

WE SPOKE OUT

COMIC BOOKS AND THE HOLOCAUST

NEAL ADAMS ■ RAFAEL MEDOFF ■ CRAIG YOE

INTRODUCTION AND
AFTERWORD BY
STAN LEE



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INTRODUCTION

by STAN LEE

PEOPLE DON'T USUALLY ASSOCIATE so profound and forbidding a topic as the Holocaust with the costumed superheroes and bombastic villains who inhabit the world of comic books. But the truth is that those colorful characters aren't the only residents of the comic book universe, and comic books can serve more purposes than entertainment alone.

Amidst all the thrilling tales of superheroes foiling evil villains, my colleagues and I have more than once used the pages of comic books in an effort to educate readers about real-life topics. When I wrote the storyline about drug abuse for three issues of *Amazing Spider-Man* in 1971, and when Neal Adams and Denny O'Neil created stories about drugs, racism, pollution, and other hot-button subjects for *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* from 1970 to 1972, we were no longer just comic book creators. We were also teachers.

I'm very proud that comics creators have taught about the Holocaust, too.

Sometimes we forget that talking about the Holocaust is a relatively new thing for most Americans. Sure, thirty-five states now require teaching the Holocaust in public schools. But the first of them, Illinois, adopted that policy as recently as 1990. There were very few opportunities for teenagers to learn about the Nazi genocide during the years before that, although comic book creators made an effort to fill that gap.

As far back as 1955, Al Feldstein and Bernard Krigstein created the astounding comic story "Master Race," about an encounter between a Holocaust survivor and a Nazi war criminal. To this day, that story gives me chills. As far as I know, it was the first attempt by comics creators to address the Holocaust and, appropriately, it is the first story in this volume.

In the 1960s and 1970s, in the pages of comic books such as Marvel's *Captain America* and *Sgt. Fury*, DC's *Star Spangled War Stories* and *Sgt. Rock*, and James Warren's *Eerie* magazine, writers and artists used the comics medium to teach teenagers about one of the darkest eras in human history. For more than a few young people, a story in a comic book was their first exposure to the Holocaust. I take great pride in the role comics creators played in introducing teens to this topic. Because educating young people about the Holocaust is crucial to ensuring that such an indescribable atrocity will never be repeated. And there can be no more important mission than that. □

Stan Lee is publisher emeritus of Marvel Comics and co-creator of such iconic comic book characters as Spider-Man, the X-Men, the Hulk, and the Fantastic Four.

MASTER RACE

YOU CAN *NEVER FORGET*, CAN YOU, CARL REISSMAN? EVEN *HERE...* IN *AMERICA...* TEN YEARS AND THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY FROM YOUR NATIVE GERMANY... YOU CAN NEVER FORGET THOSE *BLOODY WAR YEARS*. THOSE MEMORIES WILL HAUNT YOU FOREVER... AS EVEN NOW THEY HAUNT YOU WHILE YOU DESCEND THE SUBWAY STAIRS INTO THE QUIET SEMI-DARKNESS...



THE TRAIN ROARS OUT OF THE BLACK CAVERN, SHATTERING THE SILENCE OF THE ALMOST DESERTED STATION...



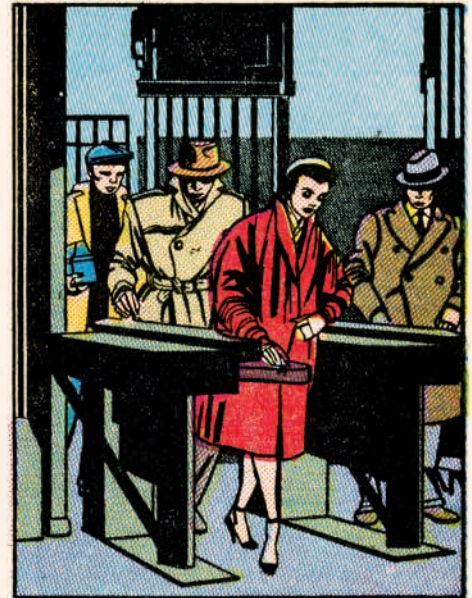
YOUR ACCENT IS STILL THICK ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE MASTERED THE LANGUAGE OF YOUR NEW COUNTRY THAT TOOK YOU IN WITH OPEN ARMS WHEN YOU FINALLY ESCAPED FROM BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP. YOU SLIDE THE BILL UNDER THE BARRED CHANGE-BOOTH WINDOW...



