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Germany, Afterwards

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Abstract

A review of:

Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America. By Heide Fehrenbach. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

and

The Holocaust and Catholic Conscience: Cardinal Aloisius Muench and the Guilt Question in Germany. By Suzanne Brown-Fleming. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006.

and

A Woman in Berlin. By Anonymous. New York: Henry Holt, 2000.

and

Johanna Krause, Twice Persecuted: Surviving in Nazi Germany and Communist East Germany. By Carolyn Gammon and Christiane Hemker. Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007.

Keywords

Human rights, Germany, Post World War II, Race, Gender violence, Rape, Nazi atrocities

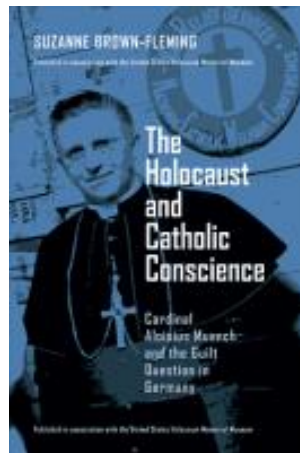
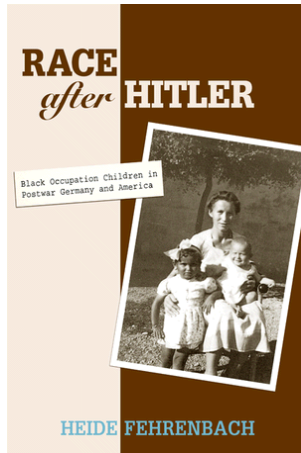
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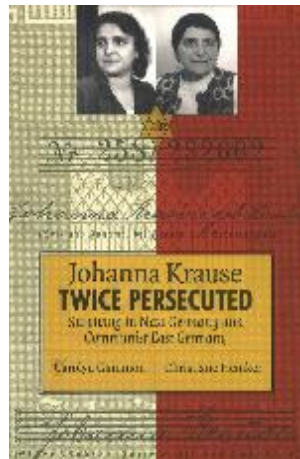
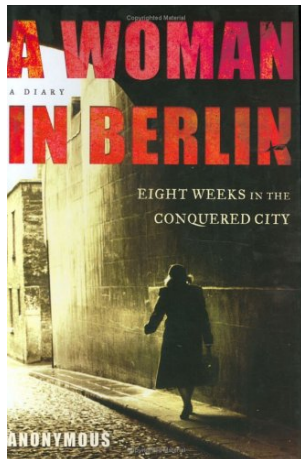


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By Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann

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Do human rights scholars need to learn more about the minutiae of the Nazi period, or the immediate post-war period? One wonders whether there is any benefit, other than one of historical interest, to learning about the way African-American soldiers and their children with white German women were treated under the American occupation of Germany. Similarly, one might wonder whether the study of continued German and American Catholic anti-Semitism after 1945 can be of any benefit, when the largest question concerning Jews in the 21st century is the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Moreover, in an age when mass rape in warfare is common, it may be mere prurience to read about mass rapes of German women by Russian soldiers. And since the fall of the Berlin Wall, do we need to know that East German Communists were often as corrupt as their Nazi predecessors?

Perhaps some lessons can be learned, and some parallels drawn between the years in Germany just after Nazism, and the world we live in today. On the other hand, although it may be the case that those who do not know their history are condemned to repeat it, the converse is not true.

Those who do know their history often repeat it nonetheless. No one can answer the question of whether the study of historical evils can help avert further crimes, least of all this author. Nevertheless, it is useful to learn how Germans and others dealt with their Nazi past; such knowledge might at least assist those who now study post-conflict resolution.

