three leaders most responsible for planning the destruction of the Armenians escaped from Turkey; though they were tried in absentia, they never faced punishment. One of those leaders, Mehmed Talaat, claimed in his memoirs that there were no deliberate plans to massacre Armenians. When those memoirs were published after Talaat’s death, they set the pattern for the arguments still used to distort the history: the false claim that the Armenians were traitors who deserved to be deported and who died as a result of a civil war in which both sides committed atrocities.

Within Turkey, individual citizens and scholars have acknowledged the genocide, holding academic conferences and organizing commemorative events. But despite overwhelming historical evidence, including primary sources, eyewitness accounts, testimony of perpetrators, survivor recollections, and physical evidence, the government of Turkey denies that a genocide took place. Those who deny what happened have used many strategies in their attempt to turn a historical fact into a matter for debate or even a myth. They have funded their own academic centers dedicated to spreading a revised history, and they have intimidated scholars who study and write about the genocide. Some authors who wrote about the genocide have been brought to trial for insulting “Turkishness,” which is a crime in Turkey. Turkish officials worked to censor United Nations reports by blocking mentions of the genocide and by countering resolutions in the United States that would have recognized April 24 as a national day of remembrance of the Armenian Genocide. While some countries, including France and Germany, have officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, many others have not. Leaders of many countries, including the United States, have been reluctant to force Turkey to acknowledge the genocide because they don’t want to embarrass or alienate an important ally.



Watch **Taner Akçam: Why Is the Armenian Genocide Important?**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Watch **Introducing the Armenian Genocide**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Denial has consequences. It prevents attempts to seek appropriate restitution for the victims, and it can undermine the feeling of belonging and security for Armenians still living in Turkey. In 1998, more than 100 prominent scholars signed a petition that opposed denial of the Armenian Genocide. It said, in part:

Denial of genocide strives to reshape history in order to demonize victims and rehabilitate the perpetrators. Denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide. It is what Elie Wiesel has called a “double killing.” Denial murders the dignity of survivors and seeks to destroy remembrance of the crime. In a century plagued by genocide, we affirm the moral necessity of remembering.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, on the 100th anniversary of the genocide, journalist Raffi Khatchadourian described how denial of the genocide affects the Armenian community worldwide. He wrote:

Armenians continue to struggle with the official negation: to endlessly combat it is its own form of prison, but to try moving past it unilaterally, abandoning the horrific events of 1915 in the shadows of denial, is to succumb to willful blindness and injustice.<sup>2</sup>

Denial, he says, is not just an absence of truth but a “wounding instrument. And, after a hundred years of it, it is hard to feel Armenian in a meaningful way without defining oneself in opposition to it.”<sup>3</sup>

Historian Taner Akçam has said that acknowledging the genocide matters deeply outside the Armenian world, too. He responded with three key reasons when asked, Why is recognizing the Armenian Genocide important?

One, to respect the victims, to accept their dignity and to give an end to their traumas. Second, it is very important for the reconciliation in a society, for the democracy and for the human rights. If a society cannot face its own history, it cannot establish a democratic future. And the third factor is, related to the second one, if you want to say the sentence “never again,” it can only be possible if society faces its past, its history. If a society, if a state, doesn’t acknowledge its wrongdoing in the past, this means there is a potential there, always, that it can do it again.<sup>4</sup>

1 “Statement by Concerned Scholars and Writers,” Armenian National Institute, April 24, 1998, accessed June 3, 2016, [http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.22/current\\_category.3/affirmation\\_detail.html](http://www.armenian-genocide.org/Affirmation.22/current_category.3/affirmation_detail.html).

2 Raffi Khatchadourian, “Daily Comment: Remembering the Armenian Genocide,” *New Yorker*, April 21, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/remembering-the-armenian-genocide>.

3 Raffi Khatchadourian, “A Century of Silence,” *New Yorker*, January 5, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/01/05/century-silence>.

4 Facing History and Ourselves, “Taner Akçam: Why Is the Armenian Genocide Important?” (video), accessed June 3, 2016, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/video/taner-ak-am-why-armenian-genocide-important>.



## Connection Questions

1. What are some of the consequences of the denial of the Armenian Genocide? How does it influence people who have ties to Armenia? Does it matter for people who do not?
2. What are some reasons why the official Turkish denial of the genocide has persisted for more than a century?
3. Why did the authors of the petition believe that there is a "moral necessity of remembering"? Do you agree?
4. How is a nation's identity connected to its history? Why does Taner Akçam say that acknowledging the past is important for democracy and human rights? Do you agree?

## Visual Essay

# Holocaust Memorials and Monuments



Teach **Analyzing and  
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LESSON

Across Europe, and even around the globe, people have built memorials to commemorate the Holocaust. Each tries to preserve the collective memory of the generation that built the memorial and to shape the memories of generations to come. This visual essay explores several examples of memorials and monuments to the Holocaust and other histories of mass violence. We use the terms *monuments* and *memorials* more or less interchangeably. Some people distinguish between the two, saying that memorials are a response to loss and death and that monuments are more commemorative and celebratory in nature. However, when considering traditional memorials and monuments, there are so many exceptions to these definitions that here we will use the terms more loosely.

Memorials raise complex questions about which history we choose to remember. If a memorial cannot tell the whole story, then what part of the story, or whose story, does it tell? Whose memories, whose point of view, and whose values and perspectives will be represented? Memorials must also respond to the question, “Why should we remember?” Writing of memorials in Germany, Ian Buruma distinguishes between a *Denkmal*, a monument built to glorify a leader, an event, or the nation as a whole, and a *Mahnmal*, a “monument of warning.” Holocaust memorials, he says, are “monuments of warning.”<sup>1</sup>

Memorial makers must also decide how to express complex ideas in the visual vocabulary available to them. Shape, mass, material, imagery, location, and perhaps some words, names, or dates can communicate a memorial’s message. Legal scholar Martha Minow asks,

Should such memorials be literal or abstract? Should they honor the dead or disturb the very possibility of honor in atrocity? Should they be monumental, or instead disavow the monumental image, itself so associated with Nazism? Preserve memories or challenge as pretense the notion that memories ever exist outside the process of constructing them?<sup>2</sup>

Some observers wonder if memorials might have unintended consequences, undermining the memories that they are meant to preserve. Critic James Young has said of memorials, “It’s a big rock telling people what to

1 Ian Buruma, *The Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 202.

2 Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998), 141.

think; it's a big form that pretends to have a meaning, that sustains itself for eternity, that never changes over time, never evolves—it fixes history, it embalms or somehow stultifies it.”<sup>3</sup> Young has suggested that memorials might actually let viewers become more passive and forgetful, because they “do our memory work for us.”<sup>4</sup> Can monuments suggest closure when none exists and consequently insulate us from history or anesthetize us rather than engaging and challenging us?

With these concerns in mind, some artists have created “counter-memorials” that are designed to change over time, to create an awareness of something that is missing, or even to disappear, provoking viewers to question, think, and connect more actively. In Kassel, Germany, artist Horst Hoheisel created a counter-memorial on the site of a majestic, pyramid-shaped fountain that had been given to the city by a Jewish entrepreneur; the original fountain was demolished by the Nazis in 1939. Rather than restore it, Hoheisel created an underground fountain that is the mirror image of the one the Nazis destroyed. Hoheisel explained:

I have designed the new fountain as a mirror image of the old one, sunk beneath the old place in order to rescue the history of this place as a wound and as an open question, to penetrate the consciousness of the Kassel citizens so that such things never happen again . . . The sunken fountain is not the memorial at all. It is only history turned into a pedestal, an invitation to passersby who stand upon it to search for the memorial in their own heads. For only there is the memorial to be found.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. As you explore the images in the visual essay, consider what message each memorial conveys. Who created and authorized the memorial? Who is the audience for this message? How is the message conveyed? Whose story is the memorial telling? What might the memorial be leaving out?
2. What are some key differences among the memorials pictured on the pages that follow? What do they have in common? Which one speaks to you most strongly?
3. Memorials have many different kinds of goals, including telling an accurate story of the past, expressing nationalist ideas, honoring life, confronting evil, and encouraging reconciliation. Do you see any of these goals reflected in the memorials in the visual essay? What other goals might these memorials reflect?
4. What are James Young's criticisms of memorials? Do any of the memorials in this visual essay reflect his concerns?
5. What memorials and monuments do you pass in your daily life? Do they have an impact on you? Why or why not?

3 “Holocaust Monuments and Counter-Monuments: Excerpt from Interview with Professor James E. Young,” May 24, 1998, Yad Vashem, accessed June 3, 2016, [http://www.yadvashem.org/odot\\_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203659.pdf](http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%203659.pdf).

4 James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 1999, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.harvard-designmagazine.org/issues/9/memory-and-counter-memory>.

5 Quoted in *ibid*.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Sylvia Kramanski Kolski

## Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial, Western Side

This memorial was designed by Leon Suzin and sculpted by Nathan Rapoport. Its western side depicts Jewish partisans who fought in the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943.





Hank Walker / Getty Images

## Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial

This memorial was built on the site of Warsaw's Jewish ghetto. When it was unveiled in 1948, the city still lay in ruins all around it.





Eisreiter / CC BY-SA 4.0

## Aschrott Fountain

In Kassel, Germany, artist Horst Hoheisel created a “counter-memorial” marking the site where a majestic fountain built by a Jewish citizen once stood; it had been destroyed by the Nazis in 1939.





## Stolpersteine

*Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) in Sušice, Czech Republic, mark the site where the four members of the Gutmann family lived before they were murdered in the Holocaust. (See Reading 16, "Remembering the Names.")





## Memorial to Roma and Sinti Victims of National Socialism

This memorial in Berlin, Germany, was designed by Dani Karavan and opened in 2012. The triangular stone at the center of the pool holds a fresh flower, which is replaced every day.



## Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach

Miami Beach is home to a large number of Holocaust survivors, who commissioned this memorial by architect Kenneth Treister in 1990. The outstretched arm is almost four stories tall.





## Garden of Stones Memorial, 2006

Sculptor Andy Goldsworthy created this memorial at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City in 2003. Small oak trees were planted by Holocaust survivors in a hole within each stone.



## Garden of Stones Memorial, 2012

Nine years after this memorial was created, the saplings have grown into large trees whose trunks have become part of the boulders.



Wikimedia, Nikodem Nijaki, CC BY-SA 3.0

## Shoes on the Danube Bank Memorial

Sixty pairs of shoes mark the site in Budapest, Hungary, where fascist Arrow Cross militiamen shot Jews and threw their bodies into the river in 1944 and 1945. The memorial opened in 2005.



## Reading 16

# Remembering the Names

The identities of individuals, communities, and nations are often influenced by how we understand the past. Memorials, artwork, and other symbols can divide a country, but they also have the potential to bring together people from different communities and walks of life in honoring people and events from history that are in danger of being forgotten.

This is what German artist Gunter Demnig discovered as he used his art to keep alive the memories of victims of the Holocaust. His public art has prompted thousands of people, from around the world and across generations, to learn about and discuss this difficult history. Demnig began his work in 1997 when he started installing plaques honoring individual Holocaust victims in streets near their former homes across Europe. The plaques are called *Stolpersteine*, or “stumbling stones.” One *Stolperstein*, in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee, reads:

HERE LIVED CHAIM SHATTNER  
BORN 1867  
DEPORTED 22.9.1942  
THERESIENTSTADT  
MURDERED 20.12.1943

Since beginning the project, Demnig has relied on participation from others to help it spread. In 2013, journalist Andreas Kluth wrote:

Private individuals—Germans who are curious about what transpired in their building, schoolchildren doing a project, surviving relatives of a victim, anybody who is interested—conduct their own research about a victim at a specific address. They submit this to the artist, pay him a small fee (€120) and then wait for their installation date. (Such is the demand, the wait is currently about six months.) Demnig usually lays the *Stolperstein* himself, often giving a talk as well.<sup>1</sup>

Thousands have participated since 1997. Kluth continued:

There are now almost 40,000 such *Stolpersteine* in several European countries, most in Germany, thousands in Berlin alone. Some streets that used to be centres of Jewish life teem with them. My own street, in elegant Charlottenburg, is one. In front of my own front door are five *Stolpersteine*, and they were among the first things that my kids and I noticed when we first came to look at the place. We bowed down and I read the inscriptions out loud. My seven-year-old daughter wondered what this might be about. Since she asked, I began to tell them, for the first time, about the Holocaust. As I did so, some of our neighbours-to-be paused and joined us and an ad hoc conversation arose—all before we had even moved in . . .

<sup>1</sup> Andreas Kluth, “Stumbling Over the Past,” *1843 Magazine (The Economist)*, May/June 2013, accessed September 2, 2015, <http://moreintelligentlife.com/content/places/andreas-kluth/stumbling-over-past>.

Demnig calls his project “a decentralised monument” or, alternatively, “a social sculpture” . . . As the artist, he retains control over every part of the process. Each Stolperstein is handmade because, he says, any form of mass-manufacturing would remind him of the mechanised and bureaucratic murder at Auschwitz. But to grow, the project relies on the initiative of volunteers who grasp that, as a rabbi in Cologne once told Demnig, “a human being is only forgotten once his or her name is forgotten.” . . .

At first [the Stolpersteine project] was purely conceptual since, as he says, “laying 6 [million] Stolpersteine in Europe seemed an absurd notion.” Then he talked to a priest who said, “Well, you can’t lay 6m, but as a symbol you could start small.” In 1996 he laid the first Stolpersteine in Berlin, illegally. Three months later, the plates—51 of them, all along one street—came to the attention of the authorities when the stones impeded construction work. They wanted to remove them, but the workers refused. Bureaucrats came to inspect the stones, and they were retrospectively legalised.

By 2000, Demnig was laying Stolpersteine legally. But they were never uncontroversial. Every now and then, he meets resistance from landlords who would rather not have remembrance thrust upon them. And right-wing extremists hate the very notion: Demnig says he has received three death threats.

Even among those who want to remember, not all like the approach. Most notably, Charlotte Knobloch, who was president of Germany’s Central Council of Jews between 2006-10, feels that the Stolpersteine are undignified because pedestrians are in effect trampling on a victim’s name. Knobloch still leads the Jewish community in Munich, where she survived Kristallnacht as a six-year-old girl, so that city is among the few that, so far, do not allow Stolpersteine in public spaces, though some residents put them in their private pavements . . .

[Demnig] perceives the act of stepping on a nameplate quite differently from Knobloch. “The more people walk over a Stolperstein,” he argues, “the greater the honour to the person who lies there.” His original vision was that pedestrians polish the brass plates just by walking over them, thereby “refreshing the memory each time”. Instead, it turns out, people usually step around the plates, perhaps associating them with gravestones, which they are not. This means that the metal oxidises and turns brown or even black, which in turn, ironically, makes it look as though the Stolpersteine were left untended. Often, residents then polish them the old-fashioned way. A lady in my building regularly lights candles and strews white roses around the Stolpersteine in our street.

There is also the idea of stumbling across something unexpected, as implied in the name. Demnig feels this was put best by a boy aged about 14 or 15: “You’re not stumbling physically, you’re stumbling with your head and with your heart.” For children especially, Demnig says, stepping over the name of a victim in their own street day after day makes the Holocaust concrete as nothing in their formal education could do. And, he adds, “one of the most beautiful pictures, I find, is this aspect that, when you want to read, you have to bow, before the victim.” I sometimes look out of my own window and see pedestrians doing just that in front of my door.



Kluth interviewed Howard Shattner, who made a documentary film about the Stolpersteine project.

In his documentary, he shows one installation where the tenants in a building had got together to sponsor a stone. "One of the most special moments for me was talking to that group of Germans. I was so moved by the fact that they had no connection to the person remembered, other than that he lived in their building, so they researched and wanted to have that memorial. It's much more meaningful to me that people are doing this from their heart." Before he knew it, he was giving each of them a long, deep hug. There is little body contact in German culture, but these embraces came quite naturally.

So this is yet another connection that the Stolpersteine help to make: not only between residents and the places they live, between schoolchildren and a past that their ancestors were responsible for but that seems unfathomable to them now, or between random pedestrians pausing to reflect and striking up a conversation—but also between Germans and Jews.<sup>2</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How are the Stolpersteine similar to other memorials? How are they different?
2. Why are the Stolpersteine welcomed by some Europeans? How do people interact with them? Why do others find them controversial?
3. What evidence in the reading suggests that the Stolpersteine have an impact on those who see them?

<sup>2</sup> Kluth, "Stumbling Over the Past."

## Reading 17

# Memory and Decision Making in Europe Today

In fall 2015, Europe was facing its greatest humanitarian crisis since World War II. Thousands of refugees and migrants were arriving weekly, by land and by sea. Most were fleeing a brutal civil war in Syria; others came from Afghanistan and Iraq. The International Rescue Committee estimated that more than 1 million refugees and migrants from the Middle East had arrived in Europe by the end of 2015.<sup>1</sup> People in many European countries were wary of allowing refugees to enter; others struggled to find the resources and the political will to meet their needs. In an article titled “Treatment of Migrants Evokes Memories of Europe’s Darkest Hour,” *New York Times* reporter Rick Lyman described how the refugee crisis raised uncomfortable echoes of World War II and the Holocaust.