YOU STARE AT THE ONRUSHING STEEL MONSTER...



YOU MOVE TO THE BUSY CLICKING TURNSTILES... SLIP THE SHINY TOKEN INTO THE THIN SLOT... AND PUSH THROUGH...



YOU BLINK AS THE FIRST CAR RUSHES BY AND ILLUMINATED WINDOWS FLASH IN AN EVER-SLOWING RHYTHM...



AND THE TRAIN GRINDS TO A HISSING STOP...



YOU MOVE TO THE DOOR AS IT SLIDES OPEN. A PASSENGER EMERGES AND YOU FEEL HIS EYES UPON YOU AND YOU SHUDDER. WHY ARE YOU FRIGHTENED, CARL? THAT WAS A **LONG TIME AGO!** THIS IS **AMERICA**. YOU'RE **SAFE NOW!** YOU'RE **FREE...**



BUT YOU **ARE** AFRAID, **AREN'T** YOU, CARL? YOU'LL **ALWAYS** BE AFRAID. YOU'LL **KEEP REMEMBERING...** REMEMBERING THE **HORROR...** THE **HATE...** THE **SUFFERING...** AND YOU'LL **STAY** AFRAID. YOU STEP INTO THE ALMOST-EMPTY CAR AND YOU SIGH INTO A SEAT...



THE DOORS SLAM SHUT. THE TRAIN LURCHES AND ROLLS AHEAD, THUNDERING OUT OF THE STATION AND BACK INTO THE BLACK CHASMS TUNNELING BENEATH THE CITY. YOU UNFOLD YOUR PAPER...



YOU TRY TO READ, BUT THE WORDS ARE MEANINGLESS. NOTHING HAS MEANING ANY MORE... NOTHING BUT THE SICKENING SENSATION THAT HAS PLAGUED YOU FOR OVER TEN LONG YEARS. THE CONCENTRATION CAMP HAS LEFT ITS MARK UPON YOU, HASN'T IT, CARL REISSMAN?

YOU LOOK AROUND AT YOUR FELLOW PASSENGERS SITTING ALONE IN THEIR OWN LITTLE WORLDS OF FEAR. YOU STUDY THEIR FACES... THEIR FEATURES... THEIR EYES... LOOKING... ALWAYS LOOKING. WHAT ARE YOU **LOOKING** FOR CARL? WHO **IS** IT YOU'RE **AFRAID** OF?



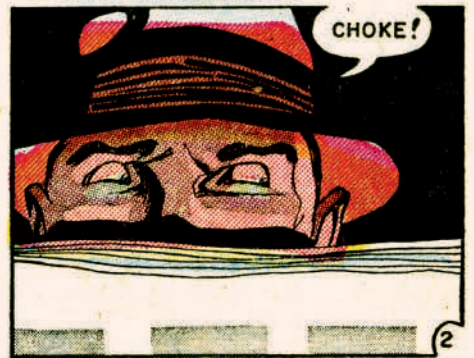
THE TRAIN GROANS INTO ANOTHER STATION AND JERKS TO A STOP. THE DOORS HUM WIDE. YOU LOOK DOWN AT YOUR PAPER, ONLY **SENSING** PEOPLE GETTING OFF...



