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## **Chapter Seven**

### **Repositioning: Stages of Shoah-Consciousness**

#### **Shock and Denial—1940s and 1950s**

##### **Decorous Silence**

My parents had been fearing the worst long before they got official word from the International Red Cross about when and where their siblings had died. One is hit by shock when death is actually pronounced—and this is something different in kind even from one's direst expectations. My mother sank into silence and then, in her characteristic way, cheered herself into going on with her life as though nothing had happened; my father, as I described at the start of this book, launched into vocal rages aimed alternately at Adolf Hitler and at his brother Robert, whom he accused of delaying the visas that should have been arranged long before.

Everybody had been accounted for except for one of my mother's sisters, Else Weinkrantz, who had worked for many years in Frankfurt am Main, where the Gestapo, as I learned only recently, had destroyed its records just as the American army was about to enter the city. Otherwise, the Germans had maintained exemplary records showing the victims' birth dates and last addresses, the dates of their deportations, and the places to which they were deported; to be sure, the actual dates on which they were actually killed—presumably a few days after deportation—were never recorded. It seemed miraculous to my family that all this evidence survived the steady bombings as well as the disruptions that occurred as Germany was taken over by the Allied powers.

But conscientious record-keeping, as my later experience with the restitution process illustrated, has long been deemed a German virtue.

Both before and after we received the letter from the Red Cross, the fate of our relatives in Germany was a frequent source of discussion within my family. To be sure, we never articulated the details about death camps that we read about in the papers; that, of course, was much too awkward. Rather, we talked around the subject seeking objects for blame, including ourselves. Yet we never brought up the topic outside the immediate family, even among our other relatives in Seattle, a few of whom, to be sure, had become targets to blame.

As I look back these many decades, our silence seems an odd phenomenon. I have long been aware of the silence ascribed to survivors from the camps, as well as to their children born after the war. But why should I, raised in utter safety in the

United States by parents who had long been resident there—why should I impose such a silence upon myself? As I ask myself this question after all these years, I recognize that at the time I was not even conscious of this silence. Although I am ordinarily willing to share details about myself with friends, I must have sensed that it was not quite proper to discuss events that my parents and I saw as central to our lives.

Just before starting to write this chapter, I contacted about a dozen old friends, some Jewish, others not, to ask if I had ever mentioned these events. They were people I had known in high school, college, graduate school, during my Fulbright year in Austria, and later after I had started my first academic job. Every one of them replied that I had said nothing about what had happened within my family— though, like all the students with whom I went to college, I had often entered dormitory discussions in which we opened up about our complex relationships with our parents. As I try retrospectively to analyze my silence, I come up with several diverse answers. For one thing, these events in my family did not yet have an acknowledged name—it was not until many years later, after all, that the terms *Holocaust* and *Shoah* became common parlance.<sup>1</sup>

It is obviously much easier to talk about something that has a recognizable word for it.

But there were deeper reasons, I believe, for my silence. Something within me must have feared that my friends, even if Jewish, would not really be interested. It was not simply that I might bore them, but, even more important, I might be disturbing them, demanding some response, a statement of sympathy perhaps, and, as a result, the conversation would become awkward for all of us. Indeed, they might even resent having to show sympathy about something too complicated for them to understand, something about which they knew little and toward which they felt distant.

And yet I did manage to find an outlet for my concerns, namely, by writing rather than talking about what had gone on. At age 19, just three years after the war ended, I started a novel of which, in a workshop at Antioch College, I finished nearly a first draft. None among the four of us in the workshop ever made his name as a novelist, though one, Rod Serling, became a pioneer in television drama; indeed, the novel he was drafting in the workshop clearly anticipated his now-classic TV play *Requiem for a Heavyweight*. Although three of the four students were Jewish and the fourth was married to a Jew, I maintained the same decorous front with them as I did with others. When we spoke of my subject matter, it was always in terms of novelistic technique—for example, how I might better control a character's stream of consciousness as he or she thought about the terrors going on in Germany.

To be sure, I was careful to set the novel only among my family members in Seattle, a subject that I knew about directly; I covered the period from mid-1940 to mid-1941, a few months before the United States entered the war. Germany was to appear only within my characters' minds, as in the following lines describing my Aunt Lotte's memory of the events at the Munich hotel that I described in the first chapter of the present book:

He [her father] had been so unmanageable, for one couldn't expect much from a man of ninety-four. It wasn't *her* fault that she had to bring him back to Berlin. They had arrived in Munich, where they had to spend the night before taking the train to Genoa. It was such a

terrible rainy night, and Lottchen had never had to manage things of that sort before. She took a taxi to the nearest hotel with Papa, and then she was told it was closed to Jews and she looked for another taxi and the same thing happened at the next hotel, and the next, and Papa was crying since it was already so late, and then they found the hotel for Jews and by then it was so crowded that they had to sleep on cots in the hallway and Papa kept whining that he only wanted to go back to Nathan, so Lottchen became impatient and went directly to the station and took the next train back to Berlin with him.<sup>2</sup>

In real life, as I explained in the opening chapter, my grandfather was asked to sleep on the lobby floor, but I changed this to a cot in order not to sound too melodramatic; I added four years to his age to make him seem even more fragile than he was. I also had Lotte bring her father back to Berlin instead of, as in real life, asking Nathan to pick him up in Munich. To be fair to Uncle Robert, I used the novelistic prerogative of trying to enter my character's mind. Although I quoted his response to my father, "Who is going to feed him here?" whenever the latter reminded him of the need for a visa for Nathan, I also tried to portray his self-justifications at a time that nobody fully understood the danger a Jew faced remaining in Germany.

Lotte had cabled from Genoa how the father had to be brought back to Berlin. She was right. To transplant somebody at such an age, in these times! Transplanting worked only when you were young, as Herman [my father] and Gottfried [my uncle, the same one who is thinking to himself here] had come. Yes, Herman was always nagging—Nathan and Papa must come. Hitler would kill, he kept saying. No Jew can stay. Absurd, as though a fantasy can really happen. The other brothers, the nephews, they would all want to come—Lotte would have to suffice. War, war, they keep saying, but America is not at war. Lotte can come. She can learn to take care of herself. She will give back in gratitude, make Edith [Gottfried's wife] happy.

Within Herman's mind, by contrast, any attempt to rouse his brother into action met with resistance:

But Gottfried, both he and Edith, they refused to hear or know what was going on. They knew that Herman was trying to wake them into getting his family over to America. Three years ago, two years ago, they laughed in his face whenever he mentioned the possibility of war. And now they would only say it was a European war and there was no

reason to worry about the family, and anyhow Lotte was on her way already.

By the end of the novel, my character Gottfried had finally relented and arranged for the visa for Nathan—only to find that the American consulates in Germany had suddenly been closed and that no more emigration was possible. In the final pages, as I wrap up the plot, Gottfried, overconfident as ever, determines to use his political connections to get Nathan out of Europe:

Was Nathan really stuck in Europe now? Surely it wasn't true. Why, he [Gottfried] could contact enough officials and get it fixed up. Congressman Magnuson was always willing to help him. Or Governor Langlie even. He certainly had known them for many years.

As I look back at the yellowed, brittle pages, with the chapters held together by corroding paper clips, I recognize that I was adventurous for the time both in my technique and my subject matter. Indeed, what is now called the Jewish–American novel barely existed then. I was encouraged not only by the others in the workshop but also by an editor at Alfred Knopf to whom our instructor had shown the manu-script and who corresponded with me several times to offer support. But alas, this editor left that house before I could be issued a contract, and his successor showed no interest. Afterward I rewrote the book to make it look more conventional, at least technically, though certainly not in its thematic concerns. A New York agent was sure he could market it if I removed some of the more “pessimistic” elements. People want to feel good when they read a novel, he told me. It was now the early 1950s, and the new optimistic spirit Americans had whipped up for themselves left little room for the family tensions and the political background with which I had been concerned. In my youthful idealism I felt outraged at the thought of becoming nothing more than an entertainer and never again sought success in the commercial market. My fellow student Rod Serling may have made the wiser decision.

### **Remembering in a Time of Forgetting**

Although much was written about the Shoah during the 15 or so years after the war, the time for serious and sustained historical inquiry had not yet come. For one thing, it took years to assemble archives and make them available to researchers; indeed, many important archives

were not even located until the political changes in Eastern Europe following the fall of the Berlin wall. But, just as important, it also took a number of years before scholars were prepared to stake their careers on a topic that, however important historically, must have looked anything but attractive.

Yet, during this time of forgetting, much was written in forms other than standard history. One can speak, for example, of anecdotal history, by means of which many of the themes that came to be associated with the Shoah made their way into public discourse. In a widely read book that appeared in 1946, Saul K. Padover, an American intelligence officer assigned to interview Germans during the last months of the war, reported responses that many others, including myself, heard during the early postwar years. For example, Padover, himself trained as a historian, explained that "it was a mistake . . . to ask: 'Were you a member of the Nazi party?' The invariable answer to that was: 'I *had* to be, you know; everybody had to.'" Another respondent, when asked if she realized that Joseph Goebbels had lied to the German people, gave another standard answer: "'I am unpolitical,' Kaethe replies, 'I know nothing about such matters.'" And a German officer, though admitting he knew about Nazi atrocities, replied that this "was none of his business . . . 'An order is sacred . . . Obedience is deeply engraven in the spirit of German soldiers.'"<sup>3</sup>

In the absence of hard facts, much that was written about the Shoah during these early years was inaccurate and often viewed from a distinctly East or West German partisan position. As I discovered while researching the Herbert Baum group to write chapter three, early accounts were full of errors and misunderstandings. As mentioned in that chapter, the East German writer Stephan Hermlin's chapter on the group in his 1951 book, *Die erste Reihe*, is largely eulogistic and less concerned with the members' Jewish origins than with their adherence to communism. Conversely, the single page on the group in Günther Weisenborn's 1954 book on anti-Nazi resistance, *Der lautlose Aufstand*, ignores their communist sympathies and stresses their Jewishness instead.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the lack of adequate historical information during these years in which shock prevailed, the question "How could this ever have happened?" obsessed many, like myself, whose families had been affected. One suspects that this question derives less from a desire for historical knowledge than from one's personal and communal fears. "Might this happen again?" I would then ask myself. And again I recognized that this question was more an emotional response than

anything that demanded a rational answer.

Yet one book, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), stood out among the many postwar books that sought to provide explanations—usually without much historical depth—to the unprecedented events that had occurred only a short time before. Here was a work that provided the wide-ranging historical context that serious readers, still traumatized by shock, needed in order to make sense out of these events. Written between 1942 and 1949, Arendt's book was essentially a series of explanations, not just a single explanation; it provided not a chain of causes and effects but rather individual lines of development; and it treated history not as a monolithic image but as a matrix of ideas and events.

