INTRODUCTION TO THE TESTIMONY OF

Hans Frei

By Ion Poppa, University of Manchester

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Introduction

Conversion to Christianity was something hundreds of thousands of Jews experienced before and during the Holocaust. Joseph Jacobs estimates that throughout the nineteenth century the number of Jewish conversions to Christianity worldwide was 204,542. The greatest numbers were in Russia (84,536), Austria-Hungary (44,756), Great Britain (28,830), and Germany (22,520).[1] Unfortunately we lack such centralised figures from 1900 to the period of the Holocaust, but we know from post-war testimonies and available scholarship[2] that the trend of conversions intensified in many countries immediately prior to and during the Holocaust.

This annotated testimony is accompanied by an article published in SIMON, the academic journal of the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Research. The article describes the main findings of my examination of 97 testimonies, containing details about conversion to Christianity before and during the Holocaust, found in the Forutnoff Video Archive of Holocaust Testimonies. This introduction borrows some information from that article, such as the state of research on conversion of Jews to Christianity and a summary of the ways in which Fortunoff interviewees remember the experience of conversion and its impact on their sense of belonging. The primary focus, however, is on Hans Frei's life and the way in which his testimony is similar or different to the other 96.

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[1] Joseph Jacobs, "Statistics," in *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, ed. Isidore Singer (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1905), vol. 11, 530. An online version is available at: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13992-statistics. Jacobs provides separate data for various regions that would later form Germany and/or Austria-Hungary, as well as total data for these countries.

[2] See for example Todd Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold: Conversion and Radical Assimilation in Modern Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 150-158. See also Viktor Karadi, *The Jews of Europe in the Modern Era* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 38.

State of research on conversion of Jews to Christianity

For various reasons,[3] research into the number of conversions during the Shoah, the effect of this experience on the converts' lives/identities/belonging, and the way in which they were treated by Christian and Jewish communities, has been scarce. This is due, to some extent, to the lack of sources, as for a long time converted Jews did not speak out about this topic. Yaakov Ariel rightly argues in a seminal article on conversions of Jews to Christianity during the Holocaust that, while a number of authors wrote during the 1950s and 1960s about Jews hiding among "Aryans," or about the reclaiming of Jewish children after the war, their narratives carried "a Jewish heroic undertone," "largely overlooked the religious aspects of conversions, and did not relate to their spiritual and communal contexts."[4] In the last decade, however, interest in the impact of conversions has increased and more steps have been taken to understand this forgotten group of Holocaust survivors. Several topics, such as the effect of conversion on the relation of Jews to their former faith,[5] the psychological impact of conversion on Jewish identity,[6] or the phenomenon of Jewish children who converted during the years of the Holocaust and the attempts to bring them into the Jewish fold in the immediate post-war years,[7] have seen notable progress.

Although a careful analysis of "Jewish conversions to Christianity, and attempts at adopting hybrid identities"[8] has been mostly absent, details on how widespread this phenomenon was in various European countries have continued to come to light. One of the first countries that came under scrutiny was Hungary, where the number of converted Jews was high. In his most recent edition of *The Politics of Genocide*, Randolph Braham puts the number of Christians of Jewish origin residing in Hungary in 1941 at up to 100,000.[9] Other historians[10] and the *YIVO Encyclopaedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*[11] put forward

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[3] See more on this in Ion Popa, "Experiences of Jews who Converted to Christianity before and during the Holocaust: An Overview of Testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive," *S:I.M.O.N. SHOAH: INTERVENTION. METHODS. DOCUMENTATION* 6, no. 2 (2020): 75-86.

[4] Yaakov Ariel, "From Faith to Faith: Conversions and De-Conversions during the Holocaust," in *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook*, ed. Dan Diner (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 38.

[5] Ronald Berger, "To Be Or Not To Be: The Holocaust And Jewish Identity In The Postwar Era," *Humanity and Society* 31, no. 1 (February 2007): 24-42; see also Julia Matveev, "Vladimir Vertlib On 'Jewish Identity In Particular and Identity and Belonging In General,'" *German Life and Letters* 68, 3 (July 2015): 1468-83.

[6] See for example Katarzyna Prot-Klinger, "Broken Identity. The Impact of the Holocaust on Identity in Romanian and Polish Jews," *The Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences* 45, no. 4 (2008): 239-46.

[7] Eva Fleischner, "'Who am I?' The Struggle for Religious Identity of Jewish Children Hidden by Christians During the Shoah," in *Gray Zones: Ambiguity and Compromise in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, eds. Jonathan Petropoulos and John K. Roth (London: Berghahn Books, 2012), 107-117; see also Joanna Michlic, "'Who Am I?' The Identity of Jewish Children in Poland, 1945-1949," *Polin* 20 (2007): 98-121.

[8] Yaakov, "From Faith to Faith," 38.

[9] Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary*, Third Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), vol. 1, 88.

[10] William McCagg Jr., "Jewish Conversion in Hungary in Modern Times," in *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, ed. Todd Endelman (New York/London: Holmes and Meier, 1987), 142-64; see also Endelman, *Leaving the Jewish Fold*, 152.

[11] Gershon David Hundert (ed.), *The Yivo Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 1, 348-51. The section on "Conversion" is written by Magda Teter.

similar numbers, which are mostly based on statistical data released after the March-April 1941 census. Unfortunately, and this is another sign of the lack of in-depth research, we do not have a critical assessment of these numbers. In Romania, the census of 1942 revealed that 4631, out of 272,573 Jews who remained after the changes of borders and the killings and deportations of 1941-1942, were converts.[12] However, as in the case of Hungary, there is a need for better understanding of the context in which these censuses were gathered, as threat to life may have influenced whether or not a Jewish person declared him or herself Christian or Jewish. Although in the last decade the topic of conversions in Western Europe appears sporadically in research about Churches' attitudes during the Holocaust, or the treatment of Jews found in mixed marriages, we lack clear numbers and a clear overview of how widespread this phenomenon was in specific countries.

Methodology of finding and researching the testimonies referring to conversion

The Fortunoff Video Archive, which was the first to start gathering video testimonies of Holocaust survivors, was initiated in 1979 by Dr. Dori Laub, a child survivor and psychiatrist born in Czernowitz, Romania, and Laurel Vlock, a television journalist who produced many interviews for Channel 8 in New Haven. From the beginning, they paid special attention to the psychological dimensions of remembering past traumatic experiences.[13] Moreover, the initial guidelines of the Fortunoff Archive stressed the importance of allowing survivors to remember their experiences without much intervention from the interviewers.[14] However, in my examination of the 97 testimonies I found that the guidelines were not always followed. This was because of the professional formation of the interviewers (Laurel Vlock, for example, tended to follow a media style of interviewing), or because of the expansion of the project to different locations (for example in the interviews done at affiliate locations in Europe, especially in Yugoslavia, the survivors were often guided in their answers by the questions of the interviewer).

In February 2019, when my Fortunoff fellowship at the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies started, I proceeded immediately by searching four key words (using the *hvt* – Holocaust video testimony – in front of each word): *conversion*, *converted*, *baptism* and *baptised*. I relied on Orbis, the search engine of the Yale University library. Each testimony contains a brief (usually between ten to 20 lines) description of its content. The four searches produced 153 results, of which 97 are testimonies describing in one form or another experiences of conversion of the interviewees, while the rest are either duplicates, irrelevant (as the words refers to something else), or are about conversion of somebody else (usually parents, with only a brief mention). 61 testimonies are from women Holocaust survivors and 36 from men. The vast majority were children at the time of baptism. Conversion to Catholicism is predominant because most testimonies are from countries where Catholicism was the main religion. In terms of

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[12] ACSIER [The Archive of the Centre for the Study of the History of Romanian Jews] III/474, 1-2.

[13] See for example Yale University Sterling Memorial Library, Holocaust Survivors Film Project records, MS 1909 Box 1, Folder 1, a report on "existing literature on the psychological effects of videotaping on interviews" (undated, but the next document in the box is from December 1979, so this report was most likely written before). See also "Summary of meeting on 2 June, 1981 with Professor Geoffrey Hartman, Dr. Dori Laub, and Laurel Vlock of the Holocaust Survivors Film Project," document dated June 16, 1981 (the pages in the box are not numbered).

[14] See Ibid., Box 2, Folder 5, "Project procedures" (no date, but the documents in the box before and after are from 1981), describing procedures for pre-interview, interview, and post-interview.

countries of origin, the largest number of testimonies is from people who either lived at the time of recording or were originally from Slovakia (26), which is due to the fact that during the 1990s the Fortunoff Archive had an active office in Bratislava, where some of these testimonies were recorded.

In April-May 2019 the Fortunoff Video Archive rolled out the beta version of another online platform, Aviary, which provides enhanced descriptions of testimonies. The search using the word *conversion* produced 90 results (in comparison to 63 in my previous Orbis search). Due to time limitations, I was unable to check the new results. However, the first sample of 97 overall testimonies is sufficient to offer an informed view on the way in which survivors remember their experience of conversion. It should be noted that in my documentation for this introduction and the annotated edition, apart from the transcript itself, the other 96 testimonies, and relevant secondary literature, I relied also on the two boxes of Hans Frei personal documents found in the Yale Divinity School Library and on two boxes of Fortunoff Archive documents found in the Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library.

The impact of conversion on Jewish identity/belonging as revealed in the Fortunoff Video Archive

Conversion had a significant impact on the life and sense of belonging of the converts, even if it was temporary.[15] Most Fortunoff survivors, who, we should not forget, were children during the war, speak of conversion in very bleak tones – as betrayal, shameful, and an embarrassment. Susan M., who was born in Budapest (her date of birth is not clear in the interview) and almost converted as a small child in Hungary to avoid persecution, describes her experience in these terms:

> I felt somehow that God was watching us and if anything this was gonna be the cause of our perishing, the next air raid or whatever, just because we were doing it. It was like, like being a traitor and I was always terribly ashamed. I am not ashamed of anything else associated with the Holocaust and I practically talk about anything else, but this is something I've always been very embarrassed about […][16]

Peter B., who was born in Budapest, in 1928, talks about mandatory catechisation classes and about how, "If I was going to survive, it was important that I have the inner sense of being Christian. I had to be the perfect actor, in a sense." He summarises the entire experience: "I consider this process as really destructive. I think my soul was executed in the process of conversion; I did not feel this as a kid, but in retrospect, this is how I feel. It has taken me years to come to terms with what I did."[17]

In a few cases conversion is explicitly denied, although the recollection of events is imbued with a suspected glorious narrative of resistance. One such example is Susan B., born in Michalovce, Czechoslovakia, in 1927. During the Holocaust, her father asked a friend who was a village priest to convert the family as a way of avoiding deportation. The priest insisted on catechisation classes and baptism. "So my father, mother, sister, and brother converted. I was an idealist and I refused to convert.

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[15] For a discussion of the psychological impact of conversion on Jewish identity see: Prot-Klinger, "Broken Identity," 239-246.

[16] Susan M., HVT 537.

[17] Peter B., HVT 2736.

But he was a very nice man, and he said that he could not make someone with such strong beliefs convert, so he just gave me the papers." In 1949 Susan immigrated to Israel (in 1958 she moved to the US) and maintained strong links with Judaism.[18] In some cases, the grown-up survivors dismiss the importance of conversion in a desire to emphasise their Jewishness, although it is clear from the testimony that the experience had a longstanding emotional impact. Nadia R. was born in 1938, in Bratislava. She was baptised into a Protestant church when she was four. The way she retells the story of her baptismal ceremony reveals the internal tensions between acknowledging the importance of the event as her first memory and denying its importance:

> - What does it mean? Do you mean baptism?
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> - Baptism, yeah, I remember it very, very clearly and that was sort of very courageous people from the, mostly Protestant, the Lutheran Church did it. […]
>
> - Did you have a ceremony?
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> - Yes, I remember the ceremony.
>
> - What was that?
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> - Well, it was in a church. I must have been three or four, so, it was in a church and for me I don't remember synagogues before, maybe I was in one, but I don't remember. This was my first, you know, and … it didn't make a big splash in my life at that time; it was something which I went through. Only later in life I really knew what it was all about, so no, there was no Jewish education in my life at that time and no identity I have to say.[19]

The internal voice of consciousness, which led many survivors to talk about conversion as betrayal, was echoed sometimes by some form of outside opprobrium.[20] In many Jewish communities converts were not welcomed back, no longer seen as Jews. Sometimes this implicit pressure can be felt in the Fortunoff testimonies when the survivors try to answer unasked questions, minimise the importance of conversion, or all of a sudden bring up Israel or involvement in Holocaust education as a way of emphasising their Jewish belonging.[21] In some other cases they retell the story of attempted conversion in very glorious tones, highlighting their resistance and devotedness to Judaism.[22]

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[18] Susan B., HVT 2008.

[19] Nadia R., HVT 3132.

[20] See the case of Berthe B., HVT 2668, who was born in Paris in 1935. She tells that the Jewish community was highly critical of her parents for sending her to a Catholic school.

[21] See for example Nadia R., HVT 3132.

[22] See for example the case of Judith S. HVT 1263, who was born in Szeged in 1929. She explains that, when offered the possibility of conversion, her father declared: "we won't change our religion. We were born as Jews, we will die as Jews if we have to. The religion is not a coat that you can change with the season."

In the Fortunoff collection there are examples where the different experiences of persecution during the Holocaust impacted differently members of the same family who converted to Christianity.[23] Nicholas P., for example, was born in Budapest in 1912. He and his brother converted to Catholicism as children. They both survived the Holocaust, Nicholas in Hungary and his brother as a Catholic priest in Italy. Nicholas, who was persecuted in Hungary, returned to Judaism immediately after the war, while his brother, who was not directly affected by the Holocaust, remained a Christian. In other cases, children who were hidden in the same place experienced conversion and post-war tensions of belonging in very different ways.[24]

Jews who converted before or during the Holocaust in both Germany and France generally retell the story of conversion and attachment to Catholicism in more positive terms, without shadows of betrayal or embarrassment. This is probably because these communities were much secularised. An excellent example, although not singular, is Paulette G., who was born in Paris in 1933 and hidden during the Holocaust by a Catholic family. She describes Catholicism and her experience as a converted Jew in these terms:

I think that, Catholicism for me stood me in good stead, it gave me a discipline, it gave some comfort, and it allowed me not to go astray someway, you know, I had something to hold on to. This religion called Catholicism. And I had a lot of fears about things, because no one could teach me anything, so I had to teach it myself, and through religion, I think, through Catholicism, I was able to hold on to certain values and ethics that allowed me to carry on with my life, you see, because I had little else to hold on to. So, in fact it was a great help to grow up with this kind of thing, and as young adults to be able to fall back on something like this, because I did believe for a long time.

Paullette is also open, during her interview, about her continued belief in Christianity after the war and the dilemmas of identity raised by this reality:

You know, my belief in Christianity did not stop when the war ended. It continued on for a long, long time. And my identity crisis as a Jew and as a Christian was very difficult. And it began to take shape after I married my husband who was an American Jewish man. And so it was a conflict, a great crisis up until that point. Was I a Jew, was I a Christian? And when I met my husband I finally found a peaceful way to resolve that problem. It was quite comfortable being a Jew again.[25]

There are a few other Fortunoff testimonies expressing similar attachment to Christianity. Denise B., who was born in Paris in 1934, says: "One of the nuns began to give me private lessons on Catholicism. I became very attached to Virgin Mary. I began to pray fervently because I thought that this would bring

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[23] Nicholas P., HVT 575.

[24] See the joint testimony of Jacques F., David I., and Paul S., HVT 1792. They were hidden in a Belgian village but did not know about each other until after the war. They remembered conversion and relation to various Catholic individuals in significantly different ways.

[25] Paulette G., HVT 2170.

my mother back. […] Catholicism helped me to think straight, my mind was such a blur."[26] Henri B., who was born in Paris in 1927 and baptised into Catholicism while in hiding with his mother and siblings in a little village outside Paris, is also appreciative of the structure Christian belief and ritual gave him: "I told you before that I was very religious. It kept me occupied during my entire deportation, I always prayed. I think it helped me. When you get beaten, and then say 'forgive them, they know not what they do,' perhaps it changes something. It also imposed rules on me, things I did or did not do."[27]

Hans Frei in the context of other Fortunoff Video Archive testimonies

Ariel points out that conversions during and following the Holocaust "involved massive formations of identities weaving elements together in new reconfigurations." This process was often painful. In comparison to many human beings who get through their lives without being much concerned about their "identities," converted Jews had to adapt, to learn skills in assuming new identities, to reinvent and reconfigure themselves constantly, "to recreate and plant themselves successfully, albeit not without pain, in new and often hostile communal and spiritual territories."[28]

The Fortunoff Video Archive provides a great array of testimonies from survivors who converted to Christianity before, during, or, in a very few instances, after the Holocaust. They were interviewed in different locations in the US, Canada, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Israel. As a result, we are provided with a wealth of information about the way in which the Holocaust and conversions were experienced in many European countries. Apart from these historical details, some of them analysed in the SIMON article, the aspect that really stands out from examining the 97 testimonies is the fascinating insight provided into the impact of conversion on Jewish lives, identities, and belonging. Especially, the attachment of Jews who converted to the Christian community has been too easily dismissed and needs further, more insightful exploration.[29] Here the testimony of Frei, as that of Paulette G. mentioned above, show a different picture from most Fortunoff testimonies, a picture where survivors who converted during the Holocaust are willing to make peace with their hybrid identities.

