

## 5. *Conformity and Obedience*

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*When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion.*

C. P. SNOW

### OVERVIEW

Chapter 4 considered *how* Germany became a totalitarian state. This chapter looks at *why* the German people allowed it to happen. Chapters 1 and 2 offered insights into the importance we, as individuals, place on our membership in various groups. This chapter shows how the Nazis took advantage of that yearning to belong. It describes, in Fritz Stern's words, how they used the "twin instruments of propaganda and terror" to coerce and cajole a people into giving up their freedom. A character in George Orwell's *1984*, a novel that details life in a state much like Nazi Germany, offers another view of the process.

Already we are breaking down the habits of thought which have survived from before the Revolution. We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer... There will be no loyalty, except loyalty toward the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no employment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed. But always... there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face – forever.

Others argue that the process of transforming a democratic society into a totalitarian one was not quite so simple. They note that “life is almost always more complicated than we think. Behind the gleaming ranks of those who seem totalitarian robots stand men and women, various and diverse, complex and complicated, some brave, some cowardly, some brainwashed, some violently idiosyncratic, and all of them very human.”<sup>1</sup>

## READING 1

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### *A Matter of Obedience?*

In her study of totalitarian regimes, Hannah Arendt wondered, “How do average, even admirable, people become dehumanized by the critical circumstances pressing in on them?” In the 1960s, Stanley Milgram, a professor at Yale University, decided to find out by recruiting college students to take part in what he called “a study of the effects of punishment on learning.” In Milgram’s words, “The point of the experiment is to see how far a person will proceed in a concrete and measurable situation in which he is ordered to inflict increasing pain on a protesting victim... At what point will the subject refuse to obey the experimenter?”<sup>2</sup>

This reading introduces the concepts that are key to this chapter. Those concepts will be expanded in later readings.

Working with pairs, Milgram designated one volunteer as “teacher” and the other as “learner.” As the “teacher” watched, the “learner” was strapped into a chair with an electrode attached to each wrist. The “learner” was then told to memorize word pairs for a test and warned that wrong answers would result in electric shocks. The “learner” was, in fact, a member of Milgram’s team. The real focus of the experiment was the “teacher.” Each was taken to a separate room and seated before a “shock generator” with switches ranging from 15 volts labeled “slight shock” to 450 volts labeled “danger – severe shock.” Each “teacher” was told to administer a “shock” for each wrong answer. The shock was to increase by fifteen volts every time the “learner” responded incorrectly. The volunteer received a practice shock before the test began to get an idea of the pain involved.

Before the experiment began, Milgram hypothesized that most volunteers would refuse to give electric shocks of more than 150 volts. A group of psychologists and psychiatrists predicted that less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the volunteers would administer all 450 volts. To everyone’s amazement, 65 percent gave the full 450 volts!

Later Milgram tried to isolate the factors that encouraged obedience by varying parts of the experiment. In one variation, he repeated the test in a less academic setting. Obedience dropped to nearly 48 percent, still a very high number. In another variation, the volunteers received instructions by telephone rather than in person. Without an authority figure in the room, only 21 percent continued to the end. Milgram also noted that when no one

in authority was present, some volunteers reacted to the “pain” of the “learner” by repeating a relatively low level shock rather than increasing voltage as instructed – an innovative compromise in Milgram’s view.

In a third version of the test, each volunteer was surrounded by authority figures who argued over whether to continue the experiment. In this variation, no “teacher” continued until the end. In yet another variation, it appeared as if three “teachers” were giving shocks at the same time. Two, however, worked for Milgram. When they “quit,” only 10 percent of the real volunteers continued.

The distance between the volunteer and the “learner” also made a difference. Only 40 percent of the “teachers” obeyed when the “learner” was in the same room. Obedience dropped to 30 percent when volunteers had to place the “learner’s” hand on a metal plate to give the shock. On the other hand, when they had a lesser role in the experiment, 92 percent “went all the way.” Gender had little effect on the outcome of the experiment. Men and women responded in very similar ways. Women did, however, show more signs of conflict over whether to obey. Philip Zimbardo, a psychologist at Stanford University, said of the experiments:

The question to ask of Milgram’s research is not why the majority of normal, average subjects behave in evil (felonious) ways, but what did the disobeying minority do after they refused to continue to shock the poor soul, who was so obviously in pain? Did they intervene, go to his aid, did they denounce the researcher, protest to higher authorities, etc.? No, even their disobedience was within the framework of “acceptability,” they stayed in their seats, “in their assigned place,” politely, psychologically demurred, and they waited to be dismissed by the authority. Using other measures of obedience in addition to “going all the way” on the shock generator, obedience to authority in Milgram’s research was total.<sup>3</sup>

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Zimbardo observed similar behavior in an experiment he supervised in 1971. He chose twenty-four young men – “mature, emotionally stable, normal, intelligent college students” – from seventy applicants. These men were arbitrarily designated as “guards” or “prisoners” in a simulated prison. The “guards” met to organize the prison and set up rules. Zimbardo reported what happened next.

At the end of only six days we had to close down our mock prison because what we saw was frightening. It was no longer apparent to most of the subjects (or to us) where reality ended and their roles began. The majority had indeed become prisoners or guards, no longer able to clearly differentiate between role playing and self. There were dramatic changes in virtually every aspect of their behavior, thinking and feeling. In less than a week the experience of imprisonment undid (temporarily) a lifetime of learning; human values were suspended, self-concepts were challenged and the ugliest, most base, pathological

side of human nature surfaced. We were horrified because we saw some boys (guards) treat others as if they were despicable animals, taking pleasure in cruelty, while other boys (prisoners) became servile, dehumanized robots who thought only of escape, of their own individual survival and of their mounting hatred for the guards.<sup>4</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Milgram has defined *obedience* as “the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose.” How do you define the word? What is *blind obedience*? How does it differ from other forms of obedience? What is the difference between *obedience* and *conformity*?

What encourages obedience? Is it fear of punishment? A desire to please? A need to go along with the group? A belief in authority? Record your ideas in your journal so that you can refer to them later.

→*Obedience*, a documentary describing the Milgram experiment, is available from the Facing History Resource Center. After watching the film, discuss the following questions.

- As students watch the film, some laugh. How do you account for that laughter? Is it because something was funny or was there another reason? Those who study human behavior say that laughter can be a way of relieving tension, showing embarrassment, or expressing relief that someone else is “on the spot.” Which explanation is most appropriate in this case?
- How did the volunteers act as they administered the shocks? What did they say? What pressures were placed on them as the experiment continued? How did they decide whether to stop?
- Did you identify with any of the volunteers you observed in *Obedience*?

Zimbardo said that he “called off the [prison] experiment not because of the horror I saw out there in the prison yard, but because of the horror of realizing that I could have easily traded places with the most brutal guard or become the weakest prisoner full of hatred at being so powerless that I could not eat, sleep or go to the toilet without permission of the authorities.”<sup>5</sup> How would you like to think you would react?

A student who took part in an experiment set up by Zimbardo on deafness-induced paranoia expressed a dilemma posed by experiments like those of Milgram and Zimbardo. “I agree with the people who say it’s not right to deceive human beings; it’s not right to treat people as if they were mice. But I agree with Professor Zimbardo that he couldn’t do his work on deafness and paranoia without deceiving his subjects, because if they knew what was going on, they wouldn’t react the same as if they didn’t. I can see

both sides. That's my dilemma, and I don't think there's any simple answer to it, only complicated ones."<sup>6</sup> What is your position on "research through deception?" Should scientists be allowed to carry out such experiments?

Sociologists Herbert Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton related Milgram's experiments to events during the Vietnam War. They characterized incidents like the My Lai massacre in which an American armed forces unit destroyed a hamlet and killed hundreds of women and children as a "crime of obedience." What does that phrase mean to you? Can obedience be a crime? If so, give an example you have seen or read about. If not, explain why obedience can never be a crime.

→*The Wave*, an award-winning film, re-creates Ron Jones's classroom "experiment," the Third Wave. It raises important questions about conformity, peer pressure, and loyalty. Both the video and a transcript are available from the Facing History Resource Center. A teacher said of her students' responses, "They were spellbound. Most felt they would have joined the Third Wave; they used phrases like 'the power of belonging' and we discussed the vulnerability in us that makes us want to be part of a group, especially if it's elite." As you watch the film or read the transcript, think about the way you responded.

- What did it teach you about yourself? About why many people are attracted to a particular leader or want desperately to be part of a particular group?
- How might you have felt if you had been a student in Jones' class? Did he have a right to manipulate students to "teach them a lesson?" Would your answer be different if students had known in advance they were taking part in an "experiment"?

Some teachers use simulations to engage students "emotionally" or simulate affective experiences and learning. Unless a simulation includes a cognitive component, however, it has little or no learning value. It may even leave some students with the impression that they now "know what it was like" to have been a victim of the Nazis. That is just not true. Keep in mind that simulations also tend to oversimplify events and leave students with an inaccurate picture of the past. In addition, a number of simulations reinforce stereotypes; build on students' fears or insecurities; encourage ridicule; or violate the trust between student and teacher.

## READING 2

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### *A Substitute for Religion*

The Nazis offered Germans a philosophy – a way of looking at the world. It was a philosophy that allowed for no uncertainty or doubt. And for some, it became a substitute for religion. That was exactly what Hitler intended. “That is the most stupendous thing, that our movement should create for the broad, searching and erring masses a new belief upon which they can have absolute confidence and build, that they not be forsaken in this world of confusion, that they find again at least in some place a position where their hearts can rest easy.”

“Beginning with the primer,” Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*, “every theater, every movie, every advertisement must be subjected to the service of one great mission.” That is why Nazi rallies resembled religious gatherings. It is also why young children were taught the following “Confession of Faith.”

I believe in the German mother who gave me birth.  
I believe in the German peasant who breaks the sod for his people.  
I believe in the German worker who performs work for his people.  
I believe in the dead who gave their lives for their people.  
For my god is my people.  
I believe in Germany!

The Nazis created holidays to celebrate their new faith. January 30 marked the day Hitler became chancellor and April 20 his birthday. Days set aside for party rallies at Nuremberg were also holidays. So was November 9, the anniversary of the attempted coup in the Munich beer hall. It was known as the Day of the Martyrs of the Movement.

March 21 became the Day of National Revival. Hitler observed the first celebration of the holiday in 1933. In a church in Potsdam, he told the German people that their days of despair were over; a glorious future was about to unfold. William Sheridan Allen wrote of the way people celebrated the day in a town he called “Thalburg.” Although the town is not real, the events Allen described actually took place.

