



Stories Lived, Stories Told: The Significance of Survivor Stories in our Populist World

Karin Mika¹

¹ Cleveland State University, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, USA

Abstract

Although all stories of all our ancestors have significance, the stories of World War II have particular relevance in terms of understanding the mentality that has resulted in what seems to be blatant hatred for “the other.” All history, and especially the history that leads to the hatred causing wars, is significant; however, World War II has a particular unique significance related to the United States as we currently know it. It was the defining event of the Twentieth Century in terms of the values that many have embraced as particularly American (e.g., work ethic, coming together in patriotism, and a “fierce defence of freedom of democratic institutions”). It was also the defining mind-set of those who now are considered part of the Baby Boomer generation. Sadly, the world, which has never been free from war, is seeing a resurgence in the type of hatred that resulted in the existence of Hitler. This may be cyclical in nature for the very reason that the survivors and their stories are now leaving us. Not letting their stories go with them might give us our last and best chance to make sure that the worst that comes from extremist populism does not happen again, or is at least hindered.

Keywords: World War II, The war, Generation, Humankind, Holocaust

When I was growing up, anytime I would anger my mother, for whatever reason, she would shout at me in her thick German accent: “Two suitcases! Your father and I came to this country with just two suitcases!” Whenever this occurred, I would do what every adolescent does: roll my eyes at the repetitive invocation of the past, a past that, in my opinion, was long gone and had little to do with me.

I knew well enough that both of my parents had been war survivors, partially because “the war” (World War II) was an everyday part of our lives. My mother was from Essen, Germany and endured the bombing of the allied raids starting in 1943. My father was from Krasnobrod, Poland, one of the many Polish villages that had been almost completely obliterated by the Germans during World War II.¹

But for an American ‘tween coming of age in the “Come On, Get Happy,”² era of the late sixties and early seventies, my parents’ experience was far afield from my life. From my vantage point, the war was “a very long time ago,” and not all that relevant to the life any of us were living in the United States. Not only that, but, to me, my parents’ war experience was not that big of a deal given that it was the norm for the community in which I grew up. The vast majority of my peers had parents who, in one way or another, made their way from Europe to the United States after World War II.³ The “war” was a part of all of our lives. We all knew our parents’ stories and

**With thanks to my research assistants Olimpia Berdysz, and Katey Hach. Thanks also to Christine Mika for proofreading and editing.

¹ The most comprehensive description of what occurred in Krasnobrod is in the Krasnobrod Yizkor, which is a memorial to the Jewish Community of Krasnobrod and includes many firsthand accounts of the actions of the Nazis after September 1, 1939. The Yizkor Project is supported by JewishGen, Inc., and memorializes the destroyed Jewish Communities in Poland. For a narrative about the destruction of Krasnobrod, see KRASNOBROD; A MEMORIAL TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY 106-77 (1956) (Yochaved Klausner, trans.). Most of Krasnobrod’s non-Jewish citizens were either killed or ultimately sent to work camps, while its Jewish citizenry suffered a much crueler fate. See NAOMI SAMSON, HIDE: A CHILD’S VIEW OF THE HOLOCAUST 2 (2000).

² “Come On, Get Happy” was the theme song of the 1970s hit show The Partridge Family. The song was written by Danny Jannsen and Wes Farrell and sung by David Cassidy. For the complete lyrics, see *Let’s Sing It*, <https://www.letsingit.com/the-partridge-family-lyrics-come-on-get-happy-dcc1658>

³ The forced or encouraged emigration of minorities from Europe during and after World War II was a form of “ethnic cleansing” in order to mold nationally homogenous population. It was also the last hope for the minorities to achieve a better life. For a comprehensive discussion on the mass migration, see TARA ZAHRA, THE GREAT DEPARTURE: MASS MIGRATION FROM EASTERN EUROPE AND THE MAKING OF THE FREE WORLD (2016).

stories about the war. As far as we were concerned, “we got it,” and didn’t need to be constantly reminded. Most of us hoped that our parents would simply move on from the past.

In my youthful ignorance, I did not realize that my parents were handing me an extraordinary gift -- the gift of knowledge. For me and for my peers, the “war” and its effects on that generation of people may have been our day-to-day, commonplace history; however, for the generation that followed, the nuances of what occurred to real people during World War II became remote. Today, the generation of World War II survivors is either dead or dying, which is making the war even more remote.⁴ When a generation of survivors perishes and is no longer able to tell their stories firsthand, the lessons learned and the wisdom imparted by the experience also perishes.⁵

Currently, World War II is often reduced to the most basic descriptors, usually about Hitler and the Holocaust. What is being forgotten with the passage of time, and what I learned from my parents’ generation, is that for every Hitler and Holocaust that has ever existed, there is a history of the people who are swept up by a political current that they cannot control. This current then causes the very horrors that every previous generation destroyed by war has sought to alleviate before the worst of history repeats itself. We are seeing many of those very horrors begin to play out yet again.⁶

This is not your typical academic article. Although, on some levels, it is a representation of the very overused Santayana admonition stating that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it,⁷ it is a much more personal story. The article has a few simple themes: that wars destroy generations; that the mindset engendering the hatred caused by populism is bad, and that the stories of our elders who are dead and dying deserve (and must) be told so that we do not fully lose the empathy that will enable us to avoid the cycle of destruction to which humankind always retreats.

The Rise of Populism in the United States

When Donald Trump ran for president, my mother was dismayed, if not horrified. While Facebook and Twitter had social media shouting matches about whether Trump and Hitler should be compared⁸, my mother, who had some firsthand experience with Adolf Hitler, said on a nearly daily basis, “He is just like Hitler.” Her dismay led to fear after Donald Trump was elected president.

My mother did not have a realistic belief that the United States would come to replicate Nazi Germany in terms of genocide, but she feared the mindset: a mindset that heralded populism and bigotry as it rallied supporters to promote the hatred of others as its primary theme. As Trump’s attacks on the media became more prolific, my mother saw other similarities comparable to Nazi Germany. She lived the last years of her life believing that, after all her efforts to raise her children in a “safe” place where one’s lineage did not matter, a new leader would emerge and undo that vision. The thought of it made her sick. She said on an almost daily basis, “Anyone who lived through what we lived through could not possibly support this.”

What Education Leaves Out

As the cycle of time moves forward, those who are alive today, understandably, focus their attention on what is occurring before them. When we study history in school, seminal events in the creation of borders, nationalities, and generations of either hatred or peaceful coexistence are reduced to a paragraph, or perhaps a sentence. Schools, out of necessity, must eliminate entire periods of history in order to have time to cover more recent centuries, and the farther forward we go, the more even the most recent, significant historical events are minimized to the barest of components⁹. What schools rarely ever focus on -- the exact how and why we even got to the significant

⁴James McAuley, *An 89-year-old Holocaust survivor worries: What happens when we’re all gone?* THE WASH. POST (Jan. 26, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/an-89-year-old-holocaust-survivor-worries-what-happens-when-were-all-gone/2018/01/26/860462dc-ff98-11e7-86b9-8908743c79dd_story.html

⁵*Id.*

⁶ See Press Release, America’s Voice Education Fund, *Donald Trump’s Message of Division and Hate Goes Global* (Mar. 18, 2019); see also Robert J. Landy, *Why is There So Much Hate in the World?*, PSYCHOLOGY TODAY (July 17, 2017), <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/couch-and-stage/201710/why-isthere-so-much-hate-in-the-world>.

⁷ GEORGE SANTAYANA, *Reason in Common Sense*, in THE LIFE OF REASON: THE PHASES OF HUMAN PROGRESS 284 (1905), paraphrased by Winston Churchill in a 1948 Speech to the House of Commons.

⁸ Sam Sanders, *#MemeOfTheWeek: Comparing Donald Trump to Hitler*, NPR POLITICS (Mar. 11, 2016), <https://www.npr.org/2016/03/11/469978004/-memeoftheweek-comparing-donald-trump-to-hitler>.

⁹ Chris Bodenner, *Why History is the Toughest Subject to Teach*, THE ATLANTIC (Oct. 27, 2015 3:00 PM) <https://www.theatlantic.com/notes/2015/10/teaching-history/411922/>.

historical events -- is actually the key. If we all truly understood that, then perhaps the cyclical destructive populism might never occur again.

Things People Don't Know About Hitler, Germany, World War II, and the Holocaust

If we study history, we come to understand that the growth of bigotry and populism is usually not a creature of the urban environments, which are often the melting pots that include various people looking for work, diversified academic institutions, and transportation centers.¹⁰ In Europe, the larger cities also included refugees from previous wars who either chose not to return to their home countries, or could not. Populism tends to begin in the more isolated areas, and then festers within itself until, with the help of appropriate leadership, it begins to transcend the borders of its own isolation.¹¹

My mother was born in Essen, Germany, in the Ruhr Valley and the home of the Krupp Arms Factory.¹² My mother was not German by blood, and her family members were not Nazis, nor were most of the people living around her in Essen.¹³ My grandmother and maternal lineage were from Pomerania (Pommern).¹⁴ Pomerania is a province that is currently situated in the north of Poland, encompassing Szczecin, (or Stetin, the German translation), and Gdansk (or Danzig).¹⁵ Throughout history, and depending on what war was being fought, all or parts of Pomerania vacillated between being part of Germany, part of Poland, and part of Prussia.¹⁶ These border changes sometimes occurred within a single generation.¹⁷

What many people do not realize about Poland is that Poland was never so much of a country as it was an ethnic group.¹⁸ The "Poles" were a western Slavic tribe that had migrated into many of the areas we now know as "Poland."¹⁹ The origin of the terms "Pole" and "Poland" is somewhat unknown, but many believe it relates to the word the settlers used to describe "field."²⁰ Thus, in the history of modern civilization, being Polish often had nothing to do with a country of origin. In fact, for hundreds of years, the country of Poland did not actually exist. Rather, being Polish was entirely related to ethnic lineage.²¹

The concept (if not tradition of humankind) of establishing borders for people of a certain ethnic lineage has been the driving force of at least half the wars that have occurred on this planet.²² It was particularly relevant where Hitler was concerned.²³ From a personal standpoint, my mother's maternal lineage played an intriguing role in what happened to her family during and after World War II: a story that was a combination of

¹⁰ That's not to say that prejudice and segregation do not exist in the urban centers, but when people tend to live side-by-side with others who are not of the same race, religion, or ethnicity, there is less a likelihood to develop the "closed in" viewpoint that exists in places where residents have never even met anyone of a different race, religion, or ethnicity. In a Washington Post article from March, 2019, the author suggested that diversity has nothing to do with whether an urban area will be bigoted, but rather that already "less bigoted" individuals choose to live in diverse area as opposed to a completely segregated area. See Rahsann Maxwell, *Why are Urban and Rural Areas so Politically Divided?*, THE WASHINGTON POST (Mar. 5, 2019) <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/03/05/why-are-urban-rural-areas-so-politically-divided/>.

¹¹ For a more comprehensive discussion on democracy and its evolution from the eighteenth century to its current form—a dangerous and possibly irreversible populism, see generally JOHN LUKAC, *DEMOCRACY AND POPULISM: FEAR AND HATRED* 5-244 (2005).

¹² For a summary of Krupp's significance prior to and during World War II, see WILLIAM MANCHESTER, *THE ARMS OF KRUPP* 1-22 (1964).

¹³ My mother spoke often about how her stepfather, who was a drinker, would deride the government in a way that the family feared for their lives.

¹⁴ In Poland, the name of the province now is "Pomorze"—"po" meaning "after" and "morze" meaning "sea." Literal translation of the name is "by the sea" or "after the sea." <https://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=Pomerania>.

¹⁵ For a map of Poland in 1945 with territorial losses and gains, see HALIK KOCHANSKI, *THE EAGLE UNBOWED: POLAND AND THE POLES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR* 540 (2012).

¹⁶ The entire history of humankind is a tension between "unifying" supposed "like" peoples and conquering others. Prior to the 1870s, the dominant force of unification in Europe was the Catholic Church, which resulted in the Holy Roman Empire. After the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, a new unified Germany was created which was dubbed by the German leaders as the "Second Reich." For a description of the wars and militarization leading up to the establishment of the Second Reich, see *id.* at 92-134.

¹⁷ For a summary of the border changes in Poland before and after the Second World War, see *id.* at 1-34, 532-78.

¹⁸ The definition of borders, which ultimately was based on ethnic and to a lesser extent on historic grounds, was particularly complicated for Poland where there was an obvious lack of natural borders and where the border regions had always been inhabited by an ethnically mixed population. See ANITA PRAZMOWSKA, *IGNACY PADEREWSKI: POLAND* 113 (2010).

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ <http://ampoleagle.com/linguist-the-name-poland-does-mean-the-land-of-fields-p4953-124.htm>.

²¹ The Polish state did not exist before the outbreak of the First World War, see PRAZMOWSKA, *supra* note 18., at vii-xii.

²² "Ethnic conflict generates interstate crises and wars. Some examples include: the disintegration of Yugoslavia, from the secession of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 and the SerbiaCroatia-Bosnia wars in 1992– 95, through the NATO Serbia war over Kosovo in 1999, to the Macedonia civil war in 2001." For further explanation, see MICHAEL BRECHER, *INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL EARTHQUAKES* 1-106 (2008).

both being in wrong place at the wrong time at one moment, being in right place at the right time the next. It is the story of every person who has ever been born in a place that world leaders covet as their own.

There are other “traditions” of humankind that contribute to our species being as prone to war as it has been. The first is to annex land areas (by negotiation or by force) that provide for some type of economic advantage.²⁴ The second is to annex land areas (by negotiation or by force) that provide a neutral area or buffer zone between warring ethnic groups that do not particularly like or trust each other.²⁵

Poland has had the worst of both of these worlds, and in different ways at different times throughout its history. To the north of modern day Poland is the Baltic Sea and its seaport connections, and well as the “corridor” connecting the bulk of Germanic lands to the quasi-Germanic Prussian lands closer to what is now modern day Russia.²⁶ In the southernmost region, the Tatra Mountains provide a natural border between what is now Slovakia and Poland; however, the southeast region is flatter, long connected to the lands often claimed by Russia (including Ukraine).²⁷ The geographic nature of Poland has too often acted as an invitation to invading forces to occupy Poland and annex its lands.²⁸ As a result, the area we now think of as Poland has spent most of its history being conquered and then redivided.²⁹ In fact, from 1795 until 1918, what we now think of as Poland did not exist.³⁰ Additionally, in 1870, the Franco-Prussian War occurred.³¹ After the Franco-Prussian war, the area of Pomerania near the Polish port of Gdansk/Danzig became a part of Germany. This fact is significant because it is the backdrop for one of Hitler’s annexation plans when he became Chancellor of Germany.³²

Roots

My great grandmother’s household considered itself Polish in origin, but lived near Gdansk, in a geographic area that became Germany after the Franco-Prussian War.³³ Like most households in that area, my family was bilingual.³⁴ My great grandmother’s first husband was Polish by blood, and the result of that relationship was my grandmother, Maria, who was also bilingual but considered herself Polish. When my great grandfather passed away, my great grandmother married a man who considered himself German, and thus the family became “German.” This coincided with the “Kulturkampf” movement imposed on the new German territories of Prussia after the Franco-Prussian war.³⁵ The result of the marriage was two daughters (my mother’s aunts) who were half German by blood, born in what was legally Germany. Even if they were technically of Polish ancestry, they were considered German by the state having all of the rights of German citizenship.