At the time of the interview (April 18, 1980) with Laurel Vlock, Frei was a respected, well-known Professor of Theology at the Yale Divinity School. He was born in 1922 in Breslau, then part of Germany, into a family of Jewish parents who had converted to Christianity in their early adulthood. His father, Wilhelm Siegmund Frei, was a professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Breslau, and his mother, Magda Frankfurther Frei, was a medic. Hans was the youngest of three children. As he explains at one point in his testimony, he and his siblings were baptised into a Protestant Church (most likely Lutheran) soon after birth. In the 1920s the family moved to Berlin after the father got a job at an important hospital in Spandau. Due to his parents' professional status, the family did not feel the economic depression that ravaged Germany throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s. However, they

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[26] Denise B., HVT 2172.

[27] Henri B., HVT 2154.

[28] Ariel, "From Faith to Faith," 65-6.

[29] Ariel, "From Faith to Faith," 42-6.

were impacted by antisemitic policies as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933. In order to avoid the hostile environment, from 1935 until 1938 Hans was sent to a Quaker school in Saffron Walden, Essex, England.[30] The choice of this school was not necessarily down to religious preference (Hans explains that his parents were not committed Christians, and were not enthusiastic about the Quakers) and probably reflects rather bureaucratic reasons, for the Quakers were relatively relaxed on the currency exchange requirements of the time. Frei developed a close connection with this religious group, but later, after the family moved to the US, identified rather with Lutheranism and Anglicanism.

His testimony is, in many ways, very different from others in the Fortunoff collection. First, Frei left Germany in 1938. He experienced the beginning of the Holocaust, but unlike most survivors, did not feel the full blow of persecution. He actually says, in the first sentences of the interview: "Well, I was one of the lucky ones who escaped without ever having seen anything more horrible than some street clashes in Germany."[31] Nonetheless, his insight into the growing persecution is extremely relevant. As the reader/listener will notice, he talks several times about the terror of those early years: the terror of denunciations, the terror of a growing police state, and the terror of legislation that excluded Jews from the German society and made them unwelcome. Two interesting episodes reflect this sense of terror. In one, probably in 1935, while returning from England Hans missed his train and arrived with the next one. He describes the profound anxiety of his parents who feared the worst. In the second, which happened in 1934 in the context of the Night of the Long Knives, he was at home with his grandmother. An individual who was chased by the police asked to take shelter in their apartment, claiming to have known his father from the trenches in the First World War. In the end Hans, who was 12 at the time, refused to give the man permission to enter; the memory of that event, and the guilt of a missed opportunity to help, were still vivid decades later.

In 1938 the Frei family moved to New York. In the testimony he does not give many details about this period, apart from some brief insight about the German Jewish life in the neighbourhoods of Flushing and Washington Heights: "We lived in the latter place. And I think a good many of those people were very much like we were, thoroughly secularized, quite relaxed about the fact that they were Jews, having a variety of outlooks towards Zionism, from strong sympathy to mild antipathy. But none of them really, in any sense, ardently members of the larger Jewish community."[32] His father worked at the Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx from 1937 until his death on January 27, 1943.

According to documents found at Yale Divinity School, Frei graduated with a BS from North Carolina State College (1942), a BD from Yale Divinity School (1945), and a PhD from Yale University (1956). He was a Fulbright Research Fellow in Germany (1959-1960). In 1966-1967 he was the recipient of an American Association of Theological Schools fellowship, which allowed him to study at the University of Cambridge. Career wise, Frei was a minister at North Stratford Baptist Church, North Stratford, New

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[30] The name of the school is not mentioned in the interview but appears in documents from Yale Divinity School. See Yale Divinity Library, Hans Wilhelm Frei Papers, RG 76, Series 6, Box 27. Personal Items and memorabilia, Folder 1, the second CV (the pages are not numbered).

[31] Hans F., HVT 170, p. 1 of 2 [00:01:29.96].

[32] Hans F., HVT 170, p.2 of 2 [00:02:14.23].

Hampshire (1945-1947), before starting an academic career that took him in the end to the Yale Divinity School, where he was an Assistant Professor of Religious Studies (1957-1963), Associate Professor (1963-1974), and Professor of Religious Studies (1974-1988). He was the Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Yale Divinity School (1983-1986). The spring syllabus 1974 shows him teaching two courses: "Hegel: Early Theological writings," and "Hegel: Reason in History." His writings, especially *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), and *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) are essential in the field of Christian Theology.[33]

Frei died unexpectedly on September 12, 1988. Family, friends and colleagues celebrated his work in a memorial service held at Battel Chapel, Yale, on September 22, 1988. He was praised for many things, two of which appear consistently: his academic excellence (he is described as a leading Anselmian), and his connection to students, who often portrayed him as a father figure.[34] His influence on Christian theology continued long after his passing, as testified by articles and books dedicated to him. In his 1992 article "Hans Frei and the Future of Theology," David Ford summarises the influence of Frei on various theologians:

> David Kelsey says that Frei helped him to rethink Luther and Calvin, especially on justification and sanctification. Michael Root says that Frei's insider/outsider view of the German tradition stimulated his appropriation of his own Lutheranism. James Buckley has, in his forthcoming book, *Seeking the Humanity of God*, drawn on Frei to present a 'Catholic particularism following in the tradition of Vatican II.' […] In terms of the history of modern theology, one of Frei's major achievements in this regard was to move Schleiermacher nearer to Barth, out of opposition and into neighbourly relations.[35]

Although Frei did not conceal his Jewish roots (testimony to that is the interview he gave to the Fortunoff Video Archive in 1980), for reasons not entirely clear his Jewishness was entirely overlooked in the memorial service and in an obituary published in *New Haven Register* on Wednesday September 14, 1988. One sentence of that obituary is particularly striking through its deliberate occlusion of his Jewish identity and persecution in Germany: "Mr. Frei was born in Breslau, Germany, April 29, 1922, son of the late Wilhelm and Magda Frankfurter Frei. His father, a physician, was on the medical faculty of the University of Breslau. Political developments prompted the family to leave Germany."[36]

One of the main reasons I chose his testimony for the annotated edition was the beautiful ways in which the topic of identity is touched upon during the interview. The interview conducted by Laurel Vlock follows a media style of questioning, which allows for in-depth examination of events and their impact on

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[33] See Yale Divinity Library, Hans Wilhelm Frei Papers, RG 76, Series 6, Box 27, especially folder 1.

[34] See Ibid., folder 5 "In Memoriam: Hans W. Frei" – Memorial Service for HWF with tributes by colleagues.

[35] David Ford, "Hans Frei and the Future of Theology," *Modern Theology* 8 (April 1992): 204.

[36] See Yale Divinity Library, Hans Wilhelm Frei Papers, RG 76, Series 6, Box 27, Folder 6 Frei Hans, Obituary.

belonging. However, it is Frei's intellect that really digs deep into all the complexities of feeling of the pressure to define yourself and the pain of having to live with hybrid identities. Frei grew up in a family that was secular and very much assimilated into German society. His education in a Quaker school from the age of 13 to the age of 16 made a great impression on him. In comparison to other converted survivors who, forcefully categorised as Jews and persecuted, found it easier to identify as Jews and return to Judaism, Frei continued to identify as Christian after the Holocaust. His experience is, to a great extent, unique in the Fortunoff Archive, where converted survivors generally identify themselves as Jewish and either deny the importance of conversion or, such as in the case of Paulette G., accept a version of hybrid identity where the Jewish component is primordial. Towards the end of his interview, Frei offers a complex view into his self-identification:

> [00:16:47.01] INTERVIEWER: Well, that takes us back to you and your family and the relationship between you and your family, which must have been or must be or must have been strained as a result of this departure on your part, even though it was clear why it happened.
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> [00:17:06.43] SUBJECT: My departure from-- towards Christianity, you mean?
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> [00:17:10.31] INTERVIEWER: Well, yeah-- not really toward Christianity. But away from the condition that the family found itself in.
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> [00:17:18.31] SUBJECT: Actually not, no, that-- I think the problem was not-- is not there. The problem-- I mean, they-- they-- they saw what I was doing as a not-- as a continuation of their own pattern of assimilation on the one hand, and moving into an academic life, on the other hand. The problem, really, for me is that I am, far more than a good many other people, at once an outsider to Jewishness and an insider.
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> […]
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> [00:18:34.78] Um, there's an author who's written a very deeply moving book, Saul Friedlander, When Memory Comes. So have you looked at it?
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> [00:18:43.59] INTERVIEWER: Mhm.
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> [00:18:44.37] SUBJECT: And he's become a very loyal, devoted Israeli, though he teaches half time in Geneva each year, half the year. And yet, I think you'll find-- in that book I found part of the same thing-- kind of an inability to get two halves of his personality together again, except in a very tenuous way. Well, that's true for me, too.
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> [00:19:14.94] But you see that my dominant personality became secular and Christian. Therefore, it would take a conscious move, rather than a natural emotive response, for me to identify myself with Judaism now. I'm too far gone.

This is not to say that Frei denies his Jewishness and, had he remained in Europe and experienced the full force of persecution, perhaps his post-war sense of belonging would have been different. It should be mentioned here that, while still in Germany, his father renounced his Christian conversion as a protest against the Nazi persecution of Jews. Unfortunately, the interview does not offer any details about what

this renunciation entailed. We do not know whether it was only a private declaration or if any formal steps were made in that direction. However, the episode indicates how the experience of the war may have impacted Hans too. As he left in 1938, he did not have to take shelter in a convent, nor to be hidden conditionally by some villagers, nor to convert as a way of gaining the trust of a convent or a foster family, as most Fortunoff survivors did.

Laurel Vlock often pushes Frei to confront what she perceives as ambivalence on his part:

> [00:48:24.31] INTERVIEWER: I-- I have to persist in the question of why they sent you to a Quaker school rather than a Jewish school.
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> [00:48:30.98] SUBJECT: In England?
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> [00:48:31.49] INTERVIEWER: Mhm.
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> [00:48:32.21] SUBJECT: Because, like so many other Jewish families, my family was totally secularized. That is to say they had given up their-- they-- we were-- we knew we were Jews, you see? But that meant simply German citizens of Jewish religion until the Nazis came.
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> [00:48:54.89] That was what assimilation meant. We were totally assimilated, and as a result, my parents had us baptized, you see? My parents had all of us children baptized.

To make matters even more complicated, over their Christian and Jewish identities (and he explains very clearly that although baptised, they still saw themselves as Jewish), there was another overarching allegiance, the allegiance to Germany:

> [00:51:58.83] We had been so deeply assimilated, you see? So deeply assimilated that, on the one hand, we were proud of the fact that we were Jewish, in a curious, undefinable way. We felt that we were Jewish, and that was that. Jews were good people.
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> [00:52:20.11] Uh, but on the other hand, we felt that it was simply a kind of cultural religious distinctness, but not anything that interfered with our, first of all, being German citizens. You see, our whole world-- for just that reason, our whole world was turned far more upside down in 1933. We were robbed of our primary support. Namely, our national identity, which was much more our identity than our Jewish identity.

At one point during the interview, returning to what she perceives as ambivalence on Hans Frei's part, Laurel Vlock asks:

> [00:52:58.77] INTERVIEWER: You claim you felt Jewish, or you felt an identification with your Jewish heritage ancestry, yet you were practicing Christians in an assimilated German society. It's, uh—
>
> [00:53:11.51] SUBJECT: Heinrich Heine, the German poet who was himself Jewish, and rather cynically converted, once said that the-- that bap-- the baptismal certificate is the admission ticket

> to European culture. And a lot of Jewish people in the middle of the 19th century, especially in Germany, began to feel some sympathy for that. So that even when they did not do it themselves, as my parents did, they downplayed any part of their heritage, except one of a strictly limited religious cultural sort.

Frei's answer reveals the complexity of belonging, and the readiness of many Jews in Germany to adapt to various circumstances they found themselves in. This fluidity, which crosses limited boundaries of self-identification, appears later on when, borrowing some of the principles of his father (who, recall, renounced conversion as a protest) and of the Quakers, to whom he alludes several times in his testimony, he says:

> [00:17:49.75] And I find that a very difficult way, you see. I mean, for example, if this country were to go officially anti-Semitic, which I don't see coming, but nonetheless, you know, [? if it somehow ?] did, I would clearly identify myself with the Jewish community.
>
> [00:18:09.64] INTERVIEWER: Why?
>
> [00:18:10.75] SUBJECT: That's because I think one should always identify oneself with those who are persecuted. I think that's-- that's only right.

However, he adds: "But I think I would do so as one whose persuasion is one of considerable scepticism at the same time." His ambivalence, his "inability to get two halves of his personality together again," is visible throughout the interview. On the hand he is proud of his Jewish heritage and talks at length about the persecution in Germany or mentions the German Jewish community in the US. At the same time, he expresses his devotedness to the Christian community in general and the Quaker community in particular. He categorises himself as being secular and Christian first; however, he is very disappointed that his German Christian friends are not willing to assume responsibility for their and their country's participation in the killing of Jews. In the interview he often uses his own experience of persecution as a Jew to draw comparison with persecution of other minorities in the US, especially of black people.

The testimony of Frei offers a wealth of information on various events that shaped German society before and after 1933. It also provides some information on German Jewish life in New York at the end of the 1930s. There are also glimpses of Frei's view on post-Second World War German society, and his vision of Israel. First and foremost, however, this is a template interview on how conversion to Christianity impacts Jewish identity and belonging and how second generation converts depart even more from Judaism. Seen through comparative lenses, Frei's answer to some of these issues are, as explained above, both similar and different to other Holocaust survivors who converted to Christianity. His family's secularism, attachment to German belonging, and desire to assimilate into that society all shaped Frei's later identity. The fact that he escaped the most terrible part of the Holocaust was also essential. However, it is interesting that, although all these elements would be sufficient to make him forget his Jewishness, he nevertheless returns to it very often during the interview. And even when he is tempted to deny it, he does so leaving the door open for an eventual reconsideration.

Transcript

[00:00:00.00] [TONES]

[00:01:25.83] [CHUCKLING]

[00:01:26.33] INTERVIEWER: Don't worry, it is not a monologue. OK.

[00:01:29.96] SUBJECT: Well, I was one of the lucky ones who escaped without ever having seen anything more horrible than some street clashes in Germany. And I was born in the town of Breslau, which was Southeast Germany. Silesia, now ceded to Poland, uh, in 1922.[1]

[00:01:55.19] My family moved to Berlin in 1929, and though I was only seven years old, I got the sense of an extraordinarily powerful city, um, torn between wealthy and poor. But at the same time, a cosmopolitan and highly-varied place, with a lot of avant garde literature, film, and so on and so on. Um, we were very early on in our lives politicized, because some of us, at least, saw-- very vaguely, we felt, b-- seeing brownshirts tyrannizing small clumps of people, and clashing with small groups of communists on the streets, we saw something was coming.[2]

[00:02:56.17] INTERVIEWER: You guys are fro-- why-- why did you leave Breslau, and what was your father's profession?

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[1] Breslau (Polish: Wroclaw) is a city in Silesia, Poland (in Germany until 1945). The earliest evidence of Jews in Breslau is a tombstone from 1203. In 1267 a church synod restricted the rights of the Jews in Breslau but Duke Henry IV granted them privileges between 1270 and 1290. In 1347 the community was placed under the jurisdiction of the municipality. The medieval community owned synagogues, a bathhouse, and cemeteries, from which a number of tombstones have survived. In the course of the 14th century, Jews were expelled from Breslau several times (1319, 1349, 1360). In 1455 an imperial decree expelled Jews from the city; the prohibition remained in force de jure until 1744. In 1776 there were nearly 2,000 Jews in Breslau. Several rabbis of Breslau were distinguished scholars. Noted among the Orthodox section were Joseph Jonas Fraenkel (1705–1793), Ferdinand Rosenthal (1887–1921), Moses Hoffmann (1921–1938), and B. Hamburger (1938 until his deportation to Poland in 1943). Liberals included Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), Manuel Joel (1863–90), and Jacob Guttmann (1891–1919). The Jewish population of Breslau numbered 3,255 in 1810; 7,384 in 1849; 13,916 in 1871; 19,743 in 1900; 20,212 in 1910; 23,240 in 1925; 20,202 in 1933; and 10,309 in 1939. See the entry for "Breslau" in *Encyclopedia Judaica*: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/breslau. For a more in-depth history of Breslau, its Jewish community, and the persecution during the Nazi Regime see Abraham Ascher, *A Community under Siege: The Jews of Breslau under Nazism* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2007). Chapter 1 is especially relevant for the period prior to 1933, pp. 27-68. See also Katharina Friedla, *Juden in Breslau/Wroclaw, 1933-1949* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2015). Chapter 2 deals with the period of the Weimar Republic, pp. 41-110.

[2] For more information on antisemitism during the Weimar Republic and the activity of the paramilitary groups before 1933, see Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of Jews* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 10-28; see also Richard Levy, "Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1890-1933: How Popular Was It?" in *The Germans and the Holocaust: Popular Responses to the Persecution and Murder of the Jews*, eds. Susanna Schrafstetter and Alan Steinweis (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), 17-40.

