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Inquiries into European Historical Cultures

Karlsson, Klas-Göran; Zander, Ulf

2004

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Klas-Göran Karlsson
& Ulf Zander (eds)

SEKEL

This volume has been published with financial support
of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

Cover and layout: Lotta Hansson
Cover picture: Lotta Hansson
Printed in Preses Nams, Riga 2004
ISBN 91-975222-1-X

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Preface

The conference *Echoes of the Holocaust* that resulted in this volume could not have been organised without the financial support of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation. Therefore, we would like to acknowledge our sincere gratitude to the Foundation. The conference at the Bishop's House in Lund in May 2003 was hosted by the incomparable Karin Dahlgren.

For the production of the book, we have also been granted financial support from the Crafoord Foundation. Our thanks are also extended to all the contributors to the conference, the absolute majority of whom have participated in this volume, and our colleagues and friends in the research project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture*: Pär Frohnert, Kristian Gerner, Fredrik Lindström, Kerstin Nyström, Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, Tomas Sniegon, Mikael Tossavainen and Johan Öhman. The language has been checked with great skills by Mark Davies.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to our publisher at Sekel Bokförlag, Carsten Jinert, and the editor Lotta Hansson.

Lund in November 2004

Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander

Klas-Göran Karlsson

Making Sense of the Holocaust after Sixty Years

An Introduction

> The burdens of Holocaust history are immense because the Holocaust itself was immense.[1]

This volume is produced within the scope of the research project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture*, financed by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation since the autumn of 2001. The Foundation was also the main financial supporter of an international project conference called *Echoes of the Holocaust*, which took place at Lund University in May 2003. Most of the chapters included in this book are revised editions of papers presented at this conference. The organisers set the contributors the task of commenting upon articles written by scholars working within the research project and recently published in the book *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*.[2] Furthermore, the contributors to the conference were simultaneously asked to present an original piece of theoretical reflection and/or empirical research on the project topic, that is, on the position and the function of the Holocaust within various national historical cultures in Europe, including Israel. The conference participants originate from and are specialists on the national historical cultures of the countries they have written about, which, in addition to Israel, comprise Austria, Germany, Poland, the Scandinavian countries and Slovakia. Only one of the contributors, the Danish historian Claus Bryld, did not take part in the conference. Instead, he has submitted a revised version of a lecture that he delivered to the project members in the spring of 2003.

This brief description of the genesis of the present volume is sufficient to indicate that it has not been conceived as a systematic, comparative history of how Holocaust history has been handled throughout post-war Europe. There are indeed some comparative gains to be made from a collective work like this on the aftermath of the Holocaust. The more modest intention of the book is to provide the reader with a few perspectives on how Holocaust history has been represented in various European countries, and why these particular representations have been made.

The Holocaust and European Historical Culture

The purpose of the entire research project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture* is to carry out a systematic, comprehensive and comparative study of the ways in which various European states and societies have confronted, and are still confronting, that part of twentieth-century history which is perhaps the most brutal and hardest to handle: the Nazi extermination of large segments of Europe's Jewish population and millions of others while the Second World War was in progress. The relevance of such a study to the contemporary situation is indisputable, and not only for those who have been personally affected by the genocide, as victims or as perpetrators. Today, issues involving culture, scholarship, morality, law, economics, and domestic and foreign policy are intimately associated with the Holocaust in Europe and in large parts of the Western world.

It goes without saying that the memory of the Holocaust has left a particularly strong imprint on Israel and Germany. The work of coming to terms with this traumatic past, a process which in German has been coined *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, has for decades had a special urgency in these states. As Dalia Ofer underlines in her contribution to this volume, Holocaust history is seminal in Israeli culture and politics. Basically, this probably stems from the conviction that Israeli Jews will never again be so defenceless and vulnerable as to be targeted for destruction. It should, however, be stressed that there was an ambiguous relationship to Holocaust memory in the early years of Israeli state-building. This ambiguity was due to a generally negative view on the Jewish diaspora experience among leading Israeli Zionists such as David Ben-Gurion, and to a critical attitude towards the

lack of Jewish activism and resistance to the Nazi perpetrators in the Holocaust process. It was not until the arrest and trial of Adolf Eichmann in the early 1960s that the Holocaust started to receive considerable public attention in Israel. From the Israeli side, Tim Cole has characterised the Eichmann trial as "a self-conscious attempt to bring awareness of the massacre of six million European Jews to both native-born Israeli youth and the wider world".[3]

In Germany, questions of both the historical profundity and social breadth of the Nazi regime have stirred up much debate, not only in professional journals but also in the popular press and large-circulation periodicals: Was the Nazi regime a historical aberration in interwar German history, or even a rather normal aspect of a European civil war that was simultaneously acted out in Stalin's Soviet Union, or was it an integrated, yet until the interwar period mainly latent element in a German "special path" to modernity – a *Sonderweg*? Was the Holocaust a result of the ideas and activities of a narrow circle of men in the Nazi party leadership and the criminal agencies of the regime, primarily the SS and Gestapo, or was it rather the result of mass involvement of also the rank and file of the *Wehrmacht*? Was it, moreover, the result of a more or less primordial "eliminationist anti-Semitism" of large segments of the German population?[4] Was the expulsion of millions of Germans from the east after the war just as monstrous a crime against humanity as the Nazi genocide against millions of Jews during the war?[5]

Many other states and societies have more recently, however, been engaged in working out a purposeful history-cultural relationship to the Holocaust. In countries that straddle the old iron curtain, coming to terms with the Nazi heritage goes hand in hand with a simultaneous settling of the score with the Communist heritage, a double emotional and intellectual mental operation in which victim and perpetrator roles are scrutinised anew in the light of a European future, far from the ideological certainties of the Cold War era. In this context, politicians, as other opinion-makers and scholars, while acknowledging the historical fact of the Holocaust, do not often miss the opportunity of giving prominence to the fact that Communists committed large-scale atrocities in the Soviet Union and its satellites for a much longer period than the Nazis perpetrated their genocide.

The ideal "national" result is often a double victimisation, that is a process in which Central Europeans and the Baltic peoples first were victims of Nazi aggression, then of Soviet Communist aggression.

Furthermore, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, antisemitism has revived. In Russia, an inherent rivalry between "Russia" and "the Jews" has been embraced in almost any form of Russian nationalism. Among Russian post-Communist nationalists, the Nazi destruction of the European Jewry is sometimes outrightly denied, sometimes placed on a level with Jewish involvement in the Bolshevik 1917 revolution, sometimes compared to the damage inflicted upon the Russian people in the post-Communist period of democratic and economic reforms. More often than not, the "Holocaust" that has destroyed Russians and Russian values is attributed to Jewish politicians and bankers both within and outside Russia.[6]

But also more definite bystander societies and states are today involved in Holocaust history-cultural affairs. In fact, all over Europe, questions as to what we can learn – and absolutely not learn – from the Holocaust, how the Holocaust and other genocides are connected to particular genocidal histories and societies, to totalitarian systems or to the modern condition in general, whether we can and should compare the Holocaust with Communist terror under Lenin and Stalin, and how to deal with various trivialisations and outright denials of the Holocaust, cause tempestuous debates. In fact, any kind of comparisons that involve the Holocaust as one part tend to stir up debates, since they touch upon the general problem of whether the Nazi genocide is and should be represented as a unique historical phenomenon. Apart from this, comparisons also bear witness to the political relevance of the topic, not least utterly controversial ones such as when debaters not only compare but equate Israeli treatment of the Palestinians in the early years of the 21st century with the Nazi treatment of the European Jews in the course of the Second World War. Michael Marrus has demonstrated that Israel and Israeli politics have become particularly interesting as an object of comparison to the Holocaust for those who try to hide "a thinly disguised antisemitism", but he also proves that various Jewish actors use the Holocaust comparatively, in order to "energize political argument, at the seemingly small cost of stretching a point".[7]

In a more general sense, the Holocaust is currently often politically used in a metaphorical or comparative way to draw attention to a situation in which a collective is exposed to alleged or real discrimination, injustice or physical violence. If the mistreatment of this collective is compared to the victim situation of the Jews during the Holocaust, or a policy carried out by a power-holder is compared to the Nazi perpetrators' policies during the Holocaust, the issue is sure to be front-page news and part of the primary political agenda. In Sweden, two prominent politicians equated the NATO bombings of Belgrade in 1996 with the Holocaust, while another politician in 2003, in the heat of the referendum campaign to decide whether Sweden should be part of the European Monetary Union, compared the EMU to Hitler's interwar plans for European domination. The idea of such a comparison is obviously not to provide a balanced and multifaceted account of similarities and differences between the Holocaust and a later situation or process, but to exploit the strong emotional charge of the Nazi genocide and ideology and bring out the alleged similarities in order to inculcate moral lessons or force political action.[8]

The current intense but "delayed" interest in the Holocaust, more than half a century after its occurrence, has also been related to theoretical or philosophical innovations. Frank Ankersmit has argued that the fact that "the cultural turn" and "the linguistic turn" have gained a hearing in post-modern scholarly thinking has made us particularly aware of the responsibilities and limitations of representations of traumatic experiences such as the Holocaust.[9] The challenging question, much debated in recent literature, is: How do we represent the unrepresentable? If we acknowledge that the Holocaust was an unprecedented historical phenomenon, we admit that it defies representation. If language is limited to discourses on what is known or can be imagined, we obviously need a new language in order to be able to represent the Holocaust. If one accepts such a view, much historical scholarship as well as art would be impossible. Or should we "turn back" in the history of historiography to physical sites of destruction, "primary memories" such as survivor testimonies and other eyewitness memories, and search for an objective truth? The latter stance is the core of historical research in Western civilisation.

In the introduction to his well-known book *Probing the Lim-*

its of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution" (1992), Saul Friedländer touches upon the problem that there is an inherent risk in our preoccupation with the cultural and linguistic construction of historical reality that the brutal historical reality itself – what actually took place in Nazi-occupied Europe in the years 1941–1945 – may disappear from our perspective, bringing some kind of post-modern banalisation or trivialisation of the Holocaust in its train: "Post-modern thought's rejection of the possibility of identifying some stable reality or truth beyond the constant polysemy and self-referentiality of linguistic constructs challenges the need to establish the realities and truths about the Holocaust."[10] We do not agree with this naive empiricism: language is the only means of rational discussion that humankind possesses.

Furthermore, the Holocaust has developed into much more than just a subject of intellectual dispute and political activity. Existential needs of exploring individual and collective identities are satisfied by the present preoccupation with the Holocaust, not only for a survivor generation whose time is short for recovering living memory, but also for a "third generation" born after the war and with no involvement in or personal memories of the Nazi atrocities, one that is critical or ashamed of the older generation's ignorance and indifference. Moral imperatives to "fill in the blank spots" of Holocaust history meet with sympathy in a situation in which conscience and moral politics are more conspicuous than ideology. More often than not, criticism is directed towards the Cold War era, when ideological barriers and temporary demonisations in both camps crowded the Holocaust out of the sphere of public interest, or relegated it to some other context than that of genocide as such. No doubt, commercial interest is yet another factor involved in fuelling the present Holocaust interest.

This all-European preoccupation with Holocaust history and memory has arisen rapidly and unexpectedly. Hence, scholarly enquiry into its causes and effects is promptly needed. In view of the fact that neo-Nazism and antisemitism constitute central problems affecting social and political developments in different parts of Europe, it seems especially important to understand the contents and manifestations of the sudden interest in and use of the Holocaust, as well as the underlying motive forces behind it.

Holocaust Texts and Contexts

In order to grasp the complexity of the ambitious, in fact multidisciplinary task of analysing the uses of the Holocaust, there are, generally speaking, two scholarly approaches. In a most general sense, representations of the Holocaust such as political statements, scholarly or educational works, public commemorations or films with commercial or aesthetic ambitions, can be analysed in terms of causes and effects. The approach can be described as reflective. In current European culture, politics and society, the Holocaust appears to concentrate, or serve as a catalyst for, a number of vital European issues at the turn of the millennium. Thus, Holocaust narratives and cultural constructs can be regarded as reflections of a variety of issues, be they ethnic relations and identity issues or civic developments such as problems of democracy, rule of law and foreign policy.

Another reflective approach is to relate the representations to various political, juridical and cultural events and processes, of which some are immediately and obviously related to the Holocaust, while others have a less direct relationship to the Nazi genocide. Among events that have had a more direct bearing on the Holocaust interest in an international context one can mention, in the political sphere, the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948 and the subsequent wars between Israel and its neighbouring Arab states, which obviously have evoked Holocaust associations. The Holocaust continues to play a large part in Middle Eastern affairs, being contributive to the continuous instability of the region and, partly due to the oil reserves found there, to an international instability. Legal processes, from the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 to the Irving-Lipstadt libel suit in London in 2000, the latter a result of accusations from the American professional historian Deborah Lipstadt that the British historian David Irving was a Holocaust denier, have also fuelled an increasing public interest in the Holocaust. So have cultural events such as the publication of Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* in 1947, the broadcasting of the American television docudrama *Holocaust* in the Western world in 1978–79, and the transmissions of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* in 1985 and Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* in 1993.

The latter examples indicate that a contextualisation of Holocaust representations can also benefit from their connections to basic cul-

tural processes. An obvious result of the culturalisation of the Holocaust during the last quarter-century is that it has changed from being an inexplicable and indescribable phenomen to being part of personalised historical narrations with actors and responsibilities, guilt and innocence. Friedländer's argument, quoted above, has thus been refuted. One of the cultural processes that have attracted much scholarly attention in the last decade and that has been touched upon above as a problem of representation is the Americanisation of the Holocaust. In the words of Alvin Rosenfeld, it involves a strategy "to downplay or deny the dark and brutal sides of life and instead to place a preponderant emphasis on the saving power of individual moral conduct and collective deeds of redemption". In Rosenfeld's view, American culture generally forwards certain standards and principles such as affirmation, progression and the need to provide lessons on Holocaust history and memory.[11] In Jörn Rüsen's text in this book, even more fundamental and protracted cultural, psychological and strategic processes of Holocaust historical culture, running between traumatisation and historisation, are further elaborated. Consequently, from this traditional scholarly perspective, Holocaust texts are situated in or receive their meanings and explanations from contexts of various kinds.

The other way to handle the issue, focusing on the Holocaust as a possible cause of attitudes, knowledge, notions and actions, can be labelled constructive. With such a perspective, the intention of our project is to analyse the constructions, narrations, representations and uses of the Holocaust by individuals, professional and social groups and states in Europe during the period from the end of the Second World War to the present, with some emphasis on developments in the most recent decade. The general idea behind this approach is to demonstrate how various individual and collective actors produce and make use of Holocaust texts to satisfy certain needs and promote interests of various kinds. The analytical focus is upon the texts themselves, their contents and forms, the conditions for their cultural and social communication, and their perceptions and receptions. Of particular interest are questions of whether and how Holocaust texts can be analysed as culturally prefigured, or provided with what Hayden White has described as "models of the direction that

thought itself might take in its effort to provide meaning to areas of experience not already regarded as being cognitively secured by either common sense, tradition, or science".[12]

This complex corresponds well to what will be called historical culture in this book. This gives an indication that the constructive approach is very much central for the members of the project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture*. To be sure, also historical cultures can be understood and explained from various contexts such as power relations, but expressions of a historical culture such as meanings, memories, metaphors, monuments, museums and myths do not in any simple and rectilinear way reflect other social phenomena traditionally considered more "basic" or "fundamental". They often have a considerable analytical value in that they may be analysed as independent variables, as cultural phenomena in their own right. The traditional, genetic-chronological way of explaining and understanding is often not applicable; chronological distance from an event worth remembering may exacerbate rather than quieten historical culture. The history-cultural sphere is often, but far from always, characterised by inertia, or by what the French Annales historians have called *la longues durée*.

Two Perspectives on State-Sponsored Holocaust History in Sweden

An important empirical inspiration for the research project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture* has been the Swedish government's ambitious initiative in 1997 to inform Swedish citizens about the Holocaust by means of a large and resourceful information project, called *Living History*. Since then, the project and its main publication have been exported to several post-Soviet and post-Communist states. In 2003 the project was transformed into a Swedish civil authority, called *Forum for Living History*. Moreover, in the millennial year 2000, the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson followed up this initiative by inviting leading international politicians to a conference about the Holocaust. Almost every one of them arrived in Stockholm to demonstrate a political unity regarding the urgency of communicating the history of the Nazi atrocities to the citizens of Europe and the wider world. In the following years, three more

international conferences were organised in the Swedish capital, dealing mainly with aspects of the Holocaust experience.

In accordance with the distinction made above, *Living History* as a manifestation of a historical culture can on the one hand be understood as a reflection of several urgent national, European and global developments and problems at the end of the 20th century. An important context is the general importance attributed to the historical dimension in the post-Cold-War era. History has been imbued with meaning, but also with uncomfortable questions and conflicts. In the national Swedish arena of the 1990s, sudden and heavy historical criticism was directed against what were depicted as the dark sides of the Swedish welfare state and Swedish wartime politics, characterised in theory by neutrality/non-alignment but in practice of generous concessions towards Nazi Germany in the first part of the war. No doubt, the Living History initiative should partly be interpreted as a political counter-attack from a Social Democratic government that felt itself intimately connected with the Swedish model society, *Folkhemmet*, and wartime politics that were in reality practised by a coalition government led by the Social Democratic leader Per Albin Hansson.

Another context, analysed in this volume especially by the two Danes Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke and Claus Bryld, is European. Within the last full decade the Holocaust, often symbolically represented as "Auschwitz", has assumed a prominent position as a keyword in a European community of values or civilisation, considered especially important in an era in which the economic and political integration of Europe has progressed to a significant degree. There still remains the matter of cultural integration, that is the instilling of common, historically based ideas and values among Europeans. In this context, the Second World War in general, and the Holocaust symbolised by "Auschwitz" in particular, have proved useful as a foundation for what could be termed a European value-system. Thus, being European means to adopt an unequivocally negative attitude towards Hitler, Nazism and "Auschwitz". The new members of the European Union are required to come to terms with their collaboration with the Nazis in the destruction of the Jews, cleaning their historical slate instead of guarding national interests of perceived victim-

hood and innocence. Right-wing politicians such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France and Jörg Haider in Austria, both of whom have trivialised or even denied the Holocaust, are not considered worthy members of a European political community. The Swedish Prime Minister surely is, which proved extremely important bearing in mind that Sweden entered the European Union as late as 1995, after being a somewhat reluctant European partner. By introducing the Living History programme so successfully, thus retrospectively associating Sweden with the wartime Allies and to the Holocaust experience, Göran Persson suddenly proved to be a responsible European politician. While earlier post-war Swedish international solidarity in all essentials was geographically orientated towards the Third world, international politics in the 1990s were historically European, with the Holocaust occupying a special seat of honour. Historical ties replaced geographical ones. The fact that mass murders were perpetrated in the south-eastern part of Europe in the 1990s probably further reinforced the conviction that there were important insights to be gained from the Holocaust, which has often served as a kind of archetype of genocidal deeds. A closer examination of the implications of an Europeanisation of the Holocaust, corresponding to the Americanisation mentioned above, remains to be carried out.

On the other hand, *Living History* can be interpreted as a history-cultural construction in order to make use of Holocaust concepts, images and narratives. The use of history that stands out from the stated objectives of the project is political and pedagogical. Such a use of history means that a delimited part of it is immediately carved out and claimed to inform current society on issues considered politically relevant. Similarities between the historical and the present are magnified, while differences are minimised. In this spirit, information about the Holocaust provided by *Living History* is supposed to influence individuals in today's Swedish society and make them more tolerant and disposed towards democracy. In addition to the doubtful strategy of reducing serious current problems of intolerance, racism and antisemitism to mere information deficits, it is most unclear if historical information can and should be transferred in this way to satisfy such political aspirations. It is quite possible that this ambition to be functional even runs the risk of being dysfunctional. In an

investigation of the present European obsession with Jewish culture, the American author Ruth Ellen Gruber gives several examples of the phenomenon that a strong European interest in and sympathy for Jewish culture and history "often coexisted with hostility, suspicion, antisemitism, and contempt directed at living Jews".[13] Furthermore, Holocaust deniers are often extremely well informed on isolated aspects of the Holocaust process.

The same general objections can obviously be raised against the idea of exporting *Living History* to Russia and other post-Communist countries, where it can be expected that the reception of Holocaust information would be different from that in Sweden. This depends on a variety of factors, an obvious one being that these societies and states also have the atrocities of another – Communist – genocidal regime to handle. In Communist Eastern Europe, not only the Holocaust but also the great Stalinist terror was for a long time followed by a great silence. Even in post-Communist Russia, information about the Holocaust is still deficient in most history textbooks.[14] Apart from this, politically arranged state-sponsored historical information, quite a unique feature in Swedish historical culture, was commonplace for many Russians in the Soviet era and one can therefore suspect it to be less popular and effective in post-Communist Russia.

A final "constructive" reflection evidential of the political character of the *Living History* campaign is that it has been launched at the same time that history as a subject in Swedish schools has risked being totally eradicated from the curriculum. In the official Swedish governmental attitude towards history, there has been an apparent contrast between on the one hand a general, modernist disregard for and disarmament of history teaching, and on the other hand a strong effort to draw attention to Holocaust history, accompanied by a resourceful political campaign to inform about the Nazi atrocities. A problem with such a paradox is that the Holocaust runs the risk of being lifted out of relevant historical contexts, in short, out of history.[15]

The ongoing research project should definitely not, however, be thought of as a simple reaction to a politico-pedagogical initiative, and there is surely no reason to criticise an increased effort to educate students about Holocaust history *per se*. Nevertheless, from the

perspective of this book, it is most interesting to conclude that *Living History* served as a political triggering factor in a process of historical culture, involving large parts of Europe in the cultivation of a Holocaust heritage that for several decades had lain fallow. In the words of sociologist Jeffrey Alexander, the Holocaust has changed from being a temporary war crime, ending with the Allied triumph over Nazism and the Nuremberg trials, to being the universalised cultural trauma and generalised "sacred-evil" of the millennium years.[16]

Holocaust Historical Culture

To be sure, there is a scholarly need for a combined reflective and constructive approach in order to fully understand manifestations of a historical culture such as the *Living History* project and the subsequent international Holocaust conferences, organised by one of the absolute European bystander states in the era of the Second World War and the Holocaust, Sweden. The theoretical and analytical concepts developed and used within *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture* project – among them historical culture, historical consciousness, collective memory and uses of history – aim at bridging over the differences between the two perspectives. The expectation is that history-cultural studies may evolve into a productive meeting ground between different ways of conceptualising society and social change.

As notoriously difficult to define as all other verbal constructs containing the word "culture", any definition of a historical culture should depart from a broad range of historical artefacts. Thus, historical culture has a materiality, or, in the words of James Young, a texture which exists in the real world in which we live. But historical artefacts would not be part of a historical culture were they not provided with immaterial qualities such as coherence and meaning, by being, once more in wordings inspired by Young, emplotted in a narrative matrix and communicated.[17] In and by historical culture, experiences, interpretations and uses of history provide human collectives with a feeling of belonging to what, after Benedict Anderson's well-known treatise on the origins and spread of nationalism, used to be called an "imagined community".[18] Agnes Heller denotes the same living experience of our relationship to others living now, the dead whose

stories we are telling, and the not-yet-born who live in us as a promise of togetherness.[19] The feeling of belonging and togetherness is based on a consciousness of being connected through history, from the past to the present and into the future, and of others not being connected to the same temporal chain. In historical consciousness, meaning, orientation and sense are created by a more or less conscious effort to temporally transcend what is apprehended as a present, living predicament. Among other feelings involved in the same mental operation are continuity, exclusivity, solidarity and stability.

For the last two centuries or so, the community *par préférance* has been the nation, brought together by and in a national historical culture. Various nations have various ways of dealing with Holocaust history and memory. However, insights into the representation and use of the Holocaust give evidence of the existence of at least an embryo of a common European historical culture. Generally speaking, there are no doubt other cultural, political and social bases for the origin and spread of a historical culture than the nation-state, for example social classes, gender, regions, ethnic and professional groups, but in all certainty historical cultures are still basically nationally conceptualised. Another problem that can cause more serious conflicts than those connected to historical interpretations, clearly demonstrated in Władysław Bułhak's essay about the development of a Polish historical culture in this book, is that there may be a lack of correspondence between a present national territorial framework and notions of a lost "historical" national territory, often accompanied by claims of historical rights to this old territory.

As the key concept of this project, historical culture can be used as a structural device, helping us to pay attention to history not only as a scholarly operation or a teaching subject, but as a cultural product in a much broader sense: one including exhibits, historical fiction, films, rituals and public debates that engage and influence broad strata of society. In addition, a history-cultural analysis normally departs from a much more elaborated structure than the traditional history of historiography, in which scholarly historical works are studied mainly as effects of internal theoretical developments. History of historiography often tends to neglect the fact that this production is affected by external circumstances, that it does not merely reflect the state of

affairs in society but is also able to affect and modify that society as a causal force, and that the outcome of this historical influence may encompass various unintended consequences in addition to the foreseeable and intended ones. Analytically, both historical culture and historical consciousness should basically be understood as collective or social phenomena. This means that questions of how history is mediated, perceived and received are at least as important as how history is produced in a historical culture.

History-Cultural Approaches

One history-cultural approach to the Holocaust can be described as genetic-developmental, promoting a chronological analysis of how historical culture has changed or remained unchanged in time and space. In Jörn Rüsen's contribution to this book, he uses the concept "teleologic" for the same perspective. In this approach, the history-cultural analysis may, as mentioned above, take as its point of departure the question of how the understandings and uses of the Holocaust have interacted with the various interventions of Israel on the world stage since its foundation in 1948: the Eichmann trial in 1961, the Six-Day war in 1967, the invasion of southern Lebanon and the Intifada in the 1980s, and the irreconcilable antagonism between Israeli Jews and Palestinians that causes strong international turbulence. In this book, the genetic-developmental perspective is most distinctly set out by Ivan Kamenec in his analysis of how the Holocaust has been represented in Slovak historical culture.

With the same approach, an important history-cultural problem is related to what has recently been called "the coalition of silence", that is the relatively unanimous muteness and non-use of the Holocaust for meaningful purposes in the first post-war decades.[20] It was a silence from the traumatised survivors who had problems facing their recent pasts; it was a silence from listeners who were not very anxious to hear the narratives of the concentration camps, but it was also a silence from entire governments, states and nations who failed to recognise and take responsibility for the genocide. To be sure, newspapers occasionally wrote about the horrors of the concentration camps, but Jews were infrequently singled out as a special victim category. The only notable exception from the silence strategy was

the law court, where the Holocaust was exposed and condemned on several occasions from the Nuremberg trials onwards. Legal disputes were also fought over lost Jewish homes and properties when restitution legislation was put into practice in post-genocide Europe. But the rest was silence, since, as has been convincingly argued,

> the motivations to forget was too strong for survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders, the implications of what had happened were too threatening for public analysis, and the underlying guilt for not having done more was too great among some Americans, Jews and non-Jews alike.[21]

When not outright silence, stereotypical or mythical interpretations of clear-cut distinctions between on the one hand Nazi perpetrators, on the other national victims or resistance movements, were hegemonic. In France, it was not until the last quarter of the 20th century that the mythical interpretation of French intervention in the Holocaust that Henry Rousso has called "the Vichy syndrome" was seriously challenged. Until then, it went without saying that the wartime Vichy government which in reality took an active part in the destruction of the French Jewry consisted of a smaller group of misguided collaborators, while the absolute majority of French citizens belonged to the resistance. Had it not been for the non-French historians Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus and their disclosures of Vichy's policy toward the Jews, the Holocaust silence might have been delayed even longer. The two North American historians made clear that the Vichy government strove to implement anti-Jewish measures of their own, independent of or even competing with the German policy. Thus, in French historical culture, the Vichy years were for a long time unambiguously regarded as a historical deviation or parenthesis.[22] In his analysis of the Holocaust in Austrian historical culture in this book, Oliver Rathkolb proves that "the coalition of silence" was at least as strong and enduring in post-war Austria.

Analysing the treatment of the Holocaust in Great Britain and the United States, Tony Kushner has offered an alternative, or complementary, explanation of the silence surrounding it. Briefly, he suggests that the indiscriminate Nazi mass murder of an entire category of human beings has been hard to reconcile with the traditional liberal values of Western democracies, such as rationalism, individualism,

universalism and faith in progress. Consequently, it was difficult for the liberal Western nations to espouse the Jewish cause through the years of discrimination, deportation and destruction, and it has for a considerable time been problematic to accomodate the Holocaust narrative with what Kushner calls the liberal imagination.[23] In addition, Kushner hints at another interesting explanation: What if this relative passing over of the history of Jewish maltreatment, which also included the victorious Allied powers, did not start in 1945, but was rooted – or culturally or ideologically prefigured – in ignorance and disregard also prior to the Second World War?

Another history-cultural problem concerns the general return of the historical dimension into public life in the years around 1990, and a subsequent, qualitatively new interest in the Holocaust experience. Who and what finally broke the coalition of silence? On the "who" question, an important change alrcady briefly referred to is probably the one between a wartime generation, for whom personal memories were always painful and often undesirable, and a younger, post-war generation with only an indirect memory of the judeocide, and with an interest in bringing the past into a public discourse of intellectual understanding and moral settlement. Another group of actors who combined to activate a Holocaust interest comprised the representatives of more particularistic and vocal Jewish politics, especially in the United States. On the "what" question, there is an obvious connection between on the one hand international changes such as the end of the Cold War, the unification of Germany, the fall of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and on the other hand the explosion of Holocaust interest in the 1990s, both in North America and Europe. However, there are notable variations with regard to the point in time when Holocaust interest surfaced, partly conditioned by different experiences and attitudes during the war years, partly by radically diverging lines of development and situations after the war.

In addition, observers are struck by the different degrees of interest in the Holocaust that have been expressed by various groups and categories in society. German cultural research has drawn attention to generation issues, maintaining that shifting temporal horizons of "short-term memory" and "long-term memory", or of "communica-

tive memory" and "cultural memory", have played a significant role in the transition from obliviousness of history to an obsession with it.[24] In his groundbreaking study *The Holocaust in American Life*, the American historian Peter Novick has shown how the Holocaust has been put to use for various purposes by Jewish as well as other ethnic groups, but also by other religious, commercial, intellectual, political, and other interest groups in the United States. Novick maintains that the Holocaust – as a bearer of what seems to be an increasingly pressing moral, cultural, and political experience – has been used both directly, for instance by groups who have viewed the preservation of Holocaust history and memory as a value in itself, and in the form of allusions, comparisons, metaphors, and symbols from which people have drawn strength, arguments, and insights.[25] The research project works with a more elaborated typology of uses of history, answering to different needs, users and functions: a scholarly, an existential, a moral, a politico-pedagogical, an ideological use and, as a special case of the latter, a non-use of history.[26] These uses correspond well to the various history-cultural "voices" articulated in letters by survivors and descendants of murdered Bulgarian Jews that Dalia Ofer analyses in her contribution to this book.

Another approach is structural, functional and often comparative, dealing for example with questions of how history-cultural "vectors" of the Holocaust have been sent out over Europe by the screening there of the *Holocaust* television miniseries in the late 1970s, shaping similar or varying reactions in various national or other contexts. The fundamental *raison d'être* of a directly history-cultural context, which in my mind tends towards a third, what could be called genealogical approach, is that it brings different kinds of interpretations and evaluations of historical phenomena to bear on present-day situations and perceptions of the future. Various tangible manifestations of historical consciousness prove that human beings, individually or in various collectives, turn to representations of the Holocaust in order to satisfy a variety of needs and interests: to find orientation and stability in their lives, to promote identity constructions, to identify the "Other", to take moral stances in questions of right and wrong, good and evil, to create ideological complexes of meaning and significance, to argue in favour of specific political affairs and opinions,

and even to make economic profits. Whether we accept these various uses of the Holocaust that most often are hard to reconcile with a traditional scholarly use of history, and furthermore with a well-established opinion that the Holocaust as an unprecedented phenomenon should not be "profanited" or "banalised", or whether we immediately reject them as abuses of history, is quite another question which does not need to be addressed here.

The main purpose of the *Echoes of the Holocaust* conference was to provide project members with theoretical, analytical and empirical inspiration for their everyday work. Behind the decision to publish the conference papers lies a conviction, coming up in discussions during the conference and growing ripe in the following internalisation of its results, that this inspiration also could be useful to a wider range of scholars within the humanities and the social sciences, and also to others concerned with questions of cultural representations of history. Hopefully, the texts presented here may well serve the purpose of initiating a wider discussion about scholarly problems of historical culture in general, and of history-cultural representations and uses of the Holocaust in post-war Europe in particular.

Disposition of the Book

In the following chapter, *Jörn Rüsen* sets himself the task of reflecting theoretically on the nature and functions of historical culture. Besides making useful conceptual distinctions in the field of historical culture, historical consciousness, memory, myth and identity building, he turns to the "fateful" and traumatic German relationship to the Holocaust and analyses the specificities of German historical culture. However, Rüsen also broadens his perspective from the national historical culture of Germany to the meaning of the Holocaust for humankind. He discusses various strategies of historical sense generation related to the Holocaust and suggests that the Nazi judeocide needs to be detraumatised by either being transformed into "normal" history, or being subject to what he describes as a "secondary traumatisation". Instead of maintaining the traditional standpoint that the Holocaust as a borderline event withstands any endeavour to bring about meaning and sense in modern history, historical thinking may learn from the mental procedure of mourning, which renders what

has passed away a present identity concern, Rüsen suggests. Thus history, or rather historical consciousness, can have a healing and constructive function.

Claus Bryld approaches the complex of the Holocaust and European historical culture from strictly personal perspectives. Firstly, his father was a Danish Nazi party member who was punished after the war. Secondly, the chapter was written as a lecture given on account of the commemoration of the first so-called Auschwitz day in Denmark on January 27, 2003. In his chapter, Bryld combines the story of his personal efforts to come to terms with the Nazi ideology, the consequences of the war and the German guilt during the years when he grew up and studied at the university, with history-cultural reflections on Auschwitz as a memorial site and Auschwitz day as a commemorative practice. As in other chapters of this book, he proves that collective memories more often than not are contested and conflicting, as in the case of Auschwitz, for a long time invoked as a site of memory by both Catholic and Jewish communities. Using Auschwitz as a prominent example, Bryld clearly demonstrates that power struggles are inherent parts of any history-cultural work: "Memory selects, add and invents, it mollifies or demonises, it explains and reasons. In other words, it embraces and transforms the past, spurred by different political motives." In his opinion, that is also the way it should be, that Auschwitz is symbolical-politically used to counteract European nationalisms and xenophobias.

Bryld's final reflection on the pan-European lessons of Auschwitz leads up to the chapter by *Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke* on the Holocaust and the decline of European values. For her, the history-cultural question "Why this intense current European interest in the Holocaust?" must be derived from the historical, or rather existential question "Why the Holocaust?". Like Bryld, Banke holds up the Holocaust mainly as a political and a moral example of what happens to a civilisation that gives priority to ethnicity and culture, not to equal human rights. But at the same time she admits that there are no simple answers: the Holocaust was an expression of the ultimate rationalism, and yet we can still find nothing but irrationality in it. And we can definitely not prevent it. But we can possibly prevent it from happening again. Banke finds some consolation in the fact that Europe

has started to deal with its trauma, and also that the Holocaust has left promising political traces such as declarations of universal human rights and the UN convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide. In this sense, there is a linear, genetic relationship between the Holocaust and war crime tribunals of the 21st century.