BUDAPEST — In Hungary, hundreds of migrants surrounded by armed police officers were tricked into boarding a train with promises of freedom, only to be taken to a “reception” camp. In the Czech Republic, the police hustled more than 200 migrants off a train and wrote identification numbers on their hands with indelible markers, stopping only when someone pointed out that this was more than a little like the tattoos the Nazis put on concentration camp inmates.

Razor-wire fences rise along national borders in Greece, Bulgaria, Hungary and France. Many political leaders stoke rising nationalism by portraying the migrants as dangerous outsiders whose foreign cultures and Muslim religion could overwhelm cherished traditional ways.

“It was horrifying when I saw those images of police putting numbers on people’s arms,” said Robert Frolich, the chief rabbi of Hungary. “It reminded me of Auschwitz. And then putting people on a train with armed guards to take them to a camp where they are closed in? Of course there are echoes of the Holocaust.”

Europeans are facing one of the Continent’s worst humanitarian crises since World War II, yet many seem blind to images that recall that blackest time in their history.

This migrant crisis is no genocide. The issue throughout the Continent is how to register, house, resettle or repatriate hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees, a daunting logistical challenge. But perhaps not since the Jews were rounded up by Nazi Germany have there been as many images coming out of Europe of people locked into trains, babies handed over barbed wire, men in military gear herding large crowds of bedraggled men, women and children.

<sup>1</sup> International Rescue Committee, “Europe marks million refugees,” *Uprooted* website, last modified December 22, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, <https://medium.com/uprooted/europe-marks-1-million-refugees-a8dbb146a2#70cdn8748>.

At the same time, the images may reveal a deeper truth about Europe and its seeming unpreparedness for a crisis so long in the making: While extolling the virtues of human rights and humanism, it remains, in many parts, a place resistant to immigration and diversity.

As a result, some here are reacting in ways that recall some of the Continent's darkest impulses.

"They must be oblivious because who would do that if they had any historical memory whatsoever," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "It's amazing, really. Certainly those images of the trains can't help but conjure up nightmares of the Holocaust."

Rabbi Frolich was especially struck by the lies used to manipulate the migrants.

"They tell them that the train was going to Austria and then take them to a camp instead," the rabbi said. "I don't think the police got instructions from the government to do it this way, but it is very similar to what happened to Jews in the 1940s."

Jan Munk, chairman of the Jewish Community of Prague, was inclined to be generous in his interpretation of the episode.

"I understand the reasons why the police marked migrants with numbers," he said. "They are under a lot of pressure and stress and simply did not realize the connotations it would have. It was indeed tasteless and reminded me of the numbers at Auschwitz, but I know it was not done on purpose."

But for others, the fact that it was not done on purpose was even more frightening, showing a puzzling historical disconnect in many of the very places that the Holocaust caused the deepest devastation.

"It may be correct that they didn't know, but the insensitivity and the ignorance of the imagery their actions evoked is stunning; it's just sickening," said Jonathan Greenblatt, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in New York.

It is not that the Holocaust has been forgotten or ignored. There are memorials in nearly every major city on the Continent. Just this summer, Romania's president signed into law a bill making it illegal to deny the Holocaust or to display fascist symbols.

One of the most revered memorials in Budapest is a series of shoes perched along the Danube riverfront. They refer to the World War II massacre of Jews by fascists who forced them to take off their shoes and shot them, letting their bodies fall into the river.

"And this memorial, that you cannot walk past without pausing to contemplate, this beautiful memorial, is in the same city where many of these other things are happening now," said Babar Baloch, regional spokesman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "It's mind-boggling."

The historical parallels are sometimes inescapable.

The migrant-crowded train station in Szeged, the southern Hungarian city nearest the Serbian border, contains a decades-old memorial to the victims of the Second

World War. It shows a series of railroad cars with pleading and helpless arms protruding from the windows.

In Budapest, at the Keleti train station, whose periphery has been turned into a squalid migrant camp, the first train that came to take away desperate migrants on Thursday — ostensibly for the Austrian border, actually for a detention camp — chugged into the station behind a locomotive bearing the slogan “1989 Europe Without Borders.”

And there may be more to come.

On Friday, the Hungarian Parliament passed the first half of a set of revisions to refugee laws that would, among other things, allow the creation of so-called transit zones along the Serbian border. Newly arrived migrants would be confined to these zones, which must be within 60 meters of the border (about 200 feet), until their cases are resolved, and those cases would have to be decided within eight days, with just three more for possible appeals.

If it is determined that they had already passed through a country deemed “safe” on their route to Hungary, as they almost certainly would have, they would be sent back under the law.

But with migrants arriving at a rate of about 3,000 a day, in just 10 days the population of the camps could be approaching 30,000.

“I cannot call them anything other than concentration camps,” said Gabor Gyulai, refugee program coordinator for the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Budapest. “These refugees arrive, in horrible condition, and then you put them in this concentration camp?”

Parliament is expected to pass a second raft of refugee laws by next week, giving greater authority to the police and the military, including the right to enter any home to search for migrants who might be hiding there.

For many migrant advocates, what is so puzzling about this historical amnesia is that the countries taking the hardest line are among those that suffered the most during World War II and produced the most refugees in the war’s aftermath.

“In Europe, we benefited from humanitarian assistance and the acceptance of refugees after the disaster that was World War II,” Mr. Roth said. “It’s as if there is such a short memory that there is no sense that Europe, now that it is healthy and successful, owes anything to any other people in need.”

Mr. Gyulai pointed out that the first major operation that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees undertook after its founding was dealing with the 200,000 refugees displaced when the Soviet Union crushed the 1956 rebellion in Hungary.

“It’s hard to understand how people lose their sense of history so quickly,” said Andrew Strohlein, European media director for Human Rights Watch. “We all say we have learned the lessons of history, but to be turning away these desperate people who are fleeing a horrific situation suggests that we haven’t learned the lessons at all.”<sup>2</sup>

2 Rick Lyman, “Treatment of Migrants Evokes Memories of Europe’s Darkest Hour,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2015, accessed June 3, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/05/world/treatment-of-migrants-evokes-memories-of-europes-darkest-hour.html?emc=e-ta1&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/05/world/treatment-of-migrants-evokes-memories-of-europes-darkest-hour.html?emc=e-ta1&_r=1).

## Connection Questions

1. How does this article connect the history of the Holocaust to the refugee crisis of 2015? What imagery from the 2015 refugee crisis echoes events of the Holocaust? What deeper issues connect the two events?
2. Kenneth Roth, the director of Human Rights Watch, laments the “short memory” of Europeans. What does he think they should remember? How might a “sense of history” inform decision making about the refugee crisis? How could it shape Europeans’ universe of obligation?
3. How might you connect some of the key moments or themes you’ve encountered in this book with the refugee crisis? What are some of the key differences between the past and the present?
4. Are there “lessons of history”? Why do some people embrace this idea? Why might others reject it?

## Reading 18

# The Holocaust as a Call to Conscience



Watch **Benjamin Ferencz: Watcher of the Sky**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

The legacy and memory of the Holocaust remain alive in numerous people, places, and institutions today. The history lives in international bodies like the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, in the stories of survivors and their families, and in the sites and memorials that millions of people visit each year. One of the most important legacies of the Holocaust, though, isn't a physical person, place, or thing. It is an idea, a promise most often expressed in the phrase "never again."

For decades, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel urged his readers and listeners to see the Holocaust not just as a historical event but as a call to conscience for people everywhere. He linked world leaders' failures to stop Nazi crimes in the 1930s and 1940s with the problem of indifference in the twenty-first century. When the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993, Wiesel spoke at the dedication to an audience that included then President Bill Clinton. At the time, the country of Yugoslavia had broken apart and was at war, and a violent campaign of "ethnic cleansing" against minorities was under way there. Wiesel's remarks made a bridge between his life history and the world today. He told his audience,

[A]s you walk through those exhibits, looking into the eyes of the killers and their victims, ask yourselves how could murderers do what they did and go on living? Why was Berlin encouraged in its belief that it could decree with impunity the humiliation, persecution, extermination of an entire people? Why weren't the railways leading to Birkenau bombed by Allied bombers? As long as I live I will not understand that. And why was there no public outcry of indignation and outrage?

. . . Oh, I don't believe there are answers. There are no answers. And this museum is not an answer; it is a question mark. If there is a response, it is a response in responsibility . . .

What have we learned? We have learned some lessons, minor lessons, perhaps, that we are all responsible, and indifference is a sin and a punishment. And we have learned that when people suffer we cannot remain indifferent.

And, Mr. President, I cannot not tell you something. I have been in the former Yugoslavia last fall. I cannot sleep since for what I have seen. As a Jew I am saying that we must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country! People fight each other and children die. Why? Something, anything must be done.



This is a lesson. There are many other lessons. You will come, you will learn. We shall learn together.<sup>1</sup>

Wiesel's message continues to resonate in the twenty-first century, at a time when many would say that the "lessons" of the Holocaust have not been learned and the promise of "never again" has not been fulfilled. Remembering post-World War II genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and Darfur, a group of scholars and activists observed, "Leaders at every level seem to love hearing themselves declare 'Never Again.' But those who mean it have no power and those with power never mean it. The record speaks for itself . . ."<sup>2</sup> In the face of this dismal record, the memory of the Holocaust continues to inspire people to work to end genocide and mass violence—a task that will require the dedication, persistence, and vigilance of generations. No one understands this better than Benjamin Ferencz, a prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials who has dedicated his life to this work.

In 1945, Ferencz was a 25-year-old American soldier when he was transferred to the army's newly created War Crimes Branch, where he was asked to gather evidence of Nazi atrocities. What he witnessed on this assignment changed him and defined his life's work. He writes:

Indelibly seared into my memory are the scenes I witnessed while liberating these centers of death and destruction. Camps like Buchenwald, Mauthausen, and Dachau are vividly imprinted in my mind's eye. Even today, when I close my eyes, I witness a deadly vision I can never forget—the crematoria aglow with the fire of burning flesh, the mounds of emaciated corpses stacked like cordwood waiting to be burned. . . . I had peered into Hell.<sup>3</sup>

Ferencz graduated from Harvard Law School in 1943, before he joined the army. After the war, he was asked to join the team of prosecutors at the Nuremberg trials. At age 27, he was the chief prosecutor for the United States in the Einsatzgruppen Case, in which 22 leaders of the Nazi mobile killing units were charged with murdering more than a million people. Using evidence Ferencz had gathered while working for the army's War Crimes Branch, the tribunal convicted all of the defendants and sentenced 13 to death.

After the Nuremberg trials, Ferencz continued to work for justice in the aftermath of the Holocaust. He led the complicated process of returning property to Holocaust survivors and their families, and he helped to negotiate reparations payments between West Germany and Israel. Because war, genocide, and other atrocities continued to occur after World War II and the Holocaust, Ferencz felt compelled to act. He lobbied for establishing the International Criminal Court (see Reading 8, "The International

1 Elie Wiesel, "Elie Wiesel's Remarks at the Dedication Ceremonies for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, April 22, 1993," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed June 3, 2016, <https://www.ushmm.org/research/ask-a-research-question/frequently-asked-questions/wiesel>.

2 Gerald Caplan, Samuel Totten, and Amanda Grzyb, "Genocide: America says 'Never Again,' but keeps turning a blind eye," *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), April 25, 2013, accessed June 3, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/genocide-america-says-never-again-but-keeps-turning-a-blind-eye/article11541517/>.

3 Benjamin B. Ferencz and Ken Keyes, Jr., *PlanetHood: The Key to Your Survival and Prosperity* (Coos Bay, OR: Vision Books, 1988), 8.

Criminal Court”) and for the increased development and use of international law. As he reaches his 90s in the 2010s, Ferencz feels greater urgency than ever to create global institutions to prevent war. He wants young people to join his movement:

The question for you is where do you stand? Where do you stand? Do you stand for a world as we have it, a realist world, with the killing, with the rapes, with the murders? If you do, what are you doing here? Go home . . .

If you believe it is possible to have a more humane world, what we were fighting for in Nuremberg, and what I’m still fighting for, then you’ve got to join the fight. Everybody can do something. Write a letter to the President. Call him up. Talk to your neighbor. Talk to your friends. Talk to your enemies . . . Do whatever you can. That’s what I’m trying to do.<sup>4</sup>

In a documentary film called *Watchers of the Sky*, Ferencz puts his life’s work in perspective by telling the story of Tycho Brahe, a sixteenth-century Danish astronomer:

Tycho Brahe was an astronomer who felt that he wanted to find out the meaning of the universe. So he persuaded the king that he should build an astronomical laboratory on the island of Hven. There he built his observatory, and every night he went out and viewed the stars and he put them down in a chart. And he’d done that for about 25 years.

A new king came on the throne and they said, “Look, we’ve got something going on out there near Elsinore.” So the [treasury] people came out and they said, “Old man, wake up! Wake up! The king wants to know what you’ve been doing here these last 25 years.”

All he said was, “I’ve been watching the skies.”

“Watching the skies? What for?”

He said, “Well, I have made a chart, and I have 97 volumes. Each one I’ve measured myself, and I can tell you the movement of every one of those stars.”

“Well, what’s the use of it? What do you intend to do with it?”

He said, “I hope to live to get 100.”

“100 volumes? What’s the utility of it? What can you do with that?”

“Well,” he said, “I admit that I was trying to find out the meaning of the universe, and I haven’t found it yet. But I believe that someday, somebody will, and I will have saved that person 25 years of labor.”

4 Benjamin Ferencz, “An Evening with . . . Ben Ferencz: Transcript,” interview by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, last modified October 5, 2000, accessed September 16, 2015, <https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/speakers-and-events/all-speakers-and-events/an-evening-with-...-ben-ferencz-in-conversation-with-joan-ringelheim/an-evening-with-...-ben-ferencz-transcript>.

Ferencz pauses with tears in his eyes before finishing the story:

And when the American astronauts landed on the moon [in 1969], they had with them the tables of Tycho Brahe.

So there it is. An inspirational story, "the Watchers of the Sky." I am watching the sky. That's it.<sup>5</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What is "conscience"? How can an awareness of history influence an individual's or a nation's conscience?
2. Speaking of the Holocaust, Elie Wiesel said, "If there is a response, it is a response in responsibility." What do you think he means by this statement?
3. What does it mean to Benjamin Ferencz to be a "watcher of the sky"? How does the story of Tycho Brahe help him persist in the work he does and also put his life's work in perspective?
4. What are the qualities of a "watcher of the sky"? Can you think of other "watchers of the sky"?

<sup>5</sup> Ben Ferencz, *Watchers of the Sky* (documentary film), directed by Edet Belzberg (Music Box Films, 2014).

## Chapter 11 Analysis and Reflection

1. In what ways did the events of World War II and the Holocaust shape institutions, laws, and attitudes in the years that followed? What has been accomplished? How have these institutions, laws, and attitudes failed? What challenges remain?
2. Are there “lessons” that we can learn from the history of the Holocaust? What do the readings in this chapter suggest? What do you think?
3. Elie Wiesel has said, “[I]f anything can, it is memory that will save humanity. For me, hope without memory is like memory without hope.”<sup>1</sup> Why does he say that memory will save humanity? What might happen if we don’t remember and confront a violent past? Why is it important to have both memory and hope as we try to solve the problems in our world?
4. Ha Jin, a Chinese American poet, wrote this poem, titled “The Past.”

I have supposed my past is part of myself.  
As my shadow appears whenever I’m in the sun  
the past cannot be thrown off and its weight  
must be borne, or I will become another man.

But I saw someone wall his past into a garden  
whose produce is always in fashion.  
If you enter his property without permission  
he will welcome you with a watchdog or a gun.

I saw someone set up his past as a harbor.  
Wherever it sails, his boat is safe—  
If a storm comes, he can always head for home.  
His voyage is the adventure of a kite.

I saw someone drop his past like trash.  
He buried it and shed it altogether.  
He has shown me that without the past  
one can also move ahead and get somewhere.

Like a shroud my past surrounds me  
but I will cut it and stitch it,  
to make good shoes with it,  
shoes that fit my feet.<sup>2</sup>

1 Elie Wiesel, “Nobel Lecture: ‘Hope, Despair and Memory,’” Nobelprize.org, accessed June 3, 2016, [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-lecture.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-lecture.html).

2 Ha Jin, *Facing Shadows* (Brooklyn, NY: Hanging Loose Press, 1996), 63.

What lines and phrases from the poem echo ideas and events in this chapter?

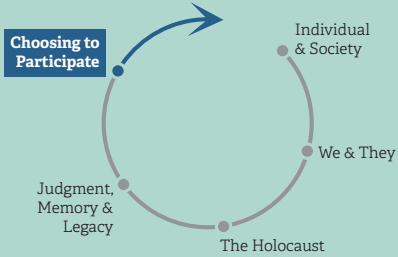
What does the poem suggest about the connection between history and identity?

What do the readings in this chapter suggest about the connection between history and identity?

