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The Past Beneath the Present

*The Resurgence of World
War II Public History After
the Collapse of Communism:
A Stroll Through the Inter-
national Press*

Hagen Fleischer

The years of the war are now somewhere far off in the past. But the war itself remains with us, holding us through the power of human memory and through the profound traces that it left behind. It holds us despite the fruitless efforts of those who would like to extinguish that memory and prevent it from being handed down to the next generation.

Mikhail Alekseyev, war veteran,
in *The Moscow Times*, May 9, 1995

All of a sudden it is back. Out of the features and the seminars the past comes sneaking in to make itself at home on the front pages of newspapers amidst current policy. It defeats U.N. conferences, penetrates courtrooms, pressures governments. Occasionally it seems to take the present hostage as in German-Greek relations or in the dealings between North and South. From Athens to Durban a new trend prevails. Old scores are to be settled with reference to war, suppression, Nazi mania, colonialism and slavery. The past has a future.

Stefan Ulrich, "The Insurrection of History,"
in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 8-9, 2001

Note on sources: Since this is based almost exclusively on the international press, it is somewhat haphazard in nature: Although several thousand articles have been used, they do not always reflect the most recent development of an issue, especially since they frequently contributed to remedying criticized wrongs. Press campaigns have affected government decisions from Sweden and Switzerland to Russia and the Vatican to grant access to relevant archives or to explode cozy myths, ending conspiracies of silence or other scandalous dealings with the past. The present study makes seldom direct reference to scholarly

works since it is less concerned with finding out “what really happened” than with how this past is confronted today by the mass media. Still, since public presentations often are in conflict, sides must be taken. In this, indirect reliance on new research is possible because the media discourse often sprang from the publicizing of new books. The problem of divergent interpretations still had to be tackled. In addition, writing about the past, even the recent past, while daily tracing the effect of World War II on media images and current developments threw this writer onto an emotional roller-coaster of optimism and pessimism; reflected in the changing mood in various chapters.¹

Introduction

Once upon a time, foreign diplomats were much impressed by the “fantastic Greek knowledge of their own history,”² meaning modern history. Today, however, the history scores on Greek university admissions examinations taken by high school graduates are among the worst.³ For the 2003 examinations the Greek Ministry of Education, citing the number of teaching days lost for various reasons, lowered the history requirements (not for any other subject). Greek history of the 1940s, which had been banned from the school syllabus until the early 1980s, was again excluded from high school examinations.⁴ Notwithstanding the simultaneous success of some popular history bestsellers, Greek youth runs the risk of being reduced to the “historical illiteracy” of senior students at American colleges, whose general cultural knowledge, according to polls, is now at the level of 1955 high school graduates. We will have to observe the development after September 11, which some have asserted “ended the nation’s holiday from history” since even the National Endowment for the Humanities is emphasizing that historical illiteracy threatens homeland security – people cannot defend what they cannot define.⁵

This illiteracy makes sense in light of the stunning success of those Hollywood movies that for many Americans create the pleasant feeling that the United States won the Second World War single-handedly,⁶ thus provoking angry reactions in other places. In London, “an A-list of academics, media dons and media heavies” assembled for a conference to debate the question, “Has Hollywood Stolen Our History?” Even though there was no pithy answer, there were few doubts that Hollywood had a habit of being economical with the truth, while seldom letting “history get in the way of a good story.” For instance, the *Guardian* sneered at the movie scene in which “heroic Americans” capture the famous German enigma machine, thereby enabling the *Wehrmacht* code to be broken and the war won. This fictional telling has some flaws, however, most prominently, the “upgrading” of the raiders’ real-life British nationality to “American.” In turn, the British reinstated truth on this point ignored the role several Poles played in the actual event. Polish historians and media, of course, then criticized the British for “wanting to take credit for everything.”⁷

Even so, history today seems more alive than ever. Current policies do not eschew romanticizing long-gone centuries. Indeed, some even take advantage of it. Familiar examples are the

mythologized Serbian defeat at Kosovo polje in 1389⁸ and the glorified Protestant victory at Ulster in 1690.⁹ More extreme cases are found in Israel, where disparaging observations about King David's turbulent love life may provoke a government crisis, while the boundaries of a possible new Palestine state and the viability of Middle East peace schemes depend upon, among other things, excavations investigating whether or not Abraham's final resting place is in Hebron.¹⁰ In Greece, the "other famous ancient" country [Churchill], reenactments of the remote past – such as the mayors of Athens and Sparta holding an ostentatious ceremony solemnly ending the Peloponnesian War after 2,400 years – clearly have less impact. The inevitable ironic comments¹¹ become even more pointed since Greek reappraisal of even recent history is still in its infancy.¹²

After the epochal events of 1989-'90 and their crushing effect upon historico-teleological utopias, whoever intended to let bygones be bygones soon was forced to realize that the past had resurfaced, infusing its *second* (at least) life into the present. All over the world, aged skeletons and related scandals were discovered in blood-soaked earth or dusty cupboards and exposed to broad daylight by the media. Above all, Nazi Germany's *Third Reich* and its long, gruesome downfall has surged up at all levels of public discourse. Documentaries on WW II's big battles are rampant, sparking new battles among authors, producers, and agents. Although the war generation is dying out, ancestral and cultural bonds maintain the public's interest.¹³ War history, in particular, is big business. Scholarly and popular bestsellers (accompanied by floods of reviews) become successes both on the big and, often at prime time, the small screen. In this study, we will deal with visual media only when it is covered in print.

In the UK, for instance, evidence of the surge in multimedia history can be seen on a daily basis in the BBC History Magazine and on the History Channel¹⁴ – the latter dubbed the "Hitler Channel" because of its thematic preferences. In general, British television has discovered history as "the new sex" – following its having been the least popular subject in the high school syllabus. Simon Schama, the professor who made history "sexy,"¹⁵ just signed an exclusive contract with the BBC for a record £3 million.¹⁶ On the side of the onetime enemy, things are similar. German television "invites almost daily for travels into the past" with a comparable focus on the Nazi period, since Hitler guarantees excellent ratings (four million viewers per episode), particularly among the steadily enlarging over-50 age group.¹⁷

The new popularity of all this often glossy "edu-tainment" is a mixed blessing. In Britain, where history is only compulsory until the age of 14, it has produced a rise in the number of students studying history. But many have misguided expectations and a "desire to be told stories rather than acquire the skills of the historian." Concern repeatedly has been expressed that "the popularity of Hitler" and WW II as an option for study – leading to a so-called "Hitlerization of history" – leaves youngsters without any sense of context.¹⁸

Post-1945: "Healing Myths"

During the decades of the Cold War, many scores from WW II remained unsettled, or at best patched up, particularly when one's own citizens or members of the same alliance were involved. Both superpowers – and, in consequence, the blocs led by them – deliberately closed ranks against the “real” enemy rather than weaken their alliances with “untimely squabbles” over the past. As a result, it was not long before Europeans of both camps put their unpleasant legacies aside, in particular the unfortunate fact that although majorities in most countries had despised the German occupiers, many accommodated, if not collaborated, with the occupation.¹⁹ A consensus of silence covered up the complicity of “ordinary” people with domestic or foreign tyranny – a pattern that often reemerged after 1990 in the eastern half of the continent.

Following Germany's defeat and multifaceted punishment by occupation, partition, and legal and moral indictment, everyone else could identify themselves with the winners against “the evil-incarnate enemy,”²⁰ whose universal and exclusive guilt was the only issue on which all sides could easily agree. Even Austrians redefined themselves as “Hitler's first victims.”²¹ Thus, the retouched official versions of national history consisted of varying mixes of history and mythology. Collectively believed founding myths of epic and nation-embracing resistance (besides a handful of traitors²²) dominated literature and the media, and official and popular histories.

The gory purge of home-grown collaborators fingered by resistance movements all over the continent actually began in the twilight period before and immediately after liberation and included random acts of revenge from hot-blooded Greece, Italy, and France up to cool and dispassionate Norway. This purging process, however, was soon modified by political factors, since internal rifts could not be allowed to remain open. This was most evident in the successor states of the main perpetrators (Germany, Austria, Italy) but also in France and in Hitler's eastern vassal states, where collaboration in all its shades had been a mass phenomenon. In the west, from Denmark to Greece, economic collaborators got off lightly because they were needed for reconstruction. In most countries, for the sake of local peace, local societies suppressed inconvenient aspects of their own history. It was impossible to punish huge numbers of compatriots whose crime had been their “law-abiding” stance toward domestic regimes often identical with or direct heirs of pre-war governments (such as Italy, Romania, Hungary, France, and Denmark). Because of the Cold War, the profitable collaboration by neutral countries with the Third Reich was soon pardoned, as, later and gradually, were the Germans themselves.

In Greece more than elsewhere,²³ the newly founded Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) gained ground through the official view that German “military virtues” were needed for containing communism. For the same reason, the United States released the FRG de facto from further reparation burdens by suspending the theme to the “Greek calends” i.e. to never-never day. From the late '40s, the strategic importance of West Germany increased at the same pace as the Communist threat was believed to be increasing, and this entailed fortifying West Germany materially and morally. The US, in particular, was pleased to be killing two birds with one stone. By trans-

forming the FRG into their forward bastion, they hoped “to keep the Germans down and the Russians out.” Therefore, when the Germans were urged to meet their external debts within the framework of an international agreement (London 1953), claims for reparations submitted by the minor Allies were “deferred until the final settlement of the problem of reparation.” This nebulous formulation was intended to protect the new German ally from financial drain and the US was satisfied that “time works in favour of Germans.” Obviously, a peace agreement with a reunited Germany was needed for any final settlement of the reparation issue, and this was not expected to happen under the prevailing circumstances of global polarization. In 1990, when against every expectation the western FRG and the eastern German Democratic Republic [GDR] united, the “2+4 agreement” between the two German states and the four principal allies was equivalent to a peace settlement, though a formal peace treaty was avoided in order to leave a loophole for the re-united Germans, allowing them *not* to recompense the former allied states for war damages. This strategy led to a serious deterioration in Greek-German relations.²⁴

During the Cold War, the West German anti-Communist position was accompanied by clear echoes of anti-Bolshevik and anti-Slavic prejudices from the Nazi era. Conversely, the West Germans considered that speaking about the damage inflicted upon them by former enemies who were now allies would undermine their integration into the West. Similar restraint (or coercion) prevailed in the GDR and other states, particularly Hungary, conquered by the Soviet Union concerning the atrocities committed by the Red Army in 1945. These atrocities were widely known among the East’s afflicted populations and were also known to the Western intelligentsia. Few, however, dared to or wanted to blemish the reputation of the gallant Soviet soldiers who had vanquished fascism – sheer evil, *per se*.

After the war, the German language created the convoluted term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* for the laborious task of dealing with the torturing (and tortured) past. *Pons-Collins*,²⁵ considered the most reputable German-English dictionary, offers the politically correct but wooden translation: “the process of coming to terms with the past.” Isolating the tricky component *Bewältigung*, we find different shades of interpretation: a) coping with, b) managing, c) getting over [the past]. The verb compound can be translated as “to master,” “to resolve,” “to confront,” or “to overcome,” whereas corresponding negations refer to an “unresolved,” “unmastered,” or even “unmasterable”²⁶ past. Some Germans associate *Bewältigung* with the more common and linguistically related terms *Gewalt* (power, force, violence) or even *Vergewaltigung* (rape). The latter connotations easily arise when reviewing six decades of multi-layered history of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and become even stronger when we learn that only during the last decade the distinguished Swiss newspaper, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ), has used the term in at least 785 articles, among them many sports stories – in the sense of taking revenge for a previous defeat! In a politico-historical context, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has been applied to many countries, from Latin America and South Africa to Yugoslavia, from Ireland and Cyprus to Australia and Indonesia, and includes states with a messianic sense of mission, like the U.S.A. and the Holy See. Since this

“ugly, clumsy, necessary word”²⁷ does not exist in other languages, the German term has to be introduced as *terminus technicus* or has to be paraphrased. A related article in the largest Greek newspaper carried the German word as a title, explaining: “The German language is a difficult one, and the above word is one of the most difficult in the German vocabulary.”²⁸ While the term has become established, most serious scholars prefer *Aufarbeitung* [of the past], which *Pons–Collins* translates inadequately as “reappraisal,” leaving out the fundamental connotation of “catching up with unsettled/uncompleted affairs.”

Along with history of the Nazi period, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has developed into a research subject of its own. Foreign analysts at times differ about the extent to which the Germans have dealt with their past. Many see the Germans as “world champions in remembrance,” while others see them still vacillating “between amnesia and anamnesis.”²⁹ Both opinions are correct, though they refer to different acts and actors in an ongoing drama. An erratic gap yawns between the moral optimum and presumed political feasibility, constantly adjusting to the ever-changing domestic and international situation.

For decades, official Germany attempted to restrict responsibility for WW II almost exclusively to the “demon” – or “(megalo)maniac” – Hitler and his wicked entourage. Identifying the Nazi Reich with its *Führer*,³⁰ limited public discourse about the heinous past to vague recognition of “crimes committed in the German name”³¹ and payment of indemnifications [*Wiedergutmachung*], especially to Jewish victims. Legal action against war criminals never was popular in Germany, and in the early 1950s the subject became overshadowed by Cold War priorities.³² In this context it was easy to attack Communism and *Red imperialism* as being very similar to Nazism. The focus was on the pre-*Barbarossa* (22.6.1941) period, making it possible to depict Stalin as the Nazis’ shrewd accomplice. Conversely, Hitler’s pathological anti-Bolshevism was seldom mentioned in the West German press, since doing so would have made uncomfortably obvious the unpleasant similarities with the canonized anti-Communism of the FRG and the “Free World” in general.

In Greece, for instance, for more than a decade, FRG embassy reports reiterated that Germanophilia was again on the rise “even though the occupation had not been quite forgotten.” A causal correlation shined through: Restoration of normal relations with Germany presupposed overlooking, “forgetting,” the unpleasant past. Those segments of the population that tried to keep alive injurious war memories were *ipso facto* suspected as Communists: The labels “anti-German” and “Communist” became interchangeable. Greece’s biggest WW II resistance movement, EAM/ELAS, was repeatedly referred to as a group of “bandits,” consistent with both Wehrmacht terminology and linguistic rules in post-Civil War Greece.³³

In West Germany, references to German atrocities often were counterbalanced by cautious allusions to German sufferings, i.e. in particular: Allied carpet-bombing of most German cities, causing mostly civilian casualties; expulsion from over 12 million ethnic Germans from the eastern provinces subsequently annexed by the USSR, Poland and the CSSR; mass rape of German women by Soviet soldiers and cruel treatment of German POWs, especially in Soviet camps. The

only war-related anniversary regularly celebrated by the Bonn government was July 20th, revering the (conservative) plotters against Hitler [1944] – a convenient homage focussed on contrasting *good Germans* with *bad Nazis*, while ignoring communist resisters. As a national holiday, the anniversary of the failed East German uprising on June 17, 1953, was chosen, which had the advantage that “on this day the West Germans could profusely bemoan German partition without having to talk about its causes, i.e. their own crimes during the time of Nazism.”³⁴

However, the ruling elites gradually had to answer persistent questions about their collective attitudes and individual activities during WW II, particularly those asked by academic youth sensitized to the Holocaust-related trials in Germany and Israel.³⁵ There is an ongoing dispute as to whether or not the rebellious '68 generation (which, in fact, began disobedience before 1968) really acted because of strong moral principles, putting commemoration of German war sufferings aside while imposing the Holocaust and, to a much lesser degree, other Nazi crimes on the collective memory of their compatriots. Conservative analysts insist that it is a myth that the '68 revolutionaries were interested in the Nazi past and that they did nothing but exploit that very past against the ruling parental generation.³⁶ The latter, grandfathers now, are still trying to settle old scores with the '68 generation, which took power in Germany in 1998, 30 years later. Regardless of the futile discussion about primary intentions, German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* clearly reached new dimensions thanks to the reshuffle caused by the '68 generation and the replacement of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), who had been ruling for 20 years, by a center-left government from 1969 to 1983. The change was symbolized by Willi Brandt falling to his knees at the Warsaw ghetto memorial in December 1970.

In the mid 1980s the “revisionist” camp attempted to reverse the tide. The first prominent case was Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s push for “reconciliation upon the tombs” with US President Ronald Reagan on the 40th anniversary of the end of WW II. Specially chosen for the occasion, Bitburg cemetery contains the remains of not only 2,000 Wehrmacht soldiers but also some SS men. The undertaking was heavily criticized as an attempt to erase the distinction between victims and perpetrators, but still took place.³⁷ A bigger onslaught came in 1986, when the prominent historian Ernst Nolte initiated the debate about the uniqueness of Nazi crimes, in particular the *Shoah*, the destruction of European Jewry. His assertion that Nazism, and in consequence the Holocaust, should be interpreted as a defensive reaction to, or even as a replica of, Bolshevism triggered the famous *Historikerstreit*: literally the “historians’ dispute,” in fact an intellectual civil war with worldwide coverage, one of the fiercest disputes ever to shake academia over how to interpret and contextualize the Nazi era. The Nolte camp was defeated, but soon began preparing the ground for a return to the fray after revisionism was supposedly justified in 1989.

