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Antisemitism on the Rise

The 1930s and Today

EDITED BY ARI KOHEN AND GERALD J. STEINACHER

University of Nebraska Press

LINCOLN

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Publication of this important and timely volume was assisted by a donation from Bruce F. Pauley, professor emeritus of history at the University of Central Florida, and his wife, Marianne Pauley.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kohen, Ari, 1977-, editor. | Steinacher, Gerald, editor.

Title: Antisemitism on the rise: the 1930s and today / edited by Ari Kohen and Gerald J. Steinacher.

Description: Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, [2021] | Series: Contemporary Holocaust studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020057443

ISBN 9781496226044 (paperback)

ISBN 9781496228468 (epub)

ISBN 9781496228475 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Antisemitism—History—20th century. |

Antisemitism—History—21st century. | Antisemitism—Study and teaching.

Classification: LCC DS145.A6335 2021 | DDC 305.892/4—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020057443>

Set in Minion Pro by Mikala R. Kolander.

Introduction

ARI KOHEN AND GERALD J. STEINACHER

People all across the United States went to sleep on the night of August 11, 2017, with the sense that something about their country had been fundamentally altered. Earlier in the evening a conglomeration of far-right white supremacists groups, alongside members of the so-called alt-right, marched through the campus of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville carrying torches and chanting neo-Nazi slogans. It was a watershed moment, even for a country whose most politically conscious citizens felt radically divided from one another by the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the presidency on a campaign characterized by racist and antisemitic dog whistles. This feeling, of living in a divided and much-changed America, existed even before the murder of Heather Heyer by a white supremacist who drove his car into a crowd of counterprotesters the next day. Indeed, in announcing his campaign for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, former vice president Joe Biden released a video in which he referred to the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville as “a defining moment” for the nation.¹

The torchlit march was the unannounced opening of this rally, scheduled for August 12, whose organizers intended, broadly, to unify the white nationalist movement and, specifically, to protest the planned removal of the statute of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from Charlottesville’s Lee Park (now Emancipation Park).² The Unite the Right rally was the culmination of a series of white nationalist events in Charlottesville, organized by white nationalist Richard Spencer (May 13, 2017) and the Ku Klux Klan (July 8, 2017), that focused on the planned removal of the Lee statue and, in the words of former KKK grand wizard David Duke, on

the promise of a Trump presidency to “take our country back.”³ But while the earlier events drew dozens of white supremacists, the August rally was intended to bring together many hundreds of members of disparate groups from across the country—including the Klan; the National Policy Institute; Identity Evropa; neo-Nazi groups such as Vanguard America, Traditionalist Workers Party, and the National Socialist Movement; neo-Confederate groups such as Identity Dixie and League of the South; and others—that all held a common belief in white supremacy.

Given the makeup of the rally’s participants, it is interesting to look back from the distance of a few years and to wonder why anyone was surprised by what took place. What made the August 11 march such a watershed moment? Everyone knew that the people who descended on Charlottesville weren’t history buffs who cared deeply about Confederate monuments as symbols of American history. They were members of fringe groups who focused on white identity and who trafficked in fantasies about a restoration of the primacy of white Christians in America. Racial resentment and white grievance were expected from the speakers at the August 12 rally. What was unexpected, on the evening of August 11, was the unmistakable feeling of looking through a window into 1930s Weimar Germany, where everyday citizens, not simply the well-known racists, were comfortable marching through the streets chanting about their hatred of minority groups. Here, on the campus designed by Thomas Jefferson, were young men, well-dressed in khaki pants and white button-down shirts, marching and chanting messages of hatred. The mask had fallen off and the bigotry that had been covered by what suddenly looked like the thinnest veneer of respectability was on display for anyone who cared to look. The violence that followed immediately seemed predictable and obvious.