In Thalburg all public offices were closed for the day. Shops closed early and also during the period from eleven thirty in the morning until one in the afternoon, in order to hear the ceremony over the radio. Radio sets were brought into the schools where the children listened to the events in Potsdam and had the explanation given to them by their teachers that “a new epoch in German history was beginning.” Then they were given a holiday for the rest of the day. All houses and public

buildings were to bedeck themselves with swastika flags. After dark came a torchlight parade which wound through the whole of Thalburg. Participating were the various Nazi and Nationalist paramilitary units, all the sports clubs in Thalburg, all the various veterans' and patriotic societies, all the schools, and such miscellaneous groups as the Artisans' Training Club, the clerks and mail carriers from the post office, and the Volunteer Fire Department. Led by the town band, the SA band, and the SA fife-and-drum corps, the parade finally came to a halt in the city park, where [the local leader of the Nazi party] gave a speech in which he praised the new unity of Germany: "The individual is nothing; the Volk is everything. Once we unite internally, then we shall defeat the external foe. Then it will be 'Germany above all in the world.'" Upon this cue the crowd sang *Deutschland ueber Alles* and then dispersed.<sup>7</sup>

No trick was overlooked: the advantage of oratory over written argument; the effects of lighting, atmosphere, symbols, and the crowd; the advantage of meetings held at night when the power to resist suggestions is low. Leadership works by skillful use of suggestion, of collective hypnosis, of subconscious motivation.

The rally itself took place in the evening, in keeping with Hitler's warning to party officials: "Never try to convert a crowd to your point of view in the morning sun. Instead dim lights are useful – especially the evening when people are tired, their powers of resistance are low, and their 'complete emotional capitulation' is easy to achieve." To heighten those emotions, the Nazis often played the music of Richard Wagner, a nineteenth-century composer who was both an antisemite and a strong German nationalist. His operas, which are based on German legends and myths, show the German people as Hitler wanted them shown – as mighty, inspiring, energetic, and patriotic.

In 1934, William Shirer, then a young reporter, saw Adolf Hitler for the first time at the largest of the annual rallies. He wrote in his diary:

Like a Roman emperor Hitler rode into this medieval town [Nuremberg] at sundown, past solid phalanxes of wildly cheering Germans who packed the narrow streets... Tens of thousands of Swastika flags blot out the Gothic beauties of the place, the facades of the old houses, the gabled roofs. The streets, hardly wider than alleys, are a sea of brown and black uniforms...

About ten o'clock tonight I got caught in a mob of ten thousand hysterics who jammed the moat in front of Hitler's hotel, shouting: "We want our Fuehrer." I was a little shocked at the faces, especially those of the women, when Hitler finally appeared on the balcony for a moment... They looked up at him as if he were a Messiah, their faces transformed into something positively inhuman.<sup>8</sup>

The next day, Shirer wrote:

I'm beginning to comprehend, I think, some of the reasons for Hitler's astounding success. Borrowing a chapter from the Roman Church, he is restoring pageantry and colour and mysticism to the drab lives of twentieth-century Germans. The morning's opening meeting in the huge Luitpold Hall on the outskirts of Nuremberg was more than a

colorful show; it had something of the mysticism and religious fervor of an Easter or a Christmas Mass in a great Gothic cathedral.

The hall was a sea of brightly colored flags. Even Hitler's arrival was made dramatic. The band stopped playing. There was a hush over the thirty thousand people packed in the hall. Then the band struck up the "Badenweiler March," a very catchy tune and used only, I'm told, when Hitler makes his big entries. Hitler appeared in the back of the auditorium and followed by his aides, [Hermann] Goering, [Joseph] Goebbels, [Rudolf] Hess and [Heinrich] Himmler, and the others, he strode slowly down the wide center aisle while thirty thousand hands raised in salute. It is a ritual, the old-times say, which is always followed.<sup>9</sup>

Suddenly one was a somebody, part of a better class of people, on a higher level – a German.

At another rally – one for party officials – an observer wrote:

As Adolf Hitler is entering the Zeppelin Field, 150 floodlights of the Air Force blaze up. They are distributed around the entire square, and cut into the night, erecting a canopy of light in the midst of darkness. For a moment, all is deathly quiet. The surprise still is too great. Nothing like it has ever been seen before. The wide field resembles a powerful Gothic cathedral made of light. Bluish-violet shine the floodlights, and between their cone of light hangs the dark cloth of night. One hundred and forty thousand people – for it must be that many who are assembled here – cannot tear their eyes away from the sight. Are we dreaming, or is it real? Is it possible to imagine a thing like that? A cathedral of light? They do not have much time to pursue such thoughts, for a new spectacle is awaiting them. It is perhaps even more beautiful and compelling for those whose senses can embrace it

...Twenty-five thousand flags, that means 25,000 local, district, and factory groups from all over the nation... Every one of these flag bearers is ready to give his life in the defense of every one of these pieces of cloth. There is not one among them to whom this flag is not the final command and the highest obligation.<sup>10</sup>

Even those who did not attend the rallies were caught up in the spirit they evoked. Horst Kruger lived in Eichkamp, a Berlin suburb. People there were skeptical of Hitler at first, but many quickly changed their minds.

Suddenly over this tiny green oasis of the nonpolitical, the storm of the wide world had broken, not a storm of politics, but a springtime storm, a storm of German rejuvenation. Who wouldn't want to trim his sails for it?

The black, white, and red flags of Imperial Germany, which the citizens of Eichkamp had always displayed in preference to the black-red-gold ones of the republic, were now joined by Nazi flags, many small and some large, often homemade, with a black swastika on a white ground; in their hurry, some people had sewn the swastika on backwards, but their good intentions were evident just the same.



Krueger notes that “the citizens of Eichkamp were eager to give themselves over to intoxication and rapture. They were weaponless. Suddenly one was a somebody, part of a better class of people, on a higher level – a German. Consecration permeated the German nation.”<sup>11</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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What is a *philosophy*? A *dogma*? Why would Hitler want his followers to regard Nazi ideas not just as a philosophy but as dogma?

Compare the prayer the Nazis wanted children to recite with a traditional prayer. What parallels do you notice? What differences seem most striking? How do you account for those differences? What role do religious leaders play in society? Why do you think Hitler wanted to assume that role?

How did Shirer regard the rally? What did he mean when he called it a *ritual*? What is a ritual? How do rituals unite people? Encourage conformity? Create a sense of tradition?

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler explained the meaning of the symbols on the Nazi flag. “In *red* we see the social idea of the movement, in *white* the nationalist idea, in the *swastika* the vision of the struggle for the victory of the Aryan man.” The colors on that flag – white, black, and red – were identical to those on the flag of Imperial Germany. Why do you think Hitler used the same colors? How powerful is a flag as the symbol of a nation? What messages does it convey to those who carry it? To those who find themselves in “a sea of brightly colored flags”? How did the Nazis use the flag to build loyalty? To make people feel that they were part of a great movement?

What does Krueger mean when he says, “Suddenly one was a somebody, part of a better class of people, on a higher level – a German?” How important is it to be “somebody?”

Ingmar Bergman, the Swedish filmmaker, was an exchange student in Germany in 1934. During his stay in the country, he lived with a minister and his family. He later recalled attending a Nazi rally in Weimar and listening to Sunday sermons based on *Mein Kampf*. By the time he returned to Sweden he was a “little pro-German fanatic.” Only later did he learn what Nazism really meant. At the time, he was caught up in the intoxicating spirit of Nazi rallies and the clarity of its teachings. What do you think attracted the young Swede to the Nazis? Why do you think he later felt “shame and humiliation” whenever he recalled that attraction?

George Sabine describes Hitler as a leader who “manipulates the people as an artist molds clay.” He notes, “No trick was overlooked: the advantage of oratory over written argument; the effects of lighting, atmosphere, symbols, and the crowd; the advantage of meetings held at night when the power to resist suggestions is low. Leadership works by skillful use of suggestion, of collective hypnosis, of subconscious motivation.”<sup>12</sup> What evi-

dence can you find in this reading to support Sabine’s conclusion? How does his analysis help explain why Bergmann experienced shame and humiliation when he recalled his attraction to the Nazis?

→Two videotapes document Nazi rallies. *Swastika* is a compilation of Nazi film footage put together by the British after World War II. *The Triumph of the Will*, a documentary of the 1934 Nuremberg rally, is the work of Leni Riefenstahl, a Nazi filmmaker. Both are available from the Facing History Resource Center. Riefenstahl once said, “The object of propaganda has little to do with truth. Its object is to make people lose their judgment.”

In watching either film, it is important not to get caught up in the feelings it is designed to evoke. Begin by describing exactly what you observed without interpretation or judgment. Then analyze the film. What message does it convey? Who is sending that message? Who is it for? How did the director make the film attractive to that group? What emotions does he or she try to evoke? How are symbols and visual images used to arouse those emotions?

→Even Jews living in Germany were sometimes caught up in the excitement of National Socialism. In the novel *Friedrich*, a young Jewish boy accompanies a non-Jewish friend to a meeting of Hitler Youth. He tells the friend, “You know, I saw you all marching through town with your flag and singing. I think it’s really great. I’d love to take part, but Father won’t let me join the *Jungvolk*.” For a similar incident, see the story of Janet B. in *Elements of Time*, pages 157-160. Her testimony can also be seen in the video montage *Friedrich*, available from the Facing History Resource Center.

Hans and Sophie Scholl were among those who became enamored with the Nazi movement in 1933. Their older sister, Inge, recalled, “For the first time politics entered our lives. Hans at the time was fifteen years old; Sophie was twelve. We heard a great deal of talk about Fatherland, comradeship, community of the *Volk*, and love of homeland.” For more, see *Elements of Time*, pages 158-159.

## READING 3

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### *Propaganda*

**T**he Nazis used propaganda to sway the people of Eichkamp and other cities and towns. As Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels was responsible for creating it. His job was to make sure that every form of expression – from music to textbooks and even sermons – trumpeted the same message.

In his diary, Goebbels wrote, “That propaganda is good which leads to success, and that is bad which fails to achieve the desired result, however

intelligent it is, for it is not propaganda's task to be intelligent; its task is to lead to success. Therefore, no one can say your propaganda is too rough, too mean; these are not criteria by which it may be characterized. It ought not be decent nor ought it be gentle or soft or humble; it ought to lead to success... Never mind whether propaganda is at a well-bred level; what matters is that it achieves its purpose." To achieve that purpose, Hitler insisted that "it must be limited to a very few points and must harp on these in slogans until the last member of the public understands what you want him to understand by your slogan. As soon as you sacrifice this slogan and try to be many-sided, the effect will piddle away."

Hitler and Goebbels did not invent propaganda. The word itself was coined by the Catholic Church to describe its efforts to counter Protestant teachings in the 1600s. Over the years, almost every nation has used propaganda to unite its people in wartime. Both sides spread propaganda during World War I, for example. Hitler and Goebbels employed it in very similar ways. They, too, wanted to counter the teachings of their opponents, shape public opinion, and build loyalty. But in doing so, they took the idea to new extremes.

Goebbels left nothing to chance. He controlled every word heard over the radio or read in a newspaper or magazine. And that control went well beyond censorship. He issued daily instructions on what to say and how to say it. Max von der Gruen said of those changes:

The power to label ideas, events, groups, and individuals was central to Nazi efforts. Such labels made it clear who were the heroes and who were the enemies.

