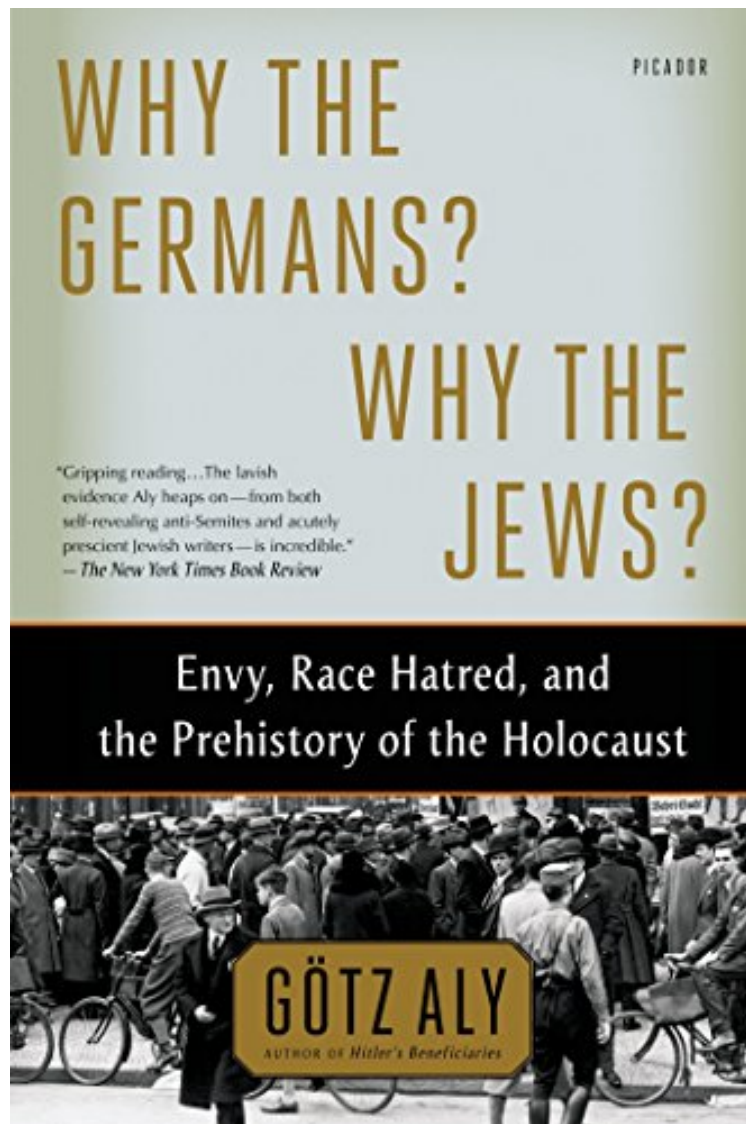


[Free and download] Why the Germans? Why the Jews?: Envy, Race Hatred, and the Prehistory of the Holocaust

## Why the Germans? Why the Jews?: Envy, Race Hatred, and the Prehistory of the Holocaust

Gotz Aly

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**Gotz Aly : Why the Germans? Why the Jews?: Envy, Race Hatred, and the Prehistory of the Holocaust** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why the Germans? Why the Jews?: Envy, Race Hatred, and the Prehistory of the Holocaust:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Scholarly discourse of German nationalist angst

By Joris German historian Gtz Aly has built a well-deserved reputation for his innovative approach (re)examining the causes of the Holocaust and the rise of Nazism. Aside from a short case study, his works place (social)-economic considerations front and center. In his latest work, this theme takes a backseat to fear and envy, though Aly is swift to point out its economic root causes. In well delineated chapters, Aly offers a rich analysis of German national identity and nationalist angst - the rise of the Jewish voice one amongst them - placing the latter as both a catalyst for and victim of internal turmoil. The book also provides rich cause and context for the indifference and latent animosity of many Germans to the fate of their Jewish peers; interspersing case studies and personal history; before completing with a chapter on the rise of the Nazi party. This book is intended for a scholarly audience and thus not necessarily a captivating read. It certainly does not (profess to) offer a comprehensive analysis to the rise of Nazism and the foundations of the Holocaust. However, Gtz Aly fills in a part of the narrative that is often overlooked. As such, this is a valuable study.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding familiarity with pre 1933 German society.