The expectations, prior to that torchlit march, were that the participants who traveled to Charlottesville were racists, and that their support for Confederate monuments was linked to their white identitarian beliefs. As such, their chanting of “White lives matter!” as they marched made sense to the people who watched on social media in real time as the march unfolded. But then

the marchers began to chant the Nazi slogans “Blood and Soil!” and “Jews will not replace us!” The connection between racism and antisemitism was so surprising and seemingly bizarre that, in the initial media rundowns of the march, reporters published accounts in which they reported that the marchers chanted “You will not replace us!”⁴ Of course, as the Anti-Defamation League points out, this amounts to a distinction without a difference, as the slogan—whether it specifically mentions “Jews” or simply references replacement theory—“reflects the primary white supremacist worldview that unless immediate action is taken, the white race is doomed to extinction by an alleged ‘rising tide of color’ purportedly controlled and manipulated by Jews.”⁵

Replacement theory, the conspiracy that provides structural support for a good deal of the white supremacist activism we see today, can be traced back to antisemitic conspiracy theorizing in France in the late 1800s that imagined a Jewish plot to bring about the downfall of white, Christian Europe through miscegenation. The best-known version is Édouard Drumont’s 1886 *La France Juive*, an immensely popular two-volume work that presaged not only Nazi antisemitic literature but also the contemporary work of Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement*, in which today’s Muslim immigrants stand in for the Jews of Drumont’s France. It was the same concept that motivated Robert Bowers to bring multiple weapons into the Tree of Life—Or L’Simcha Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on October 27, 2018 and murder eleven Jewish worshippers, the deadliest attack on Jews in American history. In the weeks before the mass shooting, Bowers, a white supremacist who had been active on the fringe social media website *Gab*, “complained that President Donald Trump was surrounded by too many Jewish people and blamed Jews for helping migrant caravans in Central America.”⁶ In a post that linked to a Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society program called National Refugee Shabbat, he wrote, “Why hello there HIAS! You like to bring in hostile invaders to dwell among us?” Another post read, “Open you Eyes! It’s the filthy EVIL Jews Bringing the Filthy EVIL Muslims into the Country!!” Just a couple of hours before his murderous shooting spree, Bowers posted, “HIAS likes to bring invaders in

that kill our people. I can't sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I'm going in.”⁷

But perhaps the most alarming aspect is not simply that white supremacist terrorism is on the rise; it's that replacement theory has been mainstreamed over the past few years so that people like Bowers hear their own beliefs spoken by those who reside at the pinnacle of power and influence. After another mass shooting committed by a white supremacist in El Paso, Texas, in 2019, the *New York Times* published an interactive analysis of the similarities in language used in the murderer's manifesto and by the biggest stars in mainstream conservative media, including Sean Hannity, Tucker Carlson, Laura Ingraham, and Rush Limbaugh. In particular, the *Times* outlined the way that words such as “invasion” and “replacement” appear over and over in the murderer's manifesto and in popular television news programming. The authors also point out that “the portrayal of immigration as a menace has returned with force, a shift brought on not just by radio and TV hosts, but by Republican leaders in Congress and the president himself. This year Mr. Trump has used the terms ‘invasion’ or ‘invaded’ seven times on Twitter to describe the situation at the border, at one point referring to the approach of the migrants as ‘the attempted Invasion of Illegals.’”⁸ And, indeed, the claims about HIAS and a migrant caravan of asylum-seekers from Central America made by the Pittsburgh synagogue murderer are directly connected to mainstream right-wing rhetoric. Most notably, in the weeks prior to the shooting, President Trump suggested that “criminals and unknown Middle Easterners are mixed in” with the group of asylum seekers, and, just days afterward, Trump further spread the baseless conspiracy theory that Jewish billionaire and philanthropist George Soros might be funding the migrant caravan.⁹ That theory was not a new one and it directly informed the actions of Cesar Sayoc, who mailed pipe bombs to Soros and prominent critics of Trump just weeks before Bowers murdered the worshippers in Pittsburgh. The Soros theory was active online in the spring and summer of 2018 but caught fire in early October in the run-up to the midterm election. It began on October 14 with a single antisemitic Twitter user with several thousand

