

REVIEW ARTICLE

Antisemitism, Everyday Life, and the Devastation of Public Morals in Nazi Germany

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Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany. By Robert Gellately. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2001. Pp. xvii + 359. \$35.00. ISBN 0-19-820560-0.

Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany. Edited by Robert Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2001. Pp. vi + 332. \$21.95. ISBN 0-691-08684-2.

Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism: German Society and the Persecution of the Jews, 1933-1941. Edited by David Bankier. New York: Berghahn Books. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and the Leo Baeck Institute. 2000. Pp. 585. \$39.95. ISBN 1-57181-238-5.

Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans. By Eric A. Johnson. New York: Basic Books. 1999. Pp. xx + 636. \$35.00. ISBN 0-465-04906-0.

Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989. Edited by Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1997 (essays originally published in *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 4 [December 1996]). Pp. 233. \$17.95. ISBN 0-226-25274-4.

The Germans and the Final Solution: Public Opinion under Nazism. By David Bankier. Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers. 1992 Paper 2001. Pp. vii + 206. \$29.95. ISBN 0-631-20100-9.

The Gestapo and German Society: Enforcing Racial Policy, 1933-1945. By Robert Gellately. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1990. Pp. xvii + 297. \$35.00. ISBN 0-19-820297-0.

I

The Holocaust, the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer insists in his introduction to *Probing the Depths of German Antisemitism*, was unique. No attempted genocide in world history was so total. So ambitious were the perpetrators that they did not confine their racial aspirations to proximately coveted territory. Nor could its deleterious effects on any of their own competing priorities—including even their military exigencies during wartime—give them much pause. Every practical consideration eventually gave way before the ideological momentum of the murders. When the embattled regime reached the point where it could hang on only by exploiting rather than annihilating its targets, the murders actually increased.

Further adding to its distinctiveness was the identity of its victims. Not by chance, notes Bauer, were the targets the Jews. They alone in Europe still sustained the cultural and social practices of their pre-Christian forbears and vibrantly carried an ancient culture forward into the modern era. The Nazis targeted the Jews not because they were eternal outsiders, but because these outsiders were simultaneously the ultimate insiders. From the Bible (both testaments) to the Enlightenment and forward to modernity, Jewish culture was associated with the Western values against which the Nazis were in revolt. It was, contends Bauer, a standing reproach to the world the Nazis wished to construct.

Does the explanation for the Holocaust lie, then, simply in a particularly virulent German strain of antisemitism? Daniel Goldhagen¹ notwithstanding, historians have tended not to think so. Antisemitism, even “eliminationist antisemitism,” can be found in abundance in European history, both temporally and geographically; yet the Holocaust, Bauer and many others insist, was unique. The ascription of a uniquely German antisemitic culture accounts for

1. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York, 1996).

neither the irregular rhythm of modern persecution in Germany nor the zeal with which non-Germans all over Europe participated in this episode of unprecedented murderous intensity.

But every other purportedly decisive explanation brings the same difficulty. Theories that connect the Holocaust to the process of national modernization in Germany beg the question of why modernization does not always prove so murderous. For all their suggestiveness, structural-functional arguments alone cannot explain why this historic case should have been less marked than others by the bureaucratic tendency to discover hurdles rather than inventive ways to overcome them. Socioeconomic explanations cannot account for the timing of a phenomenon that occurred not during Germany's economic crisis but after that crisis had been brought under control. And all of these explanations are strained by any attempt to account for the identity of the chief victim.

And so, Bauer leads us back not just to the necessity of contemplating the nature of the general interaction among several causes, but to the particular interaction, within the multitude of overlapping frameworks that mark the social dynamics of a modern participatory society, of two old-fashioned factors: the influence of a utopian ideology (always, he says, a murder-inducing factor in history), and the phenomenon of popular antisemitism. If the latter is to be more than just a circular explanation (Jews were killed because they were hated, and the reason they were hated was because they were Jews), it requires deeper empirical probing and contextual analysis. Although antisemitism was not a sufficient condition to cause the Holocaust, it was certainly a necessary one. The Holocaust may have been a German project, but its victims were the subject, and not just the object, of this history.

What the authors of the conference papers that make up this book set out to do, then, is not to discern the continuity of "eliminationist antisemitism" in German history as posited by Goldhagen, but rather, to ask the question that Goldhagen eschewed: how did a highly articulated society in which antisemitism may have been neither more nor less diverse in its *varieties* than in other European lands become, in the course of the 1930s, a recruiting ground for murderers? That is, how did the Nazi variety of antisemitic discourse, belief, and behavior come here and now to prevail?

The twenty-eight contributors to this volume, including historians from Germany, Israel, and English-speaking countries, confront this question by examining antisemitism as an idea that had consequences in everyday life. They thereby respond implicitly to an earlier criticism that the everyday-life approach to writing history (*Alltagsgeschichte*), as well as the related school of screenplays and television series, marginalize the victims and trivialize the *Alltag* in the Nazi era as a haven of nonpolitical normality and inertial resistance or traditionalist imperviousness toward the regime's attempted revolutionary makeover

of perceived experiences, behaviors, and mentalities.² *Probing the Depths* samples major new research on the Nazi period. It includes case studies that focus on particular locales as well as on social, cultural, and bureaucratic milieus. Impressive empirical studies are complemented by stimulating conceptual essays. Some articles summarize dissertations and monograph-length results heretofore unavailable in English. Specific topics include: local administration of anti-Jewish policy; local expropriations of Jewish businesses and the dynamics of expelling Jews from the economy; how people in mixed marriages experienced Nazi pressure; anti-Jewish violence; the evolution of popular attitudes before and during wartime; denunciations; working-class and Social Democratic attitudes toward Jews; how Christian churches accommodated themselves to the persecution of their converted coparishioners; antisemitism in the German resistance; and the strategies employed by Jewish organizations under Nazi pressure. These essays avoid teleology in favor of the ambiguities and contingencies of historical process. Yet, in tracing dynamic processes over time, they end up illuminating how evolving policies intersected with changing popular attitudes to produce a symbiotic radical dehumanization among the German public that did not spare even some of those who felt called to guard against it.

Whereas *Probing the Depths* examines this "moral brutalization"³ through case studies, Robert Gellately tries to evaluate it synthetically. For over a decade, Gellately has pioneered the study of denunciations perpetrated by members of the general public. Extending this work in his new book *Backing Hitler*, he also attempts to gauge the broader context of public knowledge and approval of Nazi actions regarding racial policy and its enforcement. By studying Nazi representations, the qualitative visibility of Nazi actions, and their public reception, he seeks to understand public complicity in crafting the civic context in which denunciations occurred and the civic moral framework in which they seemed to fit.

Like many of the essays in *Probing the Depths*, Gellately finds that Nazi intentionality operated neither *on* nor *alongside*, but rather, *together with* public aspirations and volition to produce a situation in which traditional values could

2. See, e.g., the exchanges of the late 1980s between Saul Friedländer and Martin Broszat, conveniently reprinted in Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate* (Boston, 1990), 77–134. To summarize the controversy in a phrase from each historian: whereas Friedländer cautioned against the agnostic duality that is still implied by the study of "the intertwining of normalcy and criminality," Broszat affirmed that he was centrally interested in this very duality, or "the side-by-side existence — to an extent without any linking connections — of (a) a relatively unpolitical normal life and (b) the dictatorial impositions . . . of the regime" (even though "under such conditions, everyday life in the Nazi period was probably not as normal after all as it might appear to have been on the surface"). Friedländer and Broszat, respectively, in Baldwin, ed., 94, 125.

3. Ulrich Herbert, quoted in Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, 263.

appear affirmed by Nazi actions. National Socialism, Gellately quotes Fritz Stern, was a "temptation" that people found reasons to support (Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 257). Most people were neither "regimented" nor "cajoled" into doing so (p. 257). Nor were they "brainwash[ed]," an empty term (when used abstractly in the aggregate) that captures not how millions of otherwise rational Germans could support a mass murderer but our own difficulty in comprehending this fact (p. 259). Gellately concludes that most people supported Nazism, including the quite visible effects of "the exclusionary dynamics of social racism" (p. 258), because, in the words of Lothar Kettenacker, Nazism stood for "what people sincerely hoped to be true" (p. 259). But this hope, in Gellately's reading, had less to do with antisemitism per se than with the subsuming of the antisemitic impulse under the related but distinct concept of the "social alien" (p. 259) — the "asocial" (p. 257) or socially "inadequate" elements (p. 258) that allegedly polluted society. The concept of the asocial was so elastic that the Nazis could count on finding additional public support whenever they expanded it, which they continually did.

The expansive agenda, in other words, never struck most Germans as so threatening that they wished to withdraw their support. As shown even more clearly by Eric Johnson's statistical analysis of police and court records in his book *Nazi Terror*, the Gestapo limited most of its actions to persons who fell into a few select categories: Jews, Marxists (alleged or actual), Jehovah's Witnesses and other active moral dissenters, sexual nonconformists. Ordinary elder residents of Cologne who responded in the mid-1990s to a questionnaire devised by Johnson, some of whom also submitted to follow-up interviews, further solidified his conviction that the vast majority of people in Nazi Germany simply did not feel terrorized. "Nazi terror," he provocatively concludes, "posed no real threat to most ordinary Germans" (Johnson, p. 253).

Not going quite so far on this point, Gellately claims only that "for most Germans, the coercive or terroristic side of Hitler's dictatorship was socially constructed" (Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 257). Apart from those in the selected categories, coercion was a byproduct less of actual policing than of media reports and popular conversations. Most Germans, he concludes, were quite "prepared to live with the idea of a surveillance society" (p. 256), whose "coercive practices . . . won far more support for the dictatorship than they lost" (p. 259). Indeed — and here Gellately goes considerably farther than Johnson — "solid citizens" (p. 258) were "certainly pleased" to see "those whom the Nazis branded" as criminals and asocial elements "sent off" to camps (p. 257), which the media "invited" the public to regard as educative and corrective institutions (p. 263). As the war "revolutionized the revolution" (p. 261) and rendered the fuller implications of Nazi social and racial policy more and more palpable by making slave laborers and camp inmates visible domestically, their physiognomies "seemed to many Germans to confirm Nazi theories and to affirm" the

citizens' "own perverted sense of social and racial superiority" (p. 262). In wanting a post-Weimar "return to an idealized version of German 'law and order,'" "good citizens'" became ever more deeply complicit in the regime's effort to translate their traditional aversion to "'social rabble'" into an expansive racial and penal project (p. 263). In this way, the public tended to accept, to support, and even to promote "the terroristic side" of Hitler's regime.

Under this theory, the fact that Jews (defined racially) became the chief target of Nazi terror would seem to mean that the public must at least have acquiesced in viewing Jews as irredeemably asocial. But by placing such acquiescence in this public context of alleged civic virtue, Gellately endows the concept of acquiescence with an active and concrete signification. To be sure, even actual denunciations frequently had more to do with personal or selfish motives than with the civic ideals that fronted them. But whatever the motives, denunciations implied a willingness to accept and even to facilitate the functioning of Nazi definitions of asociality and civic virtue. Using the definitions, even opportunistically, implied embracing them; and acquiescing in their use normalized them. Even doing nothing, suggests Heidi Gerstenberger in *Probing the Depths*, had concrete attitudinal and practical ramifications. Moreover, as emphasized both by Gellately and by David Bankier (the editor of *Probing the Depths*) in his earlier monograph *The Germans and the Final Solution*, occasional signs of popular misgivings generally involved either concern over lawless methods (which the regime *assuaged* by expansively codifying racial criminality and the system of summary "police justice"), or eventual fears of postwar reprisals — not usually humanitarian scruples, and certainly not doubts about the premise of Jewish social malignancy, acceptance of which seems on the whole to have waxed. Thus, whether or not the broader public necessarily held to Nazi priorities and shared in the intensity of Nazi convictions, public conventions and actions became bounded by a prevailing willingness, even a commitment, to join in the Nazis' ascription of asociality to race.

