



De Trompet

'Never Trust the German'

An interview with the son of a Nazi war criminal

- Brad Macdonald
- [12-07-2017](#)

Niklas Frank is a retired journalist and author. He has devoted much of his writing career to exposing and denouncing the ideology and actions of his father, Hans Frank, a prominent Nazi official who was convicted and executed in 1946 for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Hans Frank was Adolf Hitler's personal lawyer from 1926 to 1933 and the legal representative of the Nazi Party as it rose to power. After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Hitler appointed Frank as governor general of Nazi-occupied Poland. Frank was in power for five years, during which Polish civilians were exploited and subjected to forced labor, reprisal executions were carried out, Jews were segregated and deported, and millions of Jews, Poles and Ukrainians were murdered. Four of six extermination camps in the Third Reich were under Frank's jurisdiction; the other two were located nearby. Frank's nickname was "butcher of Poland." He was captured by Allied forces and tried by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg after the war. He was convicted and hung in 1946. Niklas was 7 years old.

Niklas Frank visited the *Philadelphia Trumpet's* regional office in Edstone, England, on May 25. During his visit, I interviewed him on camera. Here are the choicest parts of the interview, lightly edited for clarity and readability.

On German superiority

Your 1987 book, *In the Shadow of the Reich*, is very critical of your father. What was your intent in writing it?

Living in Germany, growing up in Germany after the war ... nobody wanted to talk about the Third Reich and what really happened. And this silence was going on, and is going on, till nowadays. I ... became more and more furious about this silence in Germany, and I [wrote books] to show people that you have to be tough and you have to be [brave enough] to find out what your parents and grandparents really have done, [and how] Hitler was made great with their personal help. ...

Do you think that, in general, the Germans still believe they are the superior race?

I would say so. ... Because they feel superior.

How does this view manifest itself?

I wouldn't say that we show this [part] of our soul and of our character openly every day. But it's something [that] keeps us together. It keeps German people together. We [believe] we are the best [people] and whatever we are doing is better than the other people are.

In your book, you wrote, "There are two people inside each German. One of them is well behaved, hardworking and a solid citizen. That is the official version of the respectable German. But underneath it, behind it, as if made up of

negative ones, there are the authentic Germans. A people of murderers, and the murderers are growing in number, day by day. I see every German being followed by his own negative shadow. The official German carries his attaché case, is beautifully dressed, speaks English and French, goes to the opera and to soccer matches. The other one has a face like yours in your cauldron. It is full of an increasing rage in a world that will not acknowledge him for love or money, and he is flirting more and more with the idea of putting on the butcher's apron again. Yes indeed, I'm frightened of the shadow German born of your spirit." You wrote that in 1987. Do you still see two people inside each German today?

Yes, for sure.

When you walk the streets of Germany, you still see that "negative shadow."

Yeah. And when I made my research for this last book *Dark Soul, Coward Mouth*, about the German denazification, after I had searched in about 4,000 files, this feeling about the two Germans in every German became really strong. ... Because they never changed after the war their true character. They are now just very great in hiding it.

What do you see that indicates there are two Germans?

I don't have a list, but it's nearly every day that I found something in the newspaper [M]y most popular example is that ... once during the [economic] crisis of Greece, [a prominent member of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party] said, "Now Europe speaks German!" This for me is one of the most brilliant examples for what [the German] people are thinking. If you have a look through our tabloids [and] newspapers, they're all saying again, *Look at all those lazy people* [referring to the Greeks]. This strengthens this kind of feeling [of German superiority] inside the Germans.

Nietzsche wrote, "The German soul has passages and galleries in it. There are caves, hiding places and dungeons therein. Its disorder has much of the charm of the mysterious. The German is well acquainted with the paths to chaos." Do you agree with that?

Yes. ... He's right. He has better words.

Are there other characteristics of the German people you think the world should be concerned about?

I think I have told it before: As long as we are dominating Europe with our industry, everything is OK. But if they dare to take away our money, then it will become dangerous.

On Germany's 'Silent Majority'

You speak a lot about the "silent majority." What is that, and what does it stand for?

For sure they don't stand for a true democracy. They obey the democracy [as long as it] works for them. ... But they don't really believe in it. And we still know ... in the midst of our society there is a big anti-Semitism. And this is growing again. We build a lot of monuments for our victims, for our Jewish victims. But this doesn't count for the silent majority.

So the silent majority is still anti-Semitic?

Yes.

And what is the source of that anti-Semitism today?

It was not [destroyed] after the war. It still was vivid in the people. They didn't dare to say it in public anymore, because it was forbidden, and it is forbidden by law [today]. But at home it's at tables, and [the silent majority] still has the same feeling against the Jews.