The fate of war intervened again in 1914 with World War I.³⁶ Although Poland did not technically exist during the war, those of Polish heritage still envisioned that Poland could be restored as a country.³⁷ Woodrow

²³ One example of members of two ethnic lineages trying to reclaim its lands is the city of Poznań, its surrounding district, and the port city of Danzig. Germany disputed Polish claims to its inclusion within the new borders and the local German community had taken up arms in order to prevent the Poles from establishing a fait accompli. See PRAZMOWSKA, *supra* note 18, at 74.

²⁴ Danzig and the areas by the sea were desired due to the economic benefits of trade. See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 41-43.

²⁵ See generally Lionel Beehner and Gustav Meibauer, *The Futility of Buffer Zones in International Politics*, 60 J. ORBIS 248 (Issue 2, 2016). J. Orbis is a publication of the Foreign Policy Research institute.

²⁶ The list of maps of Poland and surrounding territory before, during, and after the Second World War, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at xi.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Polish terrain is mostly flat plain; mountains along southern border. See MINTON GOLDMAN, *REVOLUTION AND CHANGE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES* 219-64 (Routledge 1997).

²⁹ For further discussion on the division of Polish territory after 1795, see PRAZMOWSKA, *supra* note 18, at vii-xxii.

³⁰ The Polish state did not exist before the outbreak of the First World War. See *id.* at vii.

³¹ With French political opinion demanding decisive action, especially after Bismarck’s provocative manipulation of what became known as the ‘Ems Telegram’, war was declared on 19 July 1870. See KARINE VARLEY, *UNDER THE SHADOW OF DEFEAT: THE WAR OF 1870–71 IN FRENCH MEMORY* 1-2 (2008).

³² See JAN KARSKI, *STORY OF A SECRET STATE: MY REPORT TO THE WORLD* 371 (2013).

³³ See generally Chris Lorenz, *Beyond Good and Evil? The German Empire of 1871 and Modern German Historiography*, 30 J. OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY 729 (1995).

³⁴ My grandmother’s family was from Marienwerder, considered to be a West Prussian province. It is currently Kwidzyn in Poland.

³⁵ “Kulturkampf” was a type of rule imposed in the Prussian territories by Germany after the Franco-Prussian war. Its primary purpose was to eliminate the influence of the Catholic Church from the every day life of the Poles and instill a Germanic cultural preference in the region. During this time period, the curriculum of schools was changed to reflect Germanic cultural values. See generally Richard Blanke, *The Polish Role of Origin of Kulturkampf in Poland*, 25 REVUE CANADIENNE DES SLAVISTES, 253–62 (1983).

³⁶ History provides conclusive evidence that the twentieth century was an era of pervasive turmoil. There were two general wars (1914– 18, 1939– 45) and many lesser wars in all regions of the world. See BRECHER, *supra* note 22, at 1.

Wilson also included the re-establishment of a free Poland as one of his Fourteen Points.³⁸ Although the causes of World War I and the goals of the nations are complicated and various³⁹, one thing was very consistent: the war gave every ethnic group the opportunity to redefine itself within what would be the changing borders of Europe. During World War I the “Kingdom of Poland” was re-established; however, the “Kingdom” was regarded more as a “puppet state” that was not only a concession but also devised as a means for the Germans to retain control over Polish lands, including those in the northern Polish Corridor.⁴⁰

At the end of the War, Germany was penalized by the world for its aggressive actions.⁴¹ The result was that Germany was required, in the Treaty of Versailles, to “cede” various lands to other nations.⁴² Among this ceded land was an area that re-established geographic borders for the independent state of Poland.⁴³ Poland was not “given” the entire northern Baltic Sea coastline, but was given the seaport city of Danzig.⁴⁴ Danzig was situated in the area of this new country between the new Germany and East Prussia. Many in this area allied themselves most closely with Germany and the Germanic bloodline.⁴⁵

Pomerania remained a part of Germany, except for a small part of the coastline including Danzig (which was renamed as the Polish Gdansk.)⁴⁶ This was the geographic location of my mother’s ancestry. Thus, at the end of World War I, the family found themselves in Poland, although the members of the family were still considered to be German citizens. Things changed when my great grandmother was widowed and remarried a third time, this time to a man of pure Polish ancestry.⁴⁷ Because the family was then residing in what had become Poland, the two children born after World War I (my mother’s aunt and uncle) were born Polish citizens. As opposed to their German sisters who had been born within the German Empire and ensuing *Kulturkampf*, the younger children attended Polish schools and learned neither the German language nor its culture. The result was that the family had within it three German citizens, two Polish citizens, and one person with dual citizenship. The result was also that there was a language barrier between the siblings in the same family.

Shortly after my great grandmother’s third marriage, my grandmother and her two younger sisters traveled to Essen, Germany to find domestic work, which was typical for unmarried younger women of the time.⁴⁸ Within a few years, however, all three women married. My grandmother (in 1919) married a Russian tailor who had been born in Moscow and whose family lost their family wealth in the Bolshevik Revolution.⁴⁹

He had served in the Russian military during World War I, and had been imprisoned in Germany. Given what was happening in Russia, he never returned to Russia after World War I but remained in Germany.

³⁷ See Ryan Moore, *World War I: Restoring Poland*, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BLOG (Jan. 25, 2017), <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2017/01/world-war-i-restoring-poland/>.

³⁸ Woodrow Wilson, *President of the United States, President Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points (Jan. 8, 1918)* (transcript available through the Yale Law School Library Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp).

³⁹ See generally William M. Johnson, *Some Causes of World War I and Historians’ Taboos*, 39 THE J. OF GENERAL EDUC. 77 (1987). *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27797105. Accessed 2 Nov. 2020; see also Margaret MacMillan, *THE WAR THAT ENDED PEACE* (2014).

⁴⁰ JERZY LUKOWSKI & HUBERT ZAWADZKI, *A CONCISE HISTORY OF POLAND* 218 (2006).

⁴¹ Erin Blakemore, “*Germany’s World War I Debt So Crushing It Took 92 Years To Pay Off*”, HISTORY.COM: HISTORY STORIES (June 27, 2019) <https://www.history.com/news/germany-world-war-i-debt-treaty-versailles>.

⁴² In the Palace of Versailles on June 28, 1919, the German delegation signed the Treaty of Versailles by which the German nation never intended to abide. See KEITH EUBANK, *THE ORIGINS OF WORLD WAR II* 5 (2004).

⁴³ Even after World War I, the borders of Poland were not settled, and war continued to an extent in Poland until 1923. See generally ALAN SHARP, *THE VERSAILLES SETTLEMENT : PEACEMAKING AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR, 1919-1923 (THE MAKING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY)* 71-140 (3d ed. 2018).

⁴⁴ Germany was forced to cede its territory to Denmark, Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. To give Poland an outlet to the Baltic Sea, East Prussia was detached by a strip of land that became known as the Polish Corridor, an area that included Danzig. See *id.* at 6.

⁴⁵ For a map of the area and location of Danzig after World War I, see *id.* at 5.

⁴⁶ See *id.*

⁴⁷ As the story goes, my great grandfather Marcin Jankowski had been “after” my great grandmother for many years, and once he had her, he vanquished the existing daughters from the household and began his own family with Marta.

⁴⁸ The treaty required that Germany pay for reparations. To German patriots this seemed to be a “blank check” designed to ruin Germany forever. Unemployed army officers, university professors, civil servants, and even clergymen swelled the chorus damning the treaty and the new republic that had accepted it. The German economy also suffered a disastrous inflation resulting in wages having such little buying power that the average workingman was hard put to purchase the barest necessities. See *id.* at 6-10.

⁴⁹ The Bolshevik Revolution began in October of 1917. For a more comprehensive discussion on the revolution, see MARK CARTER, *THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AS I SAW IT* (2017).

My Father's Family and Community

Prior to the Treaty of Versailles, the physical boundaries of Poland had not existed for generations.⁵⁰ My father's family was from what is now the southeastern corner of Poland, about an hour south of Lublin.⁵¹ My paternal great grandfather, his daughters, as well as my father's two older sisters were legally recorded as being Galician, although at the time, Galicia was technically part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire.⁵² At various times during history, the area from where my father's family lived was also part of Ukraine and Russia.⁵³ By the time my father was born (1918), that same village found itself situated in the new Poland.⁵⁴ Because of the changing borders, most of occupants of this area were multilingual, with most speaking German, Polish, some dialects of Russian, and, because of the extensive Jewish population, Yiddish.⁵⁵ My father grew up educated, walking 15 km each day (one way) with his sister to school in Zamosc.⁵⁶ He studied engineering and hoped to work as an engineer. One of his sisters attended school with him and wished to be a teacher.

The village my father lived in was Krasnobrod, which means "beautiful ford."⁵⁷ Krasnobrod was founded in the late 1500s and today is regarded as part of a national recreation area, near the Roztocze National Park.⁵⁸ Even in the 1920s, many were already coming to the area because of the healing qualities of the pine forests and clean air.⁵⁹ There were rolling hills and a river (the Wieprz) running through the city. It was the site of historic architecture, including the focal point of the Christian community, a church and monastery that had existed for hundreds of years.⁶⁰ My father never stopped speaking of the beauty of the area that he recalled from his childhood.

Krasnobrod at that time, like many Polish villages, had a vibrant Jewish Community. Poland had long been a haven for Jewish populations fleeing persecution worldwide.⁶¹ However, unlike the Jewish population in Germany, the Polish Jewry mostly remained traditional and segregated; thus in Krasnobrod (as was true with most of the villages), the Polish Catholics and the Polish Jews lived side-by-side, but not necessarily together.⁶² There were separate schools, separate neighborhoods, separate houses of worship, separate cemeteries, and separate history. However, according to my father, what wasn't separate was the marketplace. There, all residents of Krasnobrod came together, and being such a small community, almost everyone knew everyone else, at least as an acquaintance.

⁵⁰ Poland did not exist before the outbreak of the First World War. See PRAZMOWSKA, *supra* note 18, at vii.

⁵¹ For a map of Poland after 1945 (current map), and location of Lublin, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 540.

⁵² For a more comprehensive discussion on Galicia before and after the First World War, see JOCHEN BÖHLER, CIVIL WAR IN CENTRAL EUROPE, 1918-1921 THE RECONSTRUCTION OF POLAND 71-95 (2018).

⁵³ *See id.*

⁵⁴ *See id.*

⁵⁵ Milolaj Gliniski, *Poland Didn't Always Speak Polish: The Lost Linguistic Diversity Of Europe*, THE ADAM MICKIEWICZ INSTITUTE: CULTURE.PL (Mar. 5, 2014) <https://culture.pl/en/article/poland-didnt-always-speak-polish-the-lost-linguistic-diversity-of-europe> (March 5, 2014).

⁵⁶ For location of Zamosc, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at xxi.

⁵⁷ For location of Krasnobrod and surrounding cities, see JUDITH KALIK, SCEPTER OF JUDAH: THE JEWISH AUTONOMY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CROWN POLAND 367 (2009).

⁵⁸ VIRTUAL STETLE, *Krasnobrod*, <https://sztetl.org.pl/en/towns/k/271-krasnobrod/96-local-history/67537-local-history> (last visited Nov. 19, 2020).

⁵⁹ POLISH TOURISM ORGANIZATION, *Krasnobrod*, <https://www.poland.travel/en/experience/relax/health-resorts/krasnobrod> (last visited Nov. 19, 2020).

⁶⁰ *See* VIRTUAL STETLE, *supra* note 58.

⁶¹ "Jews had been living in Poland since at least the Middle Ages. When Crusaders moved through Europe in the thirteenth century, Jewish refugees sought safety in Poland. The 1264 Statute of Kalisz created legal protections for Jews that were extended by King Kazimierz Wielki, or Casimir the Great, in the early fourteenth century. With these protections, Jewish communities in Poland began to thrive. Scholars suggest that by the sixteenth century, 80 percent of all Jews worldwide lived in Poland, where they enjoyed relative autonomy and tolerance and developed a rich social and cultural life, including several significant Jewish religious movements, such as the Hasidim (a sect of Judaism with an emphasis on mysticism and prayer) and a Jewish reformation movement called the Haskalah. The relatively peaceful existence of Polish Jewry was threatened toward the end of the eighteenth century when, in a series of diplomatic moves, Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. With Russia in control of vast areas of Poland, most Polish Jews found themselves living under Russian rule. Russia imposed geographic and professional restrictions on Jewish life, confining Jews to the Pale of Settlement (which was abolished legally in 1917, though this region continued to house the majority of European Jewry). In response, Jews fought alongside Polish fighters seeking independence during a series of uprisings throughout the nineteenth century." See FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES, *Jewish Life in Poland Before the Holocaust*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/resistance-during-holocaust/jewish-life-poland-holocaust> (last visited Nov. 19, 2020).

⁶² *Id.*

It is unlikely that my father gave too much thought to Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933.⁶³ Being born after the end of World War I, my father had not lived through the fear of war, nor the border shifts and need for changing nationalistic allegiances that the other members of his family had lived through. It might be unfair to say that my father lived in blissful ignorance for about 20 years of life, but he often talked about how wonderful everything had been until 1938 when his own father passed away. This necessitated that my father quit school to find work to support his mother and sisters. Shortly thereafter, it became very clear to everyone in Poland that they were once again going to have to prepare for war.⁶⁴

Essen in the 1930s

By 1935, my grandmother was a widow with three young children. Her first son was born in 1920; her second son was born in 1925; my mother was born in 1929. Peter, my maternal grandfather, passed away in 1930 of pneumonia. When Peter died, this not only left my grandmother a widow with three children, but it left her a widow who had no right to German social welfare programs because she had relinquished her citizenship by marrying a Russian national.⁶⁵ There were only a few remedies to this situation. The first would be to remarry a German citizen, and the second would be to be taken in by other family members. At the onset, my grandmother remained unmarried, making some money by doing sewing and laundry while also depending on her two sisters who were both childless. However, financial necessity and the rise of Hitler caused my grandmother to make some decisions that she otherwise might not have made.