What does the last stanza suggest about how Ha Jin sees the relationship between the past and the future?



## Chapter 12



# Choosing to Participate

Marjorie Agosin





## Overview

After studying the history of the Holocaust, people often wonder how they can help bring about a more humane, just, compassionate world and a more democratic society. This chapter provides examples of individuals and groups who have chosen to speak out or take action to help achieve these goals. These stories encourage us to think about the ways we can participate as caring, thoughtful citizens in the world around us.





## Essential Questions

- What must individuals do and value in order to bring about a more humane, just, and compassionate world and a more democratic society?
- How do we determine the most effective way to make a difference in our neighborhoods, our nations, and the world? Which strategies are best for bringing about the changes we want to see?
- What does democracy need in order to survive? What tools do others use to sustain, maintain, and strengthen democracy?
- How does learning about history educate us about our responsibilities today?



RESOURCE

Explore **Choosing to Participate**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

How does learning about the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust educate us about our responsibilities in the world today? Racism, antisemitism, and other forms of bigotry—which were at the root of so much of the inhumanity of the twentieth century—have not gone away. The principles of international law and the institutions that enforce those principles, which were created after World War II in response to the problems of war, genocide, and statelessness, continue to face daunting challenges. The news from around the world can be overwhelming, and people often wonder how they can help with the enormous job of bringing about a more humane, just, compassionate world and a more democratic society.

This chapter includes stories of individuals and groups who did “choose to participate,” and their stories can help us reflect on the values and actions that will strengthen our communities rather than make them more fragile. But the goal of this final step in the Facing History & Ourselves scope and sequence is not to force or even necessarily encourage students to take action. Instead, its aim is to open their eyes to the different ways of participating that are happening around them and to the tools that others have used to make positive changes in their own communities. Encountering these examples offers an opportunity for students to reflect on who they are, who they want to be, and what kind of world they want to help create. As students explore this chapter’s stories, they should pay close attention to what inspires the individuals who appear in them, to the goals and strategies of those individuals, and to the ways those individuals enlist allies and respond to success and failure.

We often think about civic participation as a matter of politics, activism, and voting. Many people participate in organized campaigns to elect candidates, change laws, and influence the actions of governments and other institutions in our society, such as corporations and the media. But these are not the only ways of choosing to participate. Scholar Ethan Zuckerman, who studies civic engagement around the world, has noticed a trend toward types of participation that do not rely on the power of government and other institutions to make change. The readings in this chapter provide examples of both types of initiative: individuals choosing to participate through politics, activism, and institutions, and others who are attempting to make change through creative uses of art and technology, the formation of small businesses, and attempts to influence the norms and traditions of communities and cultures. Zuckerman concludes:

If you feel like you can change the world through elections, through our political system, through the institutions we have—that’s fantastic, so long as you’re engaged in making change. If you mistrust those institutions and feel disempowered by them, . . . I challenge you to find ways you can make change through code

[technology], through markets, through norms [unspoken rules], through becoming a fierce and engaged monitor of the institutions we have and that we'll build.

The one stance that's not acceptable, as far as I'm concerned is that of disengagement, of deciding that you're powerless and remaining that way.<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, Facing History & Ourselves hopes to create a society of thoughtful citizens who think deeply about the way they live—when they are riding the subway to work as much as when they hear about incidents of mass violence that demand a global response. Indeed, at the conclusion of the Facing History & Ourselves journey, we hope that students will believe that their choices do matter and will feel compelled to think carefully about the decisions they make, realizing that their choices will ultimately shape the world.

1 Ethan Zuckerman, "Insurrectionist Civics in the Age of Mistrust," . . . *My heart's in Accra* (blog), entry posted October 19, 2015, accessed October 29, 2015, <http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2015/10/19/insurrectionist-civics-in-the-age-of-mistrust/>.

## Reading 1

# What Difference Can a Word Make?



LESSON

Teach **Strategies for Making a Difference**  
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What encourages people to act on behalf of others? Do words have the power to influence the choices people make?

Raphael Lemkin witnessed a “crime without a name” in the early twentieth century and believed that giving that crime a name, *genocide*, was an essential step toward preventing it from occurring again in the future (see “Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention” in Chapter 11). In 2014, two New Jersey high-school students began a campaign to promote a word, *upstander*, that gave a name to a behavior that is crucial for building stronger communities and a more humane world. The students, Monica Mahal and Sarah Decker, explain:

Students can easily recognize the bully, the “bad guy,” the one throwing the punches . . . and most can point out the bystanders, the individuals in the shadows, watching and doing nothing . . . so who are the upstanders?

An upstander is an individual who sees wrong and acts, and the most important part is that anyone can become one. Many . . . call the act of standing up “positive bystander intervention,” but this misses the point. A person who takes a stand against an act of injustice or intolerance is not a “positive bystander,” they are an UPstander. The word itself has the ability to empower students to make an active change in their schools, in an effort to build communities that support difference and unify against intolerance.

The concept of an upstander is critical to the well-being of our society. During bullying prevention movements in our school, the term upstander was used on a casual basis. While we were typing up a speech, huddled in a coffee shop on a cold winter day, the word upstander continued to appear on the screen with the distinct red squiggly line beneath it. The message was clear: there is an error.

We both double checked our spelling, still to no avail of eliminating the spell check notification. At that moment we realized that this groundbreaking term, one that has inspired our own local community to eschew intolerance, is technically not an official English word. Since then, we have been determined to give upstander its deserved spot in the dictionary.

Getting a word in the dictionary involves two key steps: increasing its usage and proving its prevalence in publications. The term upstander is used in diplomacy, particularly by UN Ambassador Samantha Power; in non-profit organizations, such as Facing History & Ourselves; and especially in tolerance movements. We seek to form a united front to bring awareness of this cause to the Oxford and Webster

dictionaries. To do so, we have created a Change.org petition to gather support for the upstander movement. . . .

Each one of us has the power and courage to rise as upstanders, to stand up against injustice. To change our communities, our countries, and even our world. Defining the term upstander will add legitimacy to this role, and serve as a concept that our society should strive to embrace. Together as upstanders, we can change the course of human history towards a future of mindful, active global citizens.<sup>1</sup>

Mahal and Decker's petition gathered hundreds of signatures online, and their campaign caught the attention of several New Jersey lawmakers. In June 2015, the New Jersey legislature approved a resolution that declared the state's support for the campaign to include *upstander* in both the Oxford and the Merriam-Webster dictionaries. Soon the dictionary publishers responded in a blog post:

Oxford University Press frequently receives requests from members of the public to add a particular word to our dictionaries, but an official legislative resolution supporting a word's inclusion may be unprecedented. Nonetheless, that is what happened on June 29, 2015, when the New Jersey State Senate approved a resolution "urging Merriam-Webster, Inc. and the Oxford University Press to include the word *upstander* in their dictionaries." The resolution was the culmination of a years-long effort which arose from an anti-bullying campaign by New Jersey high school students . . .

The New Jersey Senate resolution traces this usage to Samantha Power, current US Ambassador to the United Nations and author of the book *A Problem from Hell: America & the Age of Genocide*, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2003. In discussing the topic of her book, Power used the term *upstander* to describe individuals who spoke out against genocide, like Henry Morgenthau, the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian genocide, and Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term *genocide* after World War II. It wasn't long before this strand of meaning was adopted by others and extended from the specific context of genocide to those who stand up for others in the face of any type of prejudice or injustice, including bullying in schools. In 2004, for example, a Holocaust survivor named Lisl Bogart used the term in a presentation to Florida schoolchildren about her experiences during the war:

"I want to ask you today to be upstanders and not bystanders. When you see another student being picked on for being different, stand up for him. When you hear a student being called names, stand up for her. Don't be a silent bystander. Be an upstander." (2004 Palm Beach Post 19 December)<sup>2</sup>

The Oxford University Press added *upstander* to its list of words for potential inclusion in February 2014 and began to monitor how frequently the word was used in publications and public speeches. In December 2016, *upstander* was added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a result of the campaign begun by Mahal and Decker.

1 Sarah Decker and Monica Mahal, "Define Upstander," *Not in Our Town* blog, entry posted October 22, 2014, accessed October 16, 2015, <https://www.niot.org/blog/define-upstander>.

2 Oxford Dictionaries, "Legislation meets lexicography: the campaign for dictionary recognition of the word 'upstander,'" *OxfordWords* (blog), entry posted July 24, 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2015/07/legislation-lexicography-campaign-upstander/>.

## Connection Questions

1. What does the word *upstander* mean? Where did it come from?
2. How did Monica Mahal and Sarah Decker discover that *upstander* was not in the dictionary? Why did they decide to start a campaign to add the word to the dictionary?
3. What difference might it make to have the word *upstander* included in the dictionary?
4. Raphael Lemkin believed that new words are created when new social phenomena “strike at our consciousness.” How can coining new words help us understand difficult problems in the world? What is the role of language in dealing with social ills? How do innovations in language educate those who use the language?



## Reading 2

# Bullying at School

A bullying incident in school is often the first time a teenager is confronted with the decision of whether to be an upstander or a bystander. In a world full of injustice, suffering, and other social problems, the choice to participate can actually originate very close to home.

The following stories highlight the power of students to make positive change by taking seemingly small actions in response to bullying in their own school communities.

In Canada, two students responded this way when a classmate was taunted because of what he wore:

Two Nova Scotia students are being praised across North America for the way they turned the tide against the bullies who picked on a fellow student for wearing pink.

The victim — a Grade 9 boy at Central Kings Rural High School in the small community of Cambridge — wore a pink polo shirt on his first day of school.

Bullies harassed the boy, called him a homosexual for wearing pink and threatened to beat him up, students said.

Two Grade 12 students — David Shepherd and Travis Price — heard the news and decided to take action.

"I just figured enough was enough," said Shepherd.

They went to a nearby discount store and bought 50 pink shirts, including tank tops, to wear to school the next day.

Then the two went online to e-mail classmates to get them on board with their anti-bullying cause that they dubbed a "sea of pink."

But a tsunami of support poured in the next day.

Not only were dozens of students outfitted with the discount tees, but hundreds of students showed up wearing their own pink clothes, some head-to-toe.

When the bullied student, who has never been identified, walked into school to see his fellow students decked out in pink, some of his classmates said it was a powerful moment. He may have even blushed a little.

"Definitely it looked like there was a big weight lifted off his shoulders. He went from looking right depressed to being as happy as can be," said Shepherd.

And there's been nary a peep from the bullies since, which Shepherd says just goes to show what a little activism will do.



LESSON

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"If you can get more people against them . . . to show that we're not going to put up with it and support each other, then they're not as big as a group as they think they are," he says.<sup>1</sup>

At Orange High School in Pepper Pike, Ohio, students responded in a different way when they witnessed bullying in their school. They began by trying to learn more about where bullying was happening. After surveying classmates about where they had witnessed bullying, students created maps that showed where bullying incidents commonly took place. "Bully hotspots" included the cafeteria, media lab, and locker rooms.

Explaining the motivation for the project, one student said, "We wanted to spread awareness because people need to know what bullying is. People need to know that it exists in our school. I think addressing it and defining it and spreading awareness that it exists is the first step in preventing and combating it."<sup>2</sup>

Because some of the acts of bullying had been rather subtle, some students either did not recognize them or felt unsure about naming them as bullying. To address this problem, student leaders created a "flash freeze" demonstration to dramatize what bullying looks like so that other students could recognize it and call it out more easily. The demonstration showed students frozen in mid-action, portraying an incident of bullying. Other students in the demonstration would then name the actions, using words like *physical*, *verbal*, *exclusion*, and *cyber-bullying*. The map of bullying "hotspots" and the demonstrations opened up a larger conversation about how to create a safer school and made it more difficult for some students to ignore bullying when they saw it happening.

One student talked about how the project affected his future choices:

I got made fun of for my name because it didn't sound American, so I was really quiet. I never really talked in school 'cause I was scared of being made fun of. And when you don't talk, you don't make friends. It's a chain reaction. It just gets worse and worse. You lose your confidence. You don't want to speak to anyone. So, I guess doing this project really helps. Whenever I see someone getting bullied, I step in. No matter what age they are, if I know them or not, it doesn't matter. Because I just think about how much I would have loved for someone to step in when I was getting bullied.<sup>3</sup>

1 "Bullied student tickled pink by schoolmates' T-shirt campaign," CBC News Canada, last modified September 18, 2007, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/bullied-student-tickled-pink-by-schoolmates-t-shirt-campaign-1.682221>.

2 Transcribed from "Students Map Bully Zones to Create a Safer School" (video), *Not in Our Town* website, accessed July 12, 2016, <https://www.niot.org/nios-video/students-map-bully-zones-create-safer-school>.

3 Ibid.

## Connection Questions

1. Experts say that bullying has two key characteristics: repeated harmful acts and an imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim. Education journalist Kim Zarzour explains, "If it involves repeated, malicious attempts to humiliate a helpless victim, if the victim is fearful, does not know how to make it stop, then it's bullying."<sup>4</sup> Do you agree with this definition? How do you define bullying? What kinds of words and actions could be included in your definition? How is bullying online different from bullying in person?
2. How did the students at Central Kings Rural High School and Orange High School respond to bullying? What did their responses have in common? In what ways were they different? How might these responses have affected those who were victims of bullying? How might they have affected perpetrators of bullying or students who were silent bystanders?
3. Often, offering simple and immediate encouragement to people who have just been bullied can make a big difference. Psychologist Elizabeth Englander points out that victims of bullying consistently tell researchers that this type of upstander behavior is one of the most helpful responses:

What helped the most was having somebody who came up to them and said, "Don't listen to him, he talks like that to everyone. There's nothing wrong with you. Why don't you come and eat lunch at my table. Don't worry about that."<sup>5</sup>

Why do you think that small, simple gestures of kindness can make a big difference to the victims of bullying? What are some other actions that peers can take to be upstanders against bullying?

4. Is bullying an accepted behavior in your school? Is being an upstander an accepted behavior? What steps can a community take to change its social norms (the behavior and language that a community considers acceptable)?
5. What strategies does your school use to address bullying? Which strategies are most effective? Which are least effective? What do you do in your school to help combat bullying? In what areas do you need more support from your peers, teachers, parents, or administrators?
6. When Holocaust survivors speak to young people in schools, they often encourage them to stand up to bullying. Lisl Bogart (see Reading 1, "What Difference Can a Word Make?") told students, "I want to ask you today to be upstanders and not bystanders. When you see another student being picked on for being different, stand up for him."<sup>6</sup> Why might Holocaust survivors make a connection between their own personal stories and the importance of standing up to bullying?

4 Kim Zarzour, *Facing the Schoolyard Bully: How to Raise an Assertive Child in an Aggressive World* (Buffalo, New York: Firefly Books, 2000), 24.

5 Elizabeth Englander, interview with Facing History, July 13, 2011.

6 Oxford Dictionaries, "Legislation meets lexicography: the campaign for dictionary recognition of the word 'upstander,'" *OxfordWords* (blog), entry posted July 24, 2015, accessed October 16, 2015, <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2015/07/legislation-lexicography-campaign-upstander/>.

## Reading 3

# Not in Our Town



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RESOURCE

According to author Suzanne Goldsmith, building a community “requires only the ability to see value in others; to look at them and see a potential partner in one’s enterprise.”<sup>1</sup> Intolerance, hatred, and violence test the strength of a community. How the members of a community respond is one measure of its citizens’ commitment to democracy. During the early 1990s, hate groups in Billings, Montana, organized a wave of racist and antisemitic violence. In 1994, journalist Claire Safran reported on the community’s response.

On a quiet evening in Billings, Montana, early [in December 1993], a stranger arrived at the home of Tammie and Brian Schnitzer. He stole across the lawn, a cinder block in hand. He stopped at a window decorated with Star of David decals and a menorah, the nine-branched candelabra that is the symbol of the Jewish festival of Chanukah. Then he hurled the stone, sending jagged shards of glass into the bedroom of Isaac, 5.

By chance, the little boy wasn’t there. He’d been in the family room watching TV with his 2-year-old sister, Rachel, and a babysitter. They heard the crash, but when the sitter searched for a cause, she missed the broken window. That remained for Brian to find when he came home. Shaken, he phoned the police and put the children to bed in the safest spot he could think of—bundled in sleeping bags under the four-poster bed in his bedroom. “We’re playing campout,” he told Isaac.

Not long after, Tammie returned from a meeting of the human rights coalition she co-chaired. Seeing the look on her husband’s face, she asked, “What’s wrong?” He led her to Isaac’s room. Shocked, she stared at the broken window. Tammie had felt a little nervous putting up the Chanukah decorations; in recent months, a string of hate crimes had occurred around town. Now her worst fears had come home.

Waiting for the police to arrive, Tammie huddled in a rocking chair in her son’s room. “I felt so cold,” she recalls. “But it wasn’t the winter air coming through the broken window. It was my sense of being so helpless. It was my fear of what would come next.”