Post-1989: History Unleashed

After the epoch-making break of 1989/90 – that is, after state communism had collapsed both as a military threat and as an ethical counter-model for a critical segment of the intelligentsia –

most of the nations of “reunited Europe” found themselves carrying out a painful process of self-assessment. With the end of the Cold War’s bipolar system, the meaning of political correctness changed dramatically – both here and there. Time-honoured bloc strategies were invalidated, individual and collective mechanisms of forgetting/remembering were adjusted, and access to yesterday’s taboos was, literally, opened. The availability of hitherto sealed Soviet archives had catalytic effects on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* that stretched far beyond Russia – even if Boris Yeltsin overestimated the impact when foretelling that it would make the world tremble.³⁸

Suddenly, the Eastern countries had to face up to “two incriminating pasts,”³⁹ distinct but intertwined, linked to two successive but ideologically antithetical periods of dictatorial rule with the potential to neutralize each other. The situation was particularly delicate in Germany. Its division had been a tangible demonstration of the consequences of Nazism, while the implosion of the postwar order had severed this connection. Moreover, the horror of the Nazi past placed blame on all Germans,⁴⁰ whereas the communist past implicated only the Easterners in the former GDR. Thus the ’89 break left problems with the Easterners while seeming to redeem the Westerners.

The impression grew that in the *new* Germany the Nazi past was being eclipsed by the GDR past. Israel Singer, general secretary of the Jewish World Congress, was not alone in his concern that the mounting preoccupation with GDR history might supersede, if not replace, public discourse about the Nazi period. Actually, a growing segment of public opinion prayed for a shift in focus following the demise of communism, which purportedly had kept the “Nazi business” boiling to divert attention away from its own offenses. Conservative celebrities expressed eloquent satisfaction that “the specters of the [Nazi] past will sink in the gray river of oblivion, Lethe,” i.e. “excessive grieving” and the “fuss” with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* might at last decline. New priorities could (and should) turn to the crimes of Stalinism and communism, which were hardly less hideous but much more relevant since they had lasted considerably longer and were more recent.⁴¹ Under such premises it was even possible to discover “Auschwitz in the souls” of the “Stasi, which had been worse than the Gestapo.”⁴² Accordingly, in reunited Germany funerals with military honours today are denied for former officers of the NVA [the GDR army] yet are granted to those Wehrmacht veterans decorated with the Knight’s Cross or higher. The Ministry of Defence explains this disparity by stating that the NVA, unlike the Wehrmacht, had not been a “German army.”⁴³ The same ministry also rules out proposals to include German communist anti-Nazi resisters in the *Bundeswehr* [FRG army] tradition, reasoning that these men had fought just for another dictatorial regime and hence could not stand for the ideals, values, and norms of a democratic army. Nonetheless, the tradition-building standards are not always lofty when Wehrmacht veterans are involved.⁴⁴

Occasional demands for a GDR-related “new Nuremberg Tribunal”⁴⁵ ignore the difference between the Nazi and communist regimes, especially when the comparison is limited to the German context in which the Soviet drive for hegemony is not to be considered. The GDR had external authoritarian rule imposed in 1945. In its post-1949 “autonomous” phase, state-sponsored

violence was less brutal and confined to its own citizens – in sharp contrast with the Nazi Reich that unleashed unspeakable carnage on the entire continent. The most incriminating evidence the GDR left behind were piles of paper [i.e. *Stasi* files], not innumerable dead, as its Nazi forerunner had done. Organized, industrialized mass murder by the Nazis had created a huge material and moral burden for subsequent generations. After all, the Nazi regime – with its strong domestic support up to the bitter end – would not have perished had the country not been defeated in war by foreign powers. The GDR, however, crumbled because of stiffening opposition from its own subjects, while most opposing foreign powers, especially Great Britain, would much have preferred to keep the GDR alive and Germany separated.

In 1945 and 1990, “liberated” German populations reacted in similar ways. They soon resented the victors’ claim of moral, beyond their undisputed material, superiority. Post-1990, after the initial reunification euphoria, a “victors’ mentality”⁴⁶ was exhibited by many of the *Wessies* [West Germans]; they, just as the Allies had done in 1945 with regard to the whole of Germany, “imported” re-educators to the *defeated* German state [GDR] to take up positions in the fields of politics, administration, education, justice, diplomacy, military, etc. Yet in contrast to the post-Nazi era, when the new rulers had only a handful of emigrants to shore up the country’s new start, in 1990 the reservoir of (linguistically proficient) potential teachers of democracy was inexhaustible, drawing on the FRG’s elite, eager for mass-scale replacement. In consequence, the purging of communists assumed a much greater scale than de-Nazification did half a century earlier; the leniency process that had integrated “less-incriminated” Nazis into the power structures of Austria and the FRG – a process that in spite of disagreeable aftereffects eased popular acceptance of the new democracy – was denied most GDR functionaries, thereby establishing a potential for unrest.

Throughout the former GDR the new Western version of mastering the past gained ground. “Reworkings of history”⁴⁷ provoked controversy. In most of Eastern Europe,⁴⁸ streets and even cities were renamed.⁴⁹ Memorials at former Nazi concentration camps were suddenly accused of presenting nothing more than communist propaganda. Some of the camps, such as Buchenwald, mythicized in the GDR as a symbol of anti-fascist struggle and self-liberation, actually had been re-opened after WW II by the Soviet administration as penitentiaries for Nazis, alleged or real. In public discourse terms like “rehabilitation” and “indemnification” were increasingly applied to victims of Stalinism, concealed for 40 years and suddenly deemed more important than victims of Nazism, too long revered by the “wrong” people. In these two-phase concentration camps revisionist trends show up, paying equal homage to both victims of Nazi crimes and Soviet oppression, sometimes even singling out the latter, who “after 1945 sacrificed... their freedom, health, and life in the resistance.” This new remembrance culture first identified Nazi criminals and acolytes with democratic opponents of Stalinism and then put them on a par with the victims of Nazism. The integrity of Nazi victims sometimes was impugned – directly or by discrediting their advocates⁵⁰ – in such a way that the line between victims and victimiz-

ers became blurred and Nazi crimes became less distinct,⁵¹ satisfying the powerful new German desire for normalcy.

Before 1989, many leftists expressed the opinion that after Auschwitz the Germans had forfeited their right to a common state. They interpreted partition as punishment for racial hubris and genocide.⁵² Following the same reasoning, others could easily interpret the unexpected reunification as a remission of sins or as “the answer to the German question,” overcoming the previous historical anomaly. The obvious “end of the postwar era” seemed to be the right time to stop “infinitely recycling” the past, since other nations had also committed wrongs in their history, while simultaneously perpetuating the theme of German guilt, often to promote their own ends.⁵³ Sentiments were widely aired in Germany that “we have finally become a normal national state again,” needing no longer to be reticent about assuming a leading role in Europe. This “Second Life Fiction,”⁵⁴ this new self-confidence and self-righteousness, had a more aggressive variant: the Right’s self-accelerating “new audacity in dealing with history,” portraying the Wehrmacht and its war as normal. Only after fierce protests was it possible to cancel a 1992 ceremony celebrating the 50th anniversary of the first launch of a “V-2” rocket,⁵⁵ a weapon that had cost nearly as many lives in production (by forced labor) as through its destructive power. Still, many Germans were and are fed up with never-ending commemoration of Nazi terror. Especially at less known concentration-camp sites, buildings and monuments were crumbling or were threatened by inappropriate local “development projects.”⁵⁶ Coined by the guru of Holocaust “revisionism,” David Irving,⁵⁷ the term “Hitler’s War,” personifying WW II (and thereby exculpating most Germans), had been adopted by the distinguished Hitler biographer and *Frankfurter Allgemeine (FAZ)* editor Joachim Fest.⁵⁸ Revisionism was metastasizing from the fringes to the mainstream.

1994 - '95: The Commemorative Marathon

Anniversaries do not only concern the past. They also concern the present.

Michael Mitterauer [*Historein*, I (1999), 145]

Europe was swept by an almost cabalistic fascination with consecutive half-centenaries commemorating the WW II’s awesome final movements. The last stage of this “commemorative marathon”⁵⁹ began with the 50th anniversary of D-Day: the Allied landing at Normandy. After strong protests by veteran organizations, London and Paris decided against inviting Helmut Kohl to the top-level celebrations. The chancellor, like most German newspapers, tried to hide the discomfort about being rebuffed by one-time conquerors and current allies.⁶⁰ East European states, however, also had not been invited. The festivities, quite obviously, had been reduced to a closed club’s party to which representatives of the defeated nations (past or present) were unwelcome. The Russians were particularly offended. In spite of Yeltsin’s attempts to brush it off, the snub evoked unpleasant Cold War memories of both camps’ downplaying the other’s contribution in the uneasy WW II alliance. Although post-communist rhetoric had Russia as a new partner, the West obviously continued to ignore, if not insult, “the millions of Soviet soldiers who, from 1941

to 1945, fought and died while bearing the brunt of the battle.” Russians reminded the world that D-Day only succeeded because the bulk of German air and land forces were deployed on the eastern front.⁶¹ This “petty” pattern of exclusivity provoked criticism in the West, too. In France – where the pioneering trial against the minor Vichy official Paul Touvier was then exposing traumas from WW II – and elsewhere,⁶² pundits and public opinion (in particular, the under-30 age group) complained that an historic chance for a pan-European fiesta rejoicing in the continent’s liberation and reconciliation had been transformed into just another divisive, looking backward, get-together.⁶³

Still, center-left analysts argued that Germans were not entitled to complain, because their own “bickering” over the departure from German soil of the remaining Russian troops also was resuscitating Cold War stereotypes.⁶⁴ When the last troops of the three Western powers left Berlin they were given emotional farewell celebrations,⁶⁵ but the Russian wish to join the celebrations was formally barred. The reasoning – that the Red Army had not come as liberator but as another totalitarian oppressor⁶⁶ – plainly attempted to offset the dual German roles as both perpetrator and victim. Then, “adding insult to injury,” Berlin’s conservative mayor, with Kohl’s consent, foiled Russian plans to use tanks at their separate final parade, warning them that they would be billed for any road damage. The German attitude sealed Western talk of “winning the Cold War” – with Russia the loser by implication.⁶⁷ In response, one Moscow newspaper retorted with a “last wish for the united Germans: That they live in such a way that our soldiers will never have reason to storm their capital” again!⁶⁸

May 8, 1945–1995

May 8, 1945, is arguably the most important date of reference in German and European remembrance. It separates history into two opposing periods, *pre-* and *post-*. Marking “liberation from Hitler-fascism,” the day already had been decreed an annual holiday in the GDR in 1950. The East German state had accepted and administered only the “healthy” traditions of German history, leaving the bad heritage (including indemnifications for the Shoah) to the FRG. In contrast, Westerners had difficulties with commemorating May 8th even at 5- or 10-year intervals, and lots of ink was used when, for the first time in 1985, FRG President Richard von Weizsäcker made a daring reappraisal – partly to neutralize negative repercussions of Kohl’s effort at Bitburg.⁶⁹

Ten years later, in the jubilee year 1995, the international climate had changed largely because of the D-Day dispute. Kohl’s wish to take part in Europe’s collective joy over the defeat of Nazism,⁷⁰ celebrating along with the main Allied powers, which also had “guaranteed” German unity in the famous “2+4” agreement, received a keen response in the respective capitals. German feelings were divided. Champions of uncompromising *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* expected historical consciousness to be given new momentum by the consecutive anniversaries of concentration-camp liberations and similar events that, for the first time, attracted large-scale publicity.

The revisionists cautiously mocked the “repentance competition” and the new German disease “memorialitis”⁷¹ while simultaneously launching a counteroffensive. On the eve of the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, they demanded an equivalent commemoration for the “genocide-like” fate of the Germans expelled from the Eastern territories.⁷² Before long, a public manifesto⁷³ signed by about 280 conservative dignitaries, including a then serving minister, appeared in *FAZ* under the headline “May 8, 1945 – Against Forgetting.” Technically published as an ad, the article bitterly complained that the government celebrated May 8th one-sidedly as a Day of Liberation, when in reality, “this day meant not only the end of National Social tyranny but at the same time the beginning of the expulsion terror, new oppression in the East, and division of our country... Any history that muzzles, suppresses, or makes these truths relative cannot be the basis for the self-image of the self-confident nation we Germans must be in the European family of peoples to exclude comparable catastrophes in the future.”

The manifesto provoked “volcanic reactions” (as is the case so often when the subject is the Nazi period). Not mentioning the Holocaust was considered a further attempt to minimize German guilt. The signatories and their conservative promoters at *FAZ* and *Die Welt* found fault with these protests, alleging that the protesters had submitted to the dictatorship of political correctness. While Jews and left-wingers warned against the creeping rehabilitation of pre-democratic, authoritarian right-wing thought, the chancellor signaled sympathy for the manifesto, associating May 8th with sorrow for both Holocaust victims and fallen German soldiers.⁷⁴ Lumping together victimizers and victims was and still is⁷⁵ one of Kohl’s favorite motifs, explicitly expressed in the monument inaugurated in 1993 and dedicated to all “Victims of War and Tyranny.” By “intolerable abstraction,”⁷⁶ Kohl’s umbrella term covered murdered Jews, fallen Wehrmacht or SS soldiers, and executed resisters – both against the Nazi regime and the vaguely identified “post-1945 totalitarian dictatorship” – equally.

Evidently, May 8th was and still is⁷⁷ a “day of dilemma” for Germans. For decades, the date stood almost exclusively for Germany’s total defeat – though it was called *Zusammenbruch* [collapse], as if it had happened on its own. Meanwhile, mainstream media found the middle ground by stating that May 8th had been both defeat and liberation. Few commentators differentiated between *experiences* in 1945 and gradual *reassessments* in retrospect! Opinion surveys showed that before the anniversary nearly 80% of Germans saw the end of WW II as liberation⁷⁸ – a percentage that should be regarded with caution since a few months earlier only 36% had considered it necessary to preserve memory of WW II.⁷⁹ Independent of polls conducted under the aegis of political correctness, the ambiguity of the question split the Germans also with regard to relations with former enemies, simultaneously modifying these very relations, as had been seen in the D-Day crisis. This time, the muse of official history considered almost everyone victors. One malicious observer counted 86 – royals, presidents, prime ministers, and other dignitaries⁸⁰ – assembled in Paris on May 8, 1995. Almost the same number had celebrated a few hours earlier in London and later went on to Moscow. Conversely, at the May 8th ceremony in Berlin, squeezed between the

big celebrations, only representatives of the “Big Four”⁸¹ and the hosts convened. “For the first time in this century, Germany is on the side of the winners of history.”⁸²

Poland, however, was excluded. Lech Walesa’s wish to be invited had been politely refused because Kohl was afraid of creating a precedent for other ex-Allied countries. The German Left reacted positively to the Polish initiative – in contrast to some conservative papers that barely concealed ridicule about “Poland wanting to be a victorious power.”⁸³ Germany’s own *post festum* inclusion in the victors’ club caused mixed feelings in former occupied countries amid fears that the defeated wanted to reverse the tide of history.⁸⁴ Many neighbours of reunited Germany were also concerned about the *Bundestag*’s much-disputed decision in 1991 to gradually relocate the capital from cozy, peaceful, Beethoven-associated Bonn to the old Reich’s capital, Berlin, with its ghosts of the Nazi regime and other autocrats from the *Kaiser* to Erich Honecker. The mayor of united Berlin proclaimed his distaste for creating a “capital of repentance.”⁸⁵ He plainly appealed to those Germans who were sick of basing their collective self-image on an extremely negative identification and were expected to celebrate their defeat on May 8th – while, for instance, the French had July 14th to celebrate themselves.⁸⁶ For many, “the long march of German shame was supposed to have ended... after obligatory 50th-anniversary stops at Warsaw, Normandy and, bleakest of all, Auschwitz. Following a May 8 finale to commemorate the end of World War II in Europe, the expectation was that the national mantra of atonement would subside to background noise.”⁸⁷

Wehrmacht Defused

Our grandfathers were no criminals
post-1995 sticker⁸⁸

German desire for “normal” traditions was particularly delicate in regard to the military. It seemed legitimate that the (whatever) “positive aspects” of the Wehrmacht could serve as a tradition-building paradigm for the FRG army. In consequence, frequent reports about sympathies for Wehrmacht veterans or methods still rampant in the *Bundeswehr* particularly alarmed the international community. This concern was underlined by current events; for the first time in 50 years German troops were being deployed in war-like operations in a foreign country.⁸⁹ When in 1995, after decades of internal debate involving the Defence Ministry, military barracks named for Wehrmacht generals, such as Hitler’s personal friend Eduard Dietl, were finally “de-Nazified,” a large private initiative was required.⁹⁰ In particular, the touring Exhibition on the Crimes of the Wehrmacht (1995-1999) challenged like a bombshell the convenient legend of the decent army, which, unlike the SS, had remained untarnished by war crimes. For decades, public discourse on Nazi terror had been mostly limited to Jewish (and German!) victims; suddenly, the exhibition’s message was – unsurprising to most serious historians but shocking to traditionalists and the general public – that the Wehrmacht had been devoted to and integrated with Hitler’s concept of a war of extermination against “inferior” people (including Slavs) in the East and had been a decisive factor in making the

Holocaust possible. Since, in total, almost 18 million Germans had served in the Wehrmacht, and the latter represented the biggest interface between the German people and the Nazi regime, the discourse inevitably touched almost every German family. The almost forgotten specter of collective guilt or, at least, collective responsibility once more loomed ahead.