In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany.⁶⁶ Unlike my father, who was relatively unaffected by this at the time it happened, my mother's family saw an immediate effect. For them, the entire climate of their living circumstances changed dramatically. First, my mother's family had a Russian surname, and although many now believe that the Germans and Russians were in a friendly relationship at the start of World War II, they were not.⁶⁷ Hitler considered "Slavic people" to be lesser human beings.⁶⁸ His initial alliance with Russia was merely advantageous from a military perspective.⁶⁹ Being from a Slavic bloodline as opposed to a Germanic bloodline, my mother's family was in as much danger as many others whom Hitler targeted. They were not German by blood, had a conspicuous Russian surname, and had relatives whose alliance was with Poland.

Secondly, my mother's family was Catholic, and not Evangelical Lutheran. Although Adolf Hitler was raised as a Catholic, he became hostile to Catholics when the church began to speak out against his policies in Germany.⁷⁰ This led to Catholic leaders and their congregations in Germany being persecuted and restricted.⁷¹ Hitler's ultimate goal was to eliminate Christianity entirely and replace it with a type of Aryan god worship, but this was harder to do with Catholics whose allegiance favored the Pope as opposed to the government controlled Evangelicals.⁷²

Thirdly, my mother's family members were not members of the Nazi party.⁷³ Even as the Nazi party gained momentum, no members of my mother's family joined the party. Without that protection, they were often taking their chances on a daily basis.⁷⁴

⁶³ On January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed as chancellor. For a comprehensive discussion on this event, see RODERICK STACKELBERG, *HITLER'S GERMANY: ORIGINS, INTERPRETATIONS, LEGACIES* 97-99 (2002).

⁶⁴ In 1938, Hitler began making it clear that he had every intention of annexing what he considered the historic German lands from the Northern Polish Corridor. See STEVE ZALOGA, *POLAND 1939: THE BIRTH OF BLITZKRIEG* 9 (2002).

⁶⁵ See GERMAN MISSIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, LOSS OF GERMAN CITIZENSHIP, <https://uk.diplo.de/uken/02/citizenship/loss-of-citizenship> (last visited January 3, 2020). "German women who married a foreign citizen before 23 May 1949 lost their German citizenship even if they thereby became stateless."

⁶⁶ See STACKELBERG, *supra* note 63, at 97-99.

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive discussion on Soviet-German relations, see *id.* at 176-95.

⁶⁸ Resettlers from Eastern Europe, those "completely imbalanced crossbreeds," those "of foreign blood," and the "genetically sick" were not German enough for the Nazis. The racial selection of members of their own nationality marks the Nazis' population policy out from those of other European countries. See PHILIPP THER, *THE DARK SIDE OF NATION-STATES: ETHNIC CLEANSING IN MODERN EUROPE* 93 (2014).

⁶⁹ For a comprehensive discussion on Soviet-German relations, see STACKELBERG, *supra* note 63, at 176-95.

⁷⁰ THEODORE S. HAMEROW, *ON THE ROAD TO THE WOLF'S LAIR - GERMAN RESISTANCE TO HITLER* 74 (1997).

⁷¹ "The Germans tried to Germanize the Church in the annexed lands by imprisoning many of the clergy and forbidding the use of Polish, even for confession. In the General Government, clergy were persecuted and many ended up in concentration camps." See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 126.

⁷² See generally Joe Sharkey, *Word for Word/The Case Against the Nazis; How Hitler's Forces Planned to Destroy German Christianity*, N.Y. TIMES, Jan. 13, 2002.

⁷³ Nazism was the regression of an entire nation to sub-civilization level. It extended from "its insistence on race as the determinant of the state, and its sequent expulsion or extermination of all who do not belong to the racial majority; from its attitude toward women and the inferior status it assigns them; from its scarcely veiled glorification of war as the goal of national life and as the norm of international relations; from its intellectual regimentation and its ruthless suppression of political, religious, and even scientific freedom— in, sum from the totalitarian state envisaged by Hitler and executed by his

Day-to-day life in Essen grew worrisome as Hitler gained power. My mother recalled that several of her neighbors “disappeared,” and most became afraid to engage in even casual conversation with their neighbors. My mother said that my grandmother was advised by friends to burn everything she had left from her deceased husband before it was discovered that she was not a “true German.”⁷⁵ By 1935, my grandmother was also being advised by concerned friends that, in order to protect the family, she should remarry a “German.” Unfortunately for my grandmother (and for my mother) the only man available was quite literally, the town drunk, a man who drank most of his pension money before he made it home to cause further trauma. Nonetheless, he had a German last name and German citizenship, and thus my grandmother married him, and spared the family complications of being the wrong nationality.

The Invasion of Poland. Understanding Hitler’s Plan.

When one reads Adolf Hitler’s speeches today, one can almost understand why there was support for him. Hitler talked about his efforts to establish good relations with his neighbours and a lasting world peace.⁷⁶ He ramped up the crowds with speeches about German pride, and the degradation of the Germanic people who were living beyond the borders of Germany after the Treaty of Versailles.⁷⁷ Interestingly enough, Hitler did not wholly blame a badly written Treaty for what had happened to Germany. Rather, a large amount of his blame was placed on the former weak German leaders who allowed the degradation of Germany and the Germanic people to occur.⁷⁸ His speeches focused on the need for Germans to re-assert their pride and resume their place in the world as, essentially, a superior ethnic and cultural group.⁷⁹

Thus, the initial part of Hitler’s plan was the reunification of the German people into one contiguous country.⁸⁰ The Germanic people, as Hitler determined them to be, lived in the land areas of Silesia, Alsace-Lorraine, the Sudetenland, and the Polish Corridor: the portion of northern Poland that extended from the German border to the Russian border and included the part of Pomerania where Gdansk was situated.⁸¹ Hitler’s initial claims were that his intent was to “relieve” the Germanic people of their mistreatment in lands that were now within the borders of other countries, a statement that was not wholly untrue.⁸² He intended to “absorb” the German speaking areas in other countries into a new Germany and reunite the two parts of Germany separated by Polish Gdansk.⁸³ He stated that he intended to accomplish this through negotiation and not war.⁸⁴

However, as far as ethnic Poland was concerned, there seems no doubt that war and conquest had always been in the picture.⁸⁵ Hitler regarded the Slavic people (including Russians) as brainless and uncultured.⁸⁶ He believed that their contribution to the world should be limited to what they could do with physical strength in their service to the more superior Germanic people.⁸⁷ Thus, as far as the actual existence of Poland was concerned, Hitler’s intent was to “conquer” what was not given (with the help of Russia) and use Polish territories to give land

government.” See BENJAMIN ALPERS, *DICTATORS, DEMOCRACY, AND AMERICAN PUBLIC CULTURE: ENVISIONING THE TOTALITARIAN ENEMY, 1920S-1950S* 69 (2003).

⁷⁴ For a description of incentives to join the Nazi Party, see Alan deBromhed, *Rise and Fall in the Third Reich: Nazi Party Members and Social Advancement*, THE CONVERSATION (Sept. 23, 2019) <https://theconversation.com/rise-and-fall-in-the-third-reich-nazi-party-members-and-social-advancement-123297>.

⁷⁵ The German Reich started large scale ethnic cleansings in the areas it occupied and among the German allies, see THER, *supra* note 68, at 96.

⁷⁶ On March 16, 1935, Hitler called for reinstatement of the draft. According to reports, “Later a crowd of 12,000, cheered wildly when Herr Goebbels read the proclamation at the Sports Palace. In the statement, Herr Hitler insisted that Germany’s purpose in rearming was to preserve peace for herself and the rest of Europe. The German government, he said, in order to preserve the security and honor of the German people saw itself required to take the most necessary measures. See *Hitler Orders Military Conscription in Germany, March 16, 1935*, UPI ARCHIVES <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1935/03/16/Hitler-orders-military-conscription-in-Germany/5124911384073/>. But see THER, *supra* note 68, at 135 (“Hitler’s framework for peace in Europe was actually a blueprint for more bloodshed and war.”)

⁷⁷ LAURENCE REES, *HITLER’S CHARISMA: LEADING MILLIONS INTO THE ABYSS* 33-55 (2012).

⁷⁸ *Id.*

⁷⁹ Hitler wanted to form a racist and nationalist utopia of national homogeneity, see THER, *supra* note 68, at 135.

⁸⁰ Hitler’s plan was to shift German eastern border to correspond with the “historical, ethnographic and economic circumstances” and “organize the entire Lebensraum according to nationalities.” See *id.* at 90.

⁸¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:World_War_II_in_Europe,_1942.svg Map of Hitler’s “New Order.”

⁸² Hitler used propaganda to convince resettlers to move to the annexed Polish territories, see THER, *supra* note 68, at 90-92.

⁸³ Germans were not satisfied just with the return of Danzig to the Reich, but also demanded the return of the portion of Poland that had formed the German partition, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 56.

⁸⁴ SANTI CORVAJA & ROBERT L. MILLER, *HITLER & MUSSOLINI: THE SECRET MEETINGS* 72 (2008).

⁸⁵ SHELDON DICK, *FROM PEACE TO WAR: GERMANY, SOVIET RUSSIA, AND THE WORLD 1939-1941* 24-25 (1997).

⁸⁶ SHELLEY BARANOWSKI, *NAZI EMPIRE: GERMAN COLONIALISM AND IMPERIALISM FROM BISMARCK TO HITLER* 87 (2011).

⁸⁷ *Id.*

to Germans for resettlement.⁸⁸ The Poles who lived there would “cede” their land to German resettlements and essentially work as slave laborers.⁸⁹

The Invasion of Poland (North, South, East, and West)

Hitler accomplished many of his various goals through an initial, relatively bloodless annexation.⁹⁰ This came about through both complicity and fear. Many of the ethnic Germans welcomed their annexation to the “motherland,” while Britain famously agreed to Hitler’s demands in an effort to avoid another world war.⁹¹ But Poland was another story. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland from the west, and, on September 17th, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east.⁹² My mother’s family near Gdansk fared well in the initial invasion because they were in an area considered part of the Germanic bloodline being annexed. My father’s hometown, in southeastern Poland, did not fare as well.

The Battle of Krasnobrod

After his father died in 1938, my father, who was then 20 years old, needed to quit school to work and support his family. He worked in a sawmill for a while, and then, when invasion seemed imminent, enlisted in the service. He was assigned to the Pulawy Fourth Battalion of Engineers.

When my father initially enlisted, it was not because everyone in Poland necessarily believed war was on the horizon. In fact, there was an immense sense of denial about what could possibly be the fate of Poland after Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Although many were wary about what was happening with Hitler’s “annexation” plan, many others believed what could only be called the propaganda of Polish pride.⁹³ Polish leaders assured its citizenry that Poland’s military was mighty and could protect its borders.⁹⁴

Polish leaders were initially unaware that they would not only be dealing with potential German aggression, but also Soviet aggression from the east.⁹⁵ Germany and the Soviet Union were not friends, and Poland’s leadership had no reason to believe that they would need to be defending two different borders.⁹⁶ However, Germany and the Soviet Union had secretly signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which paved the way for both countries to invade Poland and then annex the lands agreed upon by the two nations.⁹⁷

When the invasion of Poland began in 1939, my father was far from Krasnobrod. His unit was attempting to defend cities in the east, but merely two weeks into the invasion, it was looking as if Poland would fall. On September 14th, Polish commander-in-chief Edward Rydz-Smigly ordered the troops fighting east of the Vistula to retreat and regroup in Romania (a Polish ally).⁹⁸ My father’s unit was one of these; however, as the unit made its way to Romania, they encountered the Soviet army invading from the east.

Rather than taking the Polish soldiers prisoner or executing anyone, the Soviet soldiers told the members of the Polish army: “The war is over; go home now.” The Polish soldiers were also given the advice to get rid of anything that might indicate to the Germans that they were members of the Polish army. As a result, my father and his unit began cutting the insignias off their uniforms and dispensing with all separate elements of uniforms, such as belts, hats, and medallions.

My father then walked 90 km in what he described as torrential rain. Out of a fear that his boots would be stolen while he slept, he never took them off, and the swelling that occurred led to excruciating leg pain that

⁸⁸ For a comprehensive discussion on expulsion of Poles from the German-annexed territories, see THER, *supra* note 68, at 87-135.

⁸⁹ “The Nazis made a total of about 8.4 million people perform forced labor, 2.8 million of whom were Polish, that is, nearly 10 percent of the Polish population.” For more information on forced labor of expelled Poles, see *id.* at 97-98.

⁹⁰ GERD SCHULTZE-RHONHOF, *THE ANSCHLUSS OF THE SUDETEN REGIONS AND THE SUBJUGATION OF CZECHIA* (2014); see also ERIN R. HOCHMAN, *IMAGINING A GREATER GERMANY: REPUBLICAN NATIONALISM AND THE IDEA OF ANSCHLUSS* (2016).

⁹¹ <https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/munich1.asp> The Munich Agreement Text <https://history.blog.gov.uk/2013/09/30/whats-the-context-30-september-1938-the-munich-agreement/> General Overview.

⁹² For a comprehensive discussion on both attacks, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 59-93.

⁹³ See RENIA SPIEGEL, *RENIA’S DIARY: A HOLOCAUST JOURNAL* (2019); see also WITOLD PILECKI, *THE VOLUNTEER* (2012). In both of these diaries, the authors describe how most Poles went on mostly certain that the Polish army would ward off any invaders or that any war would be a short one.

⁹⁴ “On paper at least, the Polish Army was reasonably strong: on 1 September 1939, Poland had about 1,000,000 men organized in 37 infantry divisions, 11 cavalry brigades and 2 [armored] brigades plus artillery, and there were another 1,000,000 men in the reserve.” See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 52.

⁹⁶ Andrzej Włusek, *Soviet Invasion of Poland, 1939*, European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (Aug. 21, 2015). <https://enrs.eu/en/news/882-17-september-1939-the-soviet-invasion-of-poland>.

⁹⁷ See generally ROGER MOORHOUSE, *THE DEVILS’ ALLIANCE: HITLER’S PACT WITH STALIN 1939-1941* (2014).

⁹⁸ See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 72.

plagued him all his life. When he finally reached Krasnobrod, he found almost nothing left but smoldering ashes. The only buildings that remained untouched were the drug store and the police station, and although portions of residences remained, my father arrived to find that his family home no longer existed. After hours of searching, he finally found that his mother and sisters were still alive, and with another family whose home was not completely destroyed. The next day, my father fell ill with a fever and “did not wake up for 30 days.”