The four books under review provide disparate perspectives on the German experience under post-war occupation, and how it affected—or did not—their collective move to understand and condemn their Nazi past. Some Germans responsible for the care of children of African-American soldiers used this opportunity to show that they were not racist. Yet at the same time, many German Christians in the American zone of occupation still could not come to terms with the fact that some of their fellow-countrymen had participated in heinous crimes. In the East, the memory of Nazism was suppressed, as an aberration with which the new German Communist regime had no need to come to terms. Yet without coming to terms with the past, old Nazis could live as new Communists. And without facing the particular situation of women in warfare, the women who were raped by Russian soldiers in Berlin had to wait for decades until their story was told. Perhaps this history provides some clues about the nature of good and evil in our own times, about what makes good people commit evil acts, and about how such acts can be prevented.¹

This review focuses on four figures, discussed in the four books listed above. Each represents a different aspect of post-WWII German life.

Elfie Fiegert

Elfie Fiegert was an Afro-German child, the daughter of an African-American soldier and a white German mother. At the age of five in 1951, she was chosen to star in a film, *Toxi*, about a mixed-race German girl: the film was meant to be a lesson on how Germans should adapt to these new strangers in their midst. In the film, a white German family debates what to do about this child, who is not a biological member of the family but a potential adoptee. While some members of the family have racist reactions against her, eventually the benevolent *paterfamilias* decides that she should become a member of the family.

Toxi is the centerpiece of Heide Fehrenbach's book about African-American soldiers, and their half-German offspring, in the American zone of occupied Germany. Until 1954, well after President Truman's 1948 order to desegregate American forces, black occupation troops in Germany lived in separate quarters from white (Fehrenbach 2005: 19), and were treated as inferiors, as they still were at home. Ironically, then, while Americans attempted to de-Nazify Germans, and teach them democratic norms, the Germans observed Americans' own racist practices.

Black American soldiers, according to Fehrenbach, felt more comfortable with Germans than with white Americans; in Germany they felt “a heightened sense of personal safety, freedom of movement, and freedom of association” (37). Yet, although fraternization by African-American

¹ The use of such terms as “good” and “evil” might seem somewhat moralistic to some readers, but it is common in the literature on genocide; e.g. Erwin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989, and James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

soldiers with white German women was permitted, many white American soldiers disapproved of black soldiers who violated the segregationist norms still prevalent in the United States. Physical assaults by white soldiers on black soldiers were common, and in one case white soldiers were alleged to have detonated two bombs in Bremen to discourage inter-racial dating. (42) Nor were Germans free of condemnation of the white women who associated with black Americans, labeling them “Negerliebchen” (nigger-lovers) (45). Additionally, three black Americans were known to have been castrated by German assailants (62). German abortion laws were relaxed for women who alleged they were impregnated by occupying soldiers; officials in charge of granting abortions were particularly concerned with inter-racial rape (56-61).

Despite the continued racial persecution of African-American soldiers by both white Americans and Germans, an estimated five thousand babies were born to African-American fathers and German mothers in the American zone by the mid-1950s (2). Benevolent Germans, determined to show that they had not all been Nazis, seized the opportunity provided by these babies to show that they could integrate this new “Other” population into their midst. German schools were racially integrated before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision mandated integration of American schools in 1954. While some Germans reacted with racist horror to the presence of *Negermischlingen* (mixed-race blacks) in their midst, other Germans used their presence as a way to overcome the stain of their recent anti-Semitic past.

Toxi was a propaganda film to teach Germans how to adapt to these children. A later film starring Elfie Fiegert, however, clearly shows Germans’ continued racial ambivalence. In *Der dunkle Stern* (the Black Star), the half-black child heroine tells her teacher she would like to become a peasant farmer, thus invoking the German *volkish* myth of *Heimat* (Homeland), the natural attachment of the “true” German to the land. The other children in the class immediately mock her ambitions to be a “real” German. Instead, the child, as Fehrenbach puts it, “ultimately discovers her own stereotypical ‘natural talent’ as clown and trapeze artist,” and ends up working in a circus (126).

