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## Book Review

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# Harvard fraud makes mockery of the Nazi Holocaust

by Mark Burdman

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### **Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust**

by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen  
Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1996  
622 pages, hardbound, \$30

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Ever since U.S. President Clinton announced, in the summer of 1994, that the traditional U.S.-British "special relationship" would be superseded by a "unique" relationship between Germany and the United States oriented toward stabilizing Russia and other countries to the East, the highest levels of the British oligarchy, particularly those in the camp of Baroness Margaret Thatcher, have searched for means to poison German-American relations. In recent months, they have been looking for new flanks, to reinvigorate the black propaganda campaign that was first launched as Germany was being reunited in 1989-90, that a united Germany would represent a "Fourth Reich" threat to the world.

Now, from the bowels of that prestigious center of British ideology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University, a work has been produced, which has been correctly characterized by Gitta Sereny, an expert on the Nazi Holocaust, as a "hymn of hate to the Germans." *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, by Harvard assistant professor Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, is a calculated provocation, which carries the British-authored notion of "German collective guilt" to its most extreme expression to date. It has the aim of conveying to Americans, especially those younger "Generation X" Americans who have no idea of history, an image of "the Germans" as mass-murderers whose entire history has been defined by the determination that Jews must be "eliminated."

It is a marker of the cultural degeneration among certain milieux in the United States, that a book of this degree of incompetence, which employs the same "Big Lie" methods

as Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, would have the degree of resonance in the United States, that it has had. The psychological-cultural programmers at Harvard—the same university which pioneered the mass drugging of youth in the early 1960s—have evidently calculated that the book would have a certain effect. Harvard's recent sponsorship of the racist Herrnstein-Murray *Bell Curve* tract, is fully in line with an earlier history, including flaunted anti-Semitism, that justifies the slogan, "Before Hitler, There Was Harvard." (See article of that title by Stephen Komm in *New Solidarity* newspaper, Nov. 18, 1983.)

Goldhagen's "hymn of hate" was released in the United States, to much fanfare by the liberal establishment media. The *New York Times'* A.M. Rosenthal, for example, the journalistic thug who was one of the propagandists who helped create the environment for the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last year, by his constant attacks on the Middle East peace process, threatened, in an April 3 column, that "denial" of Goldhagen's thesis is "no longer possible, except as a mask for approval [of Nazi genocide] or cowardice." On March 31, in response to the book's release in Britain, disoriented Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel praised the work as "a tremendous contribution to the understanding and teaching of the Holocaust. In Germany, where it will certainly provoke huge controversy among historians of the Second World War, it should be read in every school."

Ecstatic praise for the book is emanating out of the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Goldhagen was featured at a symposium, with an audience packed by supporters of his thesis, at the Holocaust Museum, in Washington.

From the side of the British Thatcherites, the Hollinger Corporation-owned *Daily Telegraph* ran a positive review of the book on April 24. Author Norman Lebrecht said that Goldhagen has "put German guilt back on the agenda," and has made a significant contribution to confronting the threat posed by *present-day* Germany. According to Lebrecht, the

British have been "far too polite to confront our German friends . . . with the spectres of their former selves." Hence, a "twelve-year hole" (1933-45) in recent history now exists. But the "taboo" on such a "confrontation" has now been "well and truly busted by a Harvard assistant professor." With incredible gall coming from a Brit writing for the leading daily mouthpiece of the British Empire, Lebrecht attacked "the German failure to confront beastliness," and asserted that Goldhagen's book would help Britons overcome "our cowardly reluctance to raise it with them."

### A disgrace

This reviewer is an American Jew, who lost many of his family members in the Holocaust. He has lived in Germany for most of the past 15 years. From this vantage point, he fully concurs with the comment made by world-renowned Jewish violinist Lord Yehudi Menuhin, during an April 18 German television interview, that Goldhagen's work is a "disgrace" for which the author should be "totally ashamed."