The exhibition triggered a public dispute about German national identity and traditions of unprecedented polarization including parliamentary debates, demonstrations, libels, court cases, and bombs, both literal and literary. This dispute, acquiring “traits of a religious war,”⁹¹ was led or covered by about 40,000 press articles. Most of the letters to the editor were negative, but the touring exhibition was seen, until 1999, by 840,000 visitors, most of whom expressed positive reactions. For many the battles of the Cold War were fought again.⁹² The wider conservative camp protested vehemently against the alleged defamation of our forefathers stemming from the German Left’s “self-hate and national masochism” and moulded in part by the “Oedipal rebellion” of the ’68 generation.⁹³ The Adenauer-Foundation, affiliated with the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), organized a symposium about the exploitation of history by the media. Some pundits alleged that the media stage-managed and politicized the big intra-German debates on the recent past by claiming an interpretative monopoly through which they promoted dubious sensations – such as the exhibition and the 1996 “Goldhagen hypothesis” – harming the country’s image.⁹⁴ In late 1999 the Exhibition had to be withdrawn by the organizing Institute for Social Research because critics – spearheaded by a Hungarian and a Polish historian – provided evidence (much of it inflated) that several photographs allegedly showing Nazi massacres actually depicted victims of the Soviet Secret Police NKVD. The quick conclusion was that, along with the (photo) captions, historical truth had been mixed up and twisted.⁹⁵ With the exhibition’s organizers discredited, it seemed possible to restore the self-protective strategy of characterizing the majority of *good Germans* as victims of a manipulative *bad Nazi* minority (Hitler, SS, Gestapo) embodying all the evil “that had been committed in the name of Germany.”

Accordingly, *Schindler’s List* obtained in some quarters an alibi function by portraying good Germans (conveniently forgetting that the protagonist’s views and, in particular, his actions were in the extreme minority). The film’s director, Steven Spielberg, was awarded an exceptionally high decoration by FRG president Roman Herzog, since “Germany was more indebted to [him] than [he] possibly suspected.” His film would serve as a point of reference for German diplomats abroad.⁹⁶ Domestic films increasingly singled out good Germans, sometimes even representing them as being in the majority. In a homage to German contribution to 100 years of cinema, unrepentant Nazi film icon Leni Riefenstahl was not only included but even allowed to pose as just another victim of Nazism.⁹⁷

At the 21st century’s dawning, the “never-ending” past gathered new momentum from both sides. In late 2001, the Crimes of the Wehrmacht exhibition returned after a two-year absence, having been restructured by a new academic team.⁹⁸ While the original exhibition had used shock and provocation, the new exhibition preferred “a maximum of meticulousness and differentiation.”

After the exhibition's opening, the press universally praised its "indisputably higher scholarly level," its "precise analytical approach," and the lack of ideological dramatization. The very absence of ideology (and the partial substitution of photographs by documents) rendered unchallengeable the exhibition's unaltered assertion of the Wehrmacht's institutional involvement in the centrally planned crimes of a war that often acquired genocidal dimensions.⁹⁹

In retrospect, the revisionists had won only a Pyrrhic victory against the first exhibition, which, despite its flaws, had prepared the ground by breaching the wall of silence and initiating a learning process. The subsequent exhibition was widely accepted, at least tacitly, generally without provoking violent emotions, although soon a few thousand roaring neo-Nazi demonstrators tramped in protest through the streets of Berlin.¹⁰⁰ Some voices, particularly from the post-communist Left, expressed their uneasiness about the new "clinically sterile" mode – in printed form. On the other hand, several analysts even conjectured that a new phase in the German "culture of the past" had begun, moving from the controversial phase to the consensual phase.¹⁰¹ Within a few months, however, such hopes (and occasional fears) had to be revised.

German Suffering

The Germans at the top of all war victims. Somehow, they always have to be at the top: if not as victors, then as victims.

Kurt Pätzold¹⁰²

In December 2002, one of the flagship papers of revisionist journalism rejoiced that decades of distinguishing between *good* (i.e., innocent, non-German) and *bad* (i.e., guilty, therefore tabooed, German) victims were over: "2002 will perhaps remain in history as the year in which mourning about Germany became allowed again."¹⁰³ In fact, within a few months three voluminous tomes skyrocketed up the bestseller lists, paying unusual homage to the hardships inflicted by the Soviets or the Western Allies on ordinary Germans during or after WW II. These (civilian) victims belonged to three main categories: the many million Germans from the eastern provinces who fled the advancing Red Army; German women taken as "war booty"¹⁰⁴ by the Red Army; the approximately 600,000 civilians killed in the merciless Allied carpet bombing of German cities.

First, Nobel laureate Günther Grass published *Krebsgang* [*Crabwalk*] in 2002. This novel focusses on the sinking by a Soviet submarine of the German carrier *Wilhelm Gustloff* overloaded mostly with refugees. Grass transforms this catastrophe (the 9,000 drowned are the most in naval history) and its complex aftermath into a literary monument. The title refers both to the crab-like sidelong approach to a subject (such as the way Germans approach their past), and plays with the second meaning of the German word *Krebs*, "cancer."¹⁰⁵ A few months later, Grass was followed by the British military historian Anthony Beevor. The success of his massive book *Berlin: The Downfall, 1945* was due less to the details of heavy German-Soviet fighting than to reports of the subsequent fate of Germans in the fallen capital and other conquered territories. In particular, Beevor dealt meticulously with the rape phenomenon. In Berlin alone, an estimated 100,000

violated women sought medical treatment; Beevor agreed with earlier estimations that overall at least two million German women were raped and “a substantial minority” suffered multiple or gang rape; perhaps 10,000 died, most by suicide.¹⁰⁶

A new peak was reached with the third 2002 bestseller, Jörg Friedrich’s *Der Brand* [The Blaze],¹⁰⁷ which focusses on Allied area-bombing but, as the author clarified, in its “suffering voice” [*Leideform*], punning with the popular German synonym for *passive* voice. Friedrich refers to real history. He describes the scholarly and empirical development of a refined Anglo-American strategy that intended to kill as many Germans as possible, particularly the results of fire-bombing, which caused wholesale conflagration. This Allied strategy was deadly. “Bomber Command’s technique was already honed to perfection by 1943, and by 1945 the skies over Germany had gone ‘raving mad.’ First, 100,000 incendiary bombs, then [air] mines, which ripped away windows, doors and roofs, so creating a draught for the firestorm. Within half an hour individual fires had coalesced into one massive conflagration. Finally came the high-explosive bombs that ruptured the water supply and forced the fire brigades to seek cover. Nobody could stay outside the shelters, but those inside were asphyxiated by carbon monoxide or shrivelled by the heat.”¹⁰⁸

Friedrich’s book depicts every technical detail of the bombing and its ghastly aftermath: German women carrying their husbands’ melted remains to the cemetery in buckets, incinerated children who had shrunk to doll-size, and countless other Dantean scenes.¹⁰⁹ Within the first month Friedrich’s huge diorama of a “nonnuclear version of Hiroshima”¹¹⁰ sold more than 100,000 copies, and the author presents pieces of the same message in numerous lectures covered by journalists and television teams. He prefers to speak in towns that suffered severe bomb damage, such as Pforzheim, where 20,000 people were killed – a third of the population, proportionally more than died in Nagasaki. In jam-packed halls, he appeals to elderly audiences mostly through personal experiences, stirring up emotions, obviously by intention: “Fury bottled up within many years comes free.”¹¹¹ He emphasizes that most destructive raids, like that causing the inferno at Dresden, took place in 1945, when the outcome of the war was already decided and the cities defenseless; in consequence most of the bombing had no strategic value and was mainly intended to punish the German people for not disassociating themselves from Hitler – as the strategic planners in the first phase of “moral bombing” had hoped. In the war’s final six months alone, an average of 1,023 civilians were killed per day. However, Friedrich (and his followers) are too simplistic when they claim that the Allied air campaign did not shorten the war. Up to the summer of 1944 (D-Day), it made up for the “second front” that Stalin vehemently demanded from Churchill, and until the bitter end the constant German need for aircraft to defend against Anglo-American bombing drained the Luftwaffe, weakening the Wehrmacht’s position in the east. Similarly, the need to build more and more air shelters and deal with the disastrous consequences of the Allied air assaults neutralized an incalculably high amount of the Reich’s remaining human and material reserves, reducing (though less than expected) its industrial output.¹¹²

Friedrich does not deny that the *Luftwaffe* was the first to launch formidable air strikes on civilians, in Warsaw, Rotterdam, London, and Coventry. Noteworthy here, once more, is the geographical imbalance concentrating on victims in the old (or new) western hemisphere, leaving blind spots at the periphery. Neither Friedrich nor anyone in his journalistic “train”¹¹³ referred to the *Luftwaffe*’s terror attack on Belgrade in April 1941, probably in order to avoid parallels to NATO bombings in 1999. They also ignored *Luftwaffe* bombings of Guernica or civilian targets in the USSR. In addition, Friedrich considers the German air assaults inferior when compared to the numbers, casualties, and especially intentions of the Allied attacks: Civilian casualties were intended and not considered “collateral” (as allegedly was the case with the *Luftwaffe*’s strategic raids).¹¹⁴ The primary message to the public is clear: “No other people” suffered as much as the Germans. Friedrich’s narrative is lopsided, however, in concentrating on the warfare between the Allied military and German civilians, and avoiding contextualization with German crimes.¹¹⁵ Instead, Friedrich uses terminology hitherto associated with the Holocaust: Germans were suffocated, “gassed,” and “annihilated” in basements, which, owing to premeditated Allied bombing strategy worked not as shelters but as “gas chambers” or “crematoria.”¹¹⁶

Friedrich’s admittedly impressive book presents the greatest challenge thus far to the canonized differentiation between a just war [including “collateral damage”] and deliberate war crimes. Between the lines, the author equates area bombing with war crimes, although never stating this outright.¹¹⁷ Even so, many German newspapers asked rhetorically, “Was Churchill a war criminal?” Some answered in the affirmative “without any ifs, ands, or buts.”¹¹⁸ Friedrich, when urged to clarify what he implied, answered evasively that courts (obviously meaning a second Nuremberg) should have decided, and now “everyone has to decide himself.” He was satisfied, however, that the British would “have to deal with Churchill for a long time.”¹¹⁹ Just for this reason, *The Blaze* has been attacked by most British media (often obviously without having read it) and to date no publisher has been found in the UK. The British were particularly annoyed that a preprint appeared in Europe’s largest tabloid, *Bild*, the vulgar sister of classy *Die Welt*. “British crimes” were serialized and served up for breakfast to millions of Germans, encouraging them to feel again (as in 1945) like victims of a war which Germans themselves had started. Moreover, Churchill was depicted as a butcher just as the British, in a remarkable coincidence, were voting him in a BBC poll as the greatest Briton of all time – personifying the nation’s “eccentricity, magnanimity, and strength of character.”¹²⁰

The deadly Allied firestorm launched against the Germans is, unpredictably, going to become a point of comparison for quite unrelated modern theaters of war, a role that hitherto had been held only by the Holocaust. Thus Friedrich’s book met with approval from Arab media rejoicing about this new evidence that Churchill was “worse than Hitler, without being hanged.”¹²¹ In Israel even liberal voices concluded that “when comparing the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian populations by the greatest of the democracies, Israel’s conduct of its war against the Palestinian terror organizations that conduct suicide bombing against civilians appears to be saintly.”¹²²

Taboos and Legends

*History, more precisely: history stirred up by us, is a clogged toilet.
We flush and flush but still the crap comes up.*

Günter Grass, German winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, in *Krebstgang* (2002)

The stunning runaway success of the above mentioned books (and others trying to ride the coat-tails of this success) is usually explained away with an easy and simple catchword, taboo. German war sufferings, such as the deadly firestorms in Dresden, are frequently called the “last taboo of Europe,” since “the distorting burden of guilt for the great crimes of the Nazis” had prevented anyone from “acknowledging that even some [sic] Germans had been victimized during the war.”¹²³ Many of these voices consented that, in a tricky way, German suffering was perpetuated after the war. The thousands drowned in 1945 in the Baltic Sea’s icy waters were “buried in silence as much as in water.” The Allied Air Forces had not only demolished German cities, but the entire German nation had been “bombed into silence” and “collective amnesia” for nearly 60 years.¹²⁴ Günther Grass himself concluded, “Never should his generation have kept silent about such misery, merely because its own sense of guilt was so overwhelming, merely because for years the need to accept responsibility and show remorse took precedence, with the result that they abandoned the topic to the right wing.” Foreign reviewers presumed that Grass wanted to “still the inarticulate, smoldering resentment” of many elder Germans and “liberate their grandchildren from the burden of the past.”¹²⁵

Publishers’ claims that these books had broken taboos were highly effective in PR terms but things were not quite accurate, although there are elements of truth. As often happens with media “revelations” about “taboos,” a great deal had already been known and discussed for a long time. The war generation’s remembrances were moulded by personal and collective experiences (captivity, atrocities, expulsion, etc.) until Allied “re-education” refocussed memory on German offenses against others. Even then, most Germans cultivated a discreet cover memory that combined positive aspects, such as idealized Wehrmacht bravery, with their own suffering. This made possible a German balance-sheet not too unfavourable, since it suppressed or marginalized the perception of German crimes.¹²⁶ A good example is the popular *Der Landser* [The Private] series of pulp novels,¹²⁷ which even after over 45 years in circulation still sells more than 60,000 copies per week – each with a multiple readership over months and years. None of its 2,500 issues, most of them re-issued, refers to German war crimes. Here, the myth of the “clean” Wehrmacht remains intact; the battles of WW II, and the devotion and plight of the German soldier are shown from the German soldier’s perspective – all of which offers the often adolescent reader possibilities for positive identification.¹²⁸

On the topic of German flight and expulsion from the Soviet-occupied eastern regions of Germany, much was published during the 1950s and ’60s, especially works of popular history. The expelled Germans could even rely on the guardianship of a particular ministry and on their own party (which sometimes shared power). Only the détente of the 1970s was able to reduce their

publicity, mostly so as not to provoke new frost in relations with Eastern neighbours. Still, expellee associations made up a strong right-wing pressure group, in particular influencing the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) that governed Germany for most of the post-war period. During Kohl's long chancellorship state grants for expellee memory work were quintupled.¹²⁹ After communism's downfall, while former "expelling" countries queued for EU and NATO membership, the subject resurfaced, even in the center-left media. Most pundits sided with the more moderate expellee voices proclaiming merely their "right to history" rather than making demands for property.¹³⁰

In connection with the commemorative marathon in 1995, the conservative *FAZ* once again railed against the "tabooing" of German suffering; but, *FAZ*'s complaints can easily be disproved. In any case, in both parts of divided Germany Allied wrongs were readily denounced if they had been committed by the patron power of the *opposite* German state. Popular subjects were, in the West, the "Soviet rape orgy" and the plight of German POWs in Siberia; in the GDR the Anglo-American "terror bombing." Even more, already in 1985 the FRG top journalist Rudolf Augstein, editor of the outstanding left-of-center political magazine *Der Spiegel*, had dubbed Churchill the "arch-bomber of Dresden" who, in accordance with the criteria of the Nuremberg trials, would have to be hanged, too.¹³¹ Ten years later, a comparison of the almost simultaneous 50th anniversaries of the Dresden tragedy and the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops shows there was much more reporting about the former,¹³² even though the day of the liberation of Auschwitz had just been declared a national day of remembrance. In contrast, one of the most respected British journals admitted forthrightly that Allied area-bombing had been "as morally questionable as the bombing of Hiroshima... In strategic terms, the bombing of Dresden is harder to justify."¹³³ Similarly, in 1995, seven years before Friedrich's "taboo-breaking" implication that British-American area bombing, a kind of government-induced mass-killing of guiltless civilians, had been genocide, this suggestion already had been made in much more outspoken terms by non-German authors, although without leaving any particular impression.¹³⁴

Indeed, Friedrich's 600-page study seldom refers to new or unpublished material; most of his information was published long ago, accessible "to anyone who went looking for it." A prominent reviewer's subsequent comment that "looking was discouraged"¹³⁵ is nonetheless an oversimplification. The field of German collective trauma had never been abandoned to be cultivated exclusively by the extreme Right. Only the "guilt-addicted" leftist intelligentsia ignored the theme, which explains a recent self-castigation by some. Here lies one explanation for the success of the three books discussed here. All are works of literary or scholarly quality, and none of the authors are suspected of connections with the "revanchist" Right. Grass, the *praeceptor Germaniae*¹³⁶ in political-moral matters, publicly admitted a lasting and collective omission; of the two historians – with reputations if not splendid, then at least solid – one had the advantage of being non-German, the other of having a leftist background.¹³⁷

It has been hinted that these authors sensed the time was ripe as recent events unblocked old taboos. For instance, reports about mass-scale gang rape in the Bosnian war had increased scholarly and civic awareness of the subject, and initiated discourse on the phenomenon of treating women as carnal war trophies half a century earlier. The unsentimental war diary of an anonymous woman describing gang rapes of German women (including herself) and their survival strategies, had low sales when first published in 1959, but it has been on the German bestseller lists ever since being republished in the summer of 2003.¹³⁸

The lowering of the legitimacy threshold is stunning. In the late 1980s the biggest names in German humanities (not only from historiography) were quarrelling about the question of whether or not Nazi crimes were unique, and finally the view prevailed that no comparison was valid. Not even Stalinist terror was considered comparable. Now this dogma was overthrown by relative outsiders – a novelist and two military historians without the title of professor (which still counts in Germany) – who gained an easy and popular victory. Beevor depicts Soviet terror almost as black as the Holocaust;¹³⁹ Friedrich indicates the same with regard to the Western component of the anti-fascist alliance. And after the publication of Grass's *Crabwalk*, dealing with German WW II-era suffering is no longer considered offensive, but even obligatory.