All the activities of everyday life were given a military orientation. This military aura extended even into the realm of language. Henceforth one heard only:  
instead of "employment office" – "labor mobilization" ...  
instead of "worker" – "soldier of labor"  
instead of "work" – "service to Fuehrer and folk" ...  
instead of "factory meeting" – "factory roll call" ...  
instead of "production" – "the production battle."

It is easy to understand that if, for whatever reasons, these words are hammered into a person's brain every day, they soon become a part of his language, and he does not necessarily stop and think about where they came from and why they were coined in the first place.<sup>13</sup>

The power to label ideas, events, groups, and individuals was central to Nazi efforts. Such labels made it clear who were the heroes and who were the enemies. In the process, the Nazis defined themselves as the guardians of the "true" Germany and the custodians of the nation's glorious past.

## CONNECTIONS

Give an example of propaganda. Then compare your example with others in your class. What do they have in common? Use your answer to define *propaganda*. How do dictionaries define the word? What is the difference between persuasion in advertising and propaganda?

George Orwell has written that “If thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” What is he saying about the way propagandists use language?

Euphemisms are inoffensive terms used in place of more explicit language. In Germany, euphemisms disguised events, dehumanized Jews and other “enemies of the state,” and diffused responsibility for specific actions. Thus the Nazis spoke of “cleanups,” rather than “murders.” They did not throw enemies into jail but took them into “protective custody.” What is the difference? List current examples of euphemisms. How is each used? What do they have in common? Why do people use these euphemisms?

Government leaders today do not speak of propaganda but of “managing public opinion” or “putting the right spin on events.” Are those terms euphemisms? If so, why do people need euphemisms for propaganda? If not, how do they differ from propaganda?

In 1989, Vaclav Havel led a nonviolent revolution in Czechoslovakia that replaced a communist regime with a democratic government. As a result of his experiences with totalitarianism, Havel argues:

No word – at least in the rather metaphorical sense I am employing the word “word” here – comprises only the meaning assigned to it by an etymological dictionary. The meaning of every word also reflects the person who utters it, the situation in which it is uttered, and the reason for its utterance. The selfsame word can, at one moment, radiate great hopes, at another, it can emit lethal rays. The selfsame word can be true at one moment and false the next, at one moment illuminating, at another, deceptive.<sup>14</sup>

Havel therefore urged that people “listen carefully to the words of the powerful, to be watchful of them, to forewarn of their danger, and to proclaim their dire implications or the evil they might invoke.” What words have been both illuminating and deceptive? How do leaders transform words that radiate hope into “lethal rays”?

According to poet Stephen Vincent Benet, “There are certain words, our own and others, we’re used to – words we’ve used, heard, inherited, stuck away in the back drawer, in the locked trunk, at the back of the quiet mind.” Do you have such words? What images do they evoke? How are they used in propaganda?

→Bill Moyers has said of the power of propaganda, “In George Orwell’s novel, *1984*, Big Brother, the totalitarian state, banishes history to the memory hole,... the shredding machine which eliminates all thoughts which are inconvenient to the state and so rids history of the facts of the past that disappear down the memory hole. The ministry of truth, propagandists, have the job every morning of rewriting history, rewriting reality.” From what you know of Nazi propaganda, how well does Moyers’ explanation

apply to the Nazi state? To nations today? Moyers' ideas about propaganda and its effects on memory are taken from an interview conducted by Margot Stern Strom. The complete interview is available on video from the Facing History Resource Center. A summary of his presentation also appears in *Elements of Time*, pages 367-368.

Sybil Milton, senior historian and chief researcher at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, discusses the power of both positive and negative images in Nazi propaganda in a presentation summarized in *Elements of Time*, pages 368-370.

## READING 4

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### *Propaganda and Sports*

In 1936, the Olympics took place in Germany. The international event gave the Nazis a chance to show the world the power of the “new Germany.” In the past, Germany was not considered a strong contender in the Olympics. Now German athletes won medal after medal, as German newspapers boasted that the nation was breeding a superior race. Yet the most outstanding athlete at the Olympics that year was not a German but an American. Max von der Gruen, who was ten years old that summer, later recalled,

Although it was drummed into our heads every day that anything or anyone non-German was completely worthless, a black man became our idol: the American Jesse Owens, winner of four Olympic medals. In the playing field we used to play at being Jesse Owens; whoever could jump the farthest or run the fastest or throw some object the greatest distance became Jesse Owens.

When our teachers heard us, they forbade us to play such games, but they never replied to our question of how a black man, a member of an “inferior” race, could manage to be such a consummate athlete.<sup>15</sup>

Marion Freyer Wolff was also ten years old that summer. As a Jew living in Berlin, her memories are bittersweet:

In August 1936, the free world honored Hitler by allowing the Olympic Games to be held in Berlin. Hitler was so eager to have them in Germany that he was willing to make some minor compromises: stores and restaurants removed their We Don't Serve Jews signs for the duration of the event, and Jewish athletes participated in the games. Three Jewish women, representing Hungary, Germany, and Austria, won medals in fencing and received them from the hand of Hitler himself!...

The success of the Jewish athletes received no notice in the German press, but nobody could hide the fact that Jesse Owens, the black American sprinter, had earned four gold medals. I wondered how Hitler, who fancied himself a member of the super race, must have felt when he met this “inferior” non-Aryan again and again in the winner’s circle. To the Jewish kids of Berlin, Jesse Owens became an instant idol and morale booster.<sup>16</sup>

How did Hitler respond? When urged to congratulate Owens in the interest of good sportsmanship, the Fuehrer shouted. “Do you really think that I will allow myself to be photographed shaking hands with a Negro?” Most visitors paid no attention to the slur. They focused instead on what Von der Gruen called “the sugar-coated facade of the Third Reich.” Among those visitors was David Lloyd George, a former British prime minister who had negotiated the Treaty of Versailles. After meeting with Hitler, he wrote:

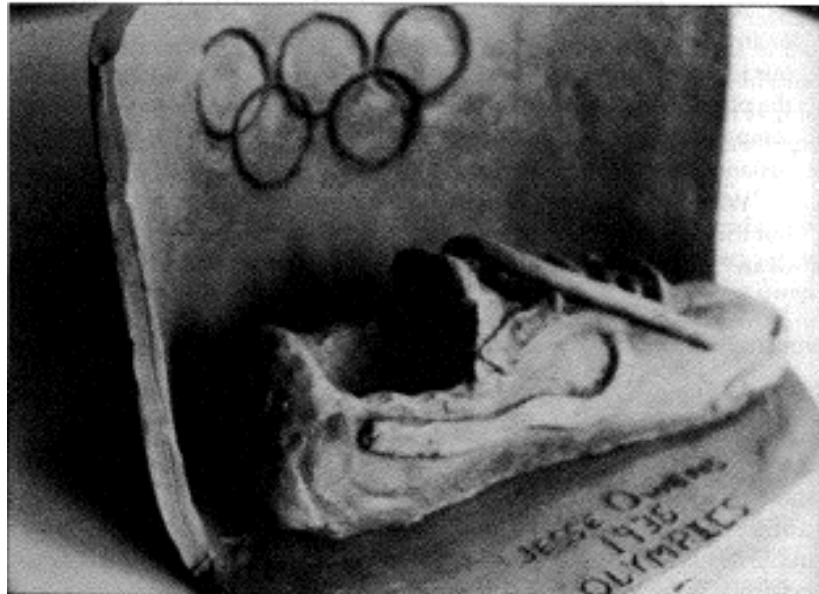
Whatever one may think of his methods – and they are certainly not those of a parliamentary country – there can be no doubt that he has achieved a marvellous transformation in the spirit of the people, in their attitude towards each other, and in their social and economic outlook...

It is true that public criticism of the Government is forbidden in every form. That does not mean that criticism is absent. I have heard the speeches of prominent Nazi orators freely condemned.

But not a word of criticism or disapproval have I heard of Hitler.

He is as immune from criticism as a king in a monarchical country. He is something more. He is the George Washington of Germany – the man who won for his country independence from her oppressors.<sup>17</sup>

A monument to Jesse Owens created by a Facing History student.



## CONNECTIONS

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Some Americans wanted the United States to boycott the Olympics to show disapproval of Hitler's tactics. Others argued that sometimes you must overlook the bad to get to the good. That argument won many people over. As a result, the United States participated in the games. Based on your own experiences, does overlooking the bad help you get to the good? How does the argument allow one to avoid taking a stand? To duck his or her responsibility for "the bad"?

What connection do you see between the way German children viewed Owens and Hitler's refusal to congratulate him?

What did Lloyd George see when he visited Germany? What did he fail to see? Why do you think he was not bothered by the lack of democracy?

What was the function of sports in Nazi Germany? What role do sports play in the United States today?

For a discussion of the importance of sports in Nazi society, see the portrait of Peter Gay in *Elements of Time*, page 100.

## READING 5

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### *Art and Propaganda*

Propagandists have long known that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Therefore Hitler was determined that all works of art would reflect the ideals of National Socialism. He began by imprisoning or exiling what he called "degenerate" artists. Then he enlisted a corps of "obedient artists" willing to immortalize on canvas the fantasy world he described in his speeches and writings. In 1937, the Nazis sponsored three exhibits that reflected their views on art and artists.

Propagandists have long known that "a picture is worth a thousand words."

The first, which opened in Munich in July, 1937, was a showing of nearly nine hundred paintings and sculptures of "true German art." The Nazis defined "true German art" as art that glorified the German countryside, the glories of the past, Aryan children, and animals. Such art was, of course, the work of "true German artists." All other artists and their work were considered "decadent" or "degenerate." According to historian Sybil Milton, "degenerate art" included "all works produced by Jewish artists; works with Jewish themes; works with pacifist subjects and art that did not glorify war; works with socialist or Marxist themes and works by other political enemies; works and objects with ugly faces and distorted figures; all expressionist works; all abstract art; and works that any Nazi bureaucrats found objectionable."<sup>18</sup>

The Nazis also exhibited “degenerate art.” That show was held in Munich too. To create the exhibit, a commission selected the 650 most “depraved” works of art from 16,000 paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures confiscated from 32 German museums. Among the artists they singled out were George Grosz, Kaethe Kollwitz, and Wassily



Kandinsky. The Nazis then grouped the art into such categories as “Insults to German Womanhood” and “Nature as Seen by Sick Minds.” Next to each work, they hung a caption complaining about the price of the painting, its “Jewish-Bolshevik” leanings (actually only six of the 112 artists featured were Jewish), or its depiction of “cretins,” “idiots,” and “cripples.” Over a four-year period, about three million people saw the exhibit in thirteen cities. When the show was over, about half of the art was destroyed. The rest was hidden in vaults.

The third exhibit, called *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), featured art that showed Jews as communists, swindlers, and sex-fiends. The Nazis used it to “teach” antisemitism. It, too, was well-attended. Over 150,000 people saw the exhibit in just three days. The art included in the show later found its way into a variety of publications, including children’s books.

