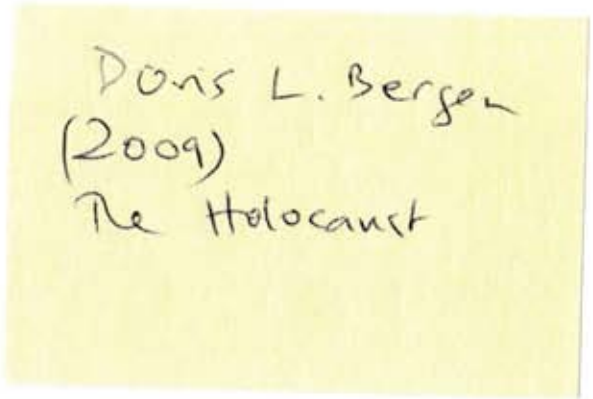
has grown up around Hitler's regime. There was neither order nor glory to his demise. No heroic struggle marked his death, only cowardice, the ruin of his own people, and lies.

The Nazi revolution had promised a new awakening. Instead it brought destruction and death far beyond the borders of Germany. An estimated 55 million people died worldwide in World War II. Among them were more than 5 million German soldiers. At least 27 million Soviet citizens were dead, as well as millions of Poles, over a million Yugoslavs, and scores of other people from all over Europe. Close to 6 million Jews were murdered, and Jewish civilization was almost eradicated from Europe. The list could go on and on, and the world continues to feel the effects of hatreds sown for the Nazi goals of racial purification and territorial expansion.



Conclusion

THE LEGACIES OF ATROCITY

This account ends in May 1945, but the legacies of Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust extend much further. Perhaps one story can begin to illustrate some of the personal and political repercussions of the history described in the previous eight chapters. Like many stories that end in death, the details can only be pieced together in a fragmentary way, but they are nonetheless significant.

This account begins in the mid-1930s in the Soviet Union. Frightened by manifestations of antisemitism under Stalin, a young Russian Jew whom we will call N. decided to leave his home and move west. He settled in France, where he built a life for himself until the Germans invaded in 1940, and his existence again became precarious.

For a while N. succeeded in evading the Nazi dragnet, but sometime in 1942 or 1943 German or French police rounded him up, along with many other foreign Jews living in France, and sent him east to a Nazi camp. Against terrible odds, N. survived more than a year as a prisoner and slave of Nazi Germany. In mid-April 1945, when British troops arrived at the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen, N. was one of the inmates liberated.

Under the terms of an Allied agreement, N., a citizen of the Soviet Union, was turned over to Soviet authorities. Instead of relief from years of torment at Nazi German hands, he soon found himself again on a deportation transport, this time to Siberia. Suspicious of the loyalty of Soviet citizens who had spent years outside the country, Stalin had tens of thousands of people like N.—Jews, POWs, forced laborers—sent directly from their "liberation" to labor camps and prisons in remote regions, where they toiled in massive industrialization projects.

Jewish youth liberated at Buchenwald lean out of a train in June 1945. Marked with the words, "Hitler kaput" (Hitler is finished), the train was en route to a children's home in France. This photograph comes from the collection of Romek Wajsman (now Robert Waisman) from Poland, one of 1,000 Jewish child survivors found by American troops when they arrived at Buchenwald in April 1945.

N. did not survive this second round of abuse. N.'s son, who lived through the war in France and later moved to New York, spent years trying to trace his father through the Red Cross and other international organizations. Decades after the war ended, he received the news he had long feared: his father had died in Siberia.

The fate of N. highlights several facts about the end of the Holocaust and World War II. The arrival of Allied forces and the collapse of Nazi Germany were not miracles that could undo or even stop the spirals of violence and misery unleashed by years of brutality. Although in hindsight it is easy to speak of liberation, for many individuals and groups of people, the end of the war meant continued and even new forms of misery. The defeat and total collapse of Hitler's Germany unleashed a movement of people within Europe, some of it voluntary, much of it coerced. Wartime atrocities created urgent demands for justice, even as the enormity of the crimes committed and the overwhelming death and destruction made any kind of restitution painfully inadequate and often impossible. Whether they had been victims, perpetrators, or

bystanders in Nazi barbarity—and many Europeans had reason to count themselves in more than one of those categories—people faced the challenge of building lives for themselves and what was left of their families and communities with scarce resources and restricted freedom, and in a climate of distrust and grief.