Such an ascription, however, cannot be assumed without further examination to have been intuitive — perhaps especially not in Germany, where the openings offered by traditional Christian and even economic antisemitism were accompanied by a Jewish civic stereotype containing elements that were, in a positive sense, *bürgerlich*. Hence, for all the suggestiveness of Gellately's analysis in *Backing Hitler*, the specificity of the Jewish target in the public imagination is a topic that is not exhausted by subsuming it under the rubric of asociality. A volume of essays edited by Gellately and Nathan Stoltzfus, *Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany*, is a useful step toward a comparative history of Nazi targeting and public receptivity. But even (or especially) in this context, one still cannot understand why (or how, or if) Jews could be seen as asocial in Nazi Germany without examining contemporary popular antisemitism. Thus, the question lingers: if the general public came to regard or at least to act upon Jews as

befitting their asocial portrayal in the Nazi universe, then how did this development happen? If this is too categorical a description of what happened (as especially Johnson argues), then how is popular acquiescence in the inclusion of Jews among the asocial target groups to be understood? And what more needs to be said and explored about the radicalization of popular antisemitism in Nazi Germany?

II

Although some of the essays in *Probing the Depths* draw opposite conclusions on some dimensions of the matter, they agree on several broad aspects. First, progressive radicalization was remarkably widespread, and was not confined to party cadres or to social sectors traditionally seen as most receptive to Nazism. Rather, most sectors of German society were implicated quite directly in a kind of daily Nazi inhumanity, the creeping effect of which was such as to dull sensitivities and thereby to permit most Germans to lose sight of the full extent of their own complicity. Second, although the impact of this process was cumulative, its rhythm, at least until the end of 1938, was usually not linear. Third, the process of radicalization was dynamic: it flowed both horizontally and vertically, and both upward and downward. The center, local authorities, popular groupings (vocational, religious, and so on), and the general public all fed each other's radicalism. Fourth, traditional varieties of antisemitism offered easy entry points into Nazi discourse (even, as editor David Bankier's own essay points out, for some exiled Social Democratic intellectuals), a fact that further cushioned the cumulative dulling of humane sensitivities. Fifth, the resultant dynamic produced a situation in which traditional values shifted within one's field of focus almost as in an Escher drawing to suit Nazi aims. Sixth, Jewish organizations and individuals were also vulnerable to the clashes of values and the regime's inescapable demand to become hardened in one's sensitivities. Thus, the leaders of Jewish organizations faced impossible choices and human dilemmas and responded in ways that looked afterward as complicit, but that had their logic at the time.

The administration of public welfare is one example of how central and local policy initiatives, both of which were backed by public pressure, interacted to produce spiraling callousness. By increasing Jewish poverty, writes Wolf Gruner, Nazi persecution in the 1930s made the already wrenching process of emigration, which the regime wanted to promote, more difficult. Poverty thus resulted in an initial increase in social services that went to Jews, an ideologically intolerable situation for the Nazis. In practical terms, Jewish poverty heightened the burden on local municipalities. Seeking relief, the latter — whose continuing institutional role in Nazi Germany has in Gruner's view been underestimated — joined in the pressure throughout the 1930s to remove Jews from eligibility for

social services. With Jewish community organizations increasingly strapped, their umbrella organization, the precariously autonomous Reichsvertretung der deutschen Juden (RV), gave way in 1939 to the Nazi-mandated Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland (RVJD), which was made responsible for providing relief. Nearly all municipalities thereupon terminated what little remained of the aid they had once provided. This step was their own initiative. Meanwhile, with confiscatory levies and predatory officials (not to mention bargain-basement sales of businesses) costing would-be émigrés more than 90 percent of their assets,⁴ Jewish community organizations in the later 1930s could no longer afford to help fund emigration — that is, from the Nazi point of view, the desired Jewish expulsion. These sorts of dilemmas in Nazi policy, writes Gruner, helped produce the new radicalism that was marked by *Kristallnacht* in November of 1938. Neither “exclusive state orchestration nor spontaneous local developments” but “a mutual dynamic interaction” that was tied to “an increasingly radical public consensus” underlay the escalating extremism in implementing anti-Jewish policy (*Probing the Depths*, p. 104).

The picture Gruner presents builds upon the insights offered by functionalism and by corporatist or interest-based explanations for collective bureaucratic callousness by carefully working out how these aspects dynamically interacted not just with racist antisemitic zeal on the part of some but also with what Gruner calls “forced antisemitism that derived from the new social reality after 1933” (p. 104). Yet, the implied distinction between forced and zealous racism is less important here than the implied commonality. Gruner is intent on breaking through several conventions, including “the often stated difference between the NSDAP and the rest of society,” the “natural distance between the administrative authorities of the old school and the prevailing ideology,” and the allegedly downsized and only passively cooperative role of traditional local elites (p. 104).⁵ Like much recent work, his case study again suggests the need, when considering the broader public beyond the party activists, to remarry functionalism to — if not ideology — then at least ideas. Whether or not everybody became a Nazi, everybody was influenced in their actions by Nazi ideas. Arguments that focus on bureaucratic momentum, even when they underscore that this momentum was the product of the pressures produced by the consequences of zealous Nazi policies, tend to suggest a kind of division between thoughtful zealots and thoughtless functionaries. It is the burden of much of the

4. This number, from June of 1938, approached 100 percent fifteen months later. These data are from Frank Bajohr's essay in Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders*, 56, 58. See also Marion Kaplan's essay, *idem*, 82–83, 86.

5. As Kaplan also notes, booty-seeking officials who (for example) “‘helped themselves . . . to valuables’” as Jews packed to emigrate seemed to “relish their new roles” and were hardly “banal bureaucrats who were just ‘taking orders.’” *Ibid.*, 83.

new work in the field, including many of the essays in *Probing the Depths*, to bridge (if not to remove) this division by suggesting and trying to trace exactly *how* the ideology of the zealots invaded the *mentality* and *as a consequence* guided the actions of the rest of the authority structure as well as the general public.

In one way or another, the junction between (on the one hand) value-based mentalities — in which not only bourgeois mores but also both antisemitism and civic courage figure — and (on the other hand) practical and behavioral considerations that influenced both bureaucratic momentum and everyday life sits at the heart of what might be called the emerging postfunctionalist historiography of Nazi Germany. The contours of this junction, however, are extremely complex. The local studies in *Probing the Depths* offer empirical data useful for evaluating these contours, and studies such as *Backing Hitler* complement such work by offering a wider-lens view; but the whole approach is still young.

Uwe Lohalm's study of the Hamburg Welfare Office again concretely documents how often local authorities ran ahead of the central ones — from segregating Jewish and "Aryan" residents of charity homes that had been built by Jewish benefactors (some of which were later expropriated) to removing "Aryan" children from their Jewish adoptive parents. Investigating the Aryanization of businesses in the same city, Frank Bajohr writes that small businessmen "organized boycott campaigns" and excluded Jews from membership in trade associations "even without . . . organizational directives 'from above'" (*Probing the Depths*, p. 227). As a port city, Hamburg's special vulnerability to foreign economic pressures even caused the central authorities to step in to try to control local anti-Jewish campaigns. Hamburg's lingering economic weakness thus protected Jewish businesses for a time. As other authors have also shown (including Albert Fischer and Simone Ladwig-Winters in this collection), economic fear sporadically impeded antisemitic campaigns, but even this impediment, such as it was, eventually was shoved aside.

Bajohr finds a generation-based as well as a class-based pattern in the behavior of Hamburg's business and financial circles. Elite members of the status-conscious and laissez faire-oriented older generation were less ready than either small business circles or the elite's own sons (whose attitude toward bourgeois values was soured by the economic crisis) to accept expropriation of or governmental intervention in the businesses of their Jewish colleagues. On one level, separating values from social mores or calculations of interest can be somewhat artificial here. Nazi interventionism and expropriation of private property violated the businessmen's corporate code of ethics and raised their fears that "brown Bolshevism" (p. 234) might eventually extend to themselves. These "'gracious' circles" (p. 231) were duly attacked in the Nazi press (the quotation is from the *Hamburger Tageblatt*) as reactionaries who put their own interests ahead of national ideals and regeneration. In that peculiar reversal of standards that characterized Nazism, acting consequently on one's antisemitism showed

idealism, while misgivings over state-sponsored thievery and the impoverishment of one's Jewish competitors showed selfishness. In the face of this onslaught, even the older generation gradually ceased to maintain its "bourgeois" reservations — which in any case had almost never led to engagement on behalf of the victims. (Nor were scruples over the economic ill effects of anti-Jewish measures free of antisemitic prejudices either in Hamburg or elsewhere, as Albert Fischer's essay on Hjalmar Schacht also shows.) Moreover, even though the beneficiaries of Aryanization tended to be smaller tradesmen, many bigger businessmen eventually began to see Aryanization as a means of distracting party authorities from other sorts of intervention in the economy that might have struck closer to home. Aryanization was thus a triumph of the logic of Nazi-serving cynicism just as much as it was a triumph of the Nazi-proclaimed brand of social and racial idealism.

At first blush, the sinister complexities of gentrified anti-Jewish terror can be swept out of the picture when exploring a seemingly much more straightforward phenomenon: local antisemitic violence. Although the violence increased over time, Michael Wildt points out that it did not come about only as a late stage in a linear process of centrally directed brutalization, but was part of the daily public and private experience of Jews from the very first days of the regime. Wildt documents this reality and its consequences in the small Franconian Catholic town of Treuchtlingen (population 4,200). He confirms that violence included not just vandalism under cover of darkness, and not just thuggery hiding behind uniforms. More often than not, it was a wildcat phenomenon, with so-called bystanders increasingly becoming perpetrators (p. 184). Riders forcibly expelled Jewish passengers from trains; schoolchildren taunted not just their peers but also their elders; debtors refused to pay their Jewish creditors and beat or intimidated those who tried to collect. Women, children, and the aged were not spared. The violence almost always was locally fomented, with occasional half-hearted efforts by local and national authorities, including the Gestapo, to curb it. The public, Wildt argues, pressured the police — not the other way around — into tolerating greater radicalism. As late as 1938, far from seeing the police as the main source of the terror, Jews appealed to them for protection. The appeals, of course, would prove to be misplaced; but it took some time for this to become fully apparent.

Here as elsewhere, the months just before *Kristallnacht* roughly marked the season when the drizzle of violence became a downpour. In October, police in another Franconian town reported an anti-Jewish rampage after a Jew admonished a Sudeten German that his tiny group was bringing the whole world to the brink of war. Then came the November riots. "It almost appears," Wildt hedges, "as if the extreme tension that the threat of war evoked among the German population was vented in local pogroms" (p. 195). Of one thing Wildt is more certain: "Riots on such a scale do not occur on demand unless the pent-

up energy required for a pogrom already exists" (p. 196). When the explosion came, SA attackers were incited (not just the other way around) by scores of ordinary citizens who joined in or accompanied the attacks with verbal encouragement while they hurled abuse at the victims. One young girl had a broken bottle shoved down her neck from which she was forced to drink. Another victim, brutally beaten in his looted home in front of his children, noted that his neighbors and their teen-aged children participated in the destruction. Even at this late date, when the fact of such violence cannot surprise, the power of its detailed localized narration is unabated. Wildt's thick description brings home two major points: pervasive public violence was a daily reality of Jewish life (be the setting metropolitan or secluded); and a great many "normal Germans" must have not only known about it but participated in or applauded it.