In the following chapter, *Dalia Ofer* tells the story of a Holocaust site of memory and memorial that was supposed to form part of the landscape of Israeli historical consciousness. In the mid-1990s, an Israeli forest was dedicated to the Bulgarian King Boris III and his wife Queen Giovanna in memory of their work in wartime Bulgaria to rescue Bulgarian Jews from the Nazi genocide. Furthermore, a monument was erected inside the forest to commemorate the late king and queen. A heated debate followed in Israel, as well as in Bulgaria and even the United States, since it soon became apparent that the Bulgarian rescue process was far from an uncontroversial history of heroism. It is true that thousands of Bulgarian Jews were saved from the death camps, but thousands of others, especially those from the Macedonian and Thracian areas controlled by Bulgaria from 1941, were ruthlessly deported to be murdered by the Nazis in Treblinka. The deportation orders were signed by King Boris. While Ofer, who was herself a member of a public committee organised in 2000 to investigate the memorialisation and therefore gained unique empirical insights, unveils the various stages in this intriguing history-cultural process, she also finds an opportunity to reflect on a more general level on the conditions of memory construction. Echoing James Young's well-known concept "collected memory", she uses "contested memory" to denote a memory that is subject to both negotiation and conflict. Consequently, a contested memory such as the treatment of the Jews in wartime greater Bulgaria cannot be reduced to a collective memory into which individual or sub-group memories are mechanically absorbed or merged, but must be analysed from a variety of perspectives.

In his analysis of Austrian post-war historical culture, *Oliver Rathkolb*'s general thesis is that since the end of the war Austrians have been engaged in the activity of self-victimisation. Thus, conclusive decisions of national importance have been considered out of reach of the Austrians. Two crucial periods are highlighted to prove this pro-

tracted victim status. The first is the Nazi period from the *Anschluss* of 1938 to the 1945 end of the war, when Austria, renamed *Ostmark*, was an integrated part of the Third Reich. The Nazi dominance has frequently been used as an argument against active Austrian involvement in the Holocaust. The Nazi period was followed by another gloomy period of "occupation", which in the case of the early second Austrian republic meant Allied administration. After its liberation, Austria was cut up into four administrative zones, but with its own government. Rathkolb discerns even a third period of victimisation, starting with the 1995 Austrian integration into the European Union. He explains aspects of this self-victimisation in terms of a weak national identity and prevailing antisemitism. However, he also demonstrates that old history-cultural patterns are beginning to change, as *fin-de-siècle* Austrian historical debate makes room for new wartime topics such as restitution of property and forced labour compensation.

The two final chapters of the book deal with historical culture in former Communist Eastern European countries. In the first, however, *Wladyslaw Bulhak* lets his analysis of Polish historical culture transgress the chronological bounds of both the Communist Polish era and its post-war representations of the Holocaust. The aim of the chapter is rather to demonstrate how Polish historical culture has persisted or changed over time, due to changeable internal and international political situations, ideological variations, and fluctuating notions of Polish identity vis-á-vis the Other. The latter has not only been in relation to the Jews, but at times also the Germans, the Russians, the Ukrainians and the Lithuanians. In order to explain an increasing disposition to think in ethnic categories and antagonisms, Bulhak attaches great analytical importance to the transition from a traditional to a modern Polish historical culture, personified by the nationalist Roman Dmowski and his "Thoughts of a Modern Pole", published in 1907 but equally influential in Poland of today. To be sure, the Holocaust cannot be and is not absent from the history of the country in which the Nazi death camps were situated, but the reader of the chapter gains an insight into a Polish historical culture in which categories of right and wrong, true and false, friend and foe are not unambiguous and clear-cut even in regard to atrocities committed during the Second World War.

In the last contribution to this volume, *Ivan Kamenec* analyses how the Holocaust has been represented, and more often not represented, in Slovakia since the end of the Second World War. The account is based on a dual contextualisation. The first is a Slovak antisemitism with multiple roots, which in sum made the Jews an easy target of persecution. The second context is the factual historical development in wartime Slovakia. In the spring of 1939, a Nazi vassal state emerged, lead by the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. After the German invasion of 1944, the government proved willing to assist the Nazis in exterminating thousands of Jews, but already in 1942 Tiso's regime, without German intervention, had deported the majority of Slovak Jews to the death camps. Following the Communist assumption of power in Czechoslovakian Slovakia that took place a few years after the war, the Holocaust was generally absent from Slovakian historical culture. However, a careful analysis testifies to the fact that periods of thaw allowed an increasing publicity for the Jewish tragedy, although less in history scholarship than in literature and other cultural products. Post-Communist Slovakia has experienced an intensified interest in the Holocaust and Jewish history in general, but Kamenec, basically confident in the strength of unbiased historical research, demonstrates that this escalating attention has also given birth to revisionist and apologetic nationalist representations of the Holocaust, and to a certain "competition of evils" between interpretations of Nazism and Communism.

Notes

1. John K. Roth, *Holocaust Politics*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2001, p. 39.
2. Edited by Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander, and published by Nordic Academic Press in Lund in 2003.
3. Tim Cole, *Selling the Holocaust. From Auschwitz to Schindler. How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, New York: Routledge 1999, p. 7. See also Dalia Ofer, "Israel", in David S. Wyman (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1996, pp. 873–880.
4. The expression is used by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in his much discussed *Hitler's Willing Executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, London: Little, Brown & Company 1996.
5. In the enormous scholarly literature on the German struggle with its Nazi and Holocaust history, Charles S. Mayer's *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press 1997, is still incomparable.
6. Cf. Vadim Rossman, *Russian Intellectual Anti-Semitism in the Post-Communist Era*, Lincoln & London: The University of Nebraska Press 2002, pp. 55–57, 129–130, 273.
7. Michael Marrus, "The Use and Misuse of the Holocaust", in Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies. The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 1991, pp. 113–115.
8. Cf. Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture. Theoretical and Analytical Challenges", in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds), *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003a, pp. 40–41.
9. Frank Ankersmit, *Historical Representation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001, pp. 160–164.
10. Saul Friedländer, "Introduction", in Saul Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1992, pp. 4–5.
11. Alvin Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust", in Alvin Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust after Half a Century*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1997, p. 123. For the Americanisation issue, see also David Wyman, "The United States", in David Wyman (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1996, pp. 693–748, Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, and Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin 1999.
12. Hayden White, "Interpretation in History", in Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1985, p. 73.
13. Ruth Ellen Gruber, *Virtually Jewish. Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 2002, pp. 23–24.
14. Cf. Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust and the Russian Historical Culture", in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds), *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003b, pp. 201–222.
15. For a more elaborated analysis of the Living History project, see Klas-Göran Karlsson, "History in Swedish Politics – the 'Living History' Project", in Attila Pok, Jörn Rüsen

& Jutta Scherrer (eds), *European History: Challenges for a Common Future*, Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung 2002, pp. 145–162.

16. Jeffrey Alexander, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama", in Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser & Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press 2004, pp. 196–263. See also Jörn Rüsen, "Holocaust Memory and Identity Building: Metahistorical Considerations in the Case of (West) Germany", in Michael Roth & Charles Salas (eds), *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute 2001, pp. 252–253.
17. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press 1993, pp. viii–ix.
18. Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London & New York: Verso 1983.
19. Agnes Heller, *A Theory of History*, London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1982, pp. 36–50.
20. Bernhard Giesen, "The Trauma of Perpetrators. The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity", in Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil Smelser & Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press 2004, pp. 116–119.
21. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, New York: Columbia University Press 1997, p. 7.
22. Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome. History and Memory in France since 1944*, Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press 1991. The epoch-making books by Paxton and Marrus are: Robert Paxton, *La France de Vichy: 1940–1944*, Paris: Seuil 1973, Robert Paxton & Michael Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, New York: Basic Books 1981.
23. Tony Kushner, *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination: A Social and Cultural History*, Oxford & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell 1994.
24. Aleida Assmann & Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit – Geschichtsversessenheit. Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1999, Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich: Beck 2002.
25. Peter Novick 1999.
26. Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Historia som vapen. Historiebruk och Sovjetunionens upplösning 1985–1995* ('History as a Weapon. Uses of History and the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, 1985–1995'), Stockholm: Natur och Kultur 1999, pp. 57–61; Klas-Göran Karlsson 2003a, pp. 38–43.

Jörn Rüsen

Interpreting the Holocaust
Some Theoretical Issues

> Die Erinnerungen sind wie verwahrloste, herrenlose Hunde, sie umringen und starren einen an, sie hecheln und heulen zum Mond, du möchtest sie verscheuchen, aber sie weichen nicht, gierig lecken sie deine Hand, und hast du sie im Rücken, beißen sie zu...
>
> *Imre Kertész*[1]

In his article "The Holocaust as a problem of historical culture. Theoretical and analytical challenges", Klas-Göran Karlsson addresses the main issues of interpreting the Holocaust as an event in European history in a theoretically reflected pattern of significance.[2] I principally agree with his proposal to develop such a pattern of significance in the form of a theory of historical culture. In the following text I would like to add further arguments to this theory of historical culture.

Reconstruction versus Teleology

Putting the Holocaust into a perspective of European history makes this burdening past important for Europe today. This importance tackles the ongoing process of building a European historical identity.[3] The Holocaust has gained a significant impact on the topical discussion about this identity. Therefore it is convincing to emphasise the importance of impacts on historical thinking in the historical approach to the Holocaust and to criticise the usual preference of causes. Karlsson pleads for a history of effects rather than a history of causes.[4] Although effects cannot be thought of without thinking of causes, this change of historical interest follows a general shift in the logic of historical thinking. I would like to describe it as a *shift*

from teleology to reconstruction. Teleology constructs historical developments in a way that they follow an inbuilt tendency from their very beginning until the end of the narrated story. It starts from beginnings and origins and follows a chronological line of temporal change. The whole development is bound into the limits of a perspective, in which the course of events is knitted together by the idea that one has to follow the chronological order of events and find its explanation that later events are determined by previous ones. The logic of this explanation is characterised by a predominance of the past over the present: It is the past which has determined the outcome of present-day circumstances and conditions of human life.

The *reconstructive way of historical thinking* changes this interrelationship between past and present. The historical view does not follow the chronological order of time; instead, it brings the past into a temporal perspective, by which the present looks back at the past. Thus the past is thematised as a series of conditions of possibilities of development and changes leading to the present-day life situation. Such a view is grounded on a fundamental time perspective of human suffering and activity: Human life is mentally guided by intentions, projections, expectations; it turns back to the past in order to give these future perspectives empirical solidity facilitated by historical memory. Human life principally transcends the pregiven circumstances and conditions in which it takes place and by which it has to be confirmed. Therefore the past which is embedded in its outcome in these circumstances and conditions is principally transgressed into the future. The logic of reconstruction follows this principal transition from the past into the future mediated by the dynamics of human life.

This logic of reconstruction opens up a new space for the awareness of possibilities and alternatives in the course of history. It is a gain in historicity and temporality and emphasises contingency as a mode of perceiving and experiencing time which is constitutive for history.[5]

Referring to this logic of reconstruction and its inbuilt superiority of the future over the past – or phenomenologically speaking the domination of protention over retention[6] – may lead to a fundamental critique of the topical memory discourse. This discourse emphasises the power of the past by memory over the present-day life of people.

Thus the constitutive intentionality – i.e. the future-directedness – of human life is put into the shade of historical thinking. In the framework of the concept of historical memory, the temporal dimension of doing history is shortened; it has lost the future dimension of human life as a constitutive element for remembering and representing the past. The logical shift to reconstruction brought the Holocaust more closely to the present-day life situation, to its potential danger of inhumanity and the attempts to avoid and overcome it.

The Concept of Historical Culture

The concept of historical culture should be explicated in accordance and in difference to the widespread concept of "historical memory" or "cultural memory".[7] Emphasising memory is an attempt to avoid the gap between historical knowledge and practical life, which is typical for modern historical studies. This knowledge has been considered as being far away from the needs of practical human life for cultural orientation. Nietzsche has critically emphasised this distance in his famous article "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life".[8] The recent discourse on memory follows his arguments. Memory, then, emphasises the vital power the presence of the past has in everyday life forms – as an orientating factor in practice, as a medium for building and presenting identity, as a means of political struggle, and in the rhetoric and aesthetic strength of the arts.

"Historical" memory is a specific quality of remembering: In this case the past is remembered as being different from the present. It has become "history", i.e. the remembered events, situations, occurrences and changes differ from those experienced in the topical horizon of today. This difference can occur even in the lifespan of people, but its *character of alterity* is strengthened if the past in concern lies beyond the lifespan of the remembering individuals. Then it enlarges the time perspectives within which people understand themselves and their world. A non-historical memory is related to experiences which share their main features and importance with the experiences of the present. Historical memory thus emphasises the strength and power of representing the past in the cultural life of the present.

It is very important to distinguish between two different meanings of "memory". (1) Here memory, used in a very narrow sense,

is a matter of single persons and their personal experiences of the past. In this sense only individuals have real memories. Therefore it is impossible to speak of "historical memory" which reaches beyond the lifespan of one person.[9] In this meaning only contemporaries of the Holocaust "remember" it. Holocaust memory is limited to the survivors, and there is only an indirect memory remaining: that of their reported witnesses.

(2) The discourse in the humanities uses the concept of memory with a completely different meaning: Here memory is not only a matter of individuals, but of collectives as well. In this case memory means a relationship to the past which is common to a group. Such a collective like a nation, a political party, people of a region, or members of a religion share a "collective memory", which tells them why and how they belong together and differ from others. Their togetherness and difference from others are presented by historical symbols of shared importance: national holidays, monuments, textbooks in schools, or works of art with the quality of being classic. Those who share the importance of these symbols refer to events in the past in order to understand their present togetherness and their common future perspective as a mental power in culturally organising social and political life.

Different modes of this collective memory can be distinguished:[10] *Communicative memory* is a medium of negotiating concepts of self-understanding vis-à-vis topical experiences of temporal change. In this medium memory is a matter of contemporaneity, of forming a generation in difference to other generations. It is a field of cultural communication in which a milieu as a social unit with floating limits and changing memberships is created as continuing itself through the changes of time. Debates among historians like the German *Historikerstreit* is an example.[11] Communicative memory reflects open discussions about the importance of historical experience, of single events, of special symbols for the representation of a political system.

This communicative memory may generate a stronger form and a higher selective feature of represented past. Then it becomes *collective memory*, and in this form it has a higher stability and a higher official role in cultural life. Its historical features have a higher selective density by which larger fields of temporal experiences are cov-

ered. People who feel committed to its symbolism are endowed with a strong feeling of stability and coherence in relation to changes in their world. In Germany the Holocaust has become an event which is remembered as essential for post-war German political culture.[12] Collective memory is an important element of social stability for a broad variety of social units, such as parties, civil movements, and schools of thought in the academic field and interest groups.

This density and stability may increase and grow into a *cultural memory,* which is the core of historical identity. Here memory is a matter of rituals and highly institutionalised performances. It has its own media and a fixed place in the cultural life of a group. Holocaust remembrance in Israel is an impressive example.[13] Cultural memory represents the political system as an entire structure and its permanence in the temporal flow of political affairs.

These three types represent different levels of selection and institutionalisation with related levels of permanence and resistance to change. Their differences are fluent, and long-run historical changes can be interpreted with the hypothesis of transforming communicative into collective and collective into cultural memory.[14] Every historical memory is changing in the course of time, but the *communicative* one is fluid, open and dependent upon topical and contingent circumstances, whereas the *collective* memory already has preliminary forms of organisational or institutional permanence, and the *cultural* one is an institution with a high degree of permanence. One could speak of a cultural *longue durée.*

These different modes of memory can be differentiated along the line of another criterion: the way the past is represented. In an ideal-typological logic two possibilities may be distinguished: a *responsive* or a *constructive* one.[15] *Responsive* memory is initiated by the intensity of a specific experience which has, so to speak, burned itself into the minds of the people. Here memory is hurting, pressing. A quasi-autonomous force is moving the minds of people, forcing them to react, to interpret, to work through. It can be characterised as an imprint upon their mental bodies. It has a "bodily" or sensual character; the past is present by the power of an image. Highly relevant examples are the catastrophic experiences of the 20th century like the Holocaust for the Jews and Germans,[16] the Nanking massacre for the Chinese

and Japanese, the Turkish mass murder for the Armenians and Turks, the Khmer Rouge terror for the Cambodians, etc. The dominating concept for analysing this mode of experience in historical memory is the concept of trauma.[17]

In the *constructive* mode the remembered past is a matter of discourse, of narration, of continuous communication. Memory has moulded the past into a meaningful history. The remembering people seem to be the masters of the past; they put it into a temporal perspective within which they can articulate their expectations, hopes and threats. *Responsive* memory is "bodily", passive, singular, and centred around traces. *Constructive* memory is a matter of language and narration, it is active and repetitive, draws temporal lines of development and is centred on ideas. It is an open question whether a responsive memory can be transformed into a constructive one without a loss (despite the attainment of sense-generation). In the case of the Holocaust it is impossible.

The category of memory is not unproblematic. To strongly juxtapose it to historical knowledge brought about by historical studies is not convincing. Memory and historical studies have a fundamental condition in common: They share the need for temporal orientation in practical life, and they share basic sense criteria used to transform the past into a meaningful history. A difference is made by the way this orientation has been achieved: in memory by the forces of imagination and in historical studies by using standards of methodical rationality in treating the experience of the past. Logically, historical studies differ from memory by the principle of "critique", which demands that every historical statement has to be submitted to the control of experience and of logical and explanatory coherence. Furthermore, memory differs from historical studies by the principle of serving everyday life (*Lebensdienlichkeit*), which demands that every historical account has to be useful for practical purposes.

In order to avoid the problematic opposition of memory and history one should synthesise all the human procedures and activities in which the past is made present by interpretation. This synthesis may be brought about by a concept of *historical consciousness*.[18] Historical consciousness is the mental realm and procedure in which the past is interpreted in order to make the present-day-life situation

understandable and to open up a future perspective on human activity and suffering. The practical realisation of the mental procedures of historical consciousness in social communication can be called *historical culture*.

Historical Culture as a Realm of Identity Formation

What does the Holocaust mean for historical identity? In order to answer this question it is necessary to problematise the usual idea that identity is a mere construction of belonging to and being different from others. In respect to history this "construction" means that the past gets its historical meaning by those who remember, interpret and represent it. By doing this, historical identity is *created*.

That the past gets its historical meaning by the interpretative work done in the present cannot be denied. But this is only one aspect of the identity-building processes in historical culture. One should not overlook the other aspect, namely that the interpretative work of the present, related to the past itself, is conditioned and influenced by that very past. Is the past itself not present in the conditions and circumstances of those who remember and create and pursue historical culture? There is not only construction done in historical culture, but there is a good deal of constructedness effective there as well.

This constructedness means that historical consciousness takes place in a context where the past has brought about conditioning presuppositions for the mental activities of remembering it. These presuppositions are not freely disposable, but they have to be recognised and reflected upon in order to pursue the mental procedures and to fulfil the orientating function of historical consciousness. They are the result of developments in the past which determine the lives of people in the present and have been looked upon by them as being fateful. The historical construction of identity depends upon the pre-given constructedness of the constructor. This dependence may be characterised in Hegel's words as "causality by fate". "Causality" can be concretised as a place in the chain of generations, aside and independent of the awareness and the deliberate relationship to the past of those who have to live their lives in this specific time. They were bound or even "thrown" ("geworfen" according to Heidegger) into this specific link of the chain of generations. Here the past has

grown into the external and internal circumstances of present-day life, without, and sometimes even against, the will of those who have to come to terms with them. In this perspective historical consciousness actually depends upon the past, which it has to transform into a sense- and meaningful history.

This "causal" or "fateful" relationship is not limited to external conditions of human life, but includes its internal conditions as well, namely the mental preformations and possibilities in culturally dealing with the past when making history out of it. The fateful generational chain has a mental dimension effective in traditions, prejudices, resentments, threats, hopes, value systems, basic convictions and – not to forget – the forces of subconscious attitudes and instincts guided by suppressive forgetfulness.

In the other perspective the past becoming history depends upon the activity of those for whom it has the meaning and relevance of history. Thus the events are, so to speak, raw material, which has to be formed into a concept of temporal change by which topical human activity and suffering can be orientated towards the future. The burden of the past pressing human identity into the responsibility for things and events that happened without their participation has now changed into the creativity of the human mind. It shapes the past into a perspective of a development, ending in the projection of a future bearing the identity of people along the lines of their self-esteem. Fateful causality is replaced by value-guided commitment deliberately related to the events of the past. They are treated as if they have to be redeemed in the future course of temporal change in the human world.[19] In the frame of this tension between fateful causality and value-guided commitment, historical consciousness pursues its operations of identity-building.

I would like to illustrate this double dimension of historical identity by a scheme which presents German historical identity in its relationship to the Holocaust.[20] As a pregiven event, to be dealt with, the Holocaust belongs to those events of the past which have determined the life situation in Germany today. It is part of a history which has led to a complete defeat of the nation and to a destruction of large parts of the country, to the political division of Germany, to a loss of land and the expulsion of its people, and to a mental burden of guilt,

responsibility, shame, horror, suppression and trauma. The pregiven temporal chain of generations is the tunnel through which this event is related to the external and internal circumstances under which the Germans have to live. It would be misleading to look at this channel as one single string combining the Nazi past with the Germany of today. In fact, it is a very complex texture of threads, knitting together through different knots different parts of the German people. The historical perspective which comprehends this texture is a complex mixture of sub-perspectives in which different groups of Germans today are related to different groups of Germans and non-Germans in the past. Concerning the people whose activities and sufferings constituted decisive elements of the fateful dependence, one could distinguish different groups, namely the contemporaries, the bystanders, the profiteers, the perpetrators, the victims and the opponents. There is no clear and evident historical relationship between these groups of Germans in the Nazi era and specific groups of Germans today.[21] The majority may be objectively related to bystanders and perpetrators, but one should not overlook that a remarkably large proportion of the victims and opponents were Germans as well. This is even true for a number of the Jewish victims who identified themselves as Germans.

contemporaries, bystanders, profiteers, perpetrators, victims, opponents	past
↓	↓
modes of objective relation, the "causality of fate"	history
↓	↓
the people of (West) Germany living under conditions which are results of what happened in the past	present

Table 1: The past conditions the present

Thus historical culture in Germany is initiated by these pregiven circumstances, initiated so far as future-directed intentions on the one hand and pregiven reality – as an outcome of past developments – on the other structurally differ and have to be bridged. Historical consciousness has to work through these circumstances in presenting

them as an end of historical development which started in – or at least progressed through – the Nazi years and which will lead into a different future. Bridging the gap between the conditioning past and the intended future, historical consciousness changes the fateful dependence into a value-guided acceptance or legitimacy of identity. In this transformation the traumatic experience of a catastrophe remains a decisive factor. On the intentional level it works as a normative factor, which decides the interpretation by which the past becomes history for the present.

contemporaries, bystanders, profiteers, perpetrators, victims, opponents	past
↑	↑
modes of subjective relation (sense generation)	history
↑	↑
collective identity of the Germans as a result of cultural activities dedicated to the memory and the consequences of the past	present

Table 2: The present conditions the past

According to this structure the Holocaust is an issue of the identity of all those people who present their identity in a history in which it occurred. This is evident for Jewish and German history, and also for the history of Europe, since at least some of the important factors which made the Holocaust possible are common to modern and contemporary European history (antisemitism, bureaucracy and the division of responsibility, the First World War and its impact on moral and political behaviour, the ideology of mastering social life by technological means, etc.).[22] The broadest dimension of historical identity is constituted by the idea of humankind, which has become a basic value in most civilisations in the world. In this respect the Holocaust as a historical event belongs to the identity of all those people who refer to their humanness as a necessary factor of their identity. This is the case as long as the Holocaust is understood as a crime against humanity.

What Makes Culture "Historical"?

The concept of historical culture needs a clear definition of its historicity.[23] Does it cover the whole realm of human memory? If so, it covers culture in general, as long as it is related to the experience of something which happened in the past. This understanding does not meet the distinctive nature of history as something specific in the realm of human culture.

This distinctive nature is characterised by two elements:

(1) History is an interpretation of time, which is not simply related to the past, but to the *difference of times*, to the difference between earlier and later (in general: between the present and its future-directedness and the past in so far as it represents something different from the present). This difference is not simply to be understood as chronological, but it has the qualitative meaning of different life forms: in earlier times people lived different lives with different value systems from people who came later. Elementary categorical expressions of this difference are for example old and new, traditional and modern, and, in archaic societies where history is realised by myth, the divine time of origin and the time of normal human life.

(2) This time difference is presented in a *narrative form,* which bridges the qualitative difference of times by the idea of a temporal connection between them (the concept of a sense-bearing course of time). This narrative character of historical culture is an analytically clear criterion of distinguishing historical from non-historical elements of culture, if culture is understood as a totality of the human interpretation of the world and the human self.

In its modern understanding this specific historicity of making sense of the experience of time can be defined by three constitutive elements: (1) Historical culture is related to the experience of time presented by memory; (2) Its sense generation is related to a temporal sequence of events in the past; (3) It presents the difference and the interrelatedness of past and future in the temporal orientation of present-day human suffering and activity.

The Problem of De-Traumatization

In order to meet the specific character of the Holocaust as a historical event in the experience of the past, it is useful to typologically distinguish between three modes of perceiving the past by experiencing events: a normal, a critical, and a catastrophic or traumatic one. This distinction is necessary when focusing on the unsolved problem of how to treat the Holocaust as a historical event. I dare to say that we still do not know, in spite of excellent historical research and representation of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, in the light of the proposed ideal typological distinction, one has to look at the catastrophic or traumatic character of the Holocaust in order to realise the fundamental and hitherto insufficiently solved problem of historical interpretation.

(a) A *"normal" historical experience* evokes historical consciousness as a procedure of understanding it by employing pregiven cultural potentials. The event is brought into a narrative, within which it makes sense so that human activity can come to terms with it by exploring the cultural potential of making sense of temporal change. The patterns of significance utilised in such a narrative are not new. In fact, they are a re-arrangement of already developed elements, which are pregiven in historical culture.

(b) A *"critical" historical experience* does not simply fit into the pregiven patterns of historical meaning. It can only be interpreted if the pregiven potentials of historical culture are substantially transformed. In this case new patterns of significance in understanding the past are constituted; historical thinking creates and follows new paradigms.

(c) A *"catastrophic" historical experience* destroys the potential of historical consciousness to digest events, so to speak, into a sense-bearing and meaningful narrative. In this case the basic principles of sense generation themselves, which usually bring about the coherence of a historical narrative, are challenged.[24] They have to be transgressed to a cultural no-man's-land; or they might even have to be given up. Therefore such an experience cannot simply be allocated to a place in the memory of those who had to suffer from it. Here the language of historical sense falls silent. The horror of

> the experience becomes traumatic. It takes time (sometimes even generations) to find a language which can articulate it.[25]

The Holocaust is the most radical experience of this "catastrophical" experience in history, at least for the Jews. The same applies in a different way to the Germans as well. For both it is unique in its genocidal character and its radical negation and destruction of the basic values of modern civilisation, which they share. As such it negates and destroys even the principles of its historical interpretation, as long as these principles are a part of this civilization. The Holocaust has often been characterised as a "black hole" of sense and meaning, which dissolves every concept of historical interpretation. When Dan Diner characterised the Holocaust as a "rupture of civilization"[26] he meant that we have to recognise it as a historical event, which by its pure occurrence destroys our cultural potentials of fitting it into a historical order of time, within which we can understand it and organise our lives according to this historical experience. The Holocaust problematises, or even prevents the meaning for any unbroken narrative interrelationship between the time before and after it. It is a "borderline experience" of history, which does not allow its integration into a coherent sense-bearing narrative. Each attempt to apply comprehensive concepts of historical development fails here.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognize the Holocaust as a historical event and to give it a place in the historiographical pattern of modern history, within which we understand ourselves, express our hopes and fears of the future, and develop our strategies of communication with others. If we placed the Holocaust beyond history by giving it a "mythical" significance it would lose its character of a factual event of empirical evidence. At the same time, historical thinking would be limited in its approach to the experience of the past. This would contradict the logic of history, since a myth is not related to experience as a necessary condition for reliability. Thus the Holocaust represents a "borderline event"; it transgresses the level of the subject matter of historical thinking and reaches into the core of the mental procedures of historical thinking itself.[27]

My distinction between a "normal", a "critical" and a "catastrophic" historical experience is an attempt to meet this specific character of

the Holocaust as a trauma of historical experience. The distinction is, of course, an artificial one. As any ideal type it is a methodical means of historical interpretation and, as such, is contrasted to the mode of historical thinking active in everyday life. Without elements of a catastrophe there would be no really challenging crisis; and without elements of normality no catastrophic and critical crisis could even be identified as a specific challenge, not to speak of the possibility of radically changing the perception and interpretation of history.

Destroying the effective concepts of sense as systems of orientation, trauma is a handicap for practical life. Those who have had a traumatic experience have to struggle to overcome it. They try to reshape it so that it makes sense, so that it fits into working patterns of interpretation and understanding. They omit or suppress that which endangers the effectiveness and validity of these patterns. One can speak of an estrangement or a falsification of experience in order to come to terms with it.

Everybody is familiar with this distortion and alienation. It is usually applied when one tries to speak about an experience which is unique and deeply unsettling one's mind. This is true not only for negative experiences with traumatic quality, but for positive experiences as well. Those who go through these experiences are pushed beyond the limits of their everyday lives, their world-view and self-understanding. Nevertheless, without words events of a disturbing quality cannot be kept in the horizon of awareness and memory. It is in the realm of language that those affected have to come to terms with them. Even in the dark cage of suppression these experiences tend to find expression. If people cannot speak about them, they are forced to substitute the lack of language and thought by compulsory activities, by failures and gaps in their ways of life. They have to "speak" about them in this "language beyond words", simply because these experiences have become part of them and they have to come to terms with this fact.

Historisation is a cultural strategy of overcoming the disturbing consequences of traumatic experiences. At the very moment people start telling the story of what happened, they take the first step on the path towards integrating the distracting events into their world-view and self-understanding. At the path's end a historical narrative gives the distraction-by-trauma a place in a temporal chain of events. Here it makes sense and has thus lost its power of destroying sense and

significance. By giving an event a "historical" significance and meaning, its traumatic character vanishes: "history" is a sense-bearing and meaningful temporal interrelationship of events, which combines the present-day-life situation with the experience of the past in a way that a future perspective on human activities can be drawn from the flow of change from the past into the present. Human activity needs an orientation, in which the idea of such a temporal continuity is necessary. The same is true for human identity.

This *detraumatisation by historisation* can be brought about by various strategies of placing traumatic events into a historical context:

- *Anonymisation* is quite common. It prevents the distraction of sense-bearing concepts. Instead of speaking about murder and other crimes, of personal suffering from a fault or guilt, one mentions a "dark period", "destiny", an "invasion of demonic forces" into the more or less orderly world.[28]
- *Categorisation* forces a trauma into the category of understandable occurrences and developments so that it loses its disturbing uniqueness for those who are involved (mainly, but not exclusively, the victims) by acquiring designation in abstract terms. Very often these terms integrate traumas into a sense-bearing and meaningful temporal development. "Tragedy" is a prominent example. The term indicates horrible things, but these are treated as having happened as part of a story which has a message for those to whom it is told, or for those who tell it to themselves.[29]
- *Normalisation* dissolves the destructive quality of what has happened. In this case the occurrence appears as the kind of thing which happens at all times and in all places again and again, and it is explained as being rooted in human nature, which is the same through all historical changes. Very often the normalising categories of "human nature" or "human evil" are used.
- *Moralisation* domesticates the destructive power of historical traumata. The traumatic event is given the character of a "case" which stands for a general rule of human conduct. It takes the meaning of a message which moves the hearts of its observers because it is so horrible. The best example is the film *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg (1993). Many of the American Holocaust museums fol-

low the same strategy of making sense. At the end of their walk through the horror that the Jews had to suffer, the visitors get a clear moralistic message. For example: "Has the world learned from the Holocaust? The state of our world leads us to say: not enough... The Holocaust was not inevitable. Human decisions created it; people like us allowed it to happen. The Holocaust reminds us vividly that each one of us is personally responsible for being on guard, at all times, against such evil. The memory of the Holocaust needs to serve as a reminder, in every aspect of our daily lives, that never again must people be allowed to do evil to one another. Never again must ethnic hatred be allowed to happen; never again must racism and religious intolerance fill our earth. Each one of us needs to resolve never to allow the tragedies of the Holocaust to occur again. This responsibility begins with each of us – today."[30]

- *Aesthetisation* presents traumatic experiences to the senses. They are put into the schemes of perception which make the world understandable and a matter of practice. The horror becomes a moderate picture, which makes it – in the worst case – ready for consumption. The film industry provides a lot of examples. The film *La vita è bella* (*Life is beautiful*) by Roberto Begnini (1997) dissolves a disturbing experience by means of slapstick and a sentimental family story. Another example is the musealisation of relicts. They can be presented in such a way that their horrible character is changed into the clarity of a historical lesson.[31]
- *Teleologisation* reconciles the traumatic past with present (or at least later) forms of life which correspond to convincing ideas of legitimacy and acceptance. A widespread mode of this teleologisation is to use the burdensome past to historically legitimate an order of life which claims to prevent its return or to protect from it. In this historical perspective a lesson is learned, and the trauma dissolves into the learning process. An example is the historical museum at Israel's Yad Vashem memorial. The visitors who follow the course of time through the museum have to walk down into the horror of the concentration camps and gas chambers and afterwards up to the foundation of the state of Israel.
- *Metahistorical reflection* makes the painful factuality of traumatic events evaporate into the thin air of abstraction. The challenging

rupture of time caused by trauma throws up a critical question concerning history in general, its principles of sense and modes of representation. To answer these questions means to overcome the rupture by incorporating it into a concept of historical change. The traumatically "dammed upflow of time"[32] in the chain of events flows again and fits into the orientation patterns of present-day life.

- *Specialisation*, finally, is a genuinely academic way of keeping under control the senselessness of traumatic experiences.[33] The problem is divided into different aspects which become special issues for different specialists. Thus, the disturbing dissonance of the complete historical picture disappears. The best example for this strategy of specialisation is the emergence of Holocaust studies as a research field of its own. Here, the horror tends to lose its status as a general challenge to historical thinking by becoming an exclusive topic for trained specialists.

All these historiographical strategies can work alongside many other mental processes, well-known to psychoanalysis, which help to overcome the distractive features of historical experience. The most effective one is, of course, suppression. But it is too easy simply to look at suppressive mechanisms of historical narration and ask what they do not tell us. It is better to look at the ways in which they tell about the past in order to remain silent about its horrifying experiences. Psychoanalysis can teach historians that there are many possible ways of changing the senselessness of an experience in the past into historical sense by historically representing it afterwards in a disburdening way. Those who know that they have been involved and are held responsible disburden themselves by exterritorialising this past out of the realm of their own history and projecting it into the realm of the other. It is very easy to translate psychoanalytical findings into historiographical ones. Changing the role of perpetrators and victims brings about this exterritorialisation, by dissection and projection of agency and responsibility. It can also be done by drawing a picture of the past in which one's own face has vanished in the representation of facts, though it nevertheless – objectively – belongs to the events constituting one's own identity.

All these strategies can be observed if one seeks for the traces of

trauma in historiography and other forms of historical culture within which people find their life orientation in the course of time. Memory and history have covered up the traces, and sometimes it is very difficult to discover the disturbing reality under the smooth surface of collective memory and historical interpretation.

The diagnosis of these strategies of historical sense generation inevitably raises the question of how the historian's work is to deal with them. Is it possible to avoid the alienating and falsifying transformation of senselessness into history which makes sense? The distracting answer to this question is no. This does not mean that careful historical investigation cannot overcome the shortcomings of suppressive falsifications and dissections, of painful interrelationships, including responsibilities. In this respect historical studies play the necessary role of providing an enlightening critique in order to clarify the facts. But in interpreting the traumatic facts historians cannot but use narrative patterns of significance which give them a historical sense. In this respect *historical studies are by their own logic a cultural practice of detraumatisation*. It changes trauma into history. Does this mean that trauma inevitably vanishes when history takes over its representation?

The accumulation of traumatic experiences in the course of the twentieth century has brought about a change in the historical attitude towards trauma. Smoothing away its damaging effects is no longer possible, at least as long as the victims, the survivors and their offspring, as well as the perpetrators and all those involved in crimes against humanity, are objectively determined by this painful deviation from normality and are subjectively confronted with the task of facing it.