[00:03:00.96] SUBJECT: My father was a doctor.[3] He was a professor in a medical school, and he was asked to join a-- the staff of a big hospital. In fact, to direct one of its departments in Berlin in the suburb of Spandau, uh, in 1920.

[00:03:19.86] Um, we were thoroughly middle-class. My mother was a doctor too, um, and so we were really protected. Um, we suffered under the worst of the chaos in Germany. For example, a kind of inflation in 1923, which makes present American inflation look like stability by contrast. Uh, but still, we had regular means of sustenance.

[00:03:51.17] My father had a regular salary, so that the oncoming American depression, which had such terrible effects on the German economy, was not really felt by us in any cutting of our standard of living. We were protected. And for just that reason, we couldn't imagine that in 1933 and thereafter, our lives would be completely turned about and just pushed into sheer chaos.[4]

[00:04:18.79] INTERVIEWER: Were you an only child?

[00:04:20.36] SUBJECT: No, I was the youngest. Very much the youngest of three. Um, and that was very fortunate for me, because both my sister and my brother, who were respectively 10 and 6 years older than I, were finishing, or near finishing, the end of their high school career, which ends in Germany at 18 with the so-called abiturium And my sister was just starting in medical school, and that was simply out. You just didn't do that anymore.

[00:04:55.94] And my brother was closing-- near to closing his high school career, and he too found every avenue cut off. That was the first step, that you simply found yourself professionally no longer able to do a thing, and socially ostracized from the rest of the community.[5]

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[3] Hans Frei's father was Wilhelm Siegmund Frei (5 September 1885 – 27 January 1943), a German dermatologist best known for his work on Durand-Nicolas-Favre disease and for the Frei Test, which was developed in 1925 for the detection of lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV). There are not many sources on Hans Frei's father. In the interview he mentions him briefly a few times and the Frei Collection at the Yale Divinity School has a little information on him. See http://www.whonamedit.com/doctor.cfm/1407.html.

[4] The stock market crash on October 24, 1929, marked the beginning of the Great Depression in the United States. In Germany, depression hit in a different but no less powerful way. The new Weimar Republic had weathered a period of intense inflation in the 1920s due to reparations required by the Versailles Treaty. Rather than tax German citizens to pay the reparations, Germany borrowed millions of dollars from the United States, entering further into debt. American demands for loan repayment had disastrous repercussions for an already fragile German economy, with banks failing and unemployment rising. As in the United States, the Weimar Republic decided to cut spending rather than increase it to spur the economy, further worsening the situation. See *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* entry for "The Great Depression": https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-great-depression. On life in Weimar Republic and the steps leading to the Nazi takeover, see the brief introduction, with links to primary documents, in Robert G. Moeller, *The Nazi State and German Society: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 3-10. On the effect of the economic depression on Germany see Michael Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, eds., *Towards the Holocaust: The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic* (Westport CT., London: Greenwood Press, 1983), especially pp. 37-74.

[5] Frei is talking here about the introduction of *numerus clausus* followed by the complete ban on Jewish students from entering university. *Numerus clausus* ("closed number" in Latin) was one of many methods used by several interwar European countries to limit the number of Jewish students at a university. For more information on the exclusion of

[00:05:16.46] INTERVIEWER: Why?

[00:05:17.72] SUBJECT: Um, you were socially ostracized by laws that came in 1935. The so-called "Nuremberg Race Laws," which just really, in effect, prohibited-- uh, institutionalized the prohibition of genuine intercourse between the Germans, in general, and their Jewish neighbors. Um, and professionally, you were simply prohibited from taking any part in the bureaucracy, which was terribly important in Germany, in the legal, medical, and other professions.[6]

[00:06:01.02] And business opportunities were simply nonexistent, because, uh, Jewish stores, first, were boycotted on one remarkable day on-- in-- in early 1933.[7] Uh, and then thereafter, they were increasingly restricted. And finally, simply, in effect, expropriated. All this without any evidence of violence yet. It was a graduated program of pressure.

[00:06:28.84] INTERVIEWER: The history of your family in Germany. Was there a long history?

[00:06:33.87] SUBJECT: Oh yes. We had been there for generations and generations. Uh, one of my ancestors was traced back to having been the first Jewish officer in the Prussian army fighting against Napoleon in the so-called Wars of Liberation in 1813, in which he was killed in one of the first battles of the reconstituted Prussian army against Napoleon. So on both sides we had a long history in Germany, and thought ourselves as utterly patriotic.

[00:07:08.88] Uh, politically, belonging to a centrist party somewhere. Uh, the equivalent of supporting either a Gerald Ford or a Jimmy Carter over against their left-wing liberal or their

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Jews from various professions, even before the Nuremberg Laws, see Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, the Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 9-40.

[6] The Nuremberg Laws were anti-Jewish statutes enacted by Germany on September 15, 1935, marking a major step in enacting racial policy and removing Jews from German society. These laws, on which the rest of Nazi racial policy hung, were written hastily and approved by Hitler personally. They deprived Jews of German citizenship, prohibited Jewish households from having German maids under the age of 45, prohibited any non-Jewish German from marrying a Jew and outlawed sexual relations between Jews and Germans. Hitler claimed during a Reichstag session that the Nuremberg Laws would actually help the Jews by creating "a level ground on which the German people may find a tolerable relation with the Jewish people." See "The Nuremberg Laws: Background & Overview," at *The Jewish Virtual Library*: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/background-and-overview-of-the-nuremberg-laws. A more in-depth description and examination can be found in James F. Trent, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: Nazi Persecution of Jewish-Christian Germans* (Lawrence, KA.: Kansas University Press, 2003), especially chapter 3, pp. 101-138. For an analysis of the judicial justification behind the Nuremberg Laws see Yves Charles Zarka, *Un Détail Nazi dans la Pansée de Carl Schmitt* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 2005).

[7] Frei is referring here to the April 1, 1933 boycott of Jewish businesses. The boycott tested the reaction of the public to policies and legislation excluding Jews from the economic and social life of the country. The results were mixed, with some regions of Germany less eager than others to follow the Nazi policy. This led to a realization that anti-Jewish measures should be implemented in smaller steps over the coming months and years. See Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: the Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 29-89. See also Robert Wistrich, "From Weimar to Hitler', in *The Holocaust: A Reader*, eds. Simone Gigliotti and Berel Lang (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 44-67.

right-wing conservative opponents. And, um, my father had been wounded three times in the First World War. And my only uncle had been killed in the First World War.[8]

[00:07:33.33] So we just thought ourselves as deeply indigenous in German culture. And for me, for example, my parents projected an academic career. And all of that was simply, suddenly shut off.

[00:07:48.15] INTERVIEWER: Had you, or your family, or immediate family, or perhaps your grandparents, anyone you knew of, ever experienced any anti-Semitism?

[00:07:57.06] SUBJECT: Yes. So-called "genteel anti-Semitism" is something that we lived with. But the difference was the difference between day and night when I think '33 came.[9]

[00:08:10.02] All of a sudden, people who, uh, were friends with you either simply cut you off completely, or more likely they would, in an apologetic way, say to you, well, of course you're one of the good Jews. And surely neither Hitler has anything-- neither Hitler nor we have anything against you. It's just that--

[00:08:34.95] And then you would go on to hear about the masses of the Jews. Jews in general were evil. A particular Jew, like yourself, the only Jew that they knew, were all right.[10]

[00:08:47.19] It's very much the same syndrome that we find in America, especially in the South, in the-- well, when I first came over, nearer to the beginning of the 20th century and around 1938, when it was all right, the nigger was all right in his place, and blacks were OK in their place. Individual blacks one could be friends with, butcri, uh, the race as a whole had to be kept in its place. That was the beginning in 1933.

[00:09:19.72] INTERVIEWER: Do you remember conversations with your parents about what was happening?

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[8] A higher percentage of German Jews fought in World War I than any other minority ethnic or religious group in Germany. Over 100,000 out of a total German-Jewish population of 550,000 served and almost 12,000 were killed. See Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011). See also David Fine, *Jewish Integration in the German Army in the First World War* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

[9] "Genteel antisemitism" refers to that type of hatred and/or prejudice that mainly manifests itself in exclusion of and social contempt for Jews but falls short of calling for radical policies against them. For a brief discussion of "genteel antisemitism" see Jocelyn Hellig, *The Holocaust and Antisemitism: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 74-5.

[10] This type of distinction, between the Jews one knows and Jews in general, is often highlighted by historians of the Holocaust. See for example, Ian Kershaw, "The persecution of the Jews and German popular opinion in the Third Reich," in *The Nazi Holocaust*, ed. Michael Marrus (Westport, London: Meckler, 1989) vol. 5, 86-114.

[00:09:24.60] SUBJECT: Yes. There were some very pathetic things in my family, and it was paralleled by others. Uh, my grandmother lived with us.[11] We didn't have the small-- tiny, small, nuclear family that we have in America. My grandmother kept repeating that, uh, if only the Nazis could have it impressed on them that the Jewish population suffered as keenly in the devastating losses of the First World War as any other sector of the population, surely they would change their policy.

[00:10:01.08] Uh, there were a lot of people, a surprising number of Jews, like that. But my parents realized it was different. They had the uneasy feeling that it was the beginning of the end of our citizenship in Germany. And I think, by and large, they were terrified.

[00:10:21.36] They-- their first-- their first aim was to get us kids out of Germany fast. And their second aim was that as long as we stayed there, as long as we didn't get out, don't make waves. Because if you make waves, you'll disappear. If you don't make waves, you're relatively safe.

[00:10:43.56] INTERVIEWER: Disappear?

[00:10:45.09] SUBJECT: You would disappear. Uh, the fear was-- by about 1935, you began to hear rumors about something called concentration camps.[12] Uh, you beg-- eh-- there was even the rumor of a, um, children's concentration camp. I don't know--[13]

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[11] On domestic life in Germany see Nancy Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially chapters 2 and 3, pp. 49-109.

[12] From its rise to power in 1933, the Nazi regime built a series of incarceration sites to imprison and eliminate real and perceived "enemies of the state." Most prisoners in the early incarceration sites were political prisoners – German Communists, Socialists, Social Democrats – as well as Roma (Gypsies), Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, and persons accused of "asocial" or socially deviant behavior. Many of these sites were called concentration camps. According to the USHMM's *Holocaust Encyclopedia,* "Many people refer to all of the Nazi incarceration sites during the Holocaust as concentration camps. The term concentration camp is used very loosely to describe places of incarceration and murder under the Nazi regime, however, not all sites established by the Nazis were concentration camps. Nazi-established sites include: **Concentration camps**: For the detention of civilians seen as real or perceived "enemies of the Reich." **Forced-labor camps**: In forced-labor camps, the Nazi regime brutally exploited the labor of prisoners for economic gain and to meet labor shortages. Prisoners lacked proper equipment, clothing, nourishment, or rest. **Transit camps**: Transit camps functioned as temporary holding facilities for Jews awaiting deportation. These camps were usually the last stop before deportations to a killing center. **Prisoner-of-war camps**: For Allied prisoners of war, including Poles and Soviet soldiers. **Killing centers**: Established primarily or exclusively for the assembly-line style murder of large numbers of people immediately upon arrival to the site. There were 5 killing centers for the murder primarily of Jews. The term is also used to describe 'euthanasia' sites for the murder of disabled patients." See *The Holocaust Encyclopedia* entry for "Nazi Camps": https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-camps For a more in-depth description and examination of concentration camps in Germany see Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 51-69. Gellately also discusses the knowledge and media reports about concentration camps; see also pp. 204-23, "Concentration Camps in Public Spaces."

[13] The rumors about children's concentration camps, although not accurate, are a testament to the terror. On Youth Camps in Nazi Germany see Geoffrey Megargee, *The USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), vol. 1 section 3, 1525-34. See also Nikolaus Wachsmann, *Hitler's*

[00:11:05.01] I don't believe there was any such thing at that time, but I remember that, um, I was able to get out and go to school in England, beginning in 1935. Though I returned home to Berlin during vacations. And one time I missed a train and, uh, came one train late.

[00:11:25.37] And my parents were absolutely panicked when they arrived at the station for the scheduled arrival of the train that I wasn't there, because even though I was an experienced traveler, their immediate reaction was that I must've been grabbed at the frontier between Holland and Germany and stuck away into a concentration camp. So by that time, they were alert.[14]

[00:11:46.84] INTERVIEWER: Mhm. What was your perception and what was their perception-- or, uh, or more germane. What was their perception of a concentration camp?

[00:11:55.62] SUBJECT: Uh, vague. Vague. We knew it was brutal.

[00:12:00.80] We knew it was confined to, uh, Jews, on one hand, and radical political opponents. Left-wing Democrats and Communists of the regime on the other hand. We did not yet know that it was so brutal that it was moving towards the extermination, to the mass extermination of people. That we did not yet know.

[00:12:26.42] INTERVIEWER: The Nuremberg Laws.

[00:12:27.58] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:12:27.89] INTERVIEWER: Uh, can you describe them, explain them? Exactly what that all entailed.

[00:12:34.54] SUBJECT: Um, the Nuremberg Laws were in part, at any rate, similar to the grandfather laws in this country, which forbade intermarriage among races.[15] It just simply said, in effect, that from here on in, a German could not-- an Aryan Gentile German could not marry

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Prisons: Legal Terror in Nazi Germany (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), especially chapters 3 and 4, pp. 112-88.

[14] Although such sudden arrests of Jews did not happen at the time, it is important to note the real-time mood of panic. For more information on Jewish life in Nazi Germany see Francis R. Nicosia and David Scarase, eds., *Jewish Life in Nazi Germany: Dilemmas and Responses* (New York and Oxford: Berghan Books, 2010), especially chapter 4, "German Zionism and Jewish Life in Nazi Berlin," pp. 89-116.

[15] Frei is referring here to the "Grandfather clause," which was a statutory or constitutional device enacted by seven southern states between 1895 and 1910 to deny suffrage to African Americans. It provided that those who had enjoyed the right to vote prior to 1866 or 1867, and their lineal descendants, would be exempt from recently enacted educational, property, or tax requirements for voting. Because the former slaves were not granted the franchise until the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, those clauses worked effectively to exclude black people from the vote but assured the franchise to many impoverished and illiterate whites. Although the U.S. Supreme Court declared in 1915 that the Grandfather clause was unconstitutional because it violated equal voting rights guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment, it was not until President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that Congress was able to put an end to the discriminatory practice. See the entry "Grandfather clause" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*: https://www.britannica.com/topic/grandfather-clause.

Jews. Um, it forbade Germans becoming household help in Jewish households, or the other way around. Though there wasn't much of that.

[00:13:19.25] It excluded the, um, Jews from participation in the professions, except on a tiny quantitative basis. And if they could prove themselves to have participated in the First World War. But those were really insignificant exceptions. And it simply then, as a whole, institutionalized the fact that Jews were no longer officially part of the German citizenry.

[00:14:03.87] INTERVIEWER: Who, uh, adopted these laws?

[00:14:07.64] SUBJECT: Um, these laws were, in effect, simply promulgated. The German Parliament, the so-called Reichstag became a rubber stamp after March 1933, which were the last, more or less, free elections. So it was, in effect, the Nazified governmental bureaucracy that promulgated these laws, with the help of the Nazi Party, because the distinction was no longer at all clear or fast, the distinction between the Nazi Party and the government. And then the thing was rubber-stamped by the Parliament, by the Reichstag.[16]

[00:14:59.16] INTERVIEWER: The general population had no opportunity to vote on these laws?

[00:15:03.18] SUBJECT: The general population had no opportunity to vote on these laws. What you had in Germany was after the last free election, you had a series of rend-- referenda. But these referenda were always "yes" and "no" referenda on specific, uh, ideological issues. Was Hitler to succeed Hindenburg as both reich's chancellor and reich's president, combining the hitherto two offices into one. Yes or no?

[00:15:39.49] And the answer was yes for 90% of the population, because-- in part, because there really was a wave of extraordinary enthusiasm. And in part, because people were either unpolitically inclined, non-politically inclined, or they were utterly confused. But there is no doubt that the propaganda machine of the Nazis was extraordinarily powerful in rallying even those who-- many of those who had hitherto been their opponents.[17]

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[16] The Reichstag was the Lower house of the Weimar Republic's Legislature. It originated with the creation of the Weimar Constitution in 1919. After 1933, the Reichstag continued to operate formally, but without any significant decisional power. See Richard Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Press, 2003), especially chapter 5, section 3, "Democracy Destroyed," pp. 350-74. See also Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Stages of Totalitarian 'Integration' (Gleichschaltung): The Consolidation of National Socialist Rule in 1933 and 1934," in *Republic To Reich: The Making of the Nazi Revolution. Ten Essays*, ed. Hajo Holborn (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 109–28.

[17] The Nazi propaganda machine was examined very early, and a scholarly work published by Yale University Press already in 1943. See Derrick Sington and Arthur Weidenfeld, *The Goebbels Experiment: A Study of the Nazi Propaganda Machine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943). The book covers topics as diverse as the institutional organization of the Nazi propaganda, propaganda in the press, in cinema, in music, literature, and in broadcasting, as well as propaganda and the armed forces. For a more recent analysis of Nazi propaganda see Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* (London: Hurst and Company, 2016),

[00:16:21.48] It took really tough fiber not to say to yourself, I was wrong in opposing them. They were that overwhelming in their political propaganda. And it took an awful lot as a Jew to be able to say to yourself, I'm not really what they're making me out to be. They were that remarkable in their propagandistic effective.[18]

[00:16:51.45] Indeed, this is a, um-- this is a, um-- kind of some symptom which you find among oppressed peoples, that they tend to adopt the image which their oppressors impose on them, the image of themselves. And that happened to an awful lot of Jews. Especially because none of us in the liberal professional Jewish community held very tightly-- well, I won't say none of us.