Happily, Menuhin has not been alone in condemning Goldhagen. The book has produced a backlash, not only in Germany, but also among reviewers, historians, and Holocaust experts in Britain, Israel, and the United States. Liberal commentator Hella Pick, who has just completed a favorable biography of Austrian Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, denounced the book, in a March 29 *Guardian* review, as "often pernicious," and filled with "gross distortion" and "a super-

fluity of embarrassing psycho-babble." Among U.S. commentators, William Pfaff devoted his April 18 *International Herald Tribune* column to a repudiation of Goldhagen's main thesis.

In an April 17 discussion, one British influential, who played a critical role in the British side of the post-World War II occupation of Germany, and who can hardly be accused of "Germanophile" proclivities, drew attention to the "coincidence," that Goldhagen's book was released almost simultaneously with the new biography of Josef Goebbels, by the notoriously pro-Hitler British author David Irving. This Briton estimated that Goldhagen is "David Irving in reverse: One denies the Holocaust happened; the other makes a mockery of the Holocaust by the way he explains it."

Perhaps most telling, is that the backlash has spread among some of the most serious experts on the Holocaust, including Israel's Yehuda Bauer, Germany's Raul Hilberg, and America's Christopher Browning. Browning wrote a book two years ago, also focussing on the role of "ordinary Germans" in committing atrocities against Jews, but coming to totally different conclusions than Goldhagen. One of Germany's prominent researchers on the subject, who has recently debated Goldhagen, has fired off a letter to Harvard, demanding to know how that prestigious university ever allowed Goldhagen to receive a Ph.D. for his dissertation on which the book is based. "I demand to know, who were his thesis advisers?" this individual stormed.



*Members of the "White Rose" German students' resistance movement against the Nazis: Hans and Sophie Scholl, with Christoph Probst. All were executed by the Gestapo. The Gestapo terror against German citizens, and the very existence of a German resistance movement, are conveniently written out of history by Goldhagen.*

## An axiom of German culture

Goldhagen begins with the premise that the Holocaust was planned and executed singularly against the Jews; the mass-murder of gypsies, and the killing of other groups, are of secondary, or tertiary interest, and do not qualify as a "Holocaust." Many of the most grievous acts, he claims, were committed outside the highly organized Nazi killing machine, by "ordinary Germans," who were under no outside compunction to do what they did, but who killed Jews voluntarily and gleefully. They *wanted* to kill Jews.

The Holocaust, according to Goldhagen, was a "German" event, carried out by "the Germans"; opposition to killing the Jews among Germans was infinitesimal, discountable. The image of the "good German," quickly opposed to the slaughter, if unable or unwilling to stop it, is a mythology, he writes. "Millions" of Germans *would have* joined in the national sport of killing Jews, if the situation had been "appropriate" to do so, Goldhagen asserts.

From such premises, Goldhagen proceeds "logically" to his conclusions. The main impulses of what he calls "German culture," can only be understood as *necessarily and deterministically* leading up to the events that were to transpire over the 1933-45 period. In his view, Germany, uniquely among all nations, was characterized by a specifically virulent form of anti-Jewish sentiment that was "eliminationist," seeking, at times by more peaceful means and at other times by more violent means, depending on the circumstances, to eliminate Jews from the face of the Earth. The ultimate historical and cultural roots of the problems lie in Germany's origins, since medieval times and the times of Luther, as a *Christian* nation, since, he writes, "anti-Semitism has been a more or less *permanent* feature of the Western world."

By the 19th century, matters took a decisive turn for the worse. Anti-Semitism, according to Goldhagen, "continued to be an axiom of German culture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. . . . Its regnant version in Germany during the Nazi period was but a more accentuated, intensified, and elaborated form of an already broadly accepted basic model."

In Goldhagen's virtual reality, Germans simply cannot win. Those who, in the 19th century, supported full rights and emancipation for Jews, were, more often than not, "anti-Semites in sheep's clothing," since they accepted the premises of the hard-core anti-Semites, that Jews had to be "eliminated," but they wanted to do so "peacefully."