## CONNECTIONS

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Is “a picture worth a thousand words”? What can pictures do that words cannot do? Which makes a stronger impression on you?

The word *degenerate* means “evil” or “corrupt”; the word *decadent*, “decaying” or “rotting.” Why do you think Hitler used these adjectives to describe art he considered “unGerman”?

→An important lesson on propaganda is available from the Facing History Resource Center. In examining the propaganda piece included in that lesson or the one on this page:

- Look at the image and describe it exactly as you see it. Reserve judgment.
- Notice how the artist uses color, shape, space, and perspective to communicate a message. Look, too, for the way the artist uses symbols. What emotion is the artist trying to evoke?
- What is the message? To whom is it directed? Is it a single message? Or do others in your class interpret the work in other ways? Finally, make your own judgment about the poster.



Keep in mind that art is never objective: art is always subjective. It forces a viewer to adjust his or her perception in order to make a decision about the value and meaning of a particular work of art.

After World War II, the nations that defeated Germany had to decide what to do with art that glorified the Nazis. What would you have done?

Why did the Nazis find the works of art they considered “degenerate” so threatening? How were their attempts to destroy that art similar to the book burnings of 1933? What differences seem most striking? For a more detailed discussion of “degenerate” art, see the articles by Sybil Milton and David Joselit in *Elements of Time*, pages 368-372.

In 1991, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art displayed 175 works of art that were a part of Hitler’s original exhibit of “degenerate art.” The catalog for that exhibit is available from the Facing History Resource Center. Since then, other museums have shown the exhibit as well.

## READING 6

### *Using Film as Propaganda*

The Nazis were quick to see a potential for propaganda in a new form of art: film. It allowed them to combine visuals and words in ways that would have been impossible a few years earlier. Every movie made in Nazi Germany had a political function, even comedies. In each, Jews were always portrayed as villains or fools. The most inflammatory antisemitic films were *The Rothschilds*, *Jud Suess*, and *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew). Goebbels even issued special instructions on how these movies were to be described. *The Rothschilds* and *Jud Suess*, for example, were to be treated as “faithful reenactments” of historical events. Therefore one publication referred to *The Rothschilds* as an historical account of the way Jews profited from England’s victory over Napoleon “while nations are bleeding on the battlefield.” Napoleon’s defeat was a “victory won by gold, a Rothschild victory, a victory for the Star of David.”

In the beginning we create the enemy. We *think* others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them. Propaganda precedes technology.

A brochure sent out by the information office stated, “Clean-shaven and dressed like a gentleman, the Jew Suess Oppenheimer contrives to be appointed Finance Minister to the Duke of Wuerttemberg... Matching one another in treachery, the court Jew and Minister Suess Oppenheimer and his secretary outbid one another in tricks and intrigue to bleed the people of Wuerttemberg... The Jew Suess Oppenheimer violates the beautiful Dorothea Sturm, an outrageous act which confirms the extent of his guilt... Jew, hands off German women!”

Although both films completely distorted historical events, German film critics praised their accuracy. One reporter admired *Jud Suess* for its “complete avoidance of bias, and its clear demonstration of a previous attempt in miniature to subjugate a country foreshadowed the later aspirations towards domination of the whole globe.”

Although the third film, *Der Ewige Jude*, was hailed as a documentary, the narration made such outrageous accusations against the Jews that it was omitted from the version shown abroad. Officials feared the tone might damage the film’s “credibility.” Marion Pritchard, then a graduate student in the Netherlands said of the film:

At that time there were still Jewish students in the school and the faculty was partly Jewish. We went to see this movie and sat and made smart remarks all the way through and laughed at it because it was so outrageous. And yet when we came out of the movie, one of my Gentile friends said to me, “I wish I hadn’t seen it. I know that it was all ridiculous and propaganda, but for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us – Jews and Gentiles. I’m going to do everything I can to help them, but I wish I didn’t have this feeling.”<sup>19</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Most people regard unity as a positive idea, but, as an American diplomat once warned, unity can also be “organized hatred.” How do his words apply to Hitler’s efforts to build unity? To Hitler’s focus on a common enemy? How do they explain why he once said that “If the Jew did not exist, we should invent him”? After the war, a minister who lived in Nazi Germany said of antisemitism, “It was already there. It’s not at all the case that Herr Goebbels invented all of it; rather, the entire ideology and also the rhetoric were there. [The Nazis] had only to take it and carry it to the logical conclusion.”<sup>20</sup> What is he suggesting about why some propaganda is more effective than others?

Hitler once wrote, “If you tell a lie big enough and long enough, people will believe you.” How did he apply that principle to movies made during the Third Reich? Why did he have to be careful that the lie not be too big or too outrageous?

What did Marion Pritchard’s friend mean when she said, “I know that it was all ridiculous and propaganda, but for the first time in my life I have a sense of them and us – Jews and Gentiles”? How do you explain her statement?

→“In the beginning we create the enemy,” writes Sam Keen. “We *think* others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them. Propaganda precedes technology.” Based on your reading thus far, how did this process unfold in Nazi Germany? What

examples can you find in current events? Sam Keen's book, *Faces of the Enemy*, and the video by the same name, explore both questions in great detail and demonstrate that images of the enemy are remarkably similar in cultures around the world. Both the book and the video are available from the Facing History Resource Center.

→Bill Moyers interviewed Fritz Hippler, the producer of *Der Ewige Jude*, fifty years after he made the film. Moyers later said that he was “struck by the cold realization that [Hippler] thought the only mistake Hitler had made was to lose the war. Here he was in 1981, sitting there in the reconstructed Germany of our times, regretting only that he, Hippler, and Adolf Hitler had been on the losing side.” *The Propaganda Battle*, a video that contains the complete interview with Hippler, is available from the Facing History Resource Center. The video also includes an interview with Frank Capra who made propaganda films for the United States during World War II.

Bohdan Wytwycky writes, “One of the effects of prejudice directed at whole categories of people is that it robs these people of their humanity. Made stereotypes of evil, stupidity and social disease, the victims are forced to travel the first leg of the journey to subhuman status. Made a depository of inferior or socially pathological traits, they receive a rude shove down the slippery slope to total dehumanization.”<sup>21</sup> How was that process evident in the way the Nazis used films to stereotype Jews?

→How does the media shape our views of ourselves and others? African Americans make up about twelve percent of the population of the United States but represent only about three percent of the positive images projected by advertising. The images not only affect how they are seen but also how they view themselves. The video *Color Adjustments* documents the way African Americans are portrayed on television. You may wish to collect news stories, advertisements, and editorials that refer to African Americans or to another minority group – Arab Americans, Japanese Americans, Native Americans, or Puerto Ricans. How often was the group portrayed in a positive manner? In a negative way? After reporting your findings to the class, discuss how the media shapes our views of ourselves and others.

→A video, *The World Is a Dangerous Place: Images of the Enemy on Children's Television*, is available from the Facing History Resource Center. What does it suggest about the power of images today? What can we do to protect ourselves from being manipulated by propaganda? What techniques would you recommend?

## READING 7

### *School for Barbarians*

Hitler believed he was on side of the history. He claimed that “When an opponent declares, ‘I will not come over to your side,’ I calmly say, ‘Your child belongs to us already. You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.’” In Hitler’s mind, young Germans were the key. In speech after speech, he declared:

We older ones are used up. Yes, we are old already... We are cowardly and sentimental... But my magnificent youngsters? Are there finer ones anywhere in the world? Look at these young men and boys? What material! With them I can make a new world...

A violently active, dominating, intrepid, brutal youth – that is what I am after. Youth must be all those things. It must be indifferent to pain. There must be no weakness or tenderness in it. I want to see once more in its eyes the gleam of pride and independence of the beast of prey... I intend to have an athletic youth – that is the first and the chief thing... I will have no intellectual training. Knowledge is ruin to my young men.

By 1939, about 90 percent of the “Aryan” children in Germany belonged to Nazi youth groups. They started at the age of six. At ten, boys were initiated into the *Jungvolk* and at fourteen promoted to the Hitler Youth or HJ (for Hitler Jugend). Girls belonged to the Jungmaedel and then the BDM (the *Bund Deutscher Maedel* or the League of German Girls). In such groups, said Hitler, “These young people will learn nothing else but how to think German and act German... And they will never be free again, not in their whole lives.”

Erika Mann, a German who opposed the Nazis, wrote a book called *School for Barbarians*. It explained to Americans how the Nazis tried to carry out Hitler’s ideas.

Every child says “Heil Hitler!” from 50 to 150 times a day, immeasurably more often than the old neutral greetings. The formula is required by law; if you meet a friend on the way to school, you say it; study periods are opened and closed with “Heil Hitler!”; “Heil Hitler!” says the postman, the street-car conductor, the girl who sells you notebooks at the stationery store; and if your parents’ first words when you come home to lunch are not “Heil Hitler!” they have been guilty of a punishable offense, and can be denounced. “Heil Hitler!” they shout, in the Jungvolk and Hitler Youth. “Heil Hitler!” cry the girls in the League of German Girls. Your evening prayers must close with “Heil Hitler!” if you take your devotions seriously.

When an opponent declares, “I will not come over to your side,” I calmly say, “Your child belongs to us already... You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.”

Officially – when you say hello to your superiors in school or in a group – the words are accompanied by the act of throwing the right arm high; but an unofficial greeting among equals requires only a comparatively lax lifting of the forearm, with the fingers closed and pointing forward. This Hitler greeting, this “German” greeting, repeated countless times from morning to bedtime, stamps the whole day.

“Heil” really means salvation, and used to be applied to relations between man and his God; one would speak of ewiges Heil (eternal salvation), and the adjective “holy” derives from the noun. But now there is the new usage...

You leave the house in the morning, “Heil Hitler” on your lips; and on the stairs of your apartment house you meet the Blockwart. A person of great importance and some danger, the Blockwart has been installed by the government as a Nazi guardian. He controls the block, reporting on it regularly, checking up on the behavior of its residents. It’s worth it to face right about, military style, and to give him the “big” Hitler salute, with the right arm as high as it will go. All the way down the street, the flags are waving, every window colored with red banners, and the black swastika in the middle of each. You don’t stop to ask why; it’s bound to be some national event. Not a week passes without an occasion on which families are given one reason or another to hang out the swastika. Only the Jews are excepted under the strict regulation. Jews are not Germans, they do not belong to the “Nation,” they can have no “national events.”

You meet the uniforms on the way to school: the black [uniformed] S.S. men, the men of the Volunteer Labor Service, and the Reichswehr soldiers. And if some of the streets are closed, you know that an official is driving through town. Nobody has ever told you that the high officials of other countries pass without the precautions of closed streets.



And here, where a building is going up, the workmen are gone – probably because of the “national event.” But the sign is on the scaffolding. “We have our Fuehrer to thank that we are working here today. Heil Hitler!” The familiar sign, seen everywhere with men at work, on roads, barracks, sport fields. What does it mean to you? Do you think of a world outside, with workers who need not thank a Fuehrer for their jobs? Certainly not – what you have, imprinted on your mind, is the sentence, deep and accepted as an old melody.