[00:17:23.91] Not-- but an awful lot of us no longer held tightly to our Jewish heritage. And as a result, we had no cultural background to hang on to. We had no way, really, of reinforcing each other, except for a kind of gallows humor, which behind closed doors, we would whisper to each other.

[00:17:53.40] INTERVIEWER: There are several questions that come to mind apropos of what you said. You opened up the large area of assimilation. That subject.

[00:18:01.56] SUBJECT: Mhm. Mhm.

[00:18:02.34] INTERVIEWER: How was a Jew identified? Your father's name was Frei? F---

[00:18:05.93] SUBJECT: Frei.

[00:18:06.31] INTERVIEWER: But how--

[00:18:07.33] SUBJECT: F-R-E-I. It was the German word for "free."

[00:18:10.20] INTERVIEWER: All right. His first name?

[00:18:11.58] SUBJECT: It was Wilhelm, which was the last two-- or last three Kaiser's name. So it-- he could not be identified as a Jew at all. However, there was a whole range of names that one would identify as German-Jewish.

[00:18:32.31] For example, you could begin with the name Meyer, which was usually, if not always, Jewish. And you would go over on the side to such names as Rosenburg, which usually meant German-Jewish. These were often names that had been adopted by Jews during the

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especially chapter 3, “Towards a Nazi Theory of Persuasion,” pp. 99-138, which examines methods of Nazi propaganda, including the use of emotion, subversion, repetition, and entertainment.

[18] On the psychological attraction of Nazism see Frank McDonough, *Hitler and the Rise of the Nazi Party*, 2nd edition (London: Pearson, 2012), 89-90.

emancipation period, um, which began in the late 18th century,[19] and then went on for a hundred years, when it was made easier for Jews to become regular German citizens.

[00:19:11.15] Uh, frequently, Jews adopted simply the names of the cities from which they came. For example, my maternal grandparents came from Frankfurt and were called Frankfurther. Um-- um, but Jews-- then the Nazis had a kind of a pseudo-scientific race theory which claimed that Jews were biologically different from the Aryan race.

[00:19:46.98] And with that went a whole lot of further pseudo-scientific paraphernalia, such as, for example, claiming that people looked Jewish. Other people did not. And so an awful lot of people who were beaten up in the streets, incidentally, were not Jews, because they were thought to look Jewish.[20]

[00:20:06.36] INTERVIEWER: Did you see any of that? Did you see any--

[00:20:08.37] SUBJECT: I saw some of that, but it's amazing how little I saw. Uh, I saw some of it with a little Jewish newspaper vendor across the street from us, who on the day of the boycott of Jewish businesses in-- on April 1, 1933, was beaten up by a crowd of brown-shirted ruffians.

[00:20:34.71] When you see an innocent man being beaten up, and you know that he's not being beaten up because the law is powerless, but because the ones who are beating him up really represent the law, then you begin to experience real terror. And that-- it-- it-- it is what blacks must, uh, feel when they experience police terror in South Africa, and sometimes in this country. Um, then we experienced the terror in more indirect ways.[21]

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[19] Christian Wilhelm von Dohm (1751–1820) was a German historian and political writer. He was a friend of Moses Mendelssohn, a central figure in the German intellectual Jewish community of that era. In 1781, Dohm published a two-volume work entitled *Ueber die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* ("On the Civil Improvement of the Jews"), which argued for Jewish political equality on humanitarian grounds. He did this at the suggestion of Mendelssohn, to whom the Alsatian Jews had appealed for aid, but who thought that such a work would produce a better effect if written by a Christian. Dohm's work dealt not only with French Jews, but with the condition of the Jews in the different stages of their history. However, his proposals, which were influential in the emancipation of French Jews, would be implemented in stages in Germany at the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century. See Gotthard Deutsch and A. M. Friedenberg, "Dohm, Christian Wilhelm Von," in *The Jewish Encylcopedia*: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5256-dohm-christian-wilhelm-von. For a more in-depth discussion on Jewish assimilation in Germany see Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski, eds., *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth Century Germany* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2008). See also Nancy Reagin, *Sweeping the German Nation: Domesticity and National Identity in Germany, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[20] On the physiological aspects of the Nazi racial theory see Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), especially chapter 3, "The Jewish Psyche," pp. 60-103.

[21] It is important to note the frequency of comparisons that Frei makes between the situation he encountered personally during the Third Reich and the situation of black people in the United States. He is not the only one to point to such similarities. See Johnpeter Horst Grill and Robert L. Jenkins, "The Nazis and the American South in the 1930s: A Mirror Image?," *The Journal of Southern History* 58, no. 4 (Nov., 1992): 667-94. See also Eric Sundquist, *Strangers in the Land: Blacks, Jews, Post-Holocaust America* (London, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press,

[00:21:15.04] For example, there was a day in June of 1934 when Nazis suddenly turned-- the Nazis, Hitler, suddenly turned on some of his own followers. It was a power struggle within the party, and he eliminated, in effect, one wing of it. The so-called "SA," the Sturmabteilung, um, killing its head.[22] But in the process, also wiping out a whole echelon of conservative leaders who were in retirement, but about whom he was still fearful. Including some leaders of the Nationalist Party, and some leaders of the so-called Reichswehr, the army.

[00:22:05.01] We didn't know it was happening until it was announced on the radio in a rambling and fierce speech that Hitler made the next day. And so when a very highly-respectable-looking man tried to take refuge with us in our apartment, my parents weren't there, only my grandmother and I, we felt the whole thing was weird, strange. Perhaps he was there as an provocative agent of the party.

[00:22:33.90] And anyway, we asked-- in any case, we asked him to leave. And then I saw him being led away by the police when he went downstairs. And I looked out of the window. And the next day, I realized that he was probably an opponent of the Nazi regime. It was a-- for me and for my conscience, it was a terrible occasion.[23]

[00:23:00.75] INTERVIEWER: When he asked for refuge, what-- what did he req-- request?

[00:23:05.53] SUBJECT: He-- he did a very typical thing in those days. He claimed to be a regimental comrade of my father's from first World War days. The First World War was-- had not ended more than 15, 16 years earlier, and was very, very vividly in the mind of all Germans. It was under that pretext that he asked for refuge.

[00:23:34.09] And I realized very soon that, uh, first of all, he was not a fellow Jew. And secondly, that he did not know what my father's regiment was, because I knew that off by heart.

2005). Sundquist points out similarities between the fate of Jews during the Third Reich and of black people in the US before the Civil Rights movements, but also discusses competitive martyrology and other dangers of comparison. See especially chapter 7, pp. 435-502.

[22] Frei is talking here about the Night of the Long Knives and the elimination of Ernst Röhm, leader of the Sturmabteilung (SA, literally Storm/Assault Division), the Nazi party's original paramilitary organization. In 1934 it incorporated close to 3 million men. "Alleging that Röhm was plotting a putsch, Hitler ordered a massacre. On the night of June 30, 1934, Röhm and many more leaders of the SA were shot by members of Heinrich Himmler's SS. Some of Hitler's other enemies were also murdered, including the last chancellor of the Weimar Republic, Kurt von Schleicher." See the entry for "The Night of the Long Knives in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*: https://www.britannica.com/event/Night-of-the-Long-Knives See also Thomas Balister, *Gewalt und Ordnung: Kalkül und Faszination der SA* (Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1989); Heinz Höhne, *Mordsache Röhm: Hitlers Durchbruch zur Allein-Herrschaft, 1933-1934* (Hamburg: Spiegel-Buch, 1984).

[23] On the way children and adult Holocaust survivors were affected by such trauma see Judith Kestenberg and Ira Brenner, *The Last Witness: The Child Survivor of the Holocaust* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996). See also Aaron Hass, *The Aftermath: Living with the Holocaust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Randolph Braham, ed. *The Psychological Perspectives of the Holocaust and of its Aftermath* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, 1988).

We were all patriotic, and therefore knew what regiments our fathers had belonged to. And we became terribly uneasy.

[00:23:55.19] INTERVIEWER: You were 12 years old. You were--

[00:23:56.63] SUBJECT: I was 12 years old, yes, and we-- and my grandmother was in her 70s and somewhat doddery. And, uh, I didn't realize. Had I known, had I had the radio on-- no, not that. I think that's incorrect.

[00:24:11.88] But as I-- as soon as we turned on the radio next day, I realized what had happened. And my parents said, you must stay indoors, uh, because, uh, the streets-- the street corners were occupied by police with heavy weapons, as I soon found out. Because as soon as my parents said, you must stay indoors, of course, I found ways of seeking out and saw the excitement for myself.

[00:24:42.54] INTERVIEWER: You were prisoners. Therefore, the family was a prisoner in its own apartment?

[00:24:46.56] SUBJECT: Uh, not yet. Not yet. You see, that didn't happen until about in-- about 1939. The Nazis were extraordinarily smart in putting the squeeze on gradually. About 1939 it began to happen that then you had to put on the yellow Star of David.[24]

[00:25:15.49] We didn't have to do that yet. We were the lucky ones. We hadn't le-- we left before that happened.

[00:25:21.58] It was then that people began, in effect, first to not want to go out anymore except to the stores. And then after that, shortly before deportation, they were actually forbidden to leave their apartment. But that we will-- as I say, we were not yet under that stress.[25]

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[24] During the Nazi era, German authorities reintroduced the Jewish badge as a key element in their plan to persecute and eventually destroy the Jewish population of Europe. They used the badge not only to stigmatize and humiliate Jews but also to segregate them and to watch and control their movements. The badge also facilitated deportation. Frei is right about the timing. Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels was the first to suggest a "general distinguishing mark" for German Jews in a memorandum in May 1938. Security Police chief Reinhard Heydrich reiterated the idea at a November 12, 1938, meeting convened by Herman Göring following Kristallnacht. In both cases no immediate action was taken. In September 1939, following the German invasion of Poland, individual German military and civilian authorities imposed the Jewish badge in certain Polish towns and villages. In the General Government, that part of Poland directly occupied by Germany, Governor General Hans Frank ordered on November 23, 1939, that all Jews over the age of ten wear a "Jewish Star." See the entry "Jewish Badge: During The Nazi Era," in *The Holocaust Encyclopeida*: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-badge-during-the-nazi-era. See also "Distinctive Badges that Jews Were Forced to Wear During the Holocaust," on Yad Vashem website: https://www.yadvashem.org/artifacts/featured/jewish-badges.html.

[25] More on the gradual exclusion of Jews in Germany in Marion Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), especially chapter 1, "Jews are turned into Pariahs, 1933-1938," pp. 17-49.

[00:25:41.95] INTERVIEWER: Did your parents discuss with you your reaction to this man that had come to the door requesting refuge?

[00:25:55.22] SUBJECT: We discussed it. And my parents were very ordinary people in this respect. They were both the highly educated people, but they were scared. And they said that it was a terrible thing, but that I had probably done the right thing.

[00:26:22.91] INTERVIEWER: The propaganda. You mentioned the propaganda as being so effective. In that day and age, radio was the prime vehicle. How did you experience propaganda subverting the society, the culture you knew?

[00:26:40.71] SUBJECT: It wasn't only the radio. The Nazis were extraordinarily skillful, extremist parties usually are, in organizing mass meetings. And once or twice, even though Jewish, I attended at the edges of a mass meeting just to look for myself.[26]

[00:27:03.18] That was still possible, because not everybody, not every youngster, was in one of those typical Hitler Youth uniforms.[27] Black short black pants, a brown shirt, and leather strap across the shoulders. Uh, not everybody had it on yet. So I attended one or two.

[00:27:22.62] And it was the-- the-- the organization of blocks, whole city areas, and transporting for free everybody in that area of a certain age group to a specifically designated mass meeting, so that you would have crowds of tens of thousands. And what would be done there would be, first of all, uh, speeches that would invariably do two things.

[00:27:55.12] On the surface, they would appeal to idealism, but the undercurrent. The strong, and really much stronger and more forceful undercurrent was always the hate of those who were not part of us. You want to watch out when political-- politicians appeal to the instinct of hate in you. And that's the biggest political lesson I learned in-- in Germany.

[00:28:31.83] Uh, and then after those speeches were over, then the entertainment would start. And the entertainment would always involve that highly effective, uh, mass use of martial music. A kind of martial music which had the same effect on the youth participating there that loud rock

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[26] On the power of mass rallies see Frank McDonough, *Hitler and the Rise of the Nazi Party*, 2nd edition (London: Pearson, 2012), 66-78.

[27] Hitler Youth (German: *Hitlerjugend*) was an organization set up by Adolf Hitler in 1933 (although some trace the origins of the organization earlier) for educating and training male youth along Nazi principles. Under the leadership of Baldur von Schirach, head of all German youth programs, the Hitler Youth included by 1935 almost 60 percent of German boys. By July 1, 1936, it was expected that all young "Aryan" Germans would join. On Hitler's Youth see Michael Kater, *Hitler Youth* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), especially the second chapter, "Serving in the Hitler Youth," pp. 13-69. The chapter deals with, among other matters, uniformity, authoritarianism, militarism, training, and discipline.

and roll has on our kids today. It is a kind of a mesmerizing effect. You felt yourself just pulled in.[28]

[00:29:05.28] Martial music is obviously not as good music, but-- as rock and roll, but it just simply had the same effect. And then the group would be organized in ord-- into a speech chorus. Uh, and if there's anything that scares the daylights out of me today even, it is a huge group of people organized to repeat slogans in rhythm. Because that was an immensely effective way of just robbing them of their own mindset, sweeping them into the current.

[00:29:49.50] INTERVIEWER: How did they get them to do this? And how many people are you talking about?

[00:29:53.32] SUBJECT: Oh, I am talking about, uh, groups from 2,000 up to hundreds of thousands in-- in the party-- um, the Congresses. The annual party Congresses, which were so frighteningly memorialized by one of the great propaganda films of that generation, Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will.[29]

[00:30:19.65] Look at that film and you will know what I'm talking about. And you'll see that even though it had, I don't know how many, at least 100,000 participants, that you can do the same thing with 2,000 partici-- participants. As long as you have a massive expression.

[00:30:34.32] INTERVIEWER: You saw the organization of these gatherings, if you will.

[00:30:38.36] SUBJECT: Yes, mhm.

[00:30:39.90] INTERVIEWER: Can you describe in detail what you saw as the way in which these people were convinced, and brought, and gotten to this place of congregation?

[00:30:53.08] SUBJECT: It-- they were organized almost in cell-like fashion. There was a leader, and a Nazi leader for women's organizations, young-- youngsters' organizations, and, uh, male youth, female youth in every small area of town. And you would be called up to-- it would be expected that you would go, because everybody, pretty much, found it at least expedient to join. Because, well-- at least "expedient." Some joined very happily.

[00:31:40.49] But if you didn't join, you pretty soon learned that there were ways of ostracizing you that were not only socially painful. But, mind you, they could be socially painful. And social

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[28] On the use of music by Nazi propaganda see Saul Friedländer and Jörfn Rüsen, eds., *Richard Wagner im Dritten Reich* (Munchen: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000). See also Erik Levi, *Mozart and the Nazis: How the Third Reich Abused a Cultural Icon* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), especially pp. 145-89.

[29] For more on Nazi Propaganda in cinema and broadcasting see Aristotle A. Kallis, *Nazi Propaganda and the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 19-26 and 31-9. On Nazi cinema see Eric Rentscchler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1996). Rentscchler (pp. 422-4) gives a bibliography on Leni Riefenstahl (1902 –2003). In the 1930s Riefenstahl directed the Nazi propaganda movies *Triumph des Willens* ("Triumph of the Will," 1935) and *Olympia* (1938), widely considered two of the most effective and technically innovative Nazi propaganda films ever made.

ostracism isn't, for adolescents, especially, a painful business. But it could also mean that you found yourself with fewer opportunities to advance into work that you wanted.[30]

[00:32:14.44] INTERVIEWER: I think it's--

[00:32:15.26] SUBJECT: If, for example, you wanted join the bureaucracy later on.

[00:32:20.90] INTERVIEWER: I think what is perplexing is, in the early days, how is this social ostracism affected? How were they able to insinuate their, uh, pers-- their manner of behavior into every aspect of German life?

[00:32:39.47] SUBJECT: It was-- all I can tell you is that it was done with remarkable efficiency and remarkable speed, and that is because the Nazi Party itself was superbly organized. It was organized everywhere, you see. And even if it was a minority, a beautifully organized apparatus, even when it is a minority, once it comes into power, it can spread directly like a cancer, because it's omnipresent.[31] And if in a certain school, for instance-- let's say by '33, when the Nazi Party was, after all, the biggest individual party in Germany, let's say that 100-- out of 100 kids in a school, 30 belonged to the Hitler Youth in 1933. The rest would be gravy once the party was in power.

[00:33:37.06] INTERVIEWER: Where were you--

[00:33:37.55] SUBJECT: And it was like that everywhere. It was not-- it was simply a matter of organization. Nothing else. That's how they could insinuate themselves.

