

We Thought this Time was Past Forever

Anita Blohm

BEFORE YOU READ: Share what you know about refugees trying to get into Europe. Where are they coming from? Why? Share what you know about Nazi Germany.

Many thousands of refugees have recently arrived in Europe, especially in Germany. There are

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their long, dangerous journeys. They all have lost their homes because of war. Often they paid a lot of money hoping for a better life of peace and free-

women, men, children, babies, and old people with many thousands of different, horrible experiences and stories. Most of the people are very sick and without strength after

dom, but they have been in the cold and rain, day and night, for weeks.

For the German organizations that are trying to help, too many refugees have come in too short of a time. Helpers

are not always able to give them food, a dry place to sleep, or warm clothes, nor are they able to build restrooms, showers, and other necessary things. There are not enough apart-

ments to stay in with winter coming, and the train of refugees doesn't stop. It's like water in a river. It seems there will be no end.

These problems are building deep divisions in my country. On one side, there are people who

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Germans hold up "Welcome" sign for incoming refugees.



Germans protest refugees coming to their country. The sign says, "Germany: unauthorized persons are forbidden to enter."

help with all they can give: money, clothes, and their own time. They stay at the checkpoints with friendly welcome signs, and they give water and fruit. On the other side, there are people who set fire to the houses where refugees will live and even in houses where they live already. On the road they yell, "Go back!" and "Foreigners go home!" They agitate against those who provide help and threaten to kill them. They spread fear.

I feel embarrassed about these pictures in the news. Racism is a big problem in my country. Not too long ago, Nazis ruled the country. They promoted the "Aryan" race. They said Jews were less than human. The German government and military murdered six million Jews because they did not belong to the Aryan race. They also murdered communists, homosexuals, Romani people, disabled people, and others. Some white Germans opposed the Nazis, but most white Germans stood by while the Nazis committed terrible crimes.

Now, racism is happening again in my country. Some people are treating refugees like they are less than human.

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There are many countries where people act badly towards refugees or anyone who is "different." But in Germany, we have a history

where racism led to genocide. We must work to make sure that time is past forever.

Nobody knows the answer to all these problems. What is the answer for all of the poor people who came with such great hopes, fleeing from bombs and war? What is the answer for all the people who stay firm in their racism? I am afraid. What will the future for my country be?



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Connecting to History

Consider the author's title. What "time" is she referring to when she says, "We thought this time was past forever."

As a German, why do you think Anita is particularly concerned about racism against refugees?

Research "Aryan race." What was it? Explain what role it played during the time that Nazis controlled Germany.



A Nazi woman measures the skull of a Romani woman.

Find out more about Nazi Germany and the Jewish Holocaust. Start by exploring <www.theholocaust-explained.org>. Scan the site and narrow your focus.

Decide on a topic you want to investigate more fully. (If everyone in the class picks a different topic to study and then present, you could all teach each other about this important historical moment.)



Child survivors of Auschwitz. Still photograph from the Soviet Film of the liberation of Auschwitz, 1945.