I sought out the book by coincidence, for I recognized the author's name, not through her earlier publications—this was, indeed, her first book in English—but through the fact that she had signed a letter to my father a year or two before in her capacity as director of the Commission on Jewish Cultural Reconstruction.<sup>5</sup> This commission was dedicated, among other matters, to returning cultural artifacts confiscated by the Nazis to their rightful owners or heirs. Arendt's letter, written on the commission's stationery, announced that my grandfather's collection of Hebrew prayer books had been located and that she would be willing to send them to my father if he provided the postage. Soon after, we received a large box of books that meant much to my father but that, after his death in 1958, I felt too secular, indeed too Hebrew-less, to keep, after which I sent them to a more worthy heir, my cousin Moshe Edelman, who at that time was still in rabbinical seminary.

The context that Arendt created in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is extraordinarily large in both place and time, bringing together such topics as the development of what Arendt calls "race-thinking," European imperialism in Africa during the late nineteenth century, and the new, "totalitarian" mode of governance that Hitler and Stalin instituted. The Shoah itself figures as a single theme among others—and then only in the last of the three sections. Indeed, it is by means of the many diverse strands that Arendt weaves together that the book achieves its greatness. She does not tell us that one thing actually "caused" another but, rather, that new, hitherto unheard-of developments became possible only *after*, though not necessarily *because of*, earlier developments, for example, the race-thinking in the Comte de Gobineau's writings of the 1850s that had created a framework within which they could flourish.<sup>6</sup> Had Arendt tried to show

that the totalitarianism “inevitably” followed the earlier thinking and events she had depicted, the result would have seemed unbearable, for the role of human agency would have seemed too small for comfort. The contextual approach she chose allowed the reader to note the human, or more precisely, the political errors that had taken place along the way and that, one hoped, would not be repeated. Few writers have shown as great a gift for detecting the ironies of history as Arendt, as in these lines showing how earlier imperialistic adventures helped make later totalitarianism possible:

When the European mob discovered what a “lovely virtue” a white skin could be in Africa, when the English conqueror in India became an administrator who no longer believed in the universal validity of law, but was convinced of his own innate capacity to rule and dominate, when the dragon-slayers turned either into “white men” of “higher breeds” or into bureaucrats and spies, playing the Great Game of endless ulterior motives in an endless movement, . . . the stage seemed to be set for all possible horrors. Lying under anybody’s nose were many elements which gathered together could create a totalitarian government on the basis of racism. (p. 221)

Reading this book during the 1950s allowed one to see connections one had not imagined before—connections, moreover, that served as a liberating force to many, like myself, who had wondered how I could find meaning in events that had undercut my traditional notions about human behavior. Rereading it now after more than half a century not only recaptures the power I felt in the initial reading but also allows me to see it through the lens of Arendt’s subsequent writing, above all, the philosophical humanism of *The Human Condition* (1958), the contempt and anger of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), and the shrewd political theorizing of *On Revolution* (1963). Above all, my rereading demonstrated how uniquely she combined vivid historical observation—as in her reconsideration of the Dreyfus case (pp. 89–120) and her withering description of the Boers (pp. 197–207)—with a theoretical analysis that brings the whole Western tradition into play. The now-classic status of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is demonstrated by the fact that, although it is perhaps lesser known than several of her later books, two collections of essays on this book, together with many other individual essays, appeared during the first decade of the present century.<sup>7</sup>

If *The Origins of Totalitarianism* looks at the Shoah within a global framework, during the immediate postwar period one notes the beginnings of a genre that, quite by contrast, expresses shock by

means of the most concrete imaginable personal narrative. I refer here to the camp-survivor memoir, which, starting soon after the liberation of the camps, has continued to flourish as long as survivors remain alive. The best known among these many memoirs are doubtless Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (1947) and Elie Wiesel's *The Night* (1958). Yet I remained unaware of these narratives throughout this period that I call the time of shock and denial. Even if I had known of them, I suspect I should have avoided texts that brought the dread events too close to home. The lofty perspective offered by *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was one thing, but a description of crowded, smelly latrines, random executions, and companions bartering stale bread was more, I thought, than I cared to handle. What I did not realize until many years later, once I had addressed myself to these narratives, was that certain of them, like those of Levi and Wiesel, as well as those, say, of Jean Améry (1966) and Ruth Kluger (1992), were far more uplifting than they were depressing, for they testified to the ability of seemingly ordinary people, most of them caught at an early stage of their development, to endure the most threatening and humiliating experiences conceivable and then, in their later capacity as writers, to demonstrate a spirit that refuses to be broken.

The unpreparedness of readers to deal with survivor narratives during the early years after the war is manifested in the difficulties their authors experienced finding publishers, let alone a public, for the stories they had to tell. Levi's *If This Is a Man* appeared with an obscure Italian publisher in 1947 (after being rejected by a number of other publishers) and did not find a general readership for another 11 years when a major press, Giulio Einaudi, issued the book, after which it became an international success. As mentioned in chapter one, H. G. Adler's *The Journey*, a thinly veiled fictional rendering of his and his wife's family's experiences in Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, languished rejected and unprinted for many years until published by a minor house in 1962 and did not find a larger readership until it was republished in 1999. Even as late as 1958 Elie Wiesel encountered difficulties finding a publisher for *Night* despite the support of François Mauriac, who had encouraged him to write the book and had also written an introduction.

Yet the camp-survivor narrative, whether in the form of memoir or fiction, has emerged as one of the distinctive literary genres of our time. Like the 19th-century African-American slave narrative, it has a predictable set of narrative conventions—conventions not dictated by any need to imitate earlier examples but simply the result of the fact that camp inmates, like black slaves, were subjected to a predictable

set of experiences that they later set about to represent in writing. Note the similar experiences portrayed in Primo Levi's and Elie Wiesel's early books on their life in Auschwitz:<sup>8</sup> the train ride to Auschwitz (PL, 17–19; EW, 21–26); the selection process on arrival (PL, 19–20; EW, 29–30); the loss of the clothing with which each had arrived (PL, 22–23; EW, 30–32); the corruption of fellow inmates (PL, 81–86; EW, 49–50, among many other such passages); whippings from Kapos (PL, 60, 67; EW, 55–56); experiencing the Allied bombings of the Buna synthetic-rubber factory where each of them worked (PL, 117–19; EW, 56–58); new selections of prisoners to be exterminated (PL, 125; EW, 67–69 [the latter performed by the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele himself]); the foot infections experienced by each of them (PL, 45–55; EW, 74–76); anticipating the arrival of the Russian army (PL, 151–57; EW, 76–78); the aftermath, for Levi, after liberation by the Russians, a long stay in Poland followed by train trips through Russia, Romania, Hungary, and Austria before his return to Italy (described at book length in his subsequent volume, *The Reawakening*); for Wiesel, a death march that results in the death of his father and also his own liberation after arriving in Buchenwald (81–119). Whether or not Wiesel actually knew Levi's still little-known narrative when he set out on his own, the world that each of them, together with a multitude of others, remembered was essentially the same.

If publishers and readers shied away from the brutal details of the camps until at least the late 1950s, the survivor narratives have served as a means not only of preserving the memory of the culminating events of the Shoah but also of giving the world an opportunity to reexperience the shock inherent in these events long after they had been absorbed, so to speak, by most of the public. Despite the similarities they display, each narrative reveals as well the individualities of the particular writer. Jean Améry, whose *At the Mind's Limits* is less a retelling of these events than a philosophical reflection upon them, is notable for its analysis and its historical placing of concepts such as torture and *ressentiment*.<sup>9</sup> Ruth Kluger's *Landscapes of Memory* is memorable not only for its feminist perspective but also for its frank discussion of the conflicts that the author experienced with her mother during her camp experience at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.<sup>10</sup> Those Jews who lived to tell their tales of Auschwitz were those who were selected for the work force and who never saw the gas chambers, but at least two memorable survivor tales come from *Sonderkommandos*, persons assigned to work in Birkenau, where they prepared victims for the gas chambers and, after asphyxiation was complete, moved the bodies to the crematoria, where they slid them

into the ovens. Since the *Sonderkommandos*, in marked contrast to the ordinary victims, witnessed the whole killing and disposal process, they were themselves regularly killed after a few months on duty, but a small number managed to survive. The two who told their tales in book form came from different Jewish cultures: Filip Müller, an Ashkenazi deported from Slovakia, and Shlomo Venezia, a Sephardic from Salonika, both of whose tales are among the most grueling documents of the Shoah.<sup>11</sup>

If survivors generally were loath to speak out during the early years, many have opened up fully toward their camp experiences during the intervening time.<sup>12</sup> Although most have not written formal narratives, thousands have proved willing to provide videotaped oral histories that are now preserved at a number of centers such as Yad Vashem and Yale University. The value of oral history was brought home to a large international public in Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour film *Shoah* (1985), in which survivors were interviewed mainly at the sites of the Nazi crimes they had experienced four decades earlier. Even many years after one has seen this film, certain incidents, most notably the interview with the Jewish barber, Abraham Bomba, who had cut the hair of victims, plague one's mind to an excruciating degree.<sup>13</sup> Shock at the atrocities of the early 1940s lives on even after the world has gone on with its normal routines and sometimes, as well, to new atrocities.

## **Fraternizing**

### *Mixing with Mischlings*

The Fulbright program initiated by the U.S. government at the end of World War II, as its original legislation made clear, was dedicated to the "promotion of inter-national good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science."<sup>14</sup> This purpose became clear to me when I spent the academic year 1952–53 as a Fulbright student in Austria. The Fulbright office in Vienna, manned by a staff of Austrians who spoke a perfect textbook English and displayed considerable sensitivity to the cultural differences between Americans and central Europeans, worked hard to get our group of some 25 academics—students and a few faculty mainly in literature, history, and music—to practice the "international good will" demanded by Senator William Fulbright's legislation.

Since my year in Austria coincided with what in retrospect seems a particularly difficult period during the Cold War, good will also meant

helping realize the goals of American foreign policy. Thus, the office encouraged all of us to prepare lectures on various aspects of American life. We presented these lectures throughout the small country, speaking at the so-called *Amerika-Häuser*, where the local Austrians could borrow American books and, besides the lectures we had prepared, hear free concerts by American musicians. My German was good enough for me to speak to the locals in their own language; thus I remember lecturing on the meaning of the 1952 presidential election for weeks before it took place and being ultracautious not to give away the fact that I much preferred Adlai Stevenson to Dwight Eisenhower. For audiences willing to listen to English I prepared a talk called "A Day in the Life of an American Cub Reporter," which chronicled my typical workday at a West Virginia newspaper while I was on an Antioch College co-op job during my senior year. The cultural propaganda in which we were engaged was meant to be indirect: We were to show how appealing—and also how democratic—life in the United States was in implicit contrast to that of the Soviet Union, whose troops were still occupying a large segment of the country.