[00:33:46.78] And something else has to be said there, I think. And that is, you see, that except for people very much on the left wing, the mystique of nationalism was very strong in Germany. And the Nazis appealed to an enormous number of people who didn't count themselves strictly Nazis at all, by appealing to a renewal of the German tradition that was so utterly defeated and crushed in 1918.[32]

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[30] The grassroots exclusion Frei is suggesting here was manifested in different ways throughout the Third Reich. As Germans became more accustomed to tougher policies against Jews, grassroots exclusion and abuse became more common. On consent and coercion in Nazi Germany see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans and the Final Solution* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 119-236. See also Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[31] Frei talks in glowing terms about Nazi organization. In addition to from the book of Frank McDonough referenced in note 56, see Richard Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (New York: Penguin, 2005) especially chapter 2, "The mobilization of the spirit," pp. 120-219.

[32] On the effect of defeat in the First World War on the German mind see "Aftermath of World War I and the Rise of Nazism, 1918–1933," on the USHMM website: https://www.ushmm.org/learn/introduction-to-the-holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide/chapter-1/aftermath-of-world-war-i-and-the-rise-of-nazism-1918-1933. For a more in-depth analysis, see Wilhelm Diest and E. J. Feuchtwanger, "The Military Collapse of the German Empire: the Reality Behind the Stab-in-the-Back Myth," *War in History* 3, no. 2 (1996): 186–207.

[00:34:25.13] And therefore, they could sweep an awful lot of people who were not strictly-speaking Nazis into their ideology. They appealed to a "national renewal," they called it. They didn't say, become Nazis, they said, Germany, reawaken. Renew yourselves. We are the instrument of the national renewal.

[00:34:48.26] And boy, did it have appeal. So the ideology very shrewdly worded on the one hand, and beautifully organized in the party structure, down to the last detail, on the other hand. That's what did it.

[00:35:03.83] INTERVIEWER: What has your experience with the Hitler Youth, or the brownshirts?[33]

[00:35:08.56] SUBJECT: Uh, that it took an active and independent mind, which is not easy for a person of 12-- 10 to 12 to have. And I only had it because my parents and my friends supported me in this, as we supported each other in this individually. It took an active and independent mind to say, I don't want to be in that. It's not only that I'm excluded, I know I can't be part of that. But it took an active and independent mind not to be jealous.

[00:35:49.85] INTERVIEWER: You didn't express this in any way? It was just an inner feeling?

[00:35:53.35] SUBJECT: Uh, as I recall, I never had the guts to confess that I was jealous, because I knew it was wrong, utterly wrong. With the top part of my mind, the rational, independent part of my mind, I knew very well that even-- that in a certain sense, I was lucky not to be able to join, because I might have been sucked in otherwise into something that, uh, I knew even though had a powerful emotional appeal, was utterly wrong.

[00:36:24.31] INTERVIEWER: You mentioned in a class, or a group of 100 young people, there might have been 30 brownshirts. Was that your circumstance?

[00:36:32.25] SUBJECT: Uh, yeah. I am not-- again, I can't really remember that too well. Because before the Nazis actually came to power, in my little, or not-so-little gymnasium in my little high school-- and by the way, German youngsters began high school in-- at age 10.

[00:36:56.70] Um, we were a polyglot group. Mainly middle-class, and many of us from academic and professional groups. Uh, it was a bit vulgar to belong to a group that had a reputation for being rowdy.

[00:37:19.88] And so nobody was really altogether sure who belonged to the Hitler Youth. I couldn't tell you how many did and how many didn't. But we knew some did.

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[33] 'Brownshirts' was another name for the SA (see note 60). Here there seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of the interviewer about the relationship between the Hitler Youth and the SA. They were separate organizations.

[00:37:30.38] And also there were a lot of other youth groups, you see? Germany was full of youth groups, uh, that were organized into romantic wandering parties.[34] We strummed our guitars in adolescence, as we marched along the green paths of the German woods days on end, you see?

[00:37:58.64] Now, again, the Hitler Youth took advantage of that general pervasive romantic adolescent atmosphere. And so there were a lot of groups, you see, in our school that could easily become sucked into the Hitler Youth Group, even though they weren't yet. And they were abolished and were indeed absorbed within the first two years of the Nazis.

[00:38:22.76] INTERVIEWER: But the fact is that the Hitler Youth wore uniforms. Did these other groups wear uniforms?

[00:38:28.33] SUBJECT: Uh, some did, some didn't. And those other uniforms sometimes bore a striking resemblance. Very short pants of one color, and, uh, um, shirts of a different color, but uniform color. Let's say one color only in the shirt. You had a lot of those.

[00:38:51.47] I remember some grays and greens, uh, just as I remember the blacks and browns of the Nazis. It didn't take much. The whole visual and sensible atmosphere was such that the Nazis could absorb those groups very simply and very easily. The only ones that held out were the church groups. Everybody else was quietly absorbed.[35]

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[34] Most youth groups in Nazi Germany were organized around Hitler-Jugend, Bund Deutscher Arbeiterjugend ("Hitler Youth, League of German Worker Youth"). From 1933 until 1945, it was the sole official youth organization in Germany. It was composed of the Hitler Youth proper, for male youths aged 14 to 18, the German Youngsters in the Hitler Youth (Deutsches Jungvolk in der Hitler Jugend or "DJ", also "DJV") for younger boys aged 10 to 14, and the League of German Girls (Bund Deutsche Mädel or "BDM"). See Kater, *Hitler Youth* and H. Koch, *The Hitler Youth: Origins and Development, 1922–1945* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996).

[35] Frei's approach here is very simplistic. He says nothing about the collaboration of the large part of the German Protestant Church with the Nazi regime. The population of Germany in 1933 was around 60 million. Almost all Germans were Christian, belonging either to the Roman Catholic (ca. 20 million members) or the Protestant (ca. 40 million members) churches. During the 1920s, a movement emerged within the German Evangelical Church, the biggest Protestant group in Germany, called the Deutsche Christen, or "German Christians." They embraced many of the nationalistic and racial aspects of Nazi ideology. Once the Nazis came to power this group sought the creation of a national "Reich Church" and supported a "Nazified" version of Christianity. See Susannna Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), especially pp. 3-11. See also Frank McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30-9. On Catholic attitudes towards Nazi Germany see Michael Phayer, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), especially chapter 5, pp. 67-81. See also Robert Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), especially chapters 2 and 4, pp. 24-60 and 94-138. See also Cristopher Probst, *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012). For a debate on the relation between Catholics and Jews in the US, and the way in which this impacted their relations during and after the Holocaust see Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), especially chapters 5 and 6 dealing with the period 1900-1960, pp. 65-102.

[00:39:19.37] INTERVIEWER: In other words, the vision of uniformed children marching or walking in step was not unusual.

[00:39:27.73] SUBJECT: No, it was not unusual at all.

[00:39:31.76] INTERVIEWER: You came from, uh, a very intellectually-oriented family, educated family. Hitler had, uh, published Mein Kampf.

[00:39:42.09] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:39:43.94] INTERVIEWER: People wonder today, because of the fact that his plans were spelled out, why more Jewish, uh, intellectuals and others didn't take warning from that.[36]

[00:39:55.46] SUBJECT: Because we were like everybody else. We feared the worst, but were never quite prepared to believe it. Uh, you often find people saying that when a fanatic comes to power, he'll change. And what we are always hard put to believe is that there's less there than meets the eye.

[00:40:28.05] We always think there's more. That there are hidden depths, hidden qualifications to what he's saying, possibilities for change. Very few of us believed that he really would do-- that he really would do all he wanted.

[00:40:43.59] We didn't believe that he believed it all the way. He knew he was an anti-Semite fanatic. But none of us believed that he would go to the full length of his beliefs. We thought, at least, practicalities would keep him from doing so.

[00:41:00.30] INTERVIEWER: You were sent to England in 1935.

[00:41:02.06] SUBJECT: Mhm. Mhm.

[00:41:03.01] INTERVIEWER: You must have had a different exposure when you were in England, then-- and then coming back into Germany.

[00:41:11.95] SUBJECT: Yes. It's a very simple thing. It's a very, very simple thing. As soon as one crossed the frontier, the atmosphere was one of fear. That's all. Just plain fear. Uh--

[00:41:28.44] INTERVIEWER: Across the frontier back into Germany?

[00:41:29.69] SUBJECT: Back into Germany. Whereas, as soon as I traveled back across, first into Holland, and then into England. That's usually the way I went, because people were relaxed.

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[36] Unwittingly the interviewer steps here into the internationalist-functionalist debate. For a brief introduction to the debate see Richard Bessel, "Functionalists vs. Intentionalists: The Debate Twenty Years on or Whatever Happened to Functionalism and Intentionalism?," *German Studies Review* 26, no. 1 (2003): 15–20. See also Christopher Browning, "The origins of the Final Solution," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. J. Friedman (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2010), 156-67; Ian Kershaw, "Hitler's role in the 'Final Solution'," *Yad Vashem Studies* 34 (2006): 7-43.

You didn't fear your neighbor. As soon as you came back to Germany, you feared your neighbor.[37]

[00:41:47.42] INTERVIEWER: Did you talk, discuss in any way, tell people in England or in Holland as you were going through what was going on?

[00:41:56.39] SUBJECT: Oh yes. In England, of course. It is difficult for a population that has known freedom under law-- that is to say, where most people, at least, most members of the majority group, the majority ethnic group, at any rate, where they've known-- never known legal terror and police terror, it is very difficult for them to imagine that. The fact that every court hearing would be rigged. The fact that the police were there not to administer justice, but to administer the nightstick to those who were persecuted was something that was-- it was impossible for Britishers to understand. That was what I experienced.[38]

[00:43:03.94] They thought you were exaggerating, at the least. It's not that they liked what was going on over there, but they though that you were wildly exaggerating. And you must remember that in-- that the biggest single experience that foreigners had in Germany under the Nazis was in 1936 at the Olympic Games. And he put on a superb show, and all the ugliness was hidden.[39]

[00:43:29.07] And remember, there was a kind of a reverence for foreigners. Foreigners were sacrosanct until the war started. You-- you hid what you were doing from the eyes of foreigners.

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[37] On denunciations see Patrick Bergmann, *Judge Thy Neighbor: Denunciations in the Spanish Inquisition, Romanov Russia, and Nazi Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 125-66; see especially the part of the introduction discussing "Denunciation as social control," pp. 8-15. On German popular opinion about Jews see Otto Dov Kulka and Eberhard Jäckel, eds., *The Jews in the Secret Nazi Reports on Popular Opinion in Germany, 1933-1945*, trans. William Templer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) especially "The Prewar Years (1933-1939)," pp. 3-467 The book follows events chronologically, presenting for each step of Nazi persecution reports on popular opinion about Jews.

[38] Frei is correct that the British public might not have understood the magnitude of what was happening. He returns to this issue a few lines below. However, the British press was reporting regularly on the abuses of the German Nazi government against Jews. See Andrew Sharf, *The British Press and Jews under Nazi Rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), which follows major episodes in the Nazi persecution of Jews and their reporting in Great Britain. It is important to note that *The Catholic Herald* accompanied most of their reports about Jews in Germany with accounts of alleged atrocities committed by Jews in the Soviet Union (p. 19).

[39] The Nazi Party had risen to power in 1933, two years after Berlin was awarded the Games, and its racist policies led to international debate about a boycott of the Games. Fearing a mass boycott, the International Olympic Committee pressured the German government and received assurances that qualified Jewish athletes would be part of the German team and that the Games would not be used to promote Nazi ideology. Adolf Hitler's government, however, routinely failed to deliver on such promises. Only one athlete of Jewish descent was a member of the German team; pamphlets and speeches about the natural superiority of the Aryan race were commonplace; and the Reich Sports Field, a newly constructed sports complex that covered 325 acres (131.5 hectares) and included four stadiums, was draped in Nazi banners and symbols. See the entry "Berlin 1936 Olympic Games" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*: https://www.britannica.com/event/Berlin-1936-Olympic-Games. For a more in-depth analysis of the way in which the Olympic Games were staged see Armin Fuhrer, *Hitlers Spiele: Olympia 1936 in Berlin* (Berlin: Bebra Verlag, 2011).

[00:43:45.52] Most of it took place behind the scenes, except for those increasingly strong, but still subtle, social and economic pressure-- pressures. But those weren't visible. We experienced those.

[00:44:01.99] But an Englishman visiting a Jewish home would not see any physical threat exercised against us. We were not prevented from going out. You see, it was after 1939. That's why I can give you firsthand experience. It was only after that that it really began to be physical persecution.

[00:44:22.66] INTERVIEWER: But when you were in England--

[00:44:24.31] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:44:24.64] INTERVIEWER: --and you-- do you remember any discussions with either your classmates or your teachers in-- in which-- that you can describe? Or a response you can-- that you can re-- reveal?

[00:44:46.28] SUBJECT: Yes, of course. But what I remember most of all, you see, is that I had discussions with them, that I talked with them. That they were all sympathetic to a person. By the way, I went to a Quaker school, and the Quakers could always be relied upon to be in-- on the side of those who were persecuted.[40]

[00:45:07.62] But, um, though they were sympathetic, it was very hard to catch their imagination. In one way, it is absolutely impossible to imagine what Auschwitz was like. But in another way, it is graphic. And once that is described, people know-- they know that it is beyond their imagination, and that it is terror raised to the absolute level.

[00:45:40.76] But I was unable to do that, because we did not experience terror raised to the absolute level. We experienced only subtle terror. And as a result, I found that my English friends nodded, sympathized, but their imagination was not caught by what I said. I could not even impress on them that given this man's psyche, given Hitler's psyche, it was almost bound to result in a war. They couldn't realize that.

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[40] Quakers are a Christian religious group that arose in England in the 1650s. The formal title of the movement is the Society of Friends or the Religious Society of Friends. There are about 210,000 Quakers across the world. For a brief account of the Quakers see https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/subdivisions/quakers_1.shtml. The foundations of the Quakers' involvement in helping Jews during the Holocaust were laid long before the beginning of the Second World War. At the beginning of the 1920s, future US president Herbert Hoover, himself a Quaker, asked the AFSC and Friends Service Council to lead child-feeding efforts in Germany. At its peak between 1920 and 1924, this program, called the Quäkerspeisung, was providing meals for around a million children a day. This kind of aid and relief effort continued during and after the Great Depression. A Quakers' Refugee Division was opened in Europe in the wake of Kristallnacht and within a year the Division opened more than 3,000 new cases and met with thousands of people seeking help in the Vienna and Berlin Quaker offices. During the war most of the Quakers' relief operations were in Southern France. For more information see "The Quakers" entry in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/quakers.

[00:46:23.36] INTERVIEWER: Your parents sent you to a Quaker school.

[00:46:25.33] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:46:25.79] INTERVIEWER: Yet, a moment ago you said that it was partially because the Jewish population of Germany was not entrenched in its own tradition that led to, perhaps, a miscalculation.

[00:46:41.39] SUBJECT: Yes. Uh, now, what I said was that the-- the fact that the German-Jewish population was no longer deeply set within its own tradition, that therefore, they had no psychological-- inner psychological support against the image that the Nazis created of themselves as Jews, you see? Uh, but because all of us were politically either centrist or slightly left, and very few were really extreme right, for that reason, we knew what was coming when it came.

[00:47:25.08] But we thought that the economic realities would drive Hitler from power.[41] Why? I can't even remember. We thought he could not last economically, because re-arming would be so expensive, for one thing. We didn't realize that re-arming would employ a huge hitherto unemployed German population.

[00:47:45.86] But increasingly after 1934, Jewish middle-class people realized that even if they were not going to be killed, they were never going to belong to the population of the country again, as long as this man was in power. And after about a year, you began to realize that he was maintaining himself in power very nicely.

[00:48:24.31] INTERVIEWER: I-- I have to persist in the question of why they sent you to a Quaker school rather than a Jewish school.

[00:48:30.98] SUBJECT: In England?

[00:48:31.49] INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

[00:48:32.21] SUBJECT: Because, like so many other Jewish families, my family was totally secularized. That is to say they had given up their-- they-- we were-- we knew we were Jews, you see? But that meant simply German citizens of Jewish religion until the Nazis came.

[00:48:54.89] That was what assimilation meant. We were totally assimilated, and as a result, my parents had us baptized, you see? My parents had all of us children baptized.[42]

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[41] On Jewish perceptions of Hitler and responses to his early policies see Herbert Strauss, *Jewish Immigrants of the Nazi Period in the U.S.A.*, vol 6, *Essays on the History, Persecution and Emigration of German Jews* (New York: K.G.Saur, 1987), especially chapter 2, "Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution," pp. 95-246.

[42] Frei seems to equate assimilation with conversion, but they were two separate aspects and not all assimilated Jews converted to Christianity. See Marion Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and*

[00:49:08.81] INTERVIEWER: Before?

[00:49:10.01] SUBJECT: Before that Naz-- long before the Nazis came. It was only when the Nazis came that my father, out of a sense of shame, canceled, if there is such a thing, he canceled his baptism and became-- declared himself officially Jewish again. And there were quite a few of us that way. There was a whole population amounting, I think, to about 15,000 German Jews who had become officially Christian.[43]

[00:49:42.41] But even those who hadn't, you see, were so utterly assimilated that, for example, Jewish festivals were not kept. Uh, they did not go to special Jewish schools until they were forced, were forced to. And, uh, the ideal of assimilation was one that my parents stayed with.