Some 80,000 people live under the big sky of this valley town sheltered by rocky hills. They drive pickups and family sedans, dress in jeans and business suits, and mingle in an easy, relaxed way. They are overwhelmingly Christian and white; about 50 Jewish families live here, and fewer than 500 blacks. Add Hispanics and Native Americans, [and] all told, minorities in Billings make up a meager 7 percent or so of the population.

<sup>1</sup> Suzanne Goldsmith-Hirsch, *A City Year: On the Streets and in the Neighborhoods with Twelve Young Community Service Volunteers* (New Brunswick, N.J., U.S.A.: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 277.

For some that's still too many. In 1986 white supremacists declared Montana to be one of five states comprising their "Aryan homeland." In the years that followed, racist incidents around the state became increasingly frequent; eventually they cropped up in Billings. . . .

By the end of 1992, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and a band of skinheads had become visible presences in Billings. Klan newspapers were tossed onto driveways, and flyers surfaced attacking mainly Jews and homosexuals. One day a bumper sticker that read "Nuke Israel" was placed on a stop sign near the temple. Not long after, Tammie saw a flyer that named Brian, who'd recently become president of the Montana association of Jewish Communities. "I felt sick," she recalls. "It really hit home."

At a meeting, temple officers chose not to speak out. Says Tammie, "They seemed to feel that to acknowledge a problem or identify ourselves as being different would make us stand apart." Tammie refused to stay silent. . . .

At the same time, Margaret MacDonald . . . a mother of two and the part-time director of the Montana Association of Churches, was encountering resistance to another effort to draw attention to the problem: a petition that opposed hatred and bigotry. "There'd been an emphatic hard-line stance in the town, like a brick wall, that the less said about the skinheads and other racists, the better," she says. She persisted, however, and over the following months, more than 100 organizations and 3,500 people signed the resolution.

In the spring of 1993, after a conversation at a town meeting, Tammie, Margaret, and several others formed the Billings Coalition for Human Rights. "This wasn't a Jewish issue, it was a human rights issue," says Tammie. "We wanted to make the community aware of what was going on."

The hate activity escalated. In September, four days before the start of the Jewish New Year, vandals overturned headstones in the Jewish cemetery. And on the holiday itself, a bomb threat was made to the temple before the start of the children's service.

Tammie urged synagogue members to speak out. "I wanted to let people know what was happening. But some members felt that we would put ourselves in more danger. We didn't know what to do."

In the weeks that followed, several Billings residents—inspired by the Coalition for Human Rights—took action against racism. When skinheads showed up at services of the African Methodist Episcopal Wayman Chapel, small groups of white Christians appeared in response. They sat with the congregation until the skinheads stopped coming. In October an interracial couple awoke one morning to find crude words and a swastika spray-painted on their house. Three days later, volunteers from the local painters union repaired the damage.

But with the arrival of the holiday season, the hate incidents turned violent. In late November a beer bottle was thrown through the window of a Jewish home. And then, on the night of December 2, the Schnitzer home was attacked.

As Tammie spoke with the police officer who'd arrived at her home, she swung between fear and outrage. "This isn't just mischief," she said. He agreed and advised her to take down the Chanukah decorations and avoid leaving the children with a babysitter.

Lying in bed that night, sleepless, Tammie thought how ironic it was that the attack on her home had occurred because of Chanukah—a holiday commemorating the Jews' fight thousands of years ago to worship God in their own way. "I wondered what kind of struggle we were going to be in for, and how we could stop it before it became worse," she says.

The next day, Friday, Tammie spoke with a reporter from the *Billings Gazette*. She told him how troubled she was by the officer's advice. "Maybe it's not wise to keep these symbols up," she said. "But how do you explain that to a child?"

On Saturday morning Margaret [MacDonald] read Tammie's quote in the paper. She tried to imagine telling her daughter, Siri, then 6, that they could not have a Christmas tree, or explaining to Charlie, then 3, that they had to take a wreath off the door because it wasn't safe.

Margaret phoned her pastor, Keith Torney. "What would you think if we had the children draw menorahs in Sunday school?" she asked. "If we mimeographed as many pictures of the menorah as we could? If we told people to put them up in their windows?"

Reverend Torney had read the paper that morning too. "Yes," he said. "And yes again." He spent the rest of the day on the phone, enlisting other churches. That week hundreds of menorahs appeared in the windows of Christian homes in Billings. "It wasn't an easy decision," says Margaret. "With two young children, I had to think hard about it myself. We put our menorah in a living room window, and made sure nobody sat in front of it."

One of the first to put up a menorah was Becky Thomas, . . . a Catholic mother of two who lives near the Schnitzers. "It's easy to go around saying you support some good cause, but this was different. It was putting ourselves in danger," she says. "I told my husband, 'Now we know how the Schnitzers feel.'"

Some, nervous about jeopardizing their families, checked first with Wayne Inman, the chief of police at the time. "Yes, there's a risk," he told callers. "But there's a greater risk in not doing it."

On December 7, the *Billings Gazette* published a full-page picture of a menorah to cut out and tape up. Local businesses also distributed photocopies of menorahs, and one put a message on a billboard, proclaiming: "Not in Our Town! No Hate, No Violence. Peace on Earth."

As the Jewish symbol sprouted in Christian windows, the haters lashed out. Glass panes on the doors of the Evangelical United Methodist Church, graced with two menorahs, were smashed. Someone fired shots into a Catholic school that had joined the crusade. Six cars parked in front of homes that displayed menorahs had their windows kicked out; the homeowners received phone calls that told them to "Go look at your car, Jew-lover."

Yet suddenly, for every menorah that was there before, ten new ones appeared. Hundreds of menorahs grew to be thousands. It's estimated that as many as 6,000 homes in Billings had menorahs on display. "All along, our coalition had been saying an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us," says Margaret MacDonald. "And God bless them, the people of this town understood." . . .



The people of Billings kept their menorahs up until the New Year. As Inman says, "The haters could attack a couple of Jewish homes. They could make a second wave of attacks on Christian homes and churches. But they could not target thousands of menorahs."

Confronted by a united town, the Ku Klux Klan and skinheads backed off. The acts of vandalism stopped, the hate literature disappeared, and the anonymous calls ended. But with no witnesses and no strong leads, the police were never able to make any arrests, a fact that leaves the community extremely uneasy. . . .

The town continues to stand together. In April [of 1994] more than 250 Christians joined the Jewish community for a seder, the traditional Passover meal. Not long after, hundreds attended a concert of Jewish music that the Schnitzers helped coordinate to show their appreciation to Billings.

Tammie Schnitzer and Margaret MacDonald are busy organizing meetings and speaking at schools about racial sensitivity. With Chanukah just a few weeks away, they're stepping up their activities and are working on combined holiday events for the temple and local churches.

Soon Tammie's going to be putting up her Chanukah decorations. "I have to make sure my kids are proud of themselves and never have to hide who they are," she says. "Yes, I'm afraid. But I know if something happened again, the community would respond."

Becky Thomas, for one, is prepared. "We saved our menorah, and it's going in our window again," she says. "We need to show commitment for a lifetime."<sup>2</sup>

Roger Rosenblatt of the *New York Times* interviewed Billings residents in 1994 and found that many of them were reassessing their attitudes and beliefs as a result of the menorah campaign. Wayne Inman, former Billings chief of police, told Rosenblatt that although there had been no African Americans or Jews in his hometown, he grew up hearing racial slurs.

It was as common as the sun coming up in the morning. Nobody ever confronted the issue. It was "normal." But when I got out into the larger world, I found that it wasn't normal, or if it was normal, it should be opposed. When you have a person present, not just a word, you see that you're talking about a human being whose skin is black. I saw that for myself. I saw the hurt and pain in his eyes. It became a very personal issue for me.<sup>3</sup>

Sarah Anthony, a member of the Human Rights Coalition, reflected on the struggle and why it matters to her. She told Rosenblatt:

I mean, what have we done so far? Come up with a plan. Make a few phone calls. Put up menorahs. That's all we did. Pretty simple stuff, actually. But you have to build the sentiment, to forge the real feeling that goes deep. We did something right here, and we will do it again if we have to. If we don't, there are people who would break every window in Billings, and we would look out those windows and see ourselves.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Claire Safran, "Not in Our Town," *Redbook*, November 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Rosenblatt, "Their Finest Minute," *New York Times*, July 3, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## Connection Questions

1. How did racism and antisemitism test the strength of the Billings community? What did the citizens' response reveal about their universe of obligation? How was their response related to their commitment to democracy?
2. What does the story of Billings suggest about the way people can get involved? What does it suggest about the way one act leads to another and yet another? What precedents or past actions did the people of Billings build on? What legacies did they leave for their children? For other communities?
3. What does Sarah Anthony mean when she says, "We did something right here, and we will do it again if we have to. If we don't, there are people who would break every window in Billings, and we would look out those windows and see ourselves"? Activist Marian Wright Edelman believes that "the good people's silence" can be "as damaging as the bad people's actions." Would Anthony agree? Do you agree?
4. What is a hate crime? What distinguishes a hate crime from other crimes? After a rock was thrown through the window of a home that belonged to a Vietnamese family, then Deputy Superintendent William Johnston of the Boston Police Department noted that the rock did more than shatter glass. It also shattered a family. What do you think he might have meant? How do his words apply to the situation in Billings that you read about?
5. "Hate crimes are not a police problem," says former Police Chief Wayne Inman. "They're a community problem. Hate crimes and hate activity flourish only in communities that allow them to flourish." James Pace, the head of a racist "skin-head" group in Billings, agrees. He told a reporter, "If you have a racist problem, it was here and it's been here and it's going to be here if we are here or not." Why do you think people join hate groups? What can people do to make sure that hate groups do not flourish in their communities?

## Reading 4

# The Voices of Millions

After internet use became widespread in the 1990s, anyone who could go online gained a new set of tools for sharing information, speaking out, and organizing responses to crises and problems that included natural disasters and mass violence. Today, millions of people use social media to express their opinions about issues in their local, national, and global communities. But although the internet has made civic participation easier, some people wonder whether online activism really makes a difference.

On March 25, 2013, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC)—an organization that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights—urged people to change their Facebook profile pictures to a pink-on-red equals sign to show support for marriage equality. That week, the Supreme Court of the United States was debating a case that involved gay marriage. One day later, hundreds of thousands of people had changed their profile pictures to the HRC symbol.

There is little evidence that the HRC Facebook campaign had any effect on the deliberations of the Supreme Court justices. And critics of the campaign worried that too many of those who changed their profile pictures felt satisfied that by taking this relatively easy action, they had “done their part” to support marriage equality. Some critics of online activism have coined terms like “hashtag activism” and “slacktivism” to describe efforts such as the HRC profile-picture campaign that require little real participation. Scott Gilmore, a former Canadian diplomat, writes:

A slacktivist is someone who believes it is more important to be seen to help than to actually help. He will wear a T-shirt to raise awareness. She will wear a wristband to demonstrate support, sign a petition to add her voice, share a video to spread the message, even pour a bucket of ice over her head. The one thing slacktivists don't do is help by, for example, giving money or time to those who are truly making the world a better place . . . <sup>1</sup>

Many experts disagree with the skeptics. They argue that the collective voices of groups of internet users can make a real difference. Discussing the HRC campaign, Matt Stempeck, a researcher at the MIT Center for Civic Media, writes:

No one taking these actions is expecting a direct response from the Supreme Court. . . . Yet this action, taken by many, can matter. We know that support for gay marriage is linked with how likely it is we know someone who is openly gay. And we know that people care deeply about societal norms [social standards]. Ever-increasing support for gay equality, generated at the interpersonal level, is



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<sup>1</sup> Scott Gilmore, “The problem with #slacktivism,” *Maclean's*, last modified November 11, 2014, accessed September 2, 2015, <http://www.macleans.ca/society/the-real-problem-with-slacktivism/>.

only strengthened by a mass outpouring of support on social networks. . . . By going pink, people are standing up as allies and creating the perception of a safe space within their own friendship communities online—spaces where gay people may face stigmas and bullying.<sup>2</sup>

In 2014, another online campaign suggested that the collective voice of a group of social media users can influence not just individual attitudes but also the behavior of institutions, such as the print and broadcast media. After an African American teenager was shot to death by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in summer 2014, thousands of people used Twitter to protest the photograph of the teenager, taken from his Facebook page, that was published by many television networks, newspapers, and websites. Journalist James Poniewozik analyzed the online protest:

The injury, a deadly one, came first. Unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot to death by police in Ferguson, Mo. Then came the insult: many news accounts used a photo of Brown that showed him, unsmiling, gesturing at the camera in a way that led to unsubstantiated claims that he was “flashing gang signs.”

This portrayal of Brown, who is African American, recalled the quasi-trial-by-photo of Trayvon Martin, another young black man shot to death. It became another racially charged statement in a controversial killing, as outlets illustrated their stories with pictures that—rather than show the dead teen smiling or in a family context—led commenters to call him a “thug” and thus to suggest that he brought his death on himself.

So as people protested in the streets of Ferguson, a meta-protest began on social media. Twitter users, especially African Americans, began a meta-protest, posting pairs of photos with the hashtag #IfTheyGunnedMeDown: a young man in a military dress uniform, say, and the same poster flipping off the camera. If I got shot down, each post asked, which version of me would the media show you?

The term “hashtag activism” has become a kind of putdown lately, with the connotation that it’s substituting gestures for action, as if getting something trending is a substitute for actually going out and engaging with the world . . .

But #IfTheyGunnedMeDown was a simple, ingenious DIY [do-it-yourself] form of media criticism: direct, powerful, and meaningful on many levels. It made the blunt point that every time a media outlet chooses a picture of someone like Brown, it makes a statement. It created identification: so many ordinary people—students, servicemen and women, community volunteers—could be made to look like a public menace with one photo dropped in a particular context. And it made a particular racial point: that it’s so much easier, given our culture’s racial baggage, for a teenager of color to be made to look like a “thug” than [a] white teen showing off for a camera the exact same way.

It was a brilliant media critique, and while Twitter and other platforms may have no magical power to stop shootings or catch warlords, one thing they are very good at is catching the attention of the media. Journalists pay attention to Twitter—

2 J. Nathan Matias, Matt Stempeck, and Molly Sauter, “Green vs. Pink: Change Your Picture, Change the World,” MIT Center for Civic Media, blog entry, posted March 28, 2013, accessed July 26, 2016, <https://civic.mit.edu/blog/natematias/green-vs-pink-change-your-picture-change-the-world>.



On August 10, 2014, teenager Tyler Atkins posted these images on Twitter accompanied by the following tweet: “#IfTheyGunnedMeDown which picture would they use.”

disproportionate attention, maybe—and that makes it a very, very good place to deliver the modern version of a letter to the editor . . .

#IfTheyGunnedMeDown is not going to stop anyone from being gunned down, but it most likely lodged in the memory of editors and producers who make judgments every day. Sure, many of them are already aware of the power of image choices, but #IfTheyGunnedMeDown chose its own images to make a powerful statement—one that people are likely to remember the next time “if” becomes “when.”<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. Why have some people criticized online activism?
2. What do the two examples of online activism described in this reading have in common? How are they different? How might these online efforts have influenced the perspectives and choices of those who saw them?
3. Do you think that online activism can influence social norms, or the beliefs and behavior that a community finds acceptable? Do you think online activism can influence people’s choices when they aren’t online?
4. How might the internet and social media affect the ways that people define “we” and “they”? In what ways might the internet and social media be useful in breaking down divisions in society? In what ways might these platforms be used to deepen or amplify those divisions?

<sup>3</sup> James Poniewozik, “#IfTheyGunnedMeDown and What Hashtag Activism Does Right,” *TIME* online, last modified August 11, 2014, accessed September 2, 2015, <http://time.com/3101550/iftheygunnedmedown-hashtag-activism-michael-brown-twitter/>.

## Reading 5

# Open-Source Participation

The widespread use of the internet and mobile phones has opened up new avenues for civic participation. With technology, individuals can respond to crises in creative ways that do not rely on governments, the media, or other institutions. This is what happened in Kenya in 2008, when a small group of bloggers and technology experts created a way for people to map the violence that erupted after a contested presidential election.

Violence related to elections was not new for Kenya. Political parties there are largely aligned with specific ethnic groups, and the supporters of whichever party is in power have often received advantages over the supporters of other parties. As one Kenyan put it, “When your group wins, you eat.”

Before the voting began in December 2007, opinion polls suggested that Raila Odinga and his Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) had a substantial lead over then president Mwai Kibaki and his Party of National Unity (PNU). While the actual voting went relatively smoothly and peacefully, the mood changed when the vote counting began. There were delays in announcing the results, and this caused frustration and suspicion among citizens—particularly among ODM supporters. Eventually, Kibaki was declared the winner, with about 200,000 more votes than Odinga. Violence erupted immediately after the announcement, especially in areas where a majority of people had supported Odinga and ODM. Odinga’s supporters charged that the vote had been rigged in favor of the incumbent Kibaki. Many people participated in the violence, and it spread quickly across the country. It lasted just over two months, and in that time more than 1,300 people were killed, thousands were badly injured, and more than 300,000 were forced from their homes.<sup>1</sup>

As the violence was increasing, Ory Okolloh, a Kenyan lawyer and activist, was using her blog to try to make sense of the conflict that was ripping her country apart. Online, she shared her personal reactions and opinions as well as whatever information she could obtain about what was happening in Kenya. Hoping to find a way to gather reliable reports of violent incidents across the country, she posted a question on January 3: “Any techies out there willing to do a mashup of where the violence and destruction is occurring using Google Maps?”