followers, but in just a few days the conspiracy had migrated to Facebook and Reddit and had reached millions of people. On October 17, a Republican congressman—Matt Gaetz of Florida—posted about the Soros conspiracy on Twitter and his post was amplified by Ann Coulter and then by Donald Trump Jr. “On Twitter alone, at least 43,000 accounts with a combined 127 million followers carried some message linking Soros to the caravan” on October 16 and 17.¹⁰ The Soros conspiracy theory almost perfectly echoes the old canard about the Rothschild family operating at the head of an international Jewish conspiracy. Indeed, in July 2019, the White House invited conservative and right-wing journalists for a social media summit. Among them was the creator of an unabashedly antisemitic cartoon depicting Soros as an instrument of the Rothschilds pulling the strings of “puppets” in the forms of then-national security adviser and retired general H. R. McMaster and former CIA director and retired general David Petraeus.¹¹ The image of the Jewish puppet master pulling the strings is an old and well-known antisemitic cliché, but the straightforward connection of Soros to the Rothschilds, the presumed Jewish conspirators of centuries past, leaves no doubt about the intent of the image.

Nor, unfortunately, was the mass shooting in Pittsburgh an isolated incident. Six months later, in April 2019, another man armed with an assault-style rifle murdered one worshipper and wounded three others at the Chabad Lubavitch Synagogue in Poway, California. The attacker, an avowed white supremacist, wrote in an open letter that he was fighting back against the Jews because they were plotting a genocide of the white European race. In these dangerous antisemitic fantasies Jews are always conspiring to harm gentiles and bring evil to the world; thus, any action to draw attention to their nefarious plots and put a stop to them is justified. This sort of belief stands at the heart of antisemitism throughout the centuries and across the globe. While antisemitism is not easy to define and often seems to have, for many, a certain “I know it when I see it” quality, the Anti-Defamation League summarizes it as “belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the form of religious teachings that proclaim the inferior-

ity of Jews, for instance, or political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.¹² In studying incidents of antisemitism we can learn very little, if anything, about Jews, but we learn a lot about the hate fantasies and negative stereotypes that gentiles have about Jews. Antisemitism operates by using fictional allegations, often centered around complicated conspiracy theories, which is why fighting it with factual arguments is so often difficult. Doris Bergen notes that “prejudices are habits of thought; they are not reasoned responses to objective realities.”¹³ While we do not have sufficient space here to detail the full historical scope of these prejudices, what follows is some basic historical information that will offer background and context for the chapters in this volume.

In 70 CE the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, which had been the religious and political center of Judaism for centuries. This meant the end of the Jewish uprising and the dispersion of the survivors all over the Roman Empire. This was the beginning of the Diaspora, or Jews living as a religious minority without a state of their own. Around that time a small sect among Jews formed its first communities. They believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the long-expected prophetic Messiah. These Judeo-Christians were initially a small group, but quickly grew in numbers because they were also committed to proselytizing among the gentiles.

In 380 CE Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. While non-Christians were persecuted and killed, the Jews remained the only religious minority tolerated (if only barely) in the Christian world. St. Augustine, an influential theologian of the early church, laid the basis for a widely adopted practice. He argued that Jews should be despised and kept in misery, but not killed. They should not be killed, he reasoned, because there is hope for their ultimate conversion when they accept Jesus as the Messiah. Jews were segregated in ghettos within or adjacent to Christian cities and towns, and were banned from many professions and from owning land. The Middle Ages saw the creation of allegations against Jews, some of which are still present in our societies. Church leaders accused the Jews of being in the service of Satan and conspiring against Christians. Because Jews

were barred from most professions in Christian societies, where an emerging merchant class was in need of a ready supply of capital to borrow, and because Christians were religiously prohibited from lending money to other Christians at interest, moneylending was one of the few professions open to Jews. This is why many Jewish families, including the Rothschilds and the Lehmans, would become prominent in the banking and financial sectors; not surprisingly, this occupation also made them many enemies.¹⁴ Jews were often despised as “bloodsuckers” by gentiles who owed them money and were accused of slyly taking advantage of the naivety or the bad luck of honest Christians. Shakespeare’s depiction of Shylock, the Jewish moneylender in *The Merchant of Venice*, is the most famous example of these views. Jews, a minority that constituted less than one percent of the total population of Western Europe, became the scapegoats for all societal and even personal ills—anything that could not be easily explained and was therefore particularly frightening. Jews were accused of causing the plague, poisoning wells, and kidnapping Christian children (especially boys) to slaughter them in religious rituals and bake with or drink their blood. Massacres known as pogroms often followed these unfounded and horrible allegations against the nearest Jewish population.¹⁵