Yet in one central respect I felt myself unable to fulfill the Fulbright program's aims. The Austrians running the office expected us to fraternize freely among the natives. We were encouraged to get to know fellow students we met in our classes at the university or at the music academy, to carouse with them, for instance, at the custom known as the "Heurigen," in which, gathered at vineyards surrounding Vienna, we were brought together to taste the headache-producing new wine. The Fulbright office complained regularly that our group spent too much time together instead of reaching out to make contact with the locals.

But my own reluctance to fraternize with Austrians had other reasons. I was suspicious of every Austrian I met: What, for instance, had this person done during the war, which had ended only seven years before? When I met fellow students in class, I wondered what their parents had done? Had it been a Nazi family? Although the Austrians claimed to have been an "occupied" country on the order of, say, Belgium or Norway, we all knew better.

And I was also aware that my father's sister Resi, who had settled in Vienna with her husband, Leo Deutschländer, to help run a school teaching useful skills to young Jewish women from Eastern European ghettos,<sup>15</sup> had been transported on April 9, 1942, from Vienna to Izbica, a Polish transit camp from which she was later shipped for

gassing in Belzec. I did not learn until after my stay in Vienna that the *Judenhaus* from which she was deported—exactly ten years before I arrived in the city—was only a few doors from where I lived in a rented room on the Hörlgasse, a short street near the university. In fact, this street was parallel to the Berggasse, on which, just a block away from me, Sigmund Freud had lived for much of his adult life. His apartment was not yet the museum it is today, and whenever I asked people in the neighborhood if they remembered him, they dismissed him as a person of no importance.

It should not be surprising that, in dealing with Austrians throughout that academic year, I remained cautious, though always correct. My usual gregariousness had to remain on temporary hold. Yet I managed to make a number of friends, as a result of which the Fulbright office seemed content with my success in making contact with the host culture. But only in retrospect do I realize how I screened prospective friends. Quite unconsciously I gravitated toward people with whom I knew I could feel safe, and these, it turned out, were all “non-aryans” by Nazi standards. For example, in a class on Molière, I met a young Viennese woman, Jorun Milch, with whom I ended up attending musical and theatrical performances for much of that year. What made our friendship possible was the fact that she and her family had spent the war years in Shanghai. There had been some Jewish blood somewhere, not enough for her to know much about Jews but sufficient to motivate a temporary emigration half way around the world.

The same principle guided my other relationships. For example, while hunting for a room to rent, I turned down quite a few attractive possibilities, somehow feeling uncomfortable with the arrangements until I found the Hörlgasse apartment, whose owner, Frau Dr. Keil, volunteered that she was Jewish but that she had survived the war because her late husband, a *Studienrat* (secondary-school teacher), was not. I made what turned out to be a lifelong friendship with a young Austrian man, Hans Janitschek, whom I met through the Fulbright office since he was scheduled to study at Haverford College the following year. His parents, both of them “mischlings of the first degree,” according to the Nuremberg racial laws, often invited me to dine with them; although his father was now a high-school principal, he had not been allowed to teach during the Nazi period, and I thus felt quite comfortable with the family. I also made friends with an elderly gentleman who regularly invited American students to his home to discuss literature and music at what the Austrians called “Jause,” afternoon tea that included enough food for us to make a

dinner out of it. Dr. Kanitz, who seemed safe to me since he had spent the Nazi years at his sister's home in Philadelphia, amused us with stories of an old, long-lost Vienna; when I praised a recent Mozart performance, he said he had stopped attending Mozart after Gustav Mahler's dismissal from the opera, for nobody else, he felt, could conduct these works properly.

Despite all the suspicions I felt during that year, I knew only one person who had been a Nazi for sure. Frau Dr. Keil revealed that Frau Weber, her halftime maid—or at least the maid's husband—had been a party member. The class system in Vienna was still strong enough to allow me to maintain a proper distance from this woman, even though she did my laundry and we were thrown together daily.

*"Bad" German, "Good" German*

European train compartments force three people to face three others in a small, enclosed space, with the result that all maintain a silence, else, if you choose to start a conversation, you end up being stuck talking to this person for the rest of the trip. I cannot remember who spoke up first in the conversation I had with a German woman on a train from Paris to Germany—part of a long trip through northern Europe during the summer following my Fulbright year. Actually, I was not going into Germany until later but was getting off at Strasbourg, a lucky moment to exit in view of the conversation that took place.

As I boarded the train, I noted the German woman on the station platform saying goodbye to a pre-adolescent boy and to a French family with whom he then set off. When she entered the compartment, she looked around and must have noted from my clothes that I was American. (During the early 1950s, Americans in Europe were always noticeable by their sporty look.) She said a few words in English, after which I turned to German, which then led her to compliment me on my knowledge of her language. She asked me how I had learned it, to which I replied that my parents had spoken German to me during my childhood. And when did they come to America? she promptly asked. I explained that my mother had emigrated during the German inflation of 1923 but that my father's residence in America dated back much earlier—to about 1898 when his own father had sent him to expand the family business to the Pacific Northwest.

Then you are not one of those 1939 Americans ("neununddreißiger Amerikaner"), she said, as though feeling relieved. It took me a while to figure out what that term signified, and it was only by means of the developing context that I recognized she was referring to German-

Jewish refugees who had emigrated around 1939. Once my parents' dates of emigration had been established, the woman said, "I know I can speak with you frankly. You will understand."

I still failed to understand where she intended this conversation to go. I might add that the others in the compartment, all of them French, seemed oblivious to our conversation, which gradually gained in intensity during the four hours in which we were cooped up together.

And pretty soon it became clear that she was enlisting my sympathies as a fellow German. "Your parents would understand what I have to say," she kept repeating. And it was clear as well that my reddish-blond hair and fair skin were sufficiently different from the Nazis' cartoons of Jews that she could assume my "aryan" status; what she apparently did not know, and what the Nazis did not publicize, was the fact that many Jews with Eastern European ancestry shared my looks.

But before she went on with her story, she volunteered how strongly she felt about international understanding. She had brought her son to Paris to live for a few weeks with a French family—one in which the father, like her husband, was an engineering professor specializing in the construction of dams. They had contacts in his field all over the world, in fact, were about to leave in a month or two for the United States, where her husband was to be a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota.

Luckily, she explained, he was now free to pursue his career, which had been blocked for years after the war after he had been incarcerated for his membership in the Nazi party, which, she said, was a perfectly normal thing for a university professor to be during those years. Still, she wasn't blaming Americans in general, and certainly not me, who surely understood these things, but she was blaming the real culprits, those "1939 Americans" who served as guards in his detention camp and who, she said, almost bursting into tears, treated him in the most brutal way imaginable. Fortunately, the American authorities finally cleared him and let him go back to his work with dams.

But then she insisted again that she wanted to speak to me frankly since those other people, the "1939 Americans," had done so much damage to impugn the German people as a whole. I countered that Americans had felt quite upset at the end of the war, and still do, in fact, about what happened to the Jewish population in Germany and in German-occupied lands. They were never told the truth, she countered. But how, I asked, were all those millions of Jews killed, to which she

replied that this was all a lie perpetrated by those “1939 Americans,” who were seeking every opportunity to implicate the Germans. She added that, though the rest of us were quite honorable, we had obviously been taken in by all that propaganda.

So the Jews weren’t actually killed? I asked. It was nothing but a lie, she insisted. Yet what about the laws that Germans had passed against Jews—like the law prohibiting them from using public transportation, or attending cultural events, or having to wear the yellow star, or even owning typewriters? These were public laws, I reminded her, laws that had been officially announced in the German press.

Those laws were necessary, she replied. Unless you’d lived in Germany, you would never have believed what the Jews could do to you. She gave me an example. She had grown up in modest circumstances: her father owned a small store, and the family lived on the floor above. A Jewish salesman came by regularly, first going to the store, where he badgered the father to the point that the latter refused to place any orders. And when he saw he was getting nowhere, this peddler, after leaving the store, insisted on going upstairs and then badgering her mother to have her husband buy his products. One couldn’t believe how insistent he was, and this sort of thing happened regularly all over Germany.

But for this they all deserved to die? I asked. They did not die, she replied. It was all a lie, and you Americans have refused to believe the truth. The Jews were certainly a problem for us, but we never did the things we are accused of doing.

She and I went back and forth arguing the matter until, luckily for me, we were about to arrive in Strasbourg, at which point I lowered my luggage from the rack. I decided to let her have it just as the train was pulling into the station. I identified what she would have called my “racial” background, and then I named all my German relatives who had perished, not a one of them surviving, I told her coldly. Where are they now? I asked. Why didn’t any of these people try to contact us after the war? And why not? Because, I said, you people killed them all. I noticed that the French people in the compartment seemed quite uncomfortable, for, though they seemed to have no idea what this was all about, I had started raising my voice once I opened up.

As the train came to a halt, I had one more thing to say: “Once you get to the United States, you’ll find that people are quite hospitable to visiting foreigners. But let me warn you: if you say any of this stuff to

the faculty wives who invite you to tea, they are certain to shun you—totally!” Without looking back to note her reaction, I lifted my bags and made a quick exit.

It might seem surprising that no more than two weeks after this incident, while I was traveling through Germany, I was received as an overnight guest by a retired general, Fritz Krause, now living in forced retirement in a town along the Rhine, near Mainz. Major General Krause had been Erwin Rommel’s artillery commander during the Afrika Korps campaign of 1941–43. My visit, let me add, had been planned well in advance. It all started soon after I had left Vienna early that summer to tour Switzerland for a few days with another Fulbright student, Jim Wolf, who had just bought a car and needed somebody to share fuel expenses. Cars were still rare in Europe at the time, and hitchhikers were plentiful. At one point we noted a German hitchhiker about our age—identifiable not only from the German flag on his knapsack but also from his long, thick hair style—obviously his generation’s reaction to the short haircuts that German soldiers had worn during the war.

Gerhard Krause quickly opened up about his family—they had never been Nazis, he assured us, and we made it clear we were both of Jewish background, though Jim’s family had not experienced a history like mine during the war. (As usual, I said nothing even to Jim about what had happened within my family.) Gerhard stayed together with us for several days, sleeping in youth hostels and seeing all the sights we could. By the time the three of us were ready to travel our separate ways, we realized we had thoroughly bonded with one another—to the point that Gerhard insisted that I stay with his parents on the trip I was planning up the Rhine, and that is precisely what I did.