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Karen Murphy, Dylan Wray, and Clara Ramírez-Barat, *Learning from Our Past: An Exploration of Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Kenya* (Nairobi, Kenya: International Center for Transitional Justice, 2015), 27.



Six days later, Ushahidi.com was born. *Ushahidi* means “testimony” in Swahili. The website allowed Kenyans to mark on a map where incidents of violence and where attempts to restore peace were occurring, based on reports submitted on computers and mobile phones. There were more than 45,000 internet users in Kenya, which meant that large numbers of people could see where violence was taking place and could better respond to what was happening.

Okolloh announced the launch of Ushahidi on her blog on January 9, 2008:

We believe that the number of deaths being reported by the government, police, and media is grossly under reported. We also don’t think we have a true picture of what is really going on—reports that all of us have heard from family and friends in affected areas suggests that things are much worse than what we have heard in the media.

We also (in my idealist world) hope that we can begin to put names and faces to the people who have lost their lives in this mess.

What’s the point of all this you might ask? Well, Kenyans have demonstrated their capacity for selective amnesia time and time again. When this crisis comes to an end we don’t want what happened to be swept under the rug in the name of “moving forward”—for us to truly move forward, the truth of what happened needs to be told—Ushahidi ([www.ushahidi.com](http://www.ushahidi.com)) is our small way of contributing to that.<sup>2</sup>

The information that Ushahidi collected proved to be more reliable and more comprehensive than information reported by either the Kenyan government or the press. Also, the data gathered by Ushahidi helped in the rescue of many Kenyans who were trapped in dire circumstances. *Forbes* magazine reported on one such rescue:

A ranger in Bogoria (northeast of Nairobi), William Kimosop, was driving to check on a remote outpost one evening in January when he stumbled across several hundred women, old people and children, lost in a ravine as they fled their villages where the men were still fighting. Four babies were born in that ravine, and supplies were running out. There were no government officials or police around. He sent a text message to a friend in Nairobi, asking her to get help from aid agencies. The friend forwarded his plea to a few people, after which it got picked up by Ushahidi and within six days a Red Cross truck reached him.<sup>3</sup>

With former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan serving as a mediator, the two political parties negotiated an agreement in February 2008 to share power in Kenya. As the negotiations progressed, individuals and organizations worked together to stop the violence between ordinary citizens. Ushahidi was part of this effort.

<sup>2</sup> Ory Okolloh, “Ushahidi.com,” *Kenyan Pundit* (blog), entry posted January 9, 2008, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.kenyan-pundit.com/2008/01/09/ushahidicom/>.

<sup>3</sup> Megha Bahree, “Citizen Voices,” *Forbes*, last modified November 29, 2008, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/global/2008/1208/114.html>.

Because of Ushahidi's success in Kenya, people in other countries began to use the platform. Since 2008, it has become a tool used by citizens around the world to report critical events in moments of crisis and to map when and where they are happening. *Newsweek* magazine described the importance of Ushahidi in rescue efforts after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti in 2010:

Ushahidi-Haiti was set up two hours after the Jan. 12 earthquake by volunteers based at Tufts University. Soon after, a short code (4636) was created for incoming text messages and spread via local and national radio stations. Witnesses could text information about what they were seeing or experiencing. If the message was actionable, e.g.: "there are people trapped in a building located on Border and Smith," then a volunteer would map the GPS coordinates and provide the information to rescue teams on the ground. Often the text messages were in Creole, but Ushahidi worked with some 10,000 Haitian-American volunteers across the United States who translated every text message within 10 minutes. Carol Waters, Ushahidi-Haiti's director of communications and partnerships, says that many of those messages were simply, "I'm buried under the rubble, but I'm still alive." By day 25 of the earthquake aftermath, Ushahidi-Haiti had mapped about 2,500 reports. In a recent e-mail, a member of the Marine Corps who worked on the Haiti rescue effort wrote, "I cannot overemphasize to you what the work of the Ushahidi/Haiti has provided. It is saving lives every day . . . You are making the biggest difference of anything I have seen out there in the open source world."<sup>4</sup>

Ushahidi has been used all over the world, including in Egypt, Chile, Liberia, Somalia, and the United States.

## Connection Questions

1. What does Ushahidi do? Why do you think Ushahidi has been so powerful?
2. How is learning about important events through social media different from learning about them from the news or from government reports? In what circumstances should we consider each source reliable? When might each be unreliable?
3. How does Ushahidi depend on the desire of people to "choose to participate" in their communities?
4. How can social media and internet technology help us help each other? When can social media or the internet be dangerous or destructive?

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Ramirez, "'Ushahidi' Technology Saves Lives in Haiti and Chile," *Newsweek*, last modified March 3, 2010, accessed October 28, 2015, <http://www.newsweek.com/ushahidi-technology-saves-lives-haiti-and-chile-210262>.

## Reading 6

# Not Just Awareness, But Action

In 2016, at a time when many people in the United States were protesting police brutality and racism in America's justice system, President Barack Obama gave a commencement address at Howard University in Washington, DC. In the speech, he talked about the concerns of many in the audience and about his vision of civic participation and the duties of citizenship:

... You have to go through life with more than just passion for change; you need a strategy. I'll repeat that. I want you to have passion, but you have to have a strategy. Not just awareness, but action. Not just hashtags, but votes. ...

[T]o bring about structural change, lasting change, awareness is not enough. It requires changes in law, changes in custom. If you care about mass incarceration, let me ask you: How are you pressuring members of Congress to pass the criminal justice reform bill now pending before them? If you care about better policing, do you know who your district attorney is? Do you know who your state's attorney general is? Do you know the difference? Do you know who appoints the police chief and who writes the police training manual? Find out who they are, what their responsibilities are. Mobilize the community, present them with a plan, work with them to bring about change, hold them accountable if they do not deliver. Passion is vital, but you've got to have a strategy.

And your plan better include voting—not just some of the time, but all the time ... not just when it's cool, not just when it's time to elect a President, not just when you're inspired. It's your duty. When it's time to elect a member of Congress or a city councilman, or a school board member, or a sheriff. That's how we change our politics—by electing people at every level who are representative of and accountable to us. It is not that complicated. Don't make it complicated.

And finally, change requires more than just speaking out—it requires listening, as well. In particular, it requires listening to those with whom you disagree, and being prepared to compromise. When I was a state senator, I helped pass Illinois's first racial profiling law, and one of the first laws in the nation requiring the video-taping of confessions in capital cases. And we were successful because, early on, I engaged law enforcement. I didn't say to them, oh, you guys are so racist, you need to do something. I understood, as many of you do, that the overwhelming majority of police officers are good, and honest, and courageous, and fair, and love the communities they serve.

And we knew there were some bad apples, and that even the good cops with the best of intentions—including, by the way, African American police officers—might



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have unconscious biases, as we all do. So we engaged and we listened, and we kept working until we built consensus. And because we took the time to listen, we crafted legislation that was good for the police—because it improved the trust and cooperation of the community—and it was good for the communities, who were less likely to be treated unfairly. And I can say this unequivocally: Without at least the acceptance of the police organizations in Illinois, I could never have gotten those bills passed. Very simple. They would have blocked them.

The point is, you need allies in a democracy. That's just the way it is. It can be frustrating and it can be slow. But history teaches us that the alternative to democracy is always worse. That's not just true in this country. It's not a black or white thing. Go to any country where the give and take of democracy has been repealed by one-party rule, and I will show you a country that does not work.

And democracy requires compromise, even when you are 100 percent right. This is hard to explain sometimes. You can be completely right, and you still are going to have to engage folks who disagree with you. If you think that the only way forward is to be as uncompromising as possible, you will feel good about yourself, you will enjoy a certain moral purity, but you're not going to get what you want. And if you don't get what you want long enough, you will eventually think the whole system is rigged. And that will lead to more cynicism, and less participation, and a downward spiral of more injustice and more anger and more despair. And that's never been the source of our progress. That's how we cheat ourselves of progress.

We remember Dr. [Martin Luther] King's soaring oratory, the power of his letter from a Birmingham jail, the marches he led. But he also sat down with President [Lyndon] Johnson in the Oval Office to try and get a Civil Rights Act and a Voting Rights Act passed. And those two seminal bills were not perfect—just like the Emancipation Proclamation [issued by Abraham Lincoln, freeing slaves in the Confederacy during the American Civil War] was a war document as much as it was some clarion call for freedom. Those mileposts of our progress were not perfect. They did not make up for centuries of slavery or Jim Crow or eliminate racism or provide for 40 acres and a mule. But they made things better. And you know what, I will take better every time. I always tell my staff—better is good, because you consolidate your gains and then you move on to the next fight from a stronger position.

. . . Change isn't something that happens every four years or eight years; change is not placing your faith in any particular politician and then just putting your feet up and saying, okay, go. Change is the effort of committed citizens who hitch their wagons to something bigger than themselves and fight for it every single day. . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President at Howard University Commencement Ceremony," speech delivered by Barack Obama at Howard University, Washington, DC, May 7, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/05/07/remarks-president-howard-university-commencement-ceremony>.

## Connection Questions

1. How might President Obama sum up the duties of citizens? What stands out to you in his vision of what it takes to bring about social and political change?
2. Obama argues that we “cheat ourselves of progress” by refusing to compromise. What does he mean? How should citizens figure out when they can compromise to make progress? Are there any ideals or beliefs that should never be compromised?
3. Other readings in this chapter explore the role of social media in civic participation. What does Obama’s speech add to your thinking about the power and limitations of social media to bring about change?
4. William Henry Hastie, the first African American to serve as a federal judge, said: “Democracy is a process, not a static condition. It is becoming rather than being. It can easily be lost, but never is fully won. Its essence is eternal struggle.” What do you think Hastie meant? Do you think President Obama would agree? What else do you think is part of the “essence” of democracy?
5. What might it look like to apply some of Obama’s ideas about making change to an issue that you care about?
6. Author James Baldwin said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”<sup>2</sup> What do you think he meant by this? How does this idea connect to Obama’s ideas about change, as articulated in his speech?

2 James Baldwin, *The Cross of Redemption: Uncollected Writings* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 34.

## Reading 7

# Mayor Mockus

What is the best way to create change in a society? Is it best accomplished by creating new laws or by trying to change the hearts and minds of individuals?

Antanas Mockus, who became the mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, in 1995, tried to answer that question in a creative way. Before Mockus was elected mayor, Bogotá, a city of 8 million people, was beset by widespread poverty, drug abuse, stifling air pollution, and automobile traffic so bad it was difficult to move about the city and dangerous to be a pedestrian. In the early 1990s, according to one Colombian politician, Bogotá was “hated by its inhabitants, who felt powerless and felt that in the future things would only get worse.”<sup>1</sup>

Before running for mayor, Mockus was the president of the National University of Colombia; he was the son of an artist and a former professor of philosophy who was known for innovative and irreverent methods in his classroom. After becoming mayor, he used the art of theater to try to convince the citizens of Bogotá, considered one of the most dangerous cities in South America, to help create a different society.

. . . People were desperate for a change, for a moral leader of some sort. The eccentric Mockus, who communicates through symbols, humor, and metaphors, filled the role. When many hated the disordered and disorderly city of Bogotá, he wore a Superman costume and acted as a superhero called “Supercitizen.” People laughed at Mockus’ antics, but the laughter began to break the ice of their extreme skepticism. . . .

When there was a water shortage, Mockus appeared on TV programs taking a shower and turning off the water as he soaped, asking his fellow citizens to do the same. In just two months people were using 14 percent less water, a savings that increased when people realized how much money they were also saving because of economic incentives approved by Mockus; water use is now 40 percent less than before the shortage.

“The distribution of knowledge is the key contemporary task,” Mockus said. “Knowledge empowers people. If people know the rules, and are sensitized by art, humor, and creativity, they are much more likely to accept change.”

Mockus taught vivid lessons with these tools. One time, he asked citizens to put their power to use with 350,000 “thumbs-up” and “thumbs-down” cards that his office distributed to the populace. The cards were meant to approve or disapprove

<sup>1</sup> Lisa Jones, “The improbable story of how Bogota, Colombia, became somewhere you might actually want to live,” *Grist*, last modified April 4, 2002, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://grist.org/article/of5/>.



of other citizens' behavior; it was a device that many people actively—and peacefully—used in the streets.

He also asked people to pay 10 percent extra in voluntary taxes. To the surprise of many, 63,000 people voluntarily paid the extra taxes. A dramatic indicator of the shift in the attitude of “Bogotanos” during Mockus' tenure is that, in 2002, the city collected more than three times the revenues it had garnered in 1990.

Another Mockus inspiration was to ask people to call his office if they found a kind and honest taxi driver; 150 people called and the mayor organized a meeting with all those good taxi drivers, who advised him about how to improve the behavior of mean taxi drivers. The good taxi drivers were named “Knights of the Zebra,” a club supported by the mayor's office.

Yet Mockus doesn't like to be called a leader. “There is a tendency to be dependent on individual leaders,” he said. “To me, it is important to develop collective leadership. I don't like to get credit for all that we achieved. Millions of people contributed to the results that we achieved . . . I like more egalitarian relationships. I especially like to orient people to learn.”

Still, there were times when Mockus felt he needed to impose his will, such as when he launched the “Carrot Law,” demanding that every bar and entertainment place close at 1 a.m. with the goal of diminishing drinking and violence.

Most important to Mockus was his campaign about the importance and sacredness of life. “In a society where human life has lost value,” he said, “there cannot be another priority than re-establishing respect for life as the main right and duty of citizens.” Mockus sees the reduction of homicides from 80 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1993 to 22 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2003 as a major achievement, noting also that traffic fatalities dropped by more than half in the same time period, from an average of 1,300 per year to about 600. Contributing to this success was the mayor's inspired decision to paint stars on the spots where pedestrians (1,500 of them) had been killed in traffic accidents. . . .

There is almost always a civics lesson behind Mockus' antics. Florence Thomas, a feminist and a professor at Colombian National University, pointed out to Mockus that in Bogotá women were afraid to go out at night. “At that time, we were also looking for what would be the best image of a safe city, and I realized that if you see streets with many women you feel safer,” Mockus explained.

So he asked men to stay home and suggested that both sexes should take advantage of the “Night for Women” to reflect on women's role in society. About 700,000 women went out, flocking to free, open-air concerts. They flooded into bars that offered women-only drink specials and strolled down a central boulevard that had been converted into a pedestrian zone.

To avoid legal challenges, the mayor stated that the men's curfew was strictly voluntary. Men who simply couldn't bear to stay indoors during the six-hour restriction were asked to carry self-styled “safe conduct” passes. About 200,000 men went out that night, some of them angrily calling Mockus a “clown” in TV interviews.

But most men graciously embraced Mockus' campaign. In the lower-middle-class neighborhood of San Cristobal, women marched through the streets to celebrate their night. When they saw a man staying at home, carrying a baby, or taking care of children, the women stopped and applauded.

That night the police commander was a woman, and 1,500 women police were in charge of Bogotá's security.

Another innovative idea was to use mimes to improve both traffic and citizens' behavior. Initially 20 professional mimes shadowed pedestrians who didn't follow crossing rules: A pedestrian running across the road would be tracked by a mime who mocked his every move. Mimes also poked fun at reckless drivers. The program was so popular that another 400 people were trained as mimes. "It was a pacifist counterweight," Mockus said. "With neither words nor weapons, the mimes were doubly unarmed. My goal was to show the importance of cultural regulations." . . . <sup>2</sup>

During his time as mayor, Mockus continued to take risks and find creative ways to communicate ideas about civic engagement, safety, and community with his constituents. According to humanities professor Doris Sommer, Mockus had tackled apparently intractable conditions by thinking creatively: "'What would an artist do?' was his motto. If that one failed, a humanist motto came to the rescue: 'When you are stuck, reinterpret.'"<sup>3</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How did Antanas Mockus try to create change in Bogotá as mayor? What tactics did he use? Why do you think they worked?
2. What common aspects of people's thoughts and behavior do you think helped Mockus achieve change?
3. Friedrich Schiller, a German poet, philosopher, and playwright, wrote, "In order that obedience to reason may become an object of inclination [something people want to do], it must represent for us the principle of pleasure, for pleasure and pain are the only springs which set the instincts in motion."<sup>4</sup> How did Mockus use pleasure to convince people to change their behavior (or adopt his reforms)? How is this different from using punishment? When might it not be enough?
4. Which do you think is a more effective way to change a society: through laws or by influencing people's attitudes and beliefs? How might the two strategies work together?

<sup>2</sup> Maria Cristina Caballero, "Academic turns city into social experiment," *Harvard Gazette*, March 11, 2004, accessed July 15, 2016. <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/03.11/01-mockus.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Doris Sommer, *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* (Duke University Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 18.