[00:50:09.25] So first of all, it was the Quakers who were one of the few groups that made us-- made it possible for me to come over. For currency regulations reasons, it was very difficult to go to another country. Uh, but the Quakers made that possible.

[00:50:25.29] But secondly, I should explain that I personally had participated in a Quaker youth group as a youngster, and that my parents had become acquainted with the Quakers through me, and liked them immensely. But they would not have sent me to a Jewish school in any case. If they had found a school in England where I could become an assimilated Englishman, that's the school they would have sent me to, you see?

[00:50:51.45] INTERVIEWER: Did you go to church services? Christian ser--

[00:50:54.21] SUBJECT: Quaker? Quaker services? As a-- before?

[00:50:56.67] INTERVIEWER: Yes. You were baptized into something. I--

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Identity in Imperial Germany (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially chapter 2, "Domestic Judaism: Religion and German-Jewish Ethnicity," pp. 64-84.

[43] As during the Third Reich converts were not a special category in Nazi official data, it is hard to establish entirely accurate estimations of the number of Jews who were converts to Christianity. The Nazi Party created other categories, such as *Michelinge* (second and third degree Jews, according to the number of Jewish grandparents) and *Geltungsjuden* (Aryans who converted to Judaism). See James F. Trent, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: Nazi Persecution of Jewish-Christian Germans* (Lawrence, KA.: Kansas University Press, 2003), 2, who writes: "The best estimate is that the Nazis placed approximately seventy-two thousand German citizens into the category of half-Jews according to their census for Greater Germany in 1939. The quarter-Jews totaled forty thousand people." See also the definition of *Michlinge*, their fate, and the links to religious communities on pp. 3-7 and also the discussion of the Nuremberg Laws, pp. 11-12; Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair*, 75, puts the estimate for the number of *Michlinge* at 300,000 and, more importantly, says (76): "In 1933, approximately 35,000 confessionally mixed marriages existed in Germany." She means mixed marriages between Jews and non-Jews, but does not say how many were from Judaism to Christianity and vice-versa.

[00:50:59.50] SUBJECT: Um, yeah, once in a while. My parents didn't. I did. I went to a-- a, uh-- a church school.[44]

[00:51:08.93] And remember that in Germany, at that time, there was religious instruction in the schools. In fact, that was one of the bitterest fights between Nazis and the churches, about religious-- release time, religious instruction in the public schools. And, um, I attended the Christian, uh, release time, instruction, rather than the Jewish.[45]

[00:51:36.77] INTERVIEWER: What did that do in terms of your family life? Your grandmother, who was Jewish, and obviously a very-- aware of her Jewishness, was living with you.

[00:51:45.54] SUBJECT: One would ordinarily expect, wouldn't one, that it would involve a deep rift between the generations. Those who still remember their Jewish heritage deeply, and those who did not. Not so in our family.

[00:51:58.83] We had been so deeply assimilated, you see? So deeply assimilated that, on the one hand, we were proud of the fact that we were Jewish, in a curious, undefinable way. We felt that we were Jewish, and that was that. Jews were good people.

[00:52:20.11] Uh, but on the other hand, we felt that it was simply a kind of cultural religious distinctness, but not anything that interfered with our, first of all, being German citizens. You see, our whole world-- for just that reason, our whole world was turned far more upside down in 1933. We were robbed of our primary support. Namely, our national identity, which was much more our identity than our Jewish identity.[46]

[00:52:54.40] INTERVIEWER: This is a complex story--

[00:52:55.52] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:52:55.80] INTERVIEWER: --because you were converted.

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[44] It is not clear here whether he attended Quaker services in Germany or England. By the time alluded to in the interview there was a small Quaker minority in Germany. See "Quakers in Germany since 1918" on the website "Quakers in the World": http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/251/Quakers-in-Germany-since-1918.

[45] He returns to this topic later in the interview. His vision of Churches in Nazi Germany, at least as it appears in the interview, puts too much emphasis on resistance without acknowledgement of collaboration. In addition to the references in note 38, see Martyn Housden, *Resistance and Conformity in the Third Reich* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 46-67.

[46] On the assimilation and acculturation of the German Jewish population see Marion Berghahn, *Continental Britons: German-Jewish Refugees from Nazi Germany* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), especially chapter 1, "The Problem of Jewish Assimilation in Germany," pp. 18-46. The author argues (26), as does Frei, that most Jews saw themselves as German citizens first and only then as members of the Jewish faith: "By far, the majority of German Jews would have defined their situation as that of 'German Citizens of the Jewish Faith.'" One historian who seems to disagree with this idea of German Jewish assimilation is Jacob Katz, who claims that the affinity was more myth than reality. See Jacob Katz, *Emancipation and Assimilation* (Westmead, England: Gregg, 1972), 221.

[00:52:58.02] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:52:58.77] INTERVIEWER: You claim you felt Jewish, or you felt an identification with your Jewish heritage ancestry, yet you were practicing Christians in an assimilated German society. It's, uh--

[00:53:11.51] SUBJECT: Heinrich Heine, the German poet who was himself Jewish, and rather cynically converted, once said that the-- that bap-- the baptismal certificate is the admission ticket to European culture. And a lot of Jewish people in the middle of the 19th century, especially in Germany, began to feel some sympathy for that. So that even when they did not do it themselves, as my parents did, they downplayed any part of their heritage, except one of a strictly limited religious cultural sort.[47]

[00:53:54.35] That was-- you see, that was not true of the Jews of the East, who, under the tyranny of Russian governments, had always known that they were a people apart. That they had to stay together, and for whom that was a profound culture. Even though some of them broke out of it in the 1890s and became secularized socialists. But even then, they still stayed Jewish, even if not religiously.[48]

[00:54:25.44] But for those of us in Germany, and that is a population of about 500-some-thousand, the matter was very different. Very different. We, increasingly over those 100 years from about 1790 to 1900, had become a group that was assimilated and not nearly so far apart.

[00:54:51.06] Remember that it was easier and easier for German middle-class Jews, and German Jews were by and large middle-class, to go increasingly into the professions. Medical profession, business. They could get into the highly esteemed universities more and more easily.

[00:55:12.35] That was totally different from the experience of the Jews of the East. Totally different. We became assimilated.

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[47] The quotation, "the baptismal certificate is the admission ticket to European culture," appears in "6 Heinrich Heine. A Ticket of Admission to European Culture (1823, c. 1854)," in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz eds., *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, Second Edition (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 258-59. Heinrich Heine (in full: Christian Johann Heinrich Heine, original name; until 1825) Harry Heine, born Dec. 13, 1797, Düsseldorf, died Feb. 17, 1856, Paris) was a German poet whose international literary reputation and influence were established by the *Buch der Lieder* (1827; "The Book of Songs"), frequently set to music, though the more sombre poems of his last years are also highly regarded. See the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry for Heine: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Heinrich-Heine-German-author. See also the entry on *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, written by Isidore Singer and Joseph Jacobs, which offers more details about his conversion: http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/7506-heine-heinrich.

[48] Frei is referring to the marginalization imposed on Russian Jews during the 19th century, which led to them being less assimilated into the general society. For a brief introduction to the situation of the Russian Jews see Antony Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia: A Short History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2013). See also Michael Stanislawski, "Russia/Russian Empire" in *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. Gershon David Hundert (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2008), vol. 2, 1607-15. The entry can be accessed also here: https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Russia/Russian_Empire.

[00:55:20.60] INTERVIEWER: Some of the Jews of the East, uh, became part of the German-Jewish scene at a period in the early '30s. I wondered if you viewed this, and what your reaction and parents' reaction--

[00:55:34.40] SUBJECT: It's a shameful reaction. It's a deeply shameful reaction. One that became very well-known in this country.

[00:55:42.50] The German Jews had the utmost contempt for the Eastern Jews. It was almost like a form of Jewish anti-Semitism. It is one of the most painful phenomena that one can ever see or experience.[49]

[00:56:03.71] It often happens to minorities, that they divide among themselves, and one elite group will look down on another group. It is the "divide and conquer" policy that you find takes place in an atmosphere of oppression. And one of the greatest ironies of history was the fact that it was largely, not wholly, but largely a group of American Jews, well, in part of German, but often of Eastern heritage, that undertook the rescue of the German Jews. At least that element of the German Jew-- of German Judaism that was rescued is one of the great ironies of modern history. [50]

[00:56:51.56] INTERVIEWER: Were there other groups that you experienced which were also oppressed during this early period?

[00:56:57.65] SUBJECT: Uh, there were other groups, but we did not-- we did not meet. Oppressed groups--

[00:57:02.47] INTERVIEWER: Who were they?

[00:57:05.09] SUBJECT: Uh, well, first of all, of course those who were singled out from the left-wing parties. The social Democrats, for example. Say nothing of the Communists.

[00:57:15.81] Um, but whoever could stayed hidden. You didn't, even in semi-public, associate with people who were also under danger. To stay quiet, or to stay to your own self, and to your

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[49] German Jews' (especially soldiers') perception of Eastern European Jews is examined in David Fine, *Jewish Integration*, 71-94. This contempt for the Eastern European Jews was not unique to Germany, but prevalent in France too. On the perception of Eastern Jews in France see Gérard Noiriel, *Immigration, Antisémitisme et Racisme en France (XIX-XX Siècle)* (Paris: Fazard, 2007), especially chapter 3, "Comment faire payer les étrangers," pp. 135-202. See also Michael Winock, *Nationalism, Anti-Semitism, and Fascism in France* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 1998), especially pp. 136-8.

[50] Frei refers to the fact that the majority of American Jews are of Eastern European heritage. See Moshe R. Gottlieb, *American anti-Nazi Resistance, 1933-1941* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1982), especially "Introduction: The Rise of American Jewish Defense Agencies," pp. xix-xxi; and parts 2 and 3, pp. 27-213. In the introduction the author argues (xx), as does Frei, that most of the American Jewish organizations that would later play a vital role in helping German and European Jews were "overwhelmingly East European in origin."

own family, and to your own group was the safest thing to do. You didn't meet with other groups.

[00:57:40.49] Then there were the curious un-political groups that were usually of the charismatic religious type. Seventh Day Adventists,[51] Jehovah's Witnesses.[52] People like that were persecuted.

[00:57:57.55] We didn't know about people like that. We wouldn't associate with-- the good middle-class folk that we were, we wouldn't associate with people like that. And then there was a whole [INAUDIBLE] population that those were the mentally retarded. Who, under those racial laws, or at least under that racial policy, let's say, the Nazi government tried to wipe out.[53]

[00:58:23.60] INTERVIEWER: They weren't a different race, so that term is obscure. I don't--

[00:58:26.85] SUBJECT: Uh-- well, right. But, uh, the-- the racial policy that-- that-- the racial philosophy meant that, first of all, that there were superior races and inferior races, on the one hand. But also on the other hand, there were the superior healthy people and the inferior unhealthy people. And, uh, to preserve the purity of the race, you were allowed to get rid of those who-- of the inferior stock, even within that race, you see?

[00:59:02.57] INTERVIEWER: Who else?

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[51] Frei is talking here in general about the Seventh Day Adventists, although the group that was persecuted by the Nazi Party was the smaller splinter, Reformed Seventh day Adventists. The official Seventh Day Adventist Church in Germany was pro-Nazi from the beginning. Harold Alomía, "Fatal Flirting: The Nazi State and the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 6, no. 1 (2010): 1-13, argues: "The adoption of this viewpoint as part of Seventh-day Adventist thought was mixed with the church's characteristic health message as a means to court the state and to gain favor with it." The Church was largely silent on the abuses committed during the Third Reich. See also R. Blaich, "Religion Under National Socialism: The Case for the Seventh-day Adventist Church," *Central European History* 26, no. 3 (Summer1994): 256-82.

[52] On the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses under the Third Reich see "Nazi Persecution Of Jehovah's Witnesses" in the USHMM's *Holocaust Encyclopedia*: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-persecution-of-jehovahs-witnesses. See also James Penton, *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Third Reich: Sectarian Politics Under Persecution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004).

[53] Frei is referring here to the T4 (Euthanasia) Program targeting the disabled, which was implemented later; but his insight might suggest that their marginalization started much earlier. Aktion T4 (an abbreviation of Tiergartenstraße 4, where the department dealing with this program was located) involved certain German physicians who were authorized to select patients "deemed incurably sick, after most critical medical examination" and then administer to them a "mercy death." In the autumn of 1939, Adolf Hitler signed a secret authorization in order to protect participating physicians, medical staff, and administrators from prosecution. This authorization was backdated to September 1, 1939 to suggest that the effort was related to wartime measures. The killings took place from September 1939 until the end of the war, although the program was officially stopped in late August 1941 after strong protests from Catholic and Protestant Churches. According to T4's own internal calculations, the euthanasia effort claimed the lives of 70,273 institutionalized mentally and physically disabled persons at six gassing facilities between January 1940 and August 1941. Historians estimate that the Euthanasia Program, in all its phases, claimed the lives of 250,000 individuals. For a brief description of Aktion T4 see the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry: https://www.britannica.com/event/T4-Program. For a more detailed analysis see Götz Aly, ed., *Aktion T4, 1939-1945* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1987).

[00:59:03.04] SUBJECT: And that meant the mentally retarded. Chiefly the mentally retarded. Which was a policy, again, that brought the-- the only people who really effectively opposed that policy were the Lutheran churches, uh, which-- which ran many of the homes for and hospitals for the retarded. Uh, that was a grim story all in its own right.[54]

[00:59:30.89] INTERVIEWER: What about the emotionally impaired?

[00:59:39.00] SUBJECT: You've got to remember that the whole outlook that's so strong in America on emotional illness was not that developed. If you were emotionally ill, you're toeing the line, on one hand. Or if you couldn't, you were counted among the mentally retarded.

[01:00:05.95] WOMAN: Excuse me. Annie, could you [INAUDIBLE].

[01:00:09.50] INTERVIEWER: Uh, I wanted to ask you when your parents decided that they must leave, that they no longer could tolerate or could sustain themselves in their circumstances. And what you thought, felt, and--

[01:00:27.34] SUBJECT: I never doubted it for a moment that they should leave and that we should leave. Remember, I was politicized. By age eight I read the equivalent, the Berlin equivalent of The New York Times, the Vossische Zeitung, when I was eight years old. Because I knew-- I just felt it in my bones.[55]

[01:00:49.80] Uh, I knew by '34 that we ought to get out. My parents knew it too, and gradually began to get themselves into action. But it took time. It's an enormous and frightening thing to uproot yourself from a place where you've lived for 200 years.

[01:01:10.93] We are so mobile in this country that we can't realize how frightening that was for us. We lived in Germany for at least 200 years, if you didn't leave there that easily. But they began to gear themselves up for it in '34 or '35. I can't remember which.

[01:01:30.49] INTERVIEWER: Was there any problem in getting, uh, entry, gaining entry into any other--

[01:01:35.83] SUBJECT: Oh yes. Oh, indeed there was. Um, it's obvi-- of course been revealed how hard-hearted Europe was towards, uh--

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[54] Not only the mentally disabled, but also those with physical deformities were targeted. Moreover, not only the Lutheran Churches, but the Catholics also protested. In fact, it was the protest of the Catholic Bishop of Münster, Clemens August Count von Galen, which led to the official termination of the T4 program. Unfortunately, some Church institutions (hospitals, asylums, orphanages) played an active part in the T4 program. See Beth Griech-Polelle, “A Pure Conscience is Good Enough: Bishop von Galen and Resistance to Nazism,” in *In God’s Name. Genocide and Religion in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Omer Bartov and Phyllis Mack (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2001), 106-22.

[55] The *Vossische Zeitung* was a well-known liberal German newspaper published in Berlin (1721–1934). Editors of the paper, known colloquially as *Tante Voss* ("Aunt Voss"), included Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Willibald Alexis, Theodor Fontane and Kurt Tucholsky.

[01:01:50.21] [DOOR KNOCKING]

[01:01:50.62] INTERVIEWER: Oh dear.

[01:01:51.03] SUBJECT: --the persecution of the Jews.

[01:01:52.51] INTERVIEWER: We're out of tape. I-- this-- Professor Frei, I mean, this is, uh-- I know you--

[00:00:00.43] [CREW TALKING IN BACKGROUND]

[00:00:01.73] CREW: Rolling.

[00:00:03.03] INTERVIEWER: OK. We wanted to pick up, really, from where we left off. Which is a little complicated, but this whole picture, if you can sort of put it together for us, of having been baptized and therefore a Christian by identification, yet Jewish by inheritance. This whole complexity in maintaining the Jewish-- the Christian identity later is confusing.[56] And I gather there was a split in the family.

[00:00:31.78] SUBJECT: No, not a split, really. There was a divergence. But my father returned to Judaism.[57] But remember, he didn't do so as a believer on the one hand, nor on the other hand, with any real cultural loyalty.

[00:00:49.72] It was only simply that in the face of Nazism, one did not even try to identify oneself with the Germany one had known before. That was all over. That was all there was. So that my parents really had no investment, I think, in any community other than on the one hand, an intellectual community, and on the other hand, the nation, the new nation to which they came.

[00:01:28.65] INTERVIEWER: Meaning the United States?