As the Enlightenment came to dominate European thought in the eighteenth century, Jews were eventually afforded citizenship rights and allowed to leave their ghettos (sooner in some regions and much later in some countries including Russia and Romania, which resisted the enfranchisement of Jews into the twentieth century). Even with this progress, however, religious antisemitism not only remained but was joined by a secular version of antisemitism. Under pseudoscientific theories of race, Jews now were seen not merely as adherents of a different religion, but as people of a separate race. As a consequence, conversion or assimilation was not an option to solve “the Jewish question.” The term “antisemitism” was eventually coined in 1870 by the German journalist Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904) as a “scientific” term for the secular hatred of Jews. To this day, antisemitism contains a potent mix of religious, racist, and political charges and beliefs.¹⁶ Antisemitism traveled

to the Americas with European emigration, bringing many of the centuries-old stereotypes and accusations, such as the “blood libel,” common in the old world. One famous case is that of Leo Frank, who was lynched in 1915 in Georgia for allegedly murdering Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old Christian girl. Frank was kidnapped from prison and murdered by a group of armed men who were infuriated by the governor’s decision to commute Frank’s death sentence to life imprisonment. The consensus of researchers today is that Frank was wrongfully convicted.

Of particular impact are conspiracy theories claiming that Jewry is plotting to take over the world and dominate Christians. One of the most widely distributed lies centers around the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, an antisemitic forgery put together by the Russian secret police and first printed in 1905. It purports to recount the minutes of a series of meetings of anonymous Jewish leaders and is set around the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. These Jewish leaders were allegedly plotting to bring Christians under their rule worldwide by undermining Christian societies with the ideas of socialism and liberalism. The forgers did not invest much time in constructing the *Protocols*, as they mostly plagiarized from a number of French and German books, and just switched the main characters. Despite being repeatedly exposed as a complete fabrication, the document was quickly translated into all major world languages and became a classic of antisemitic propaganda. In the United States, it was none other than automobile pioneer Henry Ford who published the “Protocols” as a serial in his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, starting in 1920. Under the title “The International Jew: The World’s Problem,” the columns accused Jews of controlling the media and the financial system in order to enslave Americans.¹⁷ Hitler admired Ford and the Nazi government awarded him the Grand Cross of the German Eagle, the highest honor for a non-German. Throughout the interwar period, Ford, an American hero and titan of industry, was one of the most significant forces for antisemitism in the United States.

Theodor Herzl of Vienna, one of the fathers of modern political Zionism, hoped that a Jewish state might end antisemitism. Sadly, he was wrong. The foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 merely

changed certain aspects of antisemitism. In recent years, critiques of Israel with more or less antisemitic undertones have occurred frequently on both the political (far) right and the political (far) left. This “Toxifying Israel” is a phenomenon that has become more recognizable and more pronounced over time.¹⁸ At the heart of these issues is the conflict in the Near East. Recounted briefly, the idea of Jewish statehood never completely vanished during the Diaspora. Herzl saw the foundation of a (new) Jewish state as an answer to European nationalism when he wrote his influential book *Der Judenstaat* in 1896. Political Zionism eventually led to renewed Jewish immigration to Jerusalem and Palestine, which was first controlled by the Ottoman Empire and then, after 1917, by Britain. After World War II and the Holocaust, Jewish organizations strengthened their efforts to transform the Jewish settlements in Palestine (“Yishuv”) into an independent state by diplomatic means, but also by guerilla fighting against the British army and Arab nationalists. In 1947 the United Nations decided on a partition plan for a Jewish state and an Arab state in Palestine, and in 1948 Israel formally declared its statehood. The small nation was immediately attacked by its Arab neighbors but prevailed. The internationally guaranteed 1949 armistice line established the division between Israeli territory (including West Jerusalem) and the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip. These borders remained unchanged until 1967, when Israel defeated a military coalition of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. As a result, Israeli forces permanently occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights. The status of these territories remains disputed and the status of the mostly Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank and Gaza remains uncertain even after the landmark but unfinished Oslo Peace Process of the 1990s.