The problems of this face-to-face relationship have been extensively discussed with respect to the Holocaust. Here we find an attempt to maintain the specific nature of this traumatic event by separating its living memory from the hitherto developed strategies of historical sense generation. This distinction is characterised by *the difference between myth and history*. The "mythical" relationship to the Holocaust is said to be a form of saving its traumatic character from being dissolved through historisation. But putting it aside in such a way means robbing it of its explosive force in negating the usual procedures of historisation. If a trauma is granted an asylum beside the normality of the human world-view, it becomes shut off from the established

procedures of historical culture. It lives its own life in a separate space of significance. This separatedness allows the normality of doing history to go on as if nothing had happened. This is one danger in establishing "Holocaust studies" as a separate field of academic work and "Holocaust teaching" as a separate field in education. Separated from the other realms of academic work and education, it indirectly and unwillingly stabilises a way of thinking and teaching which should be at least challenged, insofar as the Holocaust is an integral part of its subject matter. So this attempt to preserve the traumatic character of events fails by unintentionally legitimating or even strengthening the detraumatisation through "normal" historisation.

But how can this detraumatisation be prevented? I would suggest a *secondary traumatisation*. This concept means that the mode of doing history has to be changed. I am thinking of a new historical narrative, in which the traumatic events narrated leave their traces in the very pattern of significance which governs the interpretative work of the historians. The narrative has to give up its closed forms, its smooth coverage of the chain of events. It has to express its distraction within the methodical procedures of interpretation as well as in the narrative procedures of representation.

On the level of fundamental principles of historical sense generation by interpretation of events, *senselessness must become a constitutive element of sense itself.*

- Instead of anonymisation, what happened should be stated clearly, in the shocking nakedness of rude factuality.
- Instead of being subjugated under sense-bearing categories, the events should be placed into interpretative patterns which problematise the traditional categories of historical sense.
- Instead of normalising history and dissolving destructive elements, historical culture has to preserve the memory of the "normality of the exception". It has to remember the horror under the thin veneer of everyday life, the banality of the evil, etc.
- Instead of moralising, the historical interpretation has to indicate the limits of morality, or better still, its internal brittleness.
- Instead of aesthetisation historical representation should emphasise the brutal ugliness of dehumanisation.

- Instead of smoothing over through teleologisation it has to show how the flow of time is dammed up in the relationship between the past of the traumatic occurrences and the present of their commemoration. Discontinuity, the breaking of connections, wreckage, has become a feature of sense in the sense-generating idea of the course of time.[34]
- Metahistorical reflection, eventually, has to take over the distracting elements of historical experience in its traumatic dimension and incorporate them into the abstraction of notions and ideas.
- Specialisation, finally, has to be reconnected to a "compelling overall interpretative framework"[35] of history and its representation.

The cries of the victims, the laughter of the perpetrators, and the speaking silence of the bystanders die away when the course of time achieves its normal historical shape to orient the people within it. Secondary traumatisation is a chance to give a voice to this choir of dehumanisation. By remembering it in this way, historical thinking opens up a chance of preventing its continuation.

Approaching the Holocaust by Mourning as a New Mode of Making Sense of History

The challenging traumatic character of the Holocaust needs an answer, by which a new mode of historical thinking should be created. It needs the element of mourning.

Mourning is a mental procedure of commemorating somebody or something lost. The loss bears the specific character of a loss of oneself, which goes together with the passing away of a beloved person or something else of a high value to oneself. The purpose of mourning as a mode of commemoration is to gain back oneself by "working through" the loss, in the words of Sigmund Freud.[36] Gaining back oneself means to regain life through the death of the beloved person or object. In a certain way even the lost subject or object comes back. It comes back in the form of the presence of absence, which enlarges the mental horizon of the mourning person by elements of transcendence.

We should not overlook that historical thinking itself in its very logic follows the logic of mourning at least partly in a formal way,

since it transforms the absent past, which is a part of one's own identity, to a part of present-day life.[37] In respect to the identity of a person or a group the past is not part of the outside world – not external, but an element of the internal life of the human subject. The historical relationship to the past can be compared to the relationship with deceased persons or lost objects in the mourning process.

When thinking about history and its relationship to human subjectivity, it becomes obvious that historical consciousness makes the absent past, which is a part of one's own identity, a present one. And this is exactly what mourning is all about. So in a simple logical argumentation one can say that mourning is constitutive for historical thinking in general and in principle. If those who died contribute positively to the self-esteem of the people of today – and that is the rule in the context of historical consciousness all over the world – the commemoration of them keeps or makes them alive through their death. In other words, in historical consciousness the dead are still alive. And what keeps them alive? Nothing but mourning.

I think that meta-history has completely overlooked this constitutive role of mourning in the procedures of historical memory. History renders the absence of the past present, which the living people are related to as an element of their own selves. That is exactly what happens by mourning.

In history we have a similar relationship between past and present: What has passed away is relevant for the self-esteem and self-understanding of people today, and they have to come to terms with themselves by making their passed world present again in their minds. The difference between history and mourning lies, of course, in the character of this regaining of oneself. In the case of mourning, the process is full of bitterness and pain. The experienced loss opens a wound in one's mind. History, on the contrary, seems to be a procedure of remembrance which does not have this hurting element. Instead it is conceived of as a gain, as taking over a heritage, as bringing about self-esteem. But if the past of which history speaks has this very relevance for identity, we should reconsider whether its passing away does not hurt. Does it not leave a gap to be filled by mental activity? I think it is worthwhile considering whether the procedures of historical consciousness are grounded in a process which resem-

bles mourning. So far, history writing has not been seen in this light of mourning, but is understood as having a totally different kind of quality: that of recovering independent facts as if they were things which can be picked up and integrated into the cultural properties of oneself.

I think that we should emphasise this similarity of mourning and historical thinking in order to realise the specific traumatic character of the Holocaust. As a sense-destructing rupture in historical development it is a loss of identity for all those who refer to it as an important event in their identity-building history. Only by mourning this loss can it be understood as such, and at the same time the lost elements of one's historical identity can be regained as a new presence of the absent.

I would like to illustrate this by the issue of humankind as a constitutive factor of historical identity. A historical experience that negates the universal validity of the category of humankind by depriving others of their status as human beings goes to the very heart of all identity concepts based on the category of humankind. If this negation is executed physically, it effectively destroys one's own self in its universalistic historical dimension. Under these conditions, to say the least, the persuading power of the criterion of humankind as a basic value is fundamentally weakened. Such a historical experience results in the loss of the self in its specifically human dimension. It deprives civilised modern societies of their historical foundations and cannot possibly be integrated into the course of time in which past and future are seen as being held together by the unbroken validity of humanness as a normative value. It destroys the continuity of a history in which subjectivity has inscribed its own universal norms.

What does it mean to face traumatic historical experiences? First and above all, it means to realise that so far culturally dominant criteria of sense generation have lost their validity for the historical discourse. This is probably how Dan Diner's thesis of the "break of civilisation" should be understood. But a loss is not a sell-out. Selling out the criteria of sense generation in historical discourse on the grounds of deconstructing ideology would mean the cultural suicide of modern subjectivity – a subjectivity that relies on the category of equality as the basis of mutual esteem in human relations. Acknowledging a loss without recognising what is lost leads back to

the topic of mourning by history in a compelling way. At this point we are talking about historical mourning in the sense of humankind confronted with the historical experience of drastic inhumanity. In this case mourning could lead to the recovery of one's self as fundamentally human. Mourning would have to consist of *acknowledging the loss*. This implies two aspects: First to admit that humankind as a normative concept is lost or absent in historical experience, and second to accept that whatever has been lost remains one's own – or better still: remains one's own in a new and different way.

What does this mean for the humankind criterion of historical identity? Mankind in the sense of the widest extension of modern subjectivity is deprived of its historical significance, which had so far been regarded as part and parcel of one's own culture or civilisation. It dies as a consequence of the historical experience of crimes against humankind, which are in effect crimes against the self – or better, its mental disposition. The self as defined in relation to humankind dies. Post-modernity has drawn a melancholic conclusion from this: It is no longer interested in the humankind orientation of modern subjectivity.[38] Thus, it leaves the subject of modern societies disorientated and incapable of acting exactly at the point where its real life context – in terms of political, social, economic and ecological issues – is characterised by its objective universality: in its demand for human rights, for equality as a regulating category of social conditions in the globalising process of capitalism and in the global endangering of natural resources of human life.

In contrast to this melancholy, mourning would be a cultural achievement. The subject could recover its own human dimension by moving beyond the deadly experience of a rupture of civilisation. This way of mourning would not incorporate the experience into culture, but would regard it as an effective stimulus to accentuate the validity of an orientation towards humankind in a passionate, yet disciplined and patient manner.

What do we mean by humankind re-appropriated by mourning? What do we mean by humankind that is present in its absence? Mankind is no longer a naturally justified fundamental value of human activity per se. In a historical discourse based on mourning, humankind has literally become utopian because it has lost its fixed

and steadfast position in people's everyday world, *Lebenswelt*. As a consequence of its dislocation, it no longer can be taken as a plan for a world to be created (for that would correspond to death invocation and the designed world would be a phantom or ghost). As utopia it would have an effusive, literally metaphysical status, beyond the reality of a civilised world. It would have to be taken as the yardstick for its criticism, a disturbing factor of insufficiency with respect to the achievements of civilisation.

But what do we mean by *presence* in its absence? Is it more than a shape, a phantom of what could be, but unfortunately (because humans are disposed as they are) is not? In its absence, the notion of humankind could be no more than a conditional *"as if"* of the human understanding the world and oneself. It could but take the effect of a mental driving force for human action, as a regulative concept for something that cannot be obtained, but can only be put into practice. It would not be transcendently (as empirically based metaphysics) but transcendingly effective as a value-loaded medium of sense definitions that stimulates action by serving as a guiding principle in the process of defining an aim. One could speak of fiction in the sense of a real conditional "as if". As lost, humankind is being re-appropriated in the form of a standard pointing in the direction of an improving civilisation; and the fact that this has not yet been achieved urges man into action. The lost reliable and valid norms are retrieved as disturbance, as criticism, utopia, and the motivation to keep one's own world moving in a direction indebted to these norms.

Notes

1. Imre Kertész, *Ich – ein anderer*, Berlin: Rowohlt 1998, p. 89. In English translation: "Memories are like neglected dogs without masters, they surround you and stare at you, they pant and howl at the moon, you would like to chase them away, but they don't give way, they greedily lick your hand, but if they are behind you, they snap." – I thank Annelie Ramsbrock for her critical reading of this text and many proposals for its improvement. My wife Inge has worked hard to better my English.
2. Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture. Theoretical and Analytical Challenges", in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds), *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, pp. 9–58.
3. Cf. Sharon Macdonald (ed.), *Approaches to European Historical Consciousness: Reflections and Provocations*, Hamburg: Edition Körber-Stiftung 2000.
4. Klas-Göran Karlsson, pp. 9–12.
5. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Typen des Zeitbewußtseins – Sinnkonzepte des geschichtlichen Wandels", in Friedrich Jaeger & Burkhard Liebsch (eds), *Handbuch der Kulturwissenschaften. Band 1: Grundlagen und Schlüsselbegriffe*, Stuttgart: Metzler 2003, pp. 365–384; Jörn Rüsen, "Die Kultur der Zeit. Versuch einer Typologie temporaler Sinnbildungen", in Jörn Rüsen (ed.), *Zeit deuten. Perspektiven – Epochen – Paradigmen*, Bielefeld: Transcript 2003, pp. 23–53; in English: "Making Sense of Time – Towards a Universal Typology of Conceptual Foundations of Historical Consciousness", in *Taida lishi xuebao* number 29, 2002, pp. 189–205.
6. Edmund Husserl, *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (Martin Heidegger [ed.]) 2. Aufl. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1980.
7. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich: Beck 1992. An excellent summary is Jan Assmann, "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis", *Erwägen, Wissen, Ethik* 2002:2, pp. 239–247; Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity", *New German Critique*, No 65, 1995, pp. 125–133; Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, München: Beck 1999.
8. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben" (1874), in Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montanari (eds), *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 vols. Vol. 1*,. Munich 1988, pp. 243–334 [English: Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life", in idem, *Untimely Meditations*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, pp. 83–100].
9. This is the argument of Reinhart Koselleck, "Gebrochene Erinnerung? Deutsche und polnische Vergangenheiten", *Universitas* 56, November 2001, pp. 1141–1149. Cf. Noa Gedi & Yigal Elam, "Collective Memory – What is it?", *History and Memory* 1996:1, pp. 30–50.
10. Aleida Assmann & Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit, Geschichtsversessenheit. Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945*, Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1999, pp. 35–52.
11. *"Historikerstreit" Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, München: Piper 1987; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Entsorgung der deutschen Vergangenheit? Ein polemischer Essay zum "Historikerstreit"*, München: Beck 1988; Wulf Kansteiner, "Between Politics and Memory: The *Historikerstreit* and the West German Historical Culture of the 1980s", in Richard J. Golsan

(ed.), *Fascism's Return. Scandal, Revision and Ideology since 1980*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1995, pp. 86–129.

12. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Holocaust, Erinnerung, Identität", in Harald Welzer (ed.), *Das soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung*, Hamburg: Hamburger Edition 2001, pp. 243–259; Friedrich Jaeger & Jörn Rüsen, "Erinnerungskultur", in Karl-Rudolf Korte & Werner Weidenfeld (eds), *Deutschland TrendBuch. Fakten und Orientierungen*, Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 2001, pp. 397–428.
13. Cf. Moshe Zuckermann, *Zweierlei Holocaust. Der Holocaust in den politischen Kulturen Israels und Deutschlands*, Göttingen: Wallstein 1998.
14. A teaching example is Jan-Holger Kirsch, *Nationaler Mythos oder historische Trauer? Der Streit um ein zentrales 'Holcaust-Mahnmal' für die Berliner Republik* (Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur, Bd. 25), Köln: Böhlau 2003.
15. I picked up ideas of Ursula van Beek. A similar distinction can be found in Aleida Assmann, "Erinnerung und Authentizität", *Universitas*, No 56, 2001, pp. 1127–1140.
16. I am aware of the fact that this distinction of Jews and Germans is misleading. There are e.g. German Jews, of course, but in respect to identity this distinction nevertheless makes sense.
17. Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1994; Elisabeth Bronfen, Birgit R. Erdle & Sigfrid Weigel (eds), *Trauma. Zwischen Psychoanalyse und kulturellem Deutungsmuster*, Köln: Böhlau 1999; Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1996.
18. Jörn Rüsen, "Was ist Geschichtsbewußtsein?", in Jörn Rüsen, *Historische Orientierung. Über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbewußtseins, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden*, Köln: Böhlau 1994, pp. 3–24; Magne Angvik & Bodo von Borries (eds), *Youth and History. A Comparative European Survey on Historical Consciousness and Political Attitudes among Adolescents*, 2 vols., Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung 1997; Bodo von Borries, "Exploring the Construction of Historical Meaning: Cross-Cultural Studies of Historical Consciousness among Adolescents", in Wilfried Bos & Rainer H. Lehmann (eds), *Reflections on Educational Achievement. Papers in Honour of T. Neville Postlethwaite to Mark the Occasion of his Retirement from his Chair in Comparative Education at the University of Hamburg*, Münster & New York: Waxmann 1995, pp. 25–49; David Carr, "Time: Consciousness and Historical Consciousness", in Kah Kyung Cho (ed.), *Philosophy and Science in Phenomenological Perspective*, Dordrecht, Boston & Lancaster: Kluewer Academic Publishers 1984, pp. 31–44.
19. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, *Kann gestern besser werden? Essays zum Bedenken der Geschichte* (Kulturwissenschaftliche Interventionen Bd. 2). Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos 2003.
20. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Holocaust Memory and Identity Building: Metahistorical Considerations on the Case of (West) Germany", in Michael S. Roth & Charles S. Salas (eds), *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute 2001, pp. 252–270.
21. For a detailed view cf. the work of Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller & Karoline Tschuggnall, *"Opa war kein Nazi". Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch 2002; Harald Welzer, Robert Montau & Christine Plaß, *"Was wir für böse Menschen sind!" Der Nationalsozialismus im Gespräch zwischen den Generationen*, Tübingen: Edition Diskord 1997; Elisabeth Domansky & Harald Welzer (eds), *Eine offene Geschichte. Zur kommunikativen Tradierung der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit*, Tübingen: Edition Diskord 1999.

22. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1989.
23. Klas-Göran Karlsson 2003, p. 31.
24. A good example of this challenge is Saul Friedländer's remark that looking back at the historical experience of the 20th century one has to raise again the question: What is the nature of human nature? Saul Friedländer, "Writing the History of the Shoa: Some Major Dilemmas", in Horst-Walter Blanke, Friedrich Jaeger & Thomas Sandkühler (eds), *Dimensionen der Historik. Geschichtstheorie, Wissenschaftsgeschichte und Geschichtskultur heute. Jörn Rüsen zum 60. Geburtstag*, Köln: Böhlau 1998, pp. 407–414, quotation p. 414.
25. This does not mean that there are no attempts to give meaning to it and to break its banishment from memory. The "traumatic" or "catastrophic" character of what happened becomes obvious by the failure of these attempts.
26. Dan Diner, "Zwischen Aporie und Apologie. Über Grenzen der Historisierbarkeit des Nationalsozialismus", in Dan Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1993, pp. 62–73.
27. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "The Logic of Historization. Metahistorical Reflections on the Debate between Friedländer and Broszat", *History and Memory* 1997:1–2, special issue: Gulie Ne'eman Arad (ed.), *Passing into History: Nazism and the Holocaust beyond Memory. In Honour of Saul Friedländer on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, pp. 113–146.
28. An example of this anonymization is the inaugural speech of Leopold von Wiese at the first post-war meeting of German sociologists: "Die Pest" kam "über die Menschen von außen, unvorbereitet, als ein heimtückischer Überfall. Das ist ein metaphysisches Geheimnis, an das der Soziologe nicht zu rühren vermag" (The plague came upon the unprepared people from outside. This is a metaphysical secret, not to be touched by a sociologist); Leopold von Wiese, "Die gegenwärtige Situation, soziologisch betrachtet", in *Verhandlungen des Achten Deutschen Soziologentages vom 19. bis 21. September 1946 in Frankfurt am Main*, Tübingen 1948, p. 29.
29. An interesting example is the way the famous and influential German historian Theodor Schieder tried to deal with his own involvement in the Nazi crimes (only recently disclosed). See Jörn Rüsen, "Kontinuität, Innovation und Reflexion im späten Historismus: Theodor Schieder", in Jörn Rüsen, *Konfigurationen des Historismus. Studien zur deutschen Wissenschaftskultur*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1993, pp. 357–397, especially p. 377 (a shortened English version is published in Hartmut Lehmann & James van Horn Melton [eds], *Paths of Continuity. Central European Historiography from the 1930s to the 1950s*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994, pp. 353–388).
30. Holocaust Museum Houston (visited 1996). The exhibition of the Holocaust Center in Capetown ends with the quotation of Archbishop Tutu: "We learn about the Holocaust so that we can become more human, more gentle, more caring, more compassionate, valuing every person as being of infinite worth, so precious that we know such atrocities will never happen again and the world will be a more human place" (My visit in spring 2003).
31. Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Auschwitz – die Symbolik der Authentizität", in Jörn Rüsen, *Zerbrechende Zeit. Über den Sinn der Geschichte*, Köln: Böhlau 2001, pp. 181–186 [English: "Auschwitz: How to Perceive the Meaning of the Meaningless – A Remark on the Issue of Preserving the Remnants", in *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut, Jahrbuch 1994*, pp. 180–185].
32. A formulation of Dan Diner.

33. Psychologists of repression use the concept of "splitting off".
34. Ruth Klüger, a Holocaust survivor, has characterised this concept with the metaphor of Glasscherben, "die die Hand verletzen, wenn man versucht, sie zusammenzufügen" (Pieces of glass which cut the hand, if one tries to put them together); Ruth Klüger, *Weiter leben. Eine Jugend*, Göttingen: Wallstein 1992, p. 278.
35. Saul Friedländer, "Trauma, Memory, and Transference", in Geoffrey H. Hartman (ed.), *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 1994, pp. 252–263, here p. 258. Cf. also his "Writing the History of the Shoah: Some Major Dilemmas", 1998, pp. 407–414.
36. Sigmund Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie", in Sigmund Freud, *Psychologie des Unbewußten* (Studienausgabe, Bd. III), Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag 2000, pp. 197–212 [GW 10, pp. 428–446].
37. Frank R. Ankersmit, "The Sublime Dissociation of the Past: Or How to Be(come) what one is no longer", *History and Theory* No 40, 2001, pp. 295–323.
38. Karlheinz Bohrer brilliantly characterises the "attraction" of "melancholic rhetoric" in human sciences as "a popular resting place where due to the discourse on modernity that failed to move beyond the early stages, a frightened scientific community in the meantime gathers strength for new quasi-teleological design/ideas…", see Karlheinz Bohrer, *Der Abschied. Theorie der Trauer: Baudelaire, Goethe, Nietzsche, Benjamin*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1996, p. 40. He heroically holds "no future" (*Zukunftslosigkeit*) against the hopes for the future by a radical (and fortunately only) poetic farewell. The question is how far his interpreting repetition and affirmation against all historical thinking can be read as a desperate attempt to delay this farewell real-historically. It corresponds with the title of his book, in which mourning categorically takes precedence over melancholy (without being justified by objective reasons in his explanations).

Claus Bryld

Auschwitz and the Collective Memory

Thoughts about a Place and its Usage

A Personal Review

I have no specific claim to authority, as Auschwitz or the Holocaust have not been central topics to my research so far.[1] As a historian I have only dealt with antisemitism and the Holocaust in relation to other topics, such as the history of the working class movement and the history of Nazism, or when these phenomena could be seen in connection with the historiographical struggle itself, as is suggested by the American historian Peter Novick in his book from 1999, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory*, a study to which I will return later.

However, since my early youth – I was born in 1940 – I have felt a personal obligation to learn more about the German politics of race, and not least about the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War. This is due to my upbringing in a home where my father and his brothers were members of the Danish Nazi party and were punished according to the 1945 Criminal Law Amendment Act in Denmark, and where the genocide against the Jews, when it was known after the liberation from German occupation, was considered a part of the war, as something that was unpleasant, but nevertheless hard to avoid in a war where all parties, or at least also the Soviet side, resorted to all possible means in order to win.

The German historian Ernst Nolte's odd account of reciprocity between the crimes committed by the Bolsheviks and the Nazis, an account that provoked the great strife among German historians in the latter half of the 1980s, is an explanation that I encountered long before I suppose Nolte even began to form his ideas.[2] And when I reached a stage in my life where I began to be capable of thinking for myself, of course I had to examine what had happened. Evidence

about the Holocaust was hard to come by in the 1950s, unless you sat down to study the protocols of the Nuremberg tribunal. Within the public domain, film and pictorial footage was scarce, too, not to mention that we never heard about the extermination of Jews in the classroom, since the history syllabus in intermediate and upper secondary school ended around the First World War. The 1950s were distinguished by a strangely introvert and provincial climate, presumably as a reaction to the extreme violence and brutality of the previous decade.

When I was 13 or 14 years old, the best source of enlightenment in this respect was actually to read Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which was available in Danish translation and had been published in countless editions in Denmark before 1945. I found the book both foolish and repulsive – in fact, I never managed to finish it, because it seemed so saturated with petit bourgeois prejudices while adopting a pseudo-scientific approach. In a way I would say that, to this day, reading Hitler's book is the best antidote to any antisemitic sentiments, jingoistic ideas, and ethnic cleansing. The fact that this book, authored by a pathetic individual with a huge and extremely unsympathetic ego, managed to achieve almost biblical status in Germany during the 1930s continues to astonish me. I must hasten to add that I do not belong to the group of so-called intentionalists, who believe in a direct link between *Mein Kampf* and the Holocaust. On the other hand, it is indisputable that the ideology of the book is racist and social Darwinistic to the backbone, and that this ideology must have had a general impact on the Germans – of course with the exception of those who were already sceptical of such ideas. When I was about twenty years old I felt, without any sense of irony, that I had come to terms with myself politically, and did not think too much about Hitler or my own Nazi father, both of whom were dead at this point (though I also wish to stress that the comparison between the two ends here).

In the beginning of 1960, a troupe of Polish actors from the Gdansk region visited the Copenhagen student theatre company in which I acted in my spare time. One of them stayed with us during their visit, and later that year – during the summer holidays – a friend and I decided to pay him a visit in return. We wanted to drive on our

motorbike through East Germany and Poland, partly to reunite with our friends, and partly to see what life was like down there. And so we did. Most of our actor friends lived in a small coastal town called Sopot, and after a strenuous journey we reached Sopot via Gdansk. The trip turned out to be a great experience – we played music and acted together, and had long conversations with our Polish friends. At no stage during our trip did we realise that the towns and the region we were travelling through had been a predominantly German area – that is, a majority of the population had been German – up until 1945, when the German population had been subjected to ethnic cleansing. Before the Second World War Sopot had been a holiday and seaside resort for Germans, but neither in Sopot nor Gdansk did we meet a single German, or at least anyone who spoke German. When I discovered this many years later, I had to acknowledge that schemes of ethnic cleansing can actually succeed, and I was rather shocked, not least because during my visit in 1960 I was left with a positive impression of the place and its culture, not knowing anything about its recent history and, worst of all, without feeling inclined to ask any questions. My Polish hosts and friends, whom I still remember with affection, did not mention the ethnic cleansing with one word, even though it had taken place only half a generation ago.

As noted, I did not discover this truth until many years after my visit, and since then I have read quite a bit about the expulsion of between 12 and 15 million Germans from the Eastern territories and Sudetenland in 1945.[3] Cynically speaking, this was the largest and most successful scheme of ethnic cleansing in European history, successful because both parties have accepted it as an irreversible fact today. But from a judicial point of view, of course, it set an unfortunate precedent. It was exactly that kind of precedent Hitler had in mind when formulating his *Lebensraum* philosophy in *Mein Kampf*: the sub-humans should be banished from the Eastern territories, or deployed as slave labourers to the benefit of German settlers. Only, in 1945 this "philosophy" boomeranged on his people, and the new, democratic German state had to accept the state of affairs, initially *de facto*, because the Allies were in agreement, and subsequently *de jure* as well.

Back to the summer of 1960 in Poland: Our motorbike broke down near Gdansk, and we had to do the rest of our Poland trip by train and bus. After Warsaw we reached Krakow, and here history repeated itself, if I may put it like that. Travelling around the region that the Germans had called *Das Generalgouvernement* during the war, my companion and I must have been very near Auschwitz, but in all our Danish innocence and naivety, we did not realise it, even though members of my own family had been directly or indirectly involved in the war. As far as I can remember, I had heard of the name Auschwitz at the time, but had no inkling as to where it was, except somewhere in central Europe, or any idea that there were still remnants of the extermination camp, in which case we would of course have tried to look it up. We were more preoccupied with the scenery, the Polish vodka and the beautiful Polish girls, than with the recent history of the area. Naturally, this is also something which I have reflected on subsequently. We had so many pleasant experiences on our trip to Poland, and found the Polish people extremely sympathetic, but what had happened in the country fifteen to twenty years previously was of no immediate interest to us. And the Poles themselves did not talk about it. I do not think it was taboo as such; they just did not mention the war or the persecution of themselves or the Jews, and we did not ask. This lack of recollection and dialogue was typical of the time, not just in Poland, but in all of Europe, I think.

When it comes to Auschwitz – Oswiecim in Polish – and the surrounding region, this taciturnity seems shocking in retrospect. In the cases of East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia and Sudetenland, the killings and expulsion of Germans can be seen as a response – albeit an unlawful and inhuman one – to the German Nazi policy of expulsion and extermination which was implemented between 1939–1944. It was a question of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and thus Stalin managed to push his as well as Poland's borders considerably towards the West.

Because the Germans have acknowledged their role in the war – at least on a political level – and accepted the responsibility for the war of destruction in Eastern Europe, they have also accepted the results of the retaliatory cleansings that occurred in 1945. Maybe these cleansings can be wholly or partly characterised as genocide,

but despite the extreme suffering endured by millions of people, both as individuals and families, the states and peoples survived as such. However, what went on in *Das Generalgouvernement* before 1945 can only be described as mass slaughter of human beings that was motivated by racism; a slaughter that could not be redressed, even on an unlawful basis. The Nazis persecuted and killed mostly Jews, but also the Roma and Sinti peoples were almost completely wiped out in Eastern and Central Europe. Moreover, for those who survived there was no prospect of compensation or possibility of retribution, if I may put it like that, in the regions in which they lived. Some of the survivors were able to stay on in these areas, others would go back to their homelands, in the East or the West, and yet others would emigrate to the new state of Israel or to other countries willing to accept them. But justice, even in the most power-political meaning of the word, was something they could not attain. Incidentally, for a long time during the early post-war period it was also difficult for these people to be recognized as war victims, as the nation states would give priority to their own soldiers and freedom fighters, in the name of patriotism. Jews and gypsies would not serve as symbols of the national fight against the occupying power, and in due course the same would apply to the Communists in the West: with the advent of the Cold War, they were considered to be anti-national.[4]

Auschwitz: The Facts

I am not aware of the exact motives for introducing a so-called Auschwitz Day in Denmark, except that there is a relation to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust in 2000. Later I will return to the pros and cons of having such a commemoration day, but basically I think it is better to name January 27 "Auschwitz Day" than "Holocaust Day". Auschwitz denotes actual sites, a concentration and an extermination camp, which is easier to relate to, concretely and with the senses – you can even go and see the places – while the Holocaust is more abstract and conceptual, denoting the genocide against the Jews during World War II in general. It is easier to relate to and comprehend something that is concrete rather than abstract, and from a pedagogical point of view Auschwitz, with its ghastly tangible reality, is more effective as a sign of our commemoration.

But what, then, does Auschwitz represent? As mentioned earlier, I have not been doing research on the Holocaust as such, and consequently I depend here on the historian Peter Reichel's account in a three-volume anthology on German memory sites.[5] Auschwitz is the name of a place where, using industrial methods, the Nazis murdered over one million Jews and other categories of people who had been captured and brought in from those European countries that Hitler's Germany occupied. Most of the murdered Jews came from Poland and Hungary. Added to their number are approximately a quarter of a million non-Jewish Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Roma and Sinti, and a few other groups.[6]

Before the Holocaust became a widely used term about 25 years ago, "Auschwitz" also represented the entire German system of extermination in the Eastern territories, which was responsible for the killing of approximately six million Jews. Auschwitz exemplified – and still does – the anti-humanistic, National Socialist system accountable for forced labour and genocide, medical experiments, as well as for the exploitation of the wealth and even the human remains of those murdered. It was a system engineered to perform a rational destruction of human beings through industrial methods. The killings and the exploitation of labour were organised according to methodical, efficient schemes, and the extermination was intended to be carried out without any emotions – or as one SS doctor noted, as though it were a production line.[7]

Heinrich Himmler's SS began the construction of the first concentration camp, Auschwitz I, in the spring of 1940. It was intended as an instrumental part of the so-called "Ostsiedlung" scheme, according to which Germans and other Germanic peoples such as the Scandinavians should colonise Eastern regions, while Poles, Russians, Jews and others were to be deported. Initially, the plan was to deport the Jews to Eastern Siberia, but this idea was abandoned in June 1941, when Germany launched its attack on the Soviet Union. The first transportation of prisoners to Auschwitz took place already in the summer of 1940, and consisted of 700 political prisoners from Poland.

By March 1941 two other camps were set up a few kilometres from Auschwitz I: the labour camp Buna-Monowitz, Auschwitz III,

which was intended for slave labourers working for the *IG-Farben Werke*, but also housed – with the assistance of several smaller camps – prisoners working for German large-scale industry in general, represented by companies such as *Krupp*, *Siemens-Schukert*, and *Rheinmetall-Borsig*. Shortly afterwards, the extermination camp Birkenau, also called Auschwitz II, was erected in the village of Brzezinka. It was in Auschwitz-Birkenau that the SS in September 1941 performed the first mass gassings of Soviet prisoners of war. Subsequently, these gassings continued on a large scale, with Jews especially targeted. Today the Auschwitz region is the world's largest cemetery – a cemetery without gravestones, it has been called – and as we all know, it remains a monument to the collapse of European civilisation in the twentieth century.

During the war the Allies learned about the mass crimes committed on the eastern front, as well as behind the front, already in the late summer of 1941. That they knew about the massacres is supported by a statement made by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden before the British Parliament in 1942, in which he condemned the atrocities as "this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination". [8] But beyond the inner circles of those who had direct access to the intelligence, there was a certain amount of confusion. Undoubtedly, this was partly because the Nazi crimes were of such proportions that they seemed unbelievable. Today, it is assumed that the Allies could have intervened, for example by bombing the railway tracks leading to Auschwitz, which must be considered a major junction in the railway system of Eastern and Central Europe at the time. It was not until the Nuremberg Trials, however, that the full picture of the atrocities emerged and was revealed to the world. But the true, factual memory of Auschwitz really began to be formed at the scene of these crimes, in the diaries of those Jewish prisoners who were murdered by the SS *Sonder Commandos*, and in the so-called protocols of Auschwitz, i.e. records made by some of the survivors.[9]

Auschwitz as a Memorial Site

Auschwitz as a public place of commemoration is, of course, now situated in Poland, and once again bears the name of Oswiecim. Instituted by the Polish state in July 1947, it was declared a Polish

national memorial "for eternity". In addition to being a place of commemoration, Auschwitz serves as a state museum, a documentation centre and an archive of the remains from the concentration camps. It is a major tourist site attracting more than half a million visitors annually.

To whom does Auschwitz "belong"? For more than 40 years there was only one answer to this question, and it could be found in the buildings of Auschwitz, where a museum was inaugurated in dedication to "the history of suffering of the Polish and other nations".[10] This history represented a heroic narrative, beginning with the assault on and persecution of the Poles, spanning the anti-Fascist resistance and finally the victory of Communism over Hitler-Germany. In this Communist-patriotic narrative there was no room for the fact that a great number of the Polish and European Jews had been exterminated in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and it was not until the end of the 1970s that an exhibition entitled "The Suffering and Fight of the Jews" was added to the existing one. The Communists had formed a collective memory of Auschwitz that fitted their particular agenda during the Cold War hand-in-glove, parallel to what went on – though in a somewhat more discreet fashion – on the other side of the iron curtain. As part of the demonisation of Germany which continued after 1945, the Poles, presumably with the support of the Russians, estimated the Auschwitz death count at four million people. This figure is 25 per cent higher than what Rudolf Höss, the commander of the camp, alleged during the Nuremberg Trials, a number which in itself was too high. The Communists sought to maintain the worst possible picture of the Germans, past and present. In 1990, after the collapse of Communism in Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe, the official death count was adjusted from four to 1.2 million people, as scholarly studies had indicated that this number was closer to the historical truth. However, it is not only in a Communist community that the collective memory can be shaped according to a particular agenda. It may happen in any community sustained by a collective memory, as also become clear shortly after the new management of the Auschwitz museum had revised the death count: one public reaction was that the new figure constituted an affront to the victims of Auschwitz. As if the figures themselves, still of horrendous propor-

tions, would make a difference! By all accounts, it is clearly in the interest of both historians and the public that the knowledge we have is based on verifiable information.

The struggle over the memory of Auschwitz has continued after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. First of all, it has unfolded itself as a struggle between Catholics and Jews, and secondly, on a more general level, there has been a struggle as to what form the memory of Auschwitz or the Holocaust should take, and as to what purpose it should serve. The latter controversy is international and political in scope, while the former is primarily of a religious, symbolic nature.

Let us consider briefly the religious conflict between the Catholic and Jewish communities. It had already begun ten years before the collapse of the Berlin Wall, after Pope John Paul II had paid a visit to Auschwitz. Following that event a Christian church was built, dedicated to the canonised Catholic monk Maximilian Kolbe, who had sacrificed himself for a fellow prisoner in Auschwitz. However, before the war Kolbe had published several articles supporting antisemitic ideas. Following the completion of the church, a Carmelite monastery was erected, along with a 26-foot wooden cross. Obviously, the Jewish community objected to this scheme. As Peter Reichel notes, the fear among Jews that Poland would claim Auschwitz as its memorial place, and thus make it a site for Christian anti-Judaism, was just as strong as the fear among Poles that the Jewish community would turn Auschwitz into a Judaic place of commemoration, and thereby place the Poles on the side of the perpetrators. The Jews cannot accept the presence of Christian symbolism on this site, because it is the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe, and because the killings of the Jews had taken place before the eyes of a Christian Europe.