[00:01:31.42] SUBJECT: But for me there was a more difficult search involved. I had, pretty much to my parents' dismay, become rather religious. And as a result, I found myself gravitating

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[56] Laurel Vlock makes an interesting delineation here between identity and heritage/inheritance. It is visible in her statement that the topic is complex, when she says “Jewish” and then corrects herself to “Christian identity.” This dichotomy and subsequent stumbling on words will be visible again several times in her questions and Frei’s answers. See an excellent study on interlinks between cultural heritage, religious observance, and personal identity in Michelle Friedman, Myrna Friedlander and David Blustein, “Toward an Understanding of Jewish Identity: A Phenomenological Study,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52, no. 1 (January 2005): 77-83. See also a good introduction on the way in which Jewish identity has been defined and researched in the last half century in Erik H. Cohen, “Jewish identity research: a state of the art,” *International Journal of Jewish Education Research* 1 (2010): 7-48.

[57] It is a pity that we do not know what this entailed. Did Hans Frei’s father go to the community and tell the rabbi that he wanted to be registered again in the Jewish community? There are some accounts of this in the Fortunoff collection (see for example Nicholas P., HVT 575). Or was it only a close circle/family declaration that he renounced Christianity and self-identified again as Jewish?

very strongly towards the Quakers. Something they sympathized with, but could not adopt for their own ideology.

[00:01:59.29] INTERVIEWER: But their Jewishness was really one forced on them, in a way. Uh, I--

[00:02:04.55] SUBJECT: Yes, I think so. Though that's putting it too strongly. No, it was not forced on them. It was something that they took very casually.

[00:02:14.23] As something that-- there was a whole group of quite assimilated German Jewish immigrants who lived in New York, some of them in Flushing, some of them in Washington Heights in the Innbrook section of New York.[58] We lived in the latter place. And I think a good many of those people were very much like we were, thoroughly secularized, quite relaxed about the fact that they were Jews, having a variety of outlooks towards Zionism, from strong sympathy to mild antipathy. But none of them really, in any sense, ardently members of the larger Jewish community.

[00:03:04.85] You may recall, may have heard about a German immigrant newspaper called Aufbau[59]

[00:03:12.92] INTERVIEWER: Yes.

[00:03:13.09] SUBJECT: Are you familiar with that?

[00:03:13.48] INTERVIEWER: Yes. Mhm.

[00:03:14.26] SUBJECT: Well, it was that-- the community that was characterized by that newspaper, which was liberal, relatively secular, concerned largely with academic and intellectual matters, and having very little loyalty other than the cause of anti-Nazism on the one hand, the

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[58] It is estimated that between 250,000 and 300,000 refugees of all kinds fled from Nazi dominated Europe to the US between 1933 and 1944. According to Werner Rosenstock, "Exodus 1933-1939: A Survey of Jewish Emigration from Germany," *LBI Year Book* I (1956): 37, approximately 27,000 Jews fled directly from Germany to the US between January 1933 and June 1938. The number increased dramatically after Kristallnacht. According to the USHMM's *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, "By September 1939, approximately 282,000 Jews had left Germany and 117,000 from annexed Austria. Of these, some 95,000 emigrated to the United States, 60,000 to Palestine, 40,000 to Great Britain, and about 75,000 to Central and South America, with the largest numbers entering Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Bolivia. More than 18,000 Jews from the German Reich were also able to find refuge in Shanghai, in Japanese-occupied China." See the "German Jewish Refugees, 1933–1939" entry in the USHMM's *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*: https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939. For more on immigration of German Jews to the US from 1933 to 1939 see Herbert Strauss, *Jewish Immigrants of the Nazi Period in the U.S.A.* vol 6, *Essays on the History, Persecution and Emigration of German Jews* (New York: K.G.Saur, 1987), especially part 3, "The pattern of acculturation," pp. 288-316.

[59] *Aufbau* is a journal targeted at German-speaking Jews around the globe founded in 1934. Hannah Arendt, Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Stefan Zweig wrote for the publication. Until 2004 it was published in New York City but is now published in Zürich. *Aufbau* (German for "building up, construction") began publication in 1934 as a newsletter for the German-Jewish Club of New York. Soon *Aufbau* became one of the leading anti-Nazi publications of the German press in exile. From September 1, 1944 through September 27, 1946, *Aufbau* printed numerous lists of Jewish Holocaust survivors located in Europe, as well as a few lists of victims. See https://archive.org/details/aufbau.

cause of liberalism on the other hand, taking their Judaism naturally, but not as an ardent ideology.

[00:03:54.88] INTERVIEWER: Perhaps I can approach this from a different perspective. The idea of their Germanness was pretty entrenched in these people, the Nazi period not withstanding.[60] Are you indicating that they renounced all identification with their German nationalism?

[00:04:15.85] SUBJECT: Oh, clearly. As a matter of fact, I think the test of that was the fact that when the war was over, I doubt whether any of them, except perhaps the tiniest percentage, even thought vaguely of ever returning to Germany again.[61]

[00:04:33.49] INTERVIEWER: Well, I guess what I'm trying to find out is that the cause of their disassociation from Germany was their Jewish heritage. And I'm trying to understand why they didn't-- why they remained casual about that in the face of that being the-- the cause of the disruption in their lives.[62]

[00:04:55.81] SUBJECT: It was a cause that was imposed on them. It was a disruption that was clearly became, you're right, the cause of-- of-- of-- a complete collapse of an earlier-- earlier ideological commitment. But they did not learn from that. But they did not draw the inference that I think you are drawing.

[00:05:17.41] And therefore, their first ideological commitment would be to their Jewishness. No, I think not. Having once been assimilated in one place, they then became, relatively speaking, assimilated in another place which offered them a nationality without the-- well, at least as they saw it, without the enormous fear of having to go through a similar catastrophe, that is to say that it was a national-- that it would become a national religion which might then swing over into something like anti-Semitism again.

[00:05:57.76] For example, most of these people were awfully dismayed by the McCarthy period. It reminded them of Hitler. But again, it did not make them turn more towards their Jewishness. I think Henry Kissinger would be a fairly typical product of this group. Whose-- I

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[60] On German national identity see Geoff Eley and Jan Palmowski, eds., *Citizenship and National Identity in Twentieth Century Germany* (Stanford CA.: Stanford University Press, 2008).

[61] On Jews returning to Germany after 1945 see John Borneman and Jeffrey Peck, *The Return of German Jews and the Question of Identity* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), especially pp. 79-118 dealing with German Jews returning to Germany from the US

[62] Laurel Vlock puts the problem in a very logical way: if you dissociate so clearly with Germany because of the Third Reich and what it did to Jews then how is it that you do not associate yourself with Judaism? Frei's answers reveal the difficulty in addressing the question and the complexity posed not only by multiple identities but by the way in which these identities have to be negotiated in specific contexts.

think whose identification with his own Jewish background has been, shall we say, minimal rather than maximal. Even though he's never denied it.[63]

[00:06:30.60] INTERVIEWER: No. I guess what I'm trying to understand is that assimilation in Germany had not been something which had helped these Jewish people when--

[00:06:45.93] SUBJECT: The chips were down.

[00:06:46.80] INTERVIEWER: Yeah, when the chips were down, precisely.

[00:06:48.30] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:06:49.75] INTERVIEWER: And so I find it a little perplexing as to why assimilation would again be the mode for people who it had not protected in the past.

[00:07:00.03] SUBJECT: I think a negative reason would be simply, um, that they did not conceive of Israel, which would have been the option. They did not conceive of that in the long run as a positive option. Most of them, though they had sympathy for it, very few of them after the war were tempted to leave America to go to Israel.

[00:07:27.03] And the positive reason is, I think-- it may sound cynical, it's not meant cynically-- that the reason assimilation had not worked for them was that they had been in the wrong country. That is to say, I think most of them felt had they been in Britain, had they been in the United States, it would have worked.[64]

[00:07:57.69] INTERVIEWER: I wondered what their attitude was about a strong Jewish community, albeit not one that was headed toward Israel. But strengthening the-- you know, themselves in the context of their-- their own society, so that they would be reinforced from that aspect.

[00:08:27.61] SUBJECT: I think one would have to say that within bounds they would have been sympathetic. I'm trying to think back on what my parents' friends attitude became towards temple or synagogue. Those that we knew moved mildly back towards a religious organization, usually Reform Judaism, since some-- and usually some rabbis who had come back, who had

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[63] Henry Alfred Kissinger (born Heinz Alfred Kissinger; May 27, 1923) is an American scholar and government official who served as United States Secretary of State and National Security Advisor under the presidential administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. A Jewish refugee, who fled Nazi Germany with his family in 1938, he received the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in ending the Vietnam War. See Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992). A selected bibliography on Kissinger, including his own biographical works, can be found on the Noble Prize webpage: https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1973/kissinger/biographical/.

[64] In essence, Frei suggests that German Jews did not blame assimilation for their fate during the Holocaust but rather the complex situation they found themselves in under an antisemitic dictatorial regime. There was nothing wrong in assimilation and acculturation, he says, but in the misfortune of living in a country that took a turn for the worst.

emigrated from Germany were involved in founding new congregations. But it didn't go any further than that ever.

[00:09:23.25] INTERVIEWER: Did you know or did you ever find that in this German Jewish community that there was a reluctance to believe the lengths to which the Nazi regime had gone?

[00:09:37.68] SUBJECT: No. It's not that they were unrealistic. Not that I can remember. On the contrary, I think we were agitated.

[00:09:48.60] My parents-- I remember my father in the last two years of his life finding out, I think it was through the Red Cross, that my aunt, his sister, had been deported. And he was agonized. Because he was quite sure that that meant death.[65]

[00:10:13.97] INTERVIEWER: Did he ever discuss with you at home what it was in the German organization, mentality, if you will, condition-- that made all of this possible? Was that ever explored?

[00:10:34.02] SUBJECT: No. I did that. They didn't. My friends and I did that, um, rather than my parents. Who, when-- when it came to really searching historical inquiry, my father was too much of a natural scientist to believe in it.

[00:11:02.33] And my mother likewise. They just-- they weren't very searchingly inclined. But I think if one-- I haven't recently done that. It's something I like to do.

[00:11:14.84] If one goes through the files of that newspaper, The Aufbau I think you will find endless discussions of that. Some things sometimes from a Marxist point of view that it was really a-- the last vestige, or the last extremity of capitalism run wild in a military economy. Sometimes from a kind of point of view that I myself am inclined to adhere to. Namely, there was a re-- residual mixture of religious superstition on the one hand and the queer kind of racial romanticism which had begun to just fester in Germany early in the 19th century.[66]

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[65] Information about the Nazi persecution circulated among American Jews (many of them of German origin) throughout the 1930s. See Gulie Ne'eman Arad, *America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), especially the third and fourth parts, dealing with events from 1933 to 1942, pp. 103-224. See also Alex Grobman, "What Did They Know? The American Jewish Press and the Holocaust, 1 September 1939-17 December 1942," in *America, American Jews and the Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey Gurock (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), 331-56. On pages 337-8 the author shows how, as early as January 1940, news about German atrocities in Poland reached American Jewish audiences via *The New York Times*. However, "Some Jews doubted the authenticity of such horror tales," as they believed that the American press "was considered to be 'oversensational.'" Grobman shows the way in which the Jewish American press reported on the stages of persecution in Europe. On the way in which the American Protestant Press reported on the persecution of Jews see Robert Ross, *So It Was True: The American Protestant Press and the Nazi Persecution of the Jews* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

[66] Frei is trying to explain how it was possible for the Holocaust to take place in Germany. It is interesting that, an excellent Theologian, he emphasises the role of religious superstition in creating the context for the hatred that led to the Holocaust. For more on the role of religious antisemitism in setting up the conditions for the Holocaust see Marvin Perry and Frederick Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Palgrave

[00:12:11.72] INTERVIEWER: You yourself, you went to a Quaker school in England. You finally came to the United States. What was your-- what was your route? What was your pattern? And how did it all evolve?

[00:12:27.86] SUBJECT: Well, my pattern evolved purely religiously academically. That is to say, I became very much a member of a Protestant communion.[67] And I really discovered my Jewish heritage, actually, through Christianity, rather than directly.

[00:12:46.71] INTERVIEWER: What does that mean?

[00:12:48.11] SUBJECT: That meant that eventually I discovered the Old Testament. And began to branch out from there into some fascinating study in rabbinic Judaism. And-- not that I'm an expert on that, but to some degree on rabbinic Judaism.

[00:13:05.81] And then interestingly enough, I began to read about the enormous arguments that have been engaged in on the nature of the study of Judaism, which involves, oh, a group of people as strong on the one hand as Gershom Scholem[68] and on the other hand, a traditional group of Jewish scholars who thought of Judaism very much in assimilationist ways. Since they were themselves assimilated, they thought of it as a purely assimilated study, too. Whereas for Sholem it was a much more rich, complex study of the discovery of one's own roots, not only religiously, but culturally, which it did not do for the-- did not for these rather attenuated assimilationist folk.

[00:14:16.49] So I discovered that controversy-- it involved other people such as Hanna Arendt[69] and some of the problematic issues she got into-- at the same time as I was beginning to

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Macmillan, 2002), especially the Introduction and chapters 1 and 2 dealing with religious antisemitism, pp. 1-72. On page 6, for example, the authors say: "In the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church opposed the emancipation of Jews, insisting that they remain in ghettos, be prevented from interacting with Christians, and be denied equal rights. In its view, which dated back to St. Augustine, in the fifth century, Jews should remain degraded until they renounced their anachronistic religion and embraced the saving truth of Christianity." See also W. Brustein, "European anti-Semitism before the Holocaust and the roots of Nazism," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. J. Friedman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 18-29. See also Albert Lindemann and Richard Levy, eds., *Antisemitism: A History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[67] Here it is not clear what Church of the Protestant communion he is referring to, but information provided in the introduction of this annotated edition shows that in the US Frei progressed from links with the Lutheran Church, switched to the Baptist Church, where he was a minister at the North Stratford Baptist Church, North Stratford, New Hampshire (1945-1947), and later to Anglicanism.

[68] Gershon Scholem (1897–1982) was born to an assimilated Jewish family in Berlin. After studies in mathematics, philosophy, and Hebrew at the Frederick William University in Berlin (today, Humboldt University), he emigrated in 1923 to the British Mandate of Palestine, where he devoted his time to studying Jewish mysticism. He is widely regarded as the founder of the modern, academic study of Kabbalah, becoming the first Professor of Jewish Mysticism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. See the online entry in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, which contains also a list of books by and about Scholem: https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/scholem/.

[69] Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) was one of the most influential political philosophers of the twentieth century. Born into a German-Jewish family, she was forced to leave Germany in 1933 and lived in Paris for the next eight years, working for a number of Jewish refugee organisations. In 1941 she immigrated to the United States and soon

get interested in rabbinic studies, things of that sort. But you see, I came to this only through my having become a Christian theologian, and then a student of the phenomenon of religion generally.

[00:14:46.33] INTERVIEWER: As-- well, from any vantage point, what would be your view of the continuation of Jewish peoplehood in the context of the world as we find it, a fragile situation at best?

[00:15:06.40] SUBJECT: Absolutely necessary on the one hand, the glory also. But for my I will have to be frank-- a great problem. Because I'm frightened of all religious nationalisms and all political narcissism. And I'm afraid I see the geopolitical outlook of Israel is about as broad as the borders of Israel. I-- I find that absolutely dismaying, at the same time as I think one must be absolutely committed to the continuation, the continued existence of thriving of the nation of Israel.[70]

[00:15:44.65] INTERVIEWER: Well, then let me take it from another tack. That was an interesting answer. But I-- Christianity still thrives as a religion. I mean, it exists. The likelihood of it continuing to exist is fairly strong.

[00:16:01.84] SUBJECT: Though perhaps no longer as the major religion of the West, as it once was. I think secularity, secularization is a very strong phenomenon. But anyway, you're right.

[00:16:13.54] INTERVIEWER: Well, there may be a, uh, an attrition to some degree.

[00:16:20.82] SUBJECT: But it will continue. You're right.

[00:16:22.57] INTERVIEWER: OK. Let's talk about it from the perspective of Judaism. Where--

[00:16:27.07] SUBJECT: It will continue also. It must continue and I think it will continue. But it will be-- it'll be a much more scary borderline phenomenon always. Jewish existence is a very precarious existence.

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became part of a lively intellectual circle in New York. She held a number of academic positions at various American universities until her death in 1975. She is best known for two works that had a major impact both within and outside the academic community: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, and *The Human Condition*, published in 1958. See the online entry at the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, which contains also a list of books by and about Arendt: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arendt/.

[70] Frei, although understanding the necessity for the existence of the state of Israel, is, as many Jewish American intellectuals of that era (including Arendt whom he mentions), disillusioned with Israeli religious nationalism and political narcissism. For Arendt's criticism of Israel see her *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

[00:16:47.01] INTERVIEWER: Well, that takes us back to you and your family and the relationship between you and your family, which must have been or must be or must have been strained as a result of this departure on your part, even though it was clear why it happened.

[00:17:06.43] SUBJECT: My departure from-- towards Christianity, you mean?

[00:17:10.31] INTERVIEWER: Well, yeah-- not really toward Christianity. But away from the condition that the family found itself in.

