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Summary

This essay contends that scholars must more closely examine and even rethink how fear and courage are involved in shaping the civic attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens. In the case of the Weimar Republic, using fear and courage to convince elites and ordinary people of the need to support democratic or anti-democratic attitudes and behaviors was a widespread and common practice. Not only fascist, anti-democratic groups, but also supporters of the republic alluded to different types of fear and courage to persuade people to act in desired ways. But invoking fear and displaying courage did not necessarily always guarantee the desired results in peers' attitudes and behaviors, and more often than not, resulted in a much wider array of responses and unintended consequences than expected. Most striking is how the evidence of fear and courage in the archival materials of Central German communities forces us to rethink how people responded to the use of popular fears and anxieties in a wider variety of competing ways that encouraged some to defend their neighbors and the Weimar republic writ large against evolving rightwing politics, while emboldening others to intensify and adapt their attacks against democratic elites and ordinary citizens who continued to display their own courage.

> Dear German citizens, do things really have to get worse for you first? Does the water first have to climb up around your throats before you have the courage to commit yourself to resistance? […] If only you knew how strong you are, dear citizen. Carry through with the task at hand. Do not always stand there by the side with a wait and see attitude, distinguished in appearance and

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misunderstood decency. It is the only way to impress upon the riff raff and rabble on the Wilhelmsplatz, which naturally incited by a Jew, sang, whistled and screamed, praising the International and otherwise revealing themselves as uneducated children in need of punishment.[1]

Theoretical Introduction

More and more scholars are increasingly drawing attention to the history of emotions, but there is still little consensus among them on how to define emotions or study their history in general, let alone the history of fear and courage in the Weimar Republic.[2] Paul Ekman suggests that scholars who are interested in the study of emotions need to pay more attention to multiple sources of information that may indicate what people are feeling and thinking, i.e., external and innate factors, environmental stimuli, individual responses, and the interactive consequences of emotion among different individuals and groups, in order to determine the accuracy of what observations can be made vis-à-vis the available historical records about what emotions have looked like historically and how they persist and/or change over time and place.[3]

Some historians start by examining the archival materials for the expression of emotion and make linguistic distinctions between "fear" and "anxiety" or *Furcht* and *Angst* in German.[4] As the historian Johanna Bourke puts it, fear or *Furcht* most often refers to some physically tangible object that actually threatens the subject. Whereas, anxiety or *Angst* most often refers to the psychological condition of the subject, who does not appear to face any imminent threat, yet anticipates danger at any moment. However, Bourke cautions historians to be careful about

1 "Bürgermut", *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* (MZ), September 13, 1920, translations of text provided by author, p. 2.

2 For an outline of different definitions of emotion, see Paul Ekman, Wallace V. Friesen and Phoebe Ellsworth, "Conceptual Ambiguities", in Paul Ekman (ed.), *Emotion in the Human Face*, Cambridge 1982, pp. 7–20. For a review of the historiography on emotions see Birgit Aschmann, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Emotionen", in Birgit Aschmann (ed.), *Gefühl und Kalkül. Der Einfluss von Emotionen auf die Politik des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 9–32. For a summary of the research on emotions in this anthology see also Hilde Haider, "Emotionen als Steuerungselemente menschlichen Handelns", *ibid.*, pp. 33–43. For the broader cultural study of emotions in the case of Germany, see Martina Kessel, *Langeweile. Zum Umgang mit der Zeit und Gefühlen in Deutschland vom späten 18. bis zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2001, and Joachim Radtkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität. Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler*, München 1998.

3 Paul Ekman, *loc. cit.*, pp. 9–11.

4 See Joanna Bourke, *Fear. A Cultural History*, London 2005, pp. 189–191. Compare Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Cambridge c2006, and Sigmund Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, trans. Joan Riviere, New York c1974.

applying such strictly dichotomous distinctions to historical phenomena of fear and anxiety. For one, the archival records are often ambivalent – what might be a diffuse and subjective experience of anxiety for one person, as Bourke points out, may in fact be the fear of a concrete and imminent threat to another.