Another affair began to unfold in October 1998, when the Pope canonised Edith Stein, who had been murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. Stein had converted from Judaism to Catholicism, which made her canonisation problematic, since she had not been executed on account of her Catholic faith, but because she was of Jewish descent.[11] The historiography of Auschwitz is full of such provocations and counter-provocations, because the former extermination camp has become *the* memorial site of all memorial sites marking the Holocaust. Thus, it is also significant that the so-called negationists, who claim that the

Nazis did not have gas chambers and consequently did not gas any Jews, have been focusing on Auschwitz when trying to prove their point. The presence of gas chambers in Auschwitz, however, has been documented beyond any doubt, for example in the written and oral sources, and the political agenda of the negationists, be it extreme right-wing or even Nazi, is detectable in everything they submit before the public. Needless to say, they have contributed considerably to the muddling of the whole debate, even though I find it wrong to set aside the principle of free speech and punish them for their outpourings, as is done in Germany and France. Given the tradition of freedom of opinion and expression in Denmark and the other Nordic countries, I hope this sort of action would be unthinkable here. Surely, such measures would only defeat their own purpose.

Memory, Amnesia and Power

On the whole, freedom of opinion and expression is a relevant issue in connection with the ongoing discussion of the *Endlösung*. Not so much in the formal, legal sense, where it is "only" the negationists who have been gagged. Rather, what I am talking about here is the general degree of readiness to engage in the debate at all. Germany, I think, is a good (or should I say bad?) example of this, which obviously has to do with the fact that it was Germany that, under Nazi rule, carried out the genocide against the Jews, and in innumerable instances persecuted other peoples as well as its political opponents. In many respects the Germans have dealt with their own past, and today they represent one of the most broad-minded nations when it comes to protecting minority groups, human rights, internationalism, and so on. But as far as I can see, the German public is still weighed down by the past in a way that prevents it from dealing independently and freely with some of the moral issues that present themselves in the world here and now. In a reverse sort of way, the crimes of the past still dictate the thoughts and actions of the Germans, also in relation to issues that were not relevant sixty years ago, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The German philosopher Theodor Adorno was in a sense right, when he made his famous remark: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." What he meant was presumably that we must never lose

sight of the shock and terror experienced in the wake of the Holocaust, and therefore we will not be able to indulge in writing poetry. "Nach Auschwitz" – the words with which his remark begins in German – became a symbolic expression for the new era which was heralded by the uncovering of the atrocities committed between 1941–1945.

Things may not have changed that radically after Auschwitz, but Auschwitz did shock the world, or at least Western/European civilisation. In addition to denoting a place, the name became synonymous with a profound, radical questioning of the basis for human coexistence in general, as well as the belief in evolution and innovation in the fields of science, technology and medical research as a foundation for European civilisation. Thus the name Auschwitz has come to represent a line of demarcation in the historical development of the modern world, symbolising the point in time where our faith in capitalistic and technological progress as something that contained no dangers was irreversibly lost.[12] The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has given a thorough, incisive account of this paradox in his book from 1991, *Modernity and the Holocaust*.

Auschwitz must not be forgotten, the history of Germany – and of Europe – must not be repressed, but here we question an old philosophical doctrine which was formulated in antiquity and has been advanced in more recent times by people such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Bertold Brecht: in order for life to go on, we must be able to forget. Without the ability to forget, man becomes but a prisoner of the past and cannot exercise his creative powers – he will be forged *by* history instead of being a forger *of* history.

Neither is the strong preoccupation with recollection, the ability to remember, as innocent as it may initially seem. Remembrance is associated with selection, and therefore also with forgetfulness. At the same time, it is conditioned by the communities which sustain it, and consequently subjected to issues of power. As the great historian of memory Pierre Nora notes in his introduction to the seven-volume study of the collective memory in France, *Les lieux de mémoire*:

> Memory situates remembrance in a sacred context. History ferrets it out; it turns whatever it touches into prose. Memory wells up from groups that it welds together, which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs observed,

> that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective and plural yet individual. By contrast, history belongs to everyone and to none and therefore has a universal vocation. Memory is rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object. History dwells exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in the relations among things. Memory is an absolute, while history is always relative.[13]

According to Nora and other researchers of memory and history, what we forget is not only that which we do not remember, but forgetfulness is also enforced through remembrance itself. Memory selects, adds and invents, it mollifies or demonises, it explains and reasons. In other words, it embraces and transforms the past, spurred by different political motives. There are numerous communities imposing their remembrance upon the phenomenon of Auschwitz. Reichel observes that non-Jewish Germans, the Allied communities, and the various groups of victims all relate differently to Auschwitz. Even among the victims there is no consensus as to what constitutes the correct memory, and thereby what should be forgotten or remembered. This concern is also expressed by the American historian Peter Novick, who has written a highly critical – but scientifically well-founded – analysis of the way in which Americans exploit the memory of the Holocaust. In his introduction to *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* from 1999, he writes:

> To understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behavior. Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes. Historical consciousness, by its nature, focuses on the *historicity* of events – that they took place then and not now, that they grew out of circumstances different from those that now obtain. Memory, by contrast, has no sense of the passage of time; it denies the "pastness" of its objects and insists on their continuing presence.[14]

On this note, Novick goes on to criticise a wide range of organisations and individuals in American society, primarily Jewish organisations, but also people such as Elie Wiesel, the famous writer and public speaker, for exploiting the memory of Auschwitz and the Holocaust in an attempt to further their own political and ideological agenda. The Holocaust, Novick argues, has been misused, becoming instrumental in a political and cultural battle. Laying claim to history in this way is a question of power, the power to define what should be brought up for discussion, and to whose advantage. Thus we also talk about the power to quell unwanted questions and thereby silence debates. In this process the mass media play a crucial role, both as disseminators and manipulators of opinion, mostly to the benefit of those who have the political or economic means to set the agenda.

But can these theories of collective memory be applied to a discussion of Auschwitz? Well yes, Novick does it, even though it is the American and not the European public that he is concerned with. And he does it in a sober manner: his aim is to cleanse and free history from the sticky web of political interests that entangles it, and which is linked much more to the present than the past. In Germany his book was well received, while a study such as Norman G. Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* (2000) did not get good reviews.

The Right to Remember Freely

The Germans themselves, though, seem to have great difficulties engaging in a discussion of this nature, examining their own current practice. To me, the recurrent debates about, and attacks on, the writer Martin Walser seem to suggest this. In the summer of 2002 he was fiercely attacked in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, because of a satirical novel he had written about the literary reviewer Marcel Reich-Ranicki. In his anonymised portrayal of Reich-Ranicki, Walser had among other things referred to some "Jewish" characteristics in the persons behaviour, which according to the paper and other critics was simply unacceptable. Moreover, the fact that Reich-Ranicki in person had been to Auschwitz was another reason why he could not be satirised, even though the satire dealt with Reich-Ranicki as a mature, middle-aged critic. Walser also had defenders, among others the Nobel Prize laureate Günter Grass. Eventually, the media acquit-

ted Walser of antisemitism, but only after giving him a very hard time. And already by the autumn of 1998, he had seemingly stirred up the wrath of most of the press when, in an acceptance speech for a literary award in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main, he talked about how sick and tired he was of the "permanent display of shame", and of how he felt Auschwitz was being used "instrumentally" by the media as a "moral bludgeon". In his speech Walser explained why he thought that the staging of the grief in Germany had gone too far, at least in the media, and argued how the proposed Holocaust memorial in Berlin, a plan that has now been approved and is under construction, could only end up as a "nightmare the size of a football pitch". To properly understand the points Walser is making in this speech, you have to know something about the German mass media, and television especially, where programmes about Nazism and the Holocaust have taken up more and more airtime, even though these programmes are often lacking in quality and historical-factual value.[15]

It would be wrong to assume that Walser is a closet Nazi, a denier of the Holocaust or just reactionary. He is – or at least was – known as a serious writer holding democratic, progressive views. It could be argued that his choice of words was unfortunate in places, and after delivering his speech he was also fiercely opposed in many quarters of the German press, and not least by the director of the Central Jewish Council in Germany, Ignaz Bubis. After the incident and until his own death a year later, Bubis called Walser a "spiritual fire-raiser", and subsequently aggravated the tone of his criticism by remarking that whether it was intended or not, Walser's speech was implicitly antisemitic. After a couple of months, appearing in a joint interview with Walser, Bubis retracted his description of Walser as a "spiritual fire-raiser", but the whole dispute left the impression of an unresolved, highly emotional conflict that could erupt again at any time.

György Konrád, Jewish Hungarian writer and president of Berliner Akademie der Künste, made the most sensible response to this dispute that I have come across in an article for the weekly paper *Die Zeit*, in December 1998. The title of Konrád's article was, loosely translated, "The Right to Remember Freely", and his main argument levelled at Bubis was that no one is in a position to determine and dictate our opinions or memories for us. With reference to his own

experience – as a child he witnessed the capture of his father and mother by the Gestapo, and many of his family were killed in Auschwitz – he urged level-headedness and placability. "To me", he writes, "who cannot escape the memory of the destruction of my family, this memory [...] is different than it is to him who easily forgets, because the memory is not *his*." Konrád continues:

> It is true that we are not masters of our memory, not even of our own personal recollections, but if someone else, against my will and counter to my way of experiencing things, were to tell me how to remember, it would make absolutely no sense to me [...] Man cannot liberate himself from painful memories, even if he wanted to; but if these memories are presented to him repeatedly as something bearable and acceptable, he would feel estranged and respond with callousness. Even if he does not deny the agony and shame, he would raise his eyebrows at such denouncements made by professionals, and eventually reject them. Facing horror cannot be an everyday experience. When it is, it tends to become reduced to a vulgarised, commodified version of horror. We simply do not possess the ability to do penance on a daily basis. [...] Penance is considered ritualistic, theatrical, cathartic, and seen as something out of the ordinary. When exercised excessively, its actions become worn and even untrustworthy. [...] Who can bear the horror and to what extent, is not a moral question. We have to accept that it varies from individual to individual how much we can bear, and respect those differences. The living would rather not have to deal with death at all. We know we are going to die, but so long as we are alive, we do not want to face death all the time. [...] No one should have to atone for the sins of others, either. There is no one among my German friends and colleagues who is more to blame for the existence of Auschwitz than I am. Granted, we have a right to, and possibility of talking about our own family past and social inheritance, whether it be a source of honour or shame. Today, the Germans have no other obligation than this inner obligation to recount, an obligation that I also presume Martin Walser is confronted with, and which I imagine is weighing on his conscience, to the extent that he is longing for relief. Man wants to be able to look at himself in the mirror, without being troubled by such shadows.

Almost providing a motto for this idea of being able to remember and allow others to do the same, Konrád concludes:

> I would have considered it more fortunate if Mr. Bubis had refrained entirely from reacting to Martin Walser's speech. To remember should be the public as well as private concern of all free citizens. Memory cannot be controlled and regulated like collecting taxes. What bothers me about the frequent talk of Auschwitz is rather that it is joined with other images of horror in creating a media cliché. [...] It is unacceptable to couple the idea of censorship together with Jewish interests. Living in a democratic republic we do not need to agree on matters that can be viewed from different perspectives.[16]

"To remember should be the public as well as private concern of all free citizens" – that, I think, is a good guideline for society, and something we could learn from in Denmark, where political correctness is also allowed to interfere with our memory, and where those who have other memories than the majority, because they have been brought up under different circumstances, are easy prey to public indignation – this goes for ethnic Danes as well as Danes with an immigrant background.

When all is said and done, I probably count myself among those who are sceptical of the usefulness in having official commemorative events and running pedagogical campaigns, unless we allow ourselves to be self-critical and self-reflective in connection with such endeavours, and on the basis of that dare to formulate political criteria and goals for ourselves. And this almost never happens in connection with public commemorative events. One notable exception might be when the German Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeled in front of the monument to the Warsaw ghetto uprising in December 1970, a gesture that took everyone by surprise and caused a lot of debate. To me it was an extremely powerful manifestation, which symbolised an acknowledgement of the German war crimes and at the same time addressed the new threat the world was facing with the partition between East and West.

Given his liberal-democratic views, the important German political theorist Erich Vogelin (1901–1985) took strong opposition to Nazism at an early stage in his life, and had to emigrate from Germany

in the 1930s. After the war, he voiced his doubts as to whether the public's way of handling the so-called *unbewältigte Vergangenheit* had any significance at all. As he noted: "To engage critically with history it is no use just to *talk* differently – you need to *be* different. The difference in temperament is not achieved merely by raking over the atrocities of the past; on the contrary, a revolutionisation of the spirit is the very precondition for passing judgement on past events."[17]

Vogelin's proposed method for engaging with history was to try retracing our steps "from the symbols that have lost their meaning, to the experiences that have constituted meaning". While he was sceptical of eternal values, final answers, absolute truths and utopian ideas, he found that experience represents a reality which people depend on in their search for truth. That is to say, he was more concerned with personal introspection and reflection than with an extrinsic public practice of commemoration, which is never capable of containing all experience, and which, in its worst manifestations, is reduced to empty ritualisation. I tend to agree with this point: in my opinion, it is only that which reflects the individual's everyday problems and experiences in some way, and which is generally recognised by the surrounding community, that carries relevance and currency and is capable of living on in our minds. This is what may form our historical conscience – and consciousness. It does not mean, though, that it is unnecessary to keep memory alive through narratives and through education. Every generation has to learn about these terrible events and their context, but memorialisation must be anchored in a process that is not mechanical or ritualistic. The process must also include means of empathy which can be combined with individual experience and can be reflected on.

Auschwitz – What Have We Learned?

At present, however, the age of globalisation and mass media is upon us, exerting a constant pressure on us, calling for the staging of events and commemorations. Hence the decision to turn January 27, the day the extermination camp was liberated by the Red Army, into an official Auschwitz Day. As such, turning the commemoration of Auschwitz into an international event is not a bad idea. It is not unreasonable to see the legacy of Auschwitz as a shared European

– and even Western – problem, rather than solely a German one. With the existence of the European Union, and its expansion to most of Central Europe, there are many historical events that must be viewed from a new perspective and to some extent appropriated as something shared, rather than something nationally specific. Europeans will have to look at history with a shared sense of responsibility – after all there were also many non-Germans who were involved in the atrocities of the Holocaust, both before and after the mass killings. Right from the start, far too little effort was put into curbing the murderous policies of Hitler, also internationally. Those who had the means to do something, for example the governments and the big business in several Western countries, did nothing or even supported the Nazi regime. Many have a share in the responsibility, also when considering that it would presumably have been easier to stop Hitler than Stalin and his GULAG in the East. Other causes and motives than the Holocaust prompted the GULAG, and for centuries Russia was considered to be on the periphery of Europe anyway. But Hitler was conceived of within the framework of Western normality: although extremist and unruly in terms of his rhetoric, he was considered someone you could negotiate and do trade with. From a Western point of view, his anti-Marxist and anti-Communist stance was a major vindicating feature; it could be used to justify many of his actions – up until the war it could even be used to explain the assaults made on Jews. At any rate, the neighbouring Western countries considered the German legislation on, and persecution of Jews, gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals, Social Democrats and Communists a domestic affair: the whole business was unsympathetic, perhaps, but nevertheless something that the other nations were willing to tolerate, as long as Hitler's policies were exercised within the national borders.

The present appeal for conducting a long-term political analysis of what lead to the atrocities of Auschwitz should not be confused with the so-called anti-Fascist rhetoric deployed by the Communist and some of the Socialist parties during what, for many years after the war, was referred to as the "era of anti-Fascism". In many ways, this rhetoric was just as extrinsic as the talk during the Adenauer years that Hitler and a few other Nazi leaders were the only ones responsible for

the implementation of Nazi politics. To me, what is needed is a mustering of empathy, self-scrutiny and a critical evaluation of authorities, rather than an habitual memorizing and reeling off of accepted phrases about the proper political battle with the class enemy and his tools of terrorism. To cut a long story short, I find that the common treatment and commemoration of the Holocaust as a non-political phenomenon is wrong. It is true that the Holocaust represented a momentary collapse of civilisation, but it was more than that. Our commemoration of it must therefore have more of a political scope, allowing us to use the event as an opportunity to scrutinise our own time, paying close attention to current societal trends that could lead to a repetition of the excesses and crimes that were committed during the 1930s and 1940s in the name of antisemitism. Maybe we would deploy nuclear bombs instead of gas this time, but the results would be equally atrocious. An understanding of how Fascism in Italy and later Nazism in Germany rose to power is in my opinion essential, if we are to comprehend what happened later. As a theme, I find that the current rise of nationalism and xenophobia in European societies plays too insignificant a role in connection with our commemoration of Auschwitz. And in Denmark as well as globally, our way of criticising the ongoing violation of people and their rights is so lame and inconsistent that it is not possible to say that the world today has found a way of dealing with anti-democratic forces that is much different from what we saw in the 1920s and 1930s.

This assessment also applies to the Western countries. Although the West keeps referring to Human Rights (the U.S. more hesitantly than other countries), the elites have realised that "human rights" is a term that is politically flexible, and that these rights can be applied so universally and sentimentally that they only serve rhetorical purposes.

As such, having a commemorative Auschwitz Day is a good idea, but its significance all depends on what we want out of it. Accepting it as an officially staged event, devoid of any scope for political discussions with a contemporary perspective, all we can expect is that it becomes a commemoration day like any other. If we want it to carry any special significance, it must have implications for the way we conduct ourselves in the world today, for example in relation to refugees and

those who are being persecuted. The past and the present must be put into a mutual perspective. It is only by asking ourselves those painful questions which our past will help us to formulate – and as a pivotal point in our history, Auschwitz is a source of many questions – that we can build a safe foundation for supporting those minorities that are being persecuted in our own time, domestically as well as in other places around the globe. And this support will only be significant if we are willing to offer it, also when it entails material sacrifices on our part and requires us to revise our own deep-rooted prejudices and preconceptions of who the enemy is.

Unfortunately, the current situation in Denmark is indicative of the opposite, namely that we have become an introverted society dominated by consumerism and a political indifference to crimes and atrocities on the international scene, in ways that bear a resemblance to the 1930s. The situation in Chechnya and Palestine are two relevant examples, and only a few years ago the whole world watched passively as genocide was being committed in Rwanda. In Iraq, hundreds of thousands of children have died as a result of the unsuccessful sanctions imposed by the West. After September 11, 2001, the so-called war on terrorism has become yet another alibi for not taking action in certain regions of the world, or even for oppressing people further, as in Central Asia. "After Auschwitz" – does the phrase put us under any sort of obligation in the world at all, including Denmark? To answer the question we will have to prove it, because words are not enough: we also have to think and not least act politically, and our political actions must not be governed by opportunism, so that we discriminately select what qualifies as persecution and genocide according to some general, power-political agenda – an agenda that will typically be set by the strong elites.

Epilogue

The Auschwitz Day arrangement held in Copenhagen City Hall on January 27, 2003, was both dignified, eventful and beautifully executed: it evoked sadness while at the same time inviting reflection. The plight of the European Jews during the 1930s and World War II was mentioned alongside the persecutions and mass killings we have seen in Stalin's Soviet Union, as well as in Cambodia, Bosnia

and Rwanda. Especially the events in Bosnia and Rwanda were movingly commemorated. But as the audience was a select crowd of the Danish elite, it never developed into a public debate or event, as it should have.

Despite the aesthetic qualities and beautiful execution of the arrangement, I think it illustrated the validity of my main point, namely that recent events or the events that are taking place here and now right before our eyes, tend not to be discussed at such official occasions, thereby disallowing us to thematise that which we commemorate from a contemporary perspective. Apart from expressing a very general concern with anti-Nazism and anti-Communism, the arrangement sought to be "apolitical", but exactly by adopting such a line it ended up being political. Chechnya was not mentioned,[18] nor was Palestine and – obviously – the civilian population in Iraq. Other civilian disasters, such as the one that is currently unfolding in the Congo, were excluded entirely from the thematic scope of the arrangement, as they cannot be discussed in terms of identifiable actors and victims. The situation in these hot spots is still insufficiently clarified and too charged with international politics for a government like the Danish to venture formulating a clear position with reference to Human Rights.

Of course it is impossible to compare the Holocaust directly with the current oppression in Chechnya or Palestine, but the important thing is not to compare situations of oppression simply on the basis of their degree of cruelty – if we do so, everything pales beside the Holocaust. What is important is that we enable ourselves to stop *possible* crimes against humanity, *before* they develop into full-blown atrocities. In other words, we must prevent future instances of genocide or ethnic cleansing, no matter how they are sought to be carried out. However, the Danish government has too many vested interests, national as well as international, in order to be able to live up to its moral responsibility and take a clear position in this matter. On January 27, 2004, Iraq may be mentioned, *after* the war has ended (at the point of writing this in late March 2003, the war, which has been waged in contravention of international law, is still raging). But those other people who continue to suffer without being commemorated will presumably not be mentioned until some sort of conclusion has

been reached. Remembrance is concerned with what has passed, not with what is happening in the present, and despite the countless pronouncements that we must learn from our mistakes, this has not yet come to pass. The responsibility primarily lies with those powerful nations that currently seem to be in command over the life and death of so many people in the world, such as China, Russia, and not least the United States.

The world has not become less cruel after January 27, 2003 and the inception of the Danish Auschwitz Day. The policies and general position of the Danish government have not changed either. If anything, it has let itself be dictated more and more by the interests of the United States, interests which are not always in agreement with Human Rights. But of course, this does not mean that we should assume a fatalistic and defeatist attitude. Everyone has a responsibility for how the world develops, and the need for enlightenment, debates, and a joint commitment to Human Rights and democratic principles is more urgent now than ever before.

Translation: *Nils Eskestad*

Notes

1. This article is based on a lecture I gave at the Danish Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in December 2002, a couple of weeks before Auschwitz Day was being marked officially for the first time in Denmark, on January 27. The purpose of the lecture was to raise a debate about this and similar commemorative events. The present article is a slightly edited version of my lecture, with the addition of an epilogue, in which I shall try to assess briefly – and in the light of what I said in my lecture and present to you here – the way in which the commemoration day was being held on January 27, 2003.
2. Cf. Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus*, Berlin: Propyläen Verlag 1987.
3. Cf. e.g. Manfred Zeidler, *Kriegsende im Osten. Die Rote Armee und die Besetzung Deutschlands östlich von Oder und Neisse 1944/45*, Munich: Oldenburg 1996; Hans Lemberg & K. Erik Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen. Hitlers letze Opfer*, Berlin: Propyläen 2001.
4. Cf. Pieter Lagrou, *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation in Western Europe. Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000.
5. Peter Reichel, "Auschwitz", in Etienne Francois & Hagen Schulze (eds), *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. I, Munich: Beck 2001, pp. 600–621.
6. Peter Reichel 2001, p. 600.
7. Peter Reichel 2001, p. 600.
8. Peter Reichel 2001, p. 601, quotation from Lothar Kettenacker, "Die Behandlung der Kriegsverbrecher als anglo-amerikanisches Rechtsproblem", in Gerd R. Ueberschär (ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus vor Gericht. Die allierten Prozesse gegen Kriegsverbrecher und Soldaten 1943–1952*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag 1999, p. 20.
9. Peter Reichel 2001, p. 601.
10. Ibid., p. 602, quotation from Jean-Charles Szurek, "Das Museum des Lagers Auschwitz", in Ulrich Wüst & Annette Leo (eds), *Die wiedergefundene Erinnerung. Verdrängte Geschichte in Osteuropa*, Berlin: BasisDruck Verlag 1992, pp. 239–264.
11. Peter Reichel 2001, p. 603.
12. Peter Reichel 2001, pp. 618-619.
13. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History", in Pierre Nora & Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol. I, Conflicts and Divisions*, New York: Colombia University Press 1996, p. 3.
14. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory. The American Experience*, New York: Houghton Mifflin 1999, pp. 3–4.
15. Walser's speech with the title "Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede" is printed in full in *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel*, October 13, 1998, pp. 17–24. Of course my summary here is very condensed, focusing on some of his most provocative remarks. I cannot find the slightest trace of any antisemitism in his text, but only a sarcastic critique of the public "instrumentalisation" of Auschwitz. Walser also points to specific statements from various, unnamed German intellectuals whose accusations against the present German population look quite absurd. Maybe it was this ironic showdown – and the initially favourable reactions from leading politicians and the authorities – which infuriated the debate and still make it seem out of proportion. I will point out, nevertheless, that I have not studied the public debate as such.

16. György Konrád, "Die Freiheit des Erinnerns", *Die Zeit*, 53, 22 December 1998 (translation by Claus Bryld & Nils Eskestad). Cf. also Claus Bryld, *Kampen om historien. Brug og misbrug af historien siden Murens fald. 15 essays*, Roskilde: Roskilde Universitetsforlag 2001, pp. 194–212.
17. Stephan Sattler, "Der grosse Schwierige", *Die Zeit*, 40, 26 September 2002 (translation by Claus Bryld & Nils Eskestad). Vogelin's writings have recently been collected and published in 10 volumes as *Ordnung und Geschichte* by Fink Verlag, Munich.
18. In the printed programme, entitled "27–1", though, Eric Markusen does mention Chechnya on p. 5.

Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke

Holocaust and the Decline of European Values

She was not particularly large. Small, even. Still, she was impressive when she stepped forward and let her words slowly reach out into the darkened room: "My father died in Auschwitz. This is my *Kaddish* for him."[1]

Olly Ritterband was one of the "witnesses" to speak at the ceremony that marked the first official Auschwitz Day in Denmark on 27 January 2003. The ceremony was held in the City Hall in Copenhagen in the presence of about 1,200 people, amongst them the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, and much of the Danish Jewish community. As in Sweden, Great Britain, Germany, and a number of other European countries, Denmark now has an official day to commemorate the victims of genocide.

The commemorations in Denmark centre on Auschwitz Day. Auschwitz was the largest of the Nazi extermination camps, situated in Poland near the city of Oswiecim, the Polish name for Auschwitz. One million Jews, a quarter of a million Poles, and some twenty-one thousand Roma died in Auschwitz. Gassed. Starved. Suffocated. Shot. Today Auschwitz is a monument to a bloody strand in European history, the Nazis' murder of six million Jews, seven hundred thousand Roma, ninety thousand disabled. It took half an hour to gas two thousand people in Auschwitz. Its ovens could incinerate one thousand eight hundred a day. It is all still there to be seen today. Auschwitz smells of death.

The Great Mystery

The episode that we call the Holocaust has been portrayed in European culture ever since 1945, at first only sporadically, then more

systematically, and in the last couple of decades with increasing intensity. The Holocaust is a mystery that haunts European culture and European consciousness. From Marvin J. Chomsky's popular television series, *Holocaust*, transmitted in 1978 and 1979 to 220 million viewers, that once and for all made the word Holocaust synonymous with the extermination of the European Jews during the Second World War, to the political focus on the Holocaust and genocide in general that several European governments have set in motion, with information campaigns and research centres. A certain amount has been intentional, some is the natural consequence of the culture that has developed around the Holocaust: books, films, television series, museums, and art.

Representations of the Holocaust have grown in scope and become a part of mainstream European culture. Much of this culture is produced in America, which has given the American political scientist Norman G. Finkelstein cause to reflect on what he terms the Holocaust industry.[2] For Finkelstein, the widespread attention given to the Holocaust in the USA serves to sustain the image of the Jews as a persecuted people who have experienced a unique suffering. Films, books, television programmes, museums, and commemorations; all have become more numerous since the Six Day War in 1967, after which Israel, and thus the Jews, became part of the American affinity, and no longer needed to maintain the silence that had surrounded the Holocaust. On the contrary, the Six Day War was the first element in the construction of a myth where the events of the Holocaust became part of a political game. The historian Peter Novick has also considered the increasing focus on the Holocaust in the USA. Why is it that there is such a flurry of activity about the Holocaust when in truth it was a European event? Novick's answer is that it stems primarily from the composition of the American entertainment industry. It is Jewish.[3]

Yet if you look at the interest shown in the Holocaust in Europe, what is the answer here? Is there another reason why Europeans give time and thought to the Holocaust? Has the Holocaust something to say to Europeans that do not relate to the American Jewish lobby, to Hollywood, or to Israel, that is important for our own history and thus our own self-image? I believe there is. If we look at

the debate that met Jan Gross' book *Neighbors* it becomes clear just how painful retelling the history of the extermination of the Jews is in Europe. Gross describes how 1,600 Jews were slaughtered during World War II, not by the Nazis but by their Polish neighbours.[4] The book prompted a heated debate in Poland about relations with the country's Jewish population, but it also challenged the national myth about the war and provoked a painful process of reinterpreting Polish history.

Gross' book is an example of how the focus on the Holocaust impinges on European society in a very specific way, throwing out a series of fundamental questions. How could the extermination of 6 million Jews happen in the midst of European civilisation? Where did this "heart of darkness" so suddenly come from? And was it sudden? As the Polish journalist and editor, Adam Michnik, wrote, he cannot deny the guilt that still hangs like a dark shadow over Europe, and makes everyone, including himself, an accessory. Although he is a Jew, and was not involved, as a European he is marked by the trauma the Holocaust inflicted on Europe.[5] In that sense, the interest in the Holocaust is part of this grief work. It is still well-nigh impossible to grasp how so hideous and yet so organised a crime could occur in one of the most civilised societies, Germany of all places, where the Jewish population was smaller than in other, more antisemitic countries such as Poland and the Soviet Union, and where the Social Democratic party was openly against antisemitism. Whence this foul spring that so suddenly gushed forth in the heart of the continent?

Every attempt to understand this mystery contributes to making the Holocaust a part of European memory. All research, information, and remembrance are a part of the process of reworking that will slowly lead Europeans to the insight that this actually happened amongst us. It is for this reason several European countries hold a memorial day on 27 January, the day in 1945 when Europe lost its innocence, a day that will always remind Europeans of what their civilisation is capable of doing. In Europe learning about the Holocaust through films, mini-series documentaries, books and exhibitions is an attempt to understand how this could happen here.

Kertész and The Girl in the Red Coat

I lie with my six-year-old daughter Esther in my arms, and tell her about the girl in the red coat. "What did she look like?", asks Esther, and I show her the cover of the book I am reading. "This is Roma", I say. "She's a Jew, and has had to hide during the War with a woman called Manuela. Otherwise the Germans would have sent her to prison camp. So they bleached her hair and kept her indoors for three years. She wasn't allowed out to play." Esther thought, looked at the picture, and then said: "Tell me some more about Roma."

The Girl in the Red Coat (2002), is an example of the many memoirs that have been written by victims, and survivors, of the Holocaust. They are numerous, and variable in quality, but are all part of the therapeutic reworking of the genocide. *The Girl in the Red Coat* plays on the coincidence between the writer Roma Ligocka and Spielberg's film, *Schindler's List* (1993), in which a little girl in a red coat is the only flash of colour in an otherwise black-and-white film. We see her clearly, and so did Roma Ligocka, when one day in March 1994 she recognised herself in Spielberg's film, and all at once realised what had determined her life: the Holocaust. Roma Ligocka was born in 1938. Her family were wealthy Jews from the Polish city of Krakow. There was art and culture in her mother's childhood home, beautiful furniture and music and a garden behind the large house. Roma does not remember it, for she knew nothing but the ghetto, but whenever she was scared her mother told her stories of life before the Second World War, before the Holocaust. With her mother, she fled through the sewers to avoid deportation. They managed to hide for the last year of the War by pretending to be country relatives visiting some well meaning, but very scared, Gentiles.

After the war, Roma went to Jewish school, a period for her almost harder than the war years because the survivors were returning home, and everyone was so shocked by the genocide that every form of normality was completely out of the question. During these first post-war years there were only tears and anguish and suffering, and stories of the ones who had disappeared: orphans who had to take care of themselves, and families separated because so many moved to Israel and the USA, or because the new Communist rulers put them in prison. This is what happened to Roma's father, who in a kind of

historical irony survived concentration camp only to die of disease after a stay in Polish prison, a matter of weeks before penicillin became available on the black market. Roma first hit upon the words to express her life when she went to an ordinary school, with new, Communist teachers who, brimming with youthful vitality, threw out all the old, non-Communist teachers. It was here in the Communist discipline that she found a kind of peace, and to her mother's great indignation the teenage Roma swallowed Communism whole, no questions asked. For in Communism, Roma encountered a new hierarchy that for the first time placed her, a Jew, first, and gave her a chance to participate that she had never had before. But the price was a break with her mother, and her whole Jewish background that for Roma was only a traumatic experience, but for her mother was a whole culture and a whole history dwindling away during the years of Communism.

Ligocka describes the break very soberly, very simply, perhaps because she does not see the connection between the Holocaust trauma and the Communist repressive mechanism. Instead, her story is constructed as a long journey towards final deliverance, towards the freeing of her spirit. And in Roma's own words, it was her encounter with Spielberg and the little girl in the red coat. Suddenly, at the age of sixty-six, she could see what had determined her life, and what had made her adult life disintegrate. Roma, as an adult, after a prolonged nomadic existence as a scenographer, settled with her Polish director husband and small son in a Munich suburb, and slowly her existence crumbled into bits. The encounter with the German petit bourgeois was too much, and Roma first broke out of her marriage and then broke down. The cloud only lifted when, having seen Spielberg's film, she decided to tell her story: to talk about the little girl in the red coat who was so frightened, always frightened. She set aside her anguish, and resigned herself to her fate as an East European Jew, first the Holocaust and then Communism. She gives Spielberg much of the credit for this release.

It is clear that Roma Ligocka's memoirs embrace several themes. There is the Jew who finds her way back to the Sabbath. There is the East European who recreates her history after nearly sixty years of Communist repression. And there is the adult woman who rediscov-

ers the child in herself. How then to interpret Roma's story? What is it a part of? Is *The Girl in the Red Coat* an element of the worst kind of Holocaust industry, serving solely to underline the Jews' role as victims and to preserve the idea of a persecuted people? Or can we see the book as part of a wider process, where the Holocaust is the historical experience that binds Europeans together?

The Hungarian author and Nobel Laureate, Imre Kertész, writes that the Holocaust contains a unique moral value. Kertész was deported as a fifteen-year-old to Auschwitz and from there to Buchenwald, but he survived and was freed in 1945. In 1949, back in Hungary, he found himself again subjected to a totalitarian regime, which according to him was also his salvation. Unlike Paul Celan or Primo Levi, he did not commit suicide in disappointment over democratic society, but went almost immediately from one totalitarian regime to another without the hope of a world better than the one he had experienced in the camps. What Kertész learnt under Communism was repression. He maintains that the East European countries during the Soviet period did not confront the lesson to be learnt from the Holocaust. Quite the contrary: Communism's totalitarian language taught people to repress themselves and their history in favour of the changed role accorded them by their new society. Under Communism, people were barred from their own inner lives.

For Kertész, the journey back to the Holocaust is thus also a journey to freedom, not as a Holocaust victim – who in the best Spielberg manner fixes the Holocaust in the Jews' endless history of suffering – but as an enlightened man who gazes straight into the European heart of darkness, and no longer entertains any illusions about a better world. Therein lies freedom. A statement of what European civilisation also embraces. In Auschwitz, everything previously respected as European values was annihilated. And therefore from the Holocaust stems value, because prodigious suffering leads to prodigious knowledge, and thus conceals prodigious reserves of moral strength. The strength of being able to confront this heart of darkness.

It is by the latter that we can recognise all things European, writes the Swedish historian Bo Stråth.[6] By negation we become aware of the characteristics of European civilisation. The Holocaust in this sense acts as a prism for the criticism of civilisation – and as a warn-

ing. The Holocaust sounds a warning for nationalism, for xenophobia, for ethnic cleansing, for persecution on the grounds of culture, race, or religion. It is also a very loud warning for the directions in which rational thought and all our science and technology can take us. The Holocaust is the ultimate rationalism, which with a romantic ideal of a pure nation led to the most terrible episode in Europe's history.

