UCLA HOLOCAUST HISTORIAN NAMED MACARTHUR FELLOW

(1999)

UCLA historian Saul Friedlander, who holds UCLA's "1939" Club Chair in Holocaust Studies, was named a MacArthur Fellow on June 23, 1999. Friedlander will receive a grant from the MacArthur Foundation of $375,000 over five years. Individuals cannot apply for MacArthur Fellowships. Recipients are nominated and selected anonymously. UCLA's "1939" Club Chair is the first endowed chair in a public university in the United States devoted to Holocaust Studies.

Friedlander, a scholar of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, has "transformed our understanding of this period by weaving into a coherent whole the perspectives of the participants: ordinary Germans, party activists, military and political figures, and, most importantly, victims and survivors," the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation said in a statement announcing this year's 32 fellows. "Drawing from documents, films, recollections, and his personal experience, he reconstructs these events with a judicious tone that defies the nature of the subject. By enhancing our understanding of the nature and meaning of the Holocaust, Friedlander demonstrates the interplay of memory and representation in the interpretation of historic events."

Nazi Germany was one of the most advanced nations in the world, yet most Germans "looked the other way" as Hitler systematically persecuted Germany's Jews in a prelude to the Holocaust, Friedlander wrote in his chilling 1997 book, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1: The Years of Persecution, 1933- 1939"*(HarperCollins). The book, which covers the period from Hitler's rise to power to the outbreak of World War II, has been praised as the definitive history of Nazi policies prior to the Holocaust. Friedlander characterizes 1930s Germany as a world "grotesque and chilling under the veneer of an even more chilling normality."

The great majority of Germans in the 1930s "espoused traditional anti-Semitism in one form or another," but neither demanded nor opposed anti-Jewish measures, which most Germans considered a peripheral issue, wrote Friedlander. Most of the largely middle class, educated population of Germany accepted Nazi policies against the Jews and ignored the systematic removal of Jews from Germany's government, business and cultural life.

Friedlander made extensive use of new documents in his research, including local German police reports. "Among most 'ordinary Germans' there was acquiescence regarding the segregation and dismissal of the Jews from civil service" -employment which in pre-war Germany included judges, doctors in public hospitals and university professors, among many others, Friedlander wrote. "There was some glee in witnessing their degradation, but outside party ranks, there was no massive agitation to expel them from Germany or to unleash violence against them."

The German majority did not advocate violence against the Jews, but when Hitler pursued a policy of total extermination in 1941, the "hundreds of thousands of 'ordinary Germans' who actively participated in the killings acted no differently from the equally numerous and 'ordinary' Austrians, Rumanians, Ukrainians, Balts and other Europeans who became the most willing operatives of the murder machinery functioning in their midst," Friedlander wrote.

In Hitler, "cold calculation and blind fury coexisted and could find almost simultaneous expression," Friedlander wrote. Yet very few of the approximately 525,000 Jews living in Germany in January 1933 sensed the implications or foresaw the terror to come. A small number of Jewish artists and intellectuals left Germany almost immediately after Hitler's rise to power, but the vast majority of German Jews felt "no apparent sense of panic or urgency," Friedlander wrote. Even by the end of 1933, when tens of millions of people inside and outside Germany were aware of the Nazis' "systematic policy of segregation and persecution" against the Jews, the majority felt anxiety but no need to leave the country.

Jews who left Nazi Germany lost virtually everything they owned, Friedlander noted. The vast majority of German Jews knew they would face continued discrimination, but thought they could maintain their livelihood in Germany, he said. By January 1939, Jews were forced by law to sell their businesses and valuables, such as land, stock, jewels and works or art. By 1939, the Nazis had "entirely destroyed any remaining possibility for Jewish life in Germany," Friedlander said. That November, all Jewish children still attending German schools were expelled. The same year, Hitler approved the mass murder of handicapped children and mentally ill adults.

Throughout the 1930s, no powerful voice within Germany was raised against the Nazi regime. With very few exceptions, the Protestant and Catholic Churches were silent; no criticism or protest came from German universities. By 1939, virtually every American newspaper published editorials condemning the Nazis, but U.S. policies toward Germany did not change, he said. France, unlike other democratic countries, failed to offer even a symbolic gesture of protest against the Nazis.

Hitler did not hint what the final goal of his anti-Jewish policy would be in his first years in power, Friedlander said. His main goal toward the Jews in the late 1930s was to force their emigration to a distant country after confiscating their wealth. Friedlander finds no evidence of any plans for total extermination of the Jews prior to Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.

When Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, the persecution of Austrian Jews, especially in Vienna, outpaced the persecution in Germany, Friedlander says. "Public humiliation was more blatant and sadistic; expropriation better organized; forced emigration more rapid," and the Austrians "relished the public shows of degradation," he writes.

Friedlander's other books include *History, Memory, and the Extermination of the Jews*, (1993), *Reflections of Nazism*, (1984), and *When Memory Comes* (1979). He is the senior editor of the journal *History and Memory*.