"The November pogrom in Treuchtlingen," concludes Wildt, "was not the work of isolated SA gangs but rather the rampage of an entire town" (p. 198). But other scholars, including Bankier in *The Germans and the Final Solution*, have concluded that the pogroms met more generally with public disapproval — albeit less for their antisemitic content or sheer brutality (though the latter did occasion reproof) than for their wasteful destruction of property and their potential international ramifications. According to Herbert Obenaus in his contribution to *Probing the Depths*, the public showed "obvious distance" (p. 147) from the violence, reacting with "detachment" and even "censure" (p. 149). In response, the regime organized a new press campaign that carried four messages. First, it purported to demonstrate historically the incessant and inherent Jewish propensity to harm the German people. Second, it insisted that Nazi countermeasures were in keeping with growing international sentiment and practice, as demonstrated for example by American immigration restrictions. Thus, far from endangering Germany's diplomatic position, the regime's energy on the racial front allegedly would win it diplomatic authority. Third, the press tried to identify philosemitism with "philistine" elites who profited from Nazism's international successes while rejecting its populism, at the core of which allegedly sat its antisemitism. Fourth, the press complemented this campaign with assurances that future measures, while remaining energetic, would follow legal pathways.

To Obenaus, the felt need of the regime to launch such a press campaign refutes Goldhagen's thesis. Rather than showing organic linkage (as Wildt suggests) between the threat of war and popular outbreaks of antisemitic violence, *Kristallnacht* and its aftermath demonstrated the regime's justified nervousness that the nationalistic intensity of the Austrian and Sudeten crises might lead to a disconnection in the public mind between the genuine integrative power of acclamatory nationalism and integration on the Nazi-desired basis of antisemitism. This is a shrewd point, but it is rather too unambiguous. If the press campaign can be said to show that the regime was nervous lest antisemitism

prove insufficiently integrative, it might also be said to show the regime's intrepid calculation that antisemitism properly handled must indeed strike a popular chord. So we are back trying to negotiate the junction where manipulation from above meets receptivity from below.

Moreover, the issue of legality and violence also cuts both ways. It suggests that expropriation rather than destruction of Jewish property — as well as other inherently violent “eliminationist” measures such as eviction from residences, discriminatory wartime rations and shopping privileges, exclusion from “Aryan” bomb shelters, and deportation to death camps — could escape much or most of the public’s “censure” so long as they were clothed in scanty legalisms. Indeed, as John Connelly shows in a local study of petitions to Nazi authorities (included by Gellately and Sheila Fitzpatrick in *Accusatory Practices*, their edited collection of articles on denunciations in European history), evictions hardly met with sweeping censure. On the contrary, they were assiduously demanded by all manner of covetous private citizens of relatively humble means who by 1939 had thoroughly internalized the idea that they were deserving of the scant resources (such as an apartment to live in) that somehow still remained in the hands of their remaining Jewish neighbors. As Connelly documents for the Eisenach district, watchful self-styled “racial comrades” (*Völksgenossen*) — not just party members but ordinary citizens, including (for example) widows — were wont to pressure local party authorities for their patronage by demanding to know how it was possible in their part of Hitler’s Germany for Jews to retain dwellings needed or simply desired by Aryans. Similarly, the subsequent wartime diaries of urban Jewish women, writes Marion Kaplan in *Probing the Depths*, show not only public hostility but public enforcement by shopkeepers and sundry neighbors of restrictions toward the remaining (usually intermarried) Jews and their children, whose continued presence — now revealed by the mandatory wearing of the yellow star — elicited more expressions of “Aryan” surprise than sympathy. (Of course, such surprise might reflect embarrassment as well as callousness, but the former all too often led to the latter.) Finally, Obenaus notes the existence alongside the mainstream post-*Kristallnacht* press campaign of a second campaign, meant for members of party-affiliated organizations (a rather large category), in which it was vowed that the time of lenience toward Jews had passed. As Ursula Büttner reminds us in *Probing the Depths*, this sentiment was shared by significant technically nonparty groups such as the militantly antisemitic German Christians, whose influence — beyond congregations they outright controlled — extended into the more traditional or so-called intact regional branches of the Protestant Church. If there were limits to public tolerance of radical action, there were also limits, in the context of the dynamic unleashed by the regime, to public tolerance of relative inaction.

Putting aside the extreme views of Goldhagen, we still do not know and perhaps cannot really know who approved and who disapproved, who participated in and who "censured," the pogroms. Even harder to determine is how people decided whether or not to join in the more everyday types of violence and oppression that Wildt finds in Treuchtlingen before 1938, or that Connelly and Kaplan note just before and during the war.⁶ As Heide Gerstenberger asserts (*Probing the Depths*, p. 23), the hypothesis of the "relative immunity to National Socialism" of the members of one or another reference group — be it workers, or Catholics, or Hanseatic residents, or even (add Johnson and Büttner) some elements of the Confessing Church — has been serially demolished by new research. Although the hope remains open that an analysis by social groups might shed more light on the popular brutalization, this hope (further examined below) now would seem to reside in analyzing variant forms of a more universal dynamic. Traditional socioeconomic or subcultural categorizations otherwise appear increasingly inadequate as a guide to distinguishing the independent variable(s) here.

What we do know and have long known, and what we learn yet again from the diaries studied by Kaplan as well as those of the German Jewish intellectual Victor Klemperer,⁷ is that a remarkable number of non-Jewish Germans were able not to face the knowledge of what was going on all about them, including what they themselves were doing. Kaplan offers a truly telling point: virtually everything that we know about the daily oppressions that accompanied the continued Jewish presence in wartime Germany comes to us through either the records of the regime's decrees or the accounts of Jewish victims, not from the German so-called bystanders. Furthermore, on one level, the more quotidian aspect of the earlier violence must be the more important aspect, for it was the least likely to be "censured." What the Nazis cleverly did in the months after *Kristallnacht* was to escalate their official and semi-official measures — as both Gellately and Bankier show, in full public view — while avoiding (until later) the unambiguous wantonness that had caused at least some measure of public hesitation (along with public bloodlust) in November of 1938.⁸

All of which renders the evidence in Klemperer's diaries, insightfully interpreted and summarized in *Probing the Depths* by Susanne Heim, even more striking. Above all, Klemperer confirms Wildt's sense of the everyday oppressive

6. See also Kaplan's book, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York, 1998).

7. Klemperer, *Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten: Tagebücher 1933–1945*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1995).

8. By the second year of the war, mass deportations from urban centers often took place in broad daylight. As Bankier notes (*Germans*, 131), newspapers concurrently informed the public "that Germany would be cleared of Jews" by the spring of 1942.

torture of Jewish life, from the curses and petty violence inflicted by passers-by — so pervasive already in the early years that every pitiful example of ordinary decorum elicited the diarist's gratitude — to the debilitating isolation later in *Judenhäuser*, where yellow-starred residents trapped by the anticipated indignities of walking the streets cowered on the floor whenever a car passed and fretted that every ring of the doorbell heralded the Gestapo. Despite Klemperer's persistence from beginning to end in recording every flicker of non-Jewish dissatisfaction with Nazism that he encountered, and despite his wartime determination to persevere in maintaining his German identity ("I am German, the others are un-German; I must hold onto it"), Klemperer was already persuaded by May of 1936 that "no one really wants to be rid" of Hitler, whom "everyone" saw as "the foreign policy liberator." Most people were "satisfied"; the rest were resigned; few were concerned by "such trivialities as the suppression of civil rights" and "the systematic destruction of all morality."⁹ Even the tiny minority of sympathetic non-Jews emerges here as only dimly comprehending, or rather psychologically self-barred from really perceiving, what daily Jewish life had become.

Summarizing the internal situation reports that the regime used to monitor the public's disposition, Otto Kulka notes the following: on topics other than race, the diverse attitudes maintained by religious, vocational, and other reference groups of the Weimar (and earlier) periods lingered even into the 1940s; on racial matters, apart from certain moments that betray the public's awareness of the fate of Jews in the East, diversity gave way by the 1940s to silence. (One revealing break in the silence followed the regime's attempt to make hay out of the Soviet mass murder of Polish officers in the Katyn forest. Seeing through their government's cynicism, the public seemed resigned to the view that German crimes would spawn crimes by their adversaries.) The question, then, is how to interpret the silence. Did it indicate apathy? Did it indicate a desire, born of guilt or shame or fear, to repress what one knew? Or did it indicate consensus?¹⁰

The well-known results of postwar surveys by the American occupation authorities (OMGUS) help persuade Kulka that the answer is the latter. At a time when pro-Nazi views were inopportune and when no one could still plead ignorance as to where Nazi policies had led, roughly half the respondents answered survey questions in a manner that demonstrated lingering anti-

9. Klemperer 2: 83–84 (11 May 1942) and 1: 264 (10 May 1936), quoted by Heim in Bankier, ed., *Probing the Depths*, 316.

10. As Bankier points out in his monograph, there is also a fourth possibility: the authors of the national summary reports may have imposed the silence. Augmenting the national summaries with local summaries, reports by other Nazi agencies, letters, diaries, and the accounts of foreign observers, Bankier is able to penetrate the silence somewhat. See section V below.

semitism and sympathy with Nazism. Just as it took the public some time in the 1930s to replace "pretotalitarian" attitudes with "Nazi norms," it clung for a time to Nazi norms "even after the nature of the crime of genocide had been revealed" (*Probing the Depths*, p. 280).¹¹

Analyses of social sectors largely support Kulka's view that, at best, a "depersonalized attitude" (*Probing*, p. 277) widely developed toward Jews. With the disappearance of Jews from German domestic daily life, notes Kulka, came "their transmutation into an abstraction" (p. 277). Nazi popularity as a general phenomenon interacted here with popular adaptability to the *real consequences* of Nazi Jewish policy to produce at least accession to the eliminationist project. But whether accession should be understood to mean not just acquiescence but concurrence and consensus remains open to dispute. Moreover, the paths of each reference group to such concurrence or consensus may not have been uniform. According to Kaplan (*Social Outsiders*, p. 67), Jews in small towns had a generally worse experience in the 1930s than Jews in cities. Still elusive is an understanding of the manner in which accession to the Nazi racial project may have been conditioned for each social sector, gender, or age cohort by the specific social circumstances in which Jews and non-Jews had heretofore related.

In particular, while recent studies of blue-collar workers have punctured the myth of the privileged capacity of workers to avoid assimilating Nazi outlooks,¹² drawing alternative generalizations about workers remains hazardous. Accepting this risk, Alf Lüdtke subtitles his contribution to *Probing the Depths* "Reflections on Open Questions." For three generations, observes Lüdtke, Social Democrats, despite their doctrinal rejection of antisemitism, had propagated images of the capitalist into which Jews could easily be fitted. By the mid-1930s, he continues, workers shared the general perception that under Hitler, times had dramatically improved. In addition, the SA in its own vulgar way appealed to the fetish of the physical, a natural aspect of working-class pride. In the 1940s, as "dozens" (p. 307) of letters of soldiers reveal, the army engaged the working-class inductee's ethos of craftsmanship in order to harness his self-affirming contribution to the functioning of the war machine. This soldierly contribution seems to have been generally rendered with good spirit rather than reluctance, and included what one worker-soldier called "great satisfaction" in the German "quality work" entailed in the "complete extermination of the Jewish Ghetto." These soldiers, concludes Lüdtke, were both "victims

11. See also the detailed analysis and richly documented description of immediate postwar attitudes toward Jews in Frank Stern, *The Whitewashing of the Yellow Badge: Antisemitism and Philosemitism in Postwar Germany* (Oxford, 1992).

12. Bankier, *Germans*, 89–95, 175; Bernd Stöver, *Volksgemeinschaft im Dritten Reich: Die Konsensbereitschaft der Deutschen aus der Sicht sozialistischer Exilberichte* (Düsseldorf, 1993).

and accomplices." Attempting jauntily to cope, they made "efforts to eradicate" the moral and mortal dangers of their position. They "tried to appropriate the given situation" by resorting to their own class's mores, in the process *gaining* self-esteem as they became participants in human extermination (pp. 310–11).

