Reading 14.2: 
Impact of the Nuremberg Laws

Creating Context

After the Nuremberg Laws, being a Jew was no longer a matter of self-definition or self-identification. Now a person was considered a Jew because of what his or her grandparents had chosen to believe. Who you were no longer depended upon you. This reading describes the impact this change had on many in Germany.

You will need to know the following vocabulary terms in order to fully understand this reading:

- decree
- pernicious
- gentile

After noting that by 1935, “at least a quarter of the Jews who remained had been deprived of their professional livelihood by boycott, decree, or local pressure,” historian Martin Gilbert noted:

More than ten thousand public health and social workers had been driven out of their posts, four thousand lawyers were without the right to practise, two thousand doctors had been expelled from hospitals and clinics, two thousand actors, singers and musicians had been driven from their orchestras, clubs and cafes. A further twelve hundred editors and journalists had been dismissed, as had eight hundred university professors and lecturers, and eight hundred elementary and secondary school teachers.

The search for Jews, and for converted Jews, to be driven out of their jobs was continuous. On 5 September 1935 the SS newspaper published the names of eight half-Jews and converted Jews, all of the Evangelical-Lutheran faith, who had been “dismissed without notice” and deprived of any further opportunity “of acting as organists in Christian churches.” From these dismissals, the newspaper commented, “It can be seen that the Reich Chamber of Music is taking steps to protect the church from pernicious influence.”

Marta Appel, like many Germans of the Jewish faith, found that the Nuremberg Laws affected even old friendships. For years, she had been getting together once a month with women from her old high school. In 1935, she stopped attending, mainly because she did not want to embarrass her non-Jewish friends.

One day on the street, I met one of my old teachers, and with tears in her eyes she... tried to convince me that [the women] were still my friends, and tried to take away my doubts. I decided to go to the next meeting. It was a hard decision and I had not slept the night before. I was afraid for my gentile friends. For
nothing in the world did I wish to bring them trouble by my attendance, and I was also afraid for myself. I knew I would watch them, noticing the slightest expression of embarrassment in their eyes when I came. I knew they could not deceive me; I would be aware of every change in their voices. Would they be afraid to talk to me?

It was not necessary for me to read their eyes or listen to the changes in their voices. The empty table in the little alcove that had always been reserved for us spoke the clearest language. It was even unnecessary for the waiter to come and say that a lady phoned that morning not to reserve the table thereafter. I could not blame them. Why should they risk losing a position only to prove to me that we still had friends in Germany?

### 14.2 Comprehension & Connections

1. After the Nuremberg Laws, being a Jew was no longer a matter of self-definition or self-identification. What does it mean to lose the right to define yourself? In what ways did Appel lose the right to define herself? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

2. How was the dilemma confronting Germans of Jewish descent in 1935 similar to that of the Bear in *the bear that wasn’t*? How did it differ?

3. If you were one of Marta’s school friends, how might you have explained to her that she should not come to the lunch? Conversely, how might you have convinced the others in the group that they should continue to welcome Marta?

4. Suppose you were one of Appel’s school friends. What do you like to think you might you have done? Might you have attended the lunch in 1933? In 1935? What might the consequences of attending be in 1933? In 1935? Of not attending? Suppose you were in Marta Appel’s position. Do you like to think you would have gone to lunch?

5. Franklin Roosevelt told Americans in the 1930s that the only thing they had to fear was “fear itself.” Does it take courage to face one’s fears and do the right thing? What was the right thing in 1933? In 1935? When did it take more courage to do right?

6. What questions does learning about the Nuremberg Laws raise for you? What resources and strategies can you use to help answer your questions?

### Using Reading 14.2

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