Many, if not most, of the German mothers of inter-racial children loved them dearly. Some Germans, however, thought it wiser for the white mothers to give up their children; some assumed that all these white mothers were by definition prostitutes. When an African-American woman started a campaign in the late 1950s to move the children to the United States for adoption by black families, many occupying Americans, as well as many Germans, encouraged this migration. Others argued that the children were German, and ought to stay in Germany. The debates over whether the children ought to be defined by “race” or culture resemble present-day debates over intercountry adoption. Some of these children, who spoke only German and had been raised only in the German cultural milieu, were removed to the U.S. to live with black families. There is little information about what happened to them in Fehrenbach’s volume, although by the late 1980s, there was an Afro-German society in Chicago, organized by African-Americans of German birth. Unfortunately, although she interviewed several surviving Afro-German children, Fehrenbach does not favor us with their voices; their personal experiences are buried in the mountain of archival material that Fehrenbach used. It would be preferable to learn about their experiences in their own words.

Readers interested in the lives of persons of African background in Germany might wish to read the autobiography of Hans Massaquoi, who, after his emigration to the United States, became managing editor of *Ebony* magazine. Massaquoi was born before WWII: his mother was a white

German, his father the son of a Liberian diplomat. He was raised by his mother in working-class Hamburg. Although he was obliged by the Nazis to leave school and become a worker during the war, he was not otherwise disturbed, and was not sterilized, as had been the children of post-WWI African occupation troops and German women (Fehrenbach¹) Perhaps he was not sterilized because the Germans thought they might someday need some African allies, and his father's family was influential in Liberia. After the war, Massaquoi spent some time in Liberia, then immigrated to the U.S., where he was drafted. In the U.S. army, and in his subsequent life in the U.S., he experienced more racism than he had ever experienced in Germany among the rather easy-going neighborhood of manual workers in which he had lived (Massaquoi 1999).

Cardinal Aloisius Muench

Cardinal Aloisius Muench was an influential figure in post-war American-occupied Germany. An American cardinal of ethnic German background, he occupied a dual, and sometimes contradictory, role: he was simultaneously the Pope's representative in the American zone, and the official liaison between German Catholics and the American administration. Suzanne Brown-Fleming's discussion of his role in Germany draws from archival material, including Muench's considerable personal correspondence.

Just before he moved to Germany from the United States, Muench wrote and delivered a widely-distributed pastoral message entitled "One World in Charity." In this message, he condemned what he saw as a deliberate policy of "calculated starvation" of the conquered Germans (Brown-Fleming 2006: 148), a policy advocated, he believed, by President Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau. In Muench's view, the alleged post-war American policy of starvation was no different than the Nazi treatment of Jews: Germans, to Muench, were as much victims as Jews had ever been. Nor was it coincidental, in Muench's view, that Morgenthau was a Jew. According to Brown-Fleming, however, Morgenthau had not recommended that the Germans be deliberately starved. Rather, he had recommended that to prevent Germany from starting a third world war, it be turned into a non-industrial, agrarian country (15).

"One World in Charity" is reprinted in full in Brown-Fleming's volume, in both English (the version this author read) and German. The pastoral letter was illegally distributed all over Germany, with the result that once it was posted there, many German Catholics, and some Protestants, wrote to Muench for assistance and intervention with the American authorities. There are over 15,000 letters written to him in the archives, many revealing a post-war hatred of Jews every bit as livid as Jew-hatred under Nazi rule.

Muench, of course, should not be blamed for the virulent anti-Semitism that many of his correspondents exhibited. Yet his own correspondence is also characterized by an easy social anti-Semitism. He especially disapproved of the activities of those members of the Occupation forces whom he disparaged as "thirty-niners"; that is, Jews who had escaped to the United States before 1939, and then became citizens. These Jews, or "alien Americans," as Muench also referred to them (41), recruited into the occupying forces because they spoke German, were, to Muench's mind, intent on vengeance. They lacked the tolerant sense of fair play characteristic of real Americans, such as the Christians of German heritage among whom Muench had grown up. In "One World in Charity," as in much of his personal correspondence, Muench implicitly suggested that the Jewish

religion was one based on hatred and revenge, whereas the Christian religion was based on love and forgiveness. “Men have talked and written much of building One World. It will never be built by those who hate, and hating take their inspiration from the hard teaching of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It will have to be built by those who believe in Christ’s law of love,” wrote Muench (144).