In keeping with the ostensible rationalism of their own ideology, writes Bankier in his own essay in this collection, exiled Social Democratic leaders adhered to the view that Nazi racialist myth-making was a tool, not a conviction. Failing to recognize "the qualitative difference between previous Jew hatred and modern Nazi antisemitism" (p. 512), they saw the Nazi recourse to antisemitism as a reactionary capitalist tactic.¹³ Bound by doctrine to the notion that time must be on their side, they could fathom neither that the Nazis were serious about their commitment to something so old-fashioned as antisemitism, nor that antisemitism's irrational rudiments could be scientistically refashioned, in a manner befitting the modern age, into a major historical influence. Yet, at the same time that Social Democrats "underestimated the integrative potential" (p. 512) of racialism, their own understanding of antisemitism as a tactic hints at their anxiety that workers might indeed be susceptible to it. The exiled Social Democrats, suggests Bankier, may have understated the independent significance of the Jewish issue because they feared alienating workers. This tacit recognition of working-class antisemitism might be said to parallel the recognition about traditional German leadership groups — but also about international public opinion — that was implicit in the efforts of conservative resisters and exiles to influence opinion by emphasizing not Nazi victimization of Jews but Nazi victimization and degradation of Germans.

In another parallel, Christof Dipper complements Bankier's analysis of antisemitism among the Social Democratic exiles themselves with a differentiated examination of attitudes about the "Jewish question" among conservative leaders of the resistance. While both oppositional groups were (in Bankier's words about the Social Democrats) "genuinely appalled by the extermination of the Jews" (p. 516), this reaction did not prevent elements in either camp from proclaiming their own freedom from philosemitism. There remained, notes Bankier, a tension between the "commitment to fight discrimination and attribution of negative traits to the discriminated" (p. 519). This tension extended even to recriminations within domestic Social Democratic circles against Jewish bourgeois "*Salonsozialisten*" whose leadership was now held responsible for the party's failure. To be sure, rhetoric must not overshadow actions, such as the efforts of exiled Social Democratic leaders to arrange lower barriers abroad to Jewish immigration. And insofar as they tried to operate inside Germany, both

13. For the East German regime's continuance of this position (this time rather more disingenuously) as well as the postwar Social Democrats' reconsideration, see Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

the Social Democrats and the conservatives (again in Bankier's words about the former) had to "adapt their discourse to the German climate of opinion" (p. 516). Still, among the Social Democrats, a predominantly economic but racially tinged antisemitism appeared sporadically alongside an occasionally quite caustic assertion of the priority of "political" over racial victimization; and among at least some circles of conservative resisters, a racially accented variety of traditional antisemitism seems for a long time to have been almost taken for granted.

In regard to the conservatives, Dipper makes a threefold distinction. There were, first of all, members of the older generation of the national conservative elite: Carl Goerdeler, Ulrich von Hassell, Johannes Popitz, Ludwig Beck, Wilhelm Canaris, Franz Halder. This group, which included men and associates of men who had helped bring Hitler to power, was characterized by "the attempt to differentiate" between "intolerable 'excesses'" and policies whose essence the members "generally approved." At best, "They did not reject" the regime's fateful "renunciation of Jewish emancipation" (p. 481). The mass murder appalled them morally, and they "unequivocally castigated" it (p. 487). However, some of them, including Goerdeler, did equivocate about the future status of Jews in Germany. They ended or only tactically continued their restless "collaboration" (p. 479) with the Nazis before the mass murder, and their resistance was not originally motivated by it. More consistently galvanized by power politics and foreign policy, they viewed the mass murder as yet another "foreign policy disaster" (p. 484). The second group in Dipper's taxonomy consisted of a mostly younger generation of military officers — Henning von Tresckow, Claus Count von Stauffenberg, Peter Count Yorck von Wartenburg, Fritz-Dietlof Schulenburg, Axel Baron von dem Bussche — who had ardently and even idealistically favored the regime but who were moved to turn against it after the "Damascus experience" (p. 492) of being eyewitnesses to the mass murder. The third group consisted of members of the Bonhoeffer, von Moltke, von Schleicher, and von Dohnanyi families "for whom the illegitimacy of the Third Reich was evident from the start" (p. 488). For this group alone was racial antisemitism "completely alien" (p. 485).

Disputing Dipper, Peter Hoffmann cites the need to evaluate the matter in the functional terms that faced the contemporaries. In a society that had come by 1941 to the point of mass murder, insists Hoffmann, Goerdeler's suggestions of alternate ways to exclude the Jews, however shocking today, were intended "to wrench the weapon out of the murderer's hands" (p. 471). This is surely a fact, but what it reveals seems more complex than Hoffmann allows. To be sure, it suggests the degree to which even those who were called to resist felt either compelled or inclined to enter and to situate themselves within the framework of Nazi ideas. But the dichotomy between being inclined and being compelled had become blurred for them. As Dipper puts it (p. 489), "anybody who

assumed that a 'Jewish question' existed — which was certainly true for the national conservative elites — felt obliged to find its solution." Hoffmann further cautions that "one cannot determine the mentality and actions of individuals from a putative mentality of [their] social stratum" (p. 463). But the fact remains that not just a functional but also a pervasively convictional anti-semitism echoes in the private communications of many individual conservative resisters — including some like Goerdeler who spoke of "the great guilt of the Jews" even as they drew back in horror from the Nazis' murderous "bestiality" and ultimate "racial madness" (quoted by Hoffmann on pp. 471–72).

In some church congregations, ordinary people could not evade the need, in an explicitly moralizing setting, to treat "Jews" not as abstractions but as persons within their midst. With Jesus himself a Jew who had been baptized, what stand would congregations take on their own baptized members who were of Jewish origin? The record ranges from congregations dominated by the strongly racial antisemitism of the German Christian movement to the clear-eyed bravery shown by many Jehovah's Witnesses (described and statistically documented by Eric Johnson)¹⁴ and by some members of the Confessing Church.

In Ursula Büttner's account, the mainline Protestant churches deployed poor tactics and showed considerable cravenness in the face of great internal ill will toward Jewish Christians. Far from providing shelter to the persecuted, congregations and church leaders, when not themselves downright hostile, usually tried to wash their hands of the problem. Büttner gives an example of a meeting of the highest Protestant church leadership council in April of 1933 at which the view was expressed and "was not contradicted" (*Probing the Depths*, p. 447) that seeking favorable treatment for Jewish Christians might create a "dangerous . . . influx of Jews into Christianity" (quoted on p. 441). Dipper adds that the young Nazi regime "did not attempt to force the churches" to purge Jewish Christian leaders; "such initiatives . . . originated with the organizations themselves" (p. 480).

According to Büttner, the struggle — such as it was — to maintain the rights of Jewish Christians within the Protestant Church had little or no counterpart in regard to protecting the rights and the lives of these fellow parishioners in the broader society. For parents and children alike, membership in the RVJD became compulsory, and apart from Jewish Christians in what under Nazi law were mixed marriages, deportation and death were common fates. Büttner has elsewhere documented the loyalty of intermarried Germans to their spouses,¹⁵ and in *Social Outsiders*, Nathan Stoltzfus causally links the brave weeklong Rosenstrasse protest of 1943, in which "Aryan" women successfully demanded

14. See also Detlev Garbe, *Zwischen Widerstand und Martyrium: Die Zeugen Jehovas im "Dritten Reich"* (Munich, 1994).

15. Büttner, *Die Not der Juden teilen: Christlich-jüdische Familien im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg, 1988).

the return of their "non-Aryan" husbands, with the decisions that delayed the mass deportation of intermarried German Jews indefinitely. But as Stoltzfus comments, the churches "neither protested the state's crushing impact on the tradition of marriage at the time of the Nuremberg Laws" nor acted to protect "non-Aryan Christians" until it became clear that the spouses' initiatives were having an effect. "Whether an intermarried German Jew was deported to the camps," writes Stoltzfus, "depended on the actions of the 'Aryan' partner, regardless of church membership or military service."¹⁶ Büttner concludes that the majority of churchgoing Protestants consistently acted as if their fellow parishioners of Jewish origin belonged to an alien and antipathetic people (*Probing the Depths*, pp. 452, 457–58).

While ill will was abundantly present in these congregations (and also in Catholic ones), Büttner appears at times to commingle it with human frailty. To be sure, poor tactics and succumbing to intimidation meant dead Jews, just as surely as ill will did. Jewish organizations too had difficulties in feeling their way toward a stance that would help real people without compromising their own existence and hence their ability to protect anyone. In mixed marriages, Beate Meyer notes, official as well as private pressures for divorce produced harrowing decisions that cost both lives and consciences. Meyer cites grounds to believe that divorce rates in mixed marriages were closer to 20 percent, rather than the range of seven to ten percent that Büttner quotes (*Probing the Depths*, p. 66). Jewish organizations sometimes urged couples to divorce, believing that otherwise charges of racial defilement would lead one partner to the concentration camp. Instead, divorce removed the Jewish spouse's sole remaining protection and speeded deportation.

Comparing the positions of the organizations of the victims with the organizations of those who preferred to see themselves as bystanders raises deep issues about complicity, motives, and consequences. In particular, from Hannah Arendt and Hans Mommsen to Arnold Paucker and Fritz Stern,¹⁷ the notion

16. Stoltzfus, in Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders*, 119. Whereas Gellately claims that the Gestapo "really had never intended" to deport the Rosenstrasse arrestees (*Backing Hitler*, 143), Stoltzfus is persuasive that the arrests were a test case whose results deterred further actions (*Social Outsiders*, 129–35). Stoltzfus estimates that there were roughly thirty thousand intermarried German Jews in 1939. By 1944, thirteen thousand Jews remained in Germany. Virtually all of them were intermarried; nearly all survived the war (*Social Outsiders*, 123). See also Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, 422–25, and Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York, 1996).

17. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, 1963); Mommsen, "Der nationalsozialistische Polizeistaat und die Judenverfolgung vor 1938," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 10 (1962): 68–87 (cited by David Fraenkel in *Probing*, 341); Paucker, "Die Abwehr des Antisemitismus in den Jahren 1893–1933," in *Antisemitismus: Von der Judenfeindschaft zum Holocaust*, ed. Herbert A. Strauss and Norbert Kampe (Bonn, 1984), 143 (cited by Fraenkel in *Probing*, 339); Stern, "Reflections on Success — Reflections on German Jewry," in Stern, *Dreams and Delusions: The Drama of German History* (New York, 1987), 97–118.

that integration-minded Jewish organizations in Germany also contributed significantly to the catastrophe through cravenness and self-delusion has been a recurring theme of discussion. Daniel Fraenkel challenges that notion in *Probing the Depths* with the benefit of a significant new trove of sources. Long inaccessible in Moscow, the files of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (CV) have now been filmed for use at the United States Holocaust Museum.

According to Fraenkel, the new sources reveal a “non-militant” but “energetic everyday defense” that was “subtly subversive” of the Nazi program of isolating and purging Jews from German society (*Probing the Depths*, p. 340). Whereas Zionist organizations offered only ideological perspectives and an impractical long-term project, the “decidedly German”-oriented CV (p. 342), representing by far the larger faction of German Jews, conceived of its task in immediate, locally practical terms. Vehemently rejecting what it characterized as the *Schadenfreude* of the Zionists who deemed their understanding of the inherently inhospitable nature of the Diaspora confirmed, the CV refused to see Jewish reality in Germany as “a picture of unmitigated gloom” (p. 343). Instead, it persevered in the view that self-defense, while waiting out the latest storm (which was not originally expected to be lengthy), was part of the long history of the triumph of Jewish integration. Fraenkel grants that this was a colossal misjudgment, but insists that the CV had every reason to indulge it, for it accorded with both past history and present practical needs. “Even a primitive ostrich policy,” the organization’s leaders frankly argued in April of 1935, “is preferable to a tendentiously purposeful [*zweckbetonter*] pessimism that registers the difficulties with satisfaction because they seem to confirm one’s own Jewish Weltanschauung” (quoted on p. 343, where *zweckbetonter* is translated as “deliberate”). Accordingly, the CV tried first to appease the Nazi leaders and then to mitigate the impact of Nazi policies on individuals. Initially, it offered unsolicited (and frequently sycophantic) statements of loyalty and vigorously opposed anti-Nazi demonstrations abroad. It then sought to carve out a Jewish “living space in Germany” (quoted on p. 342 from a CV circular in 1935). The CV took this position, and fought long against emigration, because it considered not the former but the latter to be both unfeasible (not only was it financially ruinous, but few foreign doors were open) and cravenly defeatist.