## Reading 8

# Finding a Voice in Art

On September 11, 1973, a group of Chilean military officers led by General Augusto Pinochet struck down Salvador Allende's democratically elected government. Seventeen years of oppressive dictatorship followed in Chile.

The Pinochet dictatorship routinely violated human rights. Among other abuses, thousands of Chileans were detained, tortured, killed, or "disappeared"—forcibly abducted or taken for questioning, never to return. More than 3,000 people vanished. Thousands more were rounded up and held as political prisoners or executed at the National Stadium, a large sports complex in the city of Santiago. Pinochet's government targeted these Chileans in an effort to suppress political opposition and dissent.

In response, a grassroots movement emerged among Chilean women. The majority of people taken in for questioning or removed from their communities were men, and immediately many women who loved them began searching for them—a dangerous, even revolutionary act. Through these searches, the women began to join together, creating a community and sharing resources.



Watch **The Arpilleras of Chile**  
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Explore **Stitching Truth: Women's Protest Art in Pinochet's Chile**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](https://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)



Marjorie Agosin

This arpillera was created by Violeta Morales. The faceless figures next to the women represent the missing victims who dared to oppose Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, from 1973 to 1990.

The Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, formed community centers to support families of the disappeared. The women who came to these centers participated in workshops, taught one another practical skills, and began to make handicrafts. Turning to the folk art of embroidery, they found a way to use the workshops for more than just a source of income and support; these became places to gather and heal and talk about their loved ones who had been disappeared, and they also became places for the women to find their voices. In brilliant tapestries, called *arpilleras*, the women began to stitch together the stories of the disappeared and of other victims of the military dictatorship.

Violeta Morales was one of the women who began creating *arpilleras* after her brother, Newton, was taken by Pinochet's secret police, commonly called the DINA. After some members of a political group (known as MIR) took up arms against the new dictatorship, the DINA hunted down anyone associated with the group, whether they participated in the armed resistance or not. Newton did not participate in the resistance, but he was a member of MIR. Violeta Morales writes,

When Newton came home [on August 13, 1974,] the men took him by the arms and he called out to my mother who was in the kitchen. "Mother, the DINA is taking me away." My mother didn't understand what was happening at the time because she had never been political. The men tried to assure her because she was grasping my brother. One of the agents took her aside and said, "Don't worry ma'am; we'll bring him back in ten minutes—we only want to speak with him. We're friends from work." My brother looked pale and didn't say anything, probably so as not to frighten our mother. . . . When they took my brother Newton away from home, my other brother was arriving and followed the wagon in his taxi. From a distance he saw them bring Newton close to the church of San Francisco . . .

After our brother's disappearance, we began looking for him everywhere—like all the relatives of the detained. The DINA, Directorate of National Intelligence, was created in July 1974, and the military continued refining its methods and applying them more cruelly. We began doing things immediately and found out that at the Pro-Paz Committee, which was located on Santa Monica Street, they were getting all types of reports about abuses and violations of human rights. We began looking for our brother in jails, cemeteries, morgues, commissaries, and anywhere a military regiment existed. We also went to the law courts, and at many of the places we went, they received us with machine guns just for asking questions and for going around searching for the detained-disappeared. We sent thousands of letters abroad asking for help as well. We even went so far as sending letters to the leaders of the dictatorship themselves, but nothing came of all this. . . .

From the despair emerged the idea of making *arpilleras*. . . . We didn't want to make something that would function as a decoration. We wanted to design a handmade product that would denounce what we and our country were living. We wanted to tell people about our personal experiences through pieces of our own clothing. We wanted to embroider our story, the harsh and sad story of our ruined country. At first, we had problems getting the materials, especially the cloth and

the wool. So, we got the idea of cutting up our own clothes and unraveling our sweaters to make the first *arpilleras*.

We opened our workshop in 1974, but we didn't go public until 1975. In those years, I took full responsibility for the search of my brother. My sister had been kidnapped by a cab driver who interrogated her about the names of people she knew. She told him about her years as a volunteer worker in rural organizations and about all her activities as a university student [and then she was released]. After that, my sister was afraid to go out into the street to look for our brother. I was scared too. We were all afraid to keep on asking and searching. Then I put all my energy into the *arpillera* workshop; it was sometimes the only thing that kept me balanced emotionally. There I found other people who were suffering from the same thing and trying to help them sometimes helped me with my own tragedy. . . .

In the same *arpillera* workshops, we started training sessions to teach the women about solidarity and their role in the soup kitchens and other group activities. Sometimes it was hard teaching the women in the townships because they treated us worse than lepers; they believed that our protest activities would put them in jail or among the disappeared. It was hard convincing them that if we didn't unite and support each other, then we wouldn't be able to do anything. Many times the money that we got from the sale of *arpilleras* paid some child's medical fees or gave relief to a workshop family member. . . .

We women of Chile who were involved in the struggle had a more difficult time because, as we now realize, our men were so *machista* [male chauvinist]. Instead of helping us in those years, they pulled us down. Some of the women's husbands would not let them attend meetings or help in the training or with the solidarity work. In those years, men never said, "*Compañera*, let's go out and struggle together to change the reality of this country." Women were the ones who fought. . . .

As a woman, I realized as part of this process of fighting for liberty in my country that the myth that they had driven into our heads all our lives—that the man is the one with the power and physical force to control everything—only goes so far. It's relative, and it's like all the other myths that they implanted in us women. It was the women comrades who managed to end the military nightmare in our country; they had the strength that the men lacked or lost along the way. Women, who were always housewives, woke up and didn't submit until freedom returned to their country and its citizens. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Marjorie Agosín, a poet and human rights activist from Chile, recalls how the community created by the arpilleristas was both a healing space and a means of advocating for justice.

The women who started this arpillera movement began their journey in the places of fear—hospitals, morgues, and cemeteries. They told me how they would recognize one of their own: each carried a mark of pain. They would ask each other whether they were there for a vanished son or a husband and how many children had been taken, when they had disappeared. Violeta Morales, one of the founders of the movement, always said that she was able to recognize her own grief in the faces of others. And they recognized the shoes worn out from walking the

1 In Marjorie Agosín, *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love: The Arpillera Movement in Chile* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 83–91.



streets in search of their loved ones. Their first conversations were heavy with the language of pain, but the exchanges quickly turned into a language of solidarity. Slowly, they began to think of ways of uniting in a collective project that would transcend their individual plights. Soon they gained the support of the Vicariate of Solidarity, a branch of the Catholic Church. This organization, under the direction of Cardinal Silva Henríquez, a noted human rights activist, was created to protect the country's victims.

. . . On many occasions, I visited the workshops where the arpilleristas gathered. As they stitched, they spoke. Sometimes they needed to stop their sewing because the cloth was wet with their tears. But mutual support and love allowed them to continue embroidering the stories of their children, those they had lost, and their country. The art of the arpillera combines the individual pain of each of these women with the collective pain of all Chileans.<sup>2</sup>

As the number of workshops grew, and the arpilleristas gained confidence in their voices, they decided to stage public protests. Agreeing to use only peaceful methods, including dancing alone in public squares and chaining themselves to public buildings, mothers, daughters, and sisters of the disappeared took to the streets. They marched around central plazas, and when the police dispersed them, they staged hunger strikes, some lasting weeks. The strikes led to more concern about the disappeared, both within Chile and internationally.

In addition, with the help of the Roman Catholic Church, the arpilleras themselves found an international audience; the tapestries were smuggled out of Chile and bore witness around the world to the tragedy of the dead and the missing. Agosín writes,

The arpilleras were created as a response to censorship, as a way to fight against the impunity enjoyed by government forces. They became an important vehicle for spreading the news about Chile's situation. These pieces of cloth traveled abroad: customs officials never suspected that these humble wall hangings had the power to transform those who touched them. The arpilleras made it to museums around the world, to the calendars of Amnesty International, to the homes of exiles, and to many others who cared deeply about Chile.<sup>3</sup>

Amid growing domestic and international pressure, General Pinochet stepped down in 1990. Though his departure from government was not a direct result of the arpilleristas' work, historian Peter Winn believes that the arpilleras were particularly successful "in making Pinochet the emblematic dictator and human rights abuser of the era" and "in creating international sympathy and support for his victims and opponents."<sup>4</sup>

A generation of artists in Chile continues to follow in the footsteps of these activists, using arpilleras to provoke discussions about how to incorporate the memory of the missing into Chile's history. These artists use art as a way to showcase the power of women and the effectiveness of nonviolent protest.

2 Ibid., ix–xii.

3 In Agosín, *Tapestries of Hope, Threads of Love*, x.

4 Peter Winn, email message to Facing History, February 6, 2006.



In 2006, Michelle Bachelet was elected as the first female president of Chile. Her father served in Allende's government and was imprisoned and tortured by Pinochet's secret police; he died of a heart attack in prison. Both Bachelet and her mother were also detained and tortured by the Pinochet regime and then sent into exile. To many people, Bachelet symbolizes the radical transformation of Chile since the dictatorship. She led the country as president from 2006 to 2010, and after three years of serving in the United Nations, she was reelected as president of Chile in 2013.

## Connection Questions

1. Why did the women whose family members disappeared in Chile choose to make tapestries? What were their practical and political reasons? What other ways are there to express dissent in repressive times?
2. The arpilleristas used the art of embroidery to document both their personal and their political stories. What is unique about the power of visual art to tell stories?
3. Look carefully at the arpillera in this reading. What story does the arpillera tell? (Think about the colors the artist chose, the images she selected, and the arrangement of the objects in the arpillera.)
4. Creating arpilleras made use of a set of traditionally female domestic skills—sewing, weaving, and embroidering, for example. In what ways were the arpilleristas able to turn their disadvantages as women in a traditional society into a political tool?
5. As the arpilleras received international attention, they also influenced women in similar grassroots movements. In Peru, Argentina, and South Africa, for example, women who learned about the arpilleristas also formed social justice movements that used sewing as a technique to protest human rights abuses. Why do you think the strategy of the arpilleristas was so transferable? Attractive? Influential?
6. Some believe that artists should focus on beauty and avoid politics. Do you agree or disagree? How can art promote human rights? What function can art have in political struggles? In education?

## Reading 9

# Seeking a Strategy that Works



LESSON

Teach **Strategies for Making a Difference**  
[facinghistory.org/hhb-media](http://facinghistory.org/hhb-media)

Khalida Brohi was born in a rural village in Pakistan. When she was a young girl, her father and her 14-year-old mother decided to leave their rural village and move to a town where their children could attend school. Even as Brohi attended school in larger Pakistani towns and cities, her father kept a house in their rural homeland in order to keep the family connected to their roots. As she grew older, Brohi realized that she had opportunities denied to peers in her rural homeland. Brohi was troubled and began to look for ways to improve the lives of women and girls in Pakistan—a journey that has had many twists and turns. In a talk presented at a 2014 TED conference, she said,

I come from an indigenous tribe in the mountains of Balochistan called Brahui. Brahui, or Brohi, means mountain dweller, and it is also my language. Thanks to my father's very strict rules about connecting to our customs, I had to live a beautiful life of songs, cultures, traditions, stories, mountains, and a lot of sheep. But then, living in two extremes between the traditions of my culture, of my village, and then modern education in my school wasn't easy. I was aware that I was the only

girl who got to have such freedom, and I was guilty of it. While going to school in Karachi and Hyderabad, a lot of my cousins and childhood friends were getting married off, some to older men, some in exchange, some even as second wives. I got to see the beautiful tradition and its magic fade in front of me when I saw that the birth of a girl child was celebrated with sadness, when women were told to have patience as their main virtue.

These realizations pained Brohi, but she was first moved to act when she learned that a friend had been the victim of an "honor killing." Brohi explains: "Honor killing is a custom where men and women are suspected of having relationships before or outside of the marriage, and they're killed by their family for it. Usually the killer is the

brother or father or the uncle in the family." Those who practice honor killing believe that when a woman has a forbidden relationship with a man, she brings shame to her family, and the family's honor can be restored only by killing her. The United Nations believes that there are at least 1,000 such "honor" murders in Pakistan every year, but many more probably go unreported.

Sughar Foundation



Women hold embroidery they created with the Sughar Foundation, an organization that provides Pakistani women with opportunities for socioeconomic empowerment.

After her friend's death, Brohi started trying to raise awareness about the practice of honor killing. When her family got a computer, Brohi found a way to amplify her voice. As one of eight children, she could use the computer for only a few minutes a day, but it opened up a new world for her. She created an online campaign called the WAKE UP Campaign against Honor Killing and connected with supporters in Britain, the United States, and Australia. Members of the news media paid attention to Brohi's movement, and she organized rallies and strikes to speak out for women's rights. But she soon learned that people in her community in Balochistan were insulted by her efforts to challenge centuries-old customs. Her father received anonymous letters, the family's car was stoned, and Brohi received a death threat. She eventually stayed in Karachi for her safety, and she began to think differently about how to protect and empower women in her homeland. In her talk, she went on to explain:

Back in Karachi, as an 18-year-old, I thought this was the biggest failure of my entire life. I was devastated. As a teenager, I was blaming myself for everything that happened. And it turns out, when we started reflecting, we did realize that it was actually me and my team's fault.

There were two big reasons why our campaign had failed big time. One of those, the first reason, is we were standing against core values of people. We were saying no to something that was very important to them, challenging their code of honor, and hurting them deeply in the process. And number two, which was very important for me to learn . . . was that we were not including the true heroes who should be fighting for themselves. The women in the villages had no idea we were fighting for them in the streets. Every time I would go back, I would find my cousins and friends with scarves on their faces, and I would ask, "What happened?" And they'd be like, "Our husbands beat us." But we are working in the streets for you! We are changing the policies. How is that not impacting their life?

. . . The policies of a country do not necessarily always affect the tribal and rural communities. It was devastating—like, oh, we can't actually do something about this? And we found out there's a huge gap when it comes to official policies and the real truth on the ground.

So this time, we were like, we are going to do something different. We are going to use strategy, and we are going to go back and apologize. Yes, apologize. We went back to the communities and we said we are very ashamed of what we did. We are here to apologize, and in fact, we are here to make it up to you. How do we do that? We are going to promote three of your main cultures. We know that it's music, language, and embroidery.

Nobody believed us. Nobody wanted to work with us. It took a lot of convincing and discussions with these communities until they agreed that we are going to promote their language by making a booklet of their stories, fables and old tales in the tribe, and we would promote their music by making a CD of the songs from the tribe, and some drumbeating. And the third, which was my favorite, was we would promote their embroidery by making a center in the village where women would come every day to make embroidery . . .

So this was the model which actually came out—very amazing. Through embroidery we were promoting their traditions. We went into the village. We would mobilize the community. We would make a center inside where 30 women will come for six months to learn about value addition of traditional embroidery, enterprise development, life skills and basic education, and about their rights and how to say no to those customs and how to stand as leaders for themselves and the society. After six months, we would connect these women to loans and to markets where they can become local entrepreneurs in their communities.

We soon called this project Sughar. Sughar is a local word used in many, many languages in Pakistan. It means skilled and confident women. I truly believe, to create women leaders, there's only one thing you have to do: Just let them know that they have what it takes to be a leader. These women you see here, they have strong skills and potential to be leaders. All we had to do was remove the barriers that surrounded them, and that's what we decided to do.

But then while we were thinking everything was going well, once again everything was fantastic, we found our next setback: A lot of men started seeing the visible changes in their wife. She's speaking more, she's making decisions—oh my gosh, she's handling everything in the house. They stopped them from coming to the centers, and this time, we were like, okay, time for strategy two. We went to the fashion industry in Pakistan and decided to do research about what happens there. Turns out the fashion industry in Pakistan is very strong and growing day by day, but there is less contribution from the tribal areas and to the tribal areas, especially women.

So we decided to launch our first ever tribal women's very own fashion brand, which is now called Nomads. And so women started earning more, they started contributing more financially to the house, and men had to think again before saying no to them when they were coming to the centers.<sup>1</sup>

In 2013, Sughar began to build cement halls in Pakistani villages, with the help of the travel website TripAdvisor. They invite other nonprofit organizations to share the spaces for training and education.

<sup>1</sup> Khalida Brohi, "How I work to protect women from honor killings," speech presented at TEDGlobal 2014, October 2014, TED website, last modified 2014, accessed August 25, 2015, [https://www.ted.com/talks/khalida\\_brohi\\_how\\_i\\_work\\_to\\_protect\\_women\\_from\\_honor\\_killings](https://www.ted.com/talks/khalida_brohi_how_i_work_to_protect_women_from_honor_killings).

## Connection Questions

1. Why does Khalida Brohi say that the failure of her initial online campaign was her fault? What did she learn from that experience?
2. Why might it have been important for Brohi to apologize to the rural communities she was trying to help?
3. How was Brohi's Sughar project different from her WAKE UP Campaign? What setbacks did she encounter with the Sughar project, and how did she overcome them? How was she able to change the status of women in their families?
4. Violence against women, even killing at the hands of a male family member, is not limited to Pakistan; in fact, it happens all over the world. In her essay "The Longest War," Rebecca Solnit writes about violence against women, and she acknowledges that while there are differences in how it happens, all violence against women is "trying to silence and punish women for claiming voice, power, and the right to participate."<sup>2</sup> How is violence used as a tool to limit someone's ability to participate?
5. How might you learn more about violence against women in your own community? How might you choose to challenge this violence?