Since 1989, the legitimacy of comparing *totalitarian* systems has been confirmed by respected non-German scholars.¹⁴⁰ German authors likewise emphasize that discussion about the moral legitimacy of Allied transgressions were not necessarily meant to set off Allied guilt against German guilt.¹⁴¹ Still, since 2002, the tug-of-war about the future of German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has clearly entered a new phase of uncertainty. Even without taking into consideration the extreme Right's feeling of justification – which, however, lost some of its propaganda arsenal to the mainstream – we would do well to worry about the dynamics of the current victim culture that validates subliminal German frustration about lasting discourse about guilt.¹⁴² In addition, more trivial factors are at play, such as the cultural industry's insatiable need for new, unworn themes (“fresh pasts”¹⁴³) for commercial exploitation. The consequences, intended or not, could easily go far beyond the due scholarly and public reassessment of suffering, either inflicted by or incurred by Germans. Former inadequacies in public coverage of German victimhood contribute to the present overstressing, along with the reasoning that justice should be given to the war generations before their last representatives die off.¹⁴⁴

Since it is more pleasant to deal with crimes committed by (ideologically or ethnically) “others” and since people prefer to believe their own perception of events instead of historical facts, the Germans are increasingly shifting their focus toward offenses committed *against* Germans, with no or insufficient references to the historical context, and this inevitably reduces sensitivity to offences Germans inflicted *upon* others. This is particularly important in view of the unprecedented plethora of articles commemorating the consecutive 60th anniversaries of “firestorms” – such as the British Operation Gomorrha [sic], killing about 40,000 people in Hamburg between 24.7. and 3.8.1943¹⁴⁵ – and many recent books continuing the success of *The Blaze*. For

instance, at the 2003 Frankfurt Book Fair Friedrich presented his large photographic sequel volume called *Fire Sites*, which culminates in a chapter with dozens of nauseating photographs of (mainly German) victims and often melodramatic captions. When confronted by critical questions about his intentions, he rejoins, "Nobody would pose these questions if they were pictures of bodies in concentration camps or victims of war crimes by the Wehrmacht on the eastern front." Again Friedrich draws parallels between victims of the Holocaust and victims of the bombings.¹⁴⁶ On occasion he puts even more weight on the latter, as when he calls Churchill "The greatest child-slaughterer of all time."¹⁴⁷

How many Germans know that just one day after the much-publicized drowning of thousands of desperate German refugees on the *Wilhelm Gustloff*, nearby what was probably the last atrocious act of the Holocaust took place. Other Germans, SS men along with teenagers from the Hitler Youth, murdered over 5,000 of the remaining inmates of the Stutthof concentration camp after a death march.¹⁴⁸ Many Germans have forgotten, or never cared to remember, that anti-German violence in the wake of WW II was a harsh response (admittedly often excessive but in its excesses hardly ever centrally planned and organized) to the Nazi Reich's previous systematic efforts to suppress, humiliate, rob, deport, and, ultimately, annihilate millions of people.

Obviously, Germany's remembrance culture is characterized by a vast gap – wider than probably in any other Western community except for Austria – between "legislated morality", the commemoration rituals of the official state, appealing to foreign public opinion, and the collective memory of ordinary citizens.¹⁴⁹ Apprehension is widely expressed that recent events indicate the direction in which *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* will develop.¹⁵⁰ More than a decade ago, concerned voices warned about "symptoms of a creeping alteration to the German self-image. And Germany's neighbours have to be vigilant when Germans once more begin to pose as victims."¹⁵¹ Although well-meaning foreign observers do not share such "allergic reactions," asserting instead that the German discourse "coming of age" does not restrict but enriches history, others express fears that this particular new selective reading of history could "once again open Pandora's box" for all of Europe.¹⁵²

Indeed, the boom of epigonous books and TV features in 2003 taking advantage of the new climate in Germany and often manipulating emotions has become a self-accelerating process. The unprecedented scale of best-selling books exploiting German victim culture is unsettling, particularly when contrasted with the far smaller sales of excellent books on German guilt. While writers and readers stress the need to investigate any injury, including those inflicted upon Germans, German memory that it was the Nazi Empire and millions of its loyal subjects who first introduced new dimensions of inhumanity seems to be fading. A large number of "ordinary" Germans, including civilians who subsequently became victims, tolerated, applauded, or assisted in Nazi crimes from which they often took advantage, e.g. by the *Aryanization* of Jewish property.

Another dimension of Allied transgressions hitherto almost totally ignored, since, no influential lobby has arisen, is quite different. In fact, Allied commanders had few scruples about subject-

ing *friendly* civilian populations to collateral damage: people suppressed, occupied, or deported by the common German enemy and hoping for liberation. The Anglo-American Bomber Command did not spare occupied cities such as Lille, Rouen, and Louvain. In raids before D-Day about 12,000 French and Belgians were killed by Allied bombs, and unique historical monuments destroyed. After the Allied landing in Normandy, Caen was razed more extensively than most German cities.¹⁵³ In addition, not only German women and women from countries that had been associated with Germany (such as Hungary) but even many women from allied Poland and the Ukraine were raped by Red Army soldiers.¹⁵⁴

Skeletons I (Eastern)

There is nothing so difficult to predict as the past.

Post-1945 East European joke

Diplomatic strains over V-E Day celebrations reflected differences, the tip of the iceberg, over how the war was interpreted in the countries involved. In spite of solemn exhortations of political correctness, it was not easy to find a common platform of remembrance. Responding to overwhelming domestic pressure, the leaders of eight states, among them Polish President Lech Waleśa and his three Baltic counterparts, turned down Boris Yeltsin's invitation to join the Moscow festivities on May 9, 1995.¹⁵⁵ Many of their citizens were still extremely bitter about decades of Soviet occupation, mass deportations, and liquidations. In the Baltic states, in particular, the war was considered over only with *liberation* (new independence) in 1991, or even three years later when the last Russian troops finally withdrew from the region. Some Baltic politicians openly criticized then US President Bill Clinton for his "ignorance of history," evidenced by his attendance in Moscow, rendering credence to Russian claims to be the *liberator* of Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁶

In the former Eastern Bloc countries, the 1989 changes and the ensuing autonomous approach to their past had a tremendous effect upon contemporary foreign relations (not limited to Russia) and domestic affairs. In the West, most sins against history had been committed by exclusion; in the East often by active rewriting. Consequently, the East's retrieval of memory from the deep freeze was more difficult and even less linear. The persistent emergence of new evidence and the ever-changing socio-political climate combined in modifying, updating, and even constantly revising historical writing and culture in scholarly and public discourse. This is particularly so in Hungary and the Czech Republic, where nationalist anti-Communists and socialist post-Communists take turns in government, the latter branded by the former as the "Corpses-in-the-Base-ment-Party."¹⁵⁷ Actually, it was more than a metaphor that the historico-political discourse all too often received new energy with the resurfacing of hidden skeletons either in paper form because of more liberal access to hitherto closed sources, or literally, by the unearthing of mass graves.¹⁵⁸

Apart from the few instances when someone was "buried" and found alive,¹⁵⁹ most of these skeletons raised the question of whether or not they should be left in their burial place (usually their killing-place, as well) or if they should be exhumed and exposed to media hype. For promi-

ment figures, with the conspicuous exception of the Führer himself,¹⁶⁰ the second choice seemed more appropriate. Lech Walesa personally urged the repatriation and solemn re-interment of the body of General Władysław Sikorski, head of the exiled anti-Soviet government of Poland (1939-1943),¹⁶¹ as well as the ashes of Bor-Komorowski, leader of the anti-German and anti-Soviet uprising of the nationalist *Armia Krajowa* [Home Army]. The *Armia Krajowa* insurgents began their uprising against the German occupation on August 1, 1944. In early October, they were forced to surrender because the Soviets had halted east of Warsaw allowing the Germans to destroy Warsaw and extinguish their Polish opponents who had intended to take control of the capital before the Red Army could arrive and establish a puppet regime.

Although one of WW II's bloodiest battles, claiming more than 200,000 lives, and probably the first battle of the Cold War (with varying degrees of political cynicism displayed by all powers), the Warsaw uprising is still relatively unknown outside Poland. This is partly an after-effect of decades-long Communist rule (and Western embarrassment) when it was hushed up or denigrated as act of criminal recklessness causing death on a mass scale and the capital's ruin. The *Armia Krajowa* was branded as reactionary or worse, and affiliation with it was taken as a pretext for persecution. Nevertheless, to the huge majority of Poles the 63-day battle is a spiritual point of reference, the heroic (even if doomed) act of resistance and self-liberation, in consequence, "a historical imperative." The uprising is central to how Poles see not only their history but also their geographical role squeezed between two great and potentially expansive powers. At its 50th anniversary only the German president came and apologized for the brutal record of his compatriots. Yeltsin was "too busy to attend."¹⁶²

The post-Communist world has seen many reburials since the late 1980s, beginning with the state funeral of Hungary's reformist prime minister Imre Nagy and the other leaders of 1956's failed uprising against Soviet hegemony. The reburial took place on June 16, 1989, the anniversary of their execution. This tremendously symbolic venture, held even before the "official" downfall of the Soviet Empire, broke one of the strongest taboos and accelerated the further crumbling of the whole "bloc," particularly in Germany.¹⁶³ While the Nagy ceremony was applauded in almost all political quarters, opinions were divided regarding another "late returnee." In 1994, Hungary's conservative prime minister József Antall consented to bring back the mortal remains of the former regent and "tragic hero" Miklos Horthy, who had died in Portugal in 1957. Horthy had been made welcome in Portugal by the conservative and autocratic Portuguese prime minister, António de Oliveira Salazar. Some 30,000 mostly elderly people attended the memorial service, which was broadcast live on state television and honoured with a commemorative coin. The opposition warned against the political rehabilitation of Hitler's one-time ally – who had personified and still symbolized Hungarian irredentism. During his 25 years in power (1920-1944) Horthy had championed the "winning back" of all territories, from Slovakia to Transylvania, lost by Greater Hungary in the Trianon Peace Treaty after WW I. The fact that the government had

sponsored Horthy's solemnly staged reburial affected relations with all Hungary's neighbours, some of them with similar nationalistic credentials.¹⁶⁴

In Russia, dating back to the gory aftermath of the October revolution, skeletons and feuds often were diachronically connected. Social standing once more plays a role. While the non-governmental Memorial Society, founded in early 1989, increasingly encounters obstructions in its search for mass graves and its attempts to personalize the victims of Stalin's Great Terror,¹⁶⁵ the solemn funeral service held for the Romanov family exactly 80 years after their execution ignited a continuing row even within the anti-Communist camp – as well as in the Orthodox Church, which after all (i.e. since WW II) had quite successfully cohabited with the regime that had murdered the tsar.¹⁶⁶ Sometimes attention is greater when the victims were foreign. Much publicity was bestowed on Stalin's butchering of more than 20,000 officers and other members of the Polish elite near Smolensk (in the Katyn Forest)¹⁶⁷ and near Charkov (Ukraine).¹⁶⁸ This carnage has adversely affected Polish-Russian relations ever since the remains were discovered in 1943, although the unity of the anti-Hitler alliance had required adoption of the Soviet version that depicted the massacre as just another Nazi crime. While the final burial site of the Polish victims is still under discussion (and the mass grave of some thousands still undiscovered),¹⁶⁹ the remains of the one-time Wehrmacht invaders received even more "dignified" treatment from Russian authorities thanks to the much greater potential of Germany (and Austria). Consequently, the 1992 war graves' agreement has led to the construction in Russia of over a dozen German military cemeteries and more than 100 monuments for fallen Germans (These constructions were only temporarily delayed by internal Russian opposition, from communist and veteran circles, or because of political antagonism stoked by NATO's bombing of Serbia.¹⁷⁰).

The tangle of recent events with world war memories was demonstrated in the Balkans with their "ever-present past" more forcefully than elsewhere. This was shown, above all, by reactions to the reappearance of German soldiers in the region. Their deployment during the Yugoslav secession wars was initially limited to "friendly Croatia,"¹⁷¹ but after Kosovo, simmering WW II animosities stirred up again for good. When, for instance, the memorial site of the Wehrmacht massacre at Kragujevac¹⁷² was damaged by NATO bombs and, soon after, state subsidies were cancelled by the pro-Western government of Zoran Djindjić, "old" and "new" German inroads were easily mixed up in public discourse.¹⁷³ Moreover, digging (for civil war mass graves or merely for roadworks) all too often brought to light "WW II bones"¹⁷⁴ and connected history. This embarrassed state authorities, who at times came up with strange solutions for how to deal with the situation. Such was Franjo Tudjman's initiative to promote a pan-Croatian "reconciliation" embracing the Ustaši and Tito's guerrillas alike, reburying at the same place victims and hangmen (with changing roles) along with "fighters for Croatian independence" killed in the 1990s.¹⁷⁵

Especially in Russia, where some areas as the Smolensk region are literally "built on Soviet and German bones,"¹⁷⁶ it is sometimes difficult to separate the finds into *ours* and *theirs*; in addition, accidentally discovered mass graves from the war period might contain both prisoners executed

by the Germans and victims of the NKVD. There are no funds (and no wish) for any thorough examination, since “these are not the tsar’s bones.”¹⁷⁷ Funding is, as usual, easier to appropriate when specific interests are involved. For instance, when heavy rainfalls washed away the superficial cover upon a SS killing field, revealing the remains of thousands of Crimean Jews, the \$20,000 needed for a proper reburial were secured finally, after a long and shameful delay, by Israeli intervention.¹⁷⁸ In general, the problem is long overdue for a solution. Nearly 2.5 million people died in the Leningrad area alone and the bodies of hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers still lie where they fell, covered with dirt and some vegetation. In Soviet times even voluntary searchers were discouraged because the regime, obviously unwilling to admit the appalling extent of their own casualties, claimed that all the country’s fallen soldiers already had been reburied. Only since the late ’80s have organized voluntary searches become possible. These efforts have received official recognition but only few funds, further slowing the pace of identifications and reburials. Since the volunteers insist that the war will not be over “until the last [dead] man is accounted for,”¹⁷⁹ WW II is destined to continue for some considerable time.

Russia

Despite the 55th anniversary, many of the pages of World War II's history have yet to be written fully, some of them are not written at all, and some have to be rewritten by future generations of historians and researchers in the name of historical truth and fairness.

Yevgeny Kiselyov, *The Moscow Times*, May 12, 2000

On May 9, 1995, over 50 foreign top-level dignitaries, including then US President Clinton¹⁸⁰ and countless journalists gathered in Moscow for the jubilee, which only in Russia was openly celebrated as a *victory* jubilee – combining “Soviet-style grand ceremony with one of the city’s biggest-ever street parties,” a unique “outpouring of public joy.” Although Western leaders boycotted¹⁸¹ the huge military parade that inaugurated the country’s monumental new memorial site to this victory, they saw enormous Soviet-era posters and other chronological throwbacks all over the capital city. Veterans with shiny Soviet medals draped across their chests marched through Moscow, enjoying their history and the brilliant weather. CDs of war songs by the Red Army Ensemble were big sellers. So was the stamp, the first in 40 years, dedicated to Stalin – whose contribution to victory was extolled by good, old *Pravda* and in several speeches: “The day mixed nostalgia for the Soviet Union with new Russian patriotism in free and sometimes confusing style.”¹⁸²

People unfamiliar with recent developments were particularly confused. Yeltsin’s Russia aspired to act as the legitimate successor to the pre-1917 empire. When the president declared at the reburial service for the “innocently murdered” Romanovs that Russia had finally repented for one of its “most shameful episodes in history,”¹⁸³ it seemed that after eight decades the decisive last battle of the Russian Civil War was won by the *Whites*.¹⁸⁴ Long before 1989, however, the old tsarist empire had taken on a subcutaneous second life inside the communist state, while ordinary subjects took pride in Soviet power. Many Russians – economically and politically humiliated, and

disappointed by life under “democracy” – looked to the glorious past for reassurance. The Great Patriotic War and pride in the victory against Nazi Germany, once the main legitimizing factor for Soviet rule, is still the only memory that unites all political camps, social factions, and most ethnic groups. The surge of nostalgic nationalism and the lack of new and glorious traditions did not really allow a clear break with the communist past and its Manichean views of the war.

In contrast to WW II, the Cold War was not ended by unconditional surrender and subsequent occupation. The end did not establish *zero-hour* conditions for a new start. In consequence, a Russian version of German-style *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, such as special programs of mass education, was out of the question. Although an unprecedented boom of often critical remembrance literature about Stalin’s rule has added a new tune to the Russian book market and the huge gap between war history and its (official) postwar mythology is narrowing, this indicates mainly a trend in intellectual discourse and not general attitudes. The gloomy present and uncertain future foster public tendencies to idealize the – “better, after all” – past. Hence, the government has increasingly restrained publicity that would harm the country’s image and the nation’s unity. Before long, the abandoned Red Army Day was revived, reserving February 23rd as Defender of the Fatherland’s Day and celebrated again with marching crowds reclaiming lapsed glory. Yeltsin praised traditions and virtues of the Russian army, equating the battles of Borodino (against Napoleon) and Stalingrad. The same fighting spirit that once brought victory against all the odds would help Russia overcome current hardships.¹⁸⁵ Memory of past glory should foster optimism and confidence in firm leadership.