Undoubtedly, Muench disapproved of the Nazi extermination of the Jews; nothing in Brown-Fleming’s volume suggests otherwise. Muench was properly shocked by the activities of some of those accused in the Nuremberg war crimes trials. Nevertheless, he went out of his way to ask for clemency for several convicted Catholic war criminals, and allowed himself to be swayed by character witnesses who could testify to the accuseds’ kindnesses towards Christians, or non-Jewish Germans. He was an active participant in the Vatican’s post-war campaign for clemency; for example, for the Nazi prisoners in Spandau, writing in his diary that “mercy toward criminals—if they were that—is still a Christian virtue” (5). He assisted Catholics fighting Jewish claims for restitution of property. Muench was also active in support of the ethnic Germans who had been expelled from other parts of Europe to Germany. He referred to these expellees as a “crawling Belsen,” (144) thus explicitly equating their treatment with the treatment of the Jews. This expulsion is one of several aspects of post-WWII Europe only recently treated in academic texts (Naimark 2001: 108-38). Although Muench seemed more sympathetic to ethnic German expellees than to Jewish survivors, his concern for expellees was legitimate.

Brown-Fleming paints a portrait of Cardinal Muench as a man who did not want to face the reality of Nazism. According to her account, Muench portrayed almost all Germans either as victims, both of the Nazis and of the Occupation forces, or as heroes who had resisted the Nazis. Certainly, Muench did nothing to lead Catholic self-examination of the Church’s role during the Holocaust. Rather, he defended Germans against any attribution of collective guilt. He excused post-war anti-Semitism as a reaction against favoritism toward Jews. Anti-Semitism, he wrote in 1950, was

a reaction to [pro] Semitism—the requisitioning of hundreds of homes for Jewish displaced persons, the damage done to the property during the occupancy, the exorbitant claims that are now being made under the restitution law, black marketeering, the defense of smutty publications by Jewish printers and publishers etc. (9).

Muench also frequently associated Jews with Communism, a system he detested.

Yet one does not have to believe in collective guilt to be convinced that all organized religions in Germany should have engaged in collective self-examination of their activities from 1933 to 1945, as many did later on (Berger 2002: 175-96). Both Protestants and Catholics created organizations that collaborated with the Nazis (Koonz 1987: 221-306), at the same time as many individual Christians, both Catholic and Protestant, resisted Nazi rule, many paying with their lives. In the current age of truth commissions and other types of reconciliatory measures, such as public apologies by religious authorities for past collaboration in acts of genocide or abuse of human rights, it is difficult to

believe that several decades passed before German Christians and their allied churches confronted their passivity during Nazi rule.

Anonymous

Until recently, the Russian rape of German women in the immediate period of conquest was one of the untold stories of the 20th century. Russians entering Germany raped with impunity women of all ages, including Jewish women and Polish and Russian slave laborers. An estimated two million German women (excluding Polish and Soviet slaves) were raped, among whom were 95,000-110,000 in Berlin (Bevor 2000: xx). These rapes took place in an era in which women hid their shame. The rapes preceded by over two decades the beginnings of the second wave feminist movement, which uncovered the dirty secret of male violence against women.

“Anonymous” was a thirty-year old journalist in Berlin when the Russians conquered the city. She kept a frank diary of the first eight weeks of their occupation. The diary was published in part in the United States in 1954, and in full in Germany in 1959, but reaction, at least in Germany, was mixed: some felt that her frank account about how she sought protectors among the Russians was shameful. The diary was republished in 2000, after Anonymous’ death.

The story of how Anonymous and her women friends and acquaintances survived is a story of collective experience of pain. As Anonymous put it, “All the women help each other by speaking about it, airing their pain, and allowing others to air theirs and spit out what they’ve suffered” (2000: 147). Meeting an acquaintance, Anonymous and the other woman greet each other by asking how many times each was raped. Anonymous’ reply is, “No idea, I had to work my way up the ranks from supply train to major” (204). As Anonymous puts it, there was “No judgment, no verdict. We no longer whisper. We don’t hesitate to use certain words, to voice certain things, certain ideas” (181). Anonymous hears of suicides, social withdrawal, and madness; no victim of these rapes survives unscarred. Yet the women are able to provide each other some comfort in their cynical recounting of how many times; in this cynical story-telling they resemble the ways that some Jews whom their countrymen did not manage to exterminate also tell their stories (at least, in this writer’s experience). When Anonymous’ fiancé returns, he is shocked by the way the women in her building behave: he finds them all to be “shameless bitches” (259).