There are more placards as you continue past hotels, restaurants, indoor swimming pools, to school. They read “No Jews allowed;” “Jews not desired here;” “Not for Jews.” And what do you feel? Agreement? Pleasure? Disgust? Opposition? You don’t feel any of these. You don’t feel anything, you’ve seen these placards for almost five years. This is a habit, it is all perfectly natural, of course Jews aren’t allowed here. Five years in the life of a child of nine – that’s his life, after four years of infancy, his whole personal, conscious existence.

Through the Nazi street walks the Nazi child. There is nothing to disturb him, nothing to attract his attention or criticism. The stands sell Nazi papers almost exclusively; all German papers are Nazi; foreign papers are forbidden, if they do not please the men at the top. The child won’t be surprised at their huge headlines: “UNHEARD-OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST GERMANY IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA!” “JEWISH GANGSTERS RULE AMERICA!” “THE COMMUNIST TERROR IN SPAIN SUPPORTED BY THE POPE!” “150 MORE PRIESTS UNMASKED AS SEXUAL CRIMINALS!”

“That’s how it is in the world,” the child thinks. “What luck we’re in, to have a Fuehrer. He’ll tell the whole bunch – Czechs, Jews, Americans, Communists and priests – where to get off!”

There are no doubts, no suspicion at the coarse and hysterical tone of the dispatches, no hint that they may be inexact or false. No, these things are part of the everyday world of the Nazis, like the Blockwart, the swastika, the signs reading “No Jews allowed.” They add up to an atmosphere that is torture, a fuming poison for a free-born human being.

The German child breathes this air. There is no other condition wherever Nazis are in power; and here in Germany they do rule everywhere, and their supremacy over the German child, as he learns and eats, marches, grows up, breathes, is complete.<sup>22</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Hitler demanded that the nation produce a “violently active, dominating, intrepid, brutal youth.” What part did the schools play in carrying out that goal? What part did youth groups play? The media? Society as a whole? How do your answers explain why Erika Mann called her book *A School for*

*Barbarians?* What type of society would graduates of a “school for barbarians” create?

Hitler described his ideal youth. What is the ideal in American society? Do you know of anyone who fits either ideal?

Why do you think Hitler referred to German youth as “my young men”? Why didn’t he mention young women?

What does Hitler mean when he says that after joining a Nazi youth group, young Germans “will never be free again, not in their whole lives?” What characteristics did the youth groups foster in young people? For example, why did members wear uniforms and arm bands? Have a special salute? Take part in rallies and parades?

Write a working definition of the word *indoctrinate*. How does it differ from the word *educate*? How did Hitler indoctrinate young Germans? Why did he focus his efforts on them rather than their parents?

Compare Hitler’s view of education with traditional views of education in Germany (Chapter 3, Reading 7). What parallels do you notice? What differences seem most striking? How difficult would it be for a teacher in a traditional German school to teach in a Nazi school?

Describe the messages a child would hear in Nazi Germany. How would those messages affect the way he or she viewed the world? How does such an atmosphere turn hatred into a habit?

What did Erika Mann mean when she said that after a time the child did not feel anything? Does hearing the same message over and over again affect you in the same way? Is Mann’s book propaganda?

→The *Klan Youth Corps*, a CBS News Special Report produced in 1982, documents the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan to recruit young people. The video is available from the Facing History Resource Center. Today the Klan has competition from various neo-Nazi groups. Morris Dees, the founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center, says of young people attracted to such groups. “Psychologists say that these young haters generally come from deeply troubled, dysfunctional families and are fundamentally damaged long before they swing their first baseball bat at someone or plant their first pipe bomb. Vulnerable but streetwise youngsters, who are looking for an excuse to fight, they are easy prey for older white supremacist leaders, who cynically offer a sense of family and purpose – along with a hate-filled ideology.”<sup>23</sup> Compare members of neo-Nazi groups with members of the Klan Youth Corps and Hitler Youth. What traits do they share? What differences seem most striking?

Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center are described in Chapter 11, Reading 2. See also *Choosing to Participate*, pages 205-212.

## READING 8

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### *Belonging*

Alfons Heck, like many of his classmates, was eager to join Hitler Youth. He later recalled:

Far from being forced to enter the ranks of the Jungvolk, I could barely contain my impatience and was, in fact, accepted before I was quite 10. It seemed like an exciting life, free from parental supervision, filled with “duties” that seemed sheer pleasure. Precision marching was something one could endure for hiking, camping, war games in the field, and a constant emphasis on sports... To a degree, our prewar activities resembled those of the Boy Scouts, with much more emphasis on discipline and political indoctrination. There were the paraphernalia and the symbols, the pomp and the mysticism, very close in feeling to religious rituals. One of the first significant demands was the so-called Mutprobe: “test of courage,” which was usually administered after a six-month period of probation. The members of my Schar, a platoon-like unit of about 40-50 boys, were required to dive off the three-meter board – about 10 feet high – head first in the town’s swimming pool. There were some stinging belly flops, but the pain was worth it when our Fahnliefuehrer, the 15-year-old leader of our Fahlein (literally “little flag”), a company-like unit of about 160 boys, handed us the coveted dagger with its inscription Blood and Honor. From that moment on we were fully accepted.<sup>24</sup>

Not everyone in Nazi Germany was accepted. When Elizabeth Dopazo and her brother were very young, their parents were sent to concentration camps because of their religious beliefs; they were Jehovah’s Witnesses. Elizabeth and her brother went to live with their grandparents. She recalls:

I had met my grandparents once before. It was very difficult for my brother and me. I was seven at this point and he was six, and we spoke a dialect much as if Southern children would come up here and people made fun of them because of how they look and sound and what their parents stand for. My grandparents were Jehovah’s Witnesses too, but not as strong. They stopped going to meetings when we came because they felt they would be arrested too and then what would happen to us? So they kept a very low profile.

We had to quickly change our way of speaking so maybe we wouldn’t be so noticeable. In school right away it started, you see. We had to raise our right arm and say “Heil Hitler” and all that sort of thing and then we didn’t do it a few times. A few times was all right. You can drop a handkerchief, you can do a little something, but quickly



they look and they say, “Ah, you’re different and you’re new in the school.” So you’re watched a little more closely. You might get one or two children who’d tell on you but it was rare. The teacher would bring you to the front of the class and say “Why don’t you say Heil Hitler?” and you were shaking already because you knew, unlike other children, if you told them the real reason there’d be trouble. For us to say “Heil Hitler” and praise a person would be against our belief. We shouldn’t, because we had already pledged our allegiance to God and that’s it. So, we could stand and be respectful to the government, but we were not to participate in any adulation for political figures.

We didn’t want to offend God. We thought we could die, but that doesn’t mean much, but if we offend God then we lose out altogether. That much we knew, but then we didn’t want to explain why because we were afraid that by the time we got home our grandparents wouldn’t be there and we would be put in an institution, so we used to make little excuses but you can’t do that every day. So in no time at all we also said it, because we were just too afraid.

My brother and I talked about all these things at home after school. We had a little attic we used to go in and discuss what would be best. We grew up very fast. We never really had a childhood...

Later, around age twelve or thirteen, we joined the Hitler Youth, which we actually didn’t want to do, but the Gestapo came to my grandparents’ house, just like you’ve seen it in the movies with the long leather coats on and they stood at the front door and they were saying, “Your grandchildren have to join the Hitler Youth and if they don’t by Thursday we will take stronger measures.” After they’d left we told our grandparents we’ll join tomorrow, even if we hate all that stuff. They agreed we’d better do it and we very quickly donned those uniforms...

As time went on, my brother, when he was thirteen or fourteen, sort of was swayed. You know, you have to believe in something. He wanted to be a German officer and said our father had been wrong all along and that we went to the dogs for our father’s beliefs. He died for his ideals and where are we? He was very angry. I was too, but not as much. I was torn between what would be the good thing to do and what would not.

In fact, just before the war ended, we were afraid my brother would denounce – that he would go to the authorities and say that my family is against the regime and I don’t want anything to do with them anymore; I want to join the army and I don’t want my family hindering me in getting ahead because they’ve done that enough as it is. We were not allowed to go to higher education because we were a detriment to others. So you can imagine how he felt when the war finished. He was all disillusioned and shattered.<sup>25</sup>

If belonging was difficult for Elizabeth Dopazo and her brother, it was impossible for Frank, one of two Jewish children in a school in Breslau. He too still recalls his school days.

People started to pick on me, “a dirty Jew,” and all this kind of thing. And we started to fight. In the break time there was always one of us was always fighting. There was my friend, and he was one class above me, he fought in every break... I started to fight, too, because they insulted me too much or they started to fight, whatever it was.

We were very isolated, and one order came out after another... [One] order says all Jews must greet with the German greeting. The German greeting was “Heil Hitler” and raising your hand. Then the next order came out, and it says the Jews are not allowed to greet people with the “Heil Hitler” signal. Okay, so, in Germany you had to greet every teacher. When you see a teacher on the street, you had to respect them and you had to greet him – you had to bow down...

Now we were in an impossible situation because we went up the stairs, and we saw one teacher, and we said “Heil Hitler.” And he turned around. “Aren’t you a Jew? You’re not allowed to greet me with Heil Hitler.” But if I didn’t greet him at all, then the next teacher would say “Aren’t you supposed to greet [me with] Heil Hitler?” And this was always accompanied with a punishment ... Not all of them but some of them, the teachers that knew me and would pick on me – they’d punish me, put me in a corner, or humiliate me in one way or another...

You had to raise your hand and salute when the flag passed and Jews weren’t allowed to do it... If you don’t salute, you immediately were recognized as a Jew, and you really were left to the mercy of the people who saw you, what they would do with you. They could perfectly well kill you on the street and, you know, nobody really would say anything because there was no such thing as a court and, after all, it was only a Jew. So we were... we knew that we were in constant danger, that if we would stick out, that if we would do anything, we were at the mercy of people. There was nobody to complain to. You couldn’t complain to the Jews. You couldn’t complain to any courts. You couldn’t complain to the police.<sup>26</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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How important is it to you to “look right”? To “act right”? Fit in? How do you feel when you don’t belong? How does it affect your self-esteem? When in a child’s development is he or she most vulnerable to issues related to “in” and “out” group behavior? Are adolescents more or less vulnerable than young children?

The Nazis created a world in which young people were “free” from parental supervision. Why would such a world be particularly appealing to

adolescents? What problems did that world create for children like Elizabeth who wanted to belong but also wanted to remain true to her family's values and beliefs? Do young people today ever find themselves in similar situations? If so, how do they cope?

What situation did Frank face in school? On the street? Was there any place where he was safe? Did Frank have to accept Hitler's definition of a Jew? Explain your answers.