Saying that one is afraid, as the historian William Reddy suggests, is itself a performative action of individual agency which reveals a person's cognitive conflicts that result from the constant coordination of all the "thought materials" firing inside his or her mind and body.[5] What people consciously and unconsciously translate into words, body language and other signs of emotion often belie more complex physiological and cognitive processes of individuals, i.e., his or her fragmented coordination of attention, the selective perception of the people and things around them, the conscious and unconscious physical sensations of their bodies, conditioned and unconditioned responses, recurrent memories, internalized ideas, information and goals. An utterance of fear has a descriptive appearance, in Reddy's opinion, which suggests authenticity, but does not necessarily capture all of what people are thinking and feeling and how they often transform, intensify or even mask their thoughts and feelings in their words and other gestures to "navigate" their feelings and the world around them.

Some neuroscience researchers such as Dr. Antonio Damasio, the director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California, now believe that emotions are constantly involved in rational thought and individual decision-making and even go so far then as to think of fear and other emotions as "rational action programs". "Not long ago", Damasio says, "people thought of emotions as old stuff, as just feelings – feelings that had little to do with rational decision making, or that got in the way of it. [...] Now that position has reversed. We understand emotions as practical action programs that work to solve a problem, often before we're conscious of it. These processes are at work continually, in pilots, leaders of expeditions, parents, all of us."[6]

To what degree the history of emotions and their effects simply represents millions of individual rational "action programs" remains to be seen, but thinking of fear in terms of the individual and individual agency also requires paying attention to external factors outside the direct control or influence of individuals that can also affect them all the

5 William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: a Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge 2001, pp. 105–119.

6 Benedict Carey, "Brain Power. In Battle, Hunches Prove to Be Valuable Assets", *New York Times*, July 28, 2009.

way down to those cognitive points of conflict in what they fear. Individuals and their emotions, as Burke again points out, are simultaneously caught up in the relations of power within distinctly national historical contexts with their own discourses on fear and courage. A whole range of people, it often turns out, are actively involved in constituting sources of threat, mediating between different emotional states and influencing how others should feel, think and act on their thoughts and feelings – what Bourke calls the "commercial work" of fear, i.e., converting everyday worries or concerns into states of fear, or conversely, translating objective threats into sources of constant anxiety.

Expressing anxieties and fears, as Bourke warns, usually seems to undermine trust among individuals and communities, polarizing politics and even legitimating the violation of ethical and moral codes. But feeling afraid does not necessarily have to lead to increasingly threatening situations or to the collapse of different forms of social order. And not all of this commercial or political work on emotions involves one to one translations of anxiety and fear. Displays of other emotions like courage, joy, pride, anger or hate could be just as important in meaning for individuals and groups and just as varied in their influence on civic behavior and values. In the case of the Weimar Republic, employing fears and anxieties in politics was highly competitive, deeply ambivalent and not simply dominated by reemerging rightwing political practices of fear-mongering. It was possible to deescalate the sense of fear in provincial German towns and cities and to defend the republic as well as neighbor's front doors against politically or ethnically motivated attacks intended to threaten them. Yet these local push backs against rightwing activism, particularly against *völkisch* politics, and the courage that ordinary citizens showed also contributed to how radical rightwing activists approached these communities, their municipal institutions and opponents in evolving combinations of persuasion, coercion and terror that helped mobilize support, outflank their opponents and strengthen their repeated attempts to take control.

Fear and courage in the Weimar Republic

Many nations wrestled with the fears and anxieties of economic crisis, impending political collapse and unimaginable defeat in the wake of the First World War. Other nations saw the rise of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary movements, rampaging armies of men and even more murderous forms of politics and antisemitic violence. What set Germany's case apart after the First World War, in Richards Bessel's view,

was the rather unique coalescence of different concerns about war, defeat, revolution and economic instability that in turn framed widespread political debates in the Weimar Republic, made moral questions highly visible, reflected a popular longing for an imagined normality and based that longing upon the dangerous ground of illusion that Germans could return to the past, when in fact they were creating something altogether new.[7]

Fear, especially the threat of a communist revolution, figures very prominently in explanations of how German politics became more radical in the 1920s. If electoral results in the early years of the Weimar Republic are any indication, especially after the Kapp Putsch in March 1920, middle class citizens immediately, almost reflexively, withdrew their support from more moderate forms of middle class politics that held out any last hopes for Liberalism and cooperation with unions and Social democracy, and gave their support in larger measures to increasingly ultranationalist parties who promised to rally support against the threat of Communism to their homes, families and beliefs.[8] The ability of rightwing political movements to make use of popular fears and anxieties therefore helped undermine the potential in Germany's political compromises of 1918 and instilled a sense of crisis in the nation's path to modernity that eroded the chances for the republic and ultimately gave rise to the Nazi movement.[9]