After the first random rapes, Anonymous decided to attach herself to what became a series of protectors, exchanging rape by many men for sex with one man, and incidentally acquiring gifts of food into the bargain. It was for this pragmatic reaction to her situation that she was condemned in the 1950s. Her relationship with her last protector, a cultured Major, was one of friendship as well as sex; he brought her food, was less physically demanding than an earlier owner/protector, and talked with her; they were members of the same social class and had interests in common. Nevertheless, Anonymous still described herself as a whore:

I can actually talk with the major. Which still isn’t an answer to the question of whether I should now call myself a whore, since I am essentially living off my body....On the other hand, writing this makes me wonder why I’m being so moralistic and acting as if prostitution were so much beneath my dignity. After all, it’s an old, venerable line of work (116).

Anonymous became so accustomed to rape that her earlier readers may have been shocked—in an age when “death before dishonor” was still a standard phrase in the West—by her statement that, “It [rape] sounds like the absolute worst, the end of everything—but it’s not” (63).

Anonymous survived in part through the psychological mechanism of disassociation. Describing how her body felt after repeated rapes, she says:

I feel so slimy, I don't want to touch anything, least of all my own skin....I remember the strange vision I had this morning...my true self simply leaving my body behind, my poor, besmirched, abused body...It can't be me this is happening to, so I'm expelling it all from me (61).

Fearing another rape, she steels herself against it, “I make myself stiff as stone, shut my eyes, concentrate on my body’s veto, my inner No” (76).

German men returning from the front could not cope with the rapes their wives, sister, mothers, and daughters had undergone, nor with the changes wrought in them by living so long on their own. Anonymous writes of one German husband returned from the war who shot to death his wife, who had been sleeping with a Russian, and then committed suicide (196). Anonymous’ own fiancé left her when he found out she was “spoiled” (259). A new euphemism, “forced intercourse,” was invented to describe what had happened to the women (215).

Anonymous tells us little about her background. One might wish to know what she was doing during WWII: as a professional journalist, did she work under the Nazis, and if so, in what capacity? The only clue she provides is to say, “everyone is now turning their backs on Adolf, no one was ever a supporter. Everyone was persecuted, and no one denounced anyone else. What about me? Was I for...or against? What’s clear is that I was there” (168). On the other hand, does Anonymous’ background matter? No one should be raped as a punishment; if Anonymous had been a Nazi or a collaborator, she should have been subjected to rule of law, as she might have been had she been in the American, British or French occupied zone.

Perhaps the most important question emanating from *A Woman in Berlin* is why the Russian soldiers engaged in rape. What made ordinary men and boys into rapists? Will any man, given implicit permission to do so, rape? This is unlikely: a better explanation is that these soldiers had been living for years in excruciatingly difficult situations. They had been deprived of the company of women and children, and of the ordinary day-to-day life necessary to have a sense of self, a sense of belonging and of social worth. Some of them, in justifying their acts, spoke of having lost their own wives and children. A seventeen-year-old Russian boy told a German woman that he had twice watched German soldiers stab children to death, or bash their heads against a wall; one German woman replied, “I don’t believe it” (133). Some Russian soldiers appeared to have retained some sense of decency; in Anonymous’ experience, pregnant women and women with small children were not raped (131, 140). Under the Nazis, small Jewish children would have been killed, and fetuses torn from their mothers’ wombs.

The Russian soldiers who raped often tried to establish quasi-family relationships with their German victims. They ensconced themselves in their victims’ homes, demanding meals, laundry services, and music as well as sex. One young sailor asked Anonymous “politely and very like a child

whether I would be so kind as to find a girl for him, a nice clean girl, respectable and kind:" she declined (114). These Russians were not beasts; they were men deprived of all sociality, all community, all family, reduced to mere cannon fodder by the brutal Soviet system of military recruitment and command, such as is still found, to this day, in the conscription of Russian soldiers and their use in the Chechnya campaign.