Since the days of the grassroots Palestinian uprising in the late 1980s, known as the Intifadah, European and American leftists have often sympathized with the Palestinians and supported their struggle for liberation. In recent years, the best-known and most effective leftist group aligned in opposition to Israel is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS), which criticizes Israel for its treatment of Palestinians and its government-endorsed

program of settlement expansion in the West Bank. Of course, not every critique of Israel is automatically antisemitic. Every government can and should be criticized if democratic standards are transgressed or if human rights violations occur. But many of Israel's supporters contend that the critiques and the demands made by BDS seem to go far beyond ordinary political opposition by tacitly or explicitly questioning the legitimacy of Israel's very existence. World-renowned scholar Deborah Lipstadt argues that "one of the stated goals of the BDS movement is establishing a right of return for Palestinians throughout the world, which in practical terms would result in Jews being in the minority in Israel, and its end as a Jewish state."¹⁹ On some university campuses, left-wing groups have been very active and have fostered hostile environments for some, just as right-wing groups have done for others. Verbal assault and interruptions of Israeli or pro-Israeli speakers on campuses are very common, which (among other things) shows the lack of civil discourse on campus and the increase of divisiveness.²⁰ Groups such as Students for Justice in Palestine have caused major controversies on campuses including those of the University of Michigan, New York University, the University of California—Los Angeles, San Francisco State University, the University of Vermont, and others.²¹

Antisemitism in Islamic countries is very common, and at times openly encouraged and sponsored by the political leadership. Scholar Alvin Rosenfeld summarized this very well when he wrote: "As disturbing as these developments are, they are surpassed by a far more militant rhetoric of antisemitic denunciation, vilification, and incitement emanating from many Muslim-majority countries. . . . Aggressive anti-Jewish sentiments are pervasive today in the Arab world, Iran, and Turkey. They are also to be found within Europe's growing Muslim communities."²²

In her 2019 book about antisemitism, Lipstadt writes, "As horrific as the Holocaust was, it is firmly in the past. When I write about it, I am writing about what was. Though I remain horrified by what happened, it is history. Contemporary antisemitism is not. It is about the present. It is what many people are doing, saying and facing *now*. That gave this subject an immediacy that

no historical act possesses.”²³ Given the events of 2018–2019, Lipstadt’s concerns seem both prescient and extremely pressing. Still, many, especially in the United States, were taken completely by surprise not only by the rise of antisemitism but also by its deadly character. Prominent opinion columnist Bari Weiss wrote, “I had always thought it wasn’t possible for this kind of cancer to metastasize in the United States, for three fundamental reasons. One is the special nature of America. The United States, with its promise of free speech and religion, with its insistence that all people are created equal, with its tolerance for difference, with its emphasis on shared ideas rather than shared bloodline, has been, even with all of its ugly flaws, a New Jerusalem for the Jewish people.”²⁴ Weiss, of course, was wrong to think of America as somehow special or exempt from the moral rot of antisemitism, but she represents the majority of American Jews, among Americans more generally, who have found themselves stunned and uncertain of how to respond to the rising tide of antisemitism.²⁵