Are there other characteristics of the silent majority?

Yeah. One of the main things that always comes across in Germany is the cowardice of the Germans. Besides their famous army in former times and their hard-fighting soldiers, we are a coward people. ... We don't have a lot of civil courage. It starts with your own. If you don't have civil courage, you give permission to the most horrible dictatorship in the end.

You've made the remark that the Germans have no empathy—

Yes, that's the other thing. They are cowards and they don't have any empathy.

You mean they have no empathy for the suffering of others?

That's exactly what it means.

This is not just something we saw in World War ii—it's a characteristic of the Germans?

For me, it's a characteristic of the Germans. ... You always can minimize this and say [the Germans are no different from] any other people around the world. ... But because of what we have experienced, because of our horrible crimes, we should

know better. We should have built up a very strong empathy for all the misery around the world, and especially for the misery around Europe and our own people. But nobody cares about it.

On Nazism and Postwar Denazification

Is Nazism, in your mind, confined to this period between 1922 and 1945, or is it accurate to say there's a spirit of Nazism that always exists in the German people?

Yes, because we lost the chance to burn it out—to really burn it out of our souls. It would have taken a lot of therapists to deal with all the Nazis after the war [and to help to] really open them up. Not to tell the big things like how many Russians they shot, or how many things they did that were awful. The most important thing would have been to tell the people, at least their own families, about their own cowardice and the truth about what they really have experienced, where they have helped actively to commit crimes. ...

Do you believe the Nazi spirit is alive today in Germany?

Yes, yes.

And it's evident in the silent majority?

Yes.

And you say you see the first signs of the Nazi spirit reemerging in the refugee crisis?

[The Nazi spirit] is going down again because Merkel, our chancellor, turned about 180 degrees and now we are not any more taking refugees. ... So now it's OK, [and] the silent majority is becoming silent again. ... [But the idea of] the Aryan race—the master race—it's still in us.

Can you tell us about the Vatican's role in helping Nazis leave Germany at the end of the war, and right after the war?

I only know about the ratline buildup from Bishop Hudal. The pope knew about it, and he helped, but I can't give really a figure [for how many Nazis Hudal smuggled out]. Maybe 50; maybe 100.

Was Hudal the only Vatican agent helping Nazis escape, or was there a team?

He couldn't have done it without helpers, just like Hitler couldn't have done anything without some helpers. The same with Bishop Hudal. It was a ratline, and the rats were building up this line for the Nazis. There were a lot of priests and bishops and cardinals in Austria and Germany. ...

You've talked about a cardinal who wrote a letter on behalf of your father.

This was Cardinal Faulhaber. He was the top guy of the Bavarian Catholic Church, and he wrote a letter to Pope Pius [xii] asking him to write a letter to the Nuremberg trial asking them to save Mr. Frank. But a Polish delegation found out, and they were really upset, so the pope didn't write [the letter].

So the pope was prepared to write that letter on behalf of your father?

Yes, yes, yes. Cardinal Faulhaber wrote him, 'The Frank family was touched by God.' ...

How complicit was Pope Pius xii in Hitler's actions against the Jews?

He was silent, [but] he knew everything. He [received] a lot of letters and open statements ... explaining how horrible the fate of the German Jews is, and he didn't do anything. ...

So the pope knew about the gas chambers?

Yes.

On Germany's Repentance

Would you say after the war that there was repentance?

I don't know the word *repentance*.

Repentance means sorrow for what you have done.

No. There was [no] repentance. [In my interviews], whenever I started to talk [about the war], they immediately mentioned the [Allies'] bombing of Dresden and the bombing of Munich. ... [Many thought] we were the innocent people and suddenly the English and Americans start to bomb the peaceful Germany. Not only my father—all the people. They suffered a lot. Suddenly they had to suffer. After the war, we only were the suffering people, not the aggressive one.

And they never repented?

No.

We've talked about the spirit of Nazism—defined by anti-Semitism, a belief in a superior race, admiration for a strongman when conditions aren't great. Was that spirit perpetuated after World War ii in an intentional way through certain strategies or programs, or is it just in the German soul?

No. I would say, Brad, it was natural. For instance, when my father [during the Nuremberg trial] suddenly admitted personal guilt in killing the Jews, he took it back afterwards, months later. ... Everybody else around my father wasn't satisfied with [his admission of] guilt. ... Because if he was guilty, what about me—I was his wife? And what about me—I was his servant? And I was his minister for interior affairs in the governor general. All those people around were suddenly guilty as well as my father, not in the top position but the average level—suddenly they were all guilty. And so everybody who was in charge also on the lower level, if he or she would admit "I was guilty," all the relatives, all the others in the company or wherever it took place, said "No! If this bloody, stupid guy said he has killed you, what about me? I was working with him all the time, all the 12 years. Let me as well, that can't be true." So there was an understanding, there was an understanding: *Keep quiet; don't admit any guilt because you will hurt all your friends.* And I think from there ... it came naturally to survive and [to believe] you were innocent.