Although the CV’s approach proved ultimately of no avail, to insist that the organization should have acted otherwise strikes Fraenkel as anachronistic. In the climate of the 1930s, the CV saw the stakes not as physical but as economic survival in Germany — until the Nazis finally shut the organization down in the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*. Even after promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, both economic exclusion and the rupture of legal redress for Jews remained incomplete. Thus, for all the evidence throughout this volume of public animosity interacting with systemic cruelty, Fraenkel still insists on doing in the

case of the German Jews what Ian Kershaw did in his now classic treatment of non-Jewish opinion and dissent in Nazi Germany:¹⁸ he concentrates on illuminating the spatial possibilities rather than dwelling only on the constraints. The CV sought to find and to use the crannies in the spiraling dynamic of popular rowdiness and repressive legalism. And according to itself, it even occasionally succeeded. One folder in the CV's files marked "Successes of Our Work" chronicles four hundred cases in which its strategy of seeking out supposedly anti-Nazi officials or appealing to economic arguments in order to overturn a civil or administrative (though not penal) act of repression against a Jewish individual allegedly worked. The correctness with which officials, even police officials, occasionally responded — siding with the CV even while signing the communication with the *Hitlergruss*, for example — recalls the two-edged nature of bureaucratic rigidity and legal niceties in Nazi Germany, which served sporadically to protect even as they operated more and more often to condemn Jews. This ambiguous correctness also recalls the reason why the CV and others could still succumb to "the illusion of normality" (p. 349) — in this case, the impression that an orderly Jewish defense was still possible in Germany.

Fraenkel's evaluation of the CV thus resummons a host of difficult issues. In essence, they center on this question: what is to be concluded when contemporary Jewish hopes foreshadowed later German excuses and seeming dissimulation? "In the end," writes Eric Johnson, Jews who chose not to leave were "trapped . . . in part by the friendliness and civility of well-meaning German friends and neighbors" whose behavior masked "the impending doom" (*Nazi Terror*, p. 140). This is a dangerous statement on several levels: it seems to assume that many more Jews could have left, that they had somewhere to go;¹⁹ and its rehabilitative tenor regarding German behavior goes rather further than Johnson's evidence, including his statistical analysis of a survey of rather charitable Jewish émigrés, allows. As both Bankier and Kaplan comment, there is in any case a gap between the contemporary evidence of Jewish stress and the tendency to cope with the memory of strained situations by highlighting positive incidents. As Kaplan also shows, Jewish coping mechanisms may have contributed to contemporary episodes of denial. Still, all three of these authors corroborate the sense that the crannies and the ambiguities pointed out by Fraenkel were a genuine part of what Jews perceived — alongside the relentlessness and the callousness that they also perceived, and that Klemperer's diary also shows. As Kaplan notes, civic restrictions on Jews had existed as recently as 1919; "only

18. Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 1983).

19. According to Kaplan, three fifths eventually did leave (somewhat less than half of them prior to 1938), and many more tried but failed to navigate their way through foreign regulations and the Nazis' plunderous "bureaucratic gauntlet." She concludes: "perceptions by Jews of their predicament . . . were never the crucial factors affecting emigration." Kaplan in Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders*, 84–86, 90 (quotations).

slowly" did Jews realize that Germany in the 1930s "was not moving backward, toward territory they once knew and endured, but was heading in an entirely new direction. . . . Random kindnesses . . . gave some Jews cause for hope. One woman . . . recalled that many Jews thought 'the radical Nazi laws would never be carried out because they did not match the moderate character of the German people.'"²⁰

"Nazi policies and events," Kaplan concludes, "could confuse anyone" (*Social Outsiders*, p. 79). But if Jews can argue that they could not foresee their fate and that sycophancy or certain types of silence could be part of a defensive strategy, can ordinary Germans, most of whom in some way were Nazi supporters, be permitted to invoke similar claims? And if CV officials thought they could find sympathetic or at least professionally correct state officials to whom to appeal, should this judgment affect the seriousness with which we take the average official's postwar claim to having fallen within such a category? It is an old problem — evident, for example, in Schacht's Nuremberg defense — but it will not go away, as shown by Fischer (in *Probing the Depths*) revisiting the issue of Schacht's claims. Thus, the issue of Jewish self-defense is paradoxically linked to the widespread, even everyday, German predilection to plead for a form of public innocence.

These considerations bring us to Gellately's "characterization of the Nazi police" as "by and large reactive rather than active" (*Accusatory Practices*, p. 196). In *Nazi Terror*, Johnson also allows that the Gestapo officers' claims — however undifferentiated and self-serving — of having "s[la]t back" and waited for cases to "'come to them'" (p. 284) need to be taken seriously.²¹ Yet whether or not such arguments mitigate the culpability of individual members of the Gestapo (as both authors deny, but as postwar German courts in fact decided), they also implicate at least those members of the public who led the purportedly reclining policemen to their targets. We are thus led to the denouncers that especially Gellately studies. But we cannot stop there: we must go on, to the climate (described by Gellately) in which denunciations thrived, a climate whose atmospherics derived in part from the public mores of the rest of German society. And so, despite Johnson's assurances that "most Germans were not Nazis" (p. 253) and "never denounced anyone" (p. 367),²² we come to collective guilt through the back door.

20. Bankier, *Germans*, 125; Kaplan in Gellately and Stoltzfus, eds., *Social Outsiders*, 70–74, 79 (quotation).

21. Johnson himself differentiates carefully here. He finds the policemen's claims truer in cases involving those he calls "ordinary Germans" than in cases involving Jews, Marxists, and religion-inspired political dissenters. He also profiles Cologne's several Gestapo officers and documents their brutal actions and methods.

22. Basing his judgment on evidence from Krefeld's Gestapo files, Johnson concludes that considerably less than 2 percent of the population could have acted as denouncers — many times fewer than the percentage of informers in the former East Germany. But Johnson's figure does not include

III

In a way, *Probing the Depths* asks not whether but how Germans became Nazis — not in name, perhaps, nor even entirely in explicit beliefs, but in many facets of their discourse, and ultimately in actual practice. Not only did few Germans lift a finger to help the Nazis' victims, but many Germans actively aided the regime in carrying out its purposes. A sizable group did so quite egregiously, through denunciations — a subject the researching of which Gellately has pioneered. A far larger group did so by buying into a discourse that linked antisemitism and other Nazi precepts to other, more broadly and traditionally accepted values.

In this framework, writes Bauer in *Probing the Depths*, Goldhagen, while advancing explanations that were "totally mistaken" (p. 12), was correct in pointing to the importance of tracing motivations. Gellately apparently used to think otherwise. In *The Gestapo and German Society* (1990), he insisted that the motives of those who acted in ways that facilitated the regime's aims "did not matter all that much" (p. 257). What did matter was the fact that the system was effective in soliciting those actions. Thus, he wrote, whether the regime was popular was quite "beside the point" (p. 214). So too was whether most ordinary Germans came to believe in all the deadly inflections of Nazi antisemitic ideology. What counts, rather, is that enough found reasons to act as if they did.

In particular, the fact that the number of Gestapo agents and ongoing informants was remarkably small — far smaller than the number of *Stasi* agents and ongoing informants in postwar East Germany²³ — pointed to the importance of denunciations by the population in enforcing racial policy. "The regime," Gellately asserted, "was less dependent than might be expected upon an enthusiastic reception" of, or even a "schooled indifference" toward, its racial policy and its methods of enforcement (*Gestapo*, pp. 126, 259). Neither indifference nor ideological conviction nor even Hitler's popular acclaim, but simply a "sufficient number of people com[ing] forward," regardless of motive, was the key to the effective "functioning" of the Nazi system (p. 259). Whatever got those people

other ultimately rancorous informants such as the petition-writers from Eisenach that Connelly studies in *Accusatory Practices*:

23. From local data, Johnson (46–47) calculates a ratio of one Gestapo agent per ten to fifteen thousand city dwellers, with "typically no Gestapo officers" in the countryside. Elisabeth Kohlhaas estimates that there were seven thousand Gestapo officials in 1937 and perhaps six hundred more (excluding annexed or occupied territory) by the summer of 1941. Kohlhaas, "Die Mitarbeiter der regionalen Staatspolizeistellen: Quantitative und qualitative Befunde zur Personalausstattung der Gestapo," in *Die Gestapo — Mythos und Realität*, ed. Gerhard Paul and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (Darmstadt, 1995), 220–35, cited in Fitzpatrick and Gellately, eds., *Accusatory Practices*, 187. Gellately earlier estimated thirty-two thousand persons for the expanded German territory of 1944, of whom 15,500 were the real policemen (the rest were workmen, clerks, or civil servants not involved in enforcement): *Gestapo*, 44. By comparison, in a land with roughly one-fifth as many people, the *Stasi* at any one time employed one hundred thousand full-time members and from 170,000 to 500,000 "Unofficial Co-workers." *Accusatory Practices*, 208–9.

to step forward — and antisemitic “ideals” seem to have been considerably less important than such “base” motives as personal opportunism, greed, and private revenge — was secondary to the “functional” consequence. (Indeed, the reason most people came forward might itself be called “functional.” As Gellately noted in his coedited volume *Accusatory Practices*, citizens had learned that the regime’s “hunger for information could be made to serve purposes of their own” (p. 6). Citizens thus exploited the authorities’ vulnerability to being “manipulated ‘from below’” (p. 203).) The mere existence of a critical mass of such citizens was the necessary and sufficient condition for both enforcing racial policy and sustaining Nazi power. Thus, the low percentage of Germans who denounced others was less important than the fact (on which Gellately has always insisted) that, apart from the police’s eventual role in mass deportations, most police actions whose targets were not Communists resulted from denunciations.

This line of argument leads to many questions. Did civil courage matter? If denunciations were sovereign acts that did not depend on the presence or absence of popular enthusiasm, was civil courage different? Was it contagious? If not, then as long as the regime could count on finding its critical mass of denouncers (whatever their motives), it could never have been threatened by acts of civil courage (assuming that this was not a zero-sum game). In functional terms, “All denunciations were system-supportive,” regardless of motive; and *contrary* to fascist Italy, “there never seemed to be a shortage of them” (*Backing Hitler*, p. 262). So apparently, not all coercive regimes can count on finding a sufficient number of collaborators. Dare we ask why? But if so, are we not talking about the importance of tracing influences and motivations? Is this not especially the case if we moderate the role ascribed to coercion by contending, as Gellately does, that the Nazi police’s institutional resources and “active” rather than “reactive” role have been overstated? What does it mean to say that what really mattered was the system’s effectiveness in soliciting denunciations without granting the relevance of the popular motivational contexts that facilitated this effectiveness?