[00:17:18.31] SUBJECT: Actually not, no, that-- I think the problem was not-- is not there. The problem-- I mean, they-- they-- they saw what I was doing as a not--[71] as a continuation of their own pattern of assimilation on the one hand, and moving into an academic life, on the other hand. The problem, really, for me is that I am, far more than a good many other people, at once an outsider to Jewishness and an insider.[72]

[00:17:49.75] And I find that a very difficult way, you see. I mean, for example, if this country were to go officially anti-Semitic, which I don't see coming, but nonetheless, you know, [? if it somehow ?] did, I would clearly identify myself with the Jewish community.

[00:18:09.64] INTERVIEWER: Why?

[00:18:10.75] SUBJECT: That's because I think one should always identify oneself with those who are persecuted. I think that's-- that's only right. But I think I would do so as one whose persuasion is really one of considerable skepticism at the same time.

[00:18:34.78] Um, there's an author who's written a very deeply moving book, Saul Friedlander, When Memory Comes.[73] So have you looked at it?

[00:18:43.59] INTERVIEWER: Mhm.

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[71] It is interesting to note the stutter in both the question and the beginning of the answer; a phenomenon visible in other Fortunoff testimonies when survivors speak about conversion and identity.

[72] On the hybrid identity see Ariel, "From Faith to Faith."

[73] Saul Friedländer (born in 1933, birth name Pavel) was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Prague. The family moved to France in 1938, and his parents were murdered in Auschwitz. Pavel was hidden in a Catholic village, baptised by nuns who gave him a Catholic education in a seminary in Montluçon and prepared him for the priesthood. After the war he rejected the Church and became first a communist, and then a Zionist. In June 1948 he settled in Israel, where he changed his name to Shaul Eldar. He entered government service, working with Shimon Peres in the defence ministry on the Dimona nuclear reactor before returning to his studies, and becoming a historian. Today, retired from the University of California, Los Angeles, Saul Friedländer is among the world's leading scholars of Nazi antisemitism. See Mark Mazower, "The history man: how Saul Friedländer told his own story," *Financial Times*, November 25, 2016: https://www.ft.com/content/56f963f4-b1b3-11e6-9c37-5787335499a0. A concise biography of Saul Friedlander can be also found in an article written by Sarah Judith Hofmann for the English edition of Deutsche Welle (DW), "Saul Friedländer: 'Historian of the Holocaust' and beyond": https://www.dw.com/en/saul-friedl%C3%A4nder-historian-of-the-holocaust-and-beyond/a-47299011. More on German attitudes towards Israel in Gassert and Steinweis, *Coping*, 276-93.

[00:18:44.37] SUBJECT: And he's become a very loyal, devoted Israeli, though he teaches half time in Geneva each year, half the year. And yet, I think you'll find-- in that book I found part of the same thing-- kind of an inability to get two halves of his personality together again, except in a very tenuous way. Well, that's true for me, too.

[00:19:14.94] But you see that my dominant personality became secular and Christian. Therefore, it would take a conscious move, rather than a natural emotive response, for me to identify myself with Judaism now. I'm too far gone.

[00:19:36.69] INTERVIEWER: Leaving that aside for the moment, if-- have you had an urge or have you visited Germany? Have you gone back to the places that you knew as a young man?

[00:19:48.79] SUBJECT: Yes.

[00:19:49.07] INTERVIEWER: Did you interact with people?

[00:19:50.98] SUBJECT: Yes.

[00:19:52.02] INTERVIEWER: What was that experience?

[00:19:53.73] SUBJECT: I was also a very-- also very much an outsider. What-- you see, in effect, what I'm left with is a minimal identity, except what I can gain from my own immediate family and my own search and inquiry through life. I found-- find myself-- and to some extent, the church. But I will have to confess that even there I find certain elements of remoteness.

[00:20:26.34] I find myself really one of that curious group of refugees who has been unable to establish any strong communal ties and rather mistrusts them, one and all. That may be the-- the social or political wound that I carry, inability, really, to attach myself strongly emotionally to any community.[74]

[00:20:54.79] INTERVIEWER: But this is a time to persist a little bit. This is a time when people are constantly looking for roots. There's a-- there's almost a perennial search for the ties that you are saying you--

[00:21:05.80] SUBJECT: Mhm. I recognize that as a very important thing for virtually everyone, but not for me. It is a matter on which I have-- I believe I'm very much of the opposite mentality. In the 18th century, there was-- there came to dominance a kind of rationalist in outlook, which suggests that the true community is not the community of emotional attachment.

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[74] This internal struggle to identify with one community or another appears in many other Fortunoff testimonies, as described in the Introduction. This is especially true for Holocaust survivors who converted to Christianity. On the psychological effects of the Holocaust in general see Prot-Klinger, “Broken Identity.” On the psychological effects of conversion to Christianity see Fleischner, “‘Who am I?’”; see also Michlic, “‘Who Am I?’”

And I'm afraid I b-- I belong by-- I don't know whether by temper or by acquisition of acquired habit to that-- to that outlook.

[00:21:53.07] INTERVIEWER: Did you ever have an opportunity to discuss, to exchange any views with-- as remote as you may have found yourself from them-- from people in your community, people, young people that you knew as a young person?

[00:22:06.93] SUBJECT: Mhm. I have. And the curious thing that I found most distressing there was the continuation of the pattern of German Jews haughtiness towards Eastern Judaism and the ignoring of that extraordinarily powerful, strong tradition of the shtetl, the divesting of one's heritage of Eastern Europe, and then the curious half-way return to it, which Irving Howe describes in The World of Our Fathers.[75] I find myself again in a curious position. I am, as an outsider, deeply sympathetic to that culture.

[00:23:01.29] And it makes me deeply chagrined by my fellow German Jews' continuing contempt for, intolerance of that culture. So I have-- I really find myself pretty much an outsider to virtually every group that you could mention.

[00:23:20.61] INTERVIEWER: It was a very full answer to a question I really wasn't asking. I guess, it was a mis--

[00:23:25.91] SUBJECT: But it's a negative.

[00:23:26.38] INTERVIEWER: --but I'm glad that you answered it. No, the question I was answering-- asking, rather-- was did you have a chance to talk to any non-Jewish people?

[00:23:37.02] SUBJECT: Oh, I beg your pardon.

[00:23:37.64] INTERVIEWER: No, I was glad that you answered the way you did. I have a second chance.

[00:23:41.28] SUBJECT: Yes. And I found a gulf. I found very little candor. I found the thing-- if people had said to me, look, my role was not heroic. I'm a very ordinary person. I ran for cover, though I knew better.

[00:24:04.01] I would have probably said, well, God bless you. I don't know if I would have acted any better in your situation. I wonder if I would have. I would hope that I might have. But I'm not sure that I would have. I understand.

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[75] He is refering to Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made*, First Edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976). Howe (1920–1993) was an American literary and social critic and a prominent figure of the Democratic Socialists of America. He was born as Irving Horenstein in The Bronx, New York, the son of Jewish immigrants from Bessarabia. In 1954, Howe helped found the intellectual quarterly *Dissent*, which he edited until his death.

[00:24:16.50] But everybody that I met tried to make himself out a little more than that. And as someone who never capitulated inwardly-- well, I didn't doubt it. Lots of people didn't capitulate inwardly, although a lot of people did. But there was, for me, always a credibility gap for my former contemporary-- with my former contemporaries.

[00:24:43.38] They maximized even the slightest amount of resistance that they might have offered.[76] They may have been danger-- in danger of having to go to jail one day. Maybe they may have been in danger, say, one day in 1934. They maximized it to the skies, and so on and so on. I-- I-- I left Germany after a year as a Fulbright scholar with the same skepticism that I had gone with.[77]

[00:25:18.06] INTERVIEWER: How do you explain the denial of awareness? Awareness-- I mean, people lived around the concentration camps. They lived in towns, very often in towns-- and the camps would have the same name.

[00:25:32.05] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:25:34.80] INTERVIEWER: Did you ever discuss the fact that they claim they didn't know what was happening in-- inside those walls?

[00:25:43.74] SUBJECT: I did not actually know any people who lived close by. I did know people who were aware of concentration camps. And I-- [INAUDIBLE] many of them came pretty close to saying that indeed, they did not know. But it was because they did not want to know what was going on.[78]

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[76] This propensity to maximise the resistance narrative is well documented. See the excellent analysis for France in Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, Mass:, Harvard Univ. Press, 1991). For many years France avoided taking responsibility for its role in the destruction of French Jewry, casting the blame entirely on the Germans in what has become known in historiography as "the Vichy syndrome." This process of replacing responsibility with victimhood in order to maintain a myth of national glory has appeared not only on a large scale among European nations but also on a smaller scale among institutions within the nations. In Germany, for example, until recently almost nobody carefully analysed the myth of the "Clean Wehrmacht," according to which the German army was not involved in killing Jews and other atrocities. Different churches in Europe, aided by lack of research, portrayed themselves as having acted heroically in the Holocaust, which recent research contradicts. See Ion Popa, *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017, 190-91.

[77] Frei was a Fulbright fellow at the University of Göttingen in 1959-1960. More on how West German society at this time coped with the past in Philipp Gassert and Alan E. Steinweis, eds., *Coping with the Nazi Past: West German Debates on Nazism and Generational Conflict, 1955-1975* (New York, Oxford: Berghan Books, 2007).

[78] The difference between not knowing and not wanting to know is well discussed for the period of the Holocaust in Ian Kershaw*, Hitler, The Germans and the Final Solution* (New Have and London: Yale University Press, 2008), especially chapter 7, "Reactions to the Persecution of the Jews," pp. 151-96. For a post-war discussion on assuming responsibility in West Germany see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), especially chapter 8, "Atonement, Restitution and Justice Delayed: West Germany. 1949-1963," pp. 267-333. The chapter covers the period when Frei was in West Germany as a Fulbright Fellow (1959-1960).

[00:26:11.66] INTERVIEWER: And from your vantage point, and with as much candor as you, uh, present, last question.

[00:26:21.61] SUBJECT: OK.

[00:26:22.39] INTERVIEWER: What is your view of people familiarizing themselves, knowing now and in future times, what happened? In other words, what is your view of remembering this era?

[00:26:43.63] SUBJECT: Well, I'll have to-- I'll answer it very candidly. And that is memory is a very curious thing. One has to come to terms with it. And barbarism has to be depicted.

[00:27:05.88] It is an overpowering necessity that we bear witness to that until we come to the point where it becomes the all consuming engrossment of our lives. Until the answer to every question about our own disposition, our own outlook on what's going on in the world today, becomes encapsulated in the word Auschwitz-- we can't do that. The world will keep going.

[00:27:50.23] We cannot get stuck there. Otherwise, I often think that the tragedy may be that by seeking to concentrate on Auschwitz, we may actually repeat it in another form. So yes, remembering and bearing witness to future generations up to a point. But with some hope, in my mind, of going on to other things from there.[79]

[00:28:20.73] INTERVIEWER: Do you think the very act of-- the fact that Auschwitz and all that that implies has perhaps not been as dealt with as it might have could also make it precedent? In other words, acceptance of it can also create precedent.

[00:28:40.67] SUBJECT: I didn't quite understand. Say it again.

[00:28:42.38] INTERVIEWER: In other words, if there is the danger as-- of overfocusing on, as you've just articulated it, on Auschwitz, there is also the danger of acceptance of that bestiality, of that brutality, which creates a circumstance of precedent.

[00:28:59.80] SUBJECT: Yes, in a very strange way, Richard Rubenstein, in a perverse but remarkable book called After Auschwitz suggests just that.[80] But then, Jews will have to do

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[79] Frei is talking here about the theological concept of making Auschwitz a relevant pedagogical tool, "remembering and bearing witness for future generation." One of the best compilations of theological texts dealing with the significance of the Holocaust for Christian and Jewish theology is Dan Cohn-Sherbok, ed., *Holocaust Theology: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002). Cohn-Sherbok's book is divided into four parts, of which the third, "Wrestling with the Holocaust," is relevant for the present discussion.

[80] Frei is referring to Richard L Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966). Rubenstein was born in 1924 in New York City. He attended the College of the City, New York, 1940-1942, and was a student at the Hebrew Union College from 1942-1945. In 1946 he received a B.A. from the University of Cincinnati. Disillusioned with Reform Judaism, Rubenstein received his Masters in Hebrew Literature in 1952 from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where he was also ordained as a rabbi. Desirous of furthering his theological knowledge, Rubenstein attended Harvard Divinity School and received a Masters of Theology in 1955 and a Ph.D. in 1960. His thesis was titled "Psychoanalysis and the Image of Evil in

something that they have not hitherto done, except for him. He thinks that Auschwitz is absolutely frightening because it may be the harbinger of a behavior pattern in the late 20th and early 21st century towards enormous numbers of human groups. Whereas to my best knowledge, the Jewish community has only inquired into it, searched it out, as a phenomenon of behavior toward Judaism.

[00:29:47.93] In other words, I would say, yes, there can be too easy an acceptance of it, of course, but just as there can be too much concentration on it. What I would like to see is Auschwitz become-- and the memory of it, become a warning memorial against the horror of ever doing anything of this sort to any minority or to any group of people, be it Cambodian, be it the Armenians, or be it the Jews.

[00:30:34.20] INTERVIEWER: I-- I-- I'm just burning to ask one last-- just one last question. Identifying-- people say that we really don't learn from history, despite caveats to the contrary.

[00:30:46.20] SUBJECT: Mhm.

[00:30:48.06] INTERVIEWER: I'm wondering, whether you from your studies, from your position, your b-- your unusual vantage point feels that by bringing up all of this, we can learn to identify evil at its incipient stages, across-- across all ethnic lines. I'm not talking about Jews, particularly. If you were talking to some schoolchildren, if you were talking to young people, what would you say about that matter?

[00:31:21.47] SUBJECT: Yes. Yes. And here I'd like to take a leaf out of the book of B'nai B'rith,[81] much as I don't admire them in some ways. I think the sense that when-- when you find group emotions, especially those of hatred, being played upon, when you find that politicians begin to single out, political leaders in any country, democratic or otherwise, begin to single out individual groups in order to distract their fellow citizens' attention from real problems, you're on your way. You're on your way towards possible, possible brutality.[82]

Rabbinic Literature." More, including a short biographical sketch, at the online edition of the American Jewish Archives (The Richard Rubenstein Papers): http://collections.americanjewisharchives.org/ms/ms0685/ms0685.html.

[81] B'nai B'rith ("Children of the Covenant"), was formed in 1843 in New York by German-Jewish immigrants. B'nai B'rith states that it is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel and combating antisemitism and bigotry. For a concise description of its history see the B'nai B'rith International online edition: https://www.bnaibrith.org/about-us.html. See also Cornelia Wilhelm, *The Independent Orders of B'nai B'rith and True Sisters: Pioneers of a New Jewish Identity, 1843-1914* (Wayne State, Wayne State University Press, 2011).

[82] Frei is talking here about genocide prevention, about learning from past experiences the signals of genocide. The United Nations has a special office for genocide prevention. See https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/. In 2014 (reprinted in 2018) the office published a "Framework for Analysis for Atrocity Crimes. A Tool for prevention": https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/publications-and-resources/Genocide_Framework%20of%20Analysis-English.pdf. In 2007 the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in collaboration with the American Academy of Diplomacy and the US Institute of Peace, launched a "Genocide Prevention Task Force." "Its purpose was to spotlight genocide prevention as a national priority and to develop practical policy recommendations to enhance the capacity of the US government to respond to emerging

[00:32:19.73] INTERVIEWER: And what can the average citizen do about noticing that?

[00:32:26.89] SUBJECT: It's easy to say in a-- in what is still a democracy. The only thing the, uh, the average citizen can do to notice it and to help then is to stand by the people who are being brutalized, as some Americans stood by the indiscriminate-- indiscriminate, though under-- though perfectly understandable anger against Iranians after the hostages were taken, Iranians in this country, I mean.[83] I think one simply has to stand by those who are potentially helpless victims as early as possible.[84] And one simply has to say for oneself, well, I'm finally a responsible individual. And my stand must always be those with-- on the side of those who are being victimized.

[00:33:25.41] INTERVIEWER: OK. I respect your time. I really appreciate it. Wait a minute. I really appreciate your coming back.

[00:33:30.62] [RECORDING SNAPS]

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threats of genocide and mass atrocities." See: https://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/about/initiatives/genocide-prevention-task-force. For more academic insights into genocide prevention see James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007). See also James Waller, *Confronting Evil: Engaging Our Responsibility to Prevent Genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

[83] Frei is referring to the "The Iran hostage crisis," a diplomatic standoff between the United States and Iran. Fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days, from November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981, after a group of Iranian supports of the Iranian Revolution took over the US embassy in Tehran. Frei's testimony was recorded on April 18, 1980, when events were still in progress. On the backlash against Iranians living in the US see Marco Brunner: "During the 1979 hostage crisis, Iranians in the U.S. lived in fear of deportation," in *Timeline*, January 31, 2018, available: https://timeline.com/1979-hostage-crisis-iranians-in-us-lived-in-fear-of-deportation-97c450f3b7b3.

[84] See Timothy Snyder, "20 Lessons from the 20th Century," on the website of The Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna: https://www.iwm.at/transit-online/20-lessons-from-the-20th-century/. On lesson 7 he argues for something in the same vein as Frei "7. Stand out. Someone has to. It is easy, in words and deeds, to follow along. It can feel strange to do or say something different. But without that unease, there is no freedom. And the moment you set an example, the spell of the status quo is broken, and others will follow." See also Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Penguin, 2017).