Yeltsin’s hand-picked successor, Vladimir Putin, supported by a new/old power elite firmly rooted in communist times, took further advantage of the increasing nostalgia for Russia’s imperial past and glory. Searching for a viable Russian identity and normalcy that would help mend divisions in society at the new millennium’s dawn, Putin advocated the “indivisibility” of national history: It was necessary to pay tribute to the positive heritage of both the tsarist era, referring in particular to famous “Russian cultural titans”¹⁸⁶ and the Soviet era¹⁸⁷ as both controversial periods had seen substantial accomplishments by Russians. In late 2000, Putin succeeded in bringing a mixed bag of state symbols through the Duma – supported by a motley coalition including Communists and Vladimir Shirinovski’s extreme Right but excluding Liberals. The legislative compromise reinstated the *tune* (only) of the old Soviet anthem – composed in 1944 at Stalin’s request, abolished by Yeltsin but still popular – and “the [Red] flag that we planted atop the *Reichstag*” for the army, thereby securing Communist acceptance of the tsarist tricolour and the double-headed eagle crest. With such strong symbolism, both imperial periods were finally recognized as patriotic elements in the line of historic remembrance. The continuity of Russian history was restored and legitimized.¹⁸⁸ The anodyne ideology proposed by the “new tsar” (and KGB veteran) might be paraphrased as “Russia has been great in all its epochs, despite a few flaws.”¹⁸⁹ Still, the *historic compromise* in unity’s name needed to restrict both principal factions in order to appease the other. Further elucidation of Stalinist terror was discouraged; today even

literary classics about Soviet repression, including Boris Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago*, are threatened with removal from the school syllabus.¹⁹⁰ In any case, the *glasnost* era's enthusiasm for archival explorations and disclosure had waned. Even most ex-victims prefer amnesia, glossing over painful memories.¹⁹¹ On the other side of Putin's coin of political necessity and national reconciliation, however, it is written that Russia must remain "the only country with no Stalingrad."¹⁹²

Stalingrad

The total casualties of this battle with the most loss of human life are still under dispute, since especially civilian losses are unsettled. The death toll surpassed one million, although much higher numbers circulate. One of the most decisive military encounters in history, the 200 day Battle of Stalingrad has been immortalized in epic tomes, films, a metro station in Paris, and even a star discovered in 1972. By contrast, few people outside Russia are familiar with the city's current name, Volgograd. Communists and war veterans have steadily promoted the idea of restoring the name of the city – which until 1926 was called Tsaritsyn, after the *tsaritsa* Catherine the Great – to Stalingrad. This act, they argued, would not necessarily pay tribute to Stalin, as many emphasized, but to the memory of the dead and the decisive victory. In December 2002, in time for the battle's 60th anniversary, Putin temporarily agreed until domestic opposition and the negative consequences for "new" Russia's image abroad changed his mind again.¹⁹³

During the Cold War, Soviet campaigns against Western *falsifikatsiya* of WW II history had referred to the mainstream narrative that systematically minimized the Soviet Union's contribution while elevating the Anglo-American "crusade." Indeed, WW II had been primarily a German-Soviet war. After June 1941, the Wehrmacht never committed less than approximately 70% of its entire field strength to the eastern front and the operational engagement there accounted for more than 85% of overall German losses. On the other side, in Stalingrad alone the Soviets lost more people than the British and Americans did together during the entire war. On the most appropriate occasion, the 50th anniversary of V-E Day, US President Bill Clinton had cautiously "acknowledged" that "the West had long underestimated" the Soviet contribution.¹⁹⁴ Still, the new partnership did not much show up on the occasion of the subsequent – up to the 60th – anniversaries of the big battles. The Anglo-Saxon media, apart from a few left-of-centre voices, seldom admitted that it was Stalingrad that reversed the tide of the war and not the sideshow in El Alamein, the "epic" Pacific battles against Japan, or even the Second Front in France, which are still the beloved versions of Western war mythology, *ad nauseam* recycled and hence sanctioned by Hollywood. Commentators questioned the issue of Red Army heroism by generalizing the brutal coercive measures "keen to depict the struggle as a contest between totalitarian systems in which the more ruthless emerged as victor."¹⁹⁵ In this they were facilitated by the coincidence that the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad fell close to the 50th anniversary of Stalin's death.

Under the umbrella of warning against re-Sovietization, commentators connected the renaming campaign – and, hence, the whole myth of Stalingrad – with the late dictator's continuing "hold

over the Russian psyche.” Indeed, after the dip caused by *glasnost*, Stalin was again doing well in opinion polls, especially among older people who saw the *vozhhd* [leader] as father figure and saviour of Russia from Nazi aggression. Consequently, his supporters, if not the majority of Russians were criticized with ignoring that the dictator had “killed more innocent people than any politician [Hitler included] in European history,” – counting at least 25 million victims, if not four times as many because “the totalitarian communism of which Stalin was the chief architect has so far killed up to 100 million around the world.” The current discussion on Iraq allowed flanking attacks against “the intellectual double standard that was applied to Communism and Nazism throughout the 20th century, the influence of which has survived the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.” In this context, Russian and Western left-wing “intellectuals who now denounce Bush and Blair as warmongers” while they had allowed Stalin’s crime to sink into oblivion, were accused of continuing the Cold War by other means.¹⁹⁶ Other observers came closer to the point when explaining why post-Soviet “Russians seemed to reclaim their history.” The war that had touched and decimated most families became “a source of personal pride, a testimony to the courage and stubborn endurance of the people, rather than proof of the superiority of the Soviet system.”¹⁹⁷

Indeed, Russian remembrance is multifaceted. Stalingrad especially, but also Leningrad with its endurance of a 900-day siege and Moscow – where the Wehrmacht was stopped in the winter 1941-’42 and the myth of German invincibility saw its first cracks¹⁹⁸ – are all still viewed as powerful symbols of Russian (and, by others, Soviet) courage and perseverance, at the same time a “source of pride and pain.”¹⁹⁹ The pain refers not only to the millions of people killed in WW II. Critics today ask to what degree these losses could have been lessened if the leadership had been less cynical and contemptuous of life. For this reason, it seems, the regime afterwards calculat- ingly obscured genuine, sacrificial heroism with official, stylized, stereotyped “heroic” myths. The human cost, most probably about 27 million Soviet citizens, was regarded by the regime as detrimental to its own reputation and therefore was reduced (first, by Stalin in 1946, to 7 and later, by Khrushchev, to “about 20 million”) and “politically manipulated, all to hide unpreparedness, incompetence, and uncaring profligacy with human life on the battlefield.”²⁰⁰ Since the current leadership does not hesitate, on Defender of the Fatherland Day, to liken Stalingrad and the ongoing war in Chechnya,²⁰¹ critics see a perilous strategic continuity: “Given a choice between the lives of its citizens and the protection of its interests, the Russian state once again did not hesitate. It is the consistency over time and over regimes that makes Russian policy scary.”²⁰²

Collective glorification perpetuates the myths of war and their continual effect regardless of historical fact. Characteristically, the Russian ambassador in London protested against Anthony Beevor’s book on *Berlin 1945*, and particularly against the coverage of mass rapes, calling it an act of blasphemy and slander.²⁰³ Other Russian charges were more justified, such as blaming their small Baltic neighbours of “one-eyed” *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*²⁰⁴ – even though such accusations often were cover for Moscow’s still being unprepared for parting with time-honoured hegemonic attitudes.

Former Brothers: Raising Cain

"Not friends, brothers!"

Most of the states included in this section have been part of the famous *Cordon Sanitaire* that the French engineered after WW I with the dual purpose of isolating Soviet Russia and securing the Versailles system against Germany and "revisionist" tendencies of the defeated. The very existence of these states depended on their appropriate behaviour. After WW II – and the failed German attempt to incorporate the *Cordon* states into its *Lebensraum* – it was the turn of the USSR to reverse the plot, utilizing its new "brother" states as a strategic buffer zone against the West. Most recently, there are indications of a scheme to employ these states of "New Europe" in a similar function against the *old* powers west and east of them. Be that as it may, in the *Cordon*-states the past and its present-day significance has quite a different dimension than in other parts of Europe.

The West and Russia, in spite of all the discrepancies, shared the triumph of 1945 and understood WW II as common war against Nazi Germany; so it was easier for them, after the end of the Cold War, to find a common platform to rejoin the celebration. Western Europe was liberated from the yoke of fascism and developed democracy to unprecedented heights. The Russians could console themselves with a new era as a world power, so that continuity with the Soviet period was not seen per se as a burden, and anti-communism, as such, was not strongly felt by a majority.²⁰⁵ Conversely, most of the former Warsaw Pact members and Soviet republics almost completely ignored V-E Day or made bitter comments. The Baltic people did not want "to celebrate anything together with Moscow, especially the victory of the Red Army." Poland's then president, Lech Walesa, likewise refused to take part in the Russian festivities, publicly castigating the Western Allies for having abandoned Poland and handing it over to Stalin.²⁰⁶ Even in Bulgaria, traditionally the most Russophile satellite, commemoration of May 8th was accompanied by a heavy row between post-Communists and anti-Communists.²⁰⁷ In general, the disparate conceptions of liberation threw established views of the results of WW II into doubt. The image of British celebrations on V-E Day, for example, raised questions about how Britain had "won," considering that in September 1939 it had gone to war to honour its recent guarantee of Poland's independence, which was subsequently, in 1945, surrendered to Stalin – evidently the real victor.²⁰⁸

During half a century of communist rule, the various regimes had one-sidedly propagandized about the role and atrocities of Nazi Germany, the ideologically convenient occupier. Only after the downfall of communism and its "unifying" historiographical dogma did it become possible for latent Russophobia – interwoven with rising nationalistic pride in the glorious pages of one's own history – to focus openly on the taboo subject of Soviet occupation, and terror. Suddenly, Nazi crimes sometimes seemed inferior and inflated by communist propaganda. For the Poles, the Katyn Forest massacre exemplified the camouflaged crimes the Soviets had perpetrated. Soon, public awareness of September 17th, the day of Stalin's double-crossing assault of Poland

from the east, surpassed that of September 1st, the anniversary of Germany's invasion, which had been officially commemorated since 1945. The Poles were particularly offended by persistent Russian refusal to admit that the 1939 invasion ("authorized" by the deal with Hitler) had been an act of aggression, virtually reiterating Stalinist propaganda.²⁰⁹

As for the Warsaw uprising, Soviet "treason" was considered more shocking than German brutality. Nonetheless, Polish assessments of the two *black* periods were almost equal in value²¹⁰ and memories of Nazi rule did not fade away, since in Poland the occupation had been bloodier than in any other country except the USSR. In most other countries, however, the balance was surprisingly weighted, at least from the Western perspective. This is impressively illustrated by the upsurge in new museums dedicated to *terror*.²¹¹ In the Baltic countries, for instance, they are lumping together the Soviet-German-Soviet occupation 1940-1991, with clear emphasis on the "much longer" communist period.²¹² The same is true in Hungary, where the Conservative government, in an effort to weaken the Socialists amidst a bitter pre-election struggle, sped up the opening of Budapest's newly built "Terror House." Most of the building – used as a dungeon both before and after the definitive January 1945, when the Red Army conquered Budapest – portrays in gruesome detail the Stalinist terror; only two rooms are devoted to the previous terror phase of Hungarian fascists and German Nazis, while almost no reference is made to Horthy's "benign autocracy." According to Laszlo Karsai, one of Hungary's top Holocaust historians, "the message is simple: Almost every Hungarian is innocent. The main guilty are foreign forces: first the Germans, then the Russians, and very, very few collaborators." Hungary's new center-left government wants to restructure the museum or slash its budget, provoking "bitter, rancorous discussions."²¹³ Unsurprisingly, there is a striking contrast with similar museums in new Russia, with regard both to the lay-out and public preferences. For instance, the former Solovki Monastery, under Stalin a notorious prison camp, has been transformed into a three-section museum. The first section is dedicated to the monastery's pre-1917 history, the second to the Gulag, and the third to a minor WW II naval training camp nearby, which attracts by far the most visitors.²¹⁴

In the USSR's former "brother states," governmental promises to clear up and deal with the "darkest period of their country's history" had in mind first and foremost the communist past. In the Baltic states, for instance, all 32 memorial sites devoted to the defenders of Stalingrad have changed character and name, stirring anger in Russia.²¹⁵ In issues of everyday political culture – renaming streets or entire cities, the dismantling of monuments²¹⁶ and the erecting of new ones – "new" usually means nothing more than returning to pre-Soviet traditions of "national independence," which have ipso facto been rehabilitated and hallowed by reason of decades-long communist disparagement. It was easily forgotten that most of these nostalgically transfigured prewar regimes were socially and ideologically objectionable, authoritarian if not fascist in nature and often collaborating staunchly with Nazi Germany – as the minion states Romania and Hungary. The Third Reich had actually installed some of these regimes (Croatia, Slovakia) or had been viewed by local (e.g., Baltic or Ukrain) nationalists, at least initially, as liberators.

The suspicious paucity of any references to native collaboration in the new national remembrance culture reveals intentions to skim over the shadier aspects of the pre-communist era, in particular, the fervent anti-Semitism inextricably bound up with indigenous pre-war nationalism in most of the *Cordon* states. Today, in some countries with a significant record of collaboration with the Germans, the powers-that-be refute or hush up any association with war crimes.²¹⁷ In June 2003, the Romanian government issued a blunt denial of their country's involvement in the Holocaust. Four days later, after heavy protests, particularly from Jewish circles, and ridicule by the Western press, Bucharest admitted having played a role in the genocide.²¹⁸ The desire of almost all ex-bloc states to join the EU and NATO for political, economic, and military promotion, was easily used as leverage to remind them that admission was not possible without a certain amount of common cultural advancement, including political correctness in dealing with war history. This meant facing up to one's own responsibility, recognizing it in public discourse, applying it through education, and purging surviving culprits. It also demanded legislation aimed at symbolic, at least, compensation for Holocaust survivors. Most governments, eager to demonstrate their new democratic standards, sooner or later conformed, though in some countries considerable segments of the population resented "preferential treatment of small minority groups" (meaning Jews), asking instead for the "socially imperative" rehabilitation of the victims of Communist terror. As a further consequence, anti-Semitism and, at times, anti-Westernism increased.²¹⁹

The case of a state, which did not apply for integration into the West, is worth mentioning. The Ukraine's *sui generis* post-communist regime has tried to reconcile conflicting memories of patriotic resistance and patriotic (i.e. separatist Ukrainian) collaboration during WW II while at the same time offering less restitution for Holocaust victims than any other involved state.²²⁰ It may be interesting to follow predictable adjustments in consequence of recent Ukrainian feelers to enter NATO. There are similarities in Belarus, another autocratically ruled USSR successor state, where eternal president Aleksandr Lukashenko repeatedly has expressed esteem for Nazi Germany but also, after years of prodding, honoured local Jews murdered in the Shoah, proclaiming that he wanted to unite all citizens of his country, irrespective of previous cleavages.²²¹

Evidence of the nationalist surge (with anti-Russian connotations) that had already surfaced before 1989 is found in the rehabilitation of individuals or organizations such as Stepan Bandera and the UPA in the Ukraine, Milan Nedić and the Četnici in Serbia,²²² Józef Tiso in Slovakia, Ion Antonescu in Romania,²²³ the Latvian (SS-) *Legion*, and even the Ustaši,²²⁴ who all had collaborated with the Nazis as early champions of independence. Official tributes to Genghis Khan and Vlad Țepeș [Count Dracula] as national heroes by the regimes in Ulan Bator and Bucharest, respectively, were extreme cases.²²⁵ Since many intellectuals have adroitly converted from communism to new "democratic nationalism," certain patterns of communist war historiography have been perpetuated, if in reverse. One's own people were and are consistently seen as victim – of the Nazis in the pre-1990 version, of the communists ("surpassing even the Nazis") in the

current version. Memory and commemoration repress ugly aspects where one's own people in fact had been victimizers. The re-establishment of narrow, ethnically defined nationalism has rendered it dangerous, if not unpatriotic, to unveil dirty facets of national history and possibly reviving dormant conflicts. While newly accessible archival sources provide considerable evidence about locals willingly participating in anti-Jewish (or other) pogroms that contributed decisively to the "success" of the Holocaust in their country, the few researchers who dare to violate the old/new taboo are usually émigrés or foreigners. Such are, e.g., the cases of Poland,²²⁶ the Baltic states and, in particular, Hungary, where Eichmann's few German henchmen would never have succeeded in deporting almost half a million Jews within 56 days without the efficient assistance of the Hungarian administration and much sympathy from the population.²²⁷