In *Backing Hitler*, Gellately shifts his stance somewhat by bringing the impact of the acclamatory and hortatory contexts back into the picture. But then again, the theme of separating functions from motives had never really stopped him earlier from attending to motives anyway. Much of *The Gestapo and German Society* had been about policemen’s and denouncers’ motives. In *Backing Hitler*, he continues to examine the latter while adding an examination of broader public attitudes. The juxtaposition itself hints that popular acclaim for or concurrence in Nazi rationales did contribute to the creation of a context in which denunciations, be their motives “instrumental” or “affective,” thrived.²⁴ The

24. Or was the relationship symbiotic? Were denunciations sovereign acts that did not depend

threat of denunciations in turn closed off the social space needed for civil courage to blossom. Thus, Gellately explicitly engages the subject he had earlier pointedly eschewed (e.g., in *Gestapo*, pp. 213–14): were Nazi racial policies popular?

In *The Gestapo and German Society*, Gellately noted how the Nazis employed traditional values to win over the existing police forces themselves. Thus, he found that the Nazis engaged in relatively little purging of the police forces they inherited from the Weimar Republic (a point Johnson briefly disputes: *Nazi Terror*, p. 49). Rather, high police officials who were retained by the Nazis already held authoritarian or relatively illiberal views. These officials seem to have had little difficulty in accommodating themselves to the priority of extreme biological antisemitism, even when it was not their original stance. This accommodation involved not so much a shift of political outlook as an application of their philosophical preference for a hierarchical system of authority to a specific domain as defined by the regime.

In *Backing Hitler*, Gellately reaches comparable conclusions for the German public as a whole. It is Gellately's burden here to demonstrate that public cooperation in "police justice" (p. 37) was by no means reluctant or due chiefly to intimidation. "Police justice" was not a price to be paid for other, more appealing aspects of Hitler's agenda. On the contrary, the public was generally eager to embrace the Nazi ideal of making over German society in the image that the party projected of the German police. This disposition was not a *byproduct* of public support for Nazism, but rather one of its main *causes*. Perceiving a "crime wave" (pp. 7, 34), much of the public was drawn to the proposition not only that the crisis in German civil society could be traced to its toleration of "asocial elements," but also, that the health of German society, in a sense that stretched well beyond the present crisis, required extensive illiberal correctives in the realm of law enforcement. Welcoming the equation of criminality and asociality, many people needed little prodding to participate extensively in the

upon but did influence and were influenced somehow (how?) by popular enthusiasm? Did denunciations and broader public attitudes constitute independent yet interactive species? And what is the place here of the revealing hybrid phenomenon — letters and petitions to Nazi authorities from mostly nonparty members of the public — that Connelly studies? (Far from appearing simply manipulative or obsequious, the expressions of injured racial entitlement in Connelly's sample from 1939–1940 often seem keenly felt. Here, the regime and the population colluded in offering a corrective to the gap between the Nazi communitarian-egalitarian ideal and the lingering social disparities within the German "racial community." Connelly refers to this corrective, in which self-interested petitions from below and self-interested patronage from above "arranged access to scarce and vital goods according to a crude racial-biological hierarchy," as "Really Existing Volksgemeinschaft" (an allusion to the later East German regime's claim to "Really Existing Socialism"). And, apropos of symbiosis, he adds: "Decrees from above that allocated resources according to racial status meant nothing until a *critical mass* of citizenry [emphasis added] became active in enforcing them." *Accusatory Practices*, 183, 182, 183.)

illiberalism. It remained only for the Nazis to infuse the term "asocial elements" with specific identities that fit within the public's credulity.

Along these lines, *Backing Hitler* contains substantial evidence that the parameters and enforcement not only of racial policy, but also of Nazi standards of what constituted criminality more generally, were far more in public hands than the image of a citizenry cowering under the threat of the Gestapo would have it. As a *practical* matter, the public's readiness to cooperate would decide what the regime could and could not do. Moreover, as an aspiration that shaped the regime, Hitler conducted what Martin Broszat "called an 'experiment in plebiscitarian dictatorship.' He aimed for an authoritarian and leader-oriented system, but one that had popular backing, and his regime was deeply concerned, one might say, even paranoid, about popular opinion and citizens' reactions to official measures of all kinds" (*Backing Hitler*, p. 257). Given this framework of what Nazism was trying to be, the public's disposition to embrace the Nazi discourse regarding the values served by the regime's policies contributed to the context that favored denunciations over civil courage.

Acts of denunciation, of course, did not necessarily stem from ideological zeal; and self-interested or manipulative denunciations led to inefficiencies in policing that the regime inconsistently tried to combat. But whereas researchers such as Kershaw had left the impression in the 1980s that Nazi Germany was (as Gellately puts it) "a seething mass of discontent and disillusion," even self-aggrandizing denunciations showed a "positive disposition towards . . . cooperation with the regime" (*Gestapo*, p. 257). By and large, denouncers were not social misfits or marginal elements. Contrary to popular image, they also tended to be male rather than female (a point quantitatively documented by Johnson).²⁵ Often, they were motivated by their contextual perception of patriotism or duty — to the nation, to its established government, or (more rarely) to Nazi racial doctrine. When the motivation was not personal gain, it was usually tied to the perceived duty to uphold the law. There was, in short, a Huckleberry Finn-like sense of moral consciousness on the part of at least some. To be sure, civil courage was in particularly short supply in Nazi Germany. But civil courage first requires a recognition of the demands of civil morality. Although most people (as Gellately insists) simply could not have been unaware of the regime's patent immoralities, the regime was apparently effective at sowing a measure of moral confusion.

How it did so had less to do in Gellately's view with Nazi ideology *per se* than with the ease with which the ideology could be deployed within a paradigm of values connected to bourgeois respectability. Thus, in contrast to the concept of a police state, what was at stake was less the accommodation of

25. Johnson, 153–54 and 368–69; also Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziation im NS-Regime oder die kleine Macht der "Volksgenossen"* (Bonn, 1995).

police interests than the makeover of the broader political culture in their perceived image. Accepted as lying naturally in the domain of the civil constitution of society, police work had a cachet as an element in the value structure that transcended the normal definition of vocation. The notion that cooperating with law enforcement was normative made it easy to portray a system of police-administered "justice" as legitimate, and thereby to win public cooperation in the enterprise. Often, it was not even a matter of getting the public to go along, for the initiative or the momentum would be coming from below.

In *Backing Hitler*, Gellately documents the discourse the Nazis used to spur the public behavior they desired. He shows that the regime made no secret of many of its harshest practices; instead, it actively publicized them in newspapers and magazines. It did so not defensively but affirmatively, linking concentration camps and their practices to the traditional notion that incarceration afforded social purification and protection from asocial elements while it rehabilitated those for whom rehabilitation was possible. By casting the limitations of rehabilitation in racial and genetic terms, the regime connected its racial goals to traditional social values. People were supposed to know about the camps — not primarily as a warning, but as an appeal to their desire for security. Not only did the press set out to make the camps popular; it also expected them to be. After all, the public wanted a crackdown on asociality and lawlessness, and most citizens knew that they were not likely to be the recipients of this "work therapy" (p. 54). The allegedly preemptive approach to crime was explicitly contrasted to the alleged failure of the liberal approach of the American and Weimar Republics.

Within this general picture, there were actions or behaviors that earned energetic public approval, and there were those that could be better undertaken tacitly. Innovative in his use of clues from the police's case files to augment the established sources on the public mood, Gellately notes the factors that determined the public's understanding of acceptable versus unacceptable illiberalism. Seldom were public scruples humanitarian. More often they involved either introducing the modicum of domestic predictability afforded by legalism — that is, passing a law to make a violation of due process legal, as opposed to just violating it — or maintaining the priority of the rational national interest in economics and foreign relations, a consideration that much of the public took to have been disregarded in the wanton violence of *Kristallnacht*. Even here, what happened was not that the regime and the public clashed, but rather, some elements of both opposed other elements of both, on pragmatic grounds. Moreover, some objected to leniency or to uneven enforcement rather than to harshness. Gellately concludes that a great deal of very brutal activity proved to be not only acceptable to but even applauded and promoted by the public.

Gellately's interest here is not so much why Germans singled out certain groups such as Jews for attack, but rather, why Germans embraced a code of

ethics based upon a mechanism of attack at all. Thus, antisemitism in its own right is not his focus. Comparing public attitudes toward Jews and Polish slave laborers, he finds them more similar than different (p. 170). Still, he must reckon with a difference: "At the start of the Third Reich," Jews, at least in relative terms, "were not social outsiders" (p. 4). As Johnson quantitatively shows (*Nazi Terror*, p. 145), Jewish victims of Nazi prewar terror came from much more traditionally respectable backgrounds than did other victims of the Gestapo or those most often accused of crimes in most societies. Jews, states Gellately, had to be made to fit into the category of asocial elements. Partly this was done by linking Jews to communism and to crimes involving sex and money. Partly it was done simply by codifying Jews' outsider status: the Nuremberg Laws, Gellately claims, "at once transformed [Jews] into social outsiders" (*Backing Hitler*, p. 122). Not ideological racism but ordinary belief in the civic virtue of obeying the law permitted or persuaded Germans to begin perceiving Jews as asocial. Thus, whereas Bankier's exploration of how the regime "tailored its antisemitism to fit public opinion" (Gellately, *Backing Hitler*, p. 123) led him to conclude that persecution largely "depended . . . on the public's reaction" (Bankier, *Germans*, p. 73), it is also true that the public tailored its *practical* opinions to fit the regime's antisemitism. As racial measures became more and more radical, more and more people became persuaded "that it might be best if the Jews just left the country" (*Backing Hitler*, p. 126). Thus, "eliminationist" attitudes did not start out but came to be held pragmatically by much of the public. As deportations proceeded, writes Gellately, the press's openness about achieving a *judenrein* territory suggested that the regime expected public approval. And in the end, deportations took place "without causing the slightest ripple in public" (p. 149).

In short, neither Goldhagen's notion of the *continual* predominance in German history of an "eliminationist" strand of antisemitism, nor the notion of the *revolutionary* conversion of Germans into Nazi racial ideologues, nor Kershaw's notion of popular dissent in other policy areas, but mostly *indifference* regarding the Jewish question,²⁶ adequately describes the nature of popular support for Nazi racial policies. Rather, the Nazis had little difficulty in persuading large sectors of the German public — and this public had little difficulty in accepting — that traditional social values were reflected and perhaps even radically embodied in Nazi racial discourse and practice. Thus, for Gellately, a radical evolution of popular attitudes did take place under the Nazis. This evolution, however, amounted to neither a racist ideological transformation

26. In his monograph on public opinion, Bankier reformulates the indifference thesis as applied to the later years of the regime. Unwilling during the war to take on the guilt or shame of admitting their participation in the injustices, a majority of the public, he argues, "consciously chose" to be "deliberately indifferent." Bankier, *Germans*, 137.

nor a racist ideological continuity. Rather, what took place was the progressive everyday brutalizing of traditional precepts about order, respectability, and clean living, until, under conditions of war, the Nazis could count not just on public acquiescence but also on public participation in enforcing their revolutionary agenda.

IV

Gestapo officers, Eric Johnson insists in *Nazi Terror*, were not “‘normal’ men” (p. 21) or “ordinary men” (p. 79)²⁷ who did what others too would have done in an extraordinary situation. Each had far more power than the ordinary citizen to set off chain reactions with life-and-death consequences, and how they used their power rendered most of them far more culpable than ordinary Germans, including denouncers. If the Gestapo was frequently — to use Gellately’s terms — “passive” or “reactive” rather than “active” (*Backing Hitler*, p. 191), this was not because the officers were (as they later claimed) “in their souls ‘private enemies’ of National Socialism” (Johnson, *Nazi Terror*, p. 79). Rather, the regime developed a grand bargain with the citizenry: it would “look the other way” when citizens committed “minor infractions” (such as listening to foreign radio or mildly grumbling about the party), in return for which the citizenry “looked the other way . . . as the Jews were being butchered” (*Nazi Terror*, pp. 310–11).