By Philip G. Eidelberg Very movingly and poignantly written. The strong point of Aly is empathy: he identifies convincingly with both Jews and German anti Semites. The fact that he himself derives from a German Gentile family, many of whose members were themselves anti Semites gives him a special authenticity. But I have several reservations:

- 1) He makes the German non Jews appear as dull witted simpletons and country bumpkins adapting to city life with great difficulty. How do you reconcile this picture with the general image abroad during the 19th and early 20th centuries of a highly sophisticated people excelling in science, technology and medicine?
- 2) It is understandable that the Germans should have been anti-Semitic. But even strong anti-Semitism bears little resemblance to Nazi anti-Semitism. Traditional anti-Semitism viewed Jews as disreputable human beings but human nonetheless. Nazi anti-Semitism (Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg, etc.) viewed Jews as "lice" or "bacteria" in human form, as Aly himself implies (206-207).
- 3) Traditional anti-Semitism, as Aly himself stresses repeatedly, was opportunistic and pragmatic. Nazi anti-Semitism was total - it refused to make any compromises whatsoever. Every single Jew had to be removed from German society, including Jews whose skills and knowledge would have been of great use to the Third Reich. This is in sharp contrast to anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. There, Jews in science and technology were discriminated against (for example they were much less likely to be promoted), but they were usually (if not always) allowed to keep their jobs. Stalin may have been strongly anti-Semitic but even he allowed his foreign minister, Vladislav Molotov, to have a Jewish wife. Likewise, his minister of heavy industry, Lazar Kaganovich, was a Jew.
- 4) While Aly's bibliography is extensive and very knowledgeable, I was surprised at the omission of Peter Fritzsche's excellent *Germans into Nazis* (1998) which treats the same subject and from a similar perspective. But I loved the book anyway, despite its limitations, if only for its outstanding familiarity with pre 1933 German society.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Book offers an interesting thesis, but is not complete or convincing

By Richard E. Hegner This book posits that the roots of German anti-Semitism prior to 1933 rested on envy of the Jews' relatively advanced economic and professional status. This is a plausible explanation but flies in the face of most of the vast literature on this subject, and the author makes no attempt to refute what other analyses present. Nor does he present the case for his thesis in a convincing fashion. Surely, other factors were also at play, since it is difficult to conceive of a Holocaust based merely on envy and jealousy, and of Germans' acquiescence in genocide solely because of these purported causes. The book is also remarkably discursive and rambling. For example, it discusses the socioeconomic background of Nazi Gauleiter (regional officials), as if this were a contributing factor to the genocide. It is also rather poorly written--or the translation is a poor one. If you are seeking an explanation of German anti-Semitism, look elsewhere--the works of Michael Burleigh, Ian Kershaw, and even Daniel Goldhagen offer more complete and thorough analyses.

A provocative and insightful analysis that sheds new light on one of the most puzzling and historically unsettling conundrums Why did the Holocaust happen in Germany, of all places? How did a country known for its culture and refinement turn so rabidly anti-Semitic? Why did a nation where Jews had full civil rights and many opportunities a place that Jews had eagerly flocked to in the early twentieth century to escape racist persecution in Poland and Russia turn upon them so violently just a few decades later? Countless people have grappled with these questions, but few have come up with answers as original and perceptive as those of German historian Gotz Aly. Tracing the prehistory of the Holocaust from the 1800s to the Nazis' assumption of power in 1933 Aly shows that German anti-Semitism did not originate with racist ideology or religious animosity, as is often supposed. Instead, through striking statistics and economic analysis, he demonstrates that it was rooted in a more basic emotion: material envy. Aly's groundbreaking account of this fatal social dynamic opens up a new vantage point on the greatest crime in history and is sure to prompt heated debate for years to come."

From Booklist Aly is a historian specializing in the Third Reich and the Holocaust. In this provocative and disturbing book, he has set himself an impossible task: to explain why the effort to exterminate the Jews of Europe happened in Germany rather than other European nations with stronger histories of anti-Semitism. Other historians have tried, most

notably and recently Daniel Goldhagen, who saw eliminationist strains embedded in German culture. But Aly posits a simpler explanation. Despite Nazi ideology and incessant campaigning about the Jewish race, it was simple jealousy and greed that led to the persecution of Jews. He convincingly illustrates how German Jews were especially proficient in coping with the challenges of rapid industrialization and other aspects of modernity that swept Germany in the late nineteenth century. Despite their relatively small numbers, Jews rose to astounding heights in business, academia, and eventually politics. Their prominence seemed to threaten the status and well-being of other groups, especially in the lower middle class. When world depression devastated the German economy, Jewish wealth was fair game for plunder. Aly has provided a useful emphasis on this aspect of German anti-Semitism, but it is ultimately no more satisfying than earlier efforts to explain the unexplainable. --Jay Freeman Brilliant, passionate, provocative. Micha Brumlik, *Die Zeit* Consistently absorbing ... a penetrating and provocative study [that] offers shrewd insight into the German mindset over the last two centuries. The Jewish Daily Forward The most important contribution to the massive literature on the subject. Aly's analysis of a deeply rooted social malady has made the incomprehensible comprehensible. Michael Blumenthal, director of the Jewish Museum Berlin About the Author Gtz Aly is the author of *Hitlers Beneficiaries* and *Into the Tunnel*, among other books. One of the most respected historians of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, he has received the National Jewish Book Award, Germany's prestigious Heinrich Mann Prize, and numerous other honors. He is currently the Sir Peter Ustinov guest professor at the University of Vienna.