Gerhard’s family greeted me warmly. Fritz Krause had been a career officer since World War I and then had gradually made his way up the military ladder. That was a war we could freely talk about, and thus I could tell him that my mother had been in charge of a field hospital as a German army nurse on the Eastern front, indeed, once had even served tea to the Empress when the latter inspected the hospital. Krause felt good about Americans, for he had been a prisoner of war in the United States the last two years of World War II and was grateful that, as long as the war lasted, he was treated in a manner befitting a general, with his own house and with ordinary prisoners of war being assigned as his servants. When the Germans were forced to abandon their African campaign, Krause had arranged the surrender of 40,000

men and, he was proud to say, without any loss of life. But after the war, things became tough for the family, which was caught in East Germany; after they made it to the Federal Republic, Krause's military skills had become useless. With the help of one of his former staff members, he found a low-paying position in a department store in the area in which I visited him. As I said my goodbyes to the family, I told myself how good it was to know there was another Germany besides the one I had long read about and had experienced on the train ride from Paris. In retrospect, I recognize it was also a kind of forbidden pleasure to consort, if ever so briefly, with a former enemy, yet also one who, I was assured by his son, had never been a Nazi. Though I ultimately lost contact with the family, three years later they sent their younger son to dine with my parents when he passed through Seattle.

After leaving the Krauses a book of Rilke poems, I continued my trip northward, first to Berlin, where, in my meeting with Peter Weber, I received the details about my family that I presented in the early chapters of this book and thence to Copenhagen, where the Edelmanns revealed the miracle that had befallen them just ten years before as they were spirited out of Denmark to Sweden.

## **Historicizing—1960s through 1990s**

### **Hilberg, Arendt, and the Jewish Councils**

Historicizing can mean a number of things: (1) establishing a distance between the historian and the material being treated (a difficult matter if this material is especially sensitive); (2) basing your material on "objective" research (a controversial matter regarding the Shoah if you are German or Jewish); and (3) placing the historical events with which you are concerned within a larger matrix (a tricky matter since there are multiple matrices to choose from). After the long silence prevailing after the war, the historicization of the Shoah became an immense project filling libraries to the point that none of us can master all the material. I take up some salient moments crucial to the development of Shoah-consciousness—above all, of my own consciousness.

Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961) was the first all-encompassing work based on archival research to break the long silence on the subject. To be sure, H. G. Adler's study of Theresienstadt (1955), discussed in chapter one, had already undertaken a similar mission, though it was devoted to a single Nazi camp. Hilberg's book, however, covers the whole terrain, even starting with what he must have taken as an obligatory, though rather routine,

survey of German anti-Semitism over the centuries. Like Adler's book, and also like some of the early survivor memoirs discussed earlier, Hilberg's study took a long time finding a publisher, and, again, like these others, it had to settle for a then-obscure press.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, I only became aware of it two years later, when I noted the references to Hilberg in Hannah Arendt's best-seller *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), which derived much of its information about the role of the Jewish councils from his book.

The larger matrix that gives shape to Hilberg's study derives from the notion that historical events follow one another in a discernible pattern, that later events can be made to seem inevitable as a result of the earlier events depicted.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, what Hilberg found in the archives, above all, in the well-preserved records of German bureaucracy, were images of an intricate machine rigorously set up to bring about what Hilberg indicates in his title. It seems no accident that the term *functionalist* (as opposed to *intentionalist*) was used to describe the result of his research: the bureaucratic system now came to seem primary to the intentions of the Nazi leaders, however evil we may choose to view them. Indeed, Arendt, who never claimed to be an archival researcher, took Hilberg's functionalism to an extreme. Her image of Eichmann as an unthinking cog within a larger system makes it impossible to ascribe traditional ideas of evil to him—with the result that we are left with the banality inscribed in the title of her book.

The aspect of Arendt's book, and to a lesser extent, of Hilberg's as well, that most plagued my own consciousness was the depiction of the Jewish councils, the groups of Jewish leaders appointed by the Nazis throughout Germany and within occupied territories to carry out their orders. Both writers use the councils to illustrate their common thesis about what Hilberg calls the "almost complete lack of resistance" among Jews during the Shoah.<sup>18</sup> Arendt, never known for mincing words, praises Hilberg's book for "expos[ing] for the first time in all its pathetic and sordid detail" the role that the councils played in drawing up lists of Jews in their own communities and complying with Nazi orders to prioritize persons on their lists.<sup>19</sup> What seemed particularly painful at the time in both Hilberg and Arendt's discussions was seeing these Jewish leaders portrayed as betraying their own people. Many of them, like the supposedly saintly Leo Baeck, chief of the council, or *Reichsvereinigung*, and later in a similar role at Theresienstadt, had occupied leadership positions within their communities since long before the Nazis came to power. Arendt's acid comment on Baeck's decision to employ Jewish police to oversee the victims hit home

particularly,<sup>20</sup> for Baeck occupied a special place in my family's memories. My mother, in her capacity as superintendent of nurses in Berlin's Jewish Hospital during the early 1920s, had worked closely with Baeck, whom she revered and who, after her emigration to America, had sent her an etching as a wedding gift; indeed, I myself had a warm meeting with Rabbi Baeck soon after the war when, having survived Theresienstadt, he taught rabbinical students in Cincinnati not far from Antioch College, which I was then attending.

Even more painful was the thought that the order in which my various family members were picked up for deportation might have been determined by some of their most respected fellow Jews. How was it, for instance, that my aunt Betty Levi was transported in what was apparently the first train from Hamburg to Auschwitz? It is one thing to believe that a Nazi official made this decision, but coming, as it perhaps did, from a fellow Jew, one wonders if somebody on the local council did not care for her or for her late husband, who, after all, was well known in the Jewish community—or, more likely, was somebody on the council “protecting” others? Or why was Dora Lindenberger, the widow of my uncle Adolf and mother of Hanni Meyer, not deported until July 1943, by which time there were hardly any Jews left in Berlin? Did they deliberately keep her in Berlin so that she could witness Hanni's trial in December 1942, or experience her execution in March 1943? After all, Goebbels' response to the Baum group's action was a demand to Hitler to hasten the deportation of Jews from Berlin. And why was the Baum group totally left out of Hilberg's first edition? Would their actions have spoiled his thesis about Jewish passivity? To be sure, there are two brief mentions of the group's resistance in Hilberg's 1985 edition, with the longer one forming only part of a larger sentence.<sup>21</sup>

Fortunately, Hilberg and Arendt have not proved to be the final word on the councils or on Jewish passivity, and the distinction of Arendt's book, I might add, rests on firmer ground than its discussion of the councils.<sup>22</sup> Historicizing invariably breeds further historicizing, and, as a result, much has been written, especially during recent years, on the role of the Jewish councils. For one thing, as Randolph L. Braham pointed out, the councils differed greatly across German-occupied Europe.<sup>23</sup> In some places they were appointed by the Nazis, in others they remained the longtime Jewish communal leaders. And while in certain cities they actively helped round up Jews, in others they were simply intermediaries, helping to locate Jews on the Gestapo lists. In at least three cities, Lodz, Lublin, and Brussels, Jewish groups openly

defied the councils.

Yet the passivity thesis promulgated by Hilberg, Arendt, and Bruno Bettelheim has never been fully refuted; instead, we now see the relative passivity of the Jewish population in a more shaded light than before. Much of the passion that was unleashed against these three figures, as David Engel has recently shown, came from Israeli historians, for whom the notion that Jews were prone throughout their history to accept anti-Semitism without resistance was an unacceptable thesis.<sup>24</sup>

Studies of individual Jewish councils have also shaded the picture. Beate Meyer's detailed study of the Berlin council showed that the latter participated in drawing up lists only in the early stages of deportation, after which the Gestapo took full responsibility for these lists.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, as many commentators have mentioned, our view of council members' actions as collaboration—a word used during the war to characterize outright Nazis such as Pierre Laval and Vidkun Quisling—is inappropriate as a description of the councils, who thought that by cooperating they might save lives and provide comfort to their constituents. Nor did they possess our hindsight that the “final solution” was designed to destroy the whole Jewish population.

Yet Leo Baeck's role can be evaluated in varying ways. As a rabbi and as a person with a gentle disposition, he took it upon himself to help make life for his parish-ioners as bearable as possible within an impossible situation. Certainly he did not know the Nazis' ultimate plans, but, as Meyer shows, he also knew more about what was going on than others did, and he maintained his silence to keep his fellow Jews from losing hope.<sup>26</sup> During his period on the council at Theresienstadt, moreover, he chose not to impart the information he possessed that the persons who were taken out of this camp normally went straight to Auschwitz.

Though I remain cognizant of my mother's reverence for Baeck, I cannot personally go along with the policies he chose to follow. For one thing, he condemned the Baum group's act of sabotage as “folly”—understandable, perhaps, after he was himself incarcerated briefly as a result of this act and was privy to the information that 250 hostages had been rounded up and shot.<sup>27</sup> When I met Baeck in 1949, I might well, as a plain-speaking 20-year-old, have been rash enough to present my own point of view about the Baum group, whose actions, as mentioned in chapter three, I did not learn about until I met Peter

Weber, in Berlin, four years later. Moreover, if those whom the Nazis appointed to the councils had all refused to serve, indeed, had they shared their reasons for refusing with their fellow Jews, they might have encouraged at least some form of passive resistance even though the ultimate outcome would certainly have remained the same. For me at least, the notion of nourishing a hope that is based on what one knows to be a falsehood is unacceptable. And the idea of participating in forming a list of victims—even if this participation ended early in Berlin—seems reprehensible from a contemporary point of view. But, of course, I speak with the hindsight of somebody whose view of life was itself shaped by what I learned about the Shoah after the war.

One's judgment of the councils rests ultimately on one's own worldview, or, more likely even, with one's body chemistry or brain circuitry. Berel Lang, in his searching study of the philosophical implications inherent in some key issues surrounding the Shoah, approaches the question of whether the councils should have participated in making lists—"to decide or not to decide," as he puts it—by confronting two traditions within Jewish thought: The first one, that of Moses Maimonides, namely, that a community may not choose to turn over an individual at an enemy's demand, the second one, voiced by the rabbi of the Kovno ghetto during the deportations, that even if a community has been marked for destruction, it should work "to rescue what is possible."<sup>28</sup> Each tradition, Lang explains, represents a quite distinct view of human nature, the communitarian one of Maimonides and the individualistic one of the Kovno rabbi.<sup>29</sup> Baeck and his fellow council members clearly subscribed to the second view. My own hindsight knowledge leads me to side with Maimonides.

### **Martin Broszat on the Nazi State, Minus Auschwitz**

I move ahead almost a decade to a long-influential book representative of a whole period of German historical writing on the Nazi period. Martin Broszat's *The Hitler State* (1969), like Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, counts as "functionalist" in the sense that the actions it depicts seem to emanate less from the intentions of its leaders than from the necessities that needed to be met from moment to moment. But unlike Hilberg's book, there is nothing inevitable in its line of action. And, of course, it is a book not, like Hilberg's, about the Shoah, but rather about the state that made the Shoah possible in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

What seems amazing to anybody reading this distinguished piece of historical research today is how absent the Shoah remains from the

narrative. And this choice was deliberate, as Broszat proudly acknowledged in later years: Treating Auschwitz as the natural culmination of the Nazi period would prevent what he took to be a genuine historicization of this era.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, I could find only a single, brief mention of Auschwitz in this whole long book.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, the author could have protested that he had not set out to write a book on the subject that Hilberg and a multitude of others, mostly Jews at that time, had staked out for themselves. But although an author has a right to choose his own subject matter and to set boundaries as to what he or she wants to investigate, in this instance the relative absence of anti-Semitism and, later, mass murder in the very motivation and formation of Nazi policies seems glaring.