Today Germany is what people would call a pacifist nation, extremely hesitant to get involved in military conflict, because of World War ii. There's a lot of war guilt—

[This is] not war guilt.

Well, a lot of people would say when they look at Germany today that they see a people who are ashamed and sorry.

Good propaganda. We are brilliant in this propaganda.

Many people in America and Britain, like UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, believe Germany today has changed—it is rehabilitated. Is there a general shame and guilt?

There's no shame. No shame. Only with the 10 million people [the "true democrats," which are the minority].

It seems there are hints of a backlash, especially among young Germans, against the narrative that Germany made mistakes and did horrible things. More and more young Germans won't accept blame for World War ii and are tired of hearing about Hitler and the Nazis. Is this an accurate observation?

Yes. They're fed up with the Nazi stories. This also shows something really striking. If you say something like this, you never experienced empathy—you never felt empathy. Because if you really would have felt something like "putting myself in the role of a little Jew," you never would have said something like this, which you just quote: "I don't care about this. I am innocent. ... It was 70 years ago." ... He [should have] said, "Yes, I'm a German, and personally I'm not guilty, and I not only feel ashamed. It's far away, but I have to acknowledge, and this hurts, we have committed the most unbelievable crimes. And I say we, not that I'm personally responsible, for by chance or by God's plan I am a member of the German people, so I have to acknowledge it." [But] you have to show me the one who will say this besides me.

So you haven't come across that.

Never.

Do you find that concerning? Alarming?

Yes.

On Contemporary Germany

You were a journalist for *Stern* magazine for 23 years. You were in the Balkans in the early '90s covering the breakup of Yugoslavia. Germany and the Vatican were the first to recognize Croatia, even against the wishes of America, the United Nations and most of the rest of the world. That breakaway caused a lot of conflict. Is it fair to say that Germany played a significant role in causing the Balkan wars?

Yes, for this recognition of Croatia, for sure. But I don't think that really came out of Nazi understanding, and the desire to build a new empire. Maybe they thought if we acknowledge Croatia that the other countries of the former Yugoslavia will follow, and Serbia will be left alone, which turned out was what really followed. But for me it was some mistakes that they cut out Serbia. ...

You said that Germany is accomplishing today through economic imperialism what it was unable to accomplish through bombs and bullets.

You can see it.

So is that how you view Germany's role and relationship with the European Union? Would you consider it as kind of an economic and political imperialism where Germany—

Economically, not politically. ...

Do you think Europe is vulnerable to a strongman coming on the scene in Germany? If a German strongman emerged, would he be able to have his way in the rest of Europe?

We nearly have accomplished it. Nothing goes in Europe without the Germans. ...

What kind of chancellor is Angela Merkel?

She is very clever. Especially she is very clever with all the countries around, and she is much better [than] many male politicians in Germany. ... [Before she opened our borders to] the refugees, she should have talked to me first [*laughter*]. I could have [told] her, "You will not be successful. Think of the silent majority. The silent majority will press you as long as you turned around completely." And this happened. ...

Reports emerged about the right wing and even the Nazi element within the Bundeswehr, Germany's military. When you read that story, what did you think?

I was prepared to read this kind of story. ... I know there's something burning inside the soul of the Germans, and it just now suddenly popped up in our Bundeswehr. Only a part of it, for sure. But it's stronger than we imagined, and now find more and more soldiers who were involved.

This I don't understand—but I understand it on the other hand. I don't understand: [German soldiers receive] welfare; they get a good salary; they could nurse a family; they have quite a career. They can go to Afghanistan or Mali, or they have their foreign countries—they get big money in foreign countries. Everything could be OK if they would be real democrats. But ... if you have a weapon, and if you can shoot with it, and you have the brilliant German tanks ... running, then you are thinking of the old good Germany. And this is why they are not satisfied, together with the problems of the refugees

So is this crisis in the Germany military evidence the Nazi spirit is still alive and functioning in Germany?

For sure, that's a part of it. It's a part of it.

As we end the interview, do you have a final message?

Acknowledge that the German people didn't [start] any war the last 70 years—that's a good thing. But the next 70 years will follow, so be careful. Never trust the German. [Winston] Churchill [made a] brilliant sentence [about the Germans]: "You have the Germans either at your knees or at your throat." And that's exactly, that's a very good characterization of the German people. I love this guy. ■

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