The Nazi genocide derived from the German idea of culture, where a community was constituted from a shared history and culture. Those who fell outside the shared culture could not be part of the community. In the Nazis' view, Jews were not members of the supposedly organic *Gemeinschaft* of Hitler's new Germany. The Jews were likened to an excrescence that was to be wiped not only from the German body politic but also from the whole of Europe. The Nazis' persecution of the Jews was universal and it was total, writes Yehuda Bauer. They did not only persecute German Jews to make Germany Jew-free. They persecuted Jews in Austria, Denmark, France, wherever they could, with the sole aim of disposing of the Jews and solving Europe's "Jewish problem" conclusively.[7]

In fact, the idea that a community is constituted by a shared culture and history has been predominant in the twentieth century. And this despite Europe as a civilisation defining itself from the principle of equal value. By considering the great trauma of European civilisation, we not only gaze on what our civilisation gives rise to, and what such a view of community can spawn. The Holocaust also serves to draw attention to the kind of civilisation that builds on rights, not on nation and culture. As the lawyer Richard J. Goldstone writes, the Holocaust led to the creation of the international human rights movement, and it was the Holocaust that led to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948, the same year as the United Nations adopted the Convention on Genocide.[8] The Holocaust marked the start of an international society based on the rule of law that places the individual above the state, and that since the end of the Cold War has established itself, not least because of the wars in the Balkans. In this sense we are dealing with a view of community that prevails in the nation-state and enables a new community to emerge more fitting for the twenty-first century's ethnic and cultural diversity. This

is the lesson we must pass on with our stories of the Holocaust. Or as Kertész writes, the Holocaust is a trauma of the European civilisation, and the decisive question for this civilisation is whether this trauma will live on in European societies in the shape of culture or in the shape of neurosis, in the shape of creation or in the shape of destruction.[9]

No Word about the Victims

In all societies, the transition from traditional agrarian society to modern industrial has brought with it immense social and political upheavals. It has created chaos and disorder in the social structure, and the price has been bloody battles between different groups of the population. Europe between the First and the Second World Wars was to all intents little more than social upheaval, civil war, purges, persecution, and widespread social misery; together, the consequences of what we call modernisation. In Denmark this process passed off relatively smoothly. Agriculture was gradually restructured without incurring great losses and human costs. In Sweden the transition to an industrial society occurred later, but correspondingly much faster and with the population's consent, not least because working life in industrialised cities was better than a hard and scarcely profitable existence as a smallholder.

It was this process that the Bolsheviks in Russia seized upon. They wanted to modernise overnight. Modern society was to be realised here and now, no matter the cost. The result was to be the perfect, modern, industrial nation, ruled by the top of a knowledge society, the party elite. For many years, indeed decades, there was wonder at the rough but apparently effective modernisation that swept through the new Soviet Union. Most outsiders were impressed. Here was drive. Here was efficiency. Here was a rapid, uncompromising transformation of society, pushed through without the usual political compromises, without palaver, and not least apparently without popular resistance.

In the Soviet Union, order alone prevailed, an order that the whole of the rest of Europe looked to long after 1917, up to the end of the 1950s, perhaps even longer. Take the Social Democrat intellectuals in both Denmark and Sweden: they like the Bolsheviks were obsessed

with the idea of order; they too were convinced that an intellectual elite ought to rule society to attain something better by political means. Both these welfare states were constructed on the premise that planning was the route to a better society. In Sweden, the plans were realised by means of a compromise between industry and the workers' movement. In Denmark it was through a broad political compromise between all political parties. Such a compromise was not to be found in the Soviet Union. There were no negotiations there, no palaver. The model was realised without thought for the victims. All the millions who died in the wake of the Bolsheviks' forced collectivisation and streamlining of political control were simply forgotten. Such was the price of the perfect society.

The Soviet regime razed cities, executed people in droves, or deported them to the GULAG, the ingenious system of labour camps where exiles served twenty, thirty, forty years hard labour to construct the new system. Bolshevik rule was grotesque. It stripped people of every form of dignity, and reduced them to a bare number in the gigantic Soviet bureaucracy. A civilisatoric deficiency is what the Danish historian Bent Jensen calls it in his book *GULAG og glemsel*, written as an accusation of the Danish left and their stony silence. See, he writes, see how a civilisation collapses completely when a self-appointed intelligentsia seizes power and ruthlessly makes it its own. The result was terror.[10]

Why did no one in the West react to all these victims? For people did know, after all. They did find out. Why the unfeigned fascination from Western intellectuals, as millions of people perished in the East? Why was nothing said? Why no involvement? Protest? Why not a word about the victims? We pause for a moment. Not a word about the victims. Why? One answer is that the observers were fascinated. People believed in the idea of Communism. If nothing else, Marxism was a seductive ideal that captivated not only the Bolsheviks but also a large proportion of Western intellectuals. We know it, of course, the children of the sixties who imbibed scorn for capitalism and the middle classes with our school milk. After all, we heard about it all the time. That beyond capitalism and the petit bourgeoisie lay a much better society, a society that took its toll in victims.

But there was more to the great repression than fascination alone.

There was the need for an ideal, a longing. And then of course all you have to do is turn a blind eye. See no evil. Hear no evil. Know nothing of the consequences. Communism in the Soviet Union was a history workshop, where the Bolsheviks tried all the things that Western Europeans themselves did not dare try after the Holocaust. That's just the way it was. All the social control that the Holocaust had rendered impossible in the West rampaged on in the Soviet Union. And the West watched with curiosity, and then quickly looked away.

There is no measure by which one can judge such crimes against humanity and compare one with another. But if we look at its relevance for European culture and awareness as a whole, the Nazi atrocity not only touched more people directly. The Holocaust was such a shock that Europe has yet to recover. Still no one knows how it could happen. To repeat Yehuda Bauer from *Rethinking the Holocaust*, it is still a great mystery, so far from all common sense that we must still ask why. The Nazi genocide was irrational. It lacked logic. It had no rationale that we can immediately understand. The obliteration of the Jews was the consequence of elitist politics based on the ideal of a racially pure German nation into which the Jews did not fit. The Jews had to leave this world. Why, we still do not know.[11]

Regardless of the Western intellectuals' complicity and their mental repression of Stalin's hideous regime in the Soviet Union, our historical focus is still Germany and the consequences of the Nazi crimes. This is not because we do not want to see what Communism caused. Today we want to see it all. We want to see mass graves and gas chambers. We want to see labour camps and starved-out faces staring out of photographs. We want to see executioners, but in our collective memory it is the Holocaust that appears as the mystery that we have yet to solve, that we must try to understand.

When Europe Lost Its Innocence

Could the Holocaust have been prevented? Could Europeans have acted differently? Could the Jews? Who in fact is guilty? Questions such as these are unavoidable in self-examination regarding the Jewish extermination. A great part of current Holocaust research, including the American, centres on just this. The American journalist and human rights researcher, Samantha Power, wonders for example in

her prize-winning book *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (2001) why it took the USA fifty years after the United Nation's adoption of the genocide convention to intervene and prevent a genocide, in this case in Kosovo in 1999.[12] In Europe we ask ourselves: What did "we" do to prevent the Holocaust? Did "we" do anything at all? Who did? Or did we "help it along"? Did the Nazis drag Europe into the genocide, or did the Europeans themselves step up? Who was perpetrator, bystander, and victim?

Within Holocaust research, the traditional division has been very simple. The Nazis were the perpertrators, the Jews the victims. Everyone else a bystander. But what of the bystanders' duty to intervene? How many Jews did Denmark send to their deaths when a restrictive refugee policy saw refugees turned back at the border and denied residence permits? Is Denmark an accessory to the Holocaust? If Denmark had taken in more Jewish refugees during the 1930s, would the rescue of the Danish Jews in October 1943 then have been possible? And would Denmark really have had a "Jewish problem".[13] On the other hand it is inescapable that Denmark did send Jewish refugees to Auschwitz. Of course people did not know that at the time. Or did they?

On 30 December 1935, the American high commissioner for German refugees in the League of Nations, James G. McDonald, made public his letter of resignation. The letter filled a whole book and reverberated around the world. "Demand that the League of Nations acts to protect the Jews in Germany", ran the front page of the daily Danish *Politiken*, "World opinion demands intervention". "I can not remain silent any longer", reported a correspondent for the socialist-orientated *Socialdemokraten*. "The persecution is directly aimed at driving the Jews from Germany." With the persecution of the Jews in Germany, the Nazis created a problem for other countries. The Nazis' "Jewish problem" became the other countries' refugee problem. The new refugee problem was more than ordinary charity and goodwill was capable of dealing with. More radical solutions were required. None of Germany's neighbours, among them Denmark, wanted to take in large numbers of refugees. No one was interested in agreeing on a country for the Jews. And no one wanted to give them that country.

McDonald did not pull his punches. For nearly two years he had sat in meetings with European governments and discussed restric-

tions, refugee quotas, and the possibility of finding a homeland for the many Jews who had fled after Hitler came to power. He had written letters, memos, and proposals, and had tried to communicate with the German government. But nothing helped. Germany was not inclined to limit the flow of refugees, and Europe was not inclined to take them in. If the League of Nations could not agree on a lasting solution, there was only one way forward. Given the circumstances in Germany, it was no longer enough to continue supporting the refugees who had already left. There had to be an attempt to ensure the removal, or at least the mitigation of the causes that created German refugees. As McDonald wrote: "The developments since 1933, and in particular those following the Nuremberg legislation, call for fresh collective action in regard to the problem created by persecution in Germany."[14] Convinced as he was "that desperate suffering in the countries adjacent to Germany, and an even more terrible human calamity within the German frontiers", were inevitable "unless present tendencies in the Reich" were checked or reversed, McDonald could no longer remain silent. "When domestic policies threaten the demoralization of and exile of hundreds of thousands of human beings, considerations of diplomatic correctness must yield to those of common humanity". No one reacted. The day after, New Year's Day 1935, there was nothing. It was yesterday's news. World opinion perhaps listened, but it did not act.

James G. McDonald was, as the Canadian historian Michael Marrus writes, "a prominent American scholar in the field of international relations, chairman of the American Foreign Policy Association, a man widely respected by Jews and Gentiles in his own country".[15] He was on good terms with Germany, had excellent contacts there, and arrived in Berlin in 1933 with high hopes for his new job. He was physically impressive and a straightforward, but effective, speaker and also, in Marrus' words, "a devoted Christian and humanist, an energetic optimist eager to get to the root of the refugee problem".[16] His good relations with Germany ceased when he arrived in Europe. So did his good relations with Europe. In December 1935 he returned, disillusioned, to the USA, well aware that the refugee problem he had been sent across the Atlantic to solve had only become greater, and would become greater yet.

What then did McDonald suggest in his letter of resignation? Did he have a solution? Yes, he did in fact. McDonald was moved by the ideal of rights. Rights for individuals and rights for minorities. He knew what human rights were. His solution was to modern eyes very simple, but was then completely unthinkable in inter-war Europe. The co-operating countries in the League of Nations must propose that Germany revoke the laws, and not introduce new ones, that drove people out of the country. Germany must simply change its race laws. McDonald wanted the League of Nations to intervene in Germany's internal affairs and violate its sovereignty. It was the only solution. As long as the League of Nations refused to acknowledge this, McDonald did not want to be part of it. Could McDonald have prevented the Holocaust?

The European states had no chance to follow his suggestion. The international order after the First World War and the Treaty of Versailles was based on national sovereignty. This principle governed relations between states: no incursion into a state's internal affairs. McDonald's proposal was an infringement of this principle, one that no one dared to break. It would have had very different consequences to solving Europe's "Jewish problem". It would have been the end of the world order. And who wanted that? But his proposal says something of how far Europe and an American like McDonald were from one another, even then. The moral balance had been shifted between a USA that was characterised by human rights and legalism, and a Europe that was bound to the nation-state's internal contract of national inviolability and national self-determination. And that to such a degree that the Europeans were willing to abandon another of the principles in the Treaty of Versailles, namely respect for minorities. In a Europe dominated by the principles of the Westphalian Treaty, where respect for national sovereignty was the main rule, no one would interfere in Germany's business, especially not a neighbour like Denmark. And therefore no neighbour could officially criticise the politics of the German government, even if it was critisisable and against all humanitarian laws.

The years leading to the outbreak of war in the autumn of 1939 revealed all too clearly, according to Danish newspapers, how the USA repeatedly reacted with shock – and loud protests – as the German per-

secution of the Jews gathered speed, while the Europeans, and not least the Danes, heeded their own security and relations with their large neighbour. In the days after the *Kristallnacht* of 9 November 1938, the Americans marched in large numbers. As *Politiken* wrote on 13 March: "America seethes at the pogroms." "Protest against Nazi Law", read the banners at a rally of thousands, and in the *New York Times* the message was clear enough: "The scenes witnessed yesterday are such that no man can see them without feeling shame at the decline of the human race." A couple of days later, the also in Denmark well-known district attorney of New York County, Thomas Dewey, pronounced: "I appeal to world opinion to condemn a dictator who has lost his way. We stand speechless at the idea of what has been allowed to take place in Germany." At a press conference on 15 November 1938, President Roosevelt said that he could not have thought it possible "that an anti-Jewish campaign like the German could happen in the twentieth century".[17]

In Denmark, a small group of about a thousand radical intellectuals and well-intentioned students held a rally where they presented the background to Germany's racial prejudices. Persecution of the Jews was an East European phenomenon, not West European. Eastern Europe was coming to Western Europe – a barbarian policy that one naturally should have the right to protest against. Accordingly, the thousand participants composed a written protest that all but four signed, and sent it to Danish politicians at Christiansborg, the Danish parliament. But here the politicians remained silent, waiting for international actions or for the problem to vanish. It was up to the larger countries to find a solution. Denmark could do little because of its situation. Of approximately 6,000 Jews in Denmark in 1938, some 800 were refugees. If Denmark took in more, it would create a "Jewish problem" in Denmark too. There was nothing to be done. The persecution of the Jews in Germany was not Denmark's problem. When the Dutch government approached Foreign Minster Munck to consider a joint solution, the initiative was turned down with a remark to the effect that there was no forthcoming concrete proposal to consider. Denmark rode out the storm of *Kristallnacht* with 163 social democratic refugees from the Sudentenland. Few of them were Jews.

The Holocaust as a Cultural Marker

The story about James G. McDonald and his solution to the German refugee problem raises the issue of whether there is a difference between European and American civilisation. If European civilisation has despondency, that never reached the USA. Why was fascism a success in Europe and not the USA? In general all research about the Holocaust draws a picture of a civilisation haunted by xenophobia, nationalism, intolerance, and antisemitism. The Holocaust is the dark side of European civilisation, and for Zygmunt Bauman the dark side or the Janus face of Western modernity.[18] With this in mind we can turn the tables and ask if all the work on the Holocaust, all the research, the literature, the films and television series, the art and commemoration, instead of being productive serve to distance the USA from Europe. Do we maintain Europe in a morally underdog position when we keep on insisting on the Holocaust as an important European experience with great historical influence?

Looking at the post-war way of visualising the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War, it is a usually divided into three phases, that were and still remain tied to the political context. The first phase saw the dissemination of the black and white photos of the camps that were spread around the world by the mass media immediately after the end of the war. These photos were intended to say something about the winners of the war and its losers. Nazism in defeat was to be shown in all its horror. The photographs were thus part of a moral reconstruction that would lift not only Europe but European values too. Despite the genocide, good had ultimately prevailed, helped along by the USA. This was the myth constructed around the Allied victory, and to which European societies clung, naturally enough. Europe had survived thanks to the USA.

In the next phase, the documented images of the genocide were reinterpreted by different artists. These were artists who themselves had been in the camps or, like the Italian Corrado Cagli, were on the spot when the American soldiers entered Nordhausen and Buchenwald. And it was the Italian-American painter Rico Lebrun who used photographs from Buchenwald in the 1950s to speak of the human condition, the pain, the endurance, and the salvation. Pictures of emaciated concentration camp inmates, shaven-headed and

naked, were used to say something general about Western culture: attitudes to death, the fragility of the individual, the myth of Christ, victimisation, and redemption. As early as Lebrun's work in the USA in the 1950s, the Holocaust had a symbolic value. For the Russian-born Jew, Boris Lurie, a decade later the Holocaust was a key to his iconoclastic NO! art. Lurie was himself a survivor of the camps, and after the war settled in New York where he established himself as an artist. In his work, the Holocaust expresses a profound disillusion with the free, Western world. He made collages of photographs from the camps and pornographic images. One of them, "Lolita" (1962), has bits of the poster for Stanley Kubrick's film of the same name combined with pictures of three dead camp prisoners whose shaven heads stick out from behind a wooden barracks. What Lurie wanted to show with this particular arrangement was clarified in 1998: "My pictures are less to do with the Holocaust than with discontent with the American way of life."[19]

During the 1960s and 1970s the Holocaust was frequently cited in left-wing criticism of society, where Nazism symbolised all that was most degenerate in Western culture. Here was the proof, if any were needed, that capitalism led to perversion, barbarity, and carnage, a moral decline – the collapse of civilisation. And it was a shrewd blow, for even if the attack was directed at the USA, it was in Europe that the Holocaust had taken place. During the Cold War, the USA could portray itself as the civilisation that had saved Europe from the barbarians. European civilisation would not have been able to do anything itself about the Nazi cancer. And it made it easy for the Americans' to occupy Europe morally. Europe had come to doubt its civilisation.

In the third, current phase, doubt has given way to confrontation, with a direct effect on our way of dealing with the Holocaust. On the one hand we have the culture of memory itself, of which Auschwitz Day on 27 January is a part. The Holocaust is remembered. The genocide is acknowledged. The victims receive compensation. Events are analysed, and the guilty named. The relationship between guilt, responsibility, victim, and executioner is gone over anew. Some sixty years later, survivors and their children can confront the Holocaust, and we the Europeans can now openly begin to answer the question

given to us whenever we see the pictures of mounds of bodies: how could this happen here?

Alongside the culture of memory, there is all the culture that the Holocaust has generated. Quite where the border runs is not easy to say, but the Holocaust has taken on a symbolic position in our language and culture. When the British journalist Robert Fisk writes about the Turkish genocide of Armenians, it is not to deny the Jews' suffering, but to reinforce his argument.[20] It is like Sodom and Gomorra, like the destruction of Jerusalem, like the Holocaust. And when the Polish artist Zbigniew Libera builds a concentration camp out of LEGO, it is to demonstrate a monstrous rationale that underpins our civilisation, in which man is wholly subordinate to constructs. Be they memoirs like Roma Ligocka's, historical studies like Jan Gross', or artistic interpretations like Zbigniew Liberas', they are all part of the attempt to answer questions so important to Europe and European history: Was the Holocaust a flaw in European civilisation? Is the Holocaust a creation by European civilisation? Has European civilisation failed? Can Europe overcome the Holocaust?

These questions are also important to Europe's current relationship with the USA. The Holocaust led to a decisive split between Europe and the USA. It started with the First World War, when Europe woke up to the trauma of the trenches and at least ten million dead. It was the first blow to Europe's self-image as the leading force of modern civilisation. The next and decisive blow came with the inter-war radicalisation of the political right, with the advent of Fascism and Nazism as the two political movements dominating European politics. The ethnic cleansing of the 1930s and 1940s in a Europe obsessed by the nation-state gave the USA a moral advantage that later was only strengthened by an increased focus on the Holocaust as the Europeans' trauma. And therefore, it is natural to ask whether the attempt to make the Holocaust part of Europe's collective memory increases the split between Europe and the USA. Is that why we in Europe remember Auschwitz? To keep European civilisation in its subordinate position, rendering it incapable of acting independently and collectively in international conflicts?

I do not believe that. Instead I tend to think of the Holocaust as something very profound and important in the European history that

we have to confront. It is for Europeans to decide whether this historical experience will live on in European culture as a destructive or creative force.

Notes

1. The *Kaddish* is a prayer for the dead. Cf. Imre Kertesz' novel *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*, Evanston, Illinois: Hydra Books 1997.
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Dalia Ofer

Tormented Memories

The Holocaust Memory in Israel: A Case Study

This article sets out to probe the public debate that evolved in Israel over the dedication of a forest to the memory of King Boris III of Bulgaria. It will also address the image of Bulgaria in Israel's collective memory in relation to the rescue of Bulgarian Jews and to the deportation of the Macedonian and Thracian Jews to the death camps. This particular case study sheds light on the ways in which individuals and subgroups attempt to shape conceptions of the Holocaust within historical consciousness. This effort is a consequence of contested memories of experiences during the Second World War. A contested memory is both competing and conflicting and testifies to the existence of tensions between individual and collective memory. More importantly, it also reveals how subgroups form their identity and how they present themselves in the national arena, where collective memory is negotiated and shaped.

Holocaust Memory in Israel

The history of the Jews in World War II and the memory of the Holocaust occupy a central place within Israeli historical consciousness and culture. It is a multi-vocal discourse, which represents the variegated memory of the Holocaust and the different experiences of Jewish survivors during those years.[1] Although the number of Holocaust survivors in Israel – and in the world in general – is naturally declining, their personal narratives continue to have a great impact on the historical culture and the historical consciousness of Israeli society.[2] Psychologists suggest that there is a process of transference between parents and children,

and often between grandparents and their grandchildren, of the individual wartime experiences of survivors. This process, thereby, enables the "second" and "third" generations to internalise the memory of their parents and grandparents, as well as to formulate their own narrative of the Holocaust. Therefore, in addition to internalising the older generation's memories, the new generations of children and grandchildren desire to express their individualities by way of their own discourses and narratives. The process of working through both survivors' memories and their offspring's recollections of their parent's talks or silences about the Holocaust is carried out through a dialogue within the public discourse on the Holocaust.[3] However, an examination of the writers, scholars, and intellectuals who have been struggling with the history of the Holocaust shows that its meanings and representations extend beyond the people who were directly or indirectly involved in the horrors of those years.[4] This repertoire of symbols and images formulates an important part of Israeli self-understanding. Furthermore, it has become a criterion for reviewing the existential situation of Jews in the State of Israel and throughout the world.

The history of the memory of the Holocaust in Israel demonstrates the shift in emphasis from heroic underground imagery and resistance activities to the glorification of the image of the surviving Jew. This image corresponds more directly with most survivors' individual experiences. The surviving Jew was immediately linked to the Jewish victim, whose image has slowly lost the negative notion of passivity. This transition of Jewish imagery within the public discourse reflects the Israeli confrontation with the history of the Holocaust and its collective memory, which have been shaped by a number of formative experiences, such as the Eichmann Trial and Israel's wars.[5]

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of survivors' contested memories. Claims have been made that some experiences of the Holocaust were excluded from the master narrative. Only in recent years, the voice of the child survivor has entered into the narrative of the Holocaust. The same can be said about the voice of women. The survivors of Western Europe and the states in the former Soviet Union complain that the tragedy of Polish Jewry dominates the narrative of the Holocaust. For example, the survivors of Transnistria are beginning to talk about their forgotten tragedy.

This phenomenon demonstrates the dynamics in the construction of Holocaust memory and the centrality that it captures in the historical legacy and consciousness of Israeli society. Some groups of survivors express unease of what they view as the tight and excluding nature of Holocaust memory, since they too want to be included. Thus, they have made efforts to encourage the already existing commemoration agencies to take notice of them, as well as to establish new commemorations within the Israeli culture of Holocaust memory that would also include them.[6]

Victims and Survivors: The Bulgarian Forest and Its Commemoration in Contest

On January 17, 2000, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the institution responsible for the forests and national parks in Israel, nominated a public committee to re-examine its dedication of a forest in honour of the people of Bulgaria. The forest also included a monument in memory of King Boris III and Queen Giovanna as a "tribute to their contribution to rescue the Jews of Bulgaria in the dark days of the Holocaust".[7] The head of the committee was former Chief Justice Moshe Beiski, a Holocaust survivor who for many years headed the committee at Yad Vashem dealing with the Righteous Among the Nations, non-Jews who rescued Jews during the Holocaust. The esteemed public figure, Mr Lova Eliav, and a Holocaust historian at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Professor Dalia Ofer, served with him on the committee.[8]

The committee's assemblage took place almost four years after the forest and the monument to King Boris III and Queen Giovanna were dedicated (October 21, 1996). The dedication of this forest took place almost three years after the idea was first conceived by a group of Bulgarian Jews in the United States. Initially this woodland park was to be named in memory of King Boris III and his wife Queen Giovanna. However, reservations were expressed both by a number of Bulgarian Jews in Israel and the US and by descendants of Jews from Macedonia and Thrace living in Israel. Thus, the solution was to dedicate the forest to the people of Bulgaria and to erect a monument to commemorate the late king and his wife.[9]

This was not the only monument to be erected in the forest. Two

other monuments were constructed. One was in memory of the noble people of Bulgaria. A few specific names were inscribed on the plaque, including the head of the Bulgarian Church, Metropolitan Stephan, and the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mr Peshev. The second was a monument in "the eternal memory of the 11,343 Thracian and Macedonian Jews who lost their lives in concentration camps under Nazi Germany in 1943".[10]

The members of the JNF and the Union of Bulgarian Jews who were involved in the decision process thought that they had reached a fair and just solution regarding the contested memories. Henceforth, the forest would serve as a focal point for social identification and the sharing of memories among Bulgarian Jews, who could go there and share their memories with friends and transmit their history to future generations.[11]

However, the heated debate that initially followed the first proposal re-emerged to an ever-stormy tune in 1999, when a book by Michael Bar-Zohar was published. The issue that sparked the debate was the title of the book, *The Trains Travelled Unoccupied: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgarian Jews*,[12]since it completely lacked any reference to the trains full of Macedonian Jews deported to Treblinka. This debate took place in various academic foras such as those at Yad Vashem, the state authority responsible for the research, education and memory of the Holocaust. The dispute was also staged in the press. Book reviews and letters to the editors in different newspapers focused on the historical interpretation of the book and whether or not the author, who is a descendent of a Bulgarian family that emigrated to Israel, had produced a serious unbiased research.[13]

Thus, from the perspective of the victims and their descendants, two major medias of memory, a national monument and a popular book, later made into a film, had either marginalised or ignored their tragedy. They demanded that the monument in memory of King Boris III and his queen be removed.

In July 13, 2000, after half a year of meetings, the public committee mentioned above presented its conclusions. The committee interviewed the representatives of the Unions of Bulgarian and Macedonian Jews and listened to the interpretations of the historians, Moshe Mossek and Bar-Zohar. It invited the public to share its views

with the committee. In addition, it reviewed numerous amounts of letters, which had been sent to the JNF before the committee had been established, as well as the memorandas from all the assemblages involved either with the project itself or in the decision-making process.

The committee recommended to keep the name of the woodland park, "The Forest of Bulgaria", but to remove the existing monuments. In their stead they proposed to erect only one monument dedicated to the memory of the Jewish victims from Thrace and Macedonia and to all the noble people of Bulgaria who assisted in rescuing Bulgarian Jews. No specific names were to be inscribed on the monument. Thus, the name of King Boris III and his queen disappeared from the forest forever. All parties accepted the recommendations of the committee and the necessary changes were made.

In the following, I shall examine the different voices expressed in the letters and memos written in this process to demonstrate the staging of the public debate, and describe the different players involved. But first, I will set the historical scene of King Boris III and Bulgaria during the Second World War.

The Historical Background

King Boris III ruled Bulgaria until his mysterious death in August 1943. He strongly supported the war-time alliance between Bulgaria and Nazi Germany. In April 1941, he was proud to return the lost territories of Macedonia and Thrace to his country. These were to be annexed to Bulgaria after the war, but, in the meantime, were placed under its control. The Bulgarian government hurried to grant Bulgarian citizenship to all persons within its multi-ethnic native population except the Jews. In July 1942, King Boris III signed the order that gave the government a free hand to solve the Jewish problem in its reclaimed territories. In the autumn of that year the preparation for deportations commenced. Theodore Dannacker, who had gained much experience in the deportation of Jews in France, was sent to Bulgaria where he began to take the necessary steps prior to the deportations. Jews in Macedonia and Thrace were registered and their property confiscated. During the months of March–April 1943, 12,386 Jews were deported, most of them to Treblinka where

they were murdered. Hardly any attempts were made to hinder the deportations of these Jews, despite that fact that information about the extreme suffering of deportees and the inhuman conditions of their confinement before being loaded onto trains headed eastward was not concealed from the general public.

The situation in old Bulgaria was different from that in the new Thracian and Macedonian territories of Greater Bulgaria. The Bulgarian government agreed to deport most of its Jews, sparing some 25,000 who were needed for road construction. Although the deportation of Jews was to begin in old Bulgaria itself, it was never implemented. The deportation was halted through vigorous efforts by the leaders of the Jewish community in Kiustendil and Sofia, who received information about the forthcoming deportations. They mobilised prominent Bulgarian political opposition leaders and members of the ruling parties, including parliamentarians under the leadership of Dimiter Peshev, the Church Metropolitan, and many others. Their protests and the engagement of the population in general against the radical anti-Jewish policy put the king on the defensive. As a result, the Jews were not deported to the east. Instead they were forced to leave the capital and other major cities. Their property was then confiscated and they were forced to concentrate themselves in temporary residences in the countryside. All men and women of working age were assigned to forced labour. Despite the hardships of the years of exile and the pauperisation of the Jewish population, the Jews of Bulgaria remembered the central fact: they were saved from the death camps.

The fate of Bulgarian Jews is therefore considered to be a special case of state rescue. By comparison, historians often give two other examples: the rescue of the Jews in Denmark and in Finland. They account for a number of factors to explain the change in the Bulgarian government's policy on the Jewish question. Among them are military developments in the Soviet Union, in particular the German defeat in the battle of Stalingrad 1942–43, which pushed Boris III to re-examine his pro-Nazi policy, and the pressure by leading political figures. Other important factors were the Church and the Bulgarian citizenry, and pressure by the Allies who called upon Bulgaria not to take part in the final solution.

According to most historical accounts, there is no doubt that King Boris III played an active role in the Jewish deportation policy of Greater Bulgaria, since he signed the deportation order. Moreover, historians concur that in accordance to state guidelines all major command decisions were made by the king himself. He strongly identified with the pro-Nazi policy, although he resisted Nazi pressure to declare war against the Soviet Union and to cut all diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union. The disagreement between scholars concerns the evaluation of the king's role in preventing the deportation of the Jews from old Bulgaria after having already proceeded with the deportations of the Jews from the new territories. Questions still remain to be answered: How active was the king in obstructing and nullifying the final deportation plans once it became clear that there was strong opposition to the policy? What was the impact of this negative approach to the deportations in 1943, especially on other allies of Germany such as Romania and Italy?[14] At this point, we need to go back to the main issue, the controversy over the construction of the memory of the Bulgarian rescue policy.

The Controversy

A major perspective on the controversy over the construction of memory is between victims and survivors. Since it is impossible for the victims among the Macedonian and Thracian Jews to voice their protests, their role was taken up by the few who managed to survive, their descendents, or relatives of the murdered Jews. Their descendents and possibly some of their relatives did not experience the horrors of the war and/or the deportations, but they think of themselves as being, to use Wardi's terminology, "memorial candles" of their lost families.

Often, the survivors of Bulgarian Jewry feel gratitude to their former country, and since the king was the chief decision-maker and policy-maker for the country, believe that he too deserves acknowledgement. Most have not explored the complex factors that rendered their rescue possible, or the role played by King Boris III, whose death after a visit to Hitler in Germany left an aura of mystery and maybe even heroism. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, when the fate of most European Jewry was realised and most of the com-

munity had emigrated to Israel (1949), Bulgarian Jews began to feel that their persecution prior to the deportation plans was less significant than they once had felt. They had not expressed such reluctance in relation to their fate during the 1940s after they returned to Sofia and other major cities as destitute refugees who were unable to reclaim their property. However, the memory of the deportation of the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia remained as a heavy presence in the memory and consciousness of many, who even felt guilty for not having initiated a stronger fight against the deportations.

The delegates of the JNF in Jerusalem, who did not initiate the project but followed an enterprise of JNF's friends in Los Angeles, were unaware of the project's complexity and the tensions that had arisen. This can be seen in the first letter addressed to Simeon II, the son of late King Boris III, by Moshe Rivlin, director of the JNF, in which he glorified the late king. Rivlin wrote that the king's behaviour had "carefully threaded the narrowest of paths in remaining a humanitarian and loving monarch despite the evil of fascism that surrounded the country of Your Majesty's birth". Therefore, the JNF proposed "a project for his life legacy on the 100th anniversary of his birth".[15] Shortly afterwards, they learned how deep the emotions and the pains that had emerged in response to the project were. They soon realised that they were facing a difficult problem.

Less then two months after the positive response of King Simeon II to the project (November 1993), letters of protest poured into the JNF. The letter-writers represented the remnant of the destroyed communities of Macedonia and Thrace, Israelis of Macedonian and Thracian origin, and Jews from Yugoslavia, from where the territories of Macedonia and Trace were taken in 1941.[16] Later, the Union of Greek Jewish survivors of the death camps joined in the debate.[17] The correspondence did not cease throughout the entire preparation period for the ceremony, which was initially planned for the autumn of 1994. Letters were also addressed to the president of Israel, to the speaker of the Israeli parliament, and to Yad Vashem.[18]

The organisers' embarrassment increased as time passed. The dedication ceremony for the forest was continually delayed. Members of the Union of Bulgarian Jewry were concerned that the delays might hinder the entire project. Thus, they mobilised political reasoning to

hasten the realisation of the project. The press even printed in irony: "Among the crowd of trees one cannot see the king."[19] Indeed, the heads of the JNF began to have second thoughts about their decision, since so many reservations had been raised. Yet, in light of the JNF's commitments and the financial contributions they had already received for the project, they wanted to arrive at some compromise. At a meeting in February 1995 between the heads of the JNF and the Union of Bulgarian Jewry, in which central political personalities in Israeli politics participated, a decision was reached not to name the forest in memory of Boris III but in memory of the Bulgarian people.[20] During the same meeting no decision was taken about the individual monuments that were to be placed in the forest, since this was to be decided at a later date. During 1995, the issue calmed down. The JNF no longer pursued the matter publicly, but proceeded quietly to complete its obligations. The change of direction was believed to take the matter out of the public arena. Finally, on October 21, 1996, the dedication of the forest and the monuments took place. During that year the planning of the ceremony and the details of the programme for Bulgarian and Israeli dignitaries were finalised. It was, of course, an event of political significance for both Bulgaria and Israel.

Voices of Protest

As mentioned above, the second wave of protests emerged in 1998 when Bar-Zohar's book was published. The demands to remove the monument in memory of the king from the park became more radical. The severity by which the protests were expressed was nourished by the feelings of the victims' representatives that they had been deceived.

In analysing the letters of protest, four major voices can be discerned: a personal voice, a moralistic voice, a national voice, and the voice of history.

The personal voice can be divided into two classifications: the individual and the collective, which includes survivors and the descendants of the murdered Jews. This voice speaks in the name of the victims. These letters transmit personal family stories, detailing escapes, hiding, and how individuals managed to survive. Some of these testimonies recount first-hand knowledge about the role of Bulgarian

soldiers, policemen and bureaucrats in the deportation of the Jews, as well as their cruelty and inhumanity. They also emphasise that it was known during the war period that the country's anti-Jewish policy was directed by the central government under the direct order of King Boris III, and that members of the local Jewish community tried to mobilise Bulgarian Jews to change the orders.[21]

This is obviously a very painful voice and testifies to the fragmented memory of the individual. When reading the letters sent by individuals, one soon becomes aware that the writers first must have recollected the events of the Holocaust before having written their grievances down on paper. One can also notice a distinction between those who caused their suffering and those who tried to help. For example, Dora Ruso briefly recounts her and her brother's escape from Bitul (Monstir), how they managed to arrive at the Italian zone in Greece, and how they were kindly assisted by individual Italians. However, in March 1994, the Germans occupied the Italian zone and Ruso was deported to Birkenau, where she became one of the victims of Dr Josef Mengele's medical experiments. Most of her story relates to the years after her flight from the Bulgarian soldiers. Basically, her painful experiences, such as the disintegration of her family, their murder and her own displacement, were fundamentally rooted in the actions stemming from the Bulgarian policy.[22] This mood is often expressed in the letters of survivors. The personal voices of descendants of the murdered Jews, those who heard the family stories and grew up with the family's memories of life in Thrace and Macedonia, are multi-vocal. They were not blaming the Bulgarian Jews and they expressed personal appreciation to Bulgarians who endeavoured to hinder the deportation. They stressed the role of the king and were unwilling to capitulate on this issue.[23] It is interesting to note that the first group, which consisted of Macedonian and Thracian Jews who survived the Nazi killing centre, was more visible in the first stage of the debate, before the forest was dedicated. The second group, the descendants of the Macedonian and Thracian Jews, was more vocal in the second stage after Bar Zohar's book was published. When their letters referred to the personal dimension, they demonstrated the quality of a nostalgic memory, a memory of a lost paradise.[24]

On the other hand there are very few personal letters written by

Bulgarian Jews pledging honour to King Boris III. The praises to the king were only mentioned in the discussions of the committee established for the dedication of the forest. Bulgarian Jews, who justified the erection of the monument, did not tell their personal rescue stories in order to reinforce the positive argumentation on behalf of King Boris III. Therefore, I will touch upon these letters of Bulgarian Jews in another category.