Johanna Krause²

Anonymous' memoirs are the polished work of a journalist: by contrast, Johanna Krause's memoirs are the rough account of a lifetime of persecution, told when she was in her 90s to two sympathetic younger women, a Canadian and a German. Like many such survivors' accounts, Krause's story hides as much pain as she exposes. Krause was a Jewish woman who, like Victor Klemperer, (Klemperer 1998; 2001; 2003) survived Nazi rule in Dresden, in part because she was married to a Gentile. Her story of persecution under the Nazis is familiar; her greatest loss is the forced abortion of her son at seven-and-a-half months (Gammon and Hemker 2007: 59). Forever after, she keeps a dachshund dog, because it is about the same size as a baby, and she is envious when one of her young interlocutors becomes pregnant.

Krause expected that life after liberation would be easier than life under the Nazis. She was in the American zone after liberation, but decided to return to Dresden, even though an American soldier who had befriended her said, "Why do you want to go back to Dresden? You're a Jew—the Russians are going to put you in jail again" (92). Many surviving East German Jews fled as soon as they could: Krause, who did not flee, was then interrogated about them by the Stasi secret police. Krause thought that her husband's status as a Communist would protect her, but it did not. She found herself the victim of petty persecutions. Prior to the war, a Nazi official, later an overseer in a concentration camp, had been assigned to expel her from Germany, and had attempted to rape her while she was in his custody (34-38). After the war, the same man became a Communist Party secretary, and accused her of receiving stolen goods. She was found guilty, and imprisoned in the same jail in which she had been imprisoned under the Nazis: fortunately, she was released after the ex-Nazi Communist was exposed for corruption. Some time later, her husband was sentenced to nine months in jail for libeling the state by claiming that the Communist party was full of ex-SS officers (127-8).

The post-war Communist regime in East Germany ignored the plight of the Jews during Nazism, although, according to Krause, victims of the Nazis were accorded some privileges, such as extra food rations, at least during the early post-war period. In 1946, the regime permitted production of a film, *The Murderers are Among Us*. This film was made in the Soviet sector after the American, British and French occupiers refused to permit its production. The protagonist, a surgeon, spends all his time drinking, haunted by his memories of the past. While somewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe, he witnessed the planned massacre of about two hundred innocent civilians: nothing in the film suggests they might have been Jews. Eventually, the surgeon decides to assassinate the senior officer who ordered the massacre, now returned to civilian life as a factory

² In the interests of academic integrity, I should note that I work at Wilfrid Laurier University, whose Press published *Twice Persecuted*.

owner, but at the last minute the surgeon's girlfriend stops him; he decides to turn the senior officer over for trial instead. This ending, required by the Communist authorities, served the extra purpose of attributing Nazi crimes to members of the bourgeoisie, personified in the film by a factory owner. Ironically, the actor who plays the protagonist had, in real life, been a Nazi.³

Lessons Learned?

Many of the women raped in Rwanda or Sierra Leone might prefer the less brutal rapes of German women by Russian soldiers. As far as one can tell from Anonymous' account, the rape of German women was not routinely accompanied by the mutilations and murders one now reads of in Africa. We live in a world in which both national militaries and rebels routinely ignore the rules of war; both government soldiers and rebels are routinely fired up by drugs, and no distinction is made between children and adults. Anonymous' great contribution is to provide glimpses into the humanity of the rapists she encountered. As I write this review, Canadians are debating whether the war in Afghanistan is worth the sacrifice so far of seventy-six men, and one woman. Every dead Canadian soldier is described in the press as a caring husband, father, or son, a kind and sensitive individual. Yet all of these men were soldiers, trained to kill. The equality of women, so fought for in the 1970s, means that they are also now trained to kill. War is the antithesis of society and community; it is the antithesis of human sympathies and compassion.