In Germany

In 1935, Adolf Hitler reinstated the draft for young men in Germany.⁹⁹ Service initially was limited to those of pure German blood, but because there was no way to test the ethnic purity of blood at that point in time, purity was determined by one’s existing registration, as well as by name and by appearance.¹⁰⁰

In 1935, my mother was six years old. Her eldest brother was only 15 years old, with her other brother being only 10. At first, war for my mother’s family seemed very far away. In 1939, however, my mother’s hometown of Essen began seeing more and more “foreigners” in the streets of Essen heading to work at the Krupp Iron Works, which had become a factory dedicated to producing the arms Hitler required for his war machine.¹⁰¹ My mother described watching the workers parade down the street in front of her home wearing mostly rags and looking “ghost-like.”¹⁰² The citizens of Essen were told that these people were those who were being punished because they had “refused to work” in their original home countries, and the citizens of Essen were told that these “prisoners” deserved their fate and were not to be shown any compassion. In fact, anyone who helped a foreigner was threatened with arrest, if not worse.¹⁰³

My grandmother, who was well aware that they were not being told the truth about the factory workers, would often give my mother pieces of bread to “sneak” to the workers as they moved toward the factory with their guards.¹⁰⁴ According to my grandmother, if my mother got caught, she believed the soldier escorts would not do anything to her because she was a “mere child” who did not know any better. Fortunately, this theory was never tested.

Life in Essen remained both the same and not the same for my mother’s family as Germany continued its quest to annex other European countries. My mother’s eldest brother worked as a tailor, while she and her middle brother continued going to school. The family was able live normally in terms of being able to do regular day-to-day activities. Ironically, it was the very person that my grandmother was forced to marry in order to hide the family’s heritage that posed the greatest risk. When drunk, which was nearly always, my mother’s stepfather proclaimed loudly to anyone who was nearby that Adolf Hitler was a fool and a buffoon. My mother, who was a pre-teen, was often sent into bars to retrieve her stepfather so that the family did not wind up being arrested.

Things changed in Essen near the end of 1940 when Adolf Hitler began bombing London.¹⁰⁵ At that point, more soldiers would be needed for what looked like would be an all-out world war. The situation was exacerbated when, in June of 1941, Adolf Hitler reneged on his treaty with Josef Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁶ My mother’s eldest brother was drafted first and was sent east in 1942. His younger brother, a more sensitive individual, was drafted in 1943 and first refused to go, hoping to plan an escape. But my grandmother told him that if he did not report, it would be the Germans who would shoot him, and that he might have a better chance of surviving outside of Germany. My uncle capitulated and was sent with his unit to Northern Africa.

Back in Krasnobrod

⁹⁹ See *Hitler Orders Military Conscription in Germany*, UPI ARCHIVES, March 16, 1935,

<https://www.upi.com/Archives/1935/03/16/Hitler-orders-military-conscription-in-Germany/5124911384073/>.

¹⁰⁰ For an example of requirements of the draft for young men, see, THE EDITORS OF COMMAND MAGAZINE, HITLER’S ARMY: THE EVOLUTION AND STRUCTURE OF GERMAN FORCES 104-06 (1996).

¹⁰¹ For a comprehensive discussion of the slave laborers at Krupp, see, MANCHESTER, *supra* note 12, at 457-94.

¹⁰² The Poles working in Germany were no longer treated as equals, but as slaves. They were forced to wear a violet letter ‘P’ on their clothing and were forbidden to attend church services and places of entertainment, use public transport or have sexual relations with Germans. See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 101-02.

¹⁰³ For a description of the Slave Labor efforts in Germany, see Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume 1 Chapter X - The Slave Labor Program, The Illegal Use of Prisoners of War, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/chap_10.asp.

¹⁰⁴ The Nazis threatened and tortured Ukrainian, Polish, and Russian men and their families in order to recruit the slave workers. They then deported the workers to Germany by trains. See SURVIVING HITLER AND MUSSOLINI: DAILY LIFE IN OCCUPIED EUROPE, 58-60 (2006) (Gildea, et al., eds.).

¹⁰⁵ HISTORY.COM, *1940 September 07, The Blitz begins as Germany bombs London*, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-blitz-begins> (last visited Nov. 11, 2020). For a description of the first days of the bombing of London, see ERIK LARSON, *THE SPLENDID AND THE VILE: A SAGA OF CHURCHILL, FAMILY, AND DEFIANCE DURING THE BLITZ* 207-16 (2020).

¹⁰⁶ On 22 June 1941 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. See JOHN LUKACS, *FIVE DAYS IN LONDON*, MAY 1940 80 (1999).

After Poland was conquered, each village, no matter how small, had some form of occupation.¹⁰⁷ My father explained that, initially, the Germans occupied Krasnobrod and set up a disciplined system of work where each person was required to report for roll call in the morning and then proceed to their assigned tasks.¹⁰⁸ These tasks included gathering food, dispersing food, and cleaning the destruction from the initial invasion. According to my father, cleaning the destruction included burying both people and horses, as well as collecting scrap metal that could eventually be re-used for artillery.

The ultimate goal of the Germans throughout Poland was to build both a road and rail system that would connect all places and allow Germany easy access to wherever it is that they wished to go in pursuit of their enlarging aspirations for their conquest of Europe.¹⁰⁹ In the earliest days of occupation, many of Krasnobrod's Jews (as well as ethnic Poles) fled to the woods, but those who remained were made to work. This relative "equality" was, however, of short duration. Very soon in the occupation, the synagogue was burned down, Jews were targeted for humiliation, and plans were made to remove the stones from the Jewish cemeteries for the building of roads while the cemeteries themselves were to be repurposed for growing food.¹¹⁰ Shortly thereafter, the violence against the Jewish population increased as soldiers routinely executed anyone they saw fit to execute for any reason. Soldiers engaged in heinous atrocities such as throwing babies to the ground and setting buildings on fire with people locked in them.¹¹¹

There are various misunderstandings about the history of the extermination of Jews in Europe as well as the role of concentration camps. Concentration camps, as opposed to work camps were constructed for extermination, with Auschwitz being the most famous.¹¹² However, the original Auschwitz was not a "death camp," but housed Polish political prisoners, Roma (gypsies), Soviet prisoners, and even Jehovah's witnesses.¹¹³ Auschwitz II, otherwise known as Birkenau, was built as a death camp, and it was there that many of the original prisoners were gassed, as well as over a million Jews who were deported to the camp.¹¹⁴ Of the million Jews executed at Auschwitz, over 400,000 were Hungarian.¹¹⁵

The Jewish population of Krasnobrod was not sent to Auschwitz. Instead, as the war and occupation went on, they were heinously hunted down and executed in the vilest of ways imaginable.¹¹⁶ The atrocities were not only committed by brainwashed German soldiers either. The occupying army also included Ukrainians who allied with Germany because of a shared hatred of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, shared anti-Semitism led to the nearly indescribable atrocities that were occurring in nearly every city and village in Poland. My father was witness to what was occurring in Krasnobrod for a relatively short time period. In February of 1941, my father, along with all able-bodied young men, was told to report to the town center. Once there, the young men were herded to a rail station 10 kilometers away and loaded into a cattle car without being told where they were going.¹¹⁸ At the first

¹⁰⁷ See generally Anna M. Cienciala, *Poles and Jews Under German and Soviet Occupation, September 1, 1939 – June 22, 1941*, 46 THE POLISH REV. 391-402 (No. 4 2001), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25779290>.

¹⁰⁸ Gradually a network of labor camps was established throughout Poland where Jews were engaged in undertaking drainage projects, the building of barracks and the construction of military facilities for the Germans. See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 109.

¹⁰⁹ On 24 October 1938, the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski, was invited to a meeting with German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop who presented Lipski with a list of German demands: the return of Danzig and the construction of a motorway and railway across the Corridor. See *id.* at 42.

¹¹⁰ "For example, in [Lezajsk] the Jewish men were ordered by the Germans to set fire to their own synagogue and to dance in a circle around the burning building." For more on the humiliation of Jews, see KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 108-09.

¹¹¹ Testimony by Zofia Semik on German violence in Limanowa: "I saw Germans sitting behind a table. There were several of them, and men who were beaten and bloody were lying on the floor. Among them I recognized my husband. His face was bleeding, and one eye and some teeth were knocked out. The other men on the floor were Jews, craftsmen, and businessmen from Limanowa. [. . .] The guard standing at the door to this room shoved me out of the room and punched me in the face and threw the six-month-old baby in my arms against the church wall." See MATTHÄUS JÜRGEN, ET AL., WAR, PACIFICATION, AND MASS MURDER, 1939: THE EINSATZGRUPPEN IN POLAND 49 (2014).

¹¹² For more information on Auschwitz, see, KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 113-114.

¹¹³ Until the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the launch of the Final Solution, most prisoners at Auschwitz constituted of Polish Christians: there were 18,000 of them in 1941. See *id.* at 114.

¹¹⁴ MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU, <http://auschwitz.org/en/history/kl-auschwitz-birkenau/> (last visited Nov. 11, 2020).

¹¹⁵ "From May 15 to July 8, 1944, some 430,000 Hungarian Jews were shipped to Auschwitz." YAD VESHEM, *Historical Background: The Jews of Hungary During the Holocaust*, <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/jews-of-hungary-during-the-holocaust.html> (last visited Nov. 11, 2020).

¹¹⁶ Jews who were not sent to Ghettos went into hiding. They waited from day to day for the war to end; some pretended to be Aryans. They were being "hunted down like animals" by the Nazi forces. See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 313.

¹¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion on the killings of Jewish people by Ukrainians, see *id.* at 291-92.

¹¹⁸ "On 24 April 1940 all young Poles of both sexes aged 16 to 25 in the General Government were declared liable for work in the Reich. Where local mayors cooperated, recruitment was possible, but in some cases whole villages fled into the forests and the Germans resorted to manhunts, hostage-taking and exemplary executions." See, *supra* note 104, at 57.

stop where more young men were loaded onto the train, one of my father's neighbors jumped out and ran. He was immediately shot dead.

The Slave Market

After a day of travel on the train, having had no food, water, toilet, or even a place to lie down, a group of young men were "unloaded" from the train before the train would again move on. The procedure continued on until it was my father's turn. He and others were prodded into what appeared to be a bustling village center. They were corralled in a central area and placed on a large platform with armed Nazi soldiers protecting the perimeter. At this point, various Germans approached the platform and began examining the men, sometimes poking and prodding and even looking in the mouths of the men. The Germans would make their selections, and the young men from Poland would be required to follow them.

Because the majority of German young men were soldiers, Germany was without the necessary labor for farming and industry¹¹⁹. As a result, Germany simply forcibly imported labor from the countries it had conquered.¹²⁰ In terms of Polish labor, Hitler believed Poles (and other Slavic people) had no other purpose but to work and ultimately to serve the German people.¹²¹ He believed them to be brainless barbarians.

My father was first selected by a sugar beet farmer, and without opportunity to rest, was taken to a farm to load beets onto a truck with the farmer's eldest daughter. For my father, who had been an engineer in his previous life, this was not an easy task. As he later said, he worked at the same pace as the farmer's daughter who spent the day trying to converse with him. My father, who had been taught both German and Polish as a child, said he did his best to answer the daughter whenever she addressed him.

At the end of the day, the farmer came back and angrily told my father that he had expected "twice as much work." When my father defended himself, the farmer began screaming at him telling him that he was lazy and worthless. The farmer then told my father to get in his truck, and my father was taken back to the marketplace and labeled as "defective." He was delivered to the officer in charge, who grabbed him, put a gun to his head, and told my father that if he did not learn how to work by the next day, he would be shot.¹²² My father was also told that if he ever conversed with a German young woman again, he would also be shot.¹²³ He was then led to a barracks of other foreign laborers and was paraded out to the platforms again the next day with the others.

On day two, my father was selected by a beet and potato farmer named Georg Heimal, who had a large farm in Hebel, Germany. Georg Heimal had a wife, two daughters, and a staff of male workers who had various ailments that prohibited them from serving in the German Army. Heimal and his family were what my father described as a friendly group of people who were "intrigued" by the Poles after what they had been hearing about them. My father, who spoke some German and had the mannerisms of someone who was educated, did not fit the picture of what they expected. My father said that he was continually questioned about his life and his country because he was such a curiosity. Nonetheless, he was a Pole, and as a Pole, he was to be treated accordingly. He was expected to follow certain rules, including not fraternizing with the family, and acting demurely when encountering any German. He had to eat meals in the horse barn, and if he was near Germans when they would share food together, he was expected to turn away from them.¹²⁴

It was at the Heimal farm where my father spent the remainder of the war, spending each day starting work at dawn and working until the sun went down. He had no way of contacting his family and had no way of knowing that, in his absence, Krasnobrod and its people were being annihilated, with all Jews being executed and all Poles being sent to do slave labor.¹²⁵ He had no way of knowing that his mother and two sisters had themselves been sent to do forced labor in Austria, and that his younger sister had nearly been shot when a German soldier had made a derogatory comment that she responded to in German. He had no way of knowing that he would never see his home again.

The Bombing of Essen

¹¹⁹ See CATHERINE EPSTEIN, NAZI GERMANY: CONFRONTING THE MYTHS 188 (2015).

¹²⁰ Nazis forced approximately seven to eight million Poles and eastern workers to work in Germany. *See id.*

¹²¹ Nazis imposed their racial hierarchy on the foreign laborers. For a comprehensive discussion on the treatment of forced workers by the Nazis, *see id.* at 189.

¹²² "The brutal exploitation of the eastern workers was part of the ideology of the submission of races under the Aryan people and the creation of a political and economic imperium." *See, supra* note 104, at 60.

¹²³ Germans attempted to prevent intimate relationships between German women and eastern men. For a comprehensive discussion on this subject, *see id.* at 60-61, 88-123.

¹²⁴ The longer my father worked on the Heimal farm, the more the family welcomed him as family and did not enforce the laws of separation between Germans and Poles. However, even when my father was invited to eat at the same table as the Heimals, he refused.

¹²⁵ *Non-Jewish Victims: Poles*, UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MUSEUM <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/2000926-Poles.pdf>.

In early 1943, the RAF began heavily bombing my mother's hometown of Essen in an effort to derail productivity at the Krupp Factory.¹²⁶ Although Krupp was ostensibly the target, bombs fell on nearby civilian areas.¹²⁷ Moreover, the bombs that fell on the Krupp Factory also killed the foreign slave laborers.¹²⁸

My mother's elementary school was across the street from her apartment house. When the air raid signals sounded, the children would run across the street to the basement of the apartment house. Everyone, which consisted of the elderly, mothers, and children, huddled together listening to the bombs pound the city and watching the brick and dust crumble around them. My mother described how they all wrapped handkerchiefs around their noses and mouths so they did not asphyxiate from the dust. While they all huddled together, all were crying and praying. She described how her mother would hold her tight to her chest, and how she could hear her mother's heart beating "almost out of her chest." Not surprisingly, when in the United States, my mother could never stomach Fourth of July fireworks celebrations, and often jumped up in fear whenever she heard a siren. She never stopped dreaming about the air raids.