The moral voice is noticeable in the majority of letters, but most visible in the letters that talk in the "plural I", which characterises the victims as a group. They claim that in the case of conflicting memory, as is reflected in the forest project, the dominant voice must be given to the victims. It would be ethically wrong to honour a person who is responsible for killing Jews even if he had rescued other Jews, because it will stand out as a direct refutation of Jewish solidarity. Since killing was the dominant factor during those years, the descendants of the victims "will never forget and never forgive the crimes and the cruelty of the Bulgarian people. On the one hand they rescued the Jews of Bulgaria but on the other hand they erased the Jews of Macedonia and Thrace from the face of the earth".[25] Another perspective of the moral issue was to question the reactions of Bulgarian Jews during 1943 to the deportation of their fellow Jews from Thrace and Macedonia, whose pleas for help were disregarded. In some letters, individuals asked with great hesitation about the responses of Bulgarian Jews.[26] However, since this was a very delicate issue, the participants hesitated to push the discussion from the responsibility of the perpetrators into a debate on Jewish behaviour and responses to the Holocaust. This is generally a loaded issue within Israeli collective memory and in discourses on the Holocaust.[27]

Bulgarian Jews, who were in support of the monument, believed that due to the particularity of the community's rescue, the Jewish State was under a moral obligation to acknowledge this particular act, and, since the king was involved in this rescue, he deserved to be remembered. However, none would go as far as to suggest that the king be declared a Righteous Among the Nation according to Israeli law.

The national ideological voice articulates the obligation of the State of Israel to treasure the memory of the destroyed diaspora. One aspect of this sense of responsibility was expressed by the erection of

the forest monuments by the JNF in memory of the communities, and by the planting of trees in memory of Righteous Among the Nations at Yad Vashem. Already in the early stages of commemoration, the JNF planted a forest and erected monuments to the Jewish communities destroyed by the Nazis. This forest was named the Forest of the Martyrs. A monument erected on national land in memory of a ruler who was involved in the murder of the Jews seems paradoxical. This was expressed in a provocative manner in the following sentence from a letter by Nisim Yosh'a: "Up to the tenth generation the descendants of Macedonian Jews would not rest until the disgrace [of the monument] will be erased from the face of the national land."[28] In an ironic tone one letter suggested that if Bulgarian Jews wanted to worship their saviour the king, then they were free to do it in their own homes or in the offices of their unions.[29] Nir Baruch, a historian of Bulgarian Jewry, stated that no Israeli official had ever expressed a positive view of King Boris III on any formal occasion either in Bulgaria or in Israel.[30]

The political voice relates to Israeli–Bulgarian relations, to the image of Israel as a Jewish state and to the role of the JNF as a guardian of the country's national territory. The forces that presented the political perspective represented the interest of the state to dominate a hegemonic memory and narrative of the Holocaust. A dispute around the dedication of the forest to Bulgaria or on the erection of the monument could have embarrassed the government of Israel vis-à-vis Bulgaria, not to speak of a rejection of a monument. The Foreign Ministry followed the development of the project and maintained contact with the JNF. Already in the early stage of the debate Mr Zvi Rav-Ner of the Foreign Ministry informed Mr Rivlin of a heated debate in the Bulgarian press concerning the forest, and sent him newspaper articles on the situation. The matter, Rav-Ner wrote, has already caused a storm in Bulgaria and Mr Zelov, the president of Bulgaria, who is himself a historian, had rejected the idea that King Boris III had played a major role in the rescue of the Jews. In view of the transition from Communism, the neo-monarchist tendencies, and the interests of Simeon himself to return to Bulgaria, the invitation of King Simeon II to attend the ceremony in memory of his father was seen by some groups as a kind of political interference.

Thus, the issue received importance beyond a debate on history.[31] It demonstrated to what extent the politicisation of the Holocaust has become part of the Israeli discourse.

On December 5, 1997, Dr Moshe Mossek, of Bulgarian origin and a historian of Bulgarian Jewry, published a short article in the *Ha'aretz* newspaper in which he explained the growing interest in both Bulgaria and Israel in rehabilitating Bulgaria from the burden of the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust. He argued that the desire for Bulgaria to join the European Union and NATO was the key motivation to please the Jews, the USA, and Israel. The Bulgarian government considered the importance of the memory of the Holocaust and its meaning for the United States, the American Jews, and Israel. They believed that once the issue of the painful past was settled, Jews would influence political decisions in the United States and Europe on behalf of Bulgarian interests.

Writers and other public figures in Bulgaria intervened in the debate. Letters were sent to personal friends, to the JNF, and to the union of both Bulgarian Jews and the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia, expressing either support for or objection to the monument for King Boris III.[32] In one letter, addressed to the president of Israel, five Bulgarian politicians, members of parliament, professors and clergymen asked the JNF to remove the memorial from the forest in Israel. Among the signatures was that of Deputy Speaker of the House, Mr Hristor Sendor.[33]

In January 2000, the president of Bulgaria was scheduled to visit Israel. On November 17, 1999, the head of the Association of Macedonian Jews asked of the Israeli Foreign Minister David Levi that his government demand a plea for forgiveness from the Bulgarian government for its involvement in the deportation of Jews.[34] In November 1999, a memorial was established in front of the Bulgarian parliament building. The inscription read:

> On March 14, 1943, a protest of the Bulgarian public, which was supported by members of Parliament, forced the Bulgarian government to postpone the deportation of 8,500 Bulgarian Jews to the Fascist death camp. This protest and the development of the war saved from death 49,000 Bulgarian Jews. Unfortunately, 11,363 Jews from Thrace next to

the Aegean Sea and from Macedonia along the Varder River were sent to Nazi concentration camps. Only 12 survived. The Bulgarian People bow their heads in the memory of these innocent victims.

On July 27, 2000, the debate reached the Bulgarian parliament, following an announcement by the Deputy Speaker of the House, Mr Yordan Sendov, on the anti-Jewish policy of King Boris III. Following the decision of the committee on 13 July, 2000, Mr Sendov, a professor of history, supported the demolition of the monument in Israel. Parliamentarian Dyanko Markov protested vehemently the Deputy Speaker's historical interpretation and viewed his statement as damaging to Bulgarian political interests. He defended the Bulgarian Jewish policy during the war and stressed the fact that historians were renouncing the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews. He went on to describe the deportation of the Jews from Macedonia and Thrace as acts initiated by the Nazis. It thus ruled out any Bulgarian responsibility in the matter.[35]

As a result of the activities concerning the forest, the association of the survivors of the Jews of Macedonia became a mobilised group dedicated to inspect the memory and narrative of the murder of the Macedonian Jews, as well as to watch out for any attempt to doubt the responsibility of the Bulgarian government and the king. Therefore, when a film based on Bar-Zohar's earlier mentioned book was produced, the same group protested to its producer and director, and also to Israeli television, which screened the film, and to the authorities in Bulgaria, who were happy to present it in Sofia.[36]

Moreover, it is interesting to note how the construction of a Holocaust narrative transcends an internal Jewish dialogue and becomes a transnational or even international topic of negotiation. The political aspect of the debate took place also among Jews and institutions involved in the commemoration of the Holocaust in the United States. As mentioned above, the initiatives behind the forest project came from Bulgarians and Bulgarian Jews residing in the US. They thought that the proper place for the memorial would be in Israel. In conjunction with the activities in Israel, they organised a ceremony and a memorial lecture in Los Angeles and in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D. C. This, of course, angered the opposition to the project in Israel during different stages, inspiring them to lobby in the United States to have the projected stopped.

The JNF people in the USA accepted the opponents' stand in the first stage and agreed to the changes in the dedication of the forest to the people of Bulgaria that are mentioned above. They also continued to lobby for their position in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which prepared a ceremony in memory of King Boris III. *The New York Times* printed an article praising the king for his courage and humanity. This action mobilised the activists of Macedonian and Thracian Jewish associations to struggle more vigorously in defiance of the benevolent image of the king in the museum.

The historical voice appeared to be the supreme judge on each side. Therefore, all letters presented historical facts and historical interpretations of the Bulgarian policy during the 1930s and 1940s. Major facts were recited, such as the role of the king in initiating the racial laws, an anti-Jewish speech of King Boris III to the Holy Synod in 1943, and quotations from German and Bulgarian documents on King Boris III's Jewish policy. Some documents were intended to prove that his decisions to deport the Macedonian and Thracian Jews and not other Bulgarian Jews were part of the general Bulgarian policy.[37] For opponents of the king's commemoration, this documentation proved the king's antisemitism and his identification with Nazi Germany, which explained why the deportation of the Jews from greater Bulgaria did not disturb him.

For the supporters, the same events proved how courageously and shrewdly the king managed to manoeuvre between the Nazi demands and Bulgarian interests. The defendants of the king also stressed the price that he paid personally for his refusal to follow Nazi orders. The fact that historical interpretation may be biased by one's perspective was not indicated in the mood of the letters. Each side was certain that its historical documentation presented the ultimate proof. It is interesting to note that the Bulgarian Jews who opposed the forest project stressed that the persecution of the Jews prior to 1943 was manifested in an anti-Jewish policy in progress since 1934. Moreover, they also portrayed the deportation of the Jews to the countryside as a malicious plan to confiscate Jewish capital and to concentrate them in a central location prior to their deportation. Supporters of the king, attempting to prove that he tried to prevent the deportation of the Jews by dispersing them in the countryside, thus mak-

ing their concentration more difficult, presented this same fact. The death of King Boris III after his visit to Hitler in August 1943 proved his heroism. Did Hitler poison him because he refused to hand over the Jews? The supporters of the forest project reinforced their stand through the narrative of Bar-Zohar. The opponents, however, argued that Bar-Zohar's narrative originated in either ignorance or a conscious presentation of an inaccurate account, inspired by dubious motivations.[38] Another element in the historical interpretation of the supporters of the forest project leaned on the concept of state rescue of the Jews, like in Denmark and in Finland. This opposed the similarity between King Boris III and Antunesco in Rumania, or even Laval in Vichy France, who deported Jews from annexed territories and foreign Jews while sparing most of the country's "old Jews".

Conclusion

What stands out from this particular case of memory construction is that historical interpretation plays an important role for each group. Despite the fact that each side is presenting a personal narrative or one that represents the group's history, each appealed to the "objective truth" that history alone can provide.

Macedonian and Thracian Jews demanded justice from the authorities, namely to make the correct interpretation of the historical evidence. These people were not a group who gravitated to the centre of power, nor were they a central voice in shaping the commemoration of the Holocaust in past years. Nevertheless, in their protests they took issue with the regular procedures of commemoration that were already established in the country. The representatives of Macedonian and Thracian Jews called to try the JNF that pretended to follow its routine decision process when establishing patterns of commemoration. They maintained that the JNF acted against the historical culture of Israel, despite the pretension of its representatives that the JNF was following the traditional patterns of public commemoration. In the historical culture of the Holocaust, these representatives confirmed that primacy must be given to the suffering of the direct victims. They dwelt of the notion that the survivors are but the voices of the murdered victims, and if they fail to represent them accurately, like in the case of those Bulgarian Jews who supported the

monument for King Boris III, this must be rectified. The notion that the survivors survived in order to voice the pain and the experience of the murdered Jews is central in the discourse of survivors. In many testimonies, there are references to how survivors wished to tell their stories on the behalf of parents, relatives or friends to keep on living in order to tell their stories. The zealousness that the opponents of the monument manifested originated in a feeling that in their action they were mending a great evil that bestowed the historical culture and memory of Israel.

Efforts to de-legitimate an act that was carried out according to the rules and by the establishment were accomplished by activating the historical conscience of "simple people" as if they were representing the *vox populi*. In a situation in which many people wanted to view Holocaust memory as a pure commemoration of the tragedy of all Jews, the challenge of the opponents was greatly provocative and had a great impact on the politico-cultural establishment. It is important to note that activists on both sides were not necessarily Holocaust survivors. Nevertheless, these actors felt that they had a full right to speak in the name of the victims because of primordial contacts with the destroyed communities. In this respect the norms that were developed in the aftermath of the Holocaust and through public commemorations by the state proved successful. The wish to be represented in the public sphere of commemoration exhibits the importance of this space – the space of monuments as a *lieu de mémoire*.

In relation to theories and concepts on the construction of collective memory, the controversy described in this chapter is an interesting example of a process in which historical culture and politics of commemoration are intertwined. In the Jewish society of Israel, remembrance is a religious command for observant Jews and a cultural code for non-religious Jews. Jewish holidays or memorial days carry the command to remember historical or meta-historical events, such as the exodus from Egypt in Passover, the fest of Purim in memory of the redemption from Haman's plans to exterminate the Jews, the holiday of Hanukkah remembering the victory of the Maccabies over the Greeks, and the fast of the Nine of Av in memory of the destruction of the Temple. This also goes for new holidays and memorial

days that have been added to the Jewish calendar: the memorial day for the Holocaust, the memorial day for Israeli victims of wars, Independence Day and Jerusalem Day for remembering the unification of Jerusalem in 1967. History in this popular meaning that is not as a scholarly discipline is a coded lesson of the past. It is a guide for understanding the present. Thus, the construction of a historical memory is extremely important to all the political establishments in Israel.[39]

The controversy also resonates with Halbwachs's theory of the connection between the individual and the historical memory. It is true that the individual remembers through society, but not only through society. The memory of the individual is forceful, perhaps even beyond what he or she wishes. However, if society distorts it through a fixation on a site and space that would transmit a hegemonic narrative, resentment often arises. Moreover, the individual is able to act as an agent of memory and mobilise the means afforded through the public political arena. As an agent of memory the individual or subgroup negotiates with the state establishment, and their representatives, be they the president, the speaker of parliament or others. This is evident from this narrative on Israeli historical culture. Individuals involved drew on their responsibility to the moral-historical conscience to further their cause. They also made use of the political system to protest against the JNF structure, to demonstrate that JNF decisions were reached through ignorance, making manipulation possible. As Barry Schwartz among others has argued, there is an obvious selectivity of commemorative principles involved in history-cultural work. Yet, in the dialogue between past and present, arbitration does not have a free hand. Some fundamentals of historical culture cannot be ignored.[40]

Notes

1. Dalia Ofer, "History, Memory and Identity: Perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel", in Uzi Rebhun & Chaim I. Waxman (eds), *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns*, Lebanon, New Haven: University Press of New England 2004, pp. 394–417.
2. When using the terms "historical culture" and "historical consciousness", I draw on Klas-Göran Karlsson, "The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture: Theoretical and Analytical Challenges", in Klas-Göran Karlsson & Ulf Zander (eds), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, pp. 9–57.
3. Dan Baron, *Fear and Hope: Three Generations of the Holocaust*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1995; Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, Jerusalem: Keter Publications 1990. The individuality of survivors' offspring is evident in literature and other artistic forms that in the last years have gained a prominent place in the literary production of Israel. See Iris Milner's Ph.D. dissertation *Biografia, zehut vezikaron besifrut hador hasheni*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University 2001.
4. Dalia Ofer 2004.
5. Dalia Ofer, "Israel", in David Wyman (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins Uniersity Press 1996, pp. 836-924. An interesting approach to this issue is presented in Tova Perlmuter's Ph.D. dissertation *Holocaust Teaching and Its Educational Policy Development: A Case Study of Application in a Teacher College in Israel*, Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem 2003.
6. On the issue of agencies in the construction of memory, see Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, "Introduction", in Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan (eds), *War and Remembrance in the 20th Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
7. Quoted from the monument's inscription.
8. Most of the documentation that relates to this problem was made available to me as member of the committee. Some of the letters and reports that I quote have been recently published in *Annihilation and Survival in the United Bulgaria 1943 and the Conclusion of Justice Beiski's Commission*, Israel: Institute for the Research and Memorialization of the Jewish Communities in the Balkan 2003.
9. Main points raised in a meeting of the representatives of the JNF and members of the Union of Bulgarian Jews, Jerusalem, February 2, 1995. See in particular the reservations of Mr Victor Shem-Tov, a distinguished member of the Bulgarian Jewry and a former minister in many Israeli government positions. He stressed that the controversy of the issue also extends to Bulgaria. The committee should not defend any side on this matter. The conclusion of Mr Rivlin, the director of the JNF, was that the time was not yet ripe for the king's rehabilitation and that the JNF would not enter into internal political disputes.
10. There was no rejection to these monuments. The JNF announced that unlike the forest and the monument to the Bulgarians that would be funded by contributions from abroad and from Israel, the monument for the victims of Macedonia and Thrace will be funded by the JNF itself.
11. Moshe Rivlin, head of the JNF, to Arie Shumer, general director of the president house, December 5, 1994. This was a response to a letter written by Shumer, who informed Rivlin about a stream of letters in which people expressed their anger and pain concerning the plans to have a Forest Park in memory of King Boris III.

12. This is the exact Hebrew translation of the book by Michael Bar-Zohar, *hrakavot yazu reikot: hahatzala anoezet shel yehudie bulgaria mehashmada*, Or Yehuda: Hed Arzi Publications 1999. The English title is *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews.*
13. The discussion in Yad Vashem took place on May 30, 1999. The participants were Dr Moshe Mossek, Nir Baruch, and Michael Bar-Zohar. Mossek, of Bulgarian origin, immigrated to Israel as a young boy and is a historian and a chief archivist of Israel State Archives (ISA). Nir Baruch is a historian of the Jews of Bulgaria, who published a monograph on their history and destruction. Michael Bar-Zohar himself was a member of Israeli Parliament. He published a biography of Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and numerous articles in the press. He was a well-known figure in Israel political circles of the 1960s and 1970s.
14. For a more elaborated analysis of the Bulgarian policy towards the Jews, see Leni Yahil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry, 1932–1945*, New York: Oxford University Press 1990, pp. 578–587.
15. Moshe Rivlin to King Simeon II, October 24, 1993.
16. Letter of Nir Baruch, January 6, 1994; Izhak Calev representing the association for the absorption of Bulgarian Jews in Jaffa, January 6, 1994.
17. Raoul Saporta and Jacob Mano to Moshe Beiski, head of the committee, March 26, 2002.
18. Mr Shumer, director of the president house, to Moshe Rivlin, director of the JNF, November 13, 1994; Rivlin's response, December 5, 1994.
19. Mira Avrech, *Yediot Aharonot*. Dr Ben Yaacov to Moshe Rivlin and Knesset member Emmanuel Zismann of Bulgarian origin, October 11, 1994, p. 5.
20. Meeting JNF with participants from the Union of Bulgarian Jewry including Michael Bar-Zohar and Victor Shem-Tov, a reputable former politician of Bulgarian origins who served as a minister in a number of government positions in Israel, February 17, 1995.
21. Nisim Nisim to Yizhak Navon, former president of Israel, February 7, 1994; Moshe Ishai, Yoseph Alvah, Lea Penso, Aharon Zorfati, Rahel Zorfati to Moshe Rivlin, February 1994; Moshe Kasochlev to Moshe Rivlin, head of JNF, October 27, 1994; Dora Ruso to Rivlin, October 22, 1994; Arie Shumer (general director of president house) to Rivlin, December 5, 1994, telling that a number of letters protesting against the forest project had reached the president, and he asked Rivlin to respond.
22. Dora Ruso to Rivlin, October 22, 1994.
23. Nir Baruch to Yehiel Leket, acting director to the JNF, June 2, 1999.
24. Shlomo Alboher, "Back to Macedonia", *M'aariv*, June 29, 1998; idem, letter to Shlomo Gravetz, chair of the JNF board of directors, August 12, 1999.
25. Moshe Ishai, Yoseph Alvah, Lea Penso, Aharon Zorfati, and Rahel Zorfati to Moshe Rivlin, February 1994. See also Nisim Yosh`a to Yoseph Kioso, chair of the Union of Bulgarian Jewry, September 1, 1999. Shlomo Alboher, "Back to Macedonia", *M'aariv*, 29 June 1998.
26. Nisim Yosh`a to *Haaretz*, December 12, 1997; Dr Nisim Yosh'a to Nir Baruch, September 9, 1997 and Baruch's response, October 22, 1997.
27. Dalia Ofer, "Fifty Years of Israeli Discourse on the Holocaust: Characteristics and Dilemmas", in Anita Shapira (ed.), *Israel: Culture and Society*, New York: Praeger Publishers 2004.
28. Nisim Yosh`a to Yoseph Kioso, chairman of the Union of Bulgarian Jewry, September 1, 1999; June 14, 1999.
29. Nisim Yosh`a to Yoseph Kioso, chairman of the Union of Bulgarian Jewry, September 1, 1999

30. Nir Baruch to Rivlin, January 10, 1994. This was to confirm the awareness of the Israeli leadership, including Jews who emigrated from Bulgaria, to the prudence that is requested in such delicate cases.
31. Zvi Bar-Ner to Moshe Rivlin, 18 August 1994.
32. Angel Wagenschtein, a writer, former cultural attaché of Bulgaria in Vienna (1993–1996) and a member of the Communist underground during World War II, to Nir Baruch, September 18, 1999; Letter in support of the removal of the memorial to King Boris III from the Forest of Bulgaria, signed by 69 Bulgarian Jews living in Bulgaria, to Mr Gravetz, president of JFN, September 18, 1999; Prof. Dr Velko Valkanov to Mr Gravetz, president of JNF, September 1, 1999. He starts the letter in the name of the anti-fascist community of Bulgaria and parts from a speech of Dyanko Markov, a member of the Bulgarian Parliament of the Union of Democratic Forces, session, July 27, 2000. See the letter of Dr Nisim Yosh`a (in the name of the Association of the Macedonian Jews) to Eitan Ben-Tzur, general director of the Foreign Ministry, September 21, 2000. He requested that the Israeli government should respond to the speech of Prime Minister Dyanko Markov.
33. Hristov Sendor, Prof. Dr Nora Aranieve, Prof. Ivanov Dimitre, Angel Wagenschtein, and Professor Kaiser Beliaf to Ezer Wietzman, President of Israel, October 20, 1999.
34. Dr Nisim Yosh`a, Shlomo Alboher, Orzion Ishai to Foreign Minister David Levi, November 11, 1999.
35. Speech of Dyanko Markov, member of the Bulgarian Parliament of the Union of Democratic Forces, July 27, 2000. English translation given to the committee.
36. Dr Nisim Yosh'a, in the name of the Association of the Macedonian Jews, to Nizan Aviram, the producer of the film, December 27, 2000; idem. to the President of Bulgaria; Petar Stoyanov, January 14, 2001, idem. to Dorit Inbar, Israeli cable television's lawyer, March 3, 2001.
37. Nisim Yosh'a, "The Balkan Fox: On the Role of Bulgaria in the Annihilation of the Jews during the Second World War" (in Hebrew); Nir Baruch, "The Policy of the King of Bulgaria towards the Jews", in Nir Baruch, *Annihilation and Survival in the United Bulgaria 1943 and the Conclusion of Justice Beiski's Commission*, Tel Aviv 2003, pp. 19–29, and many more in the file of the JNF presented to the committee.
38. Nir Baruch's response to the book of Bar-Zohar, prepared for the discussion on the book at Yad Vashem, May 30, 1999.
39. Yoshef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, New York: Schoken Books 1989; Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History from the Antiquity to the Present* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1991, pp. 13–30; Maoz Azaryahu, *State Cults* (in Hebrew), Sede Boker: Ben Gurion University Press 1995.
40. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990; Barry Schwartz, "Collective Memory and History", *The Sociological Quarterly* 1997:3, pp. 374–404; Yael Zrubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israel National Tradition*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 1995.

Oliver Rathkolb

Austria's Reversed Holocaust Perception

The "Allied Occupation" and the Collective Memory of Austrians after 1945

"...ending a 17-year-long path of bondage full of thorns..."[1]

Leopold Figl, 1955

The perception of the Allied liberation of Austria has overruled a thorough debate about the Holocaust and the Austrian contribution to National Socialism. In order to understand why it took the Austrian public so long to start to unearth the Nazi past and the Holocaust issue in the 1980s, it is important to analyse the dominating post-war discourse concerning the history of the Second World War.[2] I shall concentrate on main points of the debate, from 1945 to 1955, and compare them with a recent debate in 2002 in an effort to describe the main perceptions in the collective public memory and their changes over time. I will also take a more direct look at the changes that have taken place in the Austrian Holocaust perception since the 1980s.

A public opinion poll of October 1995 put the question: "Since when has Austria been free?"[3] It produced an amazing result: 87 per cent answered "since 1955", not 1945, the year of the Allied liberation. This 87 per cent split into 52 per cent in favour of May 1955, when the Austrian State Treaty was signed, and 35 per cent for October 1955, the month when the Neutrality law was passed by the Austrian parliament. It would seem, then, that the ten years of Allied administration, the Marshall Plan and the re-establishment of democratic structures and bureaucratic procedures are widely considered as "occupation".

1945: Liberation?

The notion of the "liberation" of Austrians and that of the need to integrate "innocent" or "minor Nazis" into the new society without major purges came out of Soviet political language of the time. Right from the first moment of public debate, in the Declaration of the Provisional Government of Austria on April 27, 1945, this language was transformed into the key national doctrine of Austria: the "victim-only" doctrine. The propaganda proclamation of the Moscow Conference, from October 30, 1943 (The Moscow Declaration), describing Austria as the first country to fall victim to Hitlerite aggression, was integrated into the 1945 declaration. The responsibility clause was omitted in the 1945 version, as were references to taking account of Austrian resistance before a final judgement was made.[4] Despite the fact that Austria would not have been liberated from the Nazi regime without the military capabilities and the human losses of Soviet, American and British forces, and despite the fact that large areas of Austria would have been threatened by starvation had it not been for Allied Food Aid (primarily, but not exclusively, Western),[5] Austrian politicians immediately began to attack the Allied presence during and after the November 1945 election campaign. Criticism included the fact that Allied occupation costs had to be met by the Austrian tax-payers.

A significant statement in State Chancellor Karl Renner's report to the Austrian parliament on December 19, 1945, about the eight months of post-war government, refers to this policy direction: The Austrian people had been "occupied by the four big powers" and included in the "sphere of influence of the victorious four great powers". After the peace agreement the four-power administration would be transformed, and only then would the Austrian people "in reality be free".[6] At a very early stage, Renner was able to implant the "victim-only" doctrine into this peace agreement that, according to the legal department of the Chancellery, should be signed as a state treaty and not as a peace treaty in order to omit the political responsibility of the Austrian people.[7] The Austrians were described purely as victims of the Nazi regime even when commemorating Allied losses during the liberation of Austria. Leopold Figl, for example, then Governor of Lower Austria, later to be Chancellor, referred to them thus at the

opening ceremony of the Soviet soldier monument on the Stalin-Platz (today Schwarzenbergplatz) on August 19, 1945.[8]

The sense of having been liberated should have been strengthened by the widespread perception that the Austrian population had been totally suppressed by a Nazi rule imposed from Berlin during the period 1938–1945.[9] The perception of liberation, however, was overruled by the psychological fact that many decision-makers were well aware of the collaboration of Austrians with the Nazi regime. Some of them, in fact, in many cases actively or passively participated in the suppression, exploitation and terror acts against Jews, prisoners of war, forced labourers and others.[10] Renner himself, who drafted the Declaration of April 27, 1945, had not only pleaded in favour of the Anschluss in 1938, but had even defended in writing the destruction of democratic Czechoslovakia. In 1939, he praised German Nazi nationalism.[11]

The "Victim-Only" Thesis

My first thesis is, then, that the Austrian collective memory at an early stage had to exclude the facts of foreign military liberation from National Socialism, since it was suppressing the "Nazi past". By constructing a totally innocent Austrian political and social entity, the main tendency from very early on was to discount the domestic perpetrators as well as the bystanders during the Nazi regime and to focus squarely on the foreign Nazi-German regime in Austria. Therefore, the first "occupier" was Germany, and the Austrian pro-Anschluss movement before 1938 and the continuing support for the Anschluss in the following years were emphatically downplayed. Austrian construction of a small-state identity started already during World War II, to a large extent using pre-existing anti-German sentiments. These were mixed with cultural superiority codes from the pre-1918 period, building on the old Austrian-Prussian conflict and containing a strong Roman Catholic element.[12]

However, this anti-Prussian element was soon pushed into the background when a stronger debate about the "new" occupying powers started. The first and main target was the Soviet Union. It was an easy target as the looting, plundering and raping during the first weeks after the liberation had destroyed any positive images. The

Communist Party of Austria did not dare to protest the misbehaviour of the Red Army soldiers and subsequently had no chance of gaining broader voter support. One of the reasons for the relative success of the conservative People's Party (ÖVP) lay in its use of anti-Russian codes in the election campaign.[13] In 1946 the President of the National Assembly, Karl Seitz – a Social Democrat and survivor of Nazi prisons – attacked the Allies because they maintained the option to veto and block Austrian laws passed by parliament.[14] One year later the Allied opposition to the new Austrian denazification law and the amendments to it demanded by the Allied Council were criticised by Austrian politicians. They were interpreted as being an encroachment into matters which should be left to the Austrians to decide upon. The People's Party and the Socialists had already agreed upon a rather loose denazification policy mainly aimed at large-scale integration of former Nazi Party members.[15]

Public opinion polls as early as March 1947 show that 43 per cent of the Austrians in the US zones of Austria, that is in Upper Austria, Salzburg and parts of Vienna, regarded the Allied presence as "hindering the reconstruction of Austria". Only 23 per cent took the opposite view, and 17 per cent answered that the Allies were both helping and hindering.[16] The Socialist Vice Chancellor Schärf made special use of the anti-Western propaganda of the Communists to plead for a relaxation of the occupation burden, that is, occupation costs, censorship and inter-zonal traffic control. However, in general he moved completely into the pro-American camp by asking for a US presence in the context of the Cold War. This is just one example of double-speak: because of the fear of becoming part of the Communist block, the Austrian Socialists and the Peoples' Party leaders asked for close US cooperation and the presence of American and British forces in Austria.[17] At the same time in 1948, actually in the May 1st demonstrations, both the Socialists and People's Party demonstrated against the occupation.[18] The general political target was the Soviets, but public opinion in the short run did not follow the political splitting of perception into a good Western occupation and a bad Soviet occupation. That was more a long-term feature. Today, only the Soviet occupation is considered as "real occupation" and is integrated into the whole period of suppression from 1938 to 1955. Memories of

the British, US and French occupation are marginalised, or surface only in scholarly projects.[19]

"Liberated from the Occupiers..." This is a fragmentary quotation from the official speech of Foreign Minister Leopold Figl on May 15, 1955. He is considered in Austrian public opinion today to be the most important politician of the Second Republic.[20] In the collective memory, Figl is still held to be the father of the Austrian State Treaty, the man who used the traditional image of the nice and "gemuetlichen" Austrian to persuade the Soviets and other Allies to leave the country finally in 1955. His famous sentence "Österreich ist frei" – "Austria is free" – is still so powerful that it can be instrumentalised in the shaping of an Austrian collective memory. This can, for instance, be seen in the plans for the 50-year jubilee of the State Treaty in 2005. It will additionally be used as the title of a historical exhibition, despite the fact that it shows an outdated inclination to revive the "victim-only" narrative.[21]

In this 1955 speech the then Foreign Minister Figl even erased the last distinction between the Nazi terror period of 1938–1945 and the period of Allied occupation tutelage, even though the latter was considerably reduced after 1946–1947. After 1950, it had become a rather loose administration with few areas of conflict. In many cases the Austrian decision-makers performed a skilful game of playing out the former allies against each other, and the "tutors" became an object of Austrian tutelage. As early as May 1948, US political analysts referred to the psychological problem of the occupation image when discussing the reduction of concrete occupation policies and turning over military government functions to Austrian authorities: "Austrians think there is so much to turn over and because in actuality there is so little, we have nothing to lose by an announcement that all Military Government functions will be turned over forthwith."[22]

In 1955, Figl maintained that a 17-year-long path of bondage full of thorns was terminated. He continued: "The sacrifices which the Austrian people have made in their strong belief in the future have been vindicated. We have waited ten years for this day, when the Foreign Ministers of the four powers should come to Vienna."[23] In 1955, Figl's speech on Austria's newly-won sovereignty – "Austria is free" – probably resonated strongly with widely-held and deeply-felt senti-

ments in the Austrian population; there were most certainly quite a few people who would have felt the last "17 years" as a very "thorny" period in their lives. The fact that the State Treaty, and the Austrian neutrality written into it, has been the cornerstone of Austrian state ideology ever since also contributes to our understanding of the persistence of the view of 1955 as a year of liberation. However, with the 50th anniversary of the State Treaty it has also become apparent that things have been changing. This could be seen when, in 2002, Figl's speech and his status were used to represent a much more radical position on the question of the 1945–1955 "liberation", in a speech by Freedom Party (FPÖ) politician Ewald Stadler:

> Death has yielded a large crop in the last century among our people. It was not always a liberation our people experienced during the last century, although this is what a lot of self-righteous people ("Gutmenschen") are trying to convince us, people who are today organising events and exhibitions about the Wehrmacht. We were allegedly freed in 1918 from the tyranny of the monarchy. In 1934 we were allegedly freed from the chaos of democracy. In 1938 we were allegedly freed from Clerico-Fascism. And in 1945 – and this has become state ideology – we were freed from Fascism and tyranny and got into the next tyranny, especially on the soil where we are located today. And finally we have been liberated again when our country decided to join the European Union on January 1, 1995.[24]

Stadler is currently an "ombudsman" (*Volksanwalt*), nominated by the FPÖ, and head of its political academy. Drawing on Figl, he described the official historical image of the 1945 liberation as a central element in a big official lie about Austrian history. It should here be noted that although Stadler represents a position of the German national minority, and its possible problematic unresolved relationship to the Nazi era, his views also resonate strongly with widely held views in Austria on the Second World War as not primarily a participation in Nazi atrocities, but rather as a defence of the Austrian *Heimat*. The reference in Stadler's speech to the Wehrmacht exhibition effectively draws on the intense and very emotionally charged debates that this exhibition caused in Austria between 1995 and 1997.

As a reaction to Stadler's speech, a broader public debate on the perception of 1945 as liberation or occupation started. It soon be-

came clear in 2002 that the "victim-only" theory was losing ground. The Austrian President Thomas Klestil even wrote a letter to Stadler in which he criticised his dubious use of Figl for his own historical-political purposes.[25] At the same time, the debate about the crimes of the Wehrmacht is still inflamed in Austria. This is the reason why Stadler referred to them. The deconstruction of the "good soldiers" perception still directly or indirectly affects the public, since 1.2 million Austrians served in the Wehrmacht during the Second World War. Since 1995 this perception is under debate. Gradually, and with regional differences, the image of the "good and just war" is changing but still disputed in the public sphere.[26] The Austrian victim's doctrine was based upon the idea that Austrians in the German army fought a just and clean war.