Although there were few Gestapo agents, there were quite enough in Johnson’s view to carry out the *selective* strategy of terror that the regime *calculatedly* employed. Most people “did not need to be watched” (p. 373) and neither felt nor needed to be intimidated because their sympathies in any case were with the regime that had initially brought them peace, prosperity, and pride. Thus, Johnson finds denunciations considerably less important than does Gellately. Their largest role was in regard to enforcing measures that defined many aspects of social life and leisure as criminal activities. But it was exactly here that the regime was most lenient. Johnson’s quantitative analysis of local case files suggests strongly that most such cases were dismissed. Both authors agree that denunciations played only a minor role in the regime’s initially greatest area of police activity, the pursuit of Marxists. Here, writes Johnson (p. 284), the police “did not sit back and ‘let things come to them.’” As for racial policy, Johnson insists that denunciations made little difference. Most murdered Jews were not denounced, and those who were would have died anyway. For Johnson, the broader culpability of German society resided neither in

27. The apparent allusion to Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York, 1992), evokes the contrast between the older wartime reserves who comprised the police battalions and the career policemen of the Gestapo.

the public's relentless day-to-day animosity toward Jews — a portrayal he finds inaccurately monochromatic — nor in its facilitation of denunciations, but in the complicity of silent loyalty.

But Gellately wants to emphasize that public complicity was not quite so silent. Downplaying the role of denunciations in the mass murder begs the question of whether the Nazi regime would have moved to murdering Jews if denunciations and other signs of public abetment or approval of racial policies had not come first. Doctors' reports that facilitated forced sterilization are another example of complicity in advancing Nazi policy toward so-called asocial elements. And "in spite of what might appear to be the 'petty' nature" of many denunciations of ordinary Germans, "we should not lose sight of the real terror that lurked around the corner" (*Accusatory Practices*, p. 206). Even a dismissed case was a terrifying ordeal; and afterward, as Johnson shows statistically, anyone charged again faced greatly heightened odds of prolonged incarceration. Much work on everyday life and leisure time has pointed to the limits of the regime's regulatory success, which Gellately summarizes as follows: public opinion favored harsh regulation insofar as it was consistent with people's "own values, expectations, and . . . personal experiences" (*Backing Hitler*, p. 120). Thus, harshness toward BBC-listeners, and leniency toward the better connected were criticized. But the attempt to regulate private lives would hardly have been possible at all had not members of the public come forward to assist in the "socially constructed" terror (p. 257).

Yet, notwithstanding Gellately's emphasis on the centrality of denunciations, the main insight behind *Backing Hitler* would seem to be the specificity of their derivative aspect. Denunciations flowed from a specific corpus of sociocivic attitudes, namely, the respectable citizen's aversion to the asocial. Although often instrumentally applied, these sociocivic attitudes were what legitimized denunciations. Moreover, these attitudes also shaped both the positive reception for the implementation of racial policy more generally, and the rationales used in demurrals — for example, in the pleas of farmers who obstinately fraternized with their most indispensable foreign forced laborers.

Heidi Gerstenberger is less ready in *Probing the Depths* to relate the public's behavior to a specific sociocivic attitudinal framework. Rather, she returns to a universal social dimension in human nature to find a climatic dynamic into which the various aspects of the comportment of individuals may be fitted.

Not denunciation but acquiescence is, to Gerstenberger, the key to acclamation. Although acquiescence might seem to suggest passivity, retreating into normality amidst persecution "becomes political involvement" (*Probing the Depths*, p. 35). This statement is not just a moral assertion for Gerstenberger. It is very specifically a practical matter — and above all not in the privately individual but in the semi-public or corporatist arena. "The loss of humanity," she writes, "might sometimes be an individual affair. Most often it is a social

process." This insight, the significance of which Gerstenberger deems Christopher Browning to have demonstrated for the police and the military,²⁸ applies as well in her view to everyday life. Thus, mass murder was a function neither of "extraordinarily cruel personalities" (p. 31) nor of corporate interests per se ("individuals do not simply function according to their economic or social positions" [p. 26]), but rather, of individual but collectively shared *interpretations* of the interests of the referent group — above all, the professional or vocational group. Gerstenberger concretely cites the behavior of university professors and students who accepted the presumed benefits during a depression of what came close to being the first act in the Nazi process of sociopolitical *Gleichschaltung*: the purging of the professoriate. Where society's natural leaders and makers of opinion thus led, all other vocational groups soon followed. Once turned by such acquiescence into accomplices, those who populated this and other semi-public spheres quickly lost the capacity to dissent. They "preconstituted [the] social conditions for the radicalization of anti-Jewish policy" — yet in a manner that allowed many of them later to feel, quite genuinely, "that they had not been involved" (p. 33).

Gerstenberger employs the dynamics of the acclamatory process to explain the regime's murderous momentum. She supports Bauer's view — and a key finding of many of the more empirical essays — that the Holocaust was the result of a "meeting of initiatives from below and from above" (p. 13). Here, Bauer makes utopianism central: utopianism, he writes, must lead to "independent initiatives," and hence to "no dearth of willing executioners" (p. 14). Gerstenberger makes the same point, but in rather more functionalist terms. She thereby reverses the implied relationship between ideology and power. By asserting their monopoly on an understanding of the genuine public interest, modern dictatorships, she avers, ultimately make themselves dependent on public opinion; hence their interest in massively channeling people into an activist movement — an interest they advance by deploying ideology. This deployment, however, constrains them from controlling the atrocities of local activists. The government becomes nervous, fearing that if it does not take the initiative, it will be outflanked by, and lose credibility with, the rank and file. The result is the murderous competition in radicalism between the center and the base, a competition by turns dependent upon and formative of popular acquiescence. The "dynamics" of racial policy, Gerstenberger chillingly affirms — including responding to public concerns about violence by giving legal license to persecution rather than halting it — were "shaped" by those now famous reports the regime gathered on the situation of the public mood (p. 22). Rather than power having served ideology, it would seem that ideology served power.

28. Ibid.

For Gerstenberger, then, the true import of acclamation lies in shaping the individual's collectively shared interpretation of his or her referent group — deciding what it is that individuals take to be the view of “everybody” (p. 26). In that sense, however, it would appear that there is nothing special about anti-semitism: any view could have been similarly universalized. Thus, the prevalence of antisemitism is for Gerstenberger a precondition but not an explanation for the radicalization to state-organized murder. The explanation lies rather in the behavioral dynamics of group identification and interest interpretation.

The significance of the acclamatory background thus re-emerges for Gerstenberger in a manner that Gellately had once seemed to eschew. It accounts for why no reference group proved immune to Nazi appeals. Hence, Gerstenberger points out (p. 24), even Kershaw has corrected his view that expressions of dissent or grumbling on this or that issue of everyday life constituted a form of resistance. Instead, such behavior should be seen as what Gerhard Paul has more carefully couched as instances of “loyal nonconformity” (*loyale Widervilligkeit*). What these instances demonstrate is not *ideological* dissent but the boundaries — or rather, the nature — of *power* in an acclamatory regime. In short, they demonstrate that Nazi social control was less palpably stringent than was once thought. To Gellately in his bolder moments, the Nazi regime may not have been a police state at all (*Accusatory Practices*, p. 196, and *Backing Hitler*, p. 191). As Johnson has noted, such a view overly swings the pendulum. But the deeper significance of these findings is to accentuate a voluntarist component in the role of the general public in Nazi crimes. The issue then becomes one of trying to decipher the meaning of the voluntarism. Here, for the functionalists, behavioral considerations prove more important than convictions. But for those who seek to move (in Browning's phrase) “beyond intentionalism and functionalism,” such a formulation is too blunt an analytical instrument. Behavior must be remarried to values and convictions — but in a manner that recalls the revolutionary radicalism of Nazi convictions, and that therefore probes not just the extent but also the nature of the partial assimilation of those values by elements of the general public.

Leni Yahil also emphasizes the centrality of analyzing the process whereby people *developed into* mass murderers. But whereas Gerstenberger underscores the role of structures, Yahil focuses on the phenomenon of individual callousness as a response within those structures. For Yahil, the developmental process makes no sense unless one grants from the very beginning that the Nazis indeed “succeeded” in “impos[ing]” their “revolutionary concept on German society” (*Probing the Depths*, p. 37). This does not mean that everyone fervently adopted Nazi racial views. It does mean that individuals adjusted — some quickly, others over time — by integrating those views into their own everyday behavior.

In Yahil's view, Hannah Arendt, with her thesis of the banality of evil, misinterpreted the superposition of distinct phenomena. Having found in Adolf

Eichmann both banality and a personality ravaged by "moral devastation," she saw his crimes — the true source of his moral devastation — as the outgrowth of his banality. For Yahil, the lesson is not that evil's roots lie in normalcy, but rather, that the Nazis managed to superimpose a counternormalcy while they retained and even improved upon the genuine "normative structure" of everyday life through their social programs and their economic successes. Thus, "people, ordinary men and women, manage[d] not only to live in a twofold reality but . . . [to] develop a double consciousness — one normal and banal and the other criminal and devoid of morality" (p. 51).

To Yahil, the unprecedented extent of revolutionary inhumanity in the 1940s was possible *precisely because* it coexisted with an aura and even a reality of normalcy in everyday life that had continued to be the prime experience of most people even beyond the 1930s. Rendering this "double consciousness" whole and "not in disorder" (p. 39) was the Nazis' dubious achievement, and Hitler — the personification of the fusion — was the key to this popular *development*. By projecting onto the "children-loving Führer," people "closed the rift" between their roles as loving parents and as accessories to the mass murder of children (p. 43). The results were phenomena that on any normal (or banal) level must be baffling: doctors who enjoyed (as one wrote home from Buchenwald to his wife) "going off for a merry hunt" (p. 51), murderous police battalions whose members brought their families along, executioners who acted "surprised, even flabbergasted" (p. 41) when held to account, the condemned mass murderer at Nuremberg who averred — quite genuinely, Yahil suggests — that he had a "clear conscience" before his wife and children (p. 49).

Yahil's insistence on separating the banal from the radically inhumane (as a prelude, it should be emphasized, to explaining the anomaly of their union under Nazism) might seem, on one level, a matter more of personal philosophy than history. Yahil seems to refuse to understand human nature in a way that would permit her to make the psychological leap that Arendt made. Indeed, she writes, "It is not a question of psychology but of an existentialist entity, where psychic drives such as ambition, . . . brutality, sadism, . . . and many more, . . . were not inhibited and regulated by the accepted rules and statutes of a traditional society . . . [or] moral considerations" (pp. 39–40). In Yahil's hands, then, the existentialist precept that a human being shapes his own essence through his ongoing choices of how to live leads away from concluding from the greatest mass murder in human history that human nature at its everyday core carries a predilection for such unprecedented evil.

Of course, there is no way to prove or to disprove her insight. Still, it is more than a personal inclination. Yahil's insistence on not jumping to the conclusion that two concepts are the same thing ought to lead to more careful consideration of the general phenomenon, going well beyond Eichmann, that must sit at the core of any genuine *Alltagsgeschichte* for Nazi Germany. It is a phenomenon

that many astonished observers — Victor Klemperer, the underground reporters of the exiled Social Democratic Party (*Sopade*), the historian Detlev Peukert²⁹ — have pointed to: “the confused behavior of the adult population” in Nazi Germany (p. 45). How can one explain what Peukert called the “undifferentiated” mixture of signs of public approval and disapproval (p. 47) in which trivialities could loom larger than mass murder? Yahil does not claim to have a full answer, but she insists that the reality in question “underwent serious changes . . . in the course of the twelve years” both inside and outside the party (p. 53). It had to develop, and did not simply spring forth from tapping into a normal psychological predilection. Far from following from the banality of human nature, this new and “double-faceted” reality could be held together only through a process that damaged the human psyche. The result was a “hallucinatory concept,” a “destroyed sense of true reality,” a “paralysis of the capability to confront reality” (pp. 52–53).