→ More memories of school days in Nazi Germany can be found in the video montage *Childhood Experiences of German Jews*, available at the Facing History Resource Center. A description of those reminiscences appears in *Elements of Time*, pages 135-153. A video entitled *Confessions of a Hitler Youth* recounts Alfons Heck's experiences in Nazi Germany. It, too, is available from the Resource Center.

## READING 9

### *Models of Obedience*

**H**ede von Nagel now lives in California but grew up in Nazi Germany. She writes of her childhood:

As my parents' second daughter, I was a great disappointment to my father, who wanted to produce sons for the Fuehrer and the nation – and, because he was of the nobility, to carry on the family name.

He was furious that, unlike my fair-haired older sister, who looked so Nordic, I had been cursed with auburn hair and dark brown eyes. Then came a third child, this time a male, but he was a dark-eyed redhead – another letdown for my patriotic father. Only when another son was born and proved to be the very model of a tow-headed, blue-eyed Aryan was my father satisfied. “At last,” he said, “the child I wanted.”

Our parents taught us to raise our arms and say “Heil Hitler” before we said “Mama.” This type of indoctrination was universal. Children experienced it in kindergarten, at home – everywhere. We grew up believing that Hitler was a supergod, and Germany an anointed nation. We were taught our German superiority in everything. Country, race, science, art, music, history, literature.

At the same time, our parents and teachers trained my sister and me to be the unquestioning helpmates of men; as individuals, we had no right to our own opinion, no right to speak up. We were to be models of obedience, work and toughness, ever eschewing complaints, creativity or artistic pursuits.

The worst fate was to be laughed at and publicly humiliated – grim possibilities that served the Nazis as a major educational technique.

Indeed, it would have been dangerous for us to show any initiative or spontaneity, nor would it have befitted a German girl to favor feminine dresses, ruffles or makeup.

As for gentleness or sweetness or tearfulness, these were forbidden traits, and any display of them would have made us outcasts. The worst fate was to be laughed at and publicly humiliated – grim possibilities that served the Nazis as a major educational technique.

The books we read were full of stories glorifying Hitler. In them, the bad guy was usually a Jew. I had never known a Jew personally, and so the Jews I read about were personifications of the devil – too evil to be real.<sup>27</sup>

A former member of Hitler Youth has similar memories.

[It's] especially easy to manipulate children at that age... If you can drill the notion into their heads, you are from a tribe, a race that is especially valuable. And then you tell them something about the Germanic tribes, their loyalty, their battles, how Germanic women let themselves be hitched up to carts to fight against the Romans. You, you're a child of this race, a people that dealt the Romans a destructive blow in the year 9 A.D., all that sort of thing. Then there were the songs... "What we swear is written in the stars, he who directs the stars will hear our voice"... "Before the foreigner robs you of your crown, O Germany, we would prefer to fall side by side." Or "The flag is dearer than death." Death was nothing. The flag, the people – they were everything. You are nothing, your people everything. Yes, that's how children were brought up, that's how you can manipulate a child.<sup>28</sup>

Alfons Heck is not as certain it was just propaganda.

Traditionally, the German people were subservient to authority and respected their rulers as exalted father figures who could be relied on to look after them. A major reason why the Weimar Republic, despite its liberal constitution, did not catch on with many Germans, was the widespread impression that no one seemed to be firmly in charge. Hitler used that yearning for a leader brilliantly. From our very first day in the Jungvolk, we accepted it as a natural law – especially since it was merely an extension of what we had learned in school – that a leader's orders must be obeyed unconditionally, even if they appeared harsh, punitive or unsound. It was the only way to avoid chaos. This chain of command started at the very bottom and ended with Hitler.

I still recall with wonder that [our leader] once marched all 160 of us in his Fahnlein into an ice-cold river in November because our singing had displeased him. We cursed him bitterly under our breath, but not one of us refused. That would have been the unthinkable crime of disobeying a "direct order." During the war, such a refusal could be used – and frequently was – to put the offender before a firing squad.<sup>29</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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How did each of the Germans quoted in this reading believe they acquired their attitudes and values? How do you think you acquired yours? Compare your upbringing to theirs. What differences seem most striking?

Why is it important that a child be taught to obey? At what point does obedience become dangerous? What is the difference between obedience and conformity? How do you address the issue of “blind obedience”? Examine the process of your thinking.

Just as it was a status symbol for German parents to have a blonde-haired child, it was a stigma to have a disabled child. What value do parents today and society in general place on a child’s gender? His or her appearance?

→An interview with Robert Spaethling, a former member of Hitler Youth and now a professor at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, is available from the Facing History Resource Center. See also Carl’s excerpt in *Childhood Memories*.

## READING 10

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### *The Birthday Party*

**Erika Mann** described what happened when the parents of a 12-year-old boy organized a birthday party.

They gave him a birthday party, with ordinary, normal, “civilian” presents: a paintbox, a picture puzzle, a shining new bicycle – and lit twelve candles on his birthday cake. How they looked forward to that party! And it went off like a political conference. Six boys had been invited, and five of them came right on time.

“Who’s missing?” the mother asked.

“Can’t you see?” said the boy, “HE’s missing – Fritzekarl!”

“What a pity!” she answered. That it should be just Fritzekarl. Two years older than her son, he was the leader in the Jungvolk, and his presence at the party was of great importance. If he did not appear, it was a sign of disfavor; the whole thing would be spoiled.

The boys, in their Hitler Youth uniforms, stood around the birthday table, not knowing quite what to do with the toys. The bicycle pleased all of them, with its bell (which they took turns ringing) and its rubber tires, which were so hard to get nowadays, and which the father had finally been able to obtain after using all of his contacts in the Party, paying a high cash price, and emphasizing the fact that this was a wheel for a boy, a Jungvolk boy, and not for a girl who would never go

to war. Now it stood there, complete with instructions and a copy of the German Cyclist, saying, "Boys on bicycles must try to remember the names of towns, rivers, mountains and lakes as well as the material and type of architecture of bridges, etc. They may be able to make use of this knowledge for the good of the Fatherland."

The bell rang, and the son dashed to the front door. A sharp voice came through, crying "Heil Hitler!" and the five boys at the table turned on their heels as the answer came in a voice already breaking, "Heil Hitler!" Their superior officer was received with the "German salute," five hands raised, great composure, solemn faces. Solemnly, Fritzekarl gave the host his birthday present – a framed photograph of the Leader of the Reich Youth, Baldur von Schirach, with a facsimile autograph. The son clicked his heels as he received it.

"I wish to speak to your father," Fritzekarl said curtly.

The mother answered in her friendly voice, "My husband is not free just now – he's upstairs working."

Fritzekarl attempted to keep the note of military command in his shrill young voice. "Just the same, madam, I should prefer to speak to your husband for a moment... In the interest of your son."

His manner was correct, in spite of his tone. He bowed slightly to the mother as he finished his masterful little speech.

"Fourteen years old!" she thought, "but the mechanism of power backs him up, and he knows it."

The son was blushing violently. "For goodness' sake call him!" he said, stepping toward his mother.

The father came down at once.

"Heil Hitler!" cried Fritzekarl. "Heil Hitler!" repeated the man. "What can I do for you, Lieutenant?"

"Pardon me," says Fritzekarl, who doesn't get the joke, and retains his martial stare, "but your son was absent from our last practice exercises..."

"Yes, I know," the father interrupts at this point, "he had a cold."

"It was at your suggestion that he absented himself," Fritzekarl continues, his voice breaking and going hoarse over the phrase, "You wrote me some sort of excuse, to say that he was staying home at your wish."

The father puts his weight first on one foot and then on the other. "As a matter of fact, it is my wish that he stay home when he has such a severe cold."

"Oh, I didn't have such a bad cold at all," the son breaks in. He is leaning on the handlebars of the bicycle that his father had to fight for. "I could have gone, perfectly well."

The man looks at his son, a long look of surprise and pain and the resignation he has learned. "Well," he says, and moves toward the door.

But Fritzekarl stops him. “A moment, please,” he insists, but politely. “Your son was in school on that day and the following day. So he cannot have been really ill. Let me call your attention to the fact that he should have been present at practice and that it is my duty to report the absence!”

“Oh, please –” the boy was speaking for his father, quickly, bargaining “– don’t do that, please? It won’t ever happen again – will it, father? – really, never again!”

The father wanted to protest; he felt the despairing look of his wife, the outrage and embarrassment of the scene. “How dare you speak to me like that!” was what he was repeating in his mind. But he knew the consequences of such an argument, for himself, and for his son. Even if he could convince the Nazi authorities of his own part, and Fritzekarl’s rudeness, his son would still have to face the Jungvolk, paying for his father’s moment of “courage.” And so he only said, hesitatingly and stiffly, “No – it certainly will never happen again!”

“I thank you,” replied the fourteen-year-old superior of the treasonable son. The father was dismissed.

He cannot air his resentment; he has to expect eavesdroppers and spies everywhere. His wife tells their son everything – not out of malice, but in the mistaken hope of reclaiming him this way. And the new maid is a person to be feared. She listens at doors, reads everything that’s lying around the house, and she happens to be having an affair with a Blockwart; he could destroy a family single-handed. The boy would hardly denounce his own father, the man reflects, but if he repeats some remark to the maid, she will run to her Blockwart, the Gestapo (Secret State Police) will have it right away, and the doom will begin to move on them. Or, if they decide to dismiss the maid, her vengeance hanging over their heads may be even worse.<sup>30</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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After reading this story, a boy said that “this is like a world upside down – the children have the power.” Do you agree? Did the children really have power?

If so, what was the source of their power? The boy’s mother hoped to reclaim her son. How was he lost? The father wanted to protest but feared the consequences. What were the consequences? What did he mean when he said his son would have to pay for the father’s “courage”?

Today people speak of “family values.” What are they? How do they relate to life in Nazi Germany?

→Walter K, the only Jewish boy in a German classroom in 1935, lamented that when he was treated unfairly by his teacher, there was “no one to complain to.” Because his teacher was a Nazi, neither his parents nor the

principal could be of help. Have you ever felt helpless? Unable to secure assistance from the adults in your life? How did you feel? How did you cope? For more about Walter's experiences, see *Elements of Time*, pages 234-238, and the video *Childhood Memories* available from the Facing History Resource Center. Also available is the video *Blood and Honor*, which offers another view of Hitler Youth.

## READING 11

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### *A Matter of Loyalty*

**H**ans Scholl, like Fritzekarl, was a group leader in Hitler Youth. His sister described how he became disillusioned with the movement.

Hans had assembled a collection of folk songs, and his young charges loved to listen to him singing, accompanying himself on his guitar. He knew not only the songs of the Hitler Youth but also the folk songs of many peoples and many lands. How magically a Russian or Norwegian song sounded with its dark and dragging melancholy. What did it not tell us of the soul of those people and their homeland!

But some time later a peculiar change took place in Hans; he was no longer the same. Something disturbing had entered his life. It could not be the remonstrances of his father – no, because to them he simply played deaf. It was something else. His songs were forbidden, the leader had told him. And when he had laughed at this, they threatened him with disciplinary action. Why should he not be permitted to sing these beautiful songs? Only because they had been created by other peoples? He could not understand it, and this depressed him, and his usual carefree spirit began to wane.