2 Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me* (New York: Haymarket Books, 2014), 32.

## Reading 10

# Believing in Others



Teach **Strategies for Making a Difference**  
facinghistory.org/hhb-media

LESSON

Jessica Jackley became interested in the problem of poverty as a young girl and went on to found Kiva, an organization that has helped millions of people all over the world by providing small but transformative loans to finance education, businesses, and farms. Jackley's journey to making a difference wasn't always easy, and she often felt powerless and discouraged. Changing how she thought about poor people was a crucial inspiration for her work with Kiva. In a 2010 TED conference talk, Jackley described how stories are the key element that sustains her work and moves others to become involved:

The stories we tell about each other matter very much. The stories we tell ourselves about our own lives matter. And most of all, I think the way that we participate in each other's stories is of deep importance. I was six years old when I first heard stories about the poor. Now I didn't hear those stories from the poor themselves, I heard them from my Sunday school teacher . . . I remember learning that people who were poor needed something material—food, clothing, shelter—that they didn't have. And I also was taught, coupled with that, that it was my job—this classroom full of five- and six-year-old children—it was our job, apparently, to help. This is what Jesus asked of us. And then he said, "What you do for the least of these, you do for me." Now I was pretty psyched. I was very eager to be useful in the world—I think we all have that feeling. And also, it was kind of interesting that God needed help. That was news to me, and it felt like it was a very important thing to get to participate in.<sup>1</sup>

But Jackley said that as she grew older, she became discouraged by the fact that no matter how hard she worked, the problem of poverty persisted. She continued:

I felt like I had been just given a homework assignment that I had to do, and I was excited to do, but no matter what I would do, I would fail. So I felt confused, a little bit frustrated and angry, like maybe I'd misunderstood something here. And I felt overwhelmed. And for the first time, I began to fear this group of people and to feel negative emotion towards a whole group of people. I imagined in my head, a kind of long line of individuals that were never going away, that would always be with us. They were always going to ask me to help them and give them things, which I was excited to do, but I didn't know how it was going to work. And I didn't know what would happen when I ran out of things to give, especially if the problem was never going away. In the years following, the other stories I heard about the poor growing up were no more positive. For example, I saw pictures and images frequently of sadness and suffering. I heard about things that were going wrong in the lives of the poor. I heard about disease, I heard about war—they always

<sup>1</sup> Jessica Jackley, "Poverty, money — and love," speech presented at TEDGlobal 2010, July 2010, TED website, accessed August 25, 2015, [https://www.ted.com/talks/jessica\\_jackley\\_poverty\\_money\\_and\\_love](https://www.ted.com/talks/jessica_jackley_poverty_money_and_love).



seemed to be kind of related. And in general, I got this sort of idea that the poor in the world lived lives that were wrought with suffering and sadness, devastation, hopelessness.

And after a while . . . I started to feel bad every time I heard about them. I started to feel guilty for my own relative wealth, because I wasn't doing more, apparently, to make things better. And I even felt a sense of shame because of that. And so naturally, I started to distance myself. I stopped listening to their stories quite as closely as I had before. And I stopped expecting things to really change. Now I still gave—on the outside it looked like I was still quite involved. I gave of my time and my money . . . I gave when I was cornered, when it was difficult to avoid and I gave, in general, when the negative emotions built up enough that I gave to relieve my own suffering, not someone else's . . . <sup>2</sup>

Jackley's perspective changed, however, when she heard Dr. Muhammad Yunus speak. Yunus won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his pioneering work in microfinance. Through his organization, the Grameen Bank, Yunus provided "microloans" to the poor. A microloan is a very small, short-term loan that helps provide a poor person with just what they need to make a business or farm profitable and self-sufficient. But it wasn't just hearing about how microfinance works that changed Jackley's perspective. She went on to explain:

[M]ore importantly, [Yunus] told stories about the poor that were different than any stories I had heard before. In fact, for those individuals he talked about, [being] poor was sort of a side note. He was talking about strong, smart, hardworking entrepreneurs who woke up every day and were doing things to make their lives and their family's lives better. All they needed to do that more quickly and to do it better was a little bit of capital [money]. It was an amazing sort of insight for me.

And I, in fact, was so deeply moved by this . . . that I actually quit my job a few weeks later, and I moved to East Africa to try to see for myself what this was about. For the first time, actually, in a long time I wanted to meet those individuals, I wanted to meet these entrepreneurs, and see for myself what their lives were actually about. So I spent three months in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania interviewing entrepreneurs that had received 100 dollars to start or grow a business. And in fact, through those interactions, for the first time, I was starting to get to be friends with some of those people in that big amorphous group out there that was supposed to be far away. I was starting to be friends and get to know their personal stories. And over and over again, as I interviewed them and spent my days with them, I did hear stories of life change . . .

So I would hear from goat herders who had used that money that they had received to buy a few more goats. Their business trajectory would change. They would make a little bit more money; their standard of living would shift and would get better. And they would make really interesting little adjustments in their lives, like they would start to send their children to school. They might be able to buy mosquito nets. Maybe they could afford a lock for the door and feel secure. Maybe it was just that they could put sugar in their tea and offer that to me when I came as their guest and that made them feel proud. But there were these beautiful

2 Jackley, "Poverty, money—and love."

details, even if I talked to 20 goat herders in a row, and some days that's what happened—these beautiful details of life change that were meaningful to them. That was another thing that really touched me. It was really humbling to see for the first time, to really understand that even if I could have taken a magic wand and fixed everything, I probably would have gotten a lot wrong. Because the best way for people to change their lives is for them to have control and to do that in a way that they believe is best for them. So I saw that and it was very humbling.<sup>3</sup>

Jackley decided she wanted to help the people she met in East Africa get the loans they needed. She took a crash course in business and finance. She returned to Uganda with a digital camera, took pictures of seven of her friends there who wanted loans, posted their stories on a website, and asked friends and family to help. She explains: "The money came in basically overnight. We sent it over to Uganda. And over the next six months, a beautiful thing happened; the entrepreneurs received the money, they were paid, and their businesses, in fact, grew, and they were able to support themselves and change the trajectory of their lives."

After their initial success, Jackley and a partner expanded the website. Potential donors would now visit the site, read the stories of individuals in need of microloans, and choose the people whose projects they would like to support with their donation. In less than five years, the online platform, called Kiva, was arranging more than \$150 million in loans each year to entrepreneurs, farmers, and students in need from over 200 countries. Jackley concluded:

And while those numbers and those statistics are really fun to talk about and they're interesting, to me, Kiva's really about stories. It's about retelling the story of the poor, and it's about giving ourselves an opportunity to engage that validates their dignity, validates a partnership relationship, not a relationship that's based on the traditional sort of donor-beneficiary weirdness that can happen. But instead a relationship that can promote respect and hope and this optimism that together we can move forward. So what I hope is that, not only can the money keep flowing forth through Kiva—that's a very positive and meaningful thing—but I hope Kiva can blur those lines, like I said, between the traditional rich and poor categories that we're taught to see in the world, this false dichotomy of us and them, have and have not. I hope that Kiva can blur those lines. Because as that happens, I think we can feel free to interact in a way that's more open, more just and more creative, to engage with each other and to help each other . . .

For me, the best way to be inspired is to stop and to listen to someone else's story . . . Whenever I do that, guaranteed, I am inspired . . . And I believe more and more every time I listen in that person's potential to do great things in the world and in my own potential to maybe help. . . . Forget the tools, forget the moving around of resources—that stuff's easy. Believing in each other, really being sure when push comes to shove that each one of us can do amazing things in the world, that is what can make our stories into love stories and our collective story into one that continually perpetuates hope and good things for all of us. So that, this

3 Jackley, "Poverty, money—and love."

belief in each other, knowing that without a doubt and practicing that every day in whatever you do, that's what I believe will change the world and make tomorrow better than today.<sup>4</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What moved Jessica Jackley to try to do something about the problem of poverty? What challenges did she face?
2. How have stories been important to Jackley's evolving efforts to help people in poverty? How did stories change how Jackley saw the poor? Did her experiences also change how she saw herself?
3. What might Jackley have meant when she mentioned "this false dichotomy of us and them"? How might the work of Kiva help to break down that sense of "us" and "them"?
4. For Jackley, opening her heart and connecting to others' stories were the crucial ingredients in making change. What other resources and tools have helped to make Kiva successful?

<sup>4</sup> Jackley, "Poverty, money—and love."

## Reading 11

# Breaking Isolation

At some point in school, at work, or in our communities, many of us are forced to work with someone who is different from or unfamiliar to us, perhaps someone who is a member of a group we have been taught to mistrust or fear. How we choose to respond in this situation can have a powerful impact on ourselves and others.

C. P. Ellis and Ann Atwater faced such a choice. Both of them lived in Durham, North Carolina, in the 1970s. Ellis was known as the leader of the Durham branch of the Ku Klux Klan, a racist hate group. He was born in Durham in 1927, and he grew up, a white man, during the years of segregation in the South. He later recalled:

I was workin' a bread route. The highest I made one week was seventy-five dollars. The rent on our house was about twelve dollars a week . . .



I left the bread route with fifty dollars in my pocket. I went to the bank and I borrowed four thousand dollars to buy the service station. I worked seven days a week, open and close, and finally had a heart attack. Just about two months before the last payments of that loan. My wife had done the best she could to keep it runnin'. Tryin' to come out of that hole, I just couldn't do it.

I really began to get bitter. I didn't know who to blame. I tried to find somebody. I began to blame it on black people. I had to hate somebody. Hatin' America is hard to do because you can't see it to hate it. You gotta have somethin' to look

**C. P. Ellis, a former Ku Klux Klan member, and Ann Atwater, a community activist, formed an unlikely partnership after being assigned as co-leaders of a group of citizens navigating court-ordered school desegregation in Durham, North Carolina, in the 1970s.**

at to hate. The natural person for me to hate would be black people, because my father before me was a member of the Klan. As far as he was concerned, it was the savior of the white people. It was the only organization in the world that would take care of the white people. So I began to admire the Klan.

I got active in the Klan while I was at the service station. Every Monday night, a group of men would come by and buy a Coca-Cola, go back to the car, take a few drinks, and come back and stand around talkin'. I couldn't help but wonder: Why

are these dudes comin' out every Monday? They said they were with the Klan and have meetings close-by. Would I be interested? Boy, that was an opportunity I really looked forward to! To be part of somethin'. I joined the Klan, went from member to chaplain, from chaplain to vice-president, from vice-president to president. The title is exalted cyclops.<sup>1</sup>

Ellis recalled how he felt the day he took the oath and assumed that leadership role.

After I had taken my oath, there was loud applause goin' throughout the buildin', musta been at least four hundred people. For this one little ol' person. It was a thrilling moment for C. P. Ellis . . .

I can understand why people join extreme right-wing or left-wing groups. They're in the same boat I was. Shut out. Deep down inside, we want to be part of this great society. Nobody listens, so we join these groups.<sup>2</sup>

Ann Atwater, born in 1935, was an African American woman living in Durham, known mainly for her work as a community activist. She was an advocate for the poor and focused on improving low-income housing and ending discrimination by real-estate companies. Atwater was considered strong and resolute; she "stood up to politicians and Klansmen, who one night stood silently outside her apartment wearing white hoods and robes."<sup>3</sup>

Ellis and Atwater knew each other from town meetings and had often argued with one another in front of others. When a federal district judge issued a court order for school desegregation in 1970, tensions in Durham increased enormously. To manage the growing conflict, a team of local residents organized a charrette, or a series of collaborative meetings, to help resolve issues that arose from the school desegregation process. Because they were both well known in the community, Ellis and Atwater were nominated by the group to co-lead the charrette.

When Atwater and Ellis began working together, they were not enthusiastic about collaborating. Ann Atwater later remembered,

When a paper called and said I was named cochairman with C. P., I said, No, no. I laid in bed all that night, not sleepin'. The next mornin', I called back and told them yes, I would serve. I couldn't lay down and think the paper would print a headline: Blacks were scared of whites.<sup>4</sup>

Ellis went on:

. . . It was impossible. How could I work with her? But after about two or three days, it was in our hands. We had to make it a success. This give me another sense of belongin', a sense of pride. This helped this inferiority feelin' I had. A man who has stood up publicly and said he despised black people, all of a sudden he was willin' to work with 'em. In spite of all my hatred for blacks and Jews and liberals, I accepted

1 Studs Terkel, *American Dreams: Lost and Found* (Ballantine Books, 1980), 221–23.

2 Ibid.

3 Virginia Bridges, "Durham civil rights activist Ann Atwater dies at 80," *The News & Observer* (Durham, NC), June 20, 2016, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/community/durham-news/article84815927.html>.

4 Studs Terkel, *Race: How Blacks and Whites Think and Feel about the American Obsession* (New York: New Press, 1992), 280.

the job. Her and I began to reluctantly work together . . . She had as many problems workin' with me as I had workin' with her.

One night I called her: "Ann, you and I should have a lot of differences and we got 'em now. But there's somethin' laid out here before us, and if it's gonna be a success, you and I are gonna have to make it one. Can we lay aside some of these feelin's?" She said: "I'm willing if you are." I said: "Let's do it."<sup>5</sup>

Atwater recalled a similar transformation. In an interview with the *Carolina Times*, she talked publicly about the partnership:

Mr. Ellis has the same problems with the schools and his children as I do with mine and we now have a chance to do something for them. There certainly is no deep-seated love between Mr. Ellis and myself but this school project brings out problems we all have. We are going to have to lay aside our differences and work together. This will be the first time two completely different sets of philosophies have united to work for this goal of better schools. If we fail, at least no one can say we didn't try.<sup>6</sup>

When Ellis and Atwater went out into the community, they found that people were not responding to their message. Ellis said:

Some of 'em was cussin' us out. "You're sellin' us out, Ellis, get out of my door. I don't want to talk to you." Ann was gettin' the same response from blacks: "What are you doin' messin' with that Klansman?"

One day, Ann and I went back to the school and we sat down. We began to talk and just reflect. Ann said: "My daughter came home cryin' every day. She said her teacher was makin' fun of me in front of the other kids." I said: "Boy, the same thing happened to my kid. White liberal teacher was makin' fun of Tim Ellis's father, the Klansman. In front of other peoples. He came home cryin'." At this point . . . I begin to see, here we are, two people from the far ends of the fence, havin' identical problems, except hers bein' black and me bein' white. From that moment on, I tell ya, that gal and I worked together good. I begin to love the girl, really. . . .

The amazing thing about it, her and I, up to that point, had cussed each other, bawled each other, we hated each other. Up to that point, we didn't know each other. We didn't know we had things in common.

We worked at it, with the people who came to these meetings. They talked about racism, sex education, about teachers not bein' qualified. After seven, eight nights of real intense discussion, these people, who'd never talked to each other before, all of a sudden came up with resolutions. It was really somethin', you have to be there to get the tone and feelin' of it.

At that point, I didn't like integration, but the law says you do this and I've got to do what the law says, okay? We said: "Let's take these resolutions to the school board." The most disheartening thing I've ever faced was the school system refused to implement any one of these resolutions. These were recommendations from the people who pay taxes and pay their salaries. . . .<sup>7</sup>

5 Terkel, *American Dreams*, 221–23.

6 Osha Gray Davidson, *The Best of Enemies: Race and Redemption in the New South*, paperback ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 269–70.

7 Terkel, *American Dreams*, 221–23.



When the school board refused to hear the committee's recommendations, Ellis decided to run for the board. He lost the election. Soon after the charrette, both Ellis and Atwater went back to school themselves and earned high-school equivalency degrees. Atwater continued to be a prominent figure in the community as a local activist working against poverty. Ellis disavowed his Klan membership and, while working as a labor union organizer, negotiated Durham's first paid holiday for the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. The two remained friends, and at C. P. Ellis's funeral in 2005, Ann Atwater delivered his eulogy. Atwater died in 2016.

Ellis had this to say about how he felt after working with Atwater:

The whole world was openin' up, and I was learnin' new truths that I had never learned before. I was beginnin' to look at a black person, shake hands with him, and see him as a human bein'. I hadn't got rid of all this stuff. I've still got a little bit of it. But somethin' was happenin' to me.

It was almost like bein' born again. It was a new life. I didn't have these sleepless nights I used to have when I was active in the Klan and slippin' around at night. I could sleep at night and feel good about it. I'd rather live now than at any other time in history. It's a challenge.<sup>8</sup>

Atwater also spoke about how the partnership changed her.

I think I accept white people more now than they accept me. Oh, there's been a change in me like the change in C. P. I used to not talk to white people, now I talk to any of them. I would pass them on the street, they would speak at me, and I wouldn't say a word. I don't know if I was afraid 'cause I was taught white was superior. But after I learned, the change was there.

