# 1. 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 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...[1]

## 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?

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

# 2. From Religious Prejudice to Antisemitism

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."[2]

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].
>
> 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].[3]

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.

[2] 1 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 82.

[3] Wilhelm Marr, "The Victory of Judaism over Germandom," 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.

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

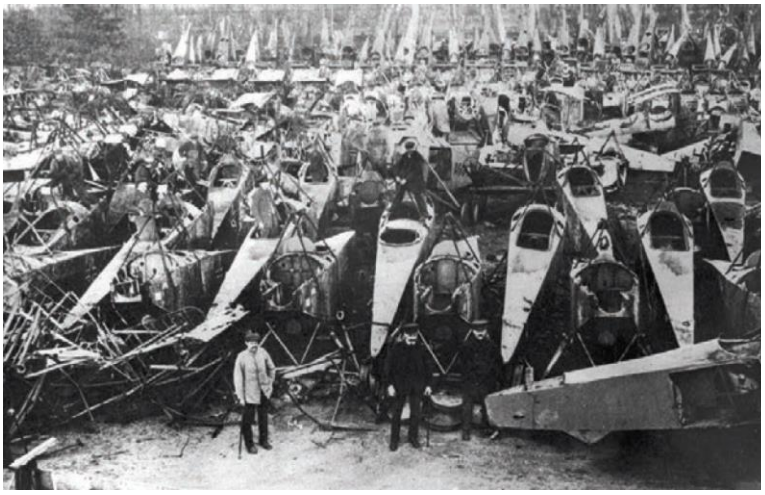
## Connection Questions

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?

# 3. 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.
>
> 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.[4]



German military aircraf being dismantled and scrapped after World War I, according to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

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

[4] Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir* (Farr, Straus & Giroux, 2000), 26–27.

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.

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.[5]

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."[6]

## 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?

[5] Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 66.

[6] Ibid., 72.

# 4. 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."[7] 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.

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.

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.[8]

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 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

[7] 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.

[8] Brendan Nyhan and Jason Reifler, "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions," *Political Behavior* 32, no. 2 (June 2010): 303–30.

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.[9]

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 committed 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.[10] 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?

[9] Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 150.

[10] Nyhan and Refler, "'When Corrections Fail," 303–30.

# 5. 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.[11]

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."[12] 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 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?[13]

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?"

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[11] Ernst Toller, *I Was a German: The Autobiography of Ernst Toller* (Paragon House, 1991), 285–86.

[12] Quoted in Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time.*(New York: Norton, 1998), 448.

[13] Arnold Schoenberg, *Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser, quoted in Frederic V. Grunfeld, *Prophets WithoutHonor: A Background to Freud, Kafka, Einstein and Their World* (Holt, 1979), 175–76.

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."[14]

## 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?

[14] Ibid.

# 6. 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 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.

Adolf Hitler talks to a young girl during his campaign for president of Germany in 1932. Hitler lost to incumbent Paul von Hindenburg.

## 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?

# 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.[15]

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."[16]

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.
>
> 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

[15] Robert Gellately,.*Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), vii.

[16] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 121.

> 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?[17]

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.[18]

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 "atrocity 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 atrocity 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....
>
> 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)....[19]

[17] 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.

[18] Doris Bergen to Facing History and Ourselves, comment on draft manuscript, December 23, 2015.

[19] Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich,* trans. Martin Brady (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 29–31.

## 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?"[20] 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?

[20] Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 67.

# 8. 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.[21]

A former member of the Hitler Youth had similar memories:

> [It's] especially easy to manipulate children at that ag.... 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. [22]

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.

[21] Hede von Nagel, "The Nazi Legacy—Fearful Silence for Their Children," *Boston Globe,* October 23, 1977.

[22] Quoted in Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 216.

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.3

## 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?

# 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.[23]

SA members in 1933 stand in front of a barricaded Jewish shop, holding signs in both German and English that urge the boyco. of Jewish businesses.

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 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

[23] Quoted in Nora Levin, *The Holocaust: The Destruction of European Jewry 1933–1945* (New York: Schocken, 1973), 46.

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![24]

## 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?

[24] 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.

# 10. 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 Zydowska 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.

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."[25] 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.[26]

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

[25] Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust; The Complete Text of the Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 197–98.

[26] 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.

> [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.[27]

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.[28]

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.... [29]

## 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?

[27] Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, eds., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 368.

[28] Lanzmann, *Shoah,* 197–98.

[29] 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.

# 11. Deciding to Act

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 eighteen-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.[30]

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 circumstances, 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.[31]

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

[30] Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, eds., *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 29.

[31] Rittner and Myers, *The Courage to Care*, 29–31.

> '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."[32]

## 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."[33] 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?

[32] bid., 32–33.

[33] 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.

# 12. Czech Scout on her viral fame: it's important to fight against fascism

Lucie Myslíková, 16, has become an internet star after a photo of her squaring up to a neo-Nazi at a Czech rally went viral

**Elena Cresci**

5 May 2017 17.00 EDT

When she attended a counter-demonstration at a far-right rally, Lucie Myslíková thought there would be a little bit of publicity from the local press.

Now a photograph of the 16-year-old Scout squaring up to a neo-Nazi has been seen by people all over the world.

Lucie's viral moment came after she attended the May Day rally in Brno, Czech Republic, with fellow Scouts. Counter-protesters aimed to disrupt the rally with peaceful protest and colourful banners.