At this particular time he was given a very special assignment. He was to carry the flag of his troop to the party's national rally at Nuremberg. He was overjoyed. But when he returned we hardly dared trust our eyes. He looked tired, and on his face lay a great disappointment. We did not expect an explanation, but gradually we learned that the youth movement which had been held up to him as an ideal image was in reality something totally different from what he had imagined the Hitler Youth to be. There drill and uniformity had been extended into every sphere of personal life. But he had always believed that every boy should develop his own special talents. Thus through his imagination, his ingenuity, his unique personality, each member could have enriched the group. But in Nuremberg everything had been done according to the same mold. There had been talk, day and night, about loyalty. But what was the keystone of all loyalty if not to be



true to oneself? My God! There was a mighty upheaval taking place in Hans.

One day he came home with another prohibition. One of the leaders had taken away a book by his most beloved writer, *Stellar Hours of Mankind* by Stefan Zweig. It was forbidden, he was told. Why? There had been no answer. He heard something similar about another German writer whom he liked very much. This one had been forced to escape from Germany because he had been engaged in spreading pacifist ideas.

Ultimately it came to an open break.

Some time before, Hans had been promoted to standard-bearer. He and his boys had sewn themselves a magnificent flag with a mythical beast in the center. The flag was something very special. It had been dedicated to the Fuehrer himself. The boys had taken an oath on the flag because it was the symbol of their fellowship. But one evening, as they stood with their flag in formation for inspection by a higher leader, something unheard-of happened. The visiting leader suddenly ordered the tiny standard-bearer, a frolicsome twelve-year-old lad, to give up the flag. "You don't need a special flag. Just keep the one that has been prescribed for all." Hans was deeply disturbed. Since when? Didn't the troop leader know what this special flag meant to its standard-bearer? Wasn't it more than just a piece of cloth that could be changed at one's pleasure?

Once more the leader ordered the boy to give up the flag. He stood quiet and motionless. Hans knew what was going on in the little fellow's mind and that he would not obey. When the high leader in a threatening voice ordered the little fellow for the third time, Hans saw the flag waver slightly. He could no longer control himself. He stepped out of line and slapped the visiting leader's face. From then on he was no longer the standard-bearer.<sup>31</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Compare Hans to Fritzekarl (Reading 10). How would Fritzekarl respond to Hans's question, "But what was the keystone of all loyalty if not to be true to oneself?" What led Hans to ask such a question? What led to his "break" with Hitler Youth?

What events would disturb a Nazi youth enough to make him or her change? How would he or she hear other points of view? Find enough courage to overcome peer pressure? Is it fair to expect a child to know enough to change?

Review the reading describing Milgram's experiment (Reading 1). How does it help explain why the standard bearer refused to obey?

## READING 12

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### *Propaganda and Education*

In *Education for Death*, American educator Gregor Ziemer described schooling in Nazi Germany. As part of his research, he studied curriculum materials used in German schools. He noted:

A teacher is not spoken of as a teacher (*Lehrer*) but an *Erzieher*. The word suggests an iron disciplinarian who does not instruct but commands, and whose orders are backed up with force if necessary.

Matters of the spirit are frankly and energetically belittled. Physical education, education for action, is alone worthy of the Nazi teacher's attention. All else can be dismissed as non-essential.

Nazi education transcends old-fashioned pedagogy. Education in Hitler schools is not the result of a gradual evolution, but of revolution. It stems from political conflict and political victory.

The Nazi schools are no place for weaklings. All children must, of course, finish the primary school before they are ten; but after that schools are proving-grounds for the Party. Those who betray any weakness of body or have not the capacities for absolute obedience and submission must be expelled.

"Students who are unable to produce required results or who betray any weakness, are to be kept out of the secondary schools," states the iron Minister to his iron-minded teachers on page one of his iron-clad manual.

The regime draws a sharp distinction between girls, inherently weak, and boys, natural exponents of Strength. Boys and girls have nothing in common. Their aims, their purposes in life, are fundamentally different. Boys will become soldiers; girls will become breeders. Co-educational schools are manifestations of decadent democracies and hence are taboo.

[Dr. Bernhard Rust, the Nazi Minister of Education,] decrees that in Nazi schools the norm is physical education. After that, German, biology, science, mathematics, and history for the boys; eugenics and home economics for the girls. Other subjects are permissible if they are taught to promote Nazi ideals. Spiritual education is definitely unimportant.<sup>32</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Who would be attracted to the kind of education Rust described?

Every culture defines the roles men and women are expected to play in society. How were those roles defined in traditional German society? In Nazi society? How were those ideas reflected in German schools? Interview people who grew up in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s to find out how those roles were defined in American culture. Research the ways those ideas were reflected in American schools. What remnants of those ideas can still be found in the schools?

How would you describe American education today? What do your parents and teachers expect you to learn? What kind of person do they want you to become? Compare your own views of American education with those of your classmates. How hard is it to reach a consensus?

→James Clavell's "The Children's Story" describes a teacher who wins over an elementary-school class in less than thirty minutes. The story raises questions about education, indoctrination, and citizenship. Copies are available from the Facing History Resource Center. A packet of materials that compares "Aryan" women with women from groups the Nazis deemed "unworthy of life," is also available.

## READING 13

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### *Racial Instruction*

Soon after Hitler took power, a new course was added to the curriculum in every German school. The Nazi Minister of Education outlined the objectives of the course:

1. Give pupils an insight into the relationship, causes and effects of all basic facts having to do with the science of heredity and race.
2. Impress the pupils with the importance of the science of heredity and race for the future of the nation and the purposes of the government.
3. Awaken in the pupils a sense of responsibility toward the nation, as represented by both its ancestry and its posterity; imbue the pupils with pride in the fact that the German people are the most important exponent of the Nordic race, and to influence them in favor of complete (Nordification) of the German people.

This is to be accomplished early enough so that no child shall leave school without a conviction of the necessity of pure blood.

As homework for the new “race science” classes, students were to:

Collect from illustrated magazines, newspapers, etc., pictures of great scholars, statesmen, artists and others who distinguish themselves by their special accomplishments (for example, in economic life, politics, sports). Determine the preponderant race and admixture, according to physical characteristics. Repeat this exercise with the pictures of great men of all nations and times...

Observe the Jew: his way of walking, his bearing, gestures, and movements when talking.

Racial instruction was not limited to a single course. It was included in all classes, even arithmetic. One book entitled *Germany's Fall and Rise – Illustrations Taken from Arithmetic Instruction in the Higher Grades of Elementary School*, asks, “The Jews are aliens in Germany – In 1933 there were 66,060,000 inhabitants of the German Reich, of whom 499,682 were Jews. What is the percentage of aliens?”

## CONNECTIONS

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What do the assignments described in the reading have in common? What were teachers trying to teach their students? How effective do you think such assignments were?

After World War II, American composers, Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein, wrote a song about prejudice and hate. According to that song, children have to be taught how to hate and they must learn before they are seven or eight. Do you agree? Would Hitler agree?

→ Frank S., a Jewish boy in a German school during the Nazi era, recalls the humiliating lessons of “race science.” He can still remember being hauled to the front of the class to demonstrate his “Jewish features.” Carl, an Aryan schoolboy whose father belonged to the Nazi party, also remembers those days. He tells of the time a professor from the Office of Racial Research at the University of Wuerzburg visited his third-grade class. “We were given a lecture on what an Aryan was supposed to be, and sent into the village to find and describe a local Aryan.” What impact do you think such lessons had on both Jewish and non-Jewish students? For the testimonies of Frank, Carl, and other students in Nazi Germany, see excerpts 1-5 in the video montage *Childhood Memories*, available from the Facing History Resource Center and described in *Elements of Time*, pages 207-238.

Although American students did not take a course called “race science” in the 1930s and 1940s, the ideas taught in the course were a part of their education as well. After all, most attended schools that were segregated by “race,” read science textbooks that claimed that the “Negro race” was inferior to the “white race,” and studied history from books that described the Indians as “savages.” A history book written in 1946 and used in elementary schools after World War II ends with the following paragraph:

The people who came to the New World were the heirs of all the past. They brought with them many of the customs and ways of doing things they had known in their Old World homes. To that new land they carried the precious heritage of freedom and justice which their ancestors had struggled for centuries to achieve. And in that new land was to be written a wonderful new chapter in the story of man's effort to make the world a better and happier place to live in. Out of the society which the people of Europe created in the New World developed the United States and the other American nations – nations of free people.<sup>33</sup>

According to the book, who built the United States and other nations in the Americas? What do the authors imply about Native Americans? African Americans? Asian Americans?

## READING 14

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### *Schools for Girls*

German girls attended school until the age of fourteen. Although they went to school Monday through Saturday, they had no textbooks and no homework. Their education was minimal except in matters relating to childbirth. After a visit to a girls' school, Gregor Ziemer wrote:

According to the teacher there was no such thing as a problem of morals in Hitler's Germany. The Fuehrer wanted every woman, every girl to bear children – soldiers. She herself was willing to have a child, even though she was not married. The State would rear and educate it.

“All of us women can now enjoy the rich emotional and spiritual experiences of having a baby by a healthy young man without the restricting ties of the old-fashioned institutions of marriage,” were her words.

Hitler and his school authorities urge BDM girls to have babies. But they do not permit the girls to be educated in the same schools with boys. Girls do not require the same sort of education that is essential for boys. The schools for boys teach military science, military geography, military ideology, Hitler worship; those for the girls prepare the proper mental set in the future mates of Hitler's soldiers.

One of Minister Rust's officials, a Herr Geheimrat Becker, discussed the problem of co-education with me. He knew something about American schools. It was his contention that the system of trying to put women on the same plane with men, even in matters of the mind, was a waste of time. He admitted there were women who could think as well as men – in their field. But the German schools had one aim: every

course, every class had to contribute in some way to Hitler's ideology. He pointed out that the boys who learned about chemistry of war... should not be bothered with the presence of girls in their classes. Girls had a definite purpose. In moments of recreation boys needed girls...

Every girl, he said, must learn the duties of a mother before she is sixteen, so she can have children. Why should girls bother with higher mathematics, or art, or drama, or literature? They could have babies without that sort of knowledge...

Becker reminded me that Hitler devotes thirty pages of *Mein Kampf* to the education of boys. Besides, he mentions the subject frequently. Seven lines he grants to the girls. And that just about indicated the relative importance of the two, Becker said.<sup>34</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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What were girls supposed to learn? Why? How did their education differ from the education boys received? Why did it differ? What are the legacies of this type of thinking?

Many people in the early 1900s believed that gender determines what one can and cannot do. What roles were women expected to play in Nazi Germany? In the Weimar Republic? In the United States in the 1920s and 1930s? What roles do they play today? What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking? How were beliefs that gender determines behavior and aptitude similar to beliefs concerning "race" and religion?