Yet this reflexive image of middle class fears and their politics misses a much larger and more complex history of fear, the rise of competing emotional economies, each with its own allusions to different fears and anxieties, alternative conversions and displays, and a tenuous line between certainty and uncertainty about how individual and group actions could or could not shape the future of their communities and the nation writ large. As other historians have shown, the hyper-sense of crisis was by no means so inevitable nor doomed the chances of democracy.[10]

7 Richard Bessel, *Germany after the First World War*, Oxford c1993, pp. 251–253.

8 For local studies in the region surrounding Erfurt see Helge Matthiesen, *Bürgertum und Nationalsozialismus in Thüringen. Das bürgerliche Gotha von 1918 bis 1930*, Jena 1994; Helge Matthiesen, "Zwei Radikalisierungen – Bürgertum und Arbeiterschaft in Gotha 1918–1923", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 21:1 (1995), pp. 32–62, and Steffen Raßloff, *Flucht in die nationale Volksgemeinschaft. Das Erfurter Bügertum zwischen Kaiserreich und NS-Diktatur*, Köln 2003.

9 See Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic. The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson, New York c1991, and Heinrich August Winkler, "Die verdrängte Schuld", in Heinrich August Winkler (ed.), *Auf ewig in Hitlers Schatten?*, München 2007, pp. 58–71.

10 See Moritz Föllmer and Rüdiger Graf (eds.), *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik*, Frankfurt 2005, pp. 15–40.

Individuals and groups did not always panic in the face of fear, nor abandon all hope or forsake the middle ground. It is important to keep in mind that local authorities still found the means to oppose the use of fear in politics to subvert civic attitudes and behavior and some still found enough common ground to work together in reigning in both right and leftwing extremism in the short run and making key decisions in municipal government and public infrastructure in the long run.[11]

In the provincial towns and villages of Central Germany, groups of radical working class activists, unemployed men, injured war veterans and their families did carve out a more radical working class presence in their local communities in the early days of 1919. They raised the red flag on key municipal buildings in Erfurt, organized their own self-defense forces known as *Hundertschaften* in neighboring towns like Gotha, and attacked local government and military sites in the chaos of the Kapp Putsch and the ensuing workers' general strike that organizers had intended to prevent the radical rightwing overthrow of government in March 1920. They shut down public services, desecrated nationalist symbols in public buildings, confiscated private property and food, injured local residents and even killed a few middle class citizens, farmers, capitalists, military personnel, civil servants, doctors, nationalists or Christians whom they targeted as class enemies. From some accounts, Communist activists also forced some fellow factory workers to take up arms in order to accelerate the radicalizing of the workers' general strikes and overthrow the Reich's interim government before the republic's first election in the spring of 1920.[12]

Opposing groups of citizens, farmers, military officers and municipal leaders responded to local Communist activities by sounding the alarm about the threat of a Communist revolution through an array of local newspapers, public assemblies, handbills, fliers and by word of mouth, calling for the citizens' defense of the nation.[13] One flier circulated on the streets of Erfurt during the Kapp Putsch in March 1920 resurrected arguments from the nation's past conflicts, urging German women to talk to their male relatives, friends and acquaintances about joining their local citizens' defense units as "true men of German blood" to defend

11 See Steffen Raßloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 196–207. Compare Hermann Hanschel, *Oberbürgermeister Hermann Luppe. Nürnberger Kommunlapolitik in der Weimarer Republik*, Nuremberg 1977, and Nicola Wenge, *Integration und Ausgrenzung in der städtischen Gesellschaft: Eine Jüdisch-Nichtjüdische Beziehungsgeschichte Kölns, 1918–1933*, Mainz 2005.