The bombing of Essen continued and increased until it became impossible to continue regular day-to-day life, including going to school. The bombing started to occur at night, and the residents were left to wait until daylight to find out what had been destroyed and who had been killed. Those who had family in other cities not being so relentlessly bombed began evacuating Essen.

During that time period, my grandmother learned that their brother (my mother's uncle Bruno), who had been a soldier in the Polish army, had been captured and was a forced laborer in Falkenberg. Bruno wrote to the family telling them that he thought it was unlikely that the allies would be bombing the farmlands near Falkenberg, and that the family should try to rent rooms from one of the residents. My grandmother took her brother's advice and, together with my mother and one of her my mother's aunts, looked for rooms near where their brother was a prisoner. They found rooms for rent in the town of Hebel, the village where my father was a forced laborer.

Hebel

What my mother described as happening to her in Hebel was likely not an unusual story.¹²⁹ Hebel was a small community in which the families had lived for generations and, by blood or marriage, were related to one another.¹³⁰ Many had never set foot out of the village, and few welcomed outsiders, even if the outsider was from their own country.¹³¹ It was in these small villages that Hitler's message gained the most traction and the propaganda flourished.¹³²

My mother was a very friendly person and a child when she arrived in Hebel in 1943. She had just turned 14 years old and, despite the war and despite her stepfather, had a naivety about the goodness of people in general. She believed that people were inherently good and would react appropriately to kindness and understanding.¹³³

On her very first day, she encountered the Town Bürgermeister¹³⁴ while walking outside and greeted him with a cheery, "Guten Tag." His response was to tell her that the greeting of the village was not "Guten Tag," but "Heil Hitler!" He also questioned why she was out and not working as "all good Germans were doing" to support

¹²⁶ See MANCHESTER, *supra* note 12, at 446-56.

¹²⁷ The aiming-point for the March 1943 bombings was an industrial precision target—the Krupp works. However, the focus of the attacks was in the middle of the city, where there were the most tightly packed buildings that would catch fire most easily. The Krupp works was right at this center. For a comprehensive discussion of the Essen bombings, see HORST BOOG, ET AL., *GERMANY AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 7: THE STRATEGIC AIR WAR IN EUROPE AND THE WAR IN THE WEST AND EAST ASIA, 1943-1944/5*, 22-29 (2006).

¹²⁸ See MANCHESTER, *supra* note 12, at 446-56.

¹²⁹ Timothy A. Tilton, *The Social Origins of Nazism: The Rural Dimensions*, in *TOWARDS THE HOLOCAUST: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COLLAPSE OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC* 61-74 (1983).

¹³⁰ For a discussion about genealogy research in the typical German village, see John Knodel and Roy Shorter, *The reliability of family reconstitution data in German village*, *ANNALES DE DÉMOGRAPHIE HISTORIQUE* 115-54 (1976).

¹³¹ For a description of village life in the Nazi era, see generally WALTER RINDERLE AND BERNARD NORLING, *THE NAZI IMPACT ON A GERMAN VILLAGE* (1993).

Overall, many towns and cities in Germany, especially the larger ones, were shaken profoundly in the early Nazi years (1933-1936), but in Oberschopfheim about all that the brownshirt "social revolution" meant was the introduction of "Heil Hitler" and the Nazi flag, a transitory rise in the marriage and birthrates, and the transmutation of village leaders into Nazi officials. Otherwise, farmers and their wives toiled as usual, alternately socialized and bickered with their neighbors, cursed "meddling outside bureaucrats," deferred to their pastor, and remained loyal to their church and their village, much as their ancestors had done for centuries.

Id. at 164.

¹³² See Tilton, *supra* note 129.

¹³³ My mother had a view of people similar to Anne Frank's view. Frank was 13 when she went into hiding, a similar age to my mother when my mother arrived in Hebel. My mother and Anne Frank were both born in 1929. *BIOGRAPHY, Anne Frank 1929-1945*, <https://www.biography.com/activist/anne-frank> (last visited Nov. 13, 2020).

¹³⁴ Bürgermeister is German for Mayor

the war.¹³⁵ Thereafter, and despite the fact that my mother and her mother had escaped the air raids of Essen, they were greeted with suspicion and disdain.

When my mother and grandmother arrived in Hebel it was my grandmother's intention that my mother continue her schooling; however, the Burgermeister informed my grandmother that my mother had enough schooling and assigned her to work on a sugar beet farm five kilometers away. My mother thus had to walk, unaccompanied, to the farm each day. My grandmother objected and threatened the Burgermeister by telling him that both of her sons were in the army, and that when they heard how their sister was being treated, they would be handling things in their own way. My grandmother was able to convince the Burgermeister to allow my mother to go to school, but only because she volunteered to do the labor my mother was assigned to do. As a result, my grandmother walked the five kilometers to the sugar beet farm while my mother was allowed to attend school for part of the day. Later in the year, both my mother and grandmother were reassigned to work at the Heimal farm, the place where my father was a forced laborer.

Hans Heimal

My mother was 14 years old when she met my father, who was 26. She was immediately smitten by him, a teenage crush. He was muscular, good-looking, and polite. He spoke German. She had no way of knowing that perhaps his respectful nature had more to do with his sense of survival than his personality. On top of that, my mother had no basis of comparison. She, along with an entire generation of girls in Germany, reached puberty at a time when most of the eligible young men of Germany went off to war. Quite often, the only young men the German teen girls saw were the foreign forced laborers.¹³⁶ This accounted for the sheer volume of "mixed" marriages that occurred after the war: another unintended consequence of Hitler's actions, and one that would have infuriated him.¹³⁷

When my father had first arrived on the Heimal farm, he spoke a modicum of German, but this improved as time went on, displaying a knack for languages. He was also not like what Hitler described a Pole to be: someone uncultured, brainless, and suitable only for work.¹³⁸ My father was educated and came from a family of teachers. He had been raised in "polite" society, and thus was well-spoken. Whether because of his upbringing or because he was smart enough to understand how to make the most of his situation, he was dutiful in his work. When my father first met the Heimal family, he introduced himself as Czeslaw (pronounced Ches-wov), but because the name was hard for Germans to pronounce, said that everyone should just call him "Hans."

"Hans" Heimal became a popular prisoner-of-war. Before long, most in the village did not even know that he was Polish, but rather thought that he was Georg Heimal's son. As a favored "son," he received more privileges than many of the others assigned as laborers on the various farms. This caused him his own personal grief as he was insulted and derided by his Polish contemporaries as being too complicit with the Germans. As he grew older, he developed a deep-rooted hatred of self, no doubt the result of his feelings that he had betrayed his country.

When my mother met Hans Heimal, she, too, had no reason to believe that he was not German. It was only after she started spending more time talking with him that she was warned by her family that if she became "too close," they would all be reported and all of them would be shot. My mother did not understand.

One of the reasons for her lack of understanding had nothing to do with age and naivety, but logic. On the farms, everyone did the work. No one was treated any differently work-wise than anyone else, and her family received no special benefits from the Burgermeister or even the residents of the village. They, too, were treated as outsiders and avoided by the older generations of villagers.

To complicate matters, the only reason that my mother and her grandmother were in Hebel was because my mother's uncle was a Polish prisoner on an adjacent farm. Despite the prohibitions against fraternizing with Poles, my grandmother and her family members did not regard their brother any differently than they had prior to the war. One of my mother's aunts, especially, flaunted the German rules, spending time playing cards and drinking whiskey with her brother, my father, and other Polish laborers.¹³⁹ As my mother said frequently, had

¹³⁵ In 1937 the shortage of labor in Germany became more acute. By 1939 there were 7 million women in the workforce. The shortage of labor contributed to the decision to require a six-month work service of all young women not already employed. See STACKELBERG, *supra* note 63, at 129.

¹³⁶ For more information on Polish-German marriages, see Aneta Poplawska-Suś, *The Everyday Life of Polish-German Marriages after 1945 – The Case of the North-Western Borderland of Poland*, 36 ETHNOLOGIA POLONA 171–93 (2016),

¹³⁷ Hitler believed that social outsiders betrayed the national community and were a threat to the purity of the Aryan race. He criminalized "community aliens" and tried to remove the "racial otherness." See EPSTEIN, *supra* note 119, at 78-79.

¹³⁸ "In the Nazi racial hierarchy, Slavs were near the bottom, just above Jews and Roma (Gypsies). The Nazis saw Poles as dirty, inferior, and foolish." See *id.* at 126.

¹³⁹ An American researcher found that during the war slave workers frequently ate at the same dinner table with the farmer and his family, and as long as they worked hard their treatment was no different from that received by German farm workers. See, *supra* note 104, at 57.

anyone reported them, they would have all been shot.¹⁴⁰ In fact, on one occasion a neighbor did report the fraternization, and the Burgermeister arrived to find my mother's brother, home on leave, playing cards with my father and other Polish laborers. Fortunately, the Burgermeister did no more than warn the gathering saying that everyone would have been arrested had one of the fraternizers not been a German soldier.

The End is Near/The Aftermath

Despite the fact that none of the German citizenry had access to real news, word filtered through the German countryside that things were not going very well for Germany in the war. In fact, some of the cities near Hebel were starting to get bombed by the allies.¹⁴¹ Because so many German soldiers had been killed, the German government even tried to conscript older men, such as Georg Heimal, who was over fifty.¹⁴² On one occasion, when a group of officers arrived to "collect" able-bodied men, my father and the other laborers hid him underneath hay in the barn.

It was the Soviets and not the Americans who "liberated" Hebel. My father was standing at a fence on the outskirts of the farm when Soviet tanks rolled by and said, "You can go home now." Unlike the pillaging that occurred in other cities, the Soviets did nothing in Hebel but roll on through to the next farm over to give everyone the news.¹⁴³ Nonetheless, the Germans in the village hid as best they could, and the Polish laborers helped ensure their safety.

In many respects, once the war was over, life remained "business as usual." The fields needed to be cared for and the animals needed to be fed. Poles and Germans continued working together to make sure the farm remained functional.¹⁴⁴ The only difference became that the terrorizing Burgermeister suddenly became contrite and apologetic, asking for mercy from my mother's family.

The end of the war brought its own hardships.¹⁴⁵ There was no money, no transportation, and no resources, other than what one could produce and his own and barter with neighbors. My father had no way of knowing whether his family was even still alive, and my mother and grandmother had no way of knowing what had happened to their home in Essen.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the whereabouts of my mother's brothers was unknown. Despite this, many of the Polish forced laborers simply walked away and headed for home. My mother's Uncle Bruno was one of these people who said he would not spend one more second working for the people who destroyed his country.

My father's situation was different. Bruno was from an area that the Germans considered to be German and had wished to annex.¹⁴⁷ His mother¹⁴⁸, in fact, was a German citizen who enjoyed both the protection of being a German citizen while the war was happening, and being able to declare herself a Polish citizen by virtue of her declared ethnicity at birth and because of her marriage to a Pole.¹⁴⁹ My father's hometown, however, was in a geographic location that endured some of the worst of war.¹⁵⁰ When last my father saw Krasnobrod, it was smoldering with its citizenry being executed. He had no way of knowing what he might be going back to.

¹⁴⁰ ROBERT GELLATELY, *THE GESTAPO AND GERMAN SOCIETY: ENFORCING RACIAL POLICY 1933-1945* 224 (1990).

¹⁴¹ By late 1944 to 1945 Soviets crossed into German territory. Stalin had massed approximately 3.8 million troops. His army outnumbered the Wehrmacht in every respect: eleven to one in soldiers, seven to one in tanks, and twenty to one in artillery and aircraft. See EPSTEIN, *supra* note 119, at 201.

¹⁴² Approximately 450,000 German armed forces were killed in January 1945. See *id.* at 204-05.

¹⁴³ "Marching westwards, Soviet troops terrorized German civilians. In winter 1944– 1945, some five million Germans were fleeing Eastern Europe in advance of the Red Army." For more information on the brutal treatment of German civilians by Soviets, see *id.* at 205-06.

¹⁴⁴ "The foreign workers made their mark on everyday life in both agricultural areas and the cities. In Berlin, for example, there were almost 400,000 foreign laborers; Hamburg had 63,000, Königsberg 70,000, Munich 65,000, while Magdeburg, Leipzig, Nuremberg and Linz each had some 60,000." See HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE?: A HOLOCAUST READER 352 (Peter Hayes, ed., 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Mark Hallam, *May 8, 1945 was 'Zero Hour' for Germany in multiple ways*, DEUTSCHE WELLE (DW.com) (Aug. 5, 2020) <https://www.dw.com/en/end-of-world-war-two-marks-zero-hour-in-germany/a-53352628>.

¹⁴⁶ Hundreds of thousands who had been made to perform forced labor by the Nazis were homeless at the end of the war. See THER, *supra* note 68, at 149.

¹⁴⁷ For a comprehensive discussion on post-war border movements and population shifts, see *id.* at 143-80.

¹⁴⁸ My great grandmother.

¹⁴⁹ After the war, many German communities were deported from their home countries even if they had never been in Germany or declared their allegiance to Hitler. This occurred in the Pomerania region of Gdansk as well. See Von Christian Habbe, *Paying with Life and Limb for the Crimes of Nazi Germany*, Der Spiegel (May 27, 2011 12:49 PM) <https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/a-time-of-retribution-paying-with-life-and-limb-for-the-crimes-of-nazi-germany-a-759737.html>.

¹⁵⁰ See The Piast Institute, *The Genocide of the Poles, 1939-1948* 16-17, http://www.piastinstitute.org/uploads/6/9/8/8/69881853/war_and_genocide_curriculum_-_camodel.pdf:

Elements of the Ukrainian Partisan Army (UPA) descended on Polish villages across southeast Poland, killing the inhabitants in the most brutal ways possible. Villagers were forced into their churches and burned alive. Killings were

As a result, my father stayed in Hebel with my mother's family. He became "useful" doing work, which included home renovation projects and fixing motor vehicles. It was not until a year later that he finally heard from his mother to say that she and his sisters themselves had been in a work camp. They were no longer in Krasnobrod, but had moved to a nearby village named Gorecko. His family told him not to try to come home because there was a near civil war in that area of Poland as the various factions were taking retribution on each other for what they did and did not do during the war.¹⁵¹ Communists and Soviet sympathizers were being executed, as was anyone considered a German sympathizer and collaborator.¹⁵² Those who went to Germany as forced laborers were sometimes lumped together with overt sympathizers and collaborators.