Now I speak and I ask them if I need information. I go in the store and if the clerk's slow, I call it to their attention. I used to walk in the store and walk out, 'cause I felt they didn't wanna wait on me. Now if I go somewhere, if I'm right and they're wrong, I argue the point. I don't find nobody else. I do it myself.<sup>9</sup>

Writer Osha Gray Davidson, in a book about their lives, says,

One way to read the story of Ann Atwater and C. P. Ellis is as testimony to the transformative power of listening. Listening is, however, only the first step. What comes next is even more difficult: reconciling the new information with what we already know, or think we do. This feat requires what the early-twentieth-century American writer Sinclair Lewis called a "willingness to sift the sanctified lies," a chore that is hard enough when the "lie" is trivial. Imagine the difficulty of listening to, and then accepting, a truth that overturns everything you believe about the world. And not merely that, but a truth that informs you that "the world is not what you think it is. And, by the way, neither are you." How many of us have the intellectual courage to consider, let alone accept, the truth when it demands so much?<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Terkel, *American Dreams*, 221–23.

<sup>9</sup> Terkel, *Race*, 280.

<sup>10</sup> Davidson, *The Best of Enemies*, 1–2.

## Connection Questions

1. How did C. P. Ellis's identity and his experiences affect what he believed about others?
2. What barriers existed between C. P. Ellis and Ann Atwater that made it difficult for them to work together? What experiences helped to break down those barriers?
3. How did the relationship between Ellis and Atwater evolve? How did it change each of them? How were the changes they went through different for each of them? How were they similar?
4. What do you think Sinclair Lewis meant when he described a "willingness to sift the sanctified lies"? What kinds of "sanctified lies" might you confront in your own life? How would that kind of confrontation feel?
5. According to writer Suzanne Goldsmith, having a common cause forms the true foundation of community. She writes,

[C]ommunities are not built of friends, or of groups of people with similar styles and tastes, or even of people who like and understand each other. They are built of people who feel they are part of something that is bigger than themselves: a shared goal or enterprise. . . . To build a community requires only the ability to see value in others; to look at them and see a potential partner in one's enterprise.

How is this notion of community reflected in the story of Ellis and Atwater? Have you had a similar experience of connecting over a common cause in your own life and relationships?

6. What makes democracy strong? What does the story of Ellis and Atwater suggest about what is required from individual citizens to strengthen democracy in their communities and country?

## Reading 12

# Acknowledging the Past to Shape the Present

How we think about the past can play a powerful role in shaping the present. In 2013, Bryan Stevenson, a lawyer who started the Equal Justice Initiative to challenge bias and inequity in the US justice system, launched a campaign to memorialize historical sites of racist violence across the American South. He began leading a project to identify, record, and mark places where lynchings occurred, both to accurately report the number of people killed and also to teach the public about the roots of twenty-first-century racial injustice. Between 1877 and 1950, at least 3,950 African Americans were lynched (executed by a mob, without a trial, usually by hanging) after being accused of “crimes” such as knocking on a white woman’s door, wearing an army uniform in public after World War II, or bumping into a white girl while running for a train.

Often, Stevenson says, the hangings became public carnivals designed to instill fear. He calls them incidents of domestic terrorism, purposefully used to enforce racial subordination and segregation.<sup>1</sup> “We cannot heal the deep wounds inflicted during the era of racial terrorism until we tell the truth about it,” writes Stevenson. “The geographic, political, economic, and social consequences of decades of terror lynchings can still be seen in many communities today and the damage created by lynching needs to be confronted and discussed. Only then can we meaningfully address the contemporary problems that are lynching’s legacy.”<sup>2</sup>

Students at Overton High School in Memphis, Tennessee, came to a similar conclusion in 2016 after learning about the lynching of Ell Persons. Zoey Parker, a senior, encountered the Persons case while doing a research assignment and shared the story with her classmates. Persons was an African American woodcutter who was burned alive in 1917 after being accused of murder. About 5,000 people from the Memphis community came to watch the event, which was prominently covered by the local newspaper, and gruesome postcards were made showing photos of his head; his murderers had decapitated his body after they had burned him to death.

When Parker’s teacher, Dr. Marilyn Taylor, informed her students that the lynching had occurred close to their school, near a present-day drive-in movie theater, students were stunned that something so brutal could have taken place in their own backyard. They were also shocked to realize



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1 John M. Glionna, “Civil rights lawyer seeks to commemorate another side of Southern heritage: Lynchings,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 2015, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-alabama-lynchings-20150705-story.html>.

2 “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror,” Equal Justice Initiative, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://www.eji.org/lynchinginamerica>.

that an incident that had been widely known about when it happened was almost completely lost to memory a century later. Dr. Taylor reflected, “They have all been to this drive-in. They had a multitude of questions the following day so we put our scheduled lesson aside and they began their investigation.”<sup>3</sup>

The students felt they needed to do more than investigate the history, so Dr. Taylor asked them, “What are we going to do about it?”<sup>4</sup>

They decided to turn research into action and form a nonprofit organization called Students Uniting Memphis. This group launched a project to create a memorial garden at the site of Ell Persons’s lynching, which in 2016 contained an abandoned bridge support surrounded by river overflow and dense foliage. Students also began to educate their community about Ell Persons. They reached out to a nearby high school where, in 1917, students had been released from classes to attend Persons’s lynching, and they partnered with another nonprofit, The Lynching Sites Project of Memphis, which was formed after its founders heard Bryan Stevenson speak about the importance of facing the past.

In 2016, 99 years after Persons’s death, more than 100 people gathered at the site of his lynching for an interfaith prayer service. The Lynching Sites Project, Students Uniting Memphis, the Memphis chapter of the NAACP—which was formed in 1917 in response to the Persons lynching—and other student groups then began working together to involve 5,000 people in a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the lynching in 2017. Students from a Facing History & Ourselves student leadership group based in Memphis were among those who became involved.

“Young people today have to take action in order for history not to repeat itself,” said Zoey Parker, the student who first researched Persons’s case for Dr. Taylor’s class. “We have to be mindful enough to understand we cannot continue to make the same mistakes as those before us.”<sup>5</sup>

3 Quoted in Marti Tippens Murphy, “Students Memorialize a Past Tragedy to Create a More Hopeful Future,” *Facing Today* (Facing History and Ourselves blog), entry posted May 23, 2016, accessed July 13, 2016, <http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/students-memorialize-a-past-tragedy-to-create-a-more-hopeful-future>.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

## Connection Questions

1. Why do you think that the Overton High School students were shocked to learn that Ell Persons's lynching happened so close to their school, in an area that was familiar to them?
2. How do students and activists intend to commemorate Persons's lynching? What do they hope their efforts will achieve?
3. How can making a disturbing moment in history visible be an act of civic participation? How can it be an act of hope?
4. What role does history play in a healthy democracy? Is it necessary to acknowledge past injustices in order for democracy to be possible in the present?
5. No matter where you live, your community has a history. Is some of your community's history unacknowledged or forgotten today? How might you discover and explore such histories? Could awareness of the past change your understanding of the place you call home?

## Reading 13

# Who We Are, Or Could Be, in Times of Crisis

During natural disasters—like hurricanes, floods, and earthquakes—people have to make choices quickly. Historian and activist Rebecca Solnit writes about what such moments of crisis reveal about human behavior. She begins with Hurricane Katrina, which hit the Gulf Coast of the United States in 2005. At least 1,245 people died in the disaster, and property damage was estimated at \$105 billion. As is often the case in natural disasters, poor people were the most vulnerable to the death and destruction caused by the storm. Many Americans thought that government and local residents should have done a better job of protecting all citizens.

In the wake of the hurricane, fear, stereotypes, and rumors undermined some rescue efforts. But Solnit emphasizes that other responses to the disaster revealed the amazing capacities of humans to do good. She writes,

Who are you? Who are we? In times of crisis, these are life and death questions. Thousands of people survived Hurricane Katrina because grandsons or aunts or neighbours or complete strangers reached out to those in need all through the Gulf Coast, and because an armada of boat owners from the surrounding communities and as far away as Texas went into New Orleans to pull stranded people to safety . . .

Katrina was an extreme version of what goes on in many disasters, where how you behave depends on whether you think your neighbours or fellow citizens are a greater threat than the havoc wrought by a disaster or a greater good than the property in houses and stores around you. ('Citizen', here, means members of a city or community, not people in possession of legal citizenship in a nation.) What you believe shapes how you act. How you act results in life or death, for yourself or others, like everyday life, only more so. Katrina was, like most disasters . . . full of altruism: from young men who took it upon themselves to supply water, food, diapers, and protection to the strangers stranded with them, to people who sheltered neighbours, to the uncounted hundreds or thousands who set out in boats—armed, often, but also armed with compassion—to find those who were stranded in the stagnant waters and bring them to safety, to the two hundred thousand or more who volunteered to house complete strangers, mostly in their own homes, via the Internet site [hurricanehousing.org](http://hurricanehousing.org) in the weeks after, more persuaded by the pictures of suffering than the rumours of monstrosity, to the uncounted tens of thousands of volunteers who came to the Gulf Coast to rebuild and restore.

In the wake of an earthquake, a bombing or a major storm, most people are altruistic, urgently engaged in caring for themselves and those around them, strangers and neighbours as well as friends and loved ones. The image of the selfish, pan-



icky or regressively savage human being in times of disaster has little truth to it. Decades of meticulous sociological research on behaviour in disasters, from the bombings of World War II to floods, tornadoes, earthquakes and storms across the North American continent and around the world have demonstrated this. But belief lags behind, and often the worst behaviour in the wake of a calamity is on the part of those who believe that others will behave savagely and that they themselves are taking defensive measures against barbarism. From 1906 San Francisco [the site of a devastating earthquake] to 2005 New Orleans, innocents have been killed by people who believed that their victims were the criminals and they themselves were the protectors of the shaken order. Belief matters . . .

. . . When all the ordinary divides and patterns are shattered, people step up—not all, but the great preponderance—to become their brothers’ keepers. And that purposefulness and connectedness brings joy even amidst death, chaos, fear and loss. Were we to know and believe this, our sense of what is possible at any time might change. We speak of self-fulfilling prophecies, but any belief that is acted on makes the world in its image. Beliefs matter. And so do the facts behind them. When it comes to human behaviour in disaster, the gap between common beliefs and actualities limits the possibilities. Changing beliefs could fundamentally change much more. Horrible in itself, disaster is sometimes a door back into paradise, the realm in which we are who we hope to be, do the work we desire and are each our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers.<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. What has Rebecca Solnit observed about the ways in which humans respond when there is a natural disaster? How might a natural disaster reshape a person’s universe of obligation (see “Universe of Obligation” in Chapter 2)? Have you ever seen similar responses to events in your own community?
2. What can natural disasters reveal about the human potential for good or about people’s capacity to help one another? Why might natural disasters reveal different aspects of human behavior than those that often follow other kinds of crises, like outbreaks of mass violence or genocide?
3. Why does Solnit say that “beliefs matter” in how humans respond to others who need help?
4. In this reading, Solnit describes how, in moments of disaster, people often step up to take care of each other and to be each other’s keepers. She has also written, “The recovery of this purpose and closeness without crisis or pressure is the great contemporary task of being human.” What do you think she means by this statement? What is the “great contemporary task of being human”? What would it look like to achieve it?

<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 1–3.

## Reading 14

# Walking with the Wind



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The readings in this chapter and throughout this book encourage us to think about our choices as individuals, as members of a community, and as participants in a democracy. While that participation may take many forms, one thing is constant: in an imperfect world marked by suffering and injustice, there will always be occasions to act.

As a young student, John Lewis worked with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and became a key leader of the civil rights movement in the United States. He later became a US congressman and a prominent voice for human rights and justice around the world. In the prologue to his memoir, Lewis tells a story from his childhood to describe his vision of how we can face profound challenges and make a better world.

[A]bout fifteen of us children were outside my aunt Seneva's house, playing in her dirt yard. The sky began clouding over, the wind started picking up, lightning flashed far off in the distance, and suddenly I wasn't thinking about playing anymore; I was terrified...

Aunt Seneva was the only adult around, and as the sky blackened and the wind grew stronger, she herded us all inside.

Her house was not the biggest place around, and it seemed even smaller with so many children squeezed inside. Small and surprisingly quiet. All of the shouting and laughter that had been going on earlier, outside, had stopped. The wind was howling now, and the house was starting to shake. We were scared. Even Aunt Seneva was scared.

And then it got worse. Now the house was beginning to sway. The wood plank flooring beneath us began to bend. And then, a corner of the room started lifting up.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. None of us could. This storm was actually pulling the house toward the sky. With us inside it.

That was when Aunt Seneva told us to clasp hands. Line up and hold hands, she said, and we did as we were told. Then she had us walk as a group toward the corner of the room that was rising. From the kitchen to the front of the house we walked, the wind screaming outside, sheets of rain beating on the tin roof. Then we walked back in the other direction, as another end of the house began to lift.

And so it went, back and forth, fifteen children walking with the wind, holding that trembling house down with the weight of our small bodies.

More than half a century has passed since that day, and it has struck me more than once over those many years that our society is not unlike the children in that house,

rocked again and again by the winds of one storm or another, the walls around us seeming at times as if they might fly apart.

It seemed that way in the 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement, when America itself felt as if it might burst at the seams—so much tension, so many storms. But the people of conscience never left the house. They never ran away. They stayed, they came together and they did the best they could, clasping hands and moving toward the corner of the house that was the weakest.

And then another corner would lift, and we would go there.

And eventually, inevitably, the storm would settle, and the house would still stand.

But we knew another storm would come, and we would have to do it all over again.

And we did.

And we still do, all of us. You and I.

Children holding hands, walking with the wind. . . .<sup>1</sup>

## Connection Questions

1. How does John Lewis use the metaphor of “walking with the wind” to talk about our role in the world? What does his metaphor suggest about what it takes to strengthen communities and make a positive difference in the world?
2. Why was it important that “the people of conscience never left the house”?
3. What do you think about Lewis’s conviction that “another storm would come, and we would have to do it all over again”? What other examples of this sort of persistence have you encountered in this chapter? How do we sustain our commitment to issues we care about?

<sup>1</sup> John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), xvi–xvii.

## Chapter 12 Analysis and Reflection

1. After studying the actions of rescuers during genocide, Ervin Staub wrote: "Goodness, like evil, often begins in small steps. Heroes evolve; they aren't born."<sup>1</sup>

Which stories in this chapter show the progression of "goodness" that Staub describes? If goodness does indeed begin in small steps, what might that mean for the choices we make on a daily basis, even when we are not in the midst of a crisis?

How do you define a hero? Do any of the stories in this chapter describe heroes?

2. Eleanor Roosevelt said that the ideals set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "carry no weight unless the people know them, unless the people understand them, unless the people demand that they be lived" (see "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights" in Chapter 11).<sup>2</sup>

In what ways were the ideals listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights brought to life by some of the individuals and groups featured in this chapter? How did these individuals or groups make those ideals "carry weight"?

3. In Reading 6, "Not Just Awareness, But Action," President Barack Obama says, "You have to go through life with more than just passion for change; you need a strategy." What different strategies do the people you learned about in this chapter use to bring about the changes they want to see in their communities? Which strategies involve governments and other powerful institutions? Which ones instead work around those institutions? Which strategies involve changing laws? Which involve changing attitudes and social customs? Which strategies were most effective? Which were most inspiring?
4. Civic participation increasingly takes place online. Danielle Allen, a political theorist who studies young people's civic participation, suggests that when people choose to take action online to strengthen their communities, they should consider ten important questions. She and her colleagues write: "Whether you're creating your first Facebook page to support a cause you care about, or seeking to engage your friends, associates, and even strangers in a new platform aimed to achieve civic ends, these ten questions will help frame your decisions. Use them to shape your strategy and to check whether you're doing everything in your power to achieve maximum impact."<sup>3</sup> The questions are:

Why does it matter to me?

How much [about myself] should I share?

How do I make it about more than myself?

Where do we start?

1 Daniel Goldman, "Is Altruism Inherited?" *Baltimore Jewish Times*, April 12, 1985, 70.

2 Eleanor Roosevelt, "Making Human Rights Come Alive," in *What I Hope to Leave Behind: The Essential Essays of Eleanor Roosevelt*, ed. Allida Black (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995), 559.

3 "Why the YPP Action Frame?," Harvard University Youth Participatory Politics Research Network, accessed July 15, 2016, <http://yppactionframe.fas.harvard.edu/action-frame-0>.

How can we make it easy and engaging?

How do [we] get wisdom from crowds?

How do [we] handle the downside of crowds?

Does raising voices count as [civic and] political action?

How do we get from voice to change?

How can we find allies?

What examples did you find in this chapter of people using the internet in their attempts to bring about change? How might they have answered Allen's questions?

What do these questions suggest about the potential opportunities and difficulties in using the internet to make positive change? Do you think these questions would be helpful even if one's plan of action does not involve the internet?

Think about a positive change that you would like to see in your community, and then use these questions to begin to sketch out a plan to make that change happen.

5. What does choosing to participate mean to you? In what ways might you participate in the communities around you?

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