The same biased approach can be observed regarding the judicial purge of the past. Sanctions and punishment, limitation periods for crimes, amnesty, and rehabilitation, all were controversial catchphrases in a society where perpetrators and victims had repeatedly changed roles following the ups and downs of recent history. Since 1990 in most former bloc countries, important public figures have emphasized the necessity of ending the retaliations and counter-retaliations of the recent past, meaning that under given conditions a German-style *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* would be a possibly self-destructive intellectual extravagance.²²⁸ Instead, energies would better be used for securing the continuity of their countries. Successive non-communist governments emphasized that such a pragmatic idealism involved the danger of living with the lie of a glossed-over past, imposing instead a rather vendetta-like "catharsis." Consequently, an incalculable – still too low for many – number of suspects of Soviet-era offences were denounced, harassed, interrogated, dismissed from work, often put on trial, and imprisoned.²²⁹ In contrast, as for "Nazi-related" perpetrators in former communist states, to date only two have been convicted. The first was the Croatian Dinko Sakic, then 78-year-old ex-commandant of the Jasenovac terror camp, who was sentenced in 1999 to 20 years for multiple murder (but not genocide). Sakic had had quite a public life in his Argentine exile – giving interviews, meeting Tudjman – until Zagreb decided to ask for his extradition in order to distinguish *new* Croatia from the Ustaša past.²³⁰ The other was a Lithuanian who, however, was spared a prison sentence for health reasons.²³¹

The Baltic States

*The past is not a five-and-dime store where you pick and choose . . .
what to extol and what to deny.*

Toomas Ilves, Estonian Foreign Minister, January 2001 [speaking of the Russians]

The three tiny Baltic states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – are universally viewed as gallant small nations who in the late '80s finally succeeded in throwing off the Soviet yoke and reasserting their sovereignty after half a century of gruesome occupation. This view particularly prevailed in Western capitals, reflecting subconscious remorse at letting down the Baltic states twice in the 1940s. At the same time, it corresponded widely with the three nations' self-image. The Baltic

peoples tend to base their identity, apart from the peculiar languages, on their vision of the past. Since their pre-WW II autonomous existence had lasted little more than two decades – with the exception of Lithuania, which has enjoyed periods of medieval imperial glory, though mostly shared with Poland – the interpretation by the Baltic states of their past and identity is principally based on memories from half a century of communist suppression. They have transformed the indubitable suffering of that period into a myth leaving little space for unconventional aspects. Characteristically, the Latvian prime minister Guntars Krasts, head of the nationalist Fatherland and Freedom Party, postulated that “no other nation in Europe has suffered as much as Latvia.”²³² In this sense, politicians and pundits of the Baltic nations were busy rewriting history to focus on Soviet/Russian terror. Books, art, films, and education reflect these popular concerns. In consequence, neither the states nor the mainstream publics took the trouble to differentiate, within the category of “victims of Soviet terror,” between war criminals and innocent sufferers. Lithuania, for instance, was quick to rehabilitate 35,000 citizens who had been convicted in the Soviet era of war crimes and collaboration with the Germans, yet it responded slowly and fragmentarily to mostly foreign demands for having the names on this list published for screening.²³³ Conversely, the conviction and imprisonment of a former Soviet guerrilla fighter for the killing of some (alleged pro-Nazi) Latvians in 1944 triggered strong protests from the Russian press, Putin personally, and Latvia’s large ethnic Russian community.²³⁴

In all three Baltic countries there are large minorities of ethnic Russians, who settled there mostly after 1945. This group certainly could not share the nationalistic mainstream view, causing further strain on inter-ethnic relations. Discriminations by the governments of the Baltic states obviously were intended to force the “foreign element” either to assimilate or move out. As a rule, citizenship was granted only to pre-WW II residents and their direct descendants. The others, even if they had been residents for decades, had to apply for citizenship and previously, in Latvia, for instance, to pass tests in language and even in history – with 1940 the obvious key date once again. An advisor of Yeltsin’s, in a 1993 interview with *The Observer*, charged Latvia and Estonia with being apartheid states, triggering another years-long public confrontation.²³⁵ Only recently have legislative discriminatory measures been smoothed down, in part because of pressure by the EU and the US, which both became increasingly irritated with the one-sided way the Baltic republics confronted their war past.

The largest contingent of non-German troops in Nazi Germany’s armed forces consisted of Latvians, though the degree to which they served voluntarily differed from case to case. In Riga, however, it was cleverly forgotten that during the Battle of Berlin in April 1945 Latvians were among the most fanatic defenders of Hitler’s den. Every year after independence, veterans of the Latvian Legion, which once numbered over 100,000 armed men under SS command, marched through the capital. High Latvian officials, from the president on down, attended, claiming that this was no show of support for the Nazis, but remembrance of gallant military service and war casualties. The marches drew warm applause, in particular from elderly onlookers – the excep-

tion being, understandably, ethnic Russians.²³⁶ Only after increasingly strongly expressed protests from Russia to Israel and the Western states, did, for the first time in 1998 on the Legion's 55th anniversary, the president not attend. In 1999 the Latvian government forbade the army from taking part, and in 2000 the parade was cancelled.²³⁷

At the same time, Western pressure was mounting upon all three republics to look honestly at their pasts and come to grips with their parallel roles as perpetrators. Actually, the position of the Baltic states in Holocaust history is unique. Everywhere else in Hitler's Europe, Jews usually were deported to the death camps in Poland. Baltic Jews were slaughtered on the spot, with many of their fellow countrymen, awash in intense anti-Semitism, cooperating with the German death squads. Nevertheless, the Baltic public at large (most historians included) had a vacuum of knowledge about the Holocaust, for the subject already had been marginalized under Soviet rule.²³⁸

A Lithuanian prime minister, Adolfas Slezevicius, was the first Baltic leader who, on the newly established Genocide Day, encouraged his countrymen to acknowledge their "painful past" – meaning involvement in the annihilation of over 200,000 Jews – and to ask for forgiveness.²³⁹ But only in late 1997, after foreign pressure, did the parliament amend its criminal code to allow suspects of genocide to stand trial regardless of their age or their state of health. In 1998, Washington hailed the decision to enter charges of genocide against a 90-year-old high ranking security police officer, Aleksandras Lileikis, which was the first trial for WW II crimes in any of the USSR successor states. But the suspect died before the trial began; only his 93 year old deputy Kazys Gimzauskas was convicted, in early 2001, but was spared a prison sentence for health reasons.²⁴⁰ Latvia did even less in this respect, and did it later.²⁴¹ After strong international criticism and pressure, Latvia did at least erect a Holocaust memorial, and the country's president admitted the long-denied role played by local collaborators.²⁴²

Still, many of the Baltic peoples continue to live in denial. Nationalists, some in high government positions, equate the loss of lives to Soviet terror²⁴³ in 1940-'41 with the Holocaust – propagating the concept of "two genocides," while emphasis should be given to the allegedly forgotten first, committed by Soviets (and Jews) against the Baltic people. There are demands for a Nuremberg trial, for Soviet crimes (including the alleged disproportionate involvement of Jews in the NKVD terror), since the trials of Baltic war criminals – few and ineffective as they did not put a single person behind bars, stirred mainstream criticism against supposedly one-eyed justice.²⁴⁴ Consequently, public debate between the three republics and their gigantic neighbour continues as a dual monologue: The Russian media focus on cooperation by Baltic *renegades* with the Nazis, and showing no remorse; Baltic officials blast the "new" Russian leadership for not accepting any moral responsibility for Soviet crimes.²⁴⁵ The intensity of this altercation has come to overshadow the traditional Polish-Russian conflict.

Poland

There is a comparable traditional (auto-)stereotype of Polish martyrdom,²⁴⁶ dating back to the country's partition among the three voracious adjacent powers that led to the *finis Poloniae*, Poland's disappearance from the map between 1795 and 1918. This disappearance was repeated in 1939, when Poland was sliced up once again, this time between Hitler and Stalin. The Polish myth of suffering, however, differs from the Baltic version because of a traditionally more defiant attitude stemming from greater self-assurance and the conviction that the Poles, with their "fourth-largest Allied military force" had decisively contributed to the final victory in WW II without, however, receiving due recognition. In Poland there are vivid memories of the foundation of a complete underground state and of Free Poles fighting in North Africa and on almost every other front. Although it is virtually unknown in Germany, Poles remember clearly that two Polish armies participated in the Soviet conquest of Berlin and that a second flag was hoisted in triumph atop the Brandenburg Gate: Poland's white-and-red banner. To the Poles, it seemed only reasonable that Lech Walesa requested to be invited to the gathering of the main protagonists in Berlin on May 8th, 1995 and the refusal disturbed Poland's traditionally traumatic relations with her principal neighbours.²⁴⁷

In Poland, earlier than in other states of the Soviet bloc (with the possible exception of Hungary in 1956) and long before the rise of *Solidarność*, strong opposing segments of society attempted to uncover and cultivate controversial or tabooed issues of the non-Communist past, even though the country was dotted with monuments of the Katyn massacre falsely attributing responsibility to the Germans. This nonconformist approach to Polish history became an efficient weapon for the opposition movement which, a few months after coming to power, was vindicated in April 1990 when a TASS statement dryly admitted that the Katyn Forest murders had personally been ordered by Stalin.²⁴⁸ Later, Yeltsin repeatedly handed over copies of some documents on the Katyn massacre and on other blank (or black) spots in Russian-Polish shared history. Political and economic talks between the two countries often contained references to the "bitter chalice" of the recent past. Nonetheless, how to honour the victims and, even more, if and how to compensate their families, remained difficult because Yeltsin insisted that "democratic Russia" bore no responsibility for Stalin's crimes. When Walesa visited Katyn for a memorial service, Yeltsin declined an invitation to join him for fear that some Polish groups might use the occasion to "make unreasonable demands for compensation or apologies."²⁴⁹ This strategy was duly adopted by Putin and only recently have things started moving again.²⁵⁰ On the last anniversary of May 8th/9th, it was again possible to show on Polish television an old war series about the joint Russian-Polish offensive against Berlin, promoting feelings of partnership²⁵¹ – making headway since Walesa had complained that although the sting had been removed, the injury had not yet healed.²⁵²

With Germany, the healing process and the consecutive *rapprochement* had advanced more rapidly and was often mentioned as an example for hostile neighbours in other world regions – in

contrast with the strained relations between Prague and Berlin, as well as Vienna, continually poisoned by the ongoing debate about the Sudeten Germans.²⁵³ There are many joint German-Polish ventures in research and education, some of them dealing with the most delicate subject of the ethnic Germans expelled from the former East German territories. Many gaps had been bridged²⁵⁴ before the new deterioration in the summer of 2003.²⁵⁵

For Poles, distant memories of post-occupation Polish brutalities against the expelled *Volksdeutsche* were largely compatible with their own culture of martyrdom, since they could be explained, if not excused, by the much worse precedents committed by the German occupiers. Things were different when in 2000 a Polish émigré to the US revealed²⁵⁶ that in July 1941 the Jews living in the village of Jedwabne had been slaughtered *not* by the Germans but by their Polish neighbours. This revelation not only made Jedwabne a worldwide symbol for Polish anti-Semitism but soon came to dominate the country's social and political life, forcing the Poles to reassess their historical self-image. A few months earlier, public opinion had reacted extremely negatively when American Jews with Polish roots sued the Polish state for having taken advantage of the Holocaust by nationalizing "heirless" Jewish property and "going on with the murderous Nazi plot of racial cleansing."²⁵⁷ Now, in contrast to the Baltic states and other former Eastern Bloc countries, in Poland a painful debate swept mainstream public opinion with impressive sincerity. After two years of research, on the 61st anniversary of the Jedwabne massacre, the Polish Institute of National Memory (IPN)²⁵⁸ concluded that, in fact, close to 100 Christian Poles – not counting the bystanders – had hunted, tormented, and finally killed hundreds of Jews. According to the IPN report, the pogrom may have been "inspired by" but it certainly was not ordered by the Germans. Nor was it an aberrant exception, for there were similar incidents in about 30 neighbouring villages and towns. The reasons were in part economic, while lingering anti-Semitism was boosted, as in the Baltic states, by experiences and rumours of Jewish collaboration with the Soviet authorities during the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland between 1939 and 1941. Even after the report, discussion continues about where to assign responsibility for the massacre: ordinary Poles, or society at large, or people from the fringes of society.²⁵⁹ Each nuance in the answer makes a difference for the new Polish self-image.

Skeletons II (Western)

In the western half, too, of our²⁶⁰ continent, remains of countless WW II victims are still dispersed, gradually being discovered by random or intentional digging, and then being properly reburied. This relates particularly to US soldiers, who suffered high casualties during last heavy fighting close to Germany's western frontiers. Thousands were declared missing in action, and discovery of their remains is ongoing. The remains have to be reburied in a military cemetery in a former Allied country, since they are not allowed to be interred on "enemy soil" – the FRG still included.²⁶¹ All of these dead were killed by conventional warfare, which gives the local papers an occasion to deal with WW II, with gallant and merciless fighting, or to present didactic conclusions.

No tale of heroism or patriotism (even if misguided), no feel-good story in which good fights and ultimately defeats evil, could be associated with other mortal remains recently discovered; those of Nazi euthanasia victims, children slaughtered in the name of science. After having been used *for decades*, particularly in a Vienna-based institute, as unique research material on which brilliant *post-war* careers were built, 791 brains were laid to rest in 2002, allegedly the last victims of this sort, but in 2003 more such “scientific material” was detected in Austria.²⁶²

In this study we will make only cursory reference to skeletons in two countries torn by civil wars overlapping WW II: Greece²⁶³ and particularly Spain²⁶⁴ where, even after the *Caudillo*’s death in 1975, discussion of Franco-era crimes continued to be taboo because it was considered necessary for a peaceful transition to democracy. Indeed, Spain would become one of the few countries where the establishment of a viable democracy had been possible *without* the sinful past first having been resolved. A re-examination of history would be undertaken only at the dawn of the new millennium, when Spain’s recently founded ARMH (Asociación para la recuperación de la memoria histórica [League for the Recovery of Historical Memory]) succeeded in having legislation passed that would allow systematic searches for the tens of thousands of bodies still buried anonymously.²⁶⁵ In August 2003 alone, a mass grave containing the remains of 5,000 Republicans was accidentally discovered by digging for construction foundations.²⁶⁶

Conversely, in long established Western democracies hidden skeletons normally emerge less dramatically from the cupboards of state bureaucracy or conformist historiography. Though it is beyond the cope of this study, it should be mentioned that fresh perspectives on blank areas in national consciousness concerning WW II often have revealed other guilty secrets or traumatic taboos, mostly from the aftermath of WW II – either directly²⁶⁷ or indirectly.²⁶⁸

Reality is rarely as splendid as myth. In the West, too, the unpleasant image of war was brightened up by conveniently slanted myths, such as the legend of nationwide resistance, or at least defiance, from the first moment, common to all countries promoting national pride, cohesion, and – particularly in such young nations as Norway and Luxemburg²⁶⁹ – national identity. In pre-1986 Austria (before the Waldheim scandal exploded), the myth of a collective victim status secured both external respect and an internal national identity distinct from Germany. Virtually all countries persistently denied that any substantial portion of their own people had collaborated with the enemy or profited from his crimes, in particular not from the destruction of domestic Jewry.

The resulting picture, with clear-cut contrasts in black and white terms, was soon blurred when the massive Eastern European archives were opened, revealing enormous quantities of explosive records, of both domestic and (captured) German provenance. Another significant impetus for a new, more honest approach to one’s own past was given by the symbolism of May 8, 1995. The 50th anniversary of Nazi Germany’s unconditional surrender was connected with growing moral and material pressure from abroad, especially regarding Holocaust-era related assets.²⁷⁰ Norwegians, for instance, on the occasion of the half-centenary learned that much Jewish property confiscated by the Quisling regime had never been returned.²⁷¹ In Switzerland,

President Kaspar Villiger publicly apologized to the Jews;²⁷² his Austrian counterpart Thomas Klestil explicitly recognized the Austrian role in Nazi wrongdoing. In Denmark and even more deeply in the Netherlands, the 50th anniversary caused a “belated bout of soul-searching” as critics denounced decades-long insincerity in facing their own past.²⁷³

Others seemed less inclined to sincerely reassess their war past – or at least to adjust to the new, international political correctness in vogue. President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland reiterated that his country had had no other choice but to ally with Hitler. On the other side of the world, the Social Democrat Prime Minister of Japan, Tomiichi Murayama, at last rendered some apology for Japanese crimes in the Great East Asian War but once again refused to pay indemnifications. The Tokyo parliament then slipped away with a compromise declaration, expressing – in the absence of the nationalist opposition – *condolences* but still avoiding any apology to their Asian neighbours.²⁷⁴ The United States – “the only power to emerge both as victor and beneficiary of the war”²⁷⁵ – repeatedly expressed concern about other countries’ records of coming to grips with their past but did little to address its own record.

First, many Americans had forgotten that the United States went to war, or was dragged into war, because of Pearl Harbor, not to undertake a *crusade* [Dwight D. Eisenhower] for saving the world from Nazi evil. (NB: It was Hitler – and Mussolini – who declared war on the USA, not the other way around.) With regard to the Pacific War, in 1995 the US agreed not to issue a postal stamp depicting a nuclear mushroom cloud in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bomb after Japanese and peacenik protests. The same circles also objected in late 2003 when, after a 19-year restoration, the *Enola Gay*, the aircraft that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, went on display in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C. While it was proudly presented as the “most technologically advanced” bomber of WW II, no reference was made to the thousands of deaths it caused. Once more, the clash of opinions and their champions were familiar. American non-conformists focussed on the suffering caused by the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, doubting President Truman’s assertion that it had been necessary to break Japan’s resistance (which, in fact, already had been on the verge of breaking) and “save hundreds of thousands” of (Allied) lives, while veterans’ groups and conservative opinion continued to insist that “nuking the Japs” had been necessary to shorten the war and was “the Eagle’s” rightful response to Japanese aggression. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s description of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor as “a date which will live in infamy” is still widely used for that unprecedented traumatic experience and metaphor for the country’s humiliation and vulnerability.²⁷⁶

In Britain, some earlier inconvenient findings²⁷⁷ faded into the background during celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the war while the press closely followed what was going on overseas, often making caustic comments about “wobblers.” A favourite target was France, preferred at this time even over Germany. *The Economist*, in an otherwise fair survey on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, was damning: “Of all the countries occupied by Germany, the one that finds it hardest to look in the mirror 50 years on is France. Its performance by and large

remains a cause for shame, myth, and evasion.”²⁷⁸ The media once more were banging against doors that were already opening.

