



“We cannot change what happened anymore. The only thing we can do is to learn from the past and to realize what discrimination and persecution of innocent people means. I believe that it’s everyone’s responsibility to fight prejudice. **To build up a future, you have to know the past.**” Otto Frank

Otto Frank was the father of the famed Holocaust diarist Anne Frank. He had served as a German army officer, a lieutenant of artillery on the Western Front in WWI. Though decorated, the Nazis sent him to Auschwitz. They murdered his wife and daughters.

Their crime? They were Jews.

The 1918 sudden surrender by the Central Powers, Imperial Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire shocked their Homefronts. Their armies were intact and still in the field. Germany had recently defeated the Russians. They had not given up one inch of Germanic land to the British, French, Italians, and Americans. How could they have lost the War?

After the War, General Ludendorff of the German High Command proffered an answer. Germany and Austro-Hungary had been “*Dolchstoss*,” stabbed in the back. They did not lose the War; they were betrayed.

It explained a lot to millions suffering from economic deprivations, dislocations, and turmoil in post War German, Austria, and Hungary.



The Versailles Peace treaty put more than just the sole blame for the War on the defeated. It placed onerous, debilitating reparations upon them as well.

Who betrayed them? Whisperings and outright accusations began ...it was the Jews, revolutionary Jewish Bolshevists, and Jewish liberals. The millennial scapegoat of antisemitism thought to have been near extinction by the Jews before the War proved to have been sleeping, festering, waiting for an excuse to emerge. Adolph Hitler vaulted to power on the stabbed-in-the-back belief just fifteen years after the War ended.

Jewish life in Germany, Austria, and Hungary had 1,500 years of roots. But, Jews had only been emancipated, granted citizenship and citizen's rights, barely 50 years earlier. Great Britain emancipated its Jews in 1858. Romania did not until 1923.

With emancipation, Jews rapidly emerged from the shadows of repression, energetically establishing themselves in law, medicine, politics, arts, and the

economy. Most Jews sincerely felt German or Austrian. Deep down, they knew their acceptance could be tenuous. Non-spoken desperation drove them to prove they were loyal, patriotic citizens of their respective countries. Nothing bespoke manly patriotic loyalty in Germanic society as military service.

When WWI broke out, over 500,000 Jews patriotically flew to their colors. They eagerly volunteered. Rabbis joined the armies.

Rabbi Leo Baeck volunteered. He wholeheartedly supported the German effort. Baeck felt it was the right thing to face down British arrogance, French revanchism, and vicious Russian antisemitism.

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German Jewish intellectuals supported the War effort, such as Martin Buber. For Buber, the War was a 'world-historical mission' for Germany to civilize Eastern Europe.

Jews stood shoulder to shoulder, facing death, with their Christian countrymen. They were eager to prove they were good Germans.

Jews in France and Britain did the same for similar national reasons. Jews did not shirk their duty, ironically, even in Russia, albeit with less enthusiasm.

German/Austrian Jews volunteered disproportionately for dangerous front-line duty, frequently fatally, to prove their loyalty. Military necessity pushed antisemitism aside. In the German army alone, of the 100,000 Jews who served, 3,000 were officers, 77,000 fought on the front lines, 30,000 were decorated, and 12,000 gave their lives.

The end of 1916 saw a growing realization in Germany, Austro-Hungary. The War was not going as well as had been hoped. The early short euphoria of quick victories dissipated.

What had gone wrong? Grumbling arose. Finger-pointing began. Antisemitism in the armies began reemerging.

Answers came. Jews did not fight. Jews were cowards. They hid in the rear or in safe office jobs, pushing Christians to die on the fronts.

The German Command, convinced the Jews did not fight, conducted a Judenzahlung, a Census of Jews in the army, to prove their point. The results were never published. The Judenzahlung proved just the opposite. German Jews fought bravely.

It was the same everywhere.

"Jewish soldiers fight great. They are born heroes, brave and self-sacrificing. It is not only true for the Jews who lived in the cities but also for the simple religious Jew who wears sideburns. They are just amazing first-class soldiers."

Archduke Josef August of Austria

"Jewry always demonstrated their duty on the front line. I express my gratitude for them in the name of the army."

King Charles of Austria-Hungary.

Historically, the Jew as a scapegoat, the cowardly Jew, the disloyal Jew, was not unique to Germans or Austro-Hungarians. It was a common canard advanced when a particular side was losing. The French, British, and even the American armies were infected with varying levels of antisemitism. For the

victors, antisemitism did not need to metastasize. For the Germanic losers, it did.

The Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A. (JWV) traces its origins to 1896. The howls of the antisemites in the U.S. said the Jews did not fight in the American Civil War. Jews earned more Congressional Medals of Honor proportional to their population than any other group. For the past 127 years, the JWV has repeatedly been called upon to defend the American Jewish Veteran.

The Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women (AJEX) in the U.K. traces its origins to the 1920s in response to rising British antisemitism claiming the Jews did not fight and Jews were disloyal.

British Jewish soldiers returning from WWII in 1946 were stunned when they encountered organized and growing British Black Shirted Fascists led by Sir Oswald Mosely on the streets of England. The Fascists called for the death of the Jews. The returning veterans did not listen to their Rabbis or establishment Jewry. They organized and bloodily battled the Fascists in the streets. Mosely's Black Shirts were defeated by 1950.

Today, there is growing consternation in the U.S. and the U.K. as classic antisemitism, masquerading as anti-Israel – pro-Palestinian political discourse, is rapidly returning.

German antisemitism metastasized by 1919. It necessitated the immediate formation by German Jewry of the Reichsbund Jüdischer Frontsoldaten, the Reich Association of Jewish Frontline Soldiers, to defend German Jewish veterans. They failed.



Hans Herzl, Theodor Herzl's son, rejected Zionism and tried to become more Austrian than the Austrians. He converted to Christianity. He assimilated. Hans finally accepted as he wrote in a letter before committing suicide, "In the end, a Jew is a Jew, is a Jew." Han's tragic belated understanding was a structural motivation for the eventual establishment of the state of Israel.

The vast majority of the German/Austro-Hungarian Jewish veterans and their families were murdered in the Holocaust. Being a veteran and holding an Iron Cross did not matter to the Nazis and their supporters.

Young German/Austrian Jews, and even some older veterans of WWI, who escaped to join the Allies during WWII, fought with a vengeance, which not even the Allies understood.

The Germans/Austro-Hungarians were never stabbed in the back by the Jews. It was the Jews who were stabbed in the back by them.

Peter Rosenbluth's documentary, *Stabbed in the Back*, tells the little-known story of the 500,000+ Jews who served with the Central powers during WWI. It is available online for free viewing.

<https://tubitv.com/movies/660809/stabbed-in-the-back>