Choices

As a result, my father continued making his life in Germany, and the longer he spent helping my mother's family, the more my mother grew attached to him. Very few people thought that the match was a great one, but my father was polite, respectful, and responsible. Marriages throughout time had been built on less, and thus with my mother being only 17 and my father 29, the two of them married and attempted to build a new life after the war. My father had no place to go, and the family discovered that their home in Essen had been destroyed. All they had left was their minimal clothing, their wits, their work ethic, and the company of those around them similarly situated. Like many other places in post-war Europe, the village became an amalgamation of refugees, transplants, and families who had lived in the village for centuries.¹⁵³

No Time for Hatred

What the majority of Germany (if not the world) should have discovered after the war was that it was not Hitler who had destroyed their lives, but engineered hatred.¹⁵⁴ My family's situation in Hebel was no different than any other city or village in Germany. It was filled with people from all walks and areas of life who found themselves needing to work together to even survive. They had lost their sons, their homes, their friends, their means to make a living, and often everything they had ever owned.¹⁵⁵ Every village that had believed that the purity of blood was a laudable goal not only found itself filled with Slavic refugees who could not go home, but were becoming "family."¹⁵⁶ It was not only family by way of marriage, but sometimes family by way of emotion, understanding, and necessity. Many of the very people who had applauded Hitler's populist rantings came to understand that the key to their own survival was getting along.¹⁵⁷

What occurred with my parents was not an unusual story, but the norm. Hitler's message of hatred was able to spread, both because of the limited communications of the time and the control of the communications by those with power over them.¹⁵⁸ However, no message could have been spread without a receptive audience: an audience that was insular, often by choice.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, even when those most "insular" had exposure to "outsiders," the majority of brainwashing was already complete, and, as exemplified by people like the Hebel

often carried out with axes, knives, saws, pitchforks, scythes, and swords. Men were castrated, sawed in half, burned alive. Women were raped, sexually mutilated, hacked apart. The UPA spared no one, not even children.

¹⁵¹ For more information on the Civil War see IVAN T. BEREND, CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, 1944-1993: DETOUR FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE PERIPHERY 7-10 (1996).

¹⁵² Even Jews who were thought to be Communist were being murdered. See KOCHANSKI, *supra* note 15, at 550.

¹⁵³ For a discussion about Polish citizens who resettled in Great Britain, see *The Lasting Effects of World War II: What Happened to Poland at the End of the War?*, MYLEARNING.ORG <https://www.mylearning.org/stories/polish-people-in-britain-after-ww2/342>.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Cristina Posa, Engineering Hatred: The Roots of Contemporary Serbian Nationalism, 11 *Balkanistica* 69, 70 (1998):

Much like Hitler, Serbian politicians like Slobodan Milosevic and Vojislav Seslj turned to stirring nationalist feelings and finding ethnic scapegoats in order to gain power while offering no real solutions to Yugoslavia's rapid economic and political deterioration. Recalling this haunting historical parallel is frightening.

¹⁵⁵ For a description of what life in post-war Europe was like immediately after the war, see *Post-War Europe: Refugees, Exile and Resettlement, 1945-1950*, ARCHIVES UNBOUND https://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/archives-unbound/primary-sources_archives-unbound_post-war-europe_refugees-exile-and-resettlement_1945-1950.pdf.

¹⁵⁶ In May 1945, foreigners formed a quarter of the German population. See Matthew Frank, MAKING MINORITIES HISTORY POPULATION TRANSFER IN TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE 267-68 (2017).

¹⁵⁷ For a description of how the post-war reconstruction plan of the Allies contributed to the concept of "getting along," see Chris Knowles, *Germany 1945-1949: a case study in post-conflict reconstruction*, HISTORY AND POLICY (Jan. 29, 2014), <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/policy-papers/papers/germany-1945-1949-a-case-study-in-post-conflict-reconstruction>.

¹⁵⁸ *Holocaust Encyclopedia: Nazi Propaganda and Censorship*, UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MUSEUM, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-propaganda-and-censorship>.

¹⁵⁹ See Gerhard Wilke, *Village Life In Nazi Germany*, 35 HISTORY TODAY 1 (1985).

Burgermeister, the superiority complex took over to implement Hitler's populist propaganda.¹⁶⁰ It was only when there was mutual need and mutual suffering that the many who had been brainwashed had a dose of reality about their dependence on each other for survival.

The Stories they Told in an Immigrant World

My parents immigrated to the United States in 1951 for the same reason that most immigrants came over from Europe: to build a better life. Although my father had opportunities for work in Germany, my father could never fully get over the trauma related to being in a country that had destroyed his homeland.

Life for my parents was not easy. They had to learn a new language and a new culture: the third for my father. They were separated from family, and, in my father's case, separated for the rest of his life.

Both of my parents worked when they arrived in the United States. My father was initially employed at United States Steel in Cleveland while my mother worked at the Dan Dee Potato Chip Factory.¹⁶¹ After work, my parents attended night classes to learn English and to learn about the United States. Both became citizens as soon as possible in the hopes that there might be protections from some of the things that had occurred in Europe.

Their days were not without various slights and prejudices¹⁶², but the United States was a much different place, being a melting pot of nationalities after World War II.¹⁶³ Even for Americans born in the United States, their lineage in a blue collar industrial city often did not go back for more than a generation.¹⁶⁴ Many who might have been sworn enemies by birth found themselves side-by-side at their jobs or in their neighborhoods, and each was working toward the same goal of leaving the catastrophe of the war behind them.

This was the environment in which I grew up. I was surrounded, not only by immigrants similar to my own parents, but families of mixed ethnic lineage: families who had come together in the same way that my parents had come together under the same circumstances. Thus, as I was growing up, my only context for understanding populism was the damage that it had done to my parents and the friends of my parents. If there was one thing that all parents seemed to want, it was that what happened to them should never repeat itself in the lives of their children.

A Broader Spectrum Revealed

As I grew older and World War II receded farther into the past, I realized that I operated under many misconceptions. Because World War II was so much a part of my world each day, I believed that it was also a part of everyone else's world.¹⁶⁵ I operated under the belief that, because so many of us were born of parents who endured the horror of what had been set into motion by a hateful madman, my generation was immune to having that happen again. I was under no illusion that the world itself might be immune to war and hatred based on ethnicity; however, I had a belief that countries like the U.S. and those in Europe had learned their lesson with Hitler: that no advanced nation would ever again elect a leader who demonized a group of citizens within his/her own country.

¹⁶⁰ For a description of the psyche of those in leadership positions such as those existing during Hitler's regime, see Betty Glad, *Why Tyrants Go Too Far: Malignant Narcissism and Absolute Power*, 23 POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY 1 (2012).

¹⁶¹ My father's immigration to the United States was sponsored by Catholic Charities of Greater Cleveland. For information on Catholic Charities Services for Refugees, see CATHOLIC CHARITIES DIOCESE OF GREATER CLEVELAND, *Migration and Refugee Services*, <https://www.ccdocle.org/service-areas/migration-refugee-services>: "Since 1948, Catholic Charities Migration & Refugee Services has been working to resettle refugees throughout Northeast Ohio."

¹⁶² While my mother worked at Dan Dee, she and the other immigrants were instructed on personal hygiene and each given deodorant. My mother, who was an almost obsessive-compulsive cleaner, was very offended by the gesture. Comments about the personal hygiene of immigrants are still not uncommon. See Haroon Siddique, *Australian MP Says Immigrants Should be Taught to Use Deodorant*, AUSTRALIA NEWS (Jan. 10, 2012, 6:16 AM), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/10/australian-mp-immigrants-taught-deodorant>.

¹⁶³ In 1948, the United States Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act, which allowed more refugees from Europe to resettle in the United States. See IMMIGRATION HISTORY.ORG, *Displaced Persons Act (1948)* <https://immigrationhistory.org/item/1948-displaced-persons-act/>.

¹⁶⁴ "More than 12 million immigrants would enter the United States through Ellis Island between 1892 and 1954." See U.S. *Immigration Timeline*, HISTORY.COM (May 14, 2019), <https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/immigration-united-states-timeline>.

¹⁶⁵ Most under a certain age know very little about the Holocaust, see Sara Boboltz, *Many Americans Still Don't Know Facts About the Holocaust, Recent Survey Finds*, HUFFPOST (Apr. 12, 2018, 4:58 PM), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/many-americans-still-lack-basic-holocaust-knowledge-survey-finds_n_5acfa79ce4b016a07e9a71e; see also Kit Ramgobal, *Survey finds shocking lack of Holocaust Knowledge among Millennials and Gen Z*, ABC NEWS (Sept. 16, 2020, 3:28 AM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/survey-finds-shocking-lack-holocaust-knowledge-among-millennials-gen-z-n1240031>.

My confidence in this belief was enhanced as time went, exemplified by the fall of the Berlin Wall¹⁶⁶, the reunification of Germany¹⁶⁷, the establishment of a “free” Poland¹⁶⁸, and the creation of the European Union.¹⁶⁹ My mother was especially thrilled by the creation of the European Union because she believed that, similar to having a “united” States, the European Union would ensure that countries in Europe would be forced into getting along without feeling the need to conquer and kill each other.¹⁷⁰ She believed that, similar to what she believed was happening in the United States, once ethnicities blended together, wars would cease all together.

The Growth of Populism

Populism is an attitude that has been cyclical throughout the course of history.¹⁷¹ Although populism, in and of itself, is not a bad thing, an over-accentuation of populism that results in stoking up fears and prejudices can decimate a nation, first, from within, and then externally.¹⁷²

There are many reasons why populism rises and falls as it does. At its healthiest, populism addresses the concerns of a group feeling that they have been disregarded by the leaders who are supposed to represent them.¹⁷³ At its worst, it targets a specific group for causing the woes of another group and focuses on the privilege of one group over another.¹⁷⁴

Populist attitudes often take root during economic calamity, or times of great change within a nation.¹⁷⁵ In the case of Germany, Hitler’s populism movement grew not only because of the poor economic climate of Germany after World War I, but because Germans, who had historically been regarded as the most disciplined of soldiers, felt a collective humiliation about “losing” in the first World War.¹⁷⁶ Hitler was able to take advantage of the country’s need for an ego boost and did so by placing specific blame for its cause.¹⁷⁷ It was all too easy for Hitler to claim that “true” Germans had a right to much better as a matter of privilege, and also that previous leaders had failed the German people.¹⁷⁸ In Hitler’s Germany, the Jewish community was the group predominantly demonized

¹⁶⁶ The Berlin Wall “fell” on November 9, 1989. See Doug Bandow, *The Berlin Wall, Its Rise, Fall, and Legacy*, FOUNDATION FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION (Nov. 5, 2019), https://fee.org/articles/the-berlin-wall-its-rise-fall-and-legacy/?gclid=CjwKCAiAzNj9BRBDEiwAPsL0d0MGSVfbcTZIYsWk9lUgeFaqQPC--0dZAM2zAajHnNN7YB6GmNVhvRoCh7lQA_vD_BwE.

¹⁶⁷ Germany was officially reunited on October 3, 1990. See HISTORY.COM, *East and West Germany Unite After 40 Years*, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/east-and-west-germany-reunite-after-45-years> (last visited Nov. 19, 2020).

¹⁶⁸ For a description of the financial reforms in Poland see Simon Johnson and Gary W. Loveman, *Starting Over: Poland After Communism*, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW (March 1, 1995), <https://hbr.org/1995/03/starting-over-poland-after-communism>.

¹⁶⁹ The European Union was formed on November 1, 1993, see EUROPA.EU, *The History of the European Union*, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history_en (last visited Nov. 19, 2020).

¹⁷⁰ see EUROPA.EU, *A peaceful Europe: the beginnings of cooperation*, https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1945-1959_en (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

¹⁷¹ Populism, itself, is a term coined in the United States, although one can define movements in other countries as “populist.” Populism presumes there is an “elite” class making decisions that harm the nonelite classes, and various populist movements have attempted to give power back to the non-elite. “In political science, populism is the idea that society is separated into two groups at odds with one another - “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite...” See David Molloy, *What is Populism, and what does the term actually mean?* BBC NEWS (March 6, 2018) (quoting CAS MUDDE AND CRISTOBAL ROVIRA KALTWASSER, *POPULISM: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION* (2017), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-43301423>).

¹⁷² See Morger Horger, Gregory Kupsky, and Zoltan Adam, *Fear and Loathing Around the World: The Rise of the New Populism*, ORIGINS (Sept. 2018), <https://origins.osu.edu/article/fear-and-loathing-around-world-rise-new-populism>.

¹⁷³ George Packer, *The Populists*, THE NEW YORKER (Aug. 30, 2015), <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/09/07/the-populists>.

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*

¹⁷⁵ See Karl Aiginger, *Populism: Roots, Consequences, and Counter Strategy*, Vox.eu (Apr. 20, 2019), <https://voxeu.org/article/populism-roots-consequences-and-counter-strategy>.

¹⁷⁶ “Germany had been humiliated by losing the First World War and suffering the indignity of the Versailles Treaty, along with a subsequent cascade of political instability and economic turbulence. Humiliated narcissists are prone to behave aggressively, particularly toward those viewed as the source of their humiliation. Adolf Hitler’s intense narcissism, coupled with his rejection as an artist, perhaps help to explain his personal aggressiveness and anger. Insofar as collectives can manifest such individual-level responses, perhaps German society more broadly also displayed the traits of the humiliated narcissist during the Nazi era.” See GEORGE R MASTROIANNI, *OF MIND AND MURDER TOWARD A MORE COMPREHENSIVE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE HOLOCAUST* 55-56 (2018).

¹⁷⁷ “A major source of Hitler’s growing popularity, aside from his assertion of German interests against the Allies, was the improvement of the German economy.” For more information on Hitler’s growing popularity, see, STACKELBERG, *supra* note 63, at 118-21.

¹⁷⁸ BBC BITESIZE, *Why the Nazis Achieved Power*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zsrwjsx/revision/7> (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

as the elite who were preventing advancement of the ethnic Germans who should have been reaping the rewards of governmental policies.¹⁷⁹

Populism can also be engendered for various other reasons and can work in tandem with nationalism and isolationism: a general sense that the leadership of a country has invested too many resources in the problems in other countries at the expense of its own citizenry. This occurred in the United States after World War I when the general population favored staying out of Europe's problems and infighting.¹⁸⁰ The losses of the war weren't the only things that spurred on a type of populism, but the Great Depression also led to a general discontent with government.¹⁸¹ The populism and neutrality that occurred not only delayed the United States from entering World War II, but also resulted in the United States refusing to be a safe haven for Jews who were trying to leave Europe.¹⁸² Sadly, anti-semitism did not begin and end with Adolf Hitler.