12 See Steffen Raßloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–261.

13 Compare Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 128–133.

their homes and communities against an array of foreign invaders, paid agents and spies who used foreign phrases, shrouded German faculties of reason, turned Germans against Germans, threatened their women and children, and robbed them of their joy.[14]

The actual responses of citizens' activist networks varied considerably, but their actions also visibly transformed their communities, converting the fears of revolutionary activity into physical displays of intimidating force intended to deter leftwing threats against the nation. The citizens' defense units of Erfurt became particularly well known in the contiguous regions for the organization of its defense. Civilian police and military leaders stationed patrols of veterans, respected citizens, young men and university students at armed key checkpoints around the town. They maintained watch over Erfurt's key public spaces and streets and ensconced their positions in sandbags, ringed with barbed wire and machine guns. Some went even further, keeping watch at the homes of working class political leaders, and in some of the worst cases reported in the early spring of 1920, summarily executed groups of men from surrounding towns like Gotha and Sömmerda for their presupposed links to Communist activities.[15]

In response to these increasing acts of terror intended to deter future Communist activity, many local working class activists went back and forth on how they thought workers should think, feel and act. The editors of Erfurt's Independent Socialist newspaper, the *Tribüne*, at first resurrected the prewar working class emotional economy that urged their readers to remain calm, hold to the parliamentary system, take to the streets when necessary in protest and then, when all else failed, call everyone out for the general strike. But as more comrades died in the spring of 1920 across Germany and their blood flowed in the streets at the hands of the "bourgeoisie" and "reactionary military", some rejected these established respectable working class expressions of feelings and values and more aggressively looked forward that May Day to the time when the proletariat would destroy its old enemy.[16]

But instead of witnessing a final decisive battle in the spring of 1920 as some on both sides had hoped, most working class activists sought to persuade workers to transcend their political differences as Socialist

14 Stadtarchiv Erfurt [StVAE], 5/759, 82. See also StVAE, 1-2/120-14, 2.

15 The moderate Social Democratic newspaper, *Freie Presse*, kept an almost daily column on the "Civil War in Thuringia" in the wake of the Kapp Putsch. See "The White Terror in Thuringia", *Freie Presse*, March 27, 1920, and "What will happen with the Self Defense Force in Sömmerda?" April 21, 1920. Compare Raßloff, p. 203.

16 "Revolutions-Maifeier", *Die Tribüne*, April 30, 1920, first supplement.

Democrats, Independent Socialists and Communists and convert their fears and anxieties of rightwing terror and working class disunity into a display of working class solidarity intended to impress rightwing nationalist activists with their combined strength and courage.[17] In what became a pattern throughout the 1920s, thousands of local workers took off work each May Day and filled the streets with their families and auxiliary organizations of cyclists, athletes, choirs, women and youth carrying their banners and singing joyous and militant songs along the way to their communities' central gathering places – all in a visible public display that would rally workers together around feelings of strength, courage, pride and joy, convince any hesitant or aloof workers to join ranks instead of the Communists and force their rightwing nationalist opponents to think twice before they attempted to openly threaten workers again.

Underneath these competing public displays of fear and courage targeting potential supporters and opposing activists, some local citizens still acted to reign in the escalation of terror and violence and probably helped to still hold some semblance of a middle ground against the extremes. In one letter of petition found in the municipal archives of Erfurt, a Prussian military engineer and instructor stationed in the city employed the images of ordinary people lying prostrate in the streets and members of the citizens' defense units firing indiscriminately into the terrified crowds in order to convey the threat that citizens' defense units posed to the very citizens they ostensibly aimed to protect. He even cited the rumors he had heard spreading of the town's security units acting like a "raw, bloodthirsty soldateska", the very same Communist activists and brigands that supposedly threatened the town, in order to persuade Erfurt's mayor of the need to provide more protection for innocent townspeople.[18]

As the fears of a leftwing revolution failed to materialize and local leftwing activists continued to assert themselves despite numerous attempts to terrify them, rightwing nationalist activists felt compelled to establish newspapers like Erfurt's *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* in order to convert disparate reports into a constant state of fear and anxiety of pending Communist attack and sustain local middle class opposition to working class activism. The success of the Russian Red Army on the borders of Poland and East Prussia, the persistent reports of communist activities in the region around Erfurt, including the hoarding of firearms

17 "Die Maifeier der Erfurter Arbeiterschaft", *Tribüne*, May 3, 1920, second supplement.
18 StVAE, 1-2/120-14, 31.

and the violent disturbance of German Nationalist rallies in the summer of 1920, for example, provided ample evidence of the looming threat of communism in the local middle class press.[19] If there was any further confusion about the peril that their readers faced at the beginning of September 1920, the northern flank of the Russian army was threatening encirclement in Poland, the secret maps of the Independent Socialists had been discovered and the local Independent Socialist Newspaper, the *Tribüne*, was calling for an "International of Deeds".[20]