As Allied troops moved into German-held territory in the last stages of the war, they encountered shocking scenes. The Soviets were the first to reach the major killing centers. Even they, many of whom had experienced and witnessed Nazi German brutality firsthand, were stunned by the horror of places like Auschwitz-Birkenau. Soldiers from the United States and Great Britain who fought their way into Germany from the west were even less prepared for what they found: mass graves, abandoned camps, boxcars full of corpses, and emaciated, dying prisoners.

On 15 April 1945, the first British tanks entered the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. Terrorized and enfeebled, inmates of the camp could not believe they were free. And in fact, freedom did not come easily. After initial contact, the British tanks moved on. For the next forty-eight hours, the camp was only nominally under British control. Hungarian soldiers whom the Ger-

German civilians conscripted by U.S. troops from the surrounding area dig mass graves for the dead found in Kaufering IV, a subcamp of Dachau in Bavaria. This photograph was taken on 30 April 1945.

mans had stationed there as guards remained in command. In two days they shot more than eighty Jews and non-Jews for such offenses as taking potato peels from the kitchen. Even after British troops entered Belsen in force, for more than two weeks three hundred inmates continued to die daily of typhus and starvation. Horror on the scale of the Holocaust did not simply disappear with the arrival of the Allied liberators.

The images captured on film by photographers and journalists who accompanied and followed Allied forces horrified people back home, just as the sights themselves stunned and sickened the soldiers who saw them first-hand. Decades later those images continue to haunt us and to shape the way we perceive and present atrocities in our own time. The questions they raise remain pressing even though they have almost become clichés: How could human beings do such things to other people? How can we go on living in a world where crimes and suffering of such magnitude are possible?

For those who survived, the end of World War II brought the realization of all that had been destroyed. Alone, without family or friends, often far from what had been their homes, many survivors, particularly Jews, had nowhere to go. Separated from their parents for years, some Jewish children no longer knew their birth names or even that they came from Jewish families. Many Jews had seen their gentile neighbors turn against them, denouncing them to Nazi officials and stealing their possessions. Could they now simply go back as if nothing had happened? In Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, and elsewhere, Jewish survivors who returned home to search for family members or reclaim their property were often met with violent hostility from the new "owners." Some Jews were attacked and beaten; some were killed.

Non-Jewish victims of Nazism faced their own problems as they discovered that true liberation was impossible in hostile surroundings. Gypsies who had managed to live through the Nazi assault were no more welcome in many places after May 1945 than they had been before or during the war. Few non-Gypsies realized or cared that Nazi Germany had singled out the Roma for particular abuse. Only decades after the war would Gypsies gradually begin to be acknowledged legally and unofficially as victims of Nazism. In some places—for example, in the western zones of occupied Germany—homosexual men were released from Nazi prisons and concentration camps only to be arrested again and incarcerated under old or new laws that criminalized homosexuality. Jehovah's Witnesses, thousands of whom endured imprisonment in Hitler's Germany, faced renewed persecution, especially under Communism, such as in the eastern zone of Germany, subsequently East Germany. Looking back at Nazism and the Holocaust, we often vow "never again," but for the

In late May or June 1945, German civilians from Burgsteinfurt watch a documentary in the local cinema about the atrocities of the Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald concentration camps. When few residents showed up to see the film, British military authorities ordered all 4,000 townspeople to attend, assembled them, and marched them to the cinema.

Jews hounded out of Polish cities and towns by pogroms in 1945 and 1946, the Jehovah's Witnesses sitting in Communist jails in the 1950s, and the Gypsies crippled and left homeless by arson attacks in Romania in the 1990s, a more apt slogan might have been "Still?"

World War II sparked the movement of the largest number of people in the shortest period of time that the world had ever known. Refugees, fugitives, displaced persons, deportees, and expellees jammed the roadways and waterways of Europe and spilled over into Central Asia and the Americas. Hundreds

German civilians from Burgsteinfurt exit the cinema in their town where they were forced to see a film showing atrocities perpetrated in Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. This photograph was taken on 30 May 1945.

of thousands of people, like the Russian Jew N., were transported eastward, against their will, as prisoners and laborers of the Soviet Union. More of the wave of motion, however, was westward. An estimated 10 million refugees poured into the western zones of occupied Germany alone, those parts controlled by the United States, Britain, and France.