Populism, in many respects, is not necessarily a bad thing and its roots are understandable. Unfortunately, when it is unleashed as part and parcel of a demonizing hatred based solely on race, religion, or ethnicity, or some other designated polarizing factor, it becomes the root of the hatred that has an immense capacity for destruction.¹⁸³

Populism and the Trump Presidency

There is no doubt that the election of 2016 was an unusual one. The populist message attached to the candidacy of Donald Trump was both understandable and not. It brought together many factions of individuals who believed that neither party had been hearing them.¹⁸⁴ However, in many respects, Trump's populist message appeared to evolve over time as he began to recognize that his own popularity, and thus his ability to win, increased with his outlandishness and targeted insults. This then caused a linkage between those who believed that politicians were not responsive enough to the needs of the majority and the most hateful types of individuals who can exist in a society.¹⁸⁵

It is hard to know exactly how the United States got to the point where Donald Trump could be a viable candidate.¹⁸⁶ In terms of "normal" politics, the presidency of Barack Obama was not much different from other presidencies. Obama inherited a bleak economy, and his presidency functioned as most presidencies do: some great things got done, while some aspects were a disappointment.¹⁸⁷ Obama himself proved somewhat of a

¹⁷⁹ *From Citizens to Outcasts 1933-1938*, UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MUSEUM, <https://www.ushmm.org/learn/holocaust/path-to-nazi-genocide/chapter-3/from-citizens-to-outcasts-1933-1938>.

¹⁸⁰ OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN, *American Isolationism in the 1930s*, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism> (last visited Nov. 20, 2020); see also Geoffrey S. Smith, *Isolationism, the Devil, and the Advent of the Second World War*, 4 INTL. HISTORY REV. 55 (1982), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40105793>.

¹⁸¹ For a discussion of Populism in the 1930s, see Ray Dalio et al., *Populism: The Phenomenon*, BRIDGEWATER DAILY OBSERVATIONS (March 22, 2017), <http://www.obela.org/system/files/Populism.pdf>.

While the recovery began in 1933, these charts obscure the fact that conditions remained terrible for years for the average American. Much like today, inequality in the US, both of income and of wealth, rose substantially, peaking in the early 1930s and remaining elevated through much of the decade. Then, the top 10% earned 45% of income (compared to 50% today), and owned 85% of the wealth (higher than the 75% they own today). However, in the 1930s, the unemployment rate was much higher than it is today....

Populists of the right at the time were xenophobic, as the foreign-born share of the population was relatively high as a result of very high immigration around the turn of the century that was largely shut down by immigration reforms in 1924. Still, immigrants provided a ready scapegoat for domestic problems. For instance, Father Coughlin was an isolationist who attacked Jews, one of the larger immigrant groups at the time. ...

¹⁸² See Smith, *supra* 180, at 87-88.

¹⁸³ See Yascha Mounk and Jordan Kyle, *What Populists do to Democracies*, THE ATLANTIC (December 26, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/12/hard-data-populism-bolsonaro-trump/578878/>; see also Matthew Eatwell, *Nativists, Populists and other Nasty People: Understand who Populists and what they really want*, LSE (Oct. 26, 2018), <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2018/10/26/nativists-racists-and-other-nasty-people-understanding-who-populists-are-and-what-they-really-want/>.

¹⁸⁴ See Michael Lind, *Donald Trump, the Perfect Populist: Why the GOP Frontrunner has far broader appeal than his predecessors going back to George Wallace*, POLITICO MAGAZINE (March 9, 2016), <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/03/donald-trump-the-perfect-populist-213697>

¹⁸⁵ See Jeet Heer, *How the Southern Strategy Made Donald Trump Possible: In states like South Carolina, the mogul reaps the benefits of the GOP's longstanding appeal to racism*, THE NEW REPUBLIC (Feb. 18, 2016), <https://newrepublic.com/article/130039/southern-strategy-made-donald-trump-possible>.

¹⁸⁶ But see BBC NEWS, *U.S. Election 2016: The 40 Year Hurt*, (March 26, 2016), <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-35890784>.

¹⁸⁷ See Jonathan Bernstein, *Redefining "Normal" After Barack Obama: He doesn't challenge norms the way Republicans say he does*, BLOOMBERG NEWS (Sept. 26, 2018), <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-09-26/obama-political-normalcy-and-norms-as-a-former-president>; see also Michael Dimock, *How America Changed During Barack Obama's*

disappointment to many in terms of his ability to “reach across the aisle” and be a dealmaker with the Republicans.¹⁸⁸ Of course, as time went on, history would reveal that his inability to be a “dealmaker” was not at all related to anything Obama was or was not doing.¹⁸⁹

In my circle of friends and acquaintances, there was never any thought that there was any more trouble in the United States during the Obama presidency than other presidencies we had experienced. Obama had to deal with a financial crisis and the repercussions of the world’s view of the United States following the invasion of Iraq.¹⁹⁰ However, from my own personal vantage point, I did not notice any undercurrent of hatred and divisiveness that many now claim as the reason for embracing Donald Trump as a candidate.¹⁹¹

The election of an African-American to the office seemed to indicate that the prejudice in the country was dissipating as many claimed was occurring.¹⁹² It also appeared to indicate that the social toleration and progressiveness embodied by the youth of the country would define the United States as we moved on after Obama.¹⁹³ This feeling amongst my peers was further solidified by the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.¹⁹⁴ Same-sex marriage was not even something that Bill Clinton had supported in the 90s¹⁹⁵, and twenty years later, few seemed to consider its arrival a big deal.¹⁹⁶

True enough, cable station Fox News and “Mogul” Donald Trump had spent the entire Obama administration insulting and deriding Obama and his family both personally and professionally¹⁹⁷, but it seemed from my vantage point that all Trump and Fox were doing were providing satire for comics.¹⁹⁸ I, personally, had never met a single individual who believed that Barack Obama was born in Kenya, or was secretly a Muslim. Anyone I knew who tuned in to Fox News did so as kind of a joke, similar to the “shock jock” audacity of Howard Stern in the 1990s.

Presidency, The Pew Research Center (Jan. 10, 2017), <https://www.pewresearch.org/2017/01/10/how-america-changed-during-barack-obamas-presidency/>.

¹⁸⁸ William A. Galston, *President Obama’s First Two Years: Policy Accomplishments, Political Difficulties*, THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTE (Nov. 4, 2010), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/president-barack-obamas-first-two-years-policy-accomplishments-political-difficulties/>.

¹⁸⁹ *Id.*

¹⁹⁰ Ewan McAskill and Julian Borger, *Iraq War was Illegal and breached UN Charter, says Annan*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 15, 2004 21:28 PM), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/sep/16/iraq.iraq>.

¹⁹¹ William Cummings, *Conservative Fire Back at Obama, say he sowed the division the led to Trump*, USA TODAY (Sept. 18, 2018 2:22 PM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/onpolitics/2018/09/10/conservatives-attack-obama-speech/1254935002/>.

¹⁹² *But see* TA NEHISI COATES, *WE WERE EIGHT YEARS IN POWER: AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY* (2017), in which the author suggests that the election of Barack Obama masked prejudices that have always existed and gave inflamed racists in such a way that they needed to increase efforts at putting back society as they believed it should be.

¹⁹³ *See Eight Years in America: Hope and What Came After*, THE INTELLIGENCER <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2016/10/8-years-in-obamas-america.html> (last visited Nov. 21, 2020).

¹⁹⁴ 576 U.S. 644 (2015); *see also* Michael J. Klarman, *How Same-Sex Marriage Came to Be: On activism, litigation, and social change in America*, Harvard Law Today (June 18, 2013), <https://today.law.harvard.edu/how-same-sex-marriage-came-to-be/>; “Still, as late as 1990, roughly 75 percent of Americans deemed homosexual sex immoral, only 29 percent supported gay adoptions, and only 10 percent to 20 percent backed same-sex marriage. Not a single jurisdiction in the world had yet embraced marriage equality.”

¹⁹⁵ *See* Andrew Kaczynski, *Listen to Bill Clinton’s Radio Address Touting His Passage of DOMA*, CNN POLITICS (Oct. 10, 2016 4:33 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/10/politics/bill-clinton-1996-radio-ad/index.html>.

¹⁹⁶ *Attitudes on Same-Sex Marriage*, THE PEW RESEARCH CENTER (May 14, 2019), <https://www.pewforum.org/fact-sheet/changing-attitudes-on-gay-marriage/>.

¹⁹⁷ *See, e.g.*, Gregory Krieg, *14 of Trump’s Outrageous Birther Claims: half after 2011*, CNN POLITICS (Sept. 16, 2016 12:33 PM) <https://www.cnn.com/2016/09/09/politics/donald-trump-birther/index.html>; *Coulter Defends Obama Retard Comment*, CNN POLITICS (Oct. 27, 2012), <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2012/10/27/piers-coulter-obama-retard-comment.cnn>;

Susan Milligan, *First Lady Second to None: Insulting Michelle Obama’s Weight is just another tasteless tactic to keep women down*, U.S. News (Aug.13, 2014 11:30 a.m.), <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/susan-milligan/2014/08/13/fox-news-contributor-keith-ablow-insults-michelle-obamas-weight>; Melanie Eversley, *Trump Hits Twitter to Blame Obama for Ebola in NYC*, USA TODAY (Oct. 23, 2014 11:24 PM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/10/23/trump-ebola-twitter-obama/17815841/>; Sarah Palin, *The case for Obama’s impeachment, The Constitution’s Remedy for a Lawless, Imperial President*, FOX NEWS CHANNEL (July 11, 2014), <https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/the-case-for-obamas-impeachment-the-constitutions-remedy-for-a-lawless-imperial-president>; *President Obama’s Suit Causes Stir*, FOX BUSINESS (Aug. 30, 2014), <https://video.foxbusiness.com/v/3757228003001/#sp=show-clips>; FOX NEWS, *Ted Cruz Outlines 76 Examples of Obama’s “Dangerous Lawlessness”*, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ted-cruz-outlines-76-examples-of-obamas-dangerous-lawlessness> (May 18, 2014).

¹⁹⁸ *See, e.g.*, Andy Borowitz, *Fox: New Evidence Hillary Killed Lincoln*, THE NEW YORKER (May 11, 2013), <https://www.newyorker.com/humor/borowitz-report/fox-new-evidence-hillary-killed-lincoln>; Jared Keller, *Picture of the Day: Fox News Mistakes Tina Fey for Sarah Palin*, THE ATLANTIC (June 6, 2011), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2011/06/picture-of-the-day-fox-news-mistakes-tina-fey-for-sarah-palin/239982/>.

It is unclear exactly when Donald Trump turned the corner on creating a populist campaign that was based on hatred, divisiveness, and blame. Unlike Adolf Hitler, Donald Trump did not have a poor economy that he could blame on others¹⁹⁹, but nonetheless, Trump indeed conjured up blame and the notion that not only the United States was being shortchanged²⁰⁰, but that the working-class people had been shortchanged.²⁰¹ This message transformed into one in which the working-class people of the United States had been shortchanged because the United States preferred everyone but its own, as demonstrated by its global business interactions, its participating in disadvantageous treaties (including climate treaties), its financial commitments to other countries, and a seeming preference and welcoming of immigrants, both legal and illegal.²⁰² This message was solidified and interpreted by many in Trump's base as being that the Caucasian native-born Christian Americans were the ones being left out the equation of progress and prosperity.²⁰³

My Mother; Memories of Nazi Germany

By the time of the 2016 presidential election, my father had been dead for six years, thus it is impossible to know what his reaction to the Trump campaign would have been. My mother, however, was upset and horrified whenever she heard Donald Trump speak.

It is inappropriate to make direct comparisons between Adolf Hitler and Donald Trump in terms of the tangible. Donald Trump did not corral the military for purposes of world conquest, nor set up extermination camps. He did not forcibly import foreign labor into the United States, nor express an interest in doing so. He did not change the curriculum of the schools to teach about and prefer a master race, nor did he declare laws that deprived an ethnic or religious group of the ability to own property.

Trump also did not select one target group as being solely responsible for all the woes of any group he personally declared to be the “true” Americans.²⁰⁴ Donald Trump, unlike Adolf Hitler, also did not directly announce that it was his intention to place native-born white Americans back at the top of the social ladder where it is their right and privilege to be. Finally, try as he might, Donald Trump could not fully control the media, as did Adolf Hitler.

Frankly, in some respects, Donald Trump may not have even been completely aware of the extent of harm of his messages.²⁰⁵ He might merely have been the man who was able to facilitate the attitude because of the cyclical nature of populism. It is a cycle that, in part, continues when a population ages and those who were saying “Never Again!” are dying with their message forgotten.²⁰⁶

It is easy for me to see the similarities between the populism that exists today and the populism that led to the destruction of Europe in World War II. I grew up with the stories of fear, destruction, and loss. I watched my

¹⁹⁹ Brooks Jackson, *Obama's Final Numbers*, FACT CHECK.ORG (Sept. 29, 2017), <https://www.factcheck.org/2017/09/obamas-final-numbers/>.

²⁰⁰ ONTHEISSUES.ORG, *Donald Trump on Foreign Policy*, http://www.issues2000.org/2016/Donald_Trump_Foreign_Policy.htm (last visited Nov. 22, 2020).

²⁰¹ JD Vance, *How Donald Trump Seduced America's White Working Class*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 10, 2016 19:03 PM), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/sep/10/jd-vance-hillbilly-elegy-donald-trump-us-white-poor-working-class>.

²⁰² See *supra*, note 200.

²⁰³ Viet Thanh Nguyen, *In Trump's vision of white America, Immigrants should be grateful and servile*, THE WASH. POST (July 18, 2019), <https://amp.flipboard.com/@WashPost/in-trump%E2%80%99s-vision-of-a-white-america-immigrants-should-be-grateful-and-servile/a-0Y5U3GQZTnqBTXr0Fp8Ezg%3Aa%3A93520813-9bb3891231%2Fwashingtonpost.com>; see also Ku Klux Klan Newspaper Declares Support for Trump, Reuters (Nov. 2, 2016 4:22 PM), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-trump-kkk/ku-klux-klan-newspaper-declares-support-for-trump-idUSKBN12X2IG>: “A Ku Klux Klan newspaper has declared support for Donald Trump's Republican run for U.S. president, saying America became great because it was a white, Christian republic.”

²⁰⁴ Although one could argue that Trump considered the “true” Americans to be any person that supported him while anyone not supporting him did not deserve the privileges of being called an American citizen.