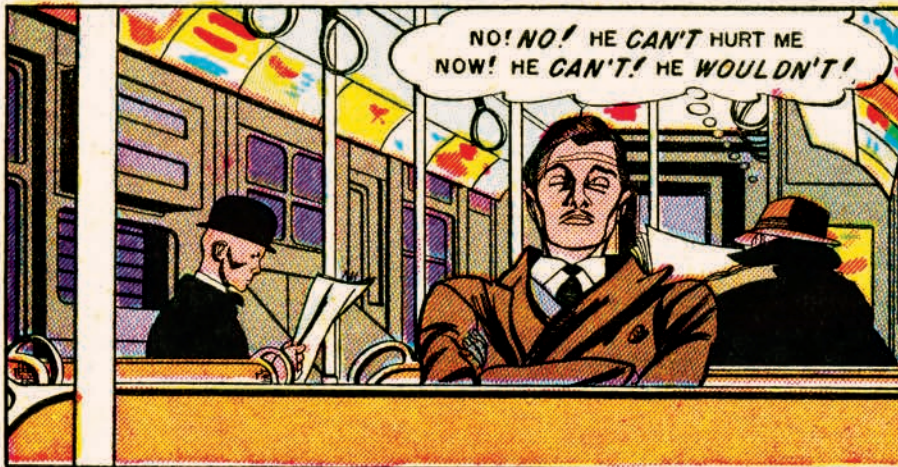
...SOMEONE GETTING ON...



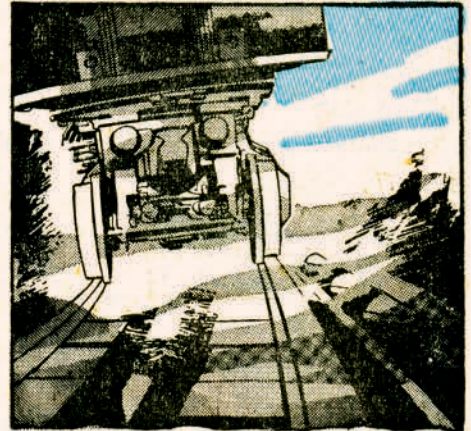
AND THEN...DOWN DEEP INSIDE YOU... YOU FEEL THE CHILL.. THE COLD CHILL ...THE CHILL OF DEATH. YOU STARE AT THE PAPER ON YOUR LAP, UNABLE TO RAISE YOUR EYES...AFRAID TO SEE WHAT YOU KNOW IS THERE. BUT, AFTER A FEW TERRORIZED MOMENTS, YOU CAN'T STAND IT! YOU **DO** LOOK UP! AND YOU **SEE** HIM...



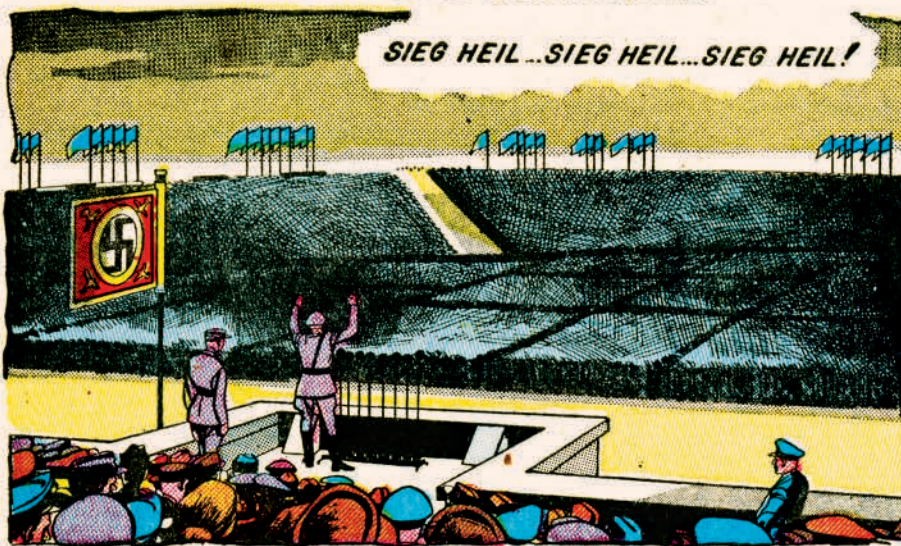
HE SITS STIFFLY, READING HIS PAPER, NOT LOOKING AT YOU, NOT NOTICING YOU. BUT *YOU'VE SEEN HIM, CARL!* YOU'VE SEEN HIS *FACE...* THE ONE YOU *KNEW* SOMEDAY YOU'D SEE AGAIN...THE FACE YOU'VE BEEN *AFRAID* TO SEE FOR *TEN LONG YEARS*. YOUR MOUTH TWITCHES. YOUR HANDS OPEN AND CLOSE, WET WITH PERSPIRATION...