She said: "The organisers [of the counter-protest] invited participants to invent their own way of celebrating the first of May and at the same time to show that the nationalism is not an alternative. The thing I liked most was the fact there was a lot of people with different opinions, but we all shared the idea of fighting against the hate."

It made sense to Lucie and her friends in the Czech Scouts to attend in their uniforms. "It's consistent with Scout ideology and history to fight against neo-Nazism," she said.

The moment captured in the photo came when one man attending the demonstration, who Lucie said she did not know personally, began arguing with her and her friends.

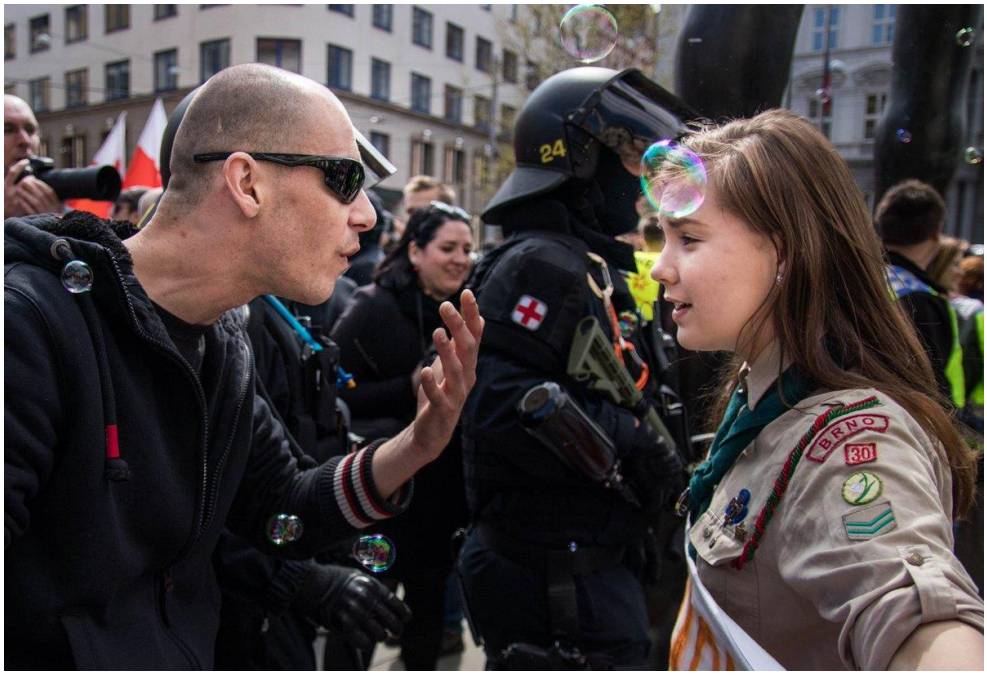
"At first they began to talk with my friend about the concept of the nation itself. The man seemed to be really angry, but he didn't do anything to us," she said.

"We started arguing about migration and refugees. He ended up warning me the refugees will rape me. I told him, I'm not afraid of refugees, because a white or a Czech guy could do the same, it's not a question of race or nation."

She added: "He was telling me he is afraid for his daughter. I think fear and xenophobia can be the reason of his opinions. There is a lot of misinformation in the world and it brings a lot of uncertainty and fear. That's the reason I don't judge anyone."

Vladimir Cicmanec, who took the photo, told CNN: "She was standing tall and she's 16 years old and she stood proud and made some profound arguments."

The image was shared widely after it was featured on the World Organisation of the Scout Movement's Facebook page. From there, it was posted to Reddit and then migrated to Twitter. One tweet was retweeted more than 5,000 times.




**Lamhfada**(@Lamhfada)

This picture of Girl Scout protesting a Nazi in Czech is just pure art. pic.twitter.com/nRwahwjOFG

May 2, 2017

It was not until media organisations began contacting Lucie that she realised the image was spreading across the world. As with any viral fame, it came with its pitfalls. "It has [come] with things I have never experienced before, which are not so pleasant," she said.

"It's lot of pressure from media, my phone is ringing all the time, my mailbox is overflowing, and some people are looking for anything I did wrong."

But at the same time, she is pleased she could highlight something she cares about. "This huge worldwide interest can bring attention to an important issue: the threat of neo-Nazism," she said.

Her unexpected political viral fame has not attracted her to politics – currently studying video and animation, she hopes to get into performance or directing.

"I'm satisfied with being 'just' an activist," she said. "It's not so formal as politics, because when I'm an activist I can be creative and find my own way how to change things or show my opinions.

"I will continue fighting against hate for sure."

*Translation provided by Iveta Zieglova.*

**Source:** Cresci, Elena. "Czech Scout on Her Viral Fame: It's Important to Fight against Fascism." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 5 May 2017, www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/czech-scout-on-her-viral-fame-its-important-to-fight-against-fascism.

# 13. 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 twentyfirst-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.[34] "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."[35]

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 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."[36]

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?"[37]

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

[34] 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.

[35] "Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror," Equal Justice Initiative, accessed July 13, 2016, http://www.eji.org/lynchinginamerica.

[36] 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.

[37] Ibid.

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 and 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."[38]

## 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?

[38] Ibid.

# 14. 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 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, panicky 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 prophesies, 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.[39]

## 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?

[39] Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 1–3.