To be sure, Broszat, who headed the influential Institut für Zeitgeschichte in Munich, sought to demonstrate a “scientific” approach to the writing of history. There was to be no looking backwards from the end, whether the end of Hitler, of the Nazi state, or of the Jews or other victims. Rather, by looking at the various Nazi institutions in the process of their formation, Broszat was able quite successfully to depict the battles for power between individuals or between groups and to show how the resulting structures of power resulted from these battles. Thus, he describes how the policing power was shifted from the interior ministry under Wilhelm Frick to the SS under Heinrich Himmler (pp. 272–73), or how direct access to Hitler himself moved from one person to another over the years (pp. 312–13). The image he presents is of a state that was constantly improvising itself. And this state, as it emerges in his book, looks considerably less totalitarian than does the state depicted with considerable drama by Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and also less purposefully driven than the state shown in Hilberg’s self-consciously tragic narrative.

In view of the directions in which historians, both of German and of Shoah history in particular, have moved in recent years, it is scarcely any wonder that Broszat’s classic study, as well as his other writings, has also become a source of controversy. The controversial aspects of his work were pinpointed in the public correspondence between Broszat and Saul Friedländer that took place in 1987, two years before the former’s death. This was well before the publication of

Friedländer’s epic history of the Shoah, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*.<sup>33</sup> The correspondence took place in the wake of the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians’ debate), a controversy set off during the preceding year by an article that Ernst Nolte, a conservative,

nationalist-minded historian, wrote challenging the so-called uniqueness of the Shoah, which he claimed had been modeled on Stalin's scourges of the preceding decade.<sup>34</sup> I shall not be concerned here with this debate, which I followed avidly at the time and which, like many other readers, I found particularly distressing, for, despite the firm liberal point of view represented by the likes of Jürgen Habermas, the debate revealed a sizable group of historians who sought to minimize the Shoah for a variety of reasons. For example, Nolte argued that a 1939 statement by Chaim Weizmann—namely, that the world's Jews would support Britain in any war against Germany—motivated Hitler to accelerate his war against the Jews.<sup>35</sup> So, just as Hitler had long maintained, the Jews had actually started the war! My disgruntlement with Nolte was put to the test a couple of years later when, in my capacity as graduate adviser for Comparative Literature at Stanford, I was assigned a young journalist from Germany who had just arrived as a visiting scholar. She was Nolte's daughter, it turned out, and she was caught by surprise when she realized that I knew who she was. "I do not agree with his views," she assured me, "but I also love my father." Fair enough!

The correspondence between Broszat and Friedländer is more central to my argument than the historians' debate, first, because it is a more thoughtful (and also more polite) discussion than the *Historikerstreit*, but also because it reveals how the process of historicizing—an activity that both these scholars see themselves as performing—is related to the particular backgrounds, both generational and ethnic, of its practitioners.<sup>36</sup> Both these men belong to the same generation, Broszat having been born in 1926 and Friedländer in 1932. But while the former, as a non-Jew, was a member of the Hitler Youth organization, Friedländer survived the war years disguised as a non-Jewish French child. As Broszat puts it in his correspondence with Friedländer, his own childhood experience motivated him professionally to treat the Nazi past "critically" and with "solemn sobriety" (p. 123)—with the result that historicizing means creating a maximum distance between the historian and the material he is presenting. This distancing, he believes, allows his approach to "focus on rational understanding" in contrast to the point of view of the Nazis' victims, whose horrendous experiences work to "coarsen historical recollection" (p. 106). For Friedländer, on the other hand, this opposition between "the mythological memory of the victims and the more rational approach of German historiography" (p. 130) by no means makes the latter approach superior to the former. Indeed, his own later book, *Nazi Germany and the Jews* sought above all to

demonstrate that the point of view of the victims—as recorded in diaries, oral testimony, survivor narratives, and letters—was a legitimate way of historicizing the past.

The large methodological divide separating these two scholars is exemplified tell-ingly in their differing views of ordinary life during the Nazi period. While Broszat argues that in many respects ordinary life went on in the way it had before Hitler came to power (p. 112–13), Friedländer sees all social activity during the period as “contaminated” (pp. 112, 120) by Nazism. While the former seeks to minimize Auschwitz to prevent this admittedly horrifying endpoint from limiting the scope and nature of his narrative (pp. 115–16, 126–27, 128), Friedländer counters that since the historian “*knows the end*” (p. 119, italics Friedländer’s), the detachment that Broszat preaches must remain “a psychological and epistemological illusion” (p. 129). And in contrast to Broszat’s implied preference for Arendt’s “banality of evil” (pp. 119, 120) as an explanation for Nazi acts over what he had called “a ritualized, almost historical-theological remembrance” (p. 114), Friedländer, calling his correspondent’s attention to Heinrich Himmler’s notorious speech to his SS officers in Posen on October 4, 1943, proposes the term “political religion” for “some important aspects of the Nazi movement” (p. 121). Indeed, in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Friedländer was to employ the term “redemptive anti-Semitism” as a means of accounting for the irrational element motivating much Nazi policy.<sup>37</sup>

The large gap separating Broszat’s and Friedländer’s approaches to historicizing is matched by the distance separating Broszat from the current generation of historians, some of whom gathered at a conference nearly 40 years after the publication of *The Hitler State* to track the distance between his functionalism of the 1960s and the confrontational stances that this new generation was taking during the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>38</sup> Although I shall deal with this generation in the final section of this chapter, I mention a few remarks from this conference here to indicate how a new generation represents a distinctly new stage of Shoah-consciousness. The scholars I discuss here were born after the war and thus had no personal motivation, as Broszat’s generation had, to distance themselves from the ideologies they had been fed in the Hitler Youth organization. Nicolas Berg, in his contribution to the conference, interprets the stance of “science,” “objectivity,” and “sobriety” that Broszat and others pursued as a reaction to their youthful past.<sup>39</sup> In his introduction, the editor of the volume, Norbert Frei, even discusses

the accusation that Broszat, at 17 as the war ended, had received a Nazi party card— though even if the card had actually been issued, as Wikipedia claims in its article on Broszat, Frei expresses doubts that the young man ever received it.<sup>40</sup> And Dan Diner, an Israeli historian born in Germany, comments that Broszat and his institute's research program centered on the question, "How could that happen?" while avoiding the question of "Why did it happen?" and, especially from a Jewish point of view, "Why did it happen to us?" with the result that Broszat was never able to understand the "perspective of the victims."<sup>41</sup> Friedländer, representing the older generation and now looking back two decades to his correspondence with Broszat, concludes that his antagonist "was worried that the remembrance of the Jewish victims would suppress the remembrance of his own [German] generation."<sup>42</sup>

Yet the functionalism common within Broszat's generation was not shared by all his contemporaries. As a counterweight to this point of view, the work of Hans-Ulrich Wehler, only five years younger than Broszat, attributes Nazi actions not to some larger "system" but rather to the power that Hitler himself exercised on the German people. Developing theories drawn from the social sciences, and, above all, the charisma concept of Max Weber, Wehler accounts for the people's willingness to accept their leader's seemingly insane policies and to hang in even after it had become clear that they had lost the war.<sup>43</sup>

### **Christopher Browning vs. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen on Police Battalion 101**

During the late 1980s, two American scholars, Christopher Browning and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, independently studied testimonies by members of Police Battalion 101, a group of fewer than 500 men who shot some 38,000 Jews in Poland and supervised the deportations of 45,200 others to death chambers.<sup>44</sup> The testimonies were not made until two decades after the group's killing actions, which took place between July 1942, and November 1943—with the result that the subjects' memories were likely dimmed by time. The accounts that Browning and Goldhagen give of these actions, though they differ somewhat in detail, are fairly similar. Yet the conclusions they draw could not be more different.

First, a few details regarding the books that emerged from their research. Browning's *Ordinary Men*, published in 1992, is a modest, relatively short work limited to the actions of the battalion.

Goldhagen's is a large, ambitious volume in which the battalion's history serves as only one of three case studies, the others relating to work camps in Poland and to the death marches that occurred near the end of the war.<sup>45</sup> While Browning's book was at first read mainly by scholars, Goldhagen's quickly became an international best seller, as well as the object of considerable controversy because of its overriding thesis. Browning's book was published while he taught at a little-known college in the Pacific Northwest, though he went on to an endowed chair at the University of North Carolina; Goldhagen's was published while the author taught at Harvard, though despite, perhaps even because of the book, he did not go on to a tenured position there. Browning's oeuvre includes some of the most fundamental scholarship by an American about the Shoah, including a meticulously researched volume detailing the steps leading to the Nazi decision on the "final solution," while Goldhagen went on to write additional controversial books, not only on the Shoah but also on other genocides.<sup>46</sup> And the personal backgrounds of these writers are also quite different: while Goldhagen is the son of a Shoah survivor (and of a Harvard professor as well), Browning, as far as I know, is not of Jewish descent.

As the title of Browning's book indicates, the men who rounded up and shot thousands of Jews (usually, as they were instructed, in the neck just above the spinal column) were "ordinary" by most any standard. A police battalion under the Nazi regime was not a regular police force, nor was it part of the SS, though SS men could belong to it. Indeed, these battalions drew men who were usually too old for the regular army; most of Battalion 101 consisted of people just under and sometimes even over 40—which meant that these men had reached maturity before the Nazi takeover and thus had never, like most soldiers, belonged to the Hitler Youth organization. They came mainly from Hamburg, which counted as less Nazi-oriented than most German cities. By background they were mostly working and lower-middle class and, except for their officers, with little education (B, 164; G, 208–9). Although the testimonies on which the two books are based led to trials of a number of participants (testimonies that were delayed because of German hesitation during the early postwar years to prosecute perpetrators), the sentences eventually handed out were relatively short; to be sure, the captain in charge of the battalion, Wilhelm Trapp, had been extradited to Poland soon after the war and was executed there.

What most starkly separates these books is the causes they ascribe to these ordinary men's actions. Goldhagen develops a concept that he calls "eliminative anti-Semitism" (G, 49–128, 416–54) by which he

means something close to Friedländer's concept of "redemptive anti-Semitism." But Friedländer's term has religious connotations missing in Goldhagen's, and Friedländer, moreover, does not employ his term as the overriding cause for the exterminations that the Germans engaged in. For Goldhagen, however, anti-Semitism was the prime motivating force in German culture especially since the *völkisch* (folk-motivated) movement in the early nineteenth century; it was, in short, built into the German psyche to a degree that it was not in the makeup of other peoples.