In response to the looming threat of Communism they helped create, rightwing activists increasingly articulated a more radical notion of civil courage that urged more aggressive forms of politics against the nation's enemies, as seen in the quote at the beginning of this essay. The author, an anonymous female voice, openly praised aggressive behavior against opposing political activists and their adherents as signs of courageous and heroic behavior among ordinary citizens. This radical rightwing editorial voice criticized those workers and veterans who chose to express themselves at public events and continued to depict them as childlike, uneducated and irresponsible workers in ways that recalled prewar practices of diminishing the threat of leftwing activism and justifying harsh responses to working class activism. The radicalization of rightwing emotional economies also more openly denigrated the feelings and actions of "respectable" middle class people who chose to flee the scene, stand by the side or just complain to the authorities rather than face the workers' and veterans' groups who made public appearances. Instead, local newspapers like the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* suggested more radical ethical and moral codes for how German citizens should respond to other groups of Germans. They valorized the sentiments and actions of those young men and women who stood together to face the onset of their leftwing enemies and fought back as the old veterans and fallen heroes had done for the fatherland in times past. They suggested that respectable workers would act more rationally and decently than those unruly mobs, and a few more brazenly pointed to the "Jew" as the key enemy, who was "naturally" misleading the German working classes.[21]

As more established middle class politics failed to adequately curb the threat of working class activism, numerous patriotic and civic asso-

19 Compare "Die rote Gefahr im Osten", *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* (*MZ*), May 29, 1920, "Neue Putschgerüchte", *MZ*, May 29, 1920, "Geistige Waffen. Kommunistentaten in Jena", *MZ*, May 29, 1920, p. 2, and "Die Waffenabgabe", *MZ*, August 14 1920, p. 3.

20 "Drohende Umfassung des russischen Nordflügels! Aufgedeckte USP-Karten. Die *Tribüne* für eine 'Internationale der Tat'", *MZ*, September 2, 1920.

21 See again "Bürgermut", *MZ*, September 13, 1920.

ciations increasingly began to carve out new forms of political activism beyond the established bounds of notable society and politics. Local German Nationalist political practice bore part of the responsibility for the loss of their attraction among ordinary German citizens and the expansion of new rightwing forms of activism. They continued to adhere to a semi-private, elitist format that failed to adequately address the issues of most ordinary people. They did not offer their own compelling emotional alternatives to the feelings of peril and danger that they helped instill. They could not decisively eliminate the threat of radical working class politics and they could not settle their own debates about whether or not the "Jew" actually posed a threat to their communities.[22]

Yet German Nationalist activists also helped point the way toward the more attractive "dramaturgy of Nazism", what Peter Fritzsche calls the political style of the Nazis and other *völkisch* groups that transfigured nationalist feelings despair into hopes of national renewal and salvation.[23] The editors of the German Nationalist *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* were particularly involved in redirecting their readers' attention in the region toward the convergence of *völkisch* politics in Nuremberg in the fall of 1923, and using anonymous editorial voices to convey all the positive feelings of new life, hope, enthusiasm, earnestness, patriotism, loyalty, sacrifice, and a "glowing desire" for freedom for those who could not witness resurgent nationalist events firsthand.[24] Despite the failure of the Nazi Putsch that followed two months later in early November 1923, there were public signs of growing interest in *völkisch* activism in the months that followed. Erfurt's police noted that many rightwing youth increasingly wore military cockades on their so called "Hitler caps" that were blue-white, black-white-red or black-white in color. The members of one rightwing youth organization, *Wehrwolf*, also carried the sign of the death's head underneath black-white or black-white-red cockades on their caps.[25]

The Responses of Ordinary Citizens to Antisemitism

Interestingly, insults to Jewish citizens began to occur repeatedly in the fall of 1923, appearing for the first time in the local magistrate's confidential reports, which indicated that some German Nationalist youth,

22 Compare Stadtarchiv Erfurt, 1-2/154-2, 13-14, 16 and 20.
23 Compare Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism, Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*, New York 1990, pp. 71–109.
24 "Der Deutsche Tag", *MZ*, September 3, 1923, p. 2.
25 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 88.

their parents and youth leaders were also beginning to translate the threat of the "Jew" into their own everyday activities and behavior.[26] In the imagination of some local rightwing activists, the "Jew" had infiltrated the German nation, deceived the German people and profited off of them at their own expense and sacrifice. In the graphic sketches of one local veteran military officer, the "Jew" became both the leader behind the ignorant socialist masses, goading them on, and the one out in front leading them toward the nation's abyss.[27] He preyed upon German women and strangled innocent young German men. As the head of the local *Wikinger* youth group put it at a commemorative event for the former German empire, they would rid Germany of its enemies once this "internal foe" had been defeated.[28]