Yahil's essay is also relevant to the work of Gellately. What strikes him is not the superposition of two quite dissonant realities, but their partial overlap. It was this overlap that lent credibility to Nazi aims, for insofar as Nazi projects found popular acceptance and cooperation, they were understood within or by reference to more traditional value structures. He makes a powerful case. Nevertheless, this case should not be taken so far as to equate the pathology of Nazi Germany with the implicit logic of bourgeois virtues. Twisting or even referencing a value (as the Nazis did) is not the same thing as the value itself; nor can it suffice to deploy a value (such as social conformity) monopolistically, without referring to how it is tempered in a pluralistic framework by other values (such as tolerance). In this sense, the totalitarian mindset is as far from traditional morality as the mass murderer's psyche is from the norm; and integrating the two wreaked “moral devastation” for the general public just as surely as it did for Adolf Eichmann. Moreover, in both cases — that of the denouncer as well as that of Eichmann — the perpetrator may be inadequately aware, or perhaps even unaware, of his or her own moral devastation. It is this variety of unawareness that is the symptom of what Arendt called the “banality of evil” and what Yahil sharply differentiates as a “hallucinatory concept” or a “destroyed sense” of reality.

V

In his monograph on racial policy and public opinion under Nazism, Bankier affirms the prevailing view that large sections of the nonparty public were receptive to Nazi antisemitism but did not initially share the Nazis' obsession

29. Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven, 1987).

with it. As anti-Jewish policy advanced, Bankier finds, it gave rise to repeated albeit limited "crises" of public confidence in the regime. These "crises" were due not to moral scruples or popular doubts about the goals of racial policy but to utilitarian reservations about the means. It was because the public generally agreed that the Jewish problem existed and was being officially solved by purging and isolating Jews that it remained uneasy with unruly populist excesses. If the Jewish problem was being efficaciously treated institutionally and legalistically, then actions outside the bounds of duly constituted authority seemed at best redundant, at worst both counterproductive and a threat to public order. Possibly they presaged similar methods against further targets, such as capitalists or Catholics. Thus, once the regime was safely ensconced in power, the bulk of the public tired of the continued attempted politicization and sought reassurances of a return to normalcy. But the numerous radicals who made up the mass organizations feared that the regime would lose its revolutionary momentum and withdraw into comfortable conservatism. In tune with its own proclivities, the regime's dialectical solution to these conflicting popular demands upon it was to unleash repeated antisemitic propaganda campaigns and participatory anti-Jewish outbursts whose reassuring taming then required further antisemitic escalation through administrative and legal channels. In this way, the more reserved elements of the public were implicated in, and welcomed rather than resisted, the regime's ever more draconian official anti-Jewish measures.

Bankier's position differs from Gerstenberger's functionalism. Bankier emphasizes that the regime adopted a radical solution to the dialectical tension between its two constituencies not because it needed a cure to a structural dilemma, but because that is what the regime wanted to do; that was what it was for. To Hitler, the notion that Jews were behind the foreign policy crises was not a manipulative propaganda point but a matter of conviction. Although only a minority of Germans shared the Manichean intensity of his conviction, many did come to see the segregation of the Jews and the insulation of the *Volksgenossen* as the best solution to the problems of public order and national wellbeing that were posed not only by the Weimar-era crises but also by the Nazi movement's own unruliness. Yet Nazi antisemitism, Bankier insists, was effective "not because the German public changed course" and adopted a racial theory but because the Nazis reinforced and harnessed the public's anti-Jewish predisposition (*Germans*, p. 155). However dialectical the process, tolerance for increasingly radical anti-Jewish measures became more and more widespread — which is what the regime desired and intended.

Bankier quickly dispenses with the matter of whether Germans knew about both the deportations and mass murder: Awareness, he declares, "exceeded mere suspicion" (p. 146). He cites examples from "the vast number of testimonies" to this effect (p. 103). Diaries, letters, and governmental reports spoke of word being spread by the many participating or witnessing soldiers. There were also

reports of clergy who preached that Stalingrad was divine retribution for unnamed German crimes. Popular rumors that Allied bombings constituted Jewish-prompted reprisals for starvation-inducing deportations demonstrate that popular ignorance about the fate of Jews was a myth. Earlier, much of the public had satisfied itself with the reverse argument: that actions against Jews were a justified response to Allied bombings. There was similar confusion as to whether forcing Jews to wear the yellow star responded to or might prompt an order that all German Americans wear swastikas. Bombings also spurred musings that had it not been for Nazi excesses such as *Kristallnacht*, the Jews might not have started the war.

These signs of popular awareness accompanied by rationalizations and excuses suggest that a thoroughly internalized antisemitism coexisted with increasing foreboding about its consequences — not for the Jews, but for the Germans. Like Kaplan, Bankier finds that the first appearance of the yellow star induced popular astonishment that there were still so many nondeported Jews. But he also finds anecdotal evidence of public acts of sympathy or at least normal human decency, such as young streetcar riders who offered their seats to older wearers of the badge. Sometimes such acts were silently tolerated, and sometimes they were jeered and their perpetrators evicted. Against the mighty backdrop of evidence of heightened antisemitism by this time, Bankier interprets the brief increase in incidents of “overt kindness” (p. 128) as a defense mechanism of people who were suddenly confronted with their own complicity. The badges abruptly transformed any given Jew from an abstraction into an “accusing public witness” (p. 129). But even this was a minority response. As time passed, denial mechanisms reasserted themselves, and initial discussion of the deportations gave way to a taboo. Occasionally, the taboo was broken — for example, to discuss whether national defense might not have been better served by placing Jewish hostages in bombing targets rather than deporting them. Fearing reprisals as defeat loomed, people *tried* to escape into their (considerable) daily troubles and *chose* to push the Jews’ fate out of their minds. Denial of knowledge and withdrawal from Nazi propaganda were ways to be aware of the Jews’ fate “without entailing any affective implications” (p. 146). Thus, Bankier asserts that citizens felt both guilt and fear, and yet, that these responses, as well as their self-serving attempt now to seek distance from the regime’s continuing anti-Jewish broadsides, demonstrate not a softening of antisemitism but the intensity with which antisemitic attitudes had come to be held. From brutal segregation to even more brutal wartime deportation, public cooperation with anti-Jewish policy had continued. The course was set, and there was no turning back without facing one’s own complicity. Only when defeat loomed did self-serving reservations come to the fore.

This analysis fits well with Gellately’s emphasis on asociality in the following ironic sense: if the general public was attracted to Nazism because of its promise

to dispose of asocial elements in German society, then the regime had to be careful lest it place itself, through its unruliness, in this category. Thus, Bankier argues that the antisemitic disposition that the public *shared* with the regime was *nevertheless* a source of tension rather than integration. "The bulk of the public," Bankier writes, "did not need propaganda" in order to be antisemitic or to "ostracize Jews" (p. 81). In the peacetime years, the public supported segregation and economic expropriations but saw the success of such measures as negating the need for new and tiresome propaganda campaigns, the wanton destruction of expropriable property, and maltreatment that threatened to turn Jews into martyrs. Thus, according to Bankier, antisemitism was integrative for the party but caused tensions with the public *even though the public also was strongly antisemitic*.

Yet, one can go rather further than Bankier: perhaps the deeper reality here is that *the tension itself was integrative*. Seeking to reassure those who valued decorum and at the same time to unleash its own populist radical energies, the regime would seem to have found in its officially virulent racial policy its chosen ground for fashioning a bridge of collusion between itself and the broader public. Thus, if businessmen or Catholics were inclined in the early stages to fear becoming the next target of wildcat Nazi radicalism, they were reassured when populist excesses were administratively channeled such that the movement's aspirations became (for the most part) confined to racial policy. And as the war provided a further impetus in this policy direction, it again allowed the movement to bypass more mainstream targets, even as it integrated German society as a community of the silently culpable.

If this insight is valid, then it may be (paradoxically) that the *strength* of Nazism lay in the inherent *fragility* of an integrative *consensus* that was based on a dynamic of tension. For it was this consensus, not (just) of action but (also) of knowing and yet standing silently (or not so silently) by, that rendered any withdrawal an impossibly dangerous admission — not primarily to others, but to oneself — of guilt.

Eric Johnson cites the example of a woman who answered his questionnaire by affirming that she had known about the mass murder at the time. She was unable to confirm this answer in a follow-up interview because her husband interrupted to say that had they known, they would have had to kill themselves (*Nazi Terror*, p. 454). This couple embodies a crucial aspect of the fragile yet tenacious integrative consensus. The remembered comfort of the *Alltag* as an enclave of silent ignorance — combined in reality with the acts of opportunism that belied this very ignorance — ran parallel to the discomfort of "internal emigration" as the retreat of the more candid "other Germany." But both "Germanys" accepted as a truism Gellately's premise that the presence of a critical mass of popular complicity precluded successful resistance. Be it complacently or regretfully, each made its terms — contributing terms — with that

reality. Yet, in a functional sense, the partner who denied knowledge was no more complacent than the one who admitted it. The lady, after all, did not kill herself.

But complacency was not just a behavior or a reflex: it was also, at least in part, the product of a conviction. Even in the "other Germany," Bankier finds evidence that the dismissal of Jews from positions of influence met with approval. Before his exile, Thomas Mann confided to his diary: "It is no great misfortune after all that . . . the Jewish presence in the judiciary has been ended . . . I could to some extent go along with the rebellion against the Jewish element." One of the regime's opinion reports remarked on a Catholic schoolteacher who vehemently opposed "economic extermination" but who thought that limiting Jewish candidacy for the civil service was "reasonable." "The Jews," the reporter stated, "are for her another world." (Quoted in Bankier, *Germans*, pp. 69–70). Even when denunciations were motivated purely by self-interest, insists Gellately, the fact that the denouncers knew what would happen to their victims suggests at least acceptance of Nazi doctrines. Johnson notes the contrast between the public's compunctions regarding denouncing clergymen and its lack of compunctions about sending Jews or Marxists to camps. Johnson sees evidence here of Germans' continued religiosity and non-Nazi convictions. But the real issue would seem to be how they managed to believe in both.³⁰

Complacency — or calculated, not thoughtless, indifference — was both as strong and as weak as the self-involvement that it betrayed. This self-involvement was evident in the Eisenach petitioners' seeming certainty that Nazi affirmations of Aryan-German privilege were justified. It was evident as well in the fear of personal risk that made outbursts of antisemitic violence (both oral and physical) a source of some misgivings. Both the peacetime concern that wildcat Nazi radicalism might upset the social fabric and the wartime fear of retaliation or postwar reprisals were largely self-interested or utilitarian. Both raised the specter that Nazi actions and public complicity might lead to a situation in which the carefully cultivated sense of the selectivity of the threat of terror might be abrogated. Here, Johnson's claim that ordinary Germans did not feel threatened finds an intersection point with Bankier: it was whenever Germans restlessly perceived the possibility that Nazi fervor might very well redound upon them — either directly through a turn in its targeting, or indirectly through the reprisals it might induce — that they became uneasy with the realities of Nazi racial policy. But as the momentum of the policy carried it seemingly beyond their control, they dared not examine their own role in this

30. On this point, for Catholics, see the comments of Margaret Lavinia Anderson, "From Syllabus to Shoah?" *Central European History* 34 (2001): 231–38, regarding Olaf Blaschke, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Göttingen, 1997).

development too closely. Thus, the murderous, tension-ridden integrative consensus continued to operate.

There are ways of saying true things that can emphasize virtually opposite aspects of the same behavior. Thus, Johnson can say quite categorically: "Most Germans did not want the Jews to be killed" (*Nazi Terror*, p. 484). But Gellately can say: The "majority more or less accepted the racist teachings" and "cooperated" in "eliminating unwanted social 'elements'" (*Backing Hitler*, pp. 261–62). Both statements may be true, but the first ignores the consequences of the second. Maybe that is what most Germans did, and maybe therein lies their true culpability.

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