Browning too tries to account for how the killing of this battalion was able to happen. But rather than seeking a single key within German history, he turns to social psychology, in particular, to the celebrated experiments by Stanley Milgram at Yale and by Philip Zimbardo at Stanford (B, 167–68, 171–76, 184, 218–19). The Milgram experiment, which took place during the early 1960s, isolated a group of subjects required to apply electric-shock treatments to supposed patients, who were actually actors simulating pain when shocks were administered to them. In his book on this experiment, Milgram, himself Jewish, makes clear from the start that the then-still-recent memory of the Shoah stands behind his attempt to study the way that ordinary human beings—in this case a cross section of people from the New Haven area—were willing to cause extreme pain to others when ordered to by their superiors.<sup>47</sup> The Zimbardo experiment (1971) used a group of Stanford students temporarily housed in a mock-prison in which participants were assigned roles as either guards or prisoners. Like the subjects of Milgram's experiments, those playing guards exhibited a degree of cruelty that they would not have displayed in real life. Indeed, the Stanford experiment had to be curtailed before its planned conclusion because of the deleterious effects it had on its subjects. It goes without saying that the rules developed in research institutions on the use of human subjects since these experiments would not allow either one of them to be performed today. However much people may now object to the research methods employed by Milgram and Zimbardo, the conclusions they reached have been largely accepted by the social-science community as a description of group behavior. And the conclusion applied by Browning to explain the behavior of a killing squad such as Battalion 101 is that, as a result of isolation, peer pressure, and the fear of not conforming to the actions of others in their group, seemingly "normal" persons could engage in outrageous, sometimes, indeed, murderous conduct.

The two books are so far apart in their basic orientation that it seems no accident that the two authors, beginning with Goldhagen's review

of *Ordinary Men*, have engaged in considerable polemics with one another.<sup>48</sup> And the reader's experience with these two books is as diverse as the conclusions they draw from the same archival sources. As I read *Ordinary Men* I kept asking myself how, if I had been put into a comparable situation—perhaps not in war but in a college psychology experiment—I might have conducted myself. Browning makes clear that Captain Trapp told his men before their first *Aktion* that they were free not to participate but that very few, either in that *Aktion* or in later ones, accepted that option; and it is also known that nonparticipants were not punished for their refusal. Are we all, under certain circumstances, perhaps capable of performing murderous acts? But above all, reading *Ordinary Men* gives at least one plausible answer to that constantly recurring question about the Shoah: how could such a thing ever happen—and in a modern society to boot?

For me, at least, reading *Hitler's Willing Executioners* right after it came out gave me no answer to that or to any other serious question; rather, it sought above all to raise the consciousness of its readers by means of vivid depictions of key incidents within the Shoah. The author's theory of "eliminationist anti-Semitism" as the main cause for the actions he describes did not seem plausible to me, if only because he was not able to demonstrate that German anti-Semitism before Hitler's ascent was distinctly worse than or different from that in other countries. Throughout the book and later, in his responses to his critics, he remains adamant in his thesis that one cause fits all.

Yet reading Goldhagen's book, I must admit, was a powerful emotional experience to a degree that scholarly books rarely are. While Browning's book is written with the sobriety characteristic of the historicizing scholars I described earlier, Goldhagen pulls out all the stops, as in this passage in his section on Battalion 101:

With what thoughts and emotions did each of these men march, gazing sidelong at the form of, say, an eight- or twelve-year-old girl, who to the unideologized mind would have looked like any other girl? In these moments, each killer had a personalized, face-to-face relationship to his victim, to his little girl. Did he see a little girl, and ask himself why he was about to kill this little, delicate human being who, if seen as a little girl by him, would normally have received his compassion, protection, and nurturance? (G, 218)

Although my relatives in Germany died in gas chambers or, as with Uncle Nathan, as a result of conditions in Theresienstadt, I was aware while reading these two books that many more distant relatives,

including children, whose names I have never known, would have been shot to death in small Polish towns by *Einsatzgruppen* and police battalions such as 101. Despite the overbearingness and sentimentality of Goldhagen's prose (note the constant repetitions of the phrase "little girl"), I cannot help but react to it emotionally. And so must have thousands of others, for no serious book on the Shoah, except for *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, has enjoyed a comparable popular success, above all, in Germany, where it has inspired considerable commentary.<sup>49</sup> And like the TV series *Holocaust* almost two decades before, this book helped bring German consciousness to a new level of awareness. It may also have enabled a new generation of German scholars, skeptical though they may be to Goldhagen's generalizations, to assume the accusing attitude toward the past that I shall describe in the following section.

## **Confronting (2000– )**

### **Confronting the German Past**

A Stanford colleague born in Germany during the late 1960s mentioned that he and other members of his generation know better than to ask their fathers and grandfathers what they did during World War II. For the sake of family harmony it may well be advisable to let sleeping dogs lie, but the guilt of one's parents became a public issue in Germany in a TV series, *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* (Our Mothers, Our Fathers), broadcast in March 2013, that forced its viewers to confront their parents' past. A number of German historians—all born well after the end of the war—have not hesitated to confront their national past, sometimes even in an overtly accusatory way. Indeed, their writing often displays a moral zeal quite distinct from the sobriety characteristic of the preceding, more "scientific" generation of historians.

Consider the detailed institutional analysis of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* (the chief national security office, known familiarly as the RSHA) by Michael Wildt (born 1954) in his book *An Uncompromising Generation*.<sup>50</sup> This office, founded by Reinhard Heydrich in September, 1939, just after the war broke out, brought together a number of agencies such as the SS, the Gestapo, the criminal police, and the whole concentration-camp system into a single powerful organization that worked independently of traditional bodies such as the army and the foreign office. By demonstrating precisely how this bureaucracy worked, and by supplying bio-graphical details of over two dozen of its leaders, Wildt shows how such earlier

dichotomies as “functionalism vs. intentionalism,” or “perpetrators vs. bureaucrats” are not adequate to the reality of the Nazi state. Although Wildt studies how the organization functioned, its actions always—whether under Heydrich or, after his assassination in 1942, under Himmler—remained subordinate to the intentions, and also the perceived intentions, of these leaders as well as of the Führer himself. And the bureaucrats who ran the various departments were also active perpetrators, for they moved regularly from their policy-making, paper-pushing jobs in Berlin into the field in Poland and in Russia, where they took turns actively observing and supervising the *Einsatzgruppen* who rounded up and shot Jews. Above all, it was the RSHA that assumed the leadership in dealing with the so-called Jewish question.

The people who ran the RSHA were in no sense “ordinary men”—indeed, they were highly educated, many with doctorates, especially in the humanities and in law. Wildt’s biographical sketches, together with photographs of these men in fancy uniform above which they display their stern, “aryan” faces, manage to bring these figures frighteningly to life. And unlike most of the “objective” historians of the earlier generation, Wildt minces no words in condemning the leniency with which they were treated by the Federal Republic: “Considered in moral terms and from the perspective of the victims, it is certainly scandalous that former leading members of the RSHA were allowed to return largely unchallenged to middle-class normality” (p. 447). Indeed, as Wildt shows at one point, a technicality deriving from the way traffic violations were treated in court allowed some RSHA men who would otherwise have faced conviction during trials in the late 1960s to go entirely free (see pp. 414–18). In his lengthy case studies, after detailing certain outrageously criminal acts, he portrays the ironies accompanying his subjects’ return to civil life. Take, for example, Martin Sandberger, who went free in 1958 after showing particular zeal in arranging executions and who, after a death sentence at Nuremberg, received instead a long prison sentence, which was eventually commuted through the help of family connections and even of the Federal President, Theodor Heuß (pp. 289–97, 385–88). But Wildt’s prize exhibit is the case of Dr. Hans Rößner, a literary scholar who had worked in RSHA Office III, which was concerned with culture and ideology. After detention until 1948, Rößner got off with a fine, eventually emerging as chief editor at a major publishing house, Piper Verlag, where he was assigned to work with Hannah Arendt. Although he went to great lengths to flatter Arendt in his letters, he also demanded uncomfortable concessions from her, for example, the elimination of the term *Jew* in the subtitle of her book on Rahel von

Varnhagen. And as soon as she had died he decided no longer to reprint *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (see pp. 393–403 for the Rößner sketch).

If Wildt's book is able to shock its readers for its revelations not only about the RSHA but also about the permissive attitude toward Nazism during the first decades of the Federal Republic, "*Davon haben wir nichts gewußt*" by Peter Longerich (born 1955), by means of massive research, explodes the long-standing notion that the German public knew nothing of Nazi atrocities against the Jews, or, if it did know, that it simply ignored this knowledge. The book's title, literally "About *that* we knew nothing" (the stressed *that* reproducing the German syntax) quotes precisely what I, as well as a multitude of others, heard postwar Germans say if one mentioned Nazi killings of Jews. To cite one of many examples, Longerich demonstrates that in 1942 a number of German newspapers reported deportations of Jews from Slovakia, a nation that they now declared to be "*judenfrei* (free of Jews)" and reported as well on successful deportations from countries such as Belgium, Norway, and Romania;<sup>51</sup> these papers did not—obviously fearing censorship—mention the deportations from Germany going on that year. But German citizens could see for themselves the troops of Jews gathering at deportation centers and being taken to train stations. As Longerich shows, the public was well aware of deportations from the time they began in 1941 (pp. 194–200).

Even more incriminating is the evidence that Longerich piles up about German citizens' knowledge of the gassing of Jews in the death camps. Although these were of course not reported in newspapers, evidence preserved in diaries, court hearings, accounts of foreign visitors to Germany, and Allied broadcasts that many Germans heard makes clear that news of these atrocities circulated widely among the public (pp. 222–47). Outside of the gassings, the chief means of killing Jews was through the shootings by *Einsatzgruppen*, whose activities became known through letters and photographs that their members sent home and through descriptions they gave when on leave in Germany (pp. 224–26).

Not that the public ever knew the whole picture, for the censorship, after all, pre-vented any such knowledge. Nor is there any way, according to Longerich, of reli-ably gauging the extent of anti-Semitism, for those Jews who survived underground depended upon the help of Germans sympathetic to their plight. As Longerich puts it, "Attempts to create a total picture of anti-Semitism in wartime Germany out of contemporary reports and memoir literature always

lead to contradictory results" (p. 252). The picture that he presents, based not only on his own research but also on that of earlier scholars such as Ian Kershaw and David Bankier, shows frequent changes in public opinion,<sup>52</sup> many of these changes, in fact, deriving from the shifting emphases of the German propaganda machine. During the course of the Nazi years, anti-Semitic sentiments welled up at particular points whenever Goebbels and his crew chose to fan the flames: in 1933, during the boycott of Jewish businesses (Longerich, pp. 55–73); in 1935, at the time of the Nuremberg laws (pp. 75–100); and again in 1938, the year of *Kristallnacht* (pp. 123–46). There were other periods, however, in which the public showed indifference toward and disinterest in the so-called Jewish question. Longerich even records a degree of public sympathy toward the Jews after they were required to wear the yellow star in 1941 (pp. 171–81). Even during the war years, the public's attitude waxed and waned depending on the degree of propaganda aimed at the Jews: Hostility was at its height in 1941 and again from mid-1942 to mid-1943, after which it waned after most Jews were already dead and the government concentrated its efforts on defending itself against Soviet attacks. Longerich, whose research included the examination of some two dozen newspapers during the course of the regime as well as of official reports on public opinion circulating within various agencies such as the SD and the Gestapo, quotes from a Nazi-organization paper in Baden in September 1943, urging a continuing campaign against the Jews even though "the greater part of the Jewish population of Europe has been exterminated [aufgerieben]" (p. 295).