Goldhagen claims that, just as the "democratic creed" is an unspoken "cultural axiom" in the United States, part of the "common sense" of our society, so has "anti-Semitism" been to Germany. Aside from the insane classification of Germans contained therein, this assertion would certainly make strange reading to those on the receiving end of such expressions of "American democracy" as lynch mobs and other forms of extreme racism.

Hitler and the Nazis become, for Goldhagen, almost an incidental predicate, the "wish-fulfillment" of the Germans'

culturally determined, axiomatic desire to eliminate Jews. For Goldhagen, World War I, the Versailles Treaty reparations imposed by the Bank of England and its U.S. collaborators, and the devastating 1923 Weimar hyperinflation, are of almost no importance, and receive a few pages in the book, which mostly contain sentences like: "During World War I, Germans accused the Jews of not serving in the military, of not defending the Fatherland," or "anti-Semitism was endemic to Weimar Germany."

## Goldhagen the eliminationist

Goldhagen reveals himself to be either a liar or an illiterate, or both, when it comes to questions of elementary history.

To use Goldhagen's own perverse neologism, it is he who is a raving "eliminationist"; he simply eliminates from his account, whatever is inconvenient. The approach is reminiscent of that of Winston Smith, the main character in George Orwell's *1984*, whose main job was to shred from all publications, the names of individuals whom his totalitarian masters wanted forgotten. In his "Note on Method," Goldhagen acknowledges this dishonest approach, by saying that he chose or omitted data, based on the criterion of "appropriateness . . . for testing certain hypotheses."

Amidst all his self-righteous pronouncements against "German culture," he eliminates any discussion of the Weimar Classical period. In the real world outside Goldhagen's paranoid projections, the entire edifice of his argument collapses, on hearing the famous four words of *German* Friedrich Schiller's *Ode to Joy*, "*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*" ("All men are brothers"), the theme of Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the most concise possible poetic statement against prejudice. Since the great German Schiller never exists, in Goldhagen's universe, the reader need never know about Schiller's passion for freedom for humanity, and about his famous third lecture on universal history, "The Mission of Moses," in which the universal debt of humanity to Mosaic Judaism is celebrated.

Similarly, Goldhagen eliminates the next crucial moment in German culture and history, namely, the 1809-13 German "wars of liberation," a movement based on the ideas of Schiller and his circle, and the ensuing crushing of that liberation movement, in the lead-up to the oligarchs' 1815 Congress of Vienna and the tripartite (Britain-Austria-Russia) Holy Alliance. These oligarchical arrangements, celebrated by Harvard prominent Henry A. Kissinger in his 1950s doctoral thesis, imposed a feudal, reactionary order on Europe. The Holy Alliance, together with the proliferation in Germany of "romanticism" and the schools of thinking associated with Immanuel Kant, among others, produced a reactionary anti-Beethoven, anti-Schiller *counterculture* in Germany, in which anti-Semitism and related racialist movements were able to take root.

By eliminating the conflict, in Germany, between *republicanism* and *oligarchism*, Goldhagen reduces "the German

problem” to a proto-genetic, proto-racialist interpretation, in which the reader, to the extent that he or she believes this hokum, is induced to wish that the Holocaust might have been avoided, if “the Germans” themselves had first been “eliminated”!

Goldhagen’s eliminationist magic wand also extends to some of the greats among *German Jews*. There is no mention of Moses Mendelssohn, Heinrich Heine, the father and son Emil and Walter Rathenau, and many more. In Goldhagen’s universe, what actually happened in history, namely, that German Jews rose to prominent positions in science, medicine, mathematics, physics, literature, and other fields, never happened. If Hitler exterminated hundreds of thousands of German Jews, Goldhagen now seems to want to finish the job, by removing that *paradoxical* fact of German history, that Jews reached a higher point of culture and achievement in Germany, than in most other countries.