What do you think would happen to a girl who demanded more than a minimal education? How would her situation be similar to that of Harrison Bergeron (Chapter 2, Reading 1)? How would it differ?

## READING 15

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### *A Lesson in Current Events*

Gregor Ziemer visited a geography class in one school. He wrote of that class:

The teacher was talking about Germany's deserved place in world affairs. He ascribed her recent swift rise to the Fuehrer's doctrine of race purity. Not every country could boast of a pure race. Czechoslovakia, for instance, was nothing but a few remnants of a race formerly under German rule, mixed with Slavs, Jews, and Galicians. The Poles were no race. But there were other countries that were fast going downhill because of racial sins. He asked his boys to name some.

They mentioned Russia, England, France. The teacher was not satisfied. "Well, which country has always called itself the 'melting pot' of all other nations? Jungens, that you must know."

Then came the chorus, "Amerika"...

The teacher launched into a devastating diatribe that made short shrift of the United States, that country which had joined the last war just to make money. He worked himself into an emotional fervor.

He explained how during the centuries there had been many men and women who could not get along in Europe. Most of them were criminals and crooks, reprobates and renegades. They were the undesirables. Whenever they tangled with the law in Germany, or any other European country, they got on a boat and went to the United States. There they married each other. And now the children – well, any German boy with intelligence could see what the result would be. These children, in turn, mingled with Jews and Negroes. The citizens of the United States were sinking lower and lower.

But he wasn't through.

"There are many other weaknesses as a result of this lack of racial purity," he continued. "Their government is corrupt. They have a low type of government, a democracy. What is a democracy?"

I wrote down a few of the answers:

"A democracy is a government by rich Jews."

"A democracy is a form of government in which people waste much time."

"A democracy is a government in which there is no real leadership."

"A democracy is a government that will be defeated by the Fuehrer."

"*Das sowieso,*" The teacher grinned. "That in any case." He expressed the conviction that the democratic form of government could not last long in a world where National Socialism was fast getting the upper hand. Democracies had too many flaws.

"Look at the United States," he said. "It is the richest country in the world. It has almost all the gold in the world. But it also has the largest number of unemployed of any country. Look at some of these pictures."

He had pictures, cut from German illustrated weeklies, purporting to depict starving men along sidewalks and wharves in American cities.

Moreover, the United States was abusing its minorities. The American Indian was almost exterminated; the Negro was lynched on the nearest tree.

The lot of the laboring man was especially unenviable. He reminded the boys of the benefits their fathers were deriving from the labor front, the Nazi Arbeitsfront, which provided pensions, free

vacations, trips to the Mediterranean. But in America capital and labor were engaged in an eternal struggle. As a result there were innumerable strikes.

The boys, most of them nine years old, did not know what strikes were. There had not been any in Germany since 1933. The teacher explained, and used more pictures, allegedly of American strikes.

The reactions were written clearly on the faces of the listening boys. A country where such things could be need not be respected, much less feared.

The teacher had one parting shot. "And the leader of the United States? Who is he?"

"Roosevelt," somebody said.

The teacher's voice got mysterious. "Roosevelt he calls himself. But his real name is Rosenfeldt. What does that show you?"

"He's a Jew," shouted the class.

A bell rang. The boys were dismissed.<sup>35</sup>

## CONNECTIONS



What did the teacher say about the United States? Which statements were true? Which were false? What did he emphasize? What message was he giving his students?

What is the difference between education and indoctrination? Was the instructor teaching his students or indoctrinating them?

Roosevelt was not Jewish. Did the teacher actually say he was? Find other examples of false statements or faulty logic in his lesson.

The Nazis used this cartoon for propaganda. How does it portray the United States? Why would the Nazis want Germans to see Americans in this way? How does the teacher quoted in this reading promote that view?



## READING 16

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### *Rebels Without a Cause*

Not all young people accepted the Nazis' ideas. By the late 1930s, a number of teenagers were questioning the system Hitler created. Among them were members of the Edelweiss Pirates – a loose collection of independent gangs in western Germany. Those gangs included the Roving Dudes of Essen, the Kittelbach Pirates of Oberhausen and Duesseldorf (after a river north of Duesseldorf), and the Navajo Wild Boys of Cologne. These groups would get together from time to time for weekend trips. Members would pitch tents in the forest, sing, talk, and “bash” Hitler Youth patrols.

A Nazi official in Duesseldorf said of the gangs:

Re: “Edelweiss Pirates”. The said youths are throwing their weight around again. I have been told that gatherings of young people have become more conspicuous than ever [in a local park]... These adolescents, aged between 12 and 17, hang around into the late evening with musical instruments and young females. Since this riff-raff is in large part outside the Hitler Youth and adopts a hostile attitude towards the organization, they represent a danger to other young people. It has recently been established that members of the armed forces too are to be found among these young people and they, owing to their membership in the Wehrmacht, exhibit particularly arrogant behaviour. There is a suspicion that it is these youths who have covered the walls of the pedestrian subway on the Altenbergstrasse with slogans “Down with Hitler.” “The [Military High Command] is lying,” “Medals for Murder,” “Down with Nazi Brutality” etc. However often these inscriptions are removed, within a few days new ones reappear on the walls.<sup>36</sup>

In Duesseldorf, the Gestapo arrested 739 teenagers who belonged to twenty-eight different groups in December of 1942. In Cologne, the Nazis publicly hung the leaders of the Cologne Edelweiss Pirates in 1944. Yet young people continued to join these gangs.

Not everyone who rebelled joined a gang. Some defined themselves in terms of their favorite music. They called themselves the *Swing-Jugend* or “swing youth.” Historian Detlev J. K. Peukert says of them:

The swing youth were not anti-fascist in a political sense – their behaviour was indeed emphatically anti-political – both Nazi slogans and traditional nationalism were of profound indifference to them. They sought their counter-identity in what they saw as the “slovenly” culture of... England and America. They accepted Jews and “half-Jews” into their groups – another outrage for the Nazis – and gave ovations to visiting bands from Belgium and Holland.

The very disgust shown by the authors of the Nazi reports and their dramatisation of events indicate that Nazi officialdom felt attacked at the heart of its concept of itself and of the state. This is the only way, too, to explain the reaction of Heinrich Himmler, who wanted to put the “ringleaders” of the swing movement into concentration camps for at least two or three years of beatings, punitive drill and forced labor.<sup>37</sup>

What kind of behavior led Himmler to advocate concentration camps? Perhaps it was a report describing a 1940 swing festival attended by five to six hundred teenagers in Hamburg.

The dance music was all English and American. Only swing dancing and jitterbugging took place. At the entrance to the hall stood a notice on which the words “Swing prohibited” had been altered to “Swing requested.” Without exception the participants accompanied the dances and songs by singing the English lyrics. Indeed, throughout the evening they attempted to speak only English; and some tables even French.

The dancers made an appalling sight. None of the couples danced normally; there was only swing of the worst sort. Sometimes two boys danced with one girl; sometimes several couples formed a circle, linking arms and jumping, slapping hands, even rubbing the backs of their heads together; and then, bent double, with the top half of the body hanging loosely down, long hair flopping into the face, they dragged themselves round practically on their knees. When the band played a rumba, the dancers went into wild ecstasy. They all leaped around and mumbled the chorus in English. The band played wilder and wilder numbers; none of the players was sitting any longer, they all “jitterbugged” on the stage like wild animals.<sup>38</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Why do you think German teenagers were attracted to gangs? To the swing youth? What need did these groups fill that Hitler Youth failed to provide?

Reread Reading 1. What insights does Milgram’s experiment offer into the behavior of the two groups?

What similarities do you see between the groups described in this reading and teen groups in your community? What is the main difference?

What do the two groups suggest about the success of Nazi propaganda? About its failures?

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Harrison E. Salisbury, Forward to *Mischling, Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany* by Ilse Koehn (Greenwillow, 1977), viii-ix.
- <sup>2</sup> Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (Harper & Row, 1974), 3-4.
- <sup>3</sup> Philip Zimbardo, "The Pathology of Imprisonment," *Societies*, April, 1972, 109.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> Quoted in "Research through Deception" by Morton Hunt, *New York Times Magazine*.
- <sup>7</sup> William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power* (Quadrangle Books, 1965), 199.
- <sup>8</sup> William Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (Alfred Knopf, 1940), 17-18.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in *The Nazi Years; A Documentary History*, ed. Joachim Remark, 79.
- <sup>11</sup> Horst Krueger, *A Crack in the Wall*, trans. Ruth Hein, (Fromm International Publishing Corp., 1982), 15-16.
- <sup>12</sup> George Sabine, *History of Political Theory*, 3rd Edition (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), 904.
- <sup>13</sup> Max von der Gruen, *Howl Like the Wolves*.
- <sup>14</sup> Vaclav Havel, "Words on Words," *New York Review of Books*, 18 January 1990, 5.
- <sup>15</sup> Max von der Gruen, *Howl Like the Wolves*.
- <sup>16</sup> Marion Freyer Wolff, *The Shrinking Circle: Memories of Nazi Berlin, 1933-1939* (UAHC, 1989), 21.
- <sup>17</sup> David Lloyd George, "I Talked to Hitler," *London Daily Express*, 17 November, 1936.
- <sup>18</sup> Sybil Milton, "Social Responsibility of the Artist," Facing History and Ourselves Foundation. (videotape)
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in *Courage to Care*, ed. Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, (New York University Press, 1986), 28.
- <sup>20</sup> Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People*, 123.
- <sup>21</sup> Bohdan Wytwycky, *The Other Holocaust: Many Circles of Hell* (The Novak Report, 1980), 83.
- <sup>22</sup> Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians* (Modern Age, 1938).
- <sup>23</sup> Morris Dees, Interview by Curtis White, *The Boston Globe*, 17 June, 1993.
- <sup>24</sup> Alfons Heck, *Diary of a Hitler Youth*.
- <sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Dopazo, "Reminiscences," unpublished interview, 1981, Facing History and Ourselves Foundation.
- <sup>26</sup> From *Childhood Experiences of German Jews*, Facing History and Ourselves Foundation. (video)
- <sup>27</sup> Mede von Nagel, "The Nazi Legacy – Fearful Silence for Their Children," *Boston Globe*, 23 October, 1977.
- <sup>28</sup> Quoted in Dan Bar-On, *Legacy of Silence* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 216.
- <sup>29</sup> Alfons Heck, *Diary of a Hitler Youth*.
- <sup>30</sup> Erika Mann, *School for Barbarians* (Modern Age, 1938).
- <sup>31</sup> Inge Scholl, *Students Against Tyranny*, trans. Arthur R. Schultz, (Wesleyan University Press, 1970), 7-10.
- <sup>32</sup> Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death*, 15-16.
- <sup>33</sup> Gertrude Hartman, *Builders of the Old World*, 2nd ed. (D.C. Heath, 1946, 1959), 447.
- <sup>34</sup> Gregor Ziemer, *Education for Death*, 128-129.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 68-69.
- <sup>36</sup> Adapted from Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany* (Yale University Press, 1987), 161.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.