On the night of September 19, 1923, for example, an unknown number of people assaulted some of the Jewish residents in town, breaking some of their windows, and damaging their doors and gardens. The police continued to report antisemitic activity, but their records do not indicate much if any follow-up criminal investigation. They claimed to have identified the culprits and noted that they were members of the local German Nationalist Youth Group *von Hindenburg*, but said little else on the subject. A year later, in the fall of 1924, the police observed swastikas inscribed on the sides of children's lanterns at the annual festival of Martinstag.[29] Jew-baiting fliers began to appear that winter in the passenger compartments of trains, which prompted train authorities to publicly state their disapproval of such activities.[30] Even some of the unemployed had been seen roaming the streets, wearing the black-white-red insignia of the *völkisch* nationalists and harassing innocent Jewish pedestrians.[31]

The study of German Jewish survivor testimonies maintained by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive reveals that many ordinary citizens in central German communities were in fact changing their civic attitudes and behavior through the ways in which other ordinary citizens responded to increasingly everyday signs of antisemitism.[32] The majority of those interviewed remember early child-

26 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 37.
27 See StVAE, 5.110.C.1.3 Corsep.
28 StVAE 1-2/154-2, 88.
29 "Völkische Geschmacklosigkeit", *Israelitisches Wochenblatt*, November 14, 1924, p. 47.
30 "Antisemitismus im Eisenbahnbetrieb", *Israelitisches Wochenblatt*, November 21, 1924, p. 55.
31 "Unfug", *Israelitisches Wochenblatt*, December 19, 1924, p. 87.
32 The study of the Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archives (VHA) examined the testimonies from more than one hundred interview subjects who were born in the towns of Erfurt, Gotha, Weimar, Magdeburg and Nuremberg between 1902 and 1930.

hoods full of feelings like happiness, comfort, and warmth; in some cases, close friendships with non-Jewish playmates, for others segregated but still convivial experiences with their non-Jewish neighbors; lives that were generally peaceful, carefree, with no worries and the sense of protection.[33] Several of the interview subjects actually noticed nothing or cannot recall any particular incident or feeling before 1933. While others felt like they had to deal with antisemitism as long as they could remember, well before the advent of the Nazi regime, several survivors recall that changes became more pronounced in their everyday lives by the mid to late 1920s through the sight of swastika graffiti on town walls, the verbal taunts from strangers and acquaintances, children, even parents pelting them with stones on the way to and from school, the visible shunning by supposed friends, anti-Jewish messages scribbled in their schoolbooks by non-Jewish German peers, the singsong threats of killing and murder in the classroom, the sound of Hitler's voice on the radio, and the mixed reactions of their parents to what was happening all around them and their families.[34]

Some surviving Jewish citizens interviewed recalled feeling goose pimples or shivers in response to the increasingly everyday forms of harassment they faced. Kurt Goldstein recalls feeling scared "to the very bones" by his memory of the 1923 Nazi Putsch in Nuremberg when a non-Jewish dentist lodger stood on guard at the front door against an angry mob that threatened to destroy his parents' lodging house and neighboring homes.[35] Anny Kessler, who was born in 1915 in Gotha, has memories of shivering and feeling goose pimples on her body at the age

The study's Nuremberg group is the largest subgroup with 67 interview subjects, followed by Magdeburg with 20, Erfurt with ten and Gotha and Weimar with two each; 38 are men and 63 are women; 16 were born before the First World War; 14 during the war and the majority, 71, between the years of 1920 and 1930; and 33 people can recall their communities to some degree before the Nazi seizure of power, if those interview subjects born in 1919 are included. On the problems of memory in testimony, see Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening", in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds.), *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York 1992, pp. 57–74. Compare Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, Munich c2003.

33 Compare Eric A. Johnson and Karl-Heinz Reuband, *What We Knew. Terror, Mass Murder, and Everyday Life in Nazi Germany*, Cambridge MA 2005, pp. 387–389.

34 Compare Herbert Aal, Interview Code: 11077, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 8, Eva Florsheim, Interview Code: 771, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, January 31, 1995, Long Beach, CA, USA, Hans Hammelbacher, Interview Code: 10446, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Forest Hills, NY, USA, December 20, 1995, segments 8–12.