Longerich's book is exemplary not only for the extent and depth of his research but also for the scrupulousness with which he weighs his evidence and for his refusal to indulge in emotional stances. His tone recaptures the sobriety of the historicizing scholars of the preceding generation who had grown up under the Nazis but had shied away from those delicate matters that historians such as Wildt and Longerich have confronted directly. Yet the effect of Longerich's investigation, despite the caution with which he voices his assertions, is nothing short of devastating. As I read of the pervasive knowledge that Germans, whether they acknowledged it to themselves or not, possessed of what was going on around them, I recognized that the hesitation I exercised in my relations with them during the early 1950s was fully justified. In view of Longerich's findings I asked myself if the dam engineer's wife with whom I had shared a compartment from Paris to Strasbourg might really have known the truth that she so fervently denied or if her knowledge was overruled by the promptings of that powerful onetime faith that Friedländer aptly termed

“redemptive anti-Semitism.” And I reminded myself that I was doubtless correct in not asking my hosts, General and Frau Krause, if they had ever known what was going on. Had I been born in Germany or Austria around 1920 to a bona fide “aryan” family, how might I have conducted myself if recruited, say, into the SS or a police battalion? Ordinarily I should deem a question of this sort irrelevant, even, to a point, absurd—yet a certain activity I once engaged in (perfectly legal, I have always assumed) has made this question seem less far-fetched than I should like to think.

This is what happened. Sometime around 1990, my family had a practical problem to solve: We had long depended on the deep shade offered by the three mulberry trees in our backyard to protect us from the summer sun, which had beat merci-lessly against the back windows of our house on Stanford campus as we waited for the trees to reach maturity. What we had not known, and what the garden books and the nursery employees failed to inform us, was that mulberry leaves provide a particularly tempting food for squirrels. As we sat at our breakfast table, we would see one squirrel after another jump across branches to find some large, tempting leaf, then stop and chew at leisure, and finally, after licking its chops, move on to another leaf while leaving the last one a pathetic, ragged-edged remnant of its former self. As we sipped our morning coffee, Claire kept reminding me it wasn’t just how ugly the trees were fast becoming but, far more important, the fact that once they lost the greenery sustaining them they were headed for a gradual but inevitable death.

The long and the short of it was we had to get rid of the squirrels. And the important thing was to do this in an orderly and also humane way. Our first move was humane but scarcely orderly. While viewing the squirrels from the breakfast table, one of us would run and shake a branch or two or, when the spirit moved us, simply shout as loud and clear as we could to order them to vacate our premises. We little cared what the neighbors thought was going on, though we hoped they wouldn’t conclude that we were shouting at each other.

It turned out to be futile. Yes, the squirrels would climb down the tree in response to our fuss, but we were hardly back in the house before they, or others in their clan, would be busy chewing again. You may ask where this seemingly endless supply of squirrels was coming from. And here we must acknowledge some blame, for we had unknowingly provided a home for vast colonies of squirrels in the fast-growing redwood trees I’d planted to create a screen between us and a neighbor who was building a house that threatened to look into our

bedrooms.

Our first step to solve the squirrel problem once and for all was to research a more appropriate solution than the futile shouting and shaking with which we had started. In the Stanford Biology Library, I found a book on squirrels that described a method of trapping squirrels for research purposes.<sup>53</sup> So we went to a pet store, which showed us a French-made trap designed to do no physical harm to an animal but simply to trap it—with the assumption that the trapper will remove it to some place where it will do less harm than on one's own property (see figure 7.1).



**Figure 7.1** Squirrel captured in a French-made, supposedly “humane” cage in the author’s garden on the Stanford University campus, around 1990 (photo by the author).

The traps, once we learned precisely how much bait to put inside (we used cheese or peanut butter), did their work readily. We often—even from far inside the house—would hear the trap door click shut, and then one of us go out, pick up the trap, now quite heavy with a despairing squirrel, and put it in the trunk of the car. Somewhere I’d heard that if you release them within five or six miles of their home, they’ll manage to find their way back. So I took to the freeway and found a spot in Woodside about eight miles away, opened the trap door and watched as they happily scurried off. This was behind a clump of trees in an area where people had a good bit of open land around their houses—certainly a more appropriate new home for them than the small lots in our own subdivision. Not that the trip to Woodside was all that easy to manage. To eliminate our squirrel population you had to do it at least three or four times a day, and each round trip consumed about a half hour of one’s time. And sometimes a squirrel, unaccustomed to its new environment, would urinate in the

cage, which meant I needed a supply of old newspapers in the trunk.

As with all such operations, you fall into a routine and learn to structure your day around trapping and transport. This went on for some weeks until a trip East inspired us to rethink the way we were dealing with the problem. We were spending a weekend in New Jersey with old friends whose particular squirrel problem was more serious than ours, for it didn't affect their trees but their house itself. Yes, these squirrels, a distinctly different variety from ours, were eating away systematically at the shingles that made up the house's siding!

Our friends had developed a method that allowed them to catch quite a few squirrels a day—just as many as they wanted to if they took the time to put bait in the trap. And there was no need to drive a half hour per trip to deport them. They showed us a huge tub of water and demonstrated how one simply had to drop the unopened trap into this tub and within a moment the little animal was gone. It went so fast that there was surely no suffering to bother one's head about. And once it was over they took the cage down the hill to the bottom of their large yard and buried the squirrel.

Once we got back to the west coast we realized that this was the only effective way of handling the situation—even if our house was not itself threatened with destruction. And since these friends, whom we'd known for most of our lives, had no compunction, who were we to object? We found a large plastic garbage pail, filled it with water, and instead of spending our time chauffeuring our booty to Woodside, we could simply set the trap whenever convenient, and we knew that within half an hour at most it'd have a new occupant. After that we needed no more than five minutes to take care of everything.

I dug some long trenches in one corner of the backyard, the only space not occupied by our plantings. The hardest part of the whole operation was the digging, for our soil was almost pure clay, and my back did not allow me to go deep enough for more than two layers of disposals. I had thought in advance that the hardest part would be putting an end to a squirrel, for sometimes when I'd just trapped one it would look as though it was smiling at me. But I reminded myself that this was no occasion for sentiment, that mice and even rats also seem to be smiling to the point that one is tempted to dub them "cute."

We had long known of the sanitary dangers that mice and rats pose. And I reminded myself that the book from the biology library was quite clear in its classifications: Squirrels are rodents just like rats and mice, and they share many of the features that make this class intolerable in

settled society. Moreover, as the book made clear, the squirrels we were dealing with were not native to our area but had been introduced at some point and then had multiplied to gross levels that, regardless of the fate of our mulberry trees, needed to be reduced in number if not weeded out altogether.

We settled into a routine for a couple of months until it became clear that the mass grave was quickly filling up. I know I could have hired a Stanford student to dig trenches deeper than the ones we already had—yet I felt inhibited about making an open thing of it; in fact, none of our neighbors knew of our practices since our six-foot fence allowed no sightlines into our yard. Our silence had nothing to do with any fears on our part that we were doing anything wrong or illegal—only that outsiders might not wholly understand how we got into this situation and might even find what we did a bit strange.

The shortage of burial space was what finally put an end to our procedures— not only that, but the two layers I had dug were so shallow that the dirt we'd used to cover them was not enough to keep insects out, or even to prevent an occasional odor from emanating. We gradually realized we had embarked on an operation more demanding than we had envisioned. And by this time fall had come and the mulberry leaves had started their annual shedding. We dumped the water out of the garbage can and gave the trap a good scrubbing before storing it.

When spring returned we noted that the mulberry trees, threadbare though they had seemed only a few months before, had managed to rejuvenate themselves with a thick new set of leaves. We also discovered that we could gain protection from the sun by investing in double-pane windows designed to cut out most of the heat.

I never kept track of how many squirrels we got rid of, one way or the other. As I think back at it these many years later I remember that I felt a little guilt but not much—probably no more than the Nazis who decimated my family felt.

## Notes

1. The word *holocaust* started to be used in English between 1957 and 1959, according to Zoë Waxman, though she dates the addition of the definite article before this word to the Eichmann trial a few years later. See Waxman, "Testimony and

- Representation," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 494.
2. From my unpublished manuscript of "The House of Endenberg."
  3. Saul K. Padover, *Experiment in Germany: The Story of an American Intelligence Officer* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), pp. 35, 41, and 28, respectively.
  4. Stephan Hermlin, *Die erste Reihe* (Berlin: Neues Leben, 1951), pp. 165–73, and *Der lautlose Aufstand: Bericht über die Widerstandsbewegung des deutschen Volkes 1933–1945*, ed. Günther Weisenborn, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1954), pp. 164–65.
  5. For Arendt's work at the Commission, see Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's pioneering biography, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (1982), 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 187–88, 244. Young-Bruehl points out how Arendt's work on the Commission influenced her analysis of bureaucracy in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.
  6. On Gobineau, see Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd ed. (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1958), pp. 170–75. Subsequent references to this book will be noted in my text.
  7. The first of these collections was a special issue of *Social Research* 69, no.2 (2002); the second, Richard H. King and Dan Stone, ed., *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race, and Genocide* (New York: Berghahn, 2007). Although the essays sometimes find flaws in the book, as in Arendt's now old-fashioned use of the word *savage* to describe African blacks (see Kathryn Giles's essay "Race Thinking and Racism, in Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*" [in *Hannah Arendt*, ed. King and Stone, pp. 49–50]), they also show the applicability of her argument to the understanding of later events such as the wars of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia (see Vlasta Jalušič, "Post-Totalitarian Elements and Eichmann's Mentality in the Yugoslav War and Mass Killings," in *Hannah Arendt*, ed. King and Stone, pp. 147–70). For some recent individual essays on *Origins*, see the group collected in *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, ed. Steven E Aschheim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 93–145. One of these essays, Michael Halberstam's "Hannah Arendt on the Totalitarian

- Sublime and Its Promise of Freedom" (pp. 105–23), is notable for the earlier sources it finds for Arendt's concept of totalitarianism in Kant's aesthetics, Hegel's allusions to the Reign of Terror in the *Phenomenology*, and Adam Müller's theory of the state. A still more recent volume, *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), contains two essays devoted mainly to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, of which one, Richard H. King's "On Race and Culture: Hannah Arendt and Her Contemporaries" (pp. 113–34), demonstrates that her way of discussing race, as well as the relation of Western culture to other cultures, shares a common ground with many of her contemporary thinkers such as Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss, and especially Eric Voegelin.
8. I quote from Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and The Reawakening*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Summit Books, 1983) and Elie Wiesel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway (New York: Bantam, 1982). Page numbers of each book, identified by the author's initials, will be noted within my text.
  9. Jean Améry, *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980). On the continuing psychological effects of torture, see pp. 21–40; on his inability to overcome *ressentiment*, see pp. 62–81.
  10. Ruth Kluger, *Landscapes of Memory: A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003).
  11. Filip Müller, *Eyewitness Auschwitz: Three Years in the Gas Chambers*, trans. and ed. Susanne Flatauer (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), and Shlomo Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers: Eight Months in the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz*, collaborator, Béatrice Prasquier, ed. Jean Mouttapa, trans. Andrew Brown (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009).
  12. For a typical explanation of why it proved difficult to discuss one's experiences, see Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers*, p. 153.
  13. The text of the film is printed in Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: An Oral History of the Holocaust* (New York: Pantheon, 1985). The interview with Bomba appears on pp. 111–17.