In France, certainly, decades long “national amnesia” veiled the common secret that during the *années noires* the great majority of the French had been loyal to Pétain’s regime in Vichy, which (after coining the term “collaboration”) had been the first regime to actively collaborate with the German occupiers. But gradual exposure of the notorious “taboo Vichy”²⁷⁹ beneath the covering myth of the resisting nation had begun long before the epochal year of 1989, though this exposure was initiated principally by foreigners. A decisive step was then made in 1994, the year of the Touvier trial, the 50th anniversary of France’s liberation, and, last but not least, of then President François Mitterand’s emotional interview confessing his long-rumoured youthful sympathies for Vichy.²⁸⁰ Still, according to polls, 90% of the French population clung to the post-war republic’s founding myth – cultivated for different reasons by the Gaullists and the Communists, bearers, respectively, of political and intellectual supremacy – that they themselves, the *Résistance* inside the country and Charles de Gaulle’s Free French from abroad, had decisively contributed to freeing their country from German occupation. At the same time, only 29% of the respondents felt that the French should feel bad about Vichy.²⁸¹

Surprising to many, France’s new conservative president, Jacques Chirac, dared new initiatives where all post-war politicians, including his socialist predecessor, had recoiled. In a speech delivered July 16, 1995, the 53rd anniversary of the large scale round-up of Jews known as the *grand rafle du Vél d’Hiv*, when French security units arrested over 13,000 Jews in Paris to hand them over to the Germans, Chirac admitted the long suppressed autonomous involvement of Vichy, *l’État français*, in the Holocaust.²⁸² Chirac then stopped providing the protection his predecessors had given Maurice Papon – a Vichy functionary with responsibility for deportation during the war who had enjoyed a brilliant career after the war – making his trial possible.²⁸³ The Papon trial, however, was not primarily a juridical issue (i.e. whether or not this 90-year-old unrepentant functionary should be convicted). Its primary intention was to reveal “truth” about the real character of Vichy, its transgressions, and the degree of its involvement in this unprecedented crime. Any verdict against Papon would be projected from the individual to the regime, and this, because the regime had been widely supported throughout the country, would in turn implicate the entire country, especially when the focus was widened from the crimes of a small minority to the great majority’s indifference. There were fierce debates on the problems of judging history in court and by the media, about the margins of interaction between historians, journalists, and justice as well as about their ability to act in a “cathartic” way.²⁸⁴ Some historians, such as the Vichy expert Henry Rousso, refused to take part in the trial. According to him, the former taboo had been replaced by militant obsession with the past. The Vichy syndrome²⁸⁵ had gained a life of its own as the nucleus of an often excessive remembrance, and Vichy had turned into *un passé qui ne passe pas*.²⁸⁶ Although Rousso, like others, doubted the pedagogic effect of legal proceedings and the attendant guilt-caused “obligation to remember,”²⁸⁷ July 16th (Vél d’Hiv) has been

declared an official day of remembrance. This meant a negative commemoration of the French nation's sins and omissions, an act that earlier had been found appropriate almost exclusively for Germany. British observers, however, remained unimpressed, sarcastically commenting on the new "Vichy Business," by contrasting attitudes of the average French and strategies of pundits and writers.²⁸⁸

The original French image of their national identity and the role they played under German occupation was matched in miniature by the particularly resilient Dutch version of the familiar self-image of the *small but brave* country. Although the Netherlands had not been involved in a war since Napoleon's time, the Dutch supposedly put up a heroic resistance during WW II, just as they had in earlier centuries against Spanish, British, and French invaders. Since the mid '90s, however, research has broken new ground and roused the public²⁸⁹ by showing that the number of recognized members of the resistance had been equal to the number of conveniently forgotten SS volunteers, to say nothing of other less conspicuous varieties of Dutch collaboration. The moving tale of Anne Frank, convenient for national pride and tourism, covered up the less pleasant fact that she, as well as thousands of others, had been given away (i.e. to Auschwitz) by local informers and that 78% of Dutch Jewry was destroyed in the Holocaust, a much higher percentage than in France or Belgium.²⁹⁰

In spite of angry dissent from veterans and nationalist circles repudiating the new trend as calumnious falsification of history, debunking the Dutch myth persists. There is even a study on football during WW II, expanding on the historically rooted violent anti-Semitism of Feyenoord Rotterdam soccer fans, which is still regularly evident when the club plays its "Jewish" rival, Ajax Amsterdam. Considering these findings that strike "a blow against Dutch complacency," a reviewer of the football study contrasted personal memories of growing up in an alleged country of heroes with the recent findings that only "about 0.25%" of the population were active in the resistance. Sarcastically, he concludes that the average Dutchman, just as the average citizen of all occupied countries, resented German occupation. Nonetheless, with the exception of the last, much more brutal phase, "life went on much as it had before the German invasion: placidly, peacefully, orderly, law-abiding... Even the 'Jewish problem' was solved in an orderly Dutch manner... The Dutch didn't collaborate out of conviction but out of habit. Rules were rules."²⁹¹

History in the Cupboard: Italian Version

Bella Ciao

[famous Italian guerrilla song]

The *volte-face* of the fascist veteran and new Italian Prime Minister Pietro Badoglio in September 1943, in fact indicating a split in the ranks of those who had been responsible for two decades of fascist rule and aggression, was the basis for the Italian post-war founding myth about a "second *risorgimento*" – comparing supposed self-liberation from fascism to the 19th century Italian movement striving for the country's liberation and unification.²⁹² The subsequent struggle of *La*

Resistenza, the “biggest resistance movement in Western Europe,” against Italy’s former ally, Germany, and then in a civil war against an allegedly small clique of fascist collaborators gave superficial substance to the Italian self-image as a nation of resisters. Symbolic weight was attributed to April 25, 1945 when guerrilla units entered (and “liberated”) the most important cities of northern Italy. Half a century of official history became based on Italy’s role as both enemy and victim of Nazi Germany during the period 1943-1945, while memories of earlier Axis complicity were suppressed by some nation-embracing version of *omertà*, the Mafia’s oath of secrecy. The catchphrase *Italiani brava gente* [good Italian people] was already coined in 1946, in a war bestseller aptly written by the Italian colonel Giuseppe Angelini, wanted in Yugoslavia for war crimes.²⁹³ The popular slogan, by definition, excluded any involvement in atrocities, any memory of aggressive war, this being the Italian version of the decent Wehrmacht legend in Germany. At the same time, it provided the needed consensus for the new state’s “anti-fascist” ideology by the “de-fascistification” of most former fascists. “Webs of denial spun by the state, academe, and the media have reinvented Italy as a victim, gulling the rest of the world into acclaiming the Good Italian long before Captain Corelli strummed a mandolin.”²⁹⁴ Although for almost half a century the Italian Neo-Fascist party MSI was largely excluded from the politically correct mainstream, the two decades of *domestic* fascist rule (from 1922) were at least latently exonerated by being compared with German Nazism with its brutal dimensions of anti-Semitism and genocide.

Matters changed dramatically in the early nineties when the demise of “real-existing Socialism” demonstrated the hollowness of officially decreed anti-fascism. The subsequent decay of the established Italian party system gave space for the foundation and, in 1994, the electoral victory of a Right-dominated alliance led by Silvio Berlusconi. For the first time after half a century the “Center-Right” coalition and hence the (new) mainstream included the MSI, renamed *Alleanza Nazionale*. The new government fostered ideas of a “Second Republic” different from its predecessor founded, at least nominally, on anti-fascism. The historian Claudio Pavone’s scholarly correct interpretation (*Una guerra civile*, Torino 1991) that the *Resistenza*’s struggle for liberation had been both a social conflict and a civil war as well was used by the Right to put both domestic Italian camps during and after the war on a par as a first step for further reversal. In 1994 and again in the jubilee year 1995, Silvio Berlusconi and his post-neo-fascist partner Gianfranco Fini proclaimed April 25, the day that so long had symbolized liberation from Fascism, as the “real end of WW II” when Italy was “pacified.” In spite of mass demonstrations and President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro distancing himself from obvious attempts of rehabilitating fascism, the Berlusconi government initiated their new foundation myth for the intended nationalist “renaissance” of Italy.²⁹⁵

After his second victory in May 2001, once again in coalition with Fini’s *Alleanza Nazionale*, Berlusconi set about to definitively erode the Left’s cultural dominance. This seemed feasible since “de-demonizing” Benito Mussolini by stressing the “progressive aspects” of Italian fascism and its Duce, hitherto allegedly neglected, had become increasingly accepted. According to foreign observers, “recollections of fascism are practically exploding from Italy’s subconscious” while

writers, filmmakers, and tourism officials generated a heritage industry that turned Italy into “Benitoland,” presenting fascism as a “Disney-like extravaganza” or a matter of folklore. Often the current fascination with the subject approaches full rehabilitation: honour guards at the Duce’s tomb; his picture adorning calendars and wine bottles; his former residences places of pilgrimage and, last but not least, “his apologists in the government.”²⁹⁶ This nostalgia, unimaginable in Germany and perhaps even in Japan, was spawned by the “*singolare schizofrenia dell’opinione pubblica italiana*”²⁹⁷ – that is to say, the persistent and multi-layered Italian policy of covering up their own crimes and highlighting their victimhood.

In spite of this, surprisingly few German perpetrators were pursued by Italy. In a belated case, in June 1994, a military prosecutor searching for evidence against the SS war criminal Erich Priebke²⁹⁸ discovered an armoured cupboard sealed and rotated so its door faced the wall in the barred vault of a Roman palazzo. It contained 695 dusty investigation files, largely of Allied provenance, on German war crimes against Italians, crimes that resulted in approximately 15,000 deaths. Most of the documents had not even been translated. The “shame cupboard” [*armadio della vergogna*] scandal was officially explained with typical Italian nobility: in the 1950s a flood of trials dealing with the criminal past of a great number of Germans would have impeded the FRG’s admission into NATO.²⁹⁹ This explanation and its extenuating mythology, however, was quashed in 2000-01, when a young Italian historian, Filippo Focardi, found and published – with a German colleague³⁰⁰ – documents revealing the real reasons for the cover-up. In the wake of WW II, long before the FRG’s foundation, Rome decided not to take legal action against German offenders for fear of triggering a boomerang effect against many Italians wanted in Greece and, even more so, in Yugoslavia. Trials against Italian war criminals would have eroded the country’s victim image. Consequently, suspects were even warned and helped to keep under cover. None has ever faced justice. Only a few mainstream Italian newspapers ever reported on these revelations, embroiling among others two former Christian Democratic prime ministers, Alcide de Gasperi and Giulio Andreotti.³⁰¹

The bulk of the media, the government, and many traditionalist academics have “greeted the research with stony silence.”³⁰² Instead, historian Ernst Nolte, whose reputation holds sway in Germany only with rightist hardliners, is being courted.³⁰³ A recent biography of Mussolini, clearly “an attempt not at revisionism, but at restoration,” is selling well, praising its hero who “got things done” and who “saved more Jews than Oskar Schindler.” Another book, *Il sangue dei vinti* [The Blood of the Defeated], focussing on the allegedly tabooed subject of the cruel post-liberation vengeance taken upon fascists, topped the bestseller lists. In general, Italian “historiography has become particularly interesting since the arrival of a government that isn’t, obviously, fascist, but which is definitely – in a label that would make sense only in Italy – anti-anti-fascist.”³⁰⁴

In September 2003, in an interview given to the author of the Mussolini biography mentioned above, Silvio Berlusconi described the Duce’s regime as “benign,” seeming to bring the wheel full circle. Nonetheless, as part of a political deal, the government finally agreed to establish a

parliamentary fact-finding committee to investigate why the records related to Nazi [*nazifascisti*] crimes had been concealed in the “shame cupboard.” The committee convened for the first time in October 2003 and has to submit its conclusions within one year from actually beginning its investigations. The battle for Italy’s historic face is still undecided.³⁰⁵

Neutral states

For most of the post-war period, just as was the case during the war, neutral states have been viewed as privileged islands of bliss in a war-torn continent. The concomitant envy may partly explain the ferocity of the attacks launched against them by the international press after recent research revealed the extent to which these states pursued their own self-interest by colluding with the Nazi Reich. It is still unresolved to what extent this collusion, economic though with a distinct politico-strategic dimension, contributed to prolonging the war, an aspect often exaggerated by *public* history. For European neutral states, largely cut off from overseas trade partners by the war, producing goods for and supplying raw materials to Germany had meant jobs and financial profits for both the state and big enterprises; at times it also meant multiple gains for politicians, particularly in dictatorially ruled Spain and Portugal. In exchange for profit, most governments of neutral states further compromised themselves by making political concessions to Berlin, mainly by restricting entrance for Jews and others fleeing Nazi persecution. In recent years these issues have kept a new generation of scholars – some of them serving on state sponsored commissions – occupied, making headlines in the international press.³⁰⁶

The country discussed most, the supposed symbol of the greed and appeasement of neutral states during WW II, was Switzerland. Already in 1945, because of its transactions with the *Reichsbank* processing and laundering huge amounts of Nazi gold mostly looted from occupied countries and murdered victims, the small Alpine state was under fire for being “Hitler’s banker”. At a moral low then, Switzerland took advantage of its economic vigour and the swift escalation of the Cold War.³⁰⁷ Swiss patriots proudly believed that it had been the Swiss army exclusively, not Swiss submissiveness, or usefulness, that had deterred Hitler from invading. During the war, correctly, the country was considered a haven for refugees from adjacent Nazi-controlled countries. Increasing restrictions on asylum either were not known or were considered necessary. Domestic records for the WW II period were accessible only to proven and loyal historians, and soon the country recovered its pre-war image.

In the 1990s, when public interest in new aspects of the Holocaust worldwide skyrocketed, the so-called Nazi gold stolen from Jewish victims became a tangible symbol of Nazi crimes and their unresolved aftermath. Since the lion’s share of the spoils was presumed to be hidden away in Swiss vaults, Swiss banks became the focus of growing public debate on both sides of the Atlantic. Although other countries³⁰⁸ (and private corporations) were also targeted, Switzerland was consistently singled out, a fact resented by many Swiss.³⁰⁹ If we exclude later humanitarian compensation and investigative progress, the main result of the expensive Independent Com-

mission of Experts: Switzerland – WW II, established in 1996, probably was resentment. The commission's head, Jean-François Bergier, was granted first-time access to archives but complained of meeting with obstacles from economic circles. The commission's report did not engender a satisfying political debate on moral ambiguities. Most Swiss politicians had grown weary of the issue³¹⁰ and half the population did not want to press charges considered exaggerated.³¹¹ The mostly younger scholars who, occasionally too vociferously, denounced "pro-Nazi" Swiss wartime policies (such as on asylum, the press, banking, and trading) were branded masochist iconoclasts, supporting a campaign whose "foreign" origins annoyed the populace even more.³¹² President Cotti's public reference to widespread domestic anger about unjustly generalized anti-Swiss criticism, in particular from the "American East Coast," caused sharp reactions from Jewish and American circles, which in turn caused, as polls revealed, a rise in anti-Semitism in Switzerland. Perhaps as a consequence, in the elections of October 1999, xenophobic Swiss People's Party made its best showing ever, becoming the strongest political party and a force to be reckoned with.³¹³

Apologies and Apologists

The apology made by Swiss President Kaspar Villiger in May 1995 was not a general admission of guilt for the country's role in WW II. It was limited to the country's refusal to let Jewish refugees enter Switzerland across the German-Swiss border, an act which resulted in almost certain death for those Jews turned away.³¹⁴ Even this selective apology was preceded by heated domestic debate that divided public opinion.³¹⁵ The opponents of acknowledging guilt, which would implicate the entire nation, were more pleased with their next president, Arnold Koller. In 1997, while announcing the establishment of a Swiss Solidarity Fund for the Relief of Human Need (which ultimately was doomed to failure) including but intentionally not restricted to Holocaust victims, Koller declined to make any further apology. "We don't need to be ashamed that we have escaped war," he said, because in WW II every country had thought primarily of its own interests. The arguments used in the Swiss-foreign apology discourse,³¹⁶ compared with examples from other countries, indicates a few of the parameters involved in the issue.

Since individual guilt is almost never implied, apart from a handful of aged perpetrators who rarely express remorse, apologies are attempts to demonstrate moral distance, to dissociate from a greater collective's sinful past. The main variables in this new guilt discourse are: Who (by what authority and what relation to guilt) is apologizing to whom? Why, how, where, on what occasion, and to what end (including the chance of "being forgiven") is the apology being made?