²⁰⁵ It is hard to know what Donald Trump believed about his messages given he seemed most interested in crowd reaction and was often inconsistent in what was being targeted. His administration started with a Muslim ban and a promise to build a wall to keep “bad Mexicans” from entering the United States; however, the ending time period of his presidency focused on demonizing all Democrats and then anyone who disagreed with him. Nonetheless, even if not intended, Trump's rhetoric stirred up the racism that had not been as overt during the Obama administration. See Jessica Gantt Shafer, *Donald Trump's "Political Incorrectness": Neoliberalism as Frontstage Racism on Social Media*, SOCIAL MEDIA AND SOCIETY (Sept. 28, 2017), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305117733226>.

²⁰⁶ Sadiq Khan, *Lessons of the second world war are at risk of being forgotten, or rewritten*, THE GUARDIAN (August 31, 2019), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/31/second-world-war-lessons-risk-being-forgotten-sadiq-khan>:

With the numbers of those who remember that dark period dwindling by the day, fewer survive to tell their story and to warn current generations of the lessons from history. Worryingly, these warnings are increasingly pertinent. For the first time in more than 70 years, it seems the lessons of the second world war are genuinely at risk of being forgotten or, worse, still being rewritten.

mother cringe every time she heard a police or ambulance siren, and I watched her cry every time someone left the house because she could never get over her fear that it might be the last time. I witnessed my father's sullen, distant look on a daily basis as he was, no doubt in a place in his mind that was very far away. I worked with women who cried uncontrollably, sometimes for no reason at all, and others who described daring escapes from Europe through tunnels, or hidden in wagons. I listened as colleagues described losing their family in Auschwitz, and another, who was able to escape the Budapest ghetto. My mother described the horror of her friend who was 14 when she was raped by a platoon of Russian soldiers in Berlin. I had a student whose grandmother was shot in front of her mother by their grandfather, who had become a member of the SS.

There was a point in my life where nearly every one I met was able to share a similar story, and it did not matter which side: Americans who died in the war, Poles who had their country overrun, Jewish immigrants who had lost their entire families, Hungarians who fled their country, ethnic Germans who were deported from their homelands without ever having set foot in Germany²⁰⁷, and Germans who were not Nazis but paid their own price for what Adolf Hitler created.²⁰⁸

The benefit gleaned from the stories I, and others, heard was that we had a firsthand knowledge of the destruction that war causes. This was not only true of the countries destroyed by war, but to the emotions of those who survived. This carried on to the next generation as well.²⁰⁹ Many of us never even met our grandparents or extended family members. Many of us knew of family members who died horrific deaths, or continued suffering in post-World War II Europe.²¹⁰ We often grew up isolated²¹¹ as opposed to various American-born friends and neighbors spent weekends traveling to see extended families. For some of us, we had almost a literal wall between ourselves and our families because of the iron curtain.²¹²

There were also aspects of the war that some of our parents would not talk about, and, if questioned, would react angrily. On the opposite end of the spectrum, many of our parents were mired in what happened to them in the war and never fully able to leave or move forward.²¹³ The survivor parents were often dysfunctional, and as much as they worked to live normally, it was an impossible task. There was nothing that could make up for what occurred to them, to take away the trauma that was always with them.²¹⁴

As we grew older, most of us gained a maturity and an understanding about the contradictions of our upbringing and what caused them. We came to understand why our childhood was often very sad, even when nothing particularly sad was happening. From my perspective, I could see that it was too simplistic to blame one evil person who intended to conquer the world and execute those he considered inferior. Rather the world that brought us Hitler and the atrocities of World War II was created by a pervasive attitude of hatred where millions were complicit in the destruction, including their own self-destruction.²¹⁵ No one was exempt from the results of that hatred: no ethnicity, no country, no religion. There was no victor in the end.

²⁰⁷ K.S., *Czech Politics: The expulsion of Sudeten Germans is still raw*, THE ECONOMIST (May 7, 2013), <https://www.economist.com/eastern-approaches/2013/05/07/the-expulsion-of-sudeten-germans-is-still-raw>; see also Allyn Vannoy, *Saga of a Volksdeutscher: A German Pole Goes to War*, Warfare History Network, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/2018/12/26/saga-of-a-volksdeutscher-german-pole-goes-to-war/> (last visited Nov. 23, 2020).

²⁰⁸ See Habbe, *supra*, note 149.

²⁰⁹ Dr. Angela Speth, *How is Second World War Trauma Passed to the Next Generation*, MEDSCAPE (Aug. 19, 2019), <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/916966>.

²¹⁰ Iris Kesternich, et al., *The Effects of World War II on Economic and Health Outcomes across Europe*, 96 REV. ECON STAT. 103 (2014), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4025972/>. Both of my grandmothers died relatively young because of lack of access to any medical care. Neither of my parents was able to travel to be with their mothers.

²¹¹ For a discussion of early support systems for immigrants after World War II, see Barbara S. Burstin, *The Early Experience of Polish Jewish and Christian Immigrants in Pittsburgh After World War II*, <file:///C:/Users/kmika/Downloads/4079-Article%20Text-3924-1-10-20121002.pdf>.

²¹² See Jenny Hudson, *The search for a family divided by the Iron Curtain*, THE GUARDIAN (Dec. 7, 2013 2:45 AM), <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/dec/07/search-family-divided-iron-curtain>.

²¹³ See, e.g., Marcin Rzeszusek, et. al, *Long Term Psychological Consequences of World War II Trauma Among Polish Survivors: A Mixed-Method Study on the Role of Social Acknowledgment*, FRONT. PSYCHOL. (Feb. 2020), <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00210/full>.

²¹⁴ See Yoram Barak, *Lifelong posttraumatic stress disorder: evidence from aging Holocaust survivors*, 2 DIALOGUES CLIN. NEUROSCI. 57 (2000), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181591/#:~:text=For%20many%20WWII%20veterans%2C%20PTSD,symptoms%20in%20midlife%20was%20usual.&text=The%20rates%20of%20active%20PTSD,12.4%14%20to%2045%25.&text=In%201997%2C%20Sadavoy%20reviewed,Holocaust%20survivors%20and%20WWII%20veterans.>

²¹⁵ See generally William I. Brustein and Ryan D. King, *Anti-semitism in Europe before the Holocaust*, 25 INTL. POL. SCI. REV. 35 (2004).

Now we are losing those stories. Those who experienced the effects of widespread hatred in World War II are dying. We are losing those who can explain firsthand just what human beings can do to one another when propelled by opportunistic political demonization.²¹⁶ With each passing day, the experiences of the World War II survivors are becoming far afield from the world in which we now live where Vietnam also is a nearly forgotten war²¹⁷ and even 9/11 has become a distant memory for some. The result is that, the less the stories are known and internalized, the less those living today can conceptualize the harm that extreme populist hatred can cause.

Unfortunately, as time goes on, history, if it is remembered at all, is reduced to its barest elements, usually with heroes and villains being clearly delineated for simplicity. As the generation of survivors dies, we lose the nuances that have the potential to prevent the worst mistakes from being repeated. This is nothing new. Even the history of the United States has demonstrated that those who live through war or strife lose their taste for it after it is over. The mourning, grief, and lessons are internalized, and, for a time, most are able to confidently believe “Never Again” and work toward that goal. However, once those who suffered are gone, a new, unaware generation revives old hatreds not fully understanding that it is the hatred unleashed that will cause civilization the most harm.²¹⁸

Sadly, this article does not offer a primer or legislative solution to ensure the stories of those who endured the hardship of war are never forgotten.²¹⁹ Without the firsthand accounts or experiences, it is even hard to accomplish the true empathy that is required to prevent the next generational mistake.²²⁰ With World War II, however, some efforts that have been made since the end of World War II. Holocaust education is compulsory in many European countries, and many European children will take field trips to Auschwitz.²²¹ Most school children in the United States will be assigned books by Elie Wiesel or Viktor Frankl, and currently 16 states require some type of Holocaust education.²²²

But education about the Holocaust is not the same as understanding the entire backdrop as to the circumstances that brought about the destruction of Europe during World War II. Moreover, without the direct connection to those who experienced the devastation of the war, sadly, the Holocaust itself is something that too many are now not finding relevant to their lives.²²³ The result of this disconnect is often what we are seeing now: a return to a type of demonization and hatred often masked under the guise of populism and patriotism.²²⁴

²¹⁶ *Auschwitz Survivor's Warning to the World: 'Hate and Silence Led To Murder'*, NBC NEWS (Jan. 24, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vObmdMhMKmM>.

²¹⁷ Joe Renouard, *Vietnam: America's Latest Forgotten War*, HISTORY NEWS NETWORK. ORG (May 1, 2015), <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/159289>.

²¹⁸ See, e.g., *The New German Anti-Semitism* N.Y. TIMES (May 21, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/21/magazine/anti-semitism-germany.html>; Leah Donnelly, *Will Racism End When Old Bigots Die?* NPR (Jan. 14, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/01/14/505266448/will-racism-end-when-old-bigots-die>; Romani Rose, *My Europe: Xenophobia, nationalism can only be defeated together*, DW.com (Aug. 2, 2020), <https://www.dw.com/en/my-europe-xenophobia-nationalism-can-only-be-defeated-together/a-54404561>.

²¹⁹ In some respects, the study of World War II has had a resurgence in interest these last few years. There are many reasons for this including the fact that many have recognized that the worldwide resurgence in populism has coincided with the dying off of Holocaust Survivors. The existence of the internet and globalism has also allowed for there to be a collecting and sharing of information which, in turn, has resulted in many more people being interested in tracing the paths of their ancestors. Movies such as *Dunkirk*, *JoJo Rabbit*, and the PBS Series *World on Fire* have enabled those in the younger generation to be reintroduced to the horrors of World War II, and the pandemic itself (through quarantine) caused a renewed interest in genealogical research. Briana Shepherd, *Family History Booming Amid Coronavirus Pandemic as More People Uncover Secrets*, ABC RADIO PERTH (Jul. 22, 2020 9:21 PM), <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-23/family-history-research-booming-amidst-coronavirus/12483170>. Many older individuals are also re-living their youth in the war because of the deprivations caused by the pandemic. See Hannah Weinberger, *World War II era 'victory gardens' make a comeback amid Coronavirus*, CROSSCUT (March 27, 2020), <https://crosscut.com/environment/2020/03/wwii-era-victory-gardens-make-comeback-amid-coronavirus>.

²²⁰ Various efforts are being made to collect the testimonials of Holocaust survivors, including the USC Shoah Foundation, see USC Shoah Foundation, <https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/holocaust> (last visited Nov. 30, 2020).

²²¹ Lindsey Johnstone, *Holocaust Remembrance Day: How are Europe's Children taught about the Holocaust?* EURONEWS (Oct. 2, 2020), <https://www.euronews.com/2020/01/27/holocaust-remembrance-day-how-is-the-holocaust-taught-in-your-country>.

²²² See *Where Holocaust Education is Required in the U.S.*, UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, <https://www.ushmm.org/teach/fundamentals/where-holocaust-education-is-required-in-the-us>.

²²³ “One in 20 Europeans has never heard of the Holocaust.” See Johnstone, *supra* note 221. Moreover, the world is not lacking in violence, wars, and war survivors who have their own stories. However, most in the United States are far removed from these locations and thus have a disconnect from what causes the wars and violence.

²²⁴ Leonie Huddy and Alessandro Del Ponte, *The rise of populism in the USA: Nationalism, race, and American party politics*, in THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POPULISM (forthcoming 2021), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343987902_The_rise_of_populism_in_the_USA_Nationalism_race_and_American_party_politics; see also (Interview with) Ivan Krastev, *Europe's 21st Century Challenge is 'Defining the People'*, GEEORG W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL CENTER (July 21, 2020), <https://www.bushcenter.org/publications/articles/2020/07/democracy-talks-39> | www.ijahss.net

We may not be able to entirely save our own pasts from receding into vague and little known history, but for those of us who knew the stories of those who lived through one of the worst time periods of this century, we must do our best to keep the stories of our ancestors alive. We must tell them, and keep telling them to others whenever we are able, and even when others say that the stories have no application to their current lives.²²⁵ Silence in the face of mounting nationalistic hatred is never an option.

Stories of the past open the door to explaining a world where, indeed, we are all related, all have the same basic needs, and all have the same fears.²²⁶ The stories demonstrate a complexity that is often overlooked: that hatred for others is often merely an accident of geography in a given time and place. World War II is a more contemporary example of how wars and border changes over the centuries often put artificial allegiances in the middle of families who were separated by no more than a few kilometers.²²⁷

Although all stories of all our ancestors have significance, the stories of World War II have particular relevance in terms of understanding the mentality that has resulted in what seems to be the current blatant hatred for “the other” All history, and especially the history that leads to the hatred causing wars is significant; however, World War II has a particular unique significance related to the United States as we currently know it. It was the defining event of the Twentieth Century in terms of the values that many have embraced as particularly American (e.g., work ethic, coming together in patriotism, and a “fierce defense of freedom of democratic institutions”).²²⁸ It was also the defining mindset of those who now are considered part of the Baby Boomer generation.

Sadly, the world has rarely been free from war, and we are now seeing a resurgence in the type of hatred that resulted in the existence of Hitler. This type of hatred may be cyclical in nature, but one of the reasons the cycle continues is because we do not do well enough to internalize the stories of the survivors. World War II ended over 75 years ago and the remaining survivors are leaving us. Preserving their stories might give us our last and best chance to make sure that the worst that comes from extremist populism does not happen again, or is at least hindered. We owe that to our ancestors who had little control over the hand that fate dealt their generation.

[europes-21st-century-challenge-is-defining-the-people.html](#).

²²⁵ Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, ‘You Shall Never be a Bystander’: How We Learn About the Holocaust When the Last Survivors are Gone, TIME (Jan. 27, 2020 12:59 PM), <https://time.com/5772511/learn-holocaust-last-survivors-gone/>.

²²⁶ This is especially true given the COVID-19 pandemic:

The shared global experience, and the fact that the “enemy” is not another nation or group but an indiscriminate virus, might promote greater cross-national solidarity and cooperation. The inability to confront the pandemic within the confines of the nation-state underlines the need for cooperation, even if the immediate response has often been otherwise.

See Florian Bieber, *Global Nationalism in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic*, CAMBRIDGE UNIV. PRESS (Apr. 27, 2020), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7242772/>.

²²⁷ The United States experienced some of this during the American Civil War, see generally Amy Murrell Taylor, *The Divided Family in Civil War America* (2005).

²²⁸ (Interview with) Nick Mueller, *The American Spirit. What Does it Mean?* THE NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM (July 11, 2017), <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/american-spirit-what-does-it-mean>.