14. Quoted on the Fulbright Program's current website:  
<http://fulbright.state.gov/history.html> .
15. The school that the Deutschlandlers ran in Vienna was part of a group, most of them in Poland, sponsored by Agudas Yisroel, a movement that Leo had helped found. The schools were called Beys Yankev. For a brief discussion of Beys Yankev, see Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe Before the Second World War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012), pp. 164–66.
16. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961). For Hilberg's own story about these difficulties, see his memoir, *The Politics of Memory: The Journey of a Holocaust Historian* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), pp. 105–19.
17. On the determinism that shapes Hilberg's book, see Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003), pp. 147–50.
18. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 662.
19. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, rev. ed. (New York: Viking, 1964), pp. 117–18.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 119. Hilberg, though less acid in tone than Arendt, condemns him as well, calling the idea of using Jewish police a "fatal decision" (*The Destruction of the European Jews*, p. 297).
21. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, rev. and definitive ed. (Chicago: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 2: 448, 465n. For Hilberg's defense of his passivity thesis, see *The Politics of Memory*, pp. 123–37; on his discussion of the councils, see pp. 150–51 in the latter volume and also his chapter on the councils in *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), pp. 105–17. In the last-named book, Hilberg speaks positively of Baeck's council leadership (pp. 107–8).
22. See, for example, Susan Neiman's eloquent defense of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as a "modernist theodicy" in her essay "Banality Reconsidered" in *Politics in Dark Times*, ed. Benhabib, pp. 305–15.
23. Randolph L. Braham, "The Jewish Councils: An Overview,"

- in *Unanswered Questions: Nazi Germany and the Genocide of the Jews*, ed. François Furet (New York: Schocken, 1989), pp. 252–74. See also Dan Stone, *Histories of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 79–84.
24. David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 134–78. Engel also distinguishes Arendt’s position from those of Hilberg and Bettelheim. While Arendt’s accusations were aimed at the Jewish councils and not at the Jewish population as a whole, the latter two implicated the Jews not only during the Nazi period but also throughout their history (p. 159).
  25. Beate Meyer, “Gratwanderung zwischen Verantwortung und Verstrickung—Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland und die Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin 1938–1945,” in *Juden in Berlin 1938–1945*, ed. Beate Meyer and Hermann Simon (Berlin: Philo, 2000), pp. 291–337. On the compilation of the lists, see p. 305. For a study of the councils in other German cities, see Beate Meyer, “Handlungsspielräume regionaler jüdischer Repräsentanten (1941–1945): Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland und die Deportationen,” in *Die Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland: Pläne, Praxis, Reaktionen 1938–1945*, ed. Christoph Dieckmann, Berthe Kundrus, and Beate Meyer (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2004), pp. 63–85.
  26. Meyer, “Gratwanderung,” pp. 317–18.
  27. *Ibid.*, p. 318. See also the biography of Baeck by Leonard Baker, *Days of Sorrow and Pain: Leo Baeck and the Berlin Jews* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), pp. 274–76. His use of the word *folly* is recorded on p. 276.
  28. Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 69–73.
  29. *Ibid.*, pp. 76–77.
  30. Berel Lang contrasts Hilberg’s and Broszat’s writings on German history as members of two opposed historiographical genres—the first as belonging to tragedy, with a strong sense of emplotment, the second as eschewing the very idea of historical plot. See Lang, *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 40–42.

31. On Broszat's theory of historicization, see Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, pp. 34–36. On Auschwitz, see his correspondence with Saul Friedländer, "A Controversy about the Historicization of National Socialism," published in *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historians' Debate*, ed. Peter Baldwin (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), pp. 102–34; his Auschwitz remark, which I take up again later, is on p. 115. Subsequent references to this correspondence will be noted in the text..
  
32. Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*, trans. John W. Hiden (London: Longman, 1981), p. 319. Subsequent references to this book will be noted in the text.
  
33. Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), designated as Volume One, and *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), designated as Volume Two.
  
34. Ernst Nolte, "Between Historical Legend and Revisionism? The Third Reich in the Perspective of 1980," in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? The Dispute about the Germans' Understanding of History*, trans. James Knowlton and Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 13–14. In the same volume, see also his articles, "The Past That Will Not Pass: A Speech that Could be Written but Not Delivered," pp. 18–23, and "Standing Things on Their Heads: Against Negative Nationalism in Interpreting History," pp. 149–54.
  
35. Nolte, "Between Historical Legend and Revisionism?" pp. 8–9, and Nolte, "Standing Things on Their Heads," in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler*, ed. Knowlton and Cates, pp. 152–53. Broszat, in his own contribution to the debate, calls this remark of Nolte "the most offensive thing that Nolte had written to date." See Broszat, "Where the Roads Part: History Is Not a Suitable Substitute for a Religion of Nationalism," in *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler*, p. 126.
  
36. The correspondence was set off not by the historians' debate but by an article that Broszat had published in 1985, "Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus," *Merkur* 39 (1985): 373–85. It is reprinted in translation in *Reworking the Past*, ed. Baldwin, pp. 77–87.

37. See his chapter entitled "Redemptive Anti-Semitism," in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, pp. 73–112, and the recapitulation of this idea in his introduction to the second volume, subtitled *The Years of Extermination: 1939–1945* (pp. xviii–ix). The speech by Himmler to which Friedländer refers can be heard on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yi9hT8ES2g>. Himmler's biographer, Peter Longerich, speculates that the justifications presented by Himmler in this now-famous speech were a reaction to the Gestapo's failure, just three days before, to arrest the Danish Jews whom they had sought to find in their homes. See Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, trans. Jeremy Noakes and Lesley Sharpe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 689–90.
38. The conference also included senior scholars like Saul Friedländer. The proceedings were published as *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Norbert Frei (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007).
39. Berg, "Zeitgeschichte und generationelle Deutungsarbeit," in *Martin Broszat*, ed. Frei., pp. 161–80, especially pp. 168–71. Berg treats the Broszat–Friedländer correspondence as paradigmatic for his long study of the way that West German historians treated the Shoah. See Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), especially pp. 35–46. As he explains (pp. 41–42), the two words of his subtitle, "research" and "memory," were suggested by the centrality of these words in the correspondence between the two historians. It is Berg's purpose in his own history of German historicizing to demonstrate that these terms do not have to be viewed in opposition to one another.
40. Frei, "Nach Broszat," in *Martin Broszat*, ed. Frei, pp. 7–9. Frei uses the accusation not to disparage Broszat but rather to help understand his later stances as a historian. The Wikipedia mention of his party membership is at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Broszat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Broszat).
41. Diner, "Strukturalistische Intention," in *Martin Broszat*, ed. Frei, pp. 185–86, 183, respectively.
42. Friedländer, "Ein Briefwechsel, fast zwanzig Jahre später," in *Martin Broszat*, ed. Frei., p. 193.

43. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Der Nationalsozialismus: Bewegung, Führerherrschaft, Verbrechen 1919–1945* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009).
44. I quote these figures from Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), pp. 225–26. Subsequent references to Browning's book will be noted in the text with the letter B.
45. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996). Subsequent references to Goldhagen's book will be noted in the text with the letter G.
46. See Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Knopf, 2002); and Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009).
47. Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 1–2, 6, 9, 52, 158, 175–78, 179, 187. One subject who was raised in Nazi Germany refused to increase the voltage of the shocks after her "patient" complained of pain; referring to her memories of Germany, she said, "Perhaps we have seen too much pain" (p. 85).
48. For Goldhagen's review, published four years before his own book appeared, see "The Evil of Banality," *The New Republic* 207 (July 13–20, 1992): 49–52. *Hitler's Willing Executioners* contains numerous criticisms of *Ordinary Men*; see, for instance, G, 534n1, 536n3, 538n19, 540–41n68, 542n79, 543–44n98, 545n1, 546n16, 549n44, 551–52n65. Browning replies to Goldhagen in detail in the afterword to the second edition of *Ordinary Men* (B, 191–223). For further polemics on Goldhagen's part, see "A Reply to My Critics," *The New Republic* 215 (December 23, 1996): 37–45.
49. See, for instance, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit: Der Streit um Daniel J. Goldhagen*, ed. Johannes Heil and Rainer Erb (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1998). For a collection of

- essays in English on the book, see *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism— Facing the German Past*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000). For a searching analysis of the international reception of Goldhagen's book, see Omer Bartov, *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 139–91. In discussing the Goldhagen–Browning conflict, Bartov shows the cultural biases inherent in the Milgram experiment, a fact that he believes limits its explanatory power (pp. 181–91).
50. Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, trans. Tom Lampert (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009). The book was first published in German in 2003. Subsequent references to this book will be noted in the text.
51. Peter Longerich, *"Davon haben wir nichts gewußt!": Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2006), pp. 207–10. Subsequent references to this book will be noted within the text.
52. See, for instance, Bankier's chapter, "Awareness of the Holocaust," in *The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 101–15. Bankier, who, like Longerich after him, presents considerable evidence of German knowledge of the Shoah, also shows that this awareness was not fully digested: "Because what they [the public] had to imagine was unprecedented, they were not always able to conceive the monstrous dimensions of the crime" (p. 115). See also Kershaw's *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), a pioneering study of public opinion in Bavaria, whose example the author portrays (p. vii) as likely representative of the country as a whole. For a searching study of the considerable information about Nazi actions available through channels such as newspapers and the public's observation of terror on the streets, see Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
53. John Gurnell, *The Natural History of Squirrels* (London: Christopher Helm, 1987), pp. 126–27.