My second thesis is, then, that with the decline of the "victim-only" doctrine, Austrian public opinion is gradually accepting the liberation perception as an option within the collective memory. However, a special note should here be made that this perception was always present in connection with the liberation of the concentration camps, especially that of Mauthausen near Linz.[27]

The Allied Scapegoat

The third thesis that I would like to put forward is connected with one of the completely neglected facets of the Allied presence in 1945–1955. Referring to Austria as a rather young nation with a still very weak national identity, political elites and public opinion continued to use the Allies as targets and scapegoats, whereas they overemphasised the perception of the strength and role of the Austrians in the rebuilding of the national economy and political structures. This is obvious when we analyse early post-war national identity icons like the Vienna State Opera, rebuilt after having been destroyed by Allied bombing and SS fire. It is even more evident in connection with the Austrian State Treaty, which, as was seen above in connection with Leopold Figl, was presented more or less as an Austrian victory over the Allies. The actual facts – that the geopolitical framework was perfect for the Treaty solution – are not remembered. The Allies, even though they may come to be perceived as the liberators of 1945, remain the occupiers of 1955, eventually pushed out by the clever and

friendly Austrians. They are still the "Others", the "Foreigners" who occupied the country. Their influence upon Austrian society, economy and political structures seems to have been completely erased from the public understanding of history.

In conclusion, the Austrians, as a people with a rather young identity, rank in public opinion polls on national pride among the top four worldwide.[28] In the meantime, they have found a successor for the "Allied occupation" scapegoat, namely the European Union. In 1995, Austrians welcomed integration into Europe as if it were a "liberation" from the exclusion from the "West". Since then, however, the public mood has altered considerably and Austrians have become rather sceptical and negative towards the Union and its enlargement. History seems to repeat itself, although this time there is no way out as there is no real opting-out clause in the EU and no second State Treaty in sight. After the EU sanctions against the People's Party/Freedom Party government in 2000, National Front tendencies – Austria First – have grown considerably and have been used as propaganda instruments by all parties in the recent campaigns for the European Parliament. Furthermore, a Social Democratic member of parliament who said that he "understood" the sanctions, has been attacked by Jörg Haider and his party as a "traitor" who should be deprived of his right to vote.

Restitution and the Awakening of Holocaust Memory

My fourth thesis deals with the question of how Austrians became aware of the Holocaust and the Austrian participation in the Nazi atrocities. It started in the late 1990s, when a debate on art restitution and forced and slave labour compensation entered Austrian public life. A basic question was: Can collective memories be renegotiated by restitution of property? Elazar Barkan has demonstrated his support for "negotiations in which both victims and perpetrators can share history and memory".[29] I would like to test his argumentation for a shared, negotiated history that differs from the static and one-way narrative which the "victim-only"-arguments are based upon. In a modern open society the transfer of money or the restitution of property implies a discussion about the previous looting and the reasons for the property transfer or compensation. In a state built upon

the law, legal and administrative procedures must be based on a state-sanctioned framework of laws which again are debated in public. In Austria, such discussions were almost absent in the first post-1945 decades. However, they have been reopened in the late 1990s in a much more positive environment.[30]

The first important topic concerns the generational approach. First, second, and third generations negotiate history in these cases through restitution, mixing constructive and re-constructive elements in order to confirm only one side of the story, that of injustice and victimisation. Rarely are both the despoiling and restitution issues integrated into their stories, in these cases the looting by the Nazis and fellow citizens in Germany, Austria, France, and the Netherlands, among others. First-generation victims are almost never involved anymore, but rather, second and third generations are the parties concerned. Still, the most influential cases that get media attention and hold political sway are those involving first-generation victims. The second and third generations have, in many cases, overcome the original traumatisation of the first generation which supported their restitution claims. However, they often confronted an unfriendly Cold War environment which soon overruled even American efforts for official assistance for refugees and new American citizens naturalized during or after World War II.

National commissions all over Europe have unearthed a considerable amount of exploitation also by non-Nazis in various European societies, especially in the looting of Jewish property. This accounts for a broader awareness of the identities of those who benefited from others' misery during the horrors of the Holocaust. However, a general tendency to "draw a line somewhere" dominates the various societies, although this is not always accepted by the elites and media. The first phase of the "drawing-the-line" mentality was focused on Holocaust survivors, while the second has come to involve all Second World War victims. In this second phase perpetrators' and bystanders' memories of their own wartime victimization as a consequence of Allied bombing, looting, the loss of family members on the battlefield, and denazification policies such as internment, confiscation of belongings and temporary unemployment, have furthermore contributed to widening the discussion on victimization. Although me-

dia attention in the 1990s about "the Swiss Nazi Gold" and Nazi forced labour has broadened the public interest and consciousness, the narrow national Austrian approaches still hampers the effort to increase public awareness.

A highly problematic issue is that the traditional legal precedent for restitution issues destroys the option for a broader public mediation. This is the primary weakness of Austrian legislation in looted art issues. In specific cases of art treasures looted by Hitler's minions and others, major obstacles exist, including different legal traditions. American legal traditions require a strict chain of documented legal ownership, which is in stark contrast to European traditions which often accept property obtained in good faith with no documented proof of ownership. Right from the beginning, a crucial problem of Austrian legislation was the lack of public understanding and mediation efforts. The adopted closed-door policy has destroyed the aim and spirit of the law and harmed the reputation of the official Commission for the Investigation of Provenance of Art Objects, which is not endowed with legal status the way a court under specific rules would be, but is just an expert panel providing guidelines without public hearings. Still, state officials play an important role in the Commission that, due to its composition and legal framing, could never develop into an arbitration committee.

In general, the current restitution procedure – although extremely slow – functions well, having so far restituted art objects worth 5 billion Austrian schillings or the equivalent of 400 million US dollars. However, it seems like the Austrian public is rarely informed about the cases after the initial media and political debate with regard to the restitution of the Rothschild property, the Strauss case and the later auction by Christie's. They ended with the largest sale earnings in one auction in Europe: 90.7 million dollars. Neither the press nor the Provenance Commission reports regularly on these issues. Even if the state of Austria should win the prominent Altmann case involving six Gustav Klimt paintings, they are already perceived as looted art. Few people really seem to care about that perception, which completely destroys the Barkan model of negotiated history.

Even if the Jewish community still argues for more restitution and compensation, the establishment of an independent Historians'

Commission in 1998, based on a suggestion by the head of the Jewish community, Ariel Muzikant, was a success in the sense of Barkan's negotiating for history. Muzikant argued that his suggestion was not intended to produce fights between perpetrators and victims, or even to back up restitution claims. Everybody, however, should know that thousands of Austrians looted their neighbours. After 1945 their descendants refused to return the looted property. In this struggle, the Historians' Commission needs to establish basic historical facts.

I am well aware of the fact that, for example, the German Restitution and Compensation payments to individuals and the State of Israel, and the Jewish Claims Conference after 1945, and again after 1989, can only to some extent be considered representative of a model for "national self-critique". However, it might serve tentatively as a model that could be used for other conflicts demanding solutions, involving minorities, expulsion and looting as well as mass killings. Nevertheless, public opinion and collective memories are relatively resistant to influence from above, especially from the government and other official institutions. I would dare to say that in the 1950s Austria, with the "victim-only" doctrine dominating society, public support for an expression of guilt and responsibility was marginal. In the 1990s, public opinion and many negotiators involved in restitution issues expressed mixed feelings while antisemitic arguments popped up again. Even so, the trend towards broader universal awareness of the Holocaust has continued and is now relatively strong in Austria, at least when compared to the 1960s–1980s. In comparison to the debates about the wartime past of former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim and the dismissive reaction of the majority of the Austrian population that they unleashed, things certainly have changed.

Austrian Antisemitism and Holocaust Memory

My fifth and final thesis is about Austrian politics of history and monument politics since 1945.[31] It is very important to underline that in the first post-1945 years memories of National Socialism were not suppressed or neglected in Austria, but streamlined. Examples of victimization, such as a Soviet Red Army soldiers' memorial in Vienna, were used to support the notion of Austrians as Nazi victims. The dominating group of victims, however, the Jews, were marginalised

or in most cases not mentioned. In Vienna as a space of memory one finds a great number of "anti-fascist" memorials to document Austrian resistance against Nazism, as well as against the authoritarian Dollfuss–Schuschnigg regime of the years 1934–1938. Political resistance is in the centre of commemoration, while the murdered and exiled Jews of Vienna are a marginal sideshow, if mentioned at all. Here Austria is certainly no exception. The Jewish Holocaust was not at the centre of public debate in 1945, neither in Europe nor in the USA.[32] In media reports from the concentration camps, Jews are rarely mentioned as the core Holocaust group.

This, however, should not be used as an excuse for the Austrian post-war policies, but could rather help us to understand why there was no strong outside pressure to deal with the victimization of Jews and the Austrian contribution to the Holocaust. Even in 1988, during the "commemoration" of the Nazi *Anschluss* 50 years earlier, memory policies still had to cope with the universal victimization of Austrian society as such: both the Wehrmacht soldiers and the Jews had to be commemorated at the same time. A monument by the sculptor Alfred Hrdlicka was erected near the State Opera and the Albertina. It was built above a cellar where 200 people were killed during a US bombing raid in March 1945. The debate was emotional. The use in this monument of the declaration of independence of April 27, 1945, which is the first state document for the Austrian "victim-only" doctrine, and the simultaneous marginalisation of the Jews in its symbolism, increased the intensity of the political debate. It took until the year 2000, with the unveiling of the Whiteread Holocaust monument in the Judenplatz in the first district of Vienna – above the remains of the Or-Suara Synagogue, destroyed in 1421 during a pogrom – to overcome these problems of Austrian memory politics. Simon Wiesenthal himself initiated the project which was accepted by the City of Vienna.[33] It took, however, nearly 20 years to carry out this project, which for the first time was exclusively devoted to the Austrian Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This, too, underlines the *longue durée* of Austrian efforts to come to terms with its Nazi past.

Antisemitism has been strong in Austria both before and after 1945 – in this sense there does not exist a "zero hour" – and after 1945 it became an antisemitism without Jews.[34] Unfortunately, politicians

tried to hide and misinterpret the first post-war eruptions of anti-Semitism. As early as March 1946, Federal President Karl Renner defended the Austrian people against British reports of antisemitism. The Socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* reported that "Österreichs Volk ist nicht vergiftet", Austria's people are not poisoned. In reality, however, outspoken verbal antisemitism was present and already used by politicians, or exploded in public events like soccer games.[35] There was, however, no pogrom violence like in Poland at the time.

The post-1986 debate about the wartime past of Kurt Waldheim showed how strongly everyday antisemitism was rooted in Austrian society. It was not Waldheim who used antisemitism in 1986 and afterwards, but some of his ardent supporters.[36] The antisemitic "Austrian backstage"[37] declined in the 1990s, but resurfaced from time to time, as when Jörg Haider used antisemitic codes during the Vienna city elections of 2002[38] – without much success, it should be added. Like in Germany a secondary antisemitism, still reproducing prejudices, is present. However, as it mostly lacks public outlets, it is transmitted in private communication ("kommunikationslatenter Antisemitismus"). Simultaneously, Holocaust awareness and the elite debate against antisemitism and in favour of a critical history of the Nazi past and Austrian collaboration have become much more visible in Austrian public debate.

Notes

1. Eva-Maria Csáky (ed.), *Der Weg zu Freiheit und Neutralität. Dokumentation zur österreichischen Außenpolitik 1945–1955,* Wien: Österreichische Gesellschaft für Außenpolitik 1989, p. 409; speech of Foreign Minister Leopold Figl, who himself was imprisoned in the Nazi Concentration camps Dachau 1938–1943 and Mauthausen near Linz 1944–1945. The speech was delivered during the signing ceremony of the Austrian State Treaty at the Belvedere Castle in Vienna, May 15, 1955.
2. For a general overview, compare Heidemarie Uhl, "Transformations of Austrian Memory: Politics of History and Monument Culture in the Second Republic", in *Austrian History Yearbook* 32, 2001, pp. 149–167.
3. Sozialwissenschaftliche Studiengesellschaft, Vienna, unpublished public opinion poll, presented 26 October 1995, Gesellschafts- and Wirtschaftsmuseum Wien.
4. "The governments of the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States of America are agreed that Austria, the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression, shall be liberated from German domination. They regard the annexation imposed on Austria by Germany on March 15, 1938, as null and void. They consider themselves as in no way bound by any changes effected in Austria since that date. They declare that they wish to see re-established a free and independent Austria and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves, as well as those neighboring states which will be faced with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis for a lasting peace. Austria is reminded, however, that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation." For the text, see Moritz Csáky, *Dokumentation*, 33. The proclamation of April 27, 1945 is published in ibid, pp. 36–37. The text of the Declaration of the Provisional Government on April 27, 1945 is published in Csáky, *Dokumentation*, 33. On the instrumentalisation of the Moscow Declaration by the Austrians and on the original purpose, see Günter Bischof, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945–55, The Leverage of the Weak,* Saki Dockrill (ed.), *Cold War History Series*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 1999, pp. 25–29, 52–67.
5. 70,000 Soviet citizens died on Austrian territory during World War II. 32,000 of them were murdered in the concentration camp of Mauthausen and its various sub-camps; *Kurier*, February 26, 1994, p.14, on the basis of an unpublished research project supervised by Manfried Rauchensteiner.
6. "Die Würfel sind gefallen, daß unser Land von vier Großmächten zugleich besetzt und unser Volk in die Einflußsphäre der vier siegreichen großen Nationen geraten sind [...] nach vollzogenem Friedensschluß diese vierfache Verwaltung ganz abzulösen und dann erst in Wahrheit frei zu sein", Österreichische Bundesregierung (ed.), *Für Recht und Frieden. Eine Auswahl der Reden des Bundespräsidenten Dr. Karl Renner*, Wien: Österreichische Staatsdruckerei 1950, p. 20.
7. Gerald Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit, Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945–1955,* Wien: Verlag Böhlau 1998, p. 38.
8. Heidemarie Uhl 2001, p. 153.
9. Evan Burr Bukey, *Hitler's Austria. Popular Sentiment in the Nazi Era, 1938–1945,* Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina 2002, p. 3.
10. Gerhard Botz, "Janus Headed Austria. Transition from Nazism and Restoration, Continuity and Learning Process", in Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.), *Modern Europe after Facism 1943–1980s,* Vol. 1, New York & Boulder: Columbia University Press 1998, p. 3.

11. Gerhard Oberkofler & Eduard Rabofsky, *Pflichterfüllung für oder gegen Österreich*, Wien: Globus 1988, and Heinz Fischer, "Karl Renner und sein Manuskript über den Anschluss und die Sudetendeutschen", in Anton Pelinka et al. (eds), *Zwischen Austromarxismus und Katholizismus. Festschrift für Norbert Leser*, Wien: Braumüller Verlag 1993.
12. Peter Thaler, *The Ambivalence of Identity. The Austrian Experience of Nation-Building in a Modern Society*, Indiana: Purdue University Press, Central European Studies 2001, pp. 81–109.
13. Manfried Rauchensteiner, *Der Sonderfall: Die Besatzungszeit in Österreich 1945–1955*, Graz: Styria Verlag 1979.
14. Günter Bischof & Josef Leidenfrost (eds), *Österreich und die Alliierten 1945–1949*, Innsbruck: Haymon Verlag 1988, pp. 19–20.
15. Oliver Rathkolb, "NS-Problem und politische Restauration: Vorgeschichte und Etablierung des VdU", in Sebastian Meissl, Klaus-Dieter Mulley & Oliver Rathkolb (eds), *Verdrängte Schuld, Verfehlte Sühne. Entnazifizierung in Österreich 1945–1955*, Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik/Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag 1986, pp. 73–99. Dieter Stiefel, *Entnazifizierung in Österreich*, Wien: Europa Verlag 1981.
16. Reinhold Wagnleitner (ed.), *Understanding Austria. The Political Reports and Analyses of Martin F. Herz, Political Officer of the US Legation in Vienna 1945–1948*, Salzburg: Wolfgang Neugebauer Verlag 1984, p. 129.
17. Günter Bischof & Josef Leidenfrost, *Die bevormundete Nation. Österreich und die Alliierten 1945–1949*, Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag & Innsbrucker Forschungen zur Zeitgeschichte-Band 4, Innsbruck Universität 1988, p. 21.
18. Compare *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, May 1, 1948.
19. Ingrid Bauer, *Welcome Ami, Go Home. Die amerikanische Besatzung in Salzburg 1945–1955*, Salzburg: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1998, p. 169. For additional information and images, see http://www.image.co.at/image/salzburg/.
20. Emil Brix, Ernst Bruckmüller & Hannes Stekl (eds), *Memoria Austriae I. Menschen, Mythen, Zeiten*, Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik 2004. In a letter to the author, March 8, 2004, Ernst Bruckmüller wrote that 21 per cent chose Mozart as a personality the Austrians are proud of, 14 per cent Figl, 12 per cent Kreisky, and 10 per cent Raab, the State Treaty Chancellor of 1955.
21. See here for instance the plans for a Jubilee exhibition at the Schallaburg (Lower Austria) with this very title organised by Stefan Karner in May 2005, at website http://www.oesterreichistfrei.at/.
22. Reinhold Wagnleitner (ed.) 1984, p. 389.
23. "Ein 17 Jahre lang dauernder dornenvoller Weg der Unfreiheit ist beendet! Die Opfer, die Österreichs Volk in dem Glauben an seine Zukunft gebracht hat, haben nun ihre Früchte getragen: Wir haben zehn Jahre auf diesen Tag gewartet, an dem die Außenminister der vier Mächte nach Wien kommen sollten..."
24. The text to Stadler's speech can be found in www.a-e-m-gmbh.com/wessely/fstadl.htm. "Reiche Ernte hat der Tod im vergangenen Jahrhundert unter unserem Volk gehalten. Und es war nicht immer eine Befreiung, wie es uns die gnadenlosen Gutmenschen, die heute Wehrmachtsveranstaltungen und Wehrmachtsausstellungen gestalten, einreden wollen, die unser Volk im vergangenen Jahrhundert erfahren hat. 1918 sind wir angeblich von der Tyrannei der Monarchie befreit worden. 1934 wurden wir angeblich vom Chaos der Demokratie befreit. 1938 wurden wir angeblich vom Kleriko-Faschismus befreit. Und 1945 – und das ist zur Staatsideologie geworden – sind wir angeblich vom Faschismus und von der Tyrannei befreit worden, und in die nächste Tyrannei geraten, insbesondere hier auf diesem Boden, auf dem wir uns heute befin-

den. Und letztlich, 1994, sind wir von der Selbstständigkeit befreit worden, als unser Land entschieden hat, in die Europäische Union mit Januar 1, 1995 einzutreten."

25. See parts of the letter of Klestil and the response of Stadler at www.wno.org/newpages.
26. Alexander Pollak, *Die Wehrmachtslegende in Österreich. Das Bild der Wehrmacht im Spiegel der österreichischen Presse nach 1945*, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2002; Hannes Heer, Walter Manoschek, Alexander Pollak & Ruth Wodak (eds), *Wie Geschichte gemacht wird. Zur Konstruktion von Erinnerungen an Wehrmacht und Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Wien: Czernin Verlag 2003, and Helga Embacher, Albert Lichtblau & Günther Sandner (eds), *Umkämpfte Erinnerung. Die Wehrmachtsausstellung in Salzburg*, Salzburg & Wien: Residenz Verlag 1995.
27. The memory policies concerning the concentration camp Mauthausen near Linz are analysed by Bertrand Perz, "'Selbst die Sonne schien damals ganz anders...' Die Entstehung der KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen 1945 bis 1970", in Heidemarie Uhl (ed.), *Steinernes Bewusstsein. Die öffentliche Repräsentation staatlicher und nationaler Identität Österreichs in seinen Denkmälern*, Bd. 2, Wien, Köln & Weimar: Böhlau Verlag 2003.
28. In 1998 one study by the National Opinion Center at the University of Chicago, based on opinion polls from 1995, even ranked Austria second, following the US but surpassing Bulgaria, Hungary and Canada; Tony W. Smith & Lars Jarkko, *National Pride: A Cross-National Analysis*, Chicago 1998.
29. Elazar Barkan, *Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*, New York: W. W. Norton 2000.
30. Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, *Die Entstehung der Rückstellungs- und Entschädigungsgesetzgebung. Die Republik Österreich und das in der NS-Zeit entzogene Vermögen*, Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik 2003. In general, compare Oliver Rathkolb (ed.), *Revisiting the National Socialist Legacy: Coming to Terms with Forced Labor, Expropriation, Compensation, and Restitution*, Innsbruck: Studienverlag 2003. A reprint of this book will be published by Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey in 2005.
31. Heidemarie Uhl, 2001, pp. 149–167.
32. Compare the various contributions for Europe in Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.), *Modern Europe after Fascism 1943–1980s*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, Columbia University Press 1998, and Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999.
33. Simon Wiesenthal, *Projekt: Judenplatz Wien. Zur Konstruktion von Erinnerung*, Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag 2000.
34. Bernd Marin, *Antisemitismus ohne Antisemiten. Autoritäre Vorurteile und Feindbilder*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag 2000.
35. Oliver Rathkolb, "Zur Kontinuität antisemitischer Vorurteile in Österreich 1945/1950", *Zeitgeschichte*, vol. 16, 1988/89, pp. 167–179.
36. Richard Mitten, *The Politics of Anti-Semitic Prejudice. The Waldheim Phenomenon in Austria*, Boulder: Westview Press 1992, and Ruth Wodak, Peter Nowak, Johanna Pelikan, Helmut Gruber, Rudolf de Cillia & Richard Mitten, *"Wir sind alle unschuldige Täter!" Diskurshistorische Studien zum Nachkriegsantisemitismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1990.
37. Christian Fleck & Albert Mueller, "Front-Stage and Back-Stage: The problem of measuring post-Nazi Antisemitism in Austria", in Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed.), *Modern Europe after Fascism 1943–1980s*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, Columbia University Press 1998, pp. 436–456.
38. See http://www.judentum.net/europa/haider-1.htm referring to a study at the University of Jerusalem, Anat Peri, "Jörg Haider's Antisemitism".

Władysław Bułhak

The Road to Głęboczyca

Polish Historical Culture at the Crossroads

The Meaning of Poland

Theatregoers throughout the world have heard of a Polish-Norwegian border dispute in Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The argument goes: "a little patch of ground, that hath in it no profit but the name."[1] It may be a valid argument from a rational economic perspective, but not always from a history-cultural perspective. If we look at the map of Europe today, we see Poland as having well-established frontiers: the river Oder in the West, the river Bug in the East, the Carpathian mountains in the south and the Baltic Sea to the north. The borders form an almost regular square with Warsaw, the capital, not far off the centre. The country's population is almost exclusively made up of ethnic Poles, most of them belonging to the Roman Catholic Church. The borders truly provide demarcation lines for both state and nation. The inhabitants of Kostrzyn, on the right bank of the Oder, who speak Polish at home, have the town of Kietz on the opposite bank, which is inhabited almost exclusively by Germans. The various neighbours question none of these borders. Consequently, from a strictly geographical point of view, Poland stands out as a perfect compact country, living in peace and harmony in accordance with the established principle that nation and state should be congruent entities.

But even an unpremeditated consideration of what we call historical culture will quickly dispel this ideal picture. Through history, the Poles themselves have considerably changed the definition of Poland, Polishness and Polish historical culture. Redefining a nation is an extremely complex problem, especially since it not only relates to internal developments, but also involves neighbouring states and

nations, and their perceptions of Poland. The purpose of this contribution is to provide an analysis of this complexity, by analysing some manifestations of Polish historical culture. The Holocaust has most surely left its strong imprint on historical culture in Poland, and the question at hand is: In what fundamental Polish history-cultural structures and narratives was the Holocaust introduced after the Second World War?

Surnames – Elements of Polish Historical Culture

Surnames are a most interesting "memory recess" and elements of a historical culture. Suffice it to say that at least in eastern and central Europe, it is relatively easy to deduce the nationality, religion, and sometimes even the place of origin of a given person from his or her surname. For example, the fishermen who live on the Hel peninsula and who belong to the small western-Slavic nation of Cashubians, can be named in one of three ways: Necel, Budzisz or Konke. The historical culture of this small nation, transformed into a literary style, could be found on the pages of novels by the well-known German author Günter Grass.[2]

The most characteristic surnames in the eastern and central parts of Europe were Jewish ones. A large number of them sound like caricatured German names, because of the hastily implemented assimilation policies of Austria and Prussia at the end of the eighteenth century. Due to the partitions of Poland, these empires came to be the homelands of large numbers of European Jews. To put it simply, the officials who were detailed to give surnames to the new citizens – most Jews did not have typical surnames in pre-partition Poland – tried to simplify their tasks. Sometimes they gave vent to a peculiar sense of humour. That is how the Apfelbaums, the Rozenblums, the Goldfarbs, and even the Denkbrots came into being.[3] Here we are getting very close to the dimensions that the Holocaust endowed European culture with. Several years later such a surname, originally the joke of a Prussian official, spelt certain death for descendants.

Konke, Apfelbaum, Denkbrot... In these names has survived a trace of the old Polish culture whose distinctive features were multiethnicity and polyvalence. What I have in mind here is the culture of the "Commonwealth of Both Nations", more often referred to as the

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or simply the Commonwealth. This was a country whose frontiers more or less included the lands of present-day Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania, but only a part of today's Poland. The political elite of that country, and at the same time the main disseminator of its culture, was a numerous and, in terms of land-ownership, diversified Polish nobility. For the purposes of this analysis, its representatives could simply be identified with the Poles of the time, although they very often had non-Polish and even non-Slavic surnames. Timothy Snyder, author of *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*, characterises this group as "the early modern Polish nation".[4] Let us briefly borrow this description so as to later introduce my own more contrasting concept, that of the "traditional Polish nation" or "traditional Polish historical culture".

The "co-author", so to speak, of that culture, living in relatively equable symbiosis with the "early modern Polish nation", was the largest Jewish community in Europe. It even had its own kind of parliament, the *Waad*, whose main task was to facilitate the collection of taxes.[5] Most of the Commonwealth's residents and the social basis of that culture, the basis of multi-ethnicity and polyvalence, consisted of peasants who spoke Polish, German, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Latvian. They were Roman Catholics, Uniates or Orthodox, but also belonged to various Protestant congregations. Their rights, however, were very limited, like their political or national aspirations. They co-created that culture but did not participate actively in it.[6]

End of the Commonwealth

When towards the end of the eighteenth century Russia, Prussia and Austria carved up the Commonwealth, this socio-political system was an obvious anachronism. The abolition of the state did not however cause any fundamental changes. The cornerstone of the system, the multi-million strong "early modern Polish nation", could not and did not disappear overnight. Nor could its culture, which provided the basis of the institutional and social structure for this huge territory.

The processes of decomposition, visible for a long time, assumed

new dynamics in the modern era. The most destructive consequences for the culture of the "early modern Polish nation" were the introduction of mass education and the slow improvement in the population's living conditions, generally due to economic development in the old Commonwealth lands. The spread of personal freedom and political rights derived from ideas left behind by Napoleon's armies. In effect, during the nineteenth century the "early modern Polish nation" gradually started to modernise. The peasantry was economically and politically emancipated. Factors related to the migration of large segments of the population were part of the same modernisation: the increase of non-Jewish urban populations, and the appearance of a working class and an intelligentsia. In the second half of the nineteenth century, more and louder voices were raised in favour of ideas of national, religious or class exclusivity, of difference, and finally of hatred.[7] This brings us very close to the main topic of this book.

It also became increasingly difficult to speak of a Polish-Jewish symbiosis. Vienna, and above all Berlin, the centre of *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, exerted great attraction on many active and progressive Jews from Poland, which Warsaw no longer did. The new residents of Vienna or Berlin were usually ready for far-reaching assimilation. Kristian Gerner has rightly shown that the Jewish entry into German culture was not an unambiguous achievement, but rather weighed down with the phenomenon he describes as "failed bivalence".[8]

Russians, Elders of Zion and the Polish Plot

Also the culture of Russia, the third and largest of the partitioning empires, proved attractive to many Jews. Probably the most famous Russian contribution to European historical culture related to the persecution of European Jewry is the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a text that sets out to "reveal" a Jewish attempt to achieve global political and economic domination. The influence of this unusual document on the Nazi vision of the world is a matter beyond dispute.[9] What did the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* have in common with the "early modern Polish nation"? Once I came across a copy of a brochure in Russian entitled 'Polish catechism or how to conquer Russia by peaceful means'. From library catalogues it would appear that it was printed in several editions between 1863 and 1911. The publish-

ers revealed in it an alleged secret handbook for participants in the ever-present Polish plot in Russia. One can find in it a whole range of duplicitous ideas on how to destroy Russia and the Orthodox faith, aiming at turning Lithuania and Ukraine into Polish colonies. The alleged participants of the Polish plot were to undermine the authority of the "avaricious" and "mentally limited" Orthodox clergy, incite Russian society against the government, that is support revolution, and finally, to infiltrate Russian institutions with the aim of subordinating the "primitive Russian nation".

In the brochure, it was argued that educated Poles should apply for state offices, in order to push their "brothers" into all-important positions, stealing from the state treasury and gaining access to secret information. However, reaching for the highest offices was argued against. It was more advisable for participants of the plot to play the part of trusted deputies of Russian bosses, of *eminences grises*. That catechism concludes: "When our agents are ensconced in all Russian institutions, and the whole country is covered, acting in unison with our brothers, then it will be in our hands." I believe it is reasonable to hypothesise that the "catechism" was one of the prototypes for the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Undoubtedly they both came from very similar sources.[10] Both obviously also reflect national and geopolitical problems related to the lands of the old Commonwealth as well as Russia in a period when national identities were invented for cultural and political purposes.

Thoughts of a Modern Pole

Later on, a new concept of Polish historical culture, which could be called "the movement of the modern Poles", emerged. Not without foundation, supporters of this movement noted that sticking to the traditional model of Polish culture was leading nowhere. In their opinion, the Polish nation really did consist of two layers – the nobility and the peasantry. In terms of democracy, nation-building and other civic changes transforming that part of Europe, the Poland of the nation of nobles became increasingly anachronistic and was to recede into the past. The new Poland, set in the Polish ethnic territory, needed a new elite which in some way would enable it to be reborn.[11]

However, the "traditional Poles" did not intend to surrender without a fight. They also displayed an aptitude for adapting to new conditions. However paradoxical it may sound, the basic part of this vision of Poland was actually accepted by the main Polish working-class party, the PPS, the Polish Socialist Party. In the socialist version there was talk of a free federation in place of the old Commonwealth. In the case of the Polish socialists, one can also speak of a traditional Polish-Jewish symbiosis. The co-founders of the party were Józef Piłsudski, a Polish nobleman, and Stanisław Mendelsohn, a Polish Jew who later became a Zionist.[12]

At the beginning of the twentieth century the "modern Poles" engaged in a basic ideological dispute with the "traditional" ones. At its core was the question of the new Poland's association with the old Commonwealth, and the kind of cooperation between the different ethic groups living there: the Poles, the Jews, the Ukrainians and others. The struggle was mainly verbal. The leader of the "modern Poles" was Roman Dmowski, a doctor of biology by education, who called Polish traditionalists "semi-Poles behind whom comes in train a crowd of fractious, loud-mouthed Israelis".[13]

An important part in this dispute was played by Roman Dmowski's book *Myśli nowoczesnego Polaka*, 'Thoughts of a Modern Pole', written and published in the early twentieth century.[14] Certain books, or rather the ideas that they contain, can be torn away from the context of their times and given new meanings in new epochs. This type of book, including Dmowski's, is particularly interesting and sometimes particularly dangerous, and undoubtedly constitutes an important element in the history-cultural structure. The book has been printed in more than a dozen editions, seven of which have come in the last twenty years. Why this popularity? Dmowski's treatise has passed into Polish historiography as the bible of twentieth century aggressive nationalists. Even today, it continues to attract a readership with such ideas. More sophisticated intellectuals such as Adam Michnik even see in it "thoughts leading directly to totalitarianism".[15] A careful and critical reader must recognise such types of opinions as too far-reaching, given our knowledge of what later occurred in east central Europe.

Much food for thought is provided by the sources that Dmowski

drew upon for his considerations. At the beginning of the twentieth century the point of reference and the ideal for Polish nationalist leaders was the general political and social orders found in the English-speaking countries, particularly the imperialist policy of the British Tories. From such "British" positions, the author attacked and rejected what we here have called "traditional Polish historical culture". At the same time, he proposed its replacement by modern Polishness guided also by the British principle of "my country right or wrong", a motto which concludes the main theme of Dmowski's book.[16]

Most important was that in importing British imperialist ideas to Poland, Dmowski adjusted them to local conditions and needs. He pointed at three categories of internal opponents or even outright enemies within – linked, of course, by a "traditional" set of references. He thus attacked "early modern Poles", including those in socialist guise, and their continued traditional symbiosis with the Jews.[17] Dmowski also wanted to apply British, Japanese and even German methods in relation to other peoples living in the lands that once belonged to the Commonwealth. Indeed, he threw down the gauntlet in a brutal and open challenge to the Ukrainians: "If the Ruthenians (Ukrainians) are to become Poles, they must be Polonised, if they are to become a nation in their own right, capable of life and struggle, they must be forced to win what they desire by way of strenuous effort, to steel themselves in the heat of battle."[18]

A politician representing a Russified and Germanised nation devoid of its own state wrote this. It must, however, be admitted that he did not subscribe to any double standards in terms of morality, and expressly recognised the right of others, that is of Germans and Russians, to oppress the Poles.[19]

Galician Sarajevo

The effects of such panaceas were not long in waiting. A sort of "laboratory of hate" was the struggle for parliamentary mandates in the Polish-Ukrainian province of Galicia that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The guns decorating the walls of many a house in that region proved loaded and ready to go off. On May 12, 1908, a Ukrainian student, Myrosław Siczyńskyi, shot Count Andrzej Potocki, the Austrian emperor's high commissioner and a model repre-

sentative of "traditional Polishness". The Ukrainians regarded him as an enemy of their cause.[20] The murder of Potocki is not such a firm icon, even in Polish and Ukrainian memories, as the death of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo a few years later. The latter set large parts of the world on fire in the years 1914–1918. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that they had much in common. In both cases the perpetrators and the victims represented an anachronistic order and the madness of the approaching age.

In 1908, few people in Europe doubted that a period of redrawing frontiers between states, nations and peoples was in the making. At the same time ever more politicians, scholars and ordinary newspaper readers increasingly engaged themselves in definitions of national space and national historical culture, be it Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Belarusian or Polish – and most certainly monovalent. In the meantime a worldwide conflict occurred, and revolutions erupted.

Failed Interwar Synthesis

Interwar independent Poland was no longer the Commonwealth but bore traits of a synthesis of two types of Polish historical culture – the traditional and the modern. They remained in a state of constant confrontation. The guns hanging on the walls were taken down when the first president of the reborn Polish state, Gabriel Narutowicz, elected with the help of radical and national minority voters and himself a classic "traditional Pole", was assassinated at the opening of an art exhibition. The assassin was an art historian and extremist "modern Pole". The dramatic process culminated in a *coup d'état* in 1926 and Poland's development towards an authoritarian system of government.[21] The murder of the Polish president becomes somewhat easier to comprehend when we add that his half-brother was among the founders and a minister of another country in this region of Europe – Lithuania. However, in the twentieth century, the old Commonwealth relations between Poland and Lithuania no longer existed. The Lithuanians cut themselves off from Polish historical culture, and vice versa. Both built their own myths regarding Vilnius/Wilna, claimed by both as an old historic capital conquered by the enemy.

Most problematic were Polish and Ukranian relations. Two ter-

ritories were particularly disputed: Galicia and Volhynia.[22] Ukrainian combatants from the war with the Poles over Galicia, like their Italian and German colleagues, set up a political and military party, "Ukrainian Nationalist Organisation", or OUN for short. Its chief ideologist was Dmytro Dontsov, an intellectual, sociologist and political philosopher. In his key work entitled 'Nationalism' he wrote that the Ukrainians should subordinate everything to building up the strength and power of their nation. He identified Ukrainian culture as that of its peasantry. The OUN tried to implement its political aims by way of terror, the Polish answer to which was repression.[23]

The Death of Głęboczyca

Many scholars maintain that a certain problem of European historical culture related to the Holocaust is the ameliorating magic of huge figures, of describing mass murders with the help of maps, tables and extracts from acts drawn up and surviving in miscellaneous offices and chancelleries. In this context the word Volhynia means up to 60,000 murdered Poles, and also more than 2,000 Ukrainian victims of Polish reprisals. But Volhynia means more than numbers, from a history-cultural perspective. In Poland, this name today arouses the same sort of connotations as those of Katyn and Auschwitz.