The immediacy of this problem is what motivated us to choose antisemitism as the topic of the 2019 Sommerhauser Symposium on Holocaust Education, a biennial workshop that began in 2015 under the auspices of the Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. According to the Anti-Defamation League the number of antisemitic incidents surged by sixty percent in 2017.²⁶ This was the biggest single-year increase in reported anti-Jewish hate since the ADL started tracking such data almost forty years ago. Our own campus has also seen its fair share of antisemitic incidents. These have included antisemitic internet activities, graffiti, and statements by individual students who self-identify as white nationalists or white supremacists. Jewish students, a microscopic minority, have written letters to the editor of the university’s student newspaper to express that they don’t feel safe on their campus anymore. It is this environment that creates the sense of immediacy that Deborah Lipstadt speaks about. And it is this environment that calls for the Sommerhauser Symposium. The conference proceedings published here can help us try to make sense of the rapid rise in antisemitism in the United States and abroad. By looking into the past, into the 1920s and 1930s, we might, despite

all the differences between then and now, see some common elements and some parallels. The 1920s and 1930s also saw a rapid spread of nativism, xenophobia, nationalism, and antisemitism. Why did it happen then and why is it happening now? The rise of antisemitism today is by no means limited to the United States; after all, antisemitism was and is an international cancer. What can we learn when comparing American antisemitism to antisemitism in Europe? How can we better understand the underlying ideas and ideologies that seem to transcend time and place? How can we best fight them? And, once we have some answers, how do we best communicate them to those outside of academia?

This last question—how best to communicate what we have learned through all our research to those outside of academia—is the question that makes the Sommerhauser Symposium different from other initiatives. How can we best educate about and fight this old hatred and the conspiracies that demonize Jews? What are the best teaching resources and teaching methods that individuals and institutions can deploy? And, perhaps most importantly, symposia like this one will sensitize universities and the wider public to the need for and utility of such a dialogue.

We started the Contemporary Holocaust Studies series, published with the University of Nebraska Press, in 2017. The first volume, which focuses on the phenomenon of Holocaust rescue and those who effected it, is titled *Unlikely Heroes: The Place of Holocaust Rescuers in Research and Teaching* and came out in May 2019. This book follows the format of the series and is centered around a two-part conversation about antisemitism. The first section looks into the 1920s and 1930s in Europe and the United States and the rise of antisemitism after World War I. The second section analyzes several contemporary forms of antisemitism across Europe and the Near East. We conclude with a look into methods and strategies to best educate students and the wider public about this crucial topic. As we wrote in the introduction to our first volume, our aim in this series is to bring together the work of university professors, high school educators, and local and national experts. High school teachers and those who train them tend to focus on pedagogy, while academics are always looking to engage with new

research. This explains why the contributions in the various sections of this volume are written in different styles and structures; these differences exist by design and, in our minds, represent a strength of the project undertaken in this book series. The questions at the end of each chapter are also closely tied to the nature of this project. They help to foster discussion and the exchange of knowledge and opinions.

The aim of this collection is not to provide an all-encompassing work about antisemitism. The topic, as every expert can attest, is far too large to cover in a single volume, and doing so is not our goal. We have collected here some important examples on the topic of antisemitism to illustrate new research findings and teaching techniques in order to show the issues at stake. We begin with some new research on antisemitism at two distinct historical moments: the interwar period and today. First, Joseph W. Bendersky considers the failure of the Weimar Republic's Jewish intellectual elites to understand the nature of German antisemitism in the 1920s and 1930s. He focuses on Franz Neumann and Otto Kirchheimer, both prominent members of the well-known Frankfurt School, who were based originally in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt and then exiled to the United States after the Nazi takeover. As Bendersky points out, the Frankfurt School has long been criticized for its late and inaccurate analyses of antisemitism. Looking through the lens of Marxism, for these German Jewish scholars, racism and antisemitism were merely a sideshow for the essential class struggle. Ultimately, their academic expertise did not help Kirchheimer and Neumann to better grasp the extent of German antisemitism. Quite the contrary—they stuck to an idealistic and one-sided view of German mentality and culture, and downplayed the potential for violent antisemitism. As Bendersky states, “many assimilated Jewish liberals and leftists shared Neumann's and Kirchheimer's comforting and reassuring view of their fellow Germans, attesting that their country was the ‘least antisemitic of all.’”