The motivations of those fleeing west varied. Some had experienced Communism in Stalin's Soviet Union and would risk anything to avoid a return to that misery. Some were ethnic Germans whose families had lived in eastern Europe for generations. Nazi authorities had begun evacuating them already before the war ended, aware that they would be targets for revenge. Many ethnic Germans had eagerly served the cause of race and space and benefited from the deprivation and expropriation of their neighbors. In some cases, Soviet and local authorities expelled ethnic Germans, both to remove potential troublemakers and to free up space for resettlement programs of their own. Ethnic Germans were forced out of western Poland, for example, at least partly

because the Soviets needed homes for Poles they had pushed out of the eastern parts of the country, territories annexed to the Soviet Union after 1945.

Other east Europeans, who like many ethnic Germans had collaborated with Nazism, also had reasons to flee west, now that their German protectors had retreated. Fearing the wrath of their neighbors, they sought security or at least anonymity. The Red Army's horrific record of rape and plunder as its troops penetrated deeper into central Europe added another urgent reason for many people to try to escape westward.

Throughout 1945 masses of weary travelers crisscrossed Europe—Hungarian Jews trying to go home; ethnic Germans from the Sudetenland making their way north and west; demobilized soldiers, prisoners of war, former slave laborers from Ukraine and Poland. Amid the chaos it is no surprise that war criminals and other fugitives often found it easy to blend in and evade detection. Under such conditions, whose documentation was in order anyway? Who would know if a former SS man or high-ranking Nazi Party boss, or even Heinrich Himmler himself, had simply buried or burned his papers, put on old clothing, and assumed a new identity? Paradoxically, the Nazis, with their obsession with race, blood, and homeland, had created a situation where all of those identities were in flux.

Building on creation during the war of the U.N. Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the United Nations tried to address some of the most pressing humanitarian concerns stemming from the refugee crisis. U.S. occupation authorities set up camps for displaced persons (DPs) in their zone, which became the first destination of many Jewish survivors. Initially DPs were organized by country of origin, so that Jews, ethnic Germans, and non-German collaborators might find themselves grouped together as Ukrainians, Poles, or Yugoslavians. Subsequently the Americans set up separate facilities for Jews, who had different needs and options from most gentiles.

By late 1946 more than 150,000 Jews lived in DP camps in the U.S. zone, bringing a Jewish presence to parts of Germany that previously had been home to relatively few Jews. Jewish DP camps were sites of Zionist activity, as survivors, especially young people, were urged to leave Europe for Palestine and, after 1948, Israel. Many Jews preferred to wait for visas to the United States, Canada, or Australia, and some accepted options that were often quicker, such as relocation to South Africa, South America, or the Caribbean. An estimated twenty thousand Jews remained in Germany even after the last Jewish DP camp finally closed in 1957. Some of them were too old or sick to travel or be granted visas; some had ties to Germany.

Jewish DP camps were more than just holding places for people waiting

to exit. They developed an internal leadership and communal spirit, with cultural and religious activities, educational opportunities, and social and family life. The immediate postwar years saw a baby boom as the birthrate among Jewish DPs rose to remarkable heights, especially in contrast to the unusually low rates for other people in Germany. Those Jewish children must have represented faith in new beginnings and hope for life after so much death.

Despite the urgent demands of daily existence, many people in postwar Europe concerned themselves with questions of justice. Perpetrators and organizers of Nazi crimes went to immense lengths to avoid being brought to account for their deeds. They set up self-help networks and used connections in Turkey, the Middle East, South America, Canada, and the Vatican to get themselves to safety. For example, Franz Stangl, former T-4 operative and subsequently commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka, fled via Turkey and the Middle East to Argentina, where Hitler's expert on Jews and transportation/deportation, Adolf Eichmann, also found refuge. Josef Mengele, the doctor and medical scholar whose vicious experiments at Auschwitz killed thousands of people, made his way to Brazil, where he died in the 1980s.