Reading accounts of atrocities past and present, we frequently ask ourselves whether we would be capable of committing such evil acts in the same situation, if we were not protected by our Western democracies and—in the case of academics—our bourgeois comforts. Hans Mol was a young Dutch Christian, a racial Aryan in Nazi terms, imprisoned by the Nazis for listening to a forbidden radio broadcast. To his credit, he refused an offer to join the SS rather than be imprisoned, but he also did something he himself considered “unpardonable,” apologizing for his crime and shifting the blame to a much older man who had owned the radio (Mol 1987: 73). Many years later, Mol told me that he had learned that severely malnourished people often lose their moral sense: at the time of his conviction, he had lost almost forty per cent of his normal body weight.

It is commonplace to state that we are all capable of the kinds of evils committed by the Nazis. If this is true—and I am not convinced it is—perhaps physical deprivation causes some of us to lose our normal moral sense. As Anonymous said, “Hunger brings out the wolf in us. I'm waiting for the first moment in my life when I tear a piece of bread out of the hands of someone weaker” (192). Regardless of the causes of the immediate post-war starvation of Germans, Cardinal Muench was right to draw American attention to it. The Allied occupiers were both morally and legally obliged to feed the people they had conquered, many of whom had not been Nazis, and many of whom were children possessing no moral responsibility whatsoever for the Nazi outrages. Even Nazi war criminals did not deserve starvation.

Johanna Krause's story reminds us of “the banality of evil” (Arendt, 1963). No thoughtful human rights scholar or activist should be at all surprised to learn how easily some East Germans

³ Information from the commentary to *The Murderers are Among Us*, a film available on DVD and video recording.

metamorphosed from Nazis to Communists. Anyone who has ever worked in a university, or any formal organization in the democratic West, should have encountered some clues as to how these two authoritarian systems worked. Many individuals will do a dishonorable deed in order to obtain a small margin of advantage, even when to do the right thing would cost them nothing; of such actions is fascism made. Many social activists will demand rights for their group, while happily trampling on the rights of other groups; of such actions is communism made. For many individuals, the goal is to obtain a privileged role in a bureaucracy, regardless of the aims that bureaucracy may serve. The role-distancing, or social “doubling” (Lifton 1986) that bureaucracies permit is the obverse side of the efficiency that bureaucracy creates.

The story of Afro-Germans is one of both compassion and racism. The presence in their midst of Afro-German children gave some non-Jewish Germans the chance to redeem themselves. Many non-Jewish Germans had not been anti-Semitic, but the risks to them under Nazi rule were severe, had they tried to assist Jews. The same Germans, not predisposed to despise blacks, were able without risk to themselves or their families to make Afro-German children’s lives easier. However racist Americans still were, the occupying American forces did not imprison social activists trying to ease the situation of racial “Others,” as the Nazis had done. But as both Fehrenbach and Brown-Fleming show, some Germans, and some Americans, still harbored deeply racist views in the 1950s. Such views have not, unfortunately, disappeared in our time, although the percentage of people in Western societies holding them has radically decreased, and government policies are designed to protect minorities, not to facilitate their persecution.

Practitioners of post-conflict resolution in our time would not repeat the mistakes of the post-Nazi past. Principles of non-discrimination are meant to apply to all social groups, so that the sufferings of Kosovars under Milošević cannot justify persecution of ethnic Serbs in Kosovo today; this is a lesson that Germans learned after WWII more quickly than their American occupiers did. Truth commissions are devised nowadays in order, in part, to persuade wrong-doers to confront their crimes, and bystanders such as some German Catholics to consider their own complicity in acts that they did not commit, but did not prevent. Systematic rape in times of warfare is now a crime, and much effort goes into counseling and rehabilitating its victims, who no longer are expected to rely for comfort only on conversations with each other, as Anonymous and her acquaintances did. Finally, it is common in periods of hoped-for transitions to democracy to control which civil servants from the old regime can retain their positions in the new regime; such is the basis of the lustration policies in Eastern Europe, for example. The hope is that these controls will prevent situations such as the metamorphosis of Nazis into Communists. These changes in perceptions of the dangers of racism, warfare, patriarchy and authoritarianism do provide some hope for the future; they at least suggest that when they understand evil, good people can take steps to prevent its recurrence.

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