35 Kurt M. Goldstein, *Retrospect and Reflections*, unpublished manuscript, Leo Baeck Institute, ME 196, MM 29, p. 45.

of 11, when she heard her teacher call her family name for the morning's role call and she anticipated her peers' derisive responses.[36] Yet other Jewish citizens also felt a much wider array of feelings ranging from shock, anxiety and desperation over their sense of difference and inferiority to feelings of exclusion, isolation, invisibility, the urge to flee, or even commit suicide. Still many others recall feeling offended, angry, and determined to persevere and fight back.

With the reemerging threat of antisemitic violence, some Jewish adults chose to sound the alarm in Erfurt, but also urged people to do something more about antisemitic harassment than simply express their feelings of shock and disbelief. Some Jewish parents began to create more sheltered worlds for their families and friends, transferring their children to different schools, sending them away to family members in the relative anonymity of urban centers, the isolation of rural life or abroad.[37] Some told their children not to worry about the hatred and malice they perceived or to simply accept increasing everyday forms of anti-Jewish persecution as their historically Jewish fate.[38] Some told their children to persevere, guarded them with dogs on their way to school or trained them to fight back.[39] Yet others armed themselves to protect their families and communities and even became known as "Nazi bashers".[40]

Fewer, but no less significant, are the glimpses of non-Jewish German peers and neighbors, who would no longer risk open friendship or association because of the knowledge of growing persecution and the fear that association with their Jewish peers and neighbors could lead to repercussions for their own lives and the prospects of their children, their careers and business.[41] Consequently, antisemitic forms of persecution

36 Anny Kessler, Interview Code: 31140, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Sunrise, FL, USA, July 21, 1997, segment 4. Compare Elizabeth See, Interview Code: 6286, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, July 31, 1995, Los Angeles, CA, USA, segments 14–17.

37 Compare Arnold Friedman, Interview Code: 18039, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 7.

38 Compare Friedman, segment 2, Werner Hausmann, Interview Code: 20734, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 1, and Arno Kahn Interview Code: 3776, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 18.

39 Compare Ruth Heiman, Interview Code: 10051, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segment 13, and Jack Minc, Interview Code: 14699, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, Bayside, NY, USA, January 18, 1996, segments 26–29.

40 See Kurt Wallach, Interview Code: 15863, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, May 31 1996, Vero Beach, FL, USA, segment 9. Compare Susan Schachori, Interview Code: 32555, USC Shoah Foundation Institute Visual History Archive, June 16, 1997, Givataim, Israel, segment 51.

41 Compare Hammelbacher, segment 8.

increasingly injected a moral calculus into the everyday life of many ordinary Germans in the mid to late 1920s that weighed the benefits and costs of social interactions with Jewish friends, neighbors and acquaintances, helping to racially transform local communities in the process and assault any remaining bonds of German civil society.[42] Even fewer but no less significant are the pieces of evidence for those non-Jewish citizens who did risk that increasing possibility of persecution out of friendship or other reasons and principles less visible in the available historic record to tip off their Jewish neighbors about a pending assault on their home or physically bar their Jewish neighbor's door from attack.

But once the Nazis were allowed to return and popular support for Nazi electoral politics and local activism began to increase in Thuringia in the late 1920s, culminating in the inclusion of Walter Frick as the first major Nazi leader in a state-level coalition government in Germany in January 1930, Nazi activists began to employ an evolving combination of persuasion, coercion and terror that went beyond attempts to seize power by legal, respectable electoral means.[43] Artur Dinter, Hitler's appointed leader of the Nazi movement in Weimar, took up the German Nationalist critique of middle class temerity in the face the nation's threats and emphasized the legality of Nazi politics and courage of Nazi activism, but he also hinted at other approaches that in effect sanctioned extra-legal means for the political elimination of Nazi opponents. "Beyond the question of parliament", as Dinter phrased it at a demonstration in Weimar in 1926, "was a question of the goal", and that was to be "coldly judged."[44]

Consequently, in towns and cities throughout Thuringia local Nazi activists translated such veiled Nazi messages into actions meant to frighten opponents and persuade others to support Nazism or at the very