THE TRAIN SCREAMS AROUND A CURVE IN ITS SUBTERRANIAN ROUTE ...AND THE SCREAM IS SHRILL AND SHARP...SETTING YOUR TEETH ON EDGE...REACHING BACK INTO THE PAST...



...TO ANOTHER SHRILL SCREAM...THE SCREAM OF A LITTLE MAN WITH WILD EYES AND BLACK HAIR AND A SMALL BLACK MOUSTACHE...



REMEMBER, CARL? REMEMBER THE LITTLE MAN IN THE UNIFORM WHO STOOD FIRST BEFORE SMALL GROUPS... THEN BEFORE CROWDS...AND FINALLY BEFORE MULTITUDES...AND SCREAMED AND SCREAMED THEM INTO AN HYSTERICAL MISSION OF WORLD CONQUEST. *YOU WERE THERE...* IN ONE OF THOSE CROWDS. REMEMBER?



AND WHEN THE LITTLE MAN HAD STOPPED SCREAMING AND THE CROWD HAD DISPERSED, REMEMBER THE SICKENING FEELING YOU HAD...THE REVULSION AND NAUSEA YOU FELT AS YOU TRUDGED HOME?...



THERE WERE *OTHERS* LIKE YOU, CARL...



...OTHERS WHO WERE *SICK* AND *REVOLTED* AND *NAUSEATED* AT THE SCREAMING PROPOSALS OF THIS LITTLE MAN. BUT *THEY* COULDN'T STOP THE TIDE, *COULD THEY, CARL?* *THEY* COULDN'T STEM THE FLOW OF HATE THAT POURED THROUGH THE STREETS WITH CLUBS AND GUNS AND THE ECHOES OF THE LITTLE MAN'S SCREAMS URGING IT ON...



NO ONE COULD STOP THE BOOKS FROM BEING BURNED...



...OR THE SHOP WINDOWS FROM BEING SMASHED AND THEIR CONTENTS RANSACKED...



...OR THE SANCTITY OF HOMES FROM BEING VIOLATED...



IT WAS A MADNESS... A WAVE THAT SWEEPED THROUGH YOUR HOMELAND LIKE A PLAGUE... A TIDAL WAVE OF FRENZIED HATE-FEARS AND BLOOD-LETTING AND EXPLODING VIOLENCE... A WILD UNCONTROLLED WAVE THAT SWEEPED YOU AND YOUR KIND ALONG WITH IT...

WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, CARL? WHEN WERE YOU CAUGHT UP IN THIS TIDE? WHEN DID YOU FIRST SEE BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP AND THE HUMAN MISERY THAT SOBBED WITHIN ITS BARBED-WIRE WALLS?...



DO YOU REMEMBER, CARL? DO YOU REMEMBER THE AWFUL SMELL OF THE GAS CHAMBERS THAT HOURLY ANNIHILATED HUNDREDS AND HUNDREDS OF YOUR COUNTRYMEN?...

DO YOU REMEMBER THE STINKING ODOR OF HUMAN FLESH BURNING IN THE OVENS... MEN'S... WOMEN'S... CHILDREN'S... PEOPLE YOU ONCE KNEW AND TALKED TO AND DRANK BEER WITH?...