This ties into one other curious “eliminationism,” which we can only briefly allude to here. As Pfaff stresses in his review, German anti-Semitism was much *less* virulent, up to the period of World War I, than in other countries. It is amazing that Goldhagen never mentions the Dreyfus affair in France, or the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, of the last part of the 19th century. If one would have written a book, ca. 1900, forecasting which country might see an outbreak of uncontrolled anti-Jewish hatred, France and Russia would certainly have ranked above Germany. Similarly, he says nothing about the extremely nasty anti-Jewish expressions in Austria. The latter country gets *one* mention in the entire book, despite the fact that leading Nazis, including Hitler, Adolf Eichmann, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, and others, were Austrians, not Germans. In Goldhagen’s strange universe, Germans and Austrians are evidently one people, a notion that would surprise some of the participants on either side of the Prussian-Austrian war.

### **The Nazis’ ‘peaceful and consensual’ revolution**

Goldhagen reaches conclusions about “the Nazi German revolution” of 1933 that are truly psychedelic, leading one to speculate whether the 36-year-old associate professor has participated in modern-day versions of the experiments in hallucinatory drugs pioneered by Harvard’s Prof. Timothy Leary in the early 1960s. He writes: “The Nazi German revolution . . . was an unusual revolution in that, domestically, it was being realized—the repression of the political left in the first few years notwithstanding—without massive coercion and violence. The revolution was primarily the transformation of consciousness—the inculcation in the Germans of a new ethos. By and large, it was a peaceful revolution willingly acquiesced to by the German people. Domestically, the Nazi German revolution was, on the whole, consensual.”

By a stroke of the pen, the Gestapo terror against German

citizens is eliminated. Eliminated is the fact that the pre-1933 Nazis had a private army of 300,000 to 400,000 men in arms, and that leading opponents of the Nazis were assassinated. Worst of all, there is no discussion of the massive support that Hitler’s Nazis received from *British and British-linked American circles*, in the period leading up to the takeover of power, and without which, it is doubtful that the “peaceful revolution” could have occurred. In the real world, “the Nazi revolution” was absolutely *not* a “Germans-only” event.

Goldhagen treats it as a casual fact, that 25,000 Germans were rounded up, and put in camps, right after the Reichstag fire. For him, again, this is a virtual irrelevance. Likewise, the anti-Nazi German resistance of Count von Stauffenberg and his courageous circle, the heroes of the July 20, 1944 attempt on Hitler’s life, receive a couple of pages of copy, and are dismissed as dominated by “eliminationist anti-Semites,” who admittedly opposed the Nazis, but shared the Nazis’ views on the Jews!

As an antidote to this venom, the reader is invited to the neighborhood where this reviewer lives, where almost every street is named after a prominent German official who was executed by the Nazis, and where the street signs give the date when that execution took place.

But this part of the story has a punch-line. Goldhagen is fanatically attempting to convey the image of “the Germans and Führer united, in a passion to eliminate the Jews.” For this to be credible, he has to claim that the Nazis’ plan to eliminate the Jews was known to, and enthusiastically supported by, the population. Yet, as U.S. historian Francis Loewenheim points out, the disproof of this comes from Daniel Goldhagen’s Holocaust-survivor father Erich, himself a professor at Harvard, and the individual from whom son Daniel claims he drew inspiration and support in writing his thesis. Loewenheim reveals that, in 1971, Erich Goldhagen wrote a study, published in the Jewish magazine *Midstream*, that reported on an Oct. 6, 1943 speech by SS head Heinrich Himmler, to an inner circle of the Nazi command, in which he declared: “I want to speak now, in this most restricted circle, about a matter which . . . for me, has become the heaviest burden of my life, the matter of the Jews. . . . I ask that you only listen, but never speak, of what I am saying to you here today. . . . You will keep the knowledge to yourselves. . . . I think it is better that we . . . take the secret to our graves.”

As Loewenheim stresses, “if Himmler and Hitler and all the other Nazi gangsters, high and low, thought their fellow Germans approved of what they were doing to the Jews . . . surely they would have had no hesitation about informing the German people about how their glorious work was coming along. . . .”

But this revealing account of Himmler’s disposition is, like so much else of importance, eliminated from Goldhagen’s “hymn of hate to the Germans.”