In the next chapter, Jean Cahan analyses the views of the influential German American political philosopher Hannah Arendt on the origins of antisemitism and totalitarianism. While Arendt's

concept of totalitarianism as a political religion was innovative and powerful, her interpretation of the origins of antisemitism remains controversial. Cahan contends that Arendt focused a great deal of her attention on individual biographies and socioeconomic factors influencing anti-Jewish hatred since the eighteenth century, while largely ignoring its centuries-old Christian and Islamic roots. Arendt believed that modern antisemitism arose from the Christian lower class's disdain for powerful Jewish bankers; she pointed to the Austrian case, noting that Jewish bankers—namely the Rothschilds—were in control of the Austrian railroads, and therefore antisemitic Austrian politicians pushed for nationalization. The empirical facts about the Austro-Hungarian railway market, however, do not support such claims. Cahan thus argues that Arendt falls too easily into the trap of generalizations, without much (or any) empirical evidence backing her claims. The Austrian politician Georg von Schönerer, who was part of a new generation of politicians running on platforms of fanatical ethnic nationalism and antisemitism, occupies a prominent place in Arendt's analyses. According to Arendt, the alleged arrogance of Jews as the chosen people drew the ire of pan-German ethnic nationalists such as Schönerer (who was himself obsessed with the Rothschilds). Not all Jews were bankers, of course, and not all bankers were Jewish, and Cahan argues that at times Arendt appears to have internalized some of the antisemitic interpretations of modern European history. Such interpretations show that even a critical spirit like Arendt's was not entirely immune to antisemitic stereotypes.

Alfred Rosenberg was one of the very few top Nazi leaders who put his personal thoughts on paper. A few years ago his diaries were rediscovered and published. Jürgen Matthäus provides some crucial insight into Rosenberg's unique blend of obsession and opportunism regarding the Nazis' "Jewish question." From a young age, Rosenberg held deeply antisemitic views, which he expressed in far-right-wing publications; those writings influenced Hitler's views on Jews and Soviet communism, particularly during the early years of the Nazi Party. His 1930 book, *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, quickly became a kind of bible for Nazi

believers, second only to Hitler's 1925 *Mein Kampf*. With the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis committed to a full-scale genocide of European Jewry, and Rosenberg, originally from Estonia, was put in charge of the occupied territories of the East, where most European Jews lived. His "Ostland" was expected to be the territory of the "biological eradication of all of Jewry in Europe," as he openly stated.²⁷ For his crimes, Rosenberg was executed at Nuremberg in 1946, but his hateful teachings did not disappear with him—on the contrary, his writings have achieved a kind of renaissance on the websites of today's extreme right.

In his chapter, "Semites' on Display: David Gordon Lyon and the Jewish Other at Harvard University, 1889–1926," Timothy Turnquist looks at the rising antisemitism in American academia after World War I. David Gordon Lyon was an American Assyriologist at Harvard (1882–1922) who studied ancient Semitic civilizations in the Middle East. Funded generously by Jacob Schiff, a German Jewish immigrant, Lyon emphasized the civilizing contributions of the Jews, a "Semitic" minority, in mainstream narratives of Western and American greatness. Turnquist's chapter explores Lyon's career as a window into shifting perceptions of Jews at Harvard. Culture wars between liberals and conservatives framed the Jewish *Other* as racially and mentally un-American. Liberals constructed the Jews as foundational to American educational and political institutions and suggested they ought to easily assimilate into the country's social fabric. Conservatives feared an oversaturation of non-Northern European immigrants, and pushed for the adoption of restrictive quotas in immigration and higher education to maintain white Protestant power. In an era of racial and political tension, Lyon's tenure demonstrated an ideologically complex quest for Jewish recognition and American self-definition.

Leonard Greenspoon examines antisemitism in the German Christian context in his chapter, "Use and Abuse of the Bible: German Christian Antisemitism in the 1930s and 1940s." In particular, Greenspoon looks carefully at the ways in which the Bible was used (or, more accurately, abused) to support anti-Judaism. He assesses the ways in which Christians misread or misapplied passages from the Hebrew Bible for their antisemitic ends, and

also explores passages from the Christian Bible that specifically criticize and even demonize “the Jews.” While Greenspoon’s focus here is on the Nazi period, he also compares the abuses of the Bible at that time with two other instances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He also rightly recognizes the small minority of Christians whose encounters with the Bible led them to live, and sometimes die, in opposition to the Nazis.