In Timothy Snyder's account of Volhynia, he includes a micro-historical cameo, representing the wartime fate of a Polish settlement called Głęboczyca, near Vladimir in Volhynia, which numbered 70 houses and about 400 residents. I have added a few facts that I have found elsewhere to his report on the matter.[24] In the inter-war period the village cooperated with local Ukrainians within the framework of a joint agricultural cooperative. Many Jews lived in the area, together with many Baptists and Jehovah's witnesses, Poles and Ukrainians. In the years 1939–1941 the Soviet Union annexed the village and the entire Volhynia. After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Germans set up a local administration and police force staffed by the Ukrainian population. In 1942, the Ukrainian police participated in the murder of Jews, organised by the Germans.

In March 1943, Ukrainian policemen broke with the Germans and joined the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, known by its initials UPA. This army fought simultaneously against all real and imagined en-

emies of Ukraine: Poles, Russians, Germans, Ukrainian traitors and others. In reality it was the armed wing of the most extreme faction of the earlier mentioned OUN. Its soldiers were definitively not representative of all Ukrainians, but were sufficiently strong to force their views onto the rest.

A sort of psychological war ensued. Ukrainian detachments marched through villages singing songs filled with hatred towards the Jews and the Poles. Houses were searched for weapons and for Jews who may have been taken into hiding, as well as potentially dangerous young men. Any Jews found were beaten before being killed. Several Poles were killed as well. However, rumours of mass murders in other places in Volhynia were repudiated by the information that "good Poles" had nothing to fear.

On August 29, 1943, before dawn, a UPA detachment, supported by local peasants armed with pitchforks, scythes, axes and staves, attacked the village. The first to die were those who had already gone out into the fields. Their wives and children followed. The names of 199 victims are known. Snyder gives numerous macabre details. The most incredible was the murder of the families of Polish Jehovah's witnesses, who did not want to escape and just prayed together in a group. Also among the victims were Jews in hiding. Next day the deserted village was ransacked. Survivors who hid in the forests were pursued and murdered. Today, many historical places related to trauma are sanctified by posterity. But where there was once a place called Głęboczyca, there is nothing.[25]

Głęboczyca, however, is only one side of the coin – the Polish one. In the immediate post-war years the current Polish borders were not quite as distinct as they may seem today. In the Polish south-east a regular war raged with Ukrainian partisans until 1947. In its course both sides committed many atrocities, including the murder of Ukrainian civilians. For example, in the village of Zawadka Morochowska, Polish forces murdered about fifty civilians, including children and the elderly. The communist authorities finally resolved the matter with the help of a forced resettlement of Ukrainians living there to "regained lands". This is today the most important element in the memories of several hundred thousand Ukrainians living in Poland.[26]

The Refrigeration Effect

What occurred on Polish soil during the Second World War caused such an unheard-of trauma that it can be argued that Polish historical culture and the cultures of neighbouring nations were not able to accommodate themselves to it fully. On top of all this came the effects of nearly half a century of Communism, which in the case of Poland meant the conscious and planned destruction of any residue of Polish historical culture both in its traditional and modern forms, although certain modern traits – as for example the idea of basing the state on mono-ethnicity, or the anti-Germanism – were adopted and adapted to new needs.

At the same time, Communism in Poland – to use a popular comparison – acted like a historical refrigerator. Numerous issues, facts, dramas and defeats were wholly or partially covered up, subjected to censorship, or reconstructed within the context of a new myth serving the interests of the new Communist state. One such myth was that of the "Regained Lands", that is the territories from which the Germans were expelled. The aim was to digest one of the biggest Polish traumas of the Second World War: the shifting of Poland's borders westwards and the accompanying ethnic cleansing and forced resettlement of great masses of people. In today's Poland, we can see the uneasy process of "defrosting" the "historical refrigerator".

What happened in the relationship between Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Germans, Russians and Jews during the Second World War and after is in fact a complex of frozen, myth-ridden problems, which is seen completely differently by the different protagonists. I am thinking here mainly of the surviving witnesses and participants in the events. Many of them avoided death at the last moment. Some of them saw their nearest and dearest being murdered. Others were killed out of hatred and out of revenge. Some of them are still alive today. So are their children and grandchildren born after the war. Many of them have inherited their parents' and grandparents' traumas.

Witnesses are doing much that is useful. Thanks to the painstaking work of two representatives of the Volhynia victims, Ewa and Władysław Siemaszko, two gigantic volumes containing detailed descriptions of what happened in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia have recently been published. The authors have managed to catalogue ten

thousand names of victims who died. In a certain sense, it is the Polish counterpart to Jewishs books of remembrance, or to several books published by the Memorial organisation in Russia to honour the victims of the Soviet terror.[27]

No wonder people tormented by these traumatic experiences sometimes find it difficult to show any sensitivity towards the other side's point of view. One example is that Polish victims' organisations are trying quite aggressively to force through a Ukrainian condemnation of the destruction inflicted on the Polish civilian population. Such demands, objectively fully justified, may be regarded as premature. Knowledge of what happened in Volhynia, let alone any moral reflection on the issue, has yet to filter down into Ukrainian historical consciousness. This is hard to understand for the Polish victims and their children, for whom these pogroms are the most important thing ever to have occurred in history. That is why demands of this type are perceived by contemporary Ukrainian patriots as Polish insolence, or as an intrigue instigated by post-Soviet special forces serving to destroy the memory of the heroic UPA, which fought against the Soviets until the early 1950s. In Soviet Ukraine, the "refrigeration effect" surrounding the memory of the "armed men of the forest" was many times stronger than in Communist Poland.[28]

It goes without saying that several traumas and conflicts infuse Polish historical culture. Some of them have lived their cultural life for centuries and been adopted for different political and ideological purposes, nationalist as well as Communist. Others, such as the Holocaust, have had a shorter life span, not least due to the fact that the latter was downplayed during the Communist era. However, in post-Communist Poland, the Holocaust has entered the mainstream of Polish historical culture. The echo of the Holocaust is no longer distant. It is an inseparable part of what we call the historical culture of contemporary Poland, and of contemporary Europe.

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25. Timothy Snyder, pp. 170–172; Władysław Siemaszko & Ewa Siemaszko, p. 873.
26. Grzegorz Motyka, *Tak było w Bieszczadach. Walki polsko-ukraińskie 1943–1948*, Warsaw: Volumen 1999, pp. 308, 403–443.
27. Władysław Siemaszko & Ewa Siemaszko Siemaszko, Vol. 1–2, pp. 1–1433.
28. In Rivne (Równe), Ukraine, a monument to Klym Savur (pseudonym of Dmytro Klachkivskyi), a commander of the UPA, was erected; he was among those who made the decision to start ethnic cleansing of Poles in Volhynia.

Ivan Kamenec

Reflections of the Holocaust in Slovak Society and Literature

The Holocaust issue has traumatised Slovak history for over sixty years. This trauma is reflected in professional literature, journalism, oral or written testimonies and in different art forms, though the strongest resonance can be observed in the historical consciousness of a society, in the controversial perceptions of its social classes, intellectual and religious circles, and different generations. The Holocaust has not only been a tragedy for its victims, but also for all contemporaries and involved persons. The only difference was which side of the barricade one stood on – whether victim, active participant, obeying orders or fulfilling professional duties, respectively. Passive observers formed the largest group while the active opponents were much fewer. The great diversity of personal experiences, attitudes and observations is emotionally mirrored in awareness and perception of history by society and creates the soil for different legends, myths, accusations and apologies.

The trauma of the Holocaust in Slovakia – as in the majority of other former Soviet block countries – is magnified by the fact that this issue has been avoided, deformed and concealed for ideological and political reasons for over forty years. After the fall of the Communist regime in Slovakia, the situation in this respect has changed substantially, and interest in the Holocaust has increased substantially. However, this transformation has not only brought positive results. The political and constitutional changes following the Velvet Revolution also brought about deformations and a revival of myths. Instead of impartial historical or sociological analyses, prosecution-like accusations or passionate defences appeared. In addition to its political or economic aspect, the Holocaust has emerged more and

more as a moral problem, which, from a psychological point of view, concerns both the Jewish victims and all strata of Slovak society irrespective of their political, social, ethnic or religious identity.

Slovak Antisemitism

Before I make any further comment on this topic, I would like to present a brief description of the conditions, causes, circumstances and specifics forming the historical background to the course of the so-called "solution of the Jewish problem" in Slovakia during the Second World War.

Antisemitism in its "modern form" appeared in Slovakia, as in several other countries of central and eastern Europe, in the last third of the nineteenth century as a result of strained domestic relations within the multinational Habsburg monarchy. This antisemitism had at least three sources and thus three different manifestations, whose stereotypes survived into the 20th century[1]: 1) *traditional religious anti-Judaism* (Jews as deicides); 2) *national antisemitism* (Jews as one of the instruments of forced Magyarisation of the Slovak nation), and 3) *economic and social antisemitism* (Jews as exploiters of the Slovak people and thus the main source of their social problems).

In March 1939 the Slovak Republic was established as a by-product of Nazi aggression against the Czechoslovak Republic. The new state was a German satellite required to radically solve the Jewish issue. The government made the antisemitic doctrine an organic part of its official domestic and foreign policy. The "solution" of the Jewish issue gradually became the key agenda of the new regime's internal policy and directly affected all areas of public life. The issue was brought forward as a result of both Nazi pressure and initiatives from the ruling Slovak political elite. Due to above-mentioned antisemitic stereotypes, but also a relatively strong position in the economic life of the country, Jewish citizens became an easy target for discrimination and persecution. The "solution" of the Jewish question was presented as a rational and legitimate measure to remedy previous social and ethnic oppression, and as one of the most important tasks in building and maintaining Slovak statehood.

Thus, the government fought a methodical "civil war" against 90,000 Slovak Jews, who corresponded to less than four per cent of

the country's total population. The Jews were labelled the age-old enemy of the Slovak nation and state, and were systematically deprived of their political, economic, social, civil, and eventually also fundamental human rights. In 1941 the solution to the Jewish problem was legislatively race-based. From the very beginning the government-controlled process of elimination of Jewish citizens from all areas of public life was accompanied by an especially brutal xenophobic propaganda, which negatively affected Slovak society by reviving and reinforcing previous antisemitic prejudices.

In 1942 this development ended in a tragedy, when as many as 58,000, that is two-thirds, of the Slovak Jews were deported to the Nazi extermination camps. At that time the Slovak Republic was the only Nazi-controlled but technically unoccupied country which used its own instruments of power and administration to deport its Jewish population. After the deportations, the remaining local Jewish population survived in Slovakia with the assistance of different temporary protective (economic, religious and presidential) exemptions, or in local Jewish labour camps. Several thousand Jews succeeded in escaping to neighbouring Hungary, unoccupied at that time. The Hungarian deportations started as late as 1944.

In the autumn of 1944, the territory of the Slovak Republic was invaded by German troops. They arrived to suppress a domestic armed anti-Fascist uprising and to complete the process of the "Final Solution". As a result, 13,000 more persons were deported to the extermination camps and over one thousand "non-Aryan" citizens were murdered directly, though some 10,000 Jews found refuge among partisan troops. Others were saved due to the selfless help of non-Jewish people, who risked their own lives and those of their families. Many under threat found refuge in mountain bunkers, chalets and hideaways in country and town houses, monasteries or church-run orphanages.

Economic Profits

The reflection of the Holocaust in Slovak society or literature can be observed from within two temporal perspectives: firstly, there was an immediate wartime reaction to the persecution of Jews. The second perspective reflects post-war reactions and opinions, which also had

several stages and diverse forms. Although the course of the Holocaust in Slovakia can be reconstructed on a fairly good professional and factual level in domestic and foreign academic literature and memoirs,[2] our knowledge of the response and attitude of the majority in society to this sensitive problem has been only superficial and hypothetical so far. In this respect we lack thorough historical, sociological or ethnological research.

The first antisemitic measures of an economic and social nature taken against the Slovak Jews in the World War II period created in several social classes the illusion of a quick and trouble-free solution to acute economic problems. The Aryanisation process, that is the transfer of Jewish property into the possession of "Aryans", was presented as the settlement of previous conflicts regarding social inequality and injustice and raised hopes, especially among the poorer classes – just as the nationalisation process did under the Communist regime a decade later. However, Aryanisation quickly degenerated into a corrupt looting of Jewish property and enrichment of political potentates of the regime. The entire process ended in economic failure and moral fiasco.

Nevertheless, for non-Jewish segments of the Slovak population, there were some sordid material gains to be made. 12,000 companies, some 100,000 hectares of farmland, thousands of houses and flats and incalculable movable property, including bank savings, lured a considerable portion of the population to take part in Aryanisation and the auctions of Jewish personal belongings left after their deportation. Thus, by allowing looting of Jewish property, the regime purposefully dragged a considerable number of the politically indifferent citizens into legal and moral turpitude and deliberately revived and cultivated traditional antisemitic stereotypes. It misused them also in justifying deportations. Robbed and forcibly displaced Jews were depicted not only as arch-enemies of the state and nation, but also potential claimants of confiscated property. It was an effective propaganda tool, which partially survived the end of the war, when several anti-Jewish pogrom-like events took place in Slovakia.

The Christian Tradition

Another controversial problem of the period and the post-war reaction to the Holocaust concerns the religious aspect. It is not only the question of traditional Christian anti-Judaism but the fact that the regime of the Second World War Slovak Republic officially declared Christian ideology to be the state ideology. Many Catholic clerics and laymen were active in political structures at all levels of the ruling hierarchy. Consequently, they took an active part in the "solution" of the Jewish issue from within the framework of their positions. From the beginning of the state's existence to its end in the spring of 1945, it was headed by the Catholic priest Jozef Tiso. Over time he held office as Prime Minister, President, Chairman of the single ruling establishment party, and the highest commander of the country's armed forces, eventually accepting the official title "The Leader".[3] It must be pointed out that in Slovakia, the commitment of the Catholic and Protestant clergy in public and political life belonged to a well-rooted tradition reaching back to the eighteenth century. A priest has always been a moral and political authority for the vast majority of deeply religious Slovaks.

Since 1939 the representatives of individual churches had carefully commented on the course of antisemitic measures and publicly approved of the Jewish elimination from economic and public life. Open criticism began only after the passing of racial laws and the beginning of the deportations.[4] Initially, criticism from religious circles did not target the core of the problem, but focused on the protection of a growing number of Jewish convertites. On the other hand, the clergymen active in politics headed by President Tiso not only publicly approved of all antisemitic measures, deportations included; they also advocated and justified them by means of Christian teachings. That attracted sharp, but in practical terms ineffective, diplomatic criticism from the Vatican.

The major part of Slovak society, especially its deeply religious Christians, found themselves in a schizophrenic position: on the one hand they trusted their pastors, also those active in politics; on the other, their natural human and religious conviction was in moral conflict with the everyday reality of the "solution" to the Jewish problem. Therefore, a number of believers and many rank-and-file priests,

members of religious orders and several bishops participated as individuals in rescuing the persecuted. These mostly anonymous rescuers demonstrated a stronger human sympathy and religious morality than many a prominent, politically active, official representative of the Catholic Church.

After the war it proved to be a complicated matter to attribute moral responsibility for the Jewish tragedy to the politically active Church representatives, owing to several political events and ideological pressures leading to the formation of an entirely new state-church relationship model. The victory of the Communist totalitarian state was followed by the methodical atheisation of society, accompanied by a massive persecution of Churches and their official representatives, which in turn resulted in a protective reaction among many believers. This automatically affected the perception and evaluation of the activities of those clergymen who were politically active in the period of the World War II Slovak Republic.

Communist Erasure

After 1945, the reactions of individual classes within Slovak society to the Holocaust were related to both personal experiences and the current political situation. In part, the professional literature and journalism set the tone. From a historiographical point of view the topic was treated most frequently by foreign, usually exile, authors. Several domestic memoirs have been published, but rather than describing the history of the Holocaust in Slovakia they comprise author reminiscences of the extermination camps. In this connection, mention must be made of the fictionalised memoirs of Alfred Wetzler, entitled *What Dante Did Not See.* The author managed to escape from Oswiecim/Auschwitz in April 1944. Together with Rudolf Vrba he smuggled out drawings, figures and other data on this infamous "death factory". Their Oswiecim report with its terrifying content brought about international shock and disbelief. However, the Allies reacted only verbally, instead of taking direct military action such as attacking the railways leading to Oswiecim by air raids.

Slovak professional historical literature dealt with the Holocaust only in a general way, within the framework of researching a wider subject matter relating to the Republic during the Second World

War. The exceptions are a few specialised studies from the 1960s, the period of partial liberalisation of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. The promisingly budding research of Holocaust history was radically interrupted by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact armies in August 1968 and the subsequent introduction of a harsh neo-Stalinist regime. The Holocaust as a subject was erased from the research plans of universities and other academic institutions. Although some partial, and half-legal, research continued, its results could be published only in *samizdats*, foreign periodicals or books with cryptographic titles. In the 1970s, an artificially constructed propagandist fight against international and domestic Zionism started. The anti-Zionist label masked obvious antisemitic tendencies.

In the Communist era the subject of the Holocaust occurred more frequently in fiction, poetry, drama, film, music, and in fine arts. The most remarkable result was the 1965 Academy Award-winning film *Obchod na korze* (*The Shop on Main Street*). Art, receiving the necessary tolerance of artistic licence, replaced Holocaust-related facts. The artistic representation of the Holocaust, however, was very important for public awareness under the existing circumstances. A quality work of art can obviously address the consumer more poignantly than any professional, academic historical study.[5]

Issues concerning the Holocaust impact on the consciousness of society during the Communist regime also appeared sporadically in the materials of opposition political dissent – especially in the statements of Charta 77.[6] In Slovakia a *samizdat* document in which the authors expressed their attitude to the Holocaust appeared in the autumn of 1987. They described it as a tragedy, a purposefully avoided or concealed event with which neither Slovak society, nor its elite was able to cope. The signatories of this statement were twenty-four Slovak public figures of different political and religious orientations and with various social and professional backgrounds.[7] Extending beyond the Holocaust topic itself, the authors were united in their effort to express abhorrence towards the practices of the existing Communist regime. Shortly after the fall of this system, one of the signatories unveiled the memorial tablet to President Jozef Tiso, the person bearing major political and moral responsibility for the tragic mass deaths of the Slovak Jews.

Post-Communist Ambiguity

The *samizdat* episode points to the fact that neither during the Communist regime nor after its demise has the Holocaust been a subject of study for historians and other professionals as much as it has echoed sensitively various public concerns in Slovak society. Often it has been used as an argument in an ongoing political struggle. Once again, in the hands of politicians, public officers, writers and propagandists, the facts of history have become instruments of ideological legitimacy. It must be stated, however, that the post-Communist political elites of Slovakia have condemned the Holocaust and finally distanced themselves from the antisemitic regime of the war period. Their representatives ostentatiously participate in unveiling numerous memorials honouring the Holocaust victims, and other commemorative events, and yet often refuse to talk openly about this traumatising period of Slovak history. They often defend their uncertainty, hesitation or ignorance by referring to the historians, who have supposedly not analysed the Holocaust satisfactorily.

I have already mentioned that after 1989 research on the Holocaust, and Jewish history in general, has experienced a dramatic increase in Slovakia. The results of older and re-opened scientific research – monographs, documents, collections of papers, studies, memoirs and press articles – are (re-)printed, and scientific conferences organised. In Slovak Holocaust research the oral history method has been introduced, assisted by the scientific institutions and civic associations implementing projects of Yale University and Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation. Within this framework several hundred survivors of the Holocaust have been interviewed and the results processed in a scholarly manner. Based on this work, several professional works of ethnological and historical character have been produced.[8] The topic of both the Jewish and the Roma Holocaust has been incorporated into school textbooks. Periodical cycles of lectures accompanied by audio-visual presentations of interviews with Holocaust survivors are organised for teachers and students. In addition, several very interesting documentaries have been shown on television, which as a mass medium has considerable impact on the historical consciousness of broader Slovak society.[9]

That being said, the heightened interest in Holocaust history is ac-

companied by certain negative phenomena. Many publicists prey on this sensitive topic for purely opportunistic reasons, without having any experience of serious research. They often lack any fundamental knowledge of the facts and are unaware of historical contexts replace this shortage with superficial judgements, simplified conclusions, and often by providing incorrect facts. Similar works damage serious study. The erroneous conclusions both deceive and serve as a good argument for those authors who intentionally mist over, relativise, cast doubt upon or even justify the course and causes of the Holocaust in Slovakia. These tendencies appeared shortly after the fall of Communism and are still present today. They make use of the poor level of Holocaust knowledge in Slovak society; act as parasites/feed upon ideological deformations of this problem originating from the former Communist regime, and refer especially to an idealised picture of the nation's history.[10]

Slovak Revisionism

The authors who purposefully falsify the history of the Holocaust in Slovakia include certain exile historians and literarily active political representatives of the World War II Slovak Republic. However, a historiography or literature openly supporting the "Auschwitz lie" thesis does not exist in Slovakia. But the so-called revisionists are attempting to mythologise the "Slovak State", its regime and leading representatives.[11] Naturally, the scenes of cruel persecution and extermination of the Slovak Jews would tarnish their idealised portraits. Therefore, these authors strive to shift all legal, political and moral responsibility for the Holocaust in Slovakia exclusively to pressure from Nazi Germany, or to several Slovak radicals, respectively, who, being in the governmental structure, obediently fulfilled German wishes and orders. In some cases this argumentation reaches a tragic absurdity. Elite representatives of the ruling regime are presented as dissenters of the Nazi regime, as opponents to the Holocaust and as rescuers of its victims. There are cynical attempts to describe the life of the Jewish population during the war in distorted, idealised forms. Comparison of the living conditions and the number of Jewish victims in Slovakia and the countries directly occupied by the Nazis are frequently used. This misinformation campaign is also nourished by some eyewit-

nesses who for political, religious or other subjective reasons choose to paint an idyllic picture of life in the Slovak Republic during the war. They claim to be the only authentic, trustworthy eyewitnesses of the events but refuse to accept any results of historical research as long as they do not agree with their beliefs and personal experiences. They often brand historians as vicious enemies of the Slovak nation and Slovak statehood. For a less informed reader or listener these arguments may sound very convincing.

Slovak revisionist circles often also use the arguments from the arsenal of already mentioned antisemitic stereotypes. Their representatives revive the thesis that the local Jewish population has always been hostile towards Slovak national, state, economic and cultural interests: "The Jews have traditionally had the disposition not only to fill with envy and hatred but also to produce their own enemies even in cases where it is not necessary."[12] These absurdities lead such authors to formulate unbelievably cynical conclusions on the Holocaust: "If there was a nation entitled to displace Jews from its territory, then it was the Slovak nation."[13] Thus responsibility for the tragedy is passed directly on to its victims.

The Totalitarian Heritage

Despite identifying individual mainstreams of opinion we do not know for certain the current state of Holocaust reflection in the historical consciousness of Slovak society. The whole problem has, however, to be seen in a wider historical context. In the twentieth century Slovakia experienced two totalitarian systems which left their psychological mark and caused moral deformations. The experience of a six-year Fascist totalitarian regime and the Holocaust was shadowed by 40 years of Communist totalitarianism, which is much fresher and emotionally more vivid and current in the minds and hearts of the population. The Communist regime has also traumatised Slovak society. Despite the 15-year development of a democratic environment, society has not yet fully coped with the political and moral consequences of Communism, of the devastation of human values and, above all, with the civic responsibilities. Coping with this historic trauma is probably a long-term and complicated process, which should be guided by the rational learning of historical facts and contexts.

Notes

1. Ivan Kamenec, "Problémy asimilácie židovských obyvateľov na Slovensku", in *Židia v interakcii*, Bratislava 1998
2. I. Kamenec, *Po stopách tragédie*, Bratislava 1991; L. Lipscher, *Židia v slovenskom štáte 1939–1945*, Bratislava 1992; E. Nižňanský, *Židovská komunita na Slovensku medzi československou parlamentnou demokraciou a slovenským štátom v stredoeurópskom kontexte*, Prešov 1999; K. Hradská, *Prípad Wisliceny. Nacistickí poradcovia a židovská oázka na Slovensku*, Bratislava 1999; D. Tóth (ed.), *Tragédia slovenských židov*, Banská Bystrica 1992. The problem of the Jewish Holocaust has also been researched by some foreign historians, mainly from Israel (among others L. Rotkirchenová, Y. A. Jelinek and G. Fatranová).
3. V. Bystrický & Š Fano (eds), *Pokus o politický a osobný profil Jozefa Tisu*, Bratislava 1992.
4. I. Kamenec, V. Prečan & S. Škorvánek (eds), *Vatikán a Slovenská republika 1939–1945. Dokumenty*, Bratislava 1992.
5. M. Richter (ed.), *Božia ulička. Antológia slovenskej literatúry o holokauste*, Bratislava 1998.
6. V. Prečan (ed.), *Charta 77, 1977–1989. Od morální k demokratické revoluci. Dokumentace*, Bratislava 1990.
7. Y. A. Jelinek, "Slovaks and the Holocaust: Attempts at Reconciliation", *Soviet Jewish Affairs* vol. 19, no. 1, 1989.
8. See footnote no. 2. Moreover, five volumes of documents were published by I. Baka, K. Hradská, I. Kamenec & E. Nižňanský (eds) within the series *Holokaust na Slovensku* ('The Holocaust in Slovakia').
9. P. Salner, *Prežili holokaust*, Bratislava 1997; M. Vrzgulová & P. Salner (eds), *Videli sme holokaust*, Bratislava 2002.
10. M. S. Ďurica, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov*, Bratislava 1995; F. Vnuk, *Mať svoj štát znamená život. Politická biografia A. Macha*, Bratislava 1991.
11. G. Hoffmann (ed.), *Zamlčaná pravda o Slovensku. Prvá Slovenská republika. Prvý slovenský prezident Dr. Jozef Tiso. Tragédia slovenských židov podľa nových dokumentov*, Partizánske 1996; S. Májek (ed.), *Dr. Jozef Tiso. Zborník z vedeckého seminára, v Bratislave 22. septembra 2001*, Bratislava 2002.
12. F. Vnuk, *Dedičstvo otcov. Eseje na historické témy*, Bratislava 1990.
13. Ibid.

About the Authors

Władysław Bułhak, b. 1965, is a Ph.D. in History. He currently serves as a Deputy Director at the Public Education Office in the Institute of National Remembrance, Warsaw, Poland. He coordinates the work of researchers and educators dealing with the problems of Nazi and Communist crimes between 1939 and 1989. Previously, he has worked as an expert at the Centre for Eastern Studies in Warsaw, and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland. As a scholar he has focused on various aspects of Polish-Russian and Polish-Soviet relations in the 19th and 20th centuries. His research in progress is on the role of the intelligentia in the system of external relations of Communist Poland in the years 1945–1956. Bułhak has published *Dmowski – Rosja a kwestia polska. U źródeł orientacji rosyjskiej obozu narodowego 1886–1908* ('Dmowski – Russia and the Polish Question. On the Genesis of the Russian Orientation of the National Camp, 1886–1908', 2000).

Claus Bryld, b. 1940, is Professor of Modern History at Roskilde University, Denmark. His fields of research include the history of political ideas and ideology, the history of the labour movement and of democratic socialism, and historiography and the didactics of history, with special reference to the general public and the mass media. Bryld is the author of a large number of scholarly works, among them "Fra historieskrivningens historie til historiekulturens historie? Idéer til en udvidelse af det historiografiske begreb" ('From Historiography to the History of Historical Culture? Ideas for Widening the Concept of Historiography'), in *Historien og historikerne i Norden efter 1965. Oplæg fra den 21. nordiske fagkonference i historisk metodelære* (1989);

Den demokratiske socialismes gennembrudsår. Arbejderbevægelsens politiske ideologi i Danmark 1884–1916 ('The Breakthrough of Democratic Socialism. The Political Ideology of the Labour Movement in Denmark 1884–1916', 1992); *Besættelsestiden som kollektiv erindring. Historie- og traditionsforvaltning af krig og besættelse 1945–1997* ('The Period of Occupation as Collective Memory. The Management of the History and Tradition of War and Occupation 1945–1997', 1998, with Anette Warring); *Kampen om historien. Brug og misbrug af historien siden Murens fald*, ('The Struggle for History. The Use and Misuse of History since the Fall of the Berlin Wall', 2001), and *Demokrati mellem fortid og fremtid* ('Democracy between Past and Future', 2003, ed. with Søren Hein Rasmussen).

Ivan Kamenec, b. 1938, is a Slovak historian who works at the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava. He focuses on the political and cultural history of Slovakia during the 20th century, in particular the Slovak Republic during the Second World War, and the Holocaust in Slovakia. In addition, he writes about Slovak historiography and teaches history at several universities in Slovakia. Among his most important works can be mentioned *Po stópach tragédie* ('In the Footsteps of Tragedy', 1991); *Slovenský štát* ('The Slovak State', 1992); *Trauma. Slovensky Stat 1939–1945* ('Trauma. The Slovak State 1939–1945', 1999); *Tragédia politika, kňaza a človeka – Dr Jozef Tiso 1887–1947* ('The tragedy of Dr Jozef Tiso, 1887–1947', 1998), and *Hľadanie a blúdenie v dejinách* ('Searching and Wandering in History', 2000).

Klas-Göran Karlsson, b. 1955, is Professor of History at Lund University, Sweden, and leader of the research project *The Holocaust and European Historical Culture*, of which this volume is part. He has specialised in East European history and written extensively on Russian, Soviet and post-Soviet topics such as historiography, historical culture and uses of history, ethnic conflicts and migration processes. Among his later works are *Historia som vapen. Historiebruk och Sovjetunionens upplösning 1985–1995* ('History as a Weapon. Uses of History and the Dissolution of the Soviet Union, 1985–1995', 1999); *Nordens Medelhav. Östersjöområdet som historia, myt och pro-*

jekt ('The Mediterranean of the North. The Baltic Sea Region as History, Myth, and Project', 2002, with Kristian Gerner), and *Terror och tystnad. Sovjetregimens krig mot den egna befolkningen* ('Terror and Silence. The Soviet Regime's War against Its Own Population', 2003). Together with Ulf Zander, he edited the first volume, *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe* (2003), of the above-mentioned research project.

Dalia Ofer is the Head of Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry and chair of the Max and Rita Haber Professor of Holocaust and East European studies. Until October 2002 she was the academic head of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Ofer is a member of the Melton Center for Jewish Education. She is also the representative of the Hebrew University on the Yad Vashem Academic Committee and a member of the management of the Research Center of Yad Vashem. She is the author and editor of six books in Hebrew and English and has published numerous articles on the history of the Holocaust, immigration to Palestine and Israel, gender, the memory of the Holocaust in Israel, and the teaching of the Holocaust. Her book *Derech Bayam: Aliyah Bet Bitkufat Hashoah* (1988) received the Ben Zvi Award, and *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel* (1990) received the Jewish Book Award. Together with Lenore J. Weitzman, she edited *Women in the Holocaust* (1998). She also edited *Ben Olim leVatikim* (1996) and is the author of the chapter on Israel in David S. Wyman (ed.), *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (1996). Recently, she published "History, Memory and Identity: Perception of the Holocaust in Israel", in Uzi Rabhon & Chaim Waxman (eds), *Jews in Israel: Contemporary Social and Cultural Patterns* (2004).

Oliver Rathkolb, b. 1955, is an Austrian historian. From 1993, he has been Assistant Professor at the Institute for Contemporary History of the University of Vienna, and since 1994 Co-Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for History and Society, Vienna. In the years 1985–2003, he was Research Director of the Bruno Kreisky Archives in Vienna, and since 2002 works as Research Director of the scientific in-

ternet platform www.demokratiezentrum.org. Furthermore, in 2000–2001 he was Schumpeter-Fellow at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, and in 2003 Visiting Professor at University of Chicago. He has published more than a hundred works on Austrian and European contemporary political and cultural history, international affairs and business history, among them three books. Rathkolb is a co-founder of the scientific quarterly *Medien und Zeit* ('Media and Time'), which focuses on interdisciplinary questions in contemporary history and communications/media history, and Managing Editor of *Zeitgeschichte* ('Contemporary History').

JÖRN RÜSEN, b. 1938, is President of the *Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut* ('Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities') at the Wissenschaftszentrum of Northrhine-Westfalia, Essen, Professor of General History and Historical Culture at the University of Witten/Herdecke, and Executive Director of the *Stiftung für Kulturwissenschaften* ('Foundation for the Humanities') in Essen. Among his scholarly fields can be mentioned the theory and methodology of history, history of historiography, modern intellectual history, historical consciousness, historical learning, processes of sense-generation, strategies of intercultural comparison, and general issues of cultural orientation in modern societies. Rüsen is the series editor of *Beiträge zur Geschichtskultur* ('Contributions to Historical Culture'), co-editor of the series *Zeit – Sinn – Kultur* ('Time – Meaning – Culture'), editor of the series *Making Sense of History*, and member of the editorial committee of several journals, including *History and Memory*, *History and Theory*, *Zeitschrift für Genozidforschung* ('Journal of Genocide Research'), *The Frontiers of Historiography* (Chinese), and *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Crossroad* (Indian). His scholarly works include *Studies in Meta-History* (1993); *Historische Orientierung* ('Historical Orientation', 1994); *Geschichte lernen* ('Learning History', 1994); *Geschichtsbewußtsein im interkulturellen Vergleich* ('Historical Consciousness in Intercultural Comparison', 1994, with Bodo von Borries); *Trauer und Geschichte* ('Sorrow and History'; 2001, ed. with Burkhard Liebsch); *Zerbrechende Zeit* ('Time that Breaks', 2001); *Geschichte im Kulturprozeß* ('History in Cultural Process', 2002); *European History: Challenge for a Common Future* (2002, ed. with Attila Pok and Jutta Scherrer); *Kann*

Gestern besser werden? ('Can Yesterday Be Better?', 2003); *Zeit deuten. Perspektiven – Epochen – Paradigmen* ('Interpreting Time. Perspectives – Epochs – Paradigms', 2003, ed.), and *History: Narration – Interpretation – Orientation* (2005; forthcoming).

Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, b. 1965, is a Ph.D. in History and a Research Fellow at the Danish Institute for International Studies, Department for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Copenhagen, and external lecturer at Roskilde University. Her main field of study is 20th Century European history, and her research includes Danish refugee policy during the 1930s, antisemitism past and present, Holocaust and European historical cultures, Denmark and Palestine during the first half of the 20th century, the development of the Scandinavian welfare state, the family in modern society, modernisation and social change, and Spain 1897–1939. Her most important scholarly works are *Stat og nation i franquismen. Spanien fra 1898 til 1939* ('State and nation in the Francoism. Spain from 1897 to 1939', 1992); *Den sociale ingeniørkunst i Danmark. Familie, stat og politik fra 1900 til 1945* ('Social Engineering in Denmark. Family, State and Politics from 1900 to 1945', 1999), and *Menneskerettigheder og flygtinge i 1930ernes Danmark* ('Refugees and Human Rights in Denmark during the 1930s', 2005; forthcoming).

Ulf Zander, b. 1965, is a Ph.D. in History and a Research Associate at Lund University, Sweden. Besides the dissertation *Fornstora dagar, moderna tider. Bruk av och debatter om svensk historia från sekelskifte till sekelskifte* ('Glorious Days, Modern Times. Uses of and Debates on Swedish History from One Turn of the Century to Another', 2001), he has written numerous articles on monuments, film and history, historiography and the uses of history in Sweden and the Baltic Sea region. Zander is co-editor of volumes dealing with historical images, the Baltic Sea region, contemporary history and counterfactual history. His most recent publication is *Clio på bio. Essäer om amerikansk film, historiekultur och identitet* ('Clio Goes to the Movies. Essays on American Film, Historical Culture and Identity', 2005; forthcoming). Together with Klas-Göran Karlsson, he edited the first project volume *Echoes of the Holocaust. Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe* (2003).