Of course those victimized by Nazism had very different interests in justice. No acts of revenge or restitution could make up for the deaths of millions, the annihilation of Jewish life in much of Europe, the destruction of property, and the shattering of trust and coexistence. Nevertheless survivors had to begin new lives, and for that they required at least minimal material resources, some acknowledgment of their suffering, and a measure of confidence in the world around them. Seeing some key criminals brought to justice could begin to address those needs as well as combat the sense of meaninglessness that must have threatened to overwhelm many survivors.

Already during the war Allied leaders had agreed that the defeated Germany must be denazified and top perpetrators brought to justice. Doing so was necessary for postwar stability, at least some of them believed, because it would make it possible to effect some kind of separation between "Nazis," who needed to be punished, and "Germans," who could and should be integrated into a peaceable world. The International Military Tribunal with the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–1946, a joint effort of all the Allies, served this purpose.

Contrary to what detractors claimed, the trial of twenty-one major war criminals and a handful of central Nazi German organizations at Nuremberg was not sham "victors' justice" or a reflection of some Allied notion of German "collective guilt." Although the trials were not perfect, and Allied cooperation was severely strained at times, they were real legal proceedings, with witnesses, massive amounts of documentation, and counsels for the defense—

Cover page of the publication Jidisze Bilder *(Jewish Pictures) with a photograph of participants at a 1948 congress in Munich. Above the participants is a graphic of a branch growing from a chopped-down tree. This image of destruction and new life became a symbol of the survivors, the She'erith Hapleitah, "the saved remnant."*

and without torture. Some individuals and organizations were acquitted, and those convicted received varying sentences, including death sentences in about half of the cases. The most famous defendant, Hitler's favorite, Hermann Göring, committed suicide in his cell before the order for his execution could be carried out.

The Nuremberg Trials were just one step. The occupying powers, and subsequently local authorities, including Germans and foreign governments—like Israel with the Eichmann trial in 1961—conducted their own hearings, trials, and deportation proceedings of camp guards, doctors, bureaucrats, members of the Einsatzgruppen, and former SS men accused of lying on their immigration applications to the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. Property of all kinds—art, gold, land, buildings, factories—has been grounds for other kinds of legal cases, commissions, and occasionally settlements. These processes are all important, although they can never bring closure to a past that remains an open wound despite remarkable—perhaps unprecedented—efforts by Germans to come to grips with their nation's cruel past.

This history has no happy ending, no uplifting message of redemption. It leaves us only with human beings, with their startling capacities for good and evil, and with an awareness of the complex ties that connect the fates of people and nations all over the world.

One final account may best express these points. This time the story begins in the Netherlands with the birth of a baby girl in 1943. When she was two weeks old, her Jewish parents and older brother were rounded up by German and Dutch police, sent to the transit camp of Westerbork, and from there to Sobibor, where they were murdered.

Somehow the baby escaped that fate. Perhaps her parents hid her or a sympathetic policeman took pity on her. Either way, someone brought her to a beauty parlor run by two young women with connections to the Dutch underground, including people who helped find hiding places for Jewish children.

Here the details become even blurrier. According to one version of events, the women found a family to take the baby, but the arrangement fell through, possibly because the couple would not promise to surrender the girl when the war was over. Meanwhile, the young women had fallen in love with the baby, and—after a coin toss to decide between them—one of them took the child herself and cared for her until 1947, when an uncle from New York managed to locate his niece. Although the Dutch woman could not bear to lose her daughter, she gave the girl up and never saw her again. Growing up in the United States, the girl remembered little from her early years, and her

uncle and his wife discouraged all contact with her Dutch foster mother, who subsequently suffered severe emotional problems and died quite young. Only decades later would the twice-orphaned girl, now a mother and grandmother herself, find a way to restore contact with members of her Dutch family. In the process she met people who had known her parents and brother, saw photographs of them, and even was given a few of their belongings.

One could present this account as an inspirational example of heroism and miraculous luck, and those are indeed important messages to take away from a study of the Holocaust. At least as significant, however, are the crushing themes of loss and violence, and the unavoidable, heartbreaking decisions that no one should have to make, decisions the scholar Lawrence Langer has dubbed "choiceless choices." These are the realities of the Holocaust and its bitter legacy, a history specific and unique but at the same time firmly embedded in the all-too-familiar global experiences of war and genocide.