Finally, to round out the first section, Łukasz W. Niparko assesses almost one thousand years of the history of Poznań Jews. The city of Poznań is the capital of the second largest region in Poland and, in the sixteenth century, was home to the largest Jewish community in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is to Poznań we can trace the beginnings of Polish statehood as well as the relics of one of the oldest Jewish communities inhabiting Poland. The often uneasy coexistence of different ethnic groups and religions ceased altogether due to totalitarian regimes. What is left today is the hidden landscape of Jewish history and culture exemplified by the Poznań synagogue, turned into a swimming pool by the Nazis—a symbol reminiscent of Atlantis, the city that disappeared under the water. In the case of Poznań, what disappeared is the culturally diverse urban space that was sundered by antisemitism, genocide, war, and modern-day nationalism.

In the volume’s second section we turn to research on contemporary antisemitism and also how to teach it. The first chapter in this section, from R. Amy Elman, considers the response, or lack thereof, from European Union politicians to the rise of antisemitism. Elman looks specifically at anti-Zionism and Holocaust inversion, along with antisemitism among European Islamic extremists. She details the problems facing European Jewry today, comparing it with the past, and also considers possible avenues for remedy through the human rights infrastructure of the European Union. Elman raises the problem of antisemitism in the guise of social justice, a topic that eludes many of the people who fill out the ranks of the anti-racist, pro-human rights left. Then, Shlomo Abramovich expands on this notion of anti-Zionism as antisemitism, and looks specifically at the ways in which the prominent Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement plays out in dis-

cussions about Israeli politics and identity. Abramovich's intent is explicitly not to answer the question of whether or not BDS should be understood as fundamentally antisemitic—there is a growing body of literature on this topic and a great deal of political disagreement—but instead to consider what exactly is gained by Israel when BDS is framed as antisemitic. To do so, Abramovich highlights the changing nature of antisemitism and, specifically, how anti-Zionism has come to be seen as antisemitic because of the redefinition of the concept in light of the politics, in Israel and in the West, surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Finally we explore the challenges of effectively teaching young people about antisemitism. To that end, we turn to colleagues with a great deal of experience in explaining the Holocaust, antisemitism, and other forms of bigotry. Scott Littky, the director of the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha, Nebraska, examines the role played by antisemitism in Holocaust education in classrooms. Littky notes that the concept of antisemitism is often misunderstood, provides several examples, and then considers better ways to teach such a crucial topic. In particular, Littky wants to reconsider some of the core texts that are used to teach antisemitism and the Holocaust in both public and Jewish schools.

Taken together, these contributions offer a serious look at some aspects of contemporary research on antisemitism, alongside a focus on bridging the gap between research and teaching on the topic. While we have organized the chapters into two distinct sections, we believe that researchers will find much of interest in the second section of this volume and teachers will feel the same way about the first section. With that in mind, we have called on veteran educators to provide discussion questions throughout in order to make every chapter as useful as possible to teachers and researchers alike. These questions aim to deepen the understanding of the material presented and are specifically intended for students in middle school, high school, and college classes.

We are extremely grateful to each one of the scholars and educators who came together for the thought-provoking discussions throughout the Sommerhauser Symposium in April 2019. We also must extend a special and heartfelt thanks to the Sommerhauser fam-

ily, without whose generous support these biennial symposia would never have been organized and would not be possible. The editors also want to thank the Harris Center for Judaic Studies, the Forsythe Family Program for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, and the departments of history and political science at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln for the financial support they have given to this initiative, as well as to the editorial staff at University of Nebraska Press for their enthusiasm about this project. Finally, the editors are extremely grateful to our colleague and friend Jean Cahan for her support, guidance, and assistance throughout the process of setting up both this symposium and this book series. Last, but not least, special thanks to our colleagues from the Institute for Holocaust Education in Omaha, Scott Littky, Kael Sagheer, and Jennifer Goodman, for providing questions for further discussion for each chapter.

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