42 Compare Wildt, 9–25 and 352–361.

43 Much of the scholarship still tends to emphasize how the Nazis shifted toward legal, respectable means in their politics and has not fully considered how the Nazis continued to resort to extralegal means at the local level beyond the well documented street fights with working class activists in the larger cities. Compare William A. Sheridan, *The Nazi Seizure of Power, The Experience of a Single German Town 1922–1945*, New York c1984. See also Rainer Hambrecht, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Mittel- und Oberfranken 1925–1933*, Nuremberg 1976; Robin Lenman, "Julius Streicher and the Origins of the NSDAP in Nuremberg 1918–1923", in Anthony Nicholls and Erich Matthias (eds.), *German Democracy and the Triumph of Hitler*, London 1971; Günter Neliba, "Wilhelm Frick und Thüringen als Experimentierfeld für die nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung", in Detlev Heiden and Gunther Mai (eds.), *Nationalsozialismus in Thüringen*, Weimar 1995, pp. 75–96, and Geoffrey Pridham, *Hitler's Rise to Power: The Nazi Movement in Bavaria, 1923–1933*, New York 1973.

44 "Nationalsozialistentag in Weimar", *TAZ*, July 6, 1926, p. 5. See also "Grossdeutsche Kundgebung", *MZ*, July 6, 1926, p. 9.

least, not stand in their way. In the case of Gera, Nazi activists assaulted at least one innkeeper and circulated letters that pressured local business owners to decorate their places of business in signs of Nazi support, if they wanted to profit from Nazi rallies planned for the town.[45] In another attack that apparently targeted the whole town without any reported indication of provocation, Nazi activists transported truckloads of young men to the town of Michelstadt in Odenwald and took local residents by surprise. They stopped roughly in the middle of the town, began to bombard some of the houses and residents standing nearby with stones, including a child, and then sprang from their trucks and began hitting people with leather straps.[46]

Conclusions

There were still competing signs of fear and courage in the last years of the Weimar Republic. Despite evolving Nazi politics, opposition to Nazism in Thuringia continued to appear in surprising places, culminating in the removal of Wilhelm Frick from the state's nationalist coalition government in 1931. Consequently, Nazi activists resorted to physical attacks on some of the members of the other nationalist parties who withdrew their support, particularly members of the Agricultural League, who had at first supported the inclusion of Nazi leaders in Thuringia's coalition government, but then disapproved of some of Frick's actions in his dual role as Thuringia's Minister of the Interior and Education and finally allowed Thuringia's parliament to call for a vote of no-confidence in Frick's Nazi leadership.[47] Consequently, regional Nazi leaders began closing ranks with members of other local nationalist organizations like the *Stahlhelm* and *Jungdeutscher Orden* at public rallies and alluded to the fear of national disunity in the face of another rising Communist threat as a way to discourage any further openly nationalist dissent to Nazi activities.[48] Perhaps most crucial in this shift toward Nazi influence in local communities, Frick's appointment of pro-Nazi state policemen in key municipal positions, despite his removal from Thuringia's coalition government, ensured that Nazi activists would be able to operate with near impunity during the time of the so-called

45 "Hakenkreuz-Terror in Gera", *Tribüne*, September 5, 1931.
46 "Hakenkreuz-Barbaren", *Tribüne*, April 11, 1930, p. 2.
47 "Nazis verprügeln Landbündler", *Tribüne*, July 2, 1931.
48 "Drei Massenaufmärsche in Thüringen. Gauappell des Stahlhelms in Apolda – Ostmarkenkundgebung der Jungdeutschen in Eisenach – Gautag der NS in Gera", *TAZ*, September 7, 1931.

Preußenschlag in July 1932 in which conservative elites forcefully outmaneuvered democratic elites in Prussia, subsequently exposing any remaining political opponents in towns like Erfurt to greater Nazi violence in the future and undermining the possibility of truly democratic politics at the local level in the process.[49] For Jewish citizens and non-Jewish citizens who opposed *völkisch* politics and/or risked their lives in support of their Jewish peers, displays of civil courage, even small ones became riskier once the Nazis could influence and control local police forces by the summer of 1932 throughout much of Thuringia. The Nazi seizure of power was not yet a foregone conclusion, but the vulnerability of political opponents, minority groups and individuals who continued to publicly show their support for democracy had advanced to a critical point at the institutional and everyday levels where the guarantees for the freedom and security of all citizens had been compromised and potentially lay open to further Nazi control.

49 "Neue Herausforderung durch SA", *Tribüne*, July 5, 1932.