Accordingly, the biologist Hubert Markl, president of the illustrious Max Planck Society, wrote an essay explaining why he could *not* apologize for the pseudo-scientific experiments of his institution's forerunner, the Kaiser Wilhelm Society. He even questioned the motives and moral authority of anyone, except elected leaders of a nation, who asked for forgiveness on the account of others who were probably unrepentant or even dead. A year later, he was no longer rejecting what

he had described as a “shame performance” and offered an apology.³¹⁷ With the criteria of Markl’s initial reasoning, it could be argued that the mayor of Hiroshima usurped authority when, on the 50th anniversary of the nuclear bomb, he apologized “for the unbearable suffering” inflicted by Japanese militarism and colonial domination on the whole region³¹⁸ instead of dwelling, as was traditional, on Japanese victimhood. His gesture carried no explicit political weight but was in sharp contrast with the scandalous self-righteousness of most Japanese politicians, showing that a similar step should be taken by higher authorities. In contrast, Czech President Vaclav Havel certainly had the authority when he expressed regret about the vengeful expulsion by the Czechs of the Sudeten Germans in 1945, even though his avowal was neither shared nor authorized by a large segment of domestic opinion.³¹⁹ The Lithuanian Catholic episcopate was no less authorized than the country’s president or prime minister to deliver collective apologies for involvement in the Shoah on the part of the bodies they represented; alas, both statements would be worth more had they not been at least partly the result of foreign pressure.³²⁰

How legitimate or useful is it to extract requests for forgiveness? Such attempts can be construed as reciprocal when both sides are in a position to give forgiveness and ask for forgiveness [*do ut des*].³²¹ When there is no reciprocity, however, things are more difficult. The Poles, for example, have waited a long time for an outright apology from Russian leaders, but, to the best of my knowledge, they are still waiting because Moscow fears that this would give credence to Polish claims for recompense.³²² Similar worries have influenced the leaders of other nations. As for the Germans, such reservations dissolve before the Holocaust, both because of its uniqueness and, to put it bluntly, because at least on this subject the FRG long ago stopped resisting the idea of financial compensation. That is exactly why the Germans were quite surprised in early 2000 when the prominent Jewish writer Elie Wiesel urged that during his scheduled visit to Israel the new FRG president, Johannes Rau, apologize for German crimes against the Jews – implying that the Germans were not genuinely repentant. During the subsequent visit Rau did, in fact, request forgiveness for the Shoah in his speech to the Israeli Knesset.³²³ However, how much such a formal request sense when no such forgiveness can be expected, and certainly not from one collective (i.e. nation) to another and over generations. Ezer Weizman, then president of Israel, had already declared that he could never forgive the murderers of 6 million Jews, even less could he do so in the name of those Jews killed. In this, he was not alone.³²⁴ Many Germans feel frustrated by such rebuffs. They sincerely believe, as politicians never tire of stressing, that they have learned their lessons from history and have accepted and commemorated their wrongs. Now they view reconciliation as something to which they are morally entitled – as if continuous acts of collective atonement were necessarily bound to lead to forgiveness.³²⁵

Greeks also have persistently asked for German remorse to be proven in word and deed, but German leaders have carefully avoided wording that can be taken as an apology:³²⁶ the closest any came was a statement by President Rau, who expressed “deep sorrow and shame” at the memorial of the Kalavryta massacre.³²⁷ This clearer wording³²⁸ may have been because of his presence

at the scene of the Kalavryta crime), since he used exactly the same words two years later at Marzabotto, the site of the largest massacre of Italians (770) in Italy³²⁹ by their former German allies.

The triggering factor of geographical affinity is not restricted to extermination sites but, when the act of contrition is related to the Holocaust, defined by any “Jewish context,”³³⁰ a flexible term including *Schindler’s List*³³¹ and even the White House. When in 2000 Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa visited then US President Bill Clinton, he forestalled habitual public censure of Argentine leaders by apologizing “with a deep feeling of pain” for his country’s role in providing post-war sanctuary to Nazis and collaborators. His statement was duly commended by the World Jewish Congress and the American media, who acclaimed De la Rúa’s promise “that his government will investigate how Nazis were allowed to enter Argentina.”³³² This was a charade, for De la Rúa could have just as easily pointed at his hosts. The United States and the Vatican had assisted thousands of incriminated Nazis and cohorts – including Ante Pavelić, the notorious chief of the Croatian Ustaša – to escape to Juan Peron’s Argentina and other havens.³³³ There has been no request for forgiveness about this, although both the US and the Vatican recently have been busy about apologies. In his first 21 years in office, the incumbent pope John Paul II has asked for forgiveness for various transgressions by the Catholic Church at least 94 times. His apologies concerned offences committed by the Inquisition or other Catholic institutions against such groups as witches, women in general, slaves, heretics, and Muslims (during the Crusades). As for the Jews, the Holy See has recently recognized faults and the guilt of Catholics, but Holocaust-specific references, if any, have remained vague because of the ambiguous role of Pope Pius XII (1938-1958), who is internationally accused of having appeased fascism and remaining silent about the plight of the Jews.³³⁴ For the same reason, obviously, no apology has been given about the Croatian context, in which the Ustaša had been a lethal amalgam of fascism and Catholicism. Instead, overruling Serbian and Jewish protests, in the presence of 400,000 enthusiastic Croats, the pope beatified cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, who had decisively contributed to legitimizing the Ustaša regime in 1941.³³⁵

While the Vatican’s post-war assistance to Nazis and the Ustaši could be interpreted as humanitarian solidarity with Catholics fleeing Communist revenge, this is not the case with other self-declared arbiters of morality. Even after the outbreak of WW II, large US firms did business with the Nazis.³³⁶ The current president George W. Bush’s grandfather, Senator Prescott Bush, made a considerable share of the family’s fortune through long and profitable collusion with Nazi Germany up to 1942.³³⁷ After WW II, skeletons were found even within the cupboards of federal agencies. In 1945-46, not only were more than 100 German rocket scientists taken to the States,³³⁸ but also thousands of Nazi war criminals were recruited as experts on Soviet affairs, skills gained through service in the SS, Gestapo, and the Wehrmacht. Obviously, “Washington was in a Cold War mode sooner than most people realize.” Even Eichmann’s obnoxious henchmen Alois Brunner and Klaus Barbie were at times on the CIA’s clandestine payroll. This payroll

was openly headed by Hitler's anti-Soviet spymaster General Reinhard Gehlen, whose post-WW II American-sponsored intelligence agency in West Germany "functioned as the CIA's eyes and ears in Central Europe," doing its best to exacerbate tensions between the superpowers to secure their own indispensability.³³⁹ In exchange for biological and chemical warfare know-how, the US granted amnesty to German experts and even the Japanese leaders of the infamous Unit 731, whose experiments on human beings surpassed in viciousness anything of which the Nazis had thought.³⁴⁰ During the early Cold War, US agencies became even more generous, largely accepting, as staunch anti-Communists, former Nazi associates from Communist countries applying for immigration.³⁴¹ In the 1990s after Washington reprimanded the Baltic and other former Communist states for their slowness in taking war criminals to court, most of them had to be extradited from the US where they had found an asylum after WW II.³⁴²

Bill Clinton established the Nazi War Criminal Records Interagency Working Group to scrutinize US records on these sordid affiliations. The release of a preliminary report in 2000 was not accompanied by any public apology by Clinton, as he had apologized with regard to the crimes white Americans had committed against blacks, native Americans, and Asian Americans,³⁴³ most of whom were US citizens, and voters. The current White House leadership does not favour apologies, since "post-Cold War triumphalism and arrogant unilateralism are rampant among US officials."³⁴⁴ The consequence has been a "murky" and opportunistic use of history. In particular, the current so-called reconstruction of Iraq was and is compared with what is portrayed as the impeccable American post-war record in bringing democracy to Germany and Japan: "History proves we're doing fine."³⁴⁵

Revisionism: (Far East) Addenda

Be proud of grandpa

In this study I have repeatedly criticized post-1989 European revisionism. Both the term itself and criticism of the term can be misunderstood, since revising dominant versions of the past – a never-ending process using new sources and new approaches – is, in fact the *raison d'être* of historians, at least in democratic countries. In the United States, revisionist history has a proud and rich record with authors such as Howard Zinn annoying the guardians of conventional history by unmasking dubious heroes from Columbus to Teddy Roosevelt, Henry Ford, and WW II generals. We are still awaiting a new truly revisionist historiography from Russia and most other Eastern states that challenges the frozen Communist image of history, though care should be taken to avoid a hasty replacement characterized by the inability to admit one's own faults (see, for example, Romania). Challenging and revising prevailing interpretations must not include the remaking of history by reconstructing incontestable historical facts. In Germany, correctly, denial of the Holocaust is not covered by the constitutional right of free speech, while particularly in the USA, despite its genuine revisionist tradition and the influence of the powerful Jewish lobby, Holocaust deniers successfully pose as "revisionists". This is, right or – probably – wrong, how

the West generally understands the term “revisionism.” This prevailing Western perception of revisionism, which attempts to sanitize and *relativize* (i.e., play down) fascism and its offshoots, is not restricted to Germany, Italy, and nationalist post-Communist states. In Spain, for instance,³⁴⁶ the belated awakening of memory has provoked a revisionist counterattack.³⁴⁷ As one expert warned, “in Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Italy, nationalist movements see WW II as the main barrier to rehabilitating nationalism. From Europe to Japan, revisionism about genocide and WW II is on the rise.”³⁴⁸

Japan, however, should be singled out, as it seems to remain largely in an atavistic stage of viewing its war history. Dealing with the transgressions of others is always more pleasant, therefore sensitivity to crimes committed by one’s own country or camp is seldom spontaneous. In most cases, it must be instigated by an outside force. Revisionism counteracts such sensitization through various strategies, such as attempting to erase the demarcation line between victims and victimizers, the same line that crystallized amid the often painful process of facing up to one’s own past. In Japan, however, this line is still largely identified with the separation between natives and non-natives. Consequently, self-serving forces and trends that elsewhere are considered as revisionist, here represent the initial (i.e. 1945-era) interpretation, which still heavily influences public opinion and obstructs attempts to shed light on Japan’s past. This delayed review is partly to be blamed on Japan’s great rival and model, the USA (which, ironically, today finds itself in a similar situation.)³⁴⁹ In 1945, the American occupiers needed the imperial bureaucracy to run the defeated country. For the same reason, they kept emperor Hirohito in place, exempting him from any investigation into his part in aggressive wars and bloody occupations. Because of its geo-strategic importance during and after the Korean War, in 1952 Japan was granted a relatively favourable peace treaty with low state reparations, enabling Tokyo to continue refusing payment of any other compensation.³⁵⁰

In 1995, Japanese daily commemoration of WW II focussed on the victim role, on the war’s consequences to Japan, not on Japan’s role in provoking the war. The Ministry of Education subsidized and recommended to students books and films glorifying the heroic deaths of juveniles: Blood leaking through the white gauze, shaping a big round red spot, the Japanese flag. The self-sacrifices of kamikaze pilots are presented as inspirational motifs, passed down from generation to generation, and commemorated in the official Yasukuni Shrine Museum, which contains sacred relicts, and divine souls, of dead war heroes and even convicted war criminals.³⁵¹ The stunning success of war comics also is disquieting because they appeal primarily to the young, calling on them “to be proud of our grandfathers.”³⁵² These symbols of a commemorative culture, like 19th century war memorials all over Europe, display a conspicuous absence of reference to enemies, to foreign victims of Japanese massacres, to pseudoscientific experiments, or to slave labour, including at least 200,000 mainly Chinese and Korean women and girls abducted to military brothels, euphemistically called comfort women.³⁵³ Among others, Japanese conservatives in 1995 and prime ministers as recently as 2000 declared that politicians should not

apologize for the collective past since history alone (or future historians) would judge everyone's responsibility for the war and its balance-sheet.³⁵⁴

Yet our unfortunate muse Clio has been reduced to a kind of comfort woman, harassed by politicians who, in addition to indemnifications, also block access to archives on sensitive issues. Since 1948, textbooks have been controlled by the Ministry of Education by means of a license system. The late historian Saburo Ienaga, whose most famous book was banned on the strength of 323 ministerial objections, repeatedly sued the state for censorship; he had only a few partial successes in a sequence of lawsuits over thirty-two years. Meanwhile nationalists – historians, politicians, and economic pundits, all campaigning against “masochist views of history” – successfully lobbied for a government decision to remove any references to Japanese war crimes from new textbooks. South Korea and China have demanded that his decision be revoked.³⁵⁵

Japanese governments will anachronistically persist with obsolete images as long as they remain in tune with the militant Right, which still views the Pacific war as the Great East Asian Liberation War against white colonialism. Frequent protests by neighbouring countries, who experienced that so-called liberation at the hands of the Japanese military, have had only little effect, although some Japanese ministers who have produced statements more unrepentant than usual have been forced to resign.³⁵⁶ Even the present prime minister, Yunihiro Koizumi, persists in worshipping at the Yasukuni shrine, symbolizing Japanese militarism.³⁵⁷ In spite of profitable economic and other³⁵⁸ cooperation, mistrust is widespread throughout Asia as long as Tokyo refuses to face up fully to its war history, expressing polite regret but no official apology. In a recent Gallup poll, 79% of the respondents in China cited Japanese lack of remorse to explain their enduring reservations about Japan.³⁵⁹

Between Uniqueness and Trivialization

As we have seen above, public interest in history has soared since 1989, focussing on the Holocaust more clearly than previously. New accessibility to archives, caused by the downfall of the Soviet Empire or by American pressure, has to be mentioned once again. Not only have massive amounts of new sources revealed new aspects of Nazi genocidal policy but also, for example, millions of pages of Ultra intercepts have revised the picture of what the Anglo-Americans knew about the Shoah.³⁶⁰ The oft-mentioned paradox that, in seeming contrast with the growing distance from the actual events, the discourse has intensified, becoming even more emotional, is consistent with the Shoah's quasi-sacred dimensions not obtained by any other genocide, including Stalin's Gulag.³⁶¹ The term Holocaust, meaning systematically planned and performed murder of racially defined “inferior” groups usually is confined to Jews (the Hebrew term *Shoah* always). Attempts to include gypsies and the mentally handicapped remained peripheral in the mainstream discourse. The same is largely true for other “forgotten” victims of the Nazis, such as homosexuals who, however, recently have been receiving increasing attention.³⁶²

Still, there are regional differences. In Russia, the Shoah is not considered as dramatic as the losses of the – defined by religion and other aspects – mainstream population,³⁶³ and the views in Greece and Poland are similar.³⁶⁴ In some countries, such as France, crimes against humanity, i.e. involvement in the Holocaust, are the only crimes for which there is no statute of limitations. Not surprisingly, in the FRG the focus on the Jewish genocide is more intense than anywhere else as the German discourse attempts to redefine the country's historic-moral position. This was made painfully clear by the lengthy debate about a project, conceived even before the fall of the Wall, to create in the perpetrators' country a central memorial site³⁶⁵ to preserve the memory of the six million murdered Jews from all over Europe. In April 1992 the German government decided upon a deeply symbolic location – larger than two football fields – in the heart of reunited Berlin, near the Brandenburg Gate and the most famous icon of German nationhood, the Reichstag. But only in June 1999, the German parliament decided on the design, after years of controversy and delay. Construction was formally inaugurated on January 27, 2000 (Holocaust Memorial Day) and construction actually began on April 4, 2003.

The fierce and persistent inner-German debates on the Holocaust memorial and on Daniel J. Goldhagen's scholarly contestable but politically important 1996 bestseller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, reformulated old questions.³⁶⁶ Was Auschwitz the outcome of a deep-rooted curse on German history, a predictable consequence of a rabidly anti-Semitic predisposition of "ordinary Germans," or a tragic, atrocious, but unique aberration? Did political correctness include the "permanent representation of German ignominy?" In connection with the 50th anniversary of the infamous *Kristallnacht* pogrom on November 9, 1938 more than 10,000 commemorative events took place all over Germany, while the president of the German parliament, Philipp Jenninger, had to resign because of insensitive formulations in his official speech. Ten years later there arose a new dispute over whether remembrance of Auschwitz was a moral obligation or a "moral cudgel"³⁶⁷ with which Germans could unfailingly be knocked down whenever it suited someone else's wishes. Was it possible to criticize Israel or individual Jews without being accused of anti-Semitism? On the other hand, "Holocaust hypocrisy" was condemned for causing passivity toward present-day wrongs. The "Nazi themes" in the media should long ago have been "replaced by Bosnia and Serbia, Somalia, and the Sudan," the thinking went. Others complained that Jews "presume to give rules of conduct to the Germans."³⁶⁸

The prevailing emphasis on the Holocaust at times led to neglect of other aspects and victim groups of WW II. This was demonstrated by FRG President Roman Herzog's multiple gaffe when, in an interview with *Der Stern*, he confused the August 1944 uprising by the Polish nationalist resistance in Warsaw, which he had been invited to honour, with the Jewish uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in spring 1943, to which his predecessors had already paid homage.³⁶⁹ Neither his press attaché nor any of the journalists and editors involved noticed this blunder, which elicited bitter comments in Poland.³⁷⁰ This confusion, however, is not confined to the Germans, as the

following two examples may demonstrate: 1) Repeatedly, the scope of the exhibition highlighting the full spectrum of the Wehrmacht's crimes was narrowed down by foreign correspondents to a "Holocaust exhibit." 2) Even more absurdly, some of the over 500,000 tourists who visit the Verdun battlefield every year (almost as many as died there in 1916), insistently ask to be shown the gas chambers.³⁷¹

As for the FRG, a uniquely delicate relationship will always exist with Israel because of the Holocaust. In 1998, when German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer was asked about the chances for official German criticism of Israel's policy towards the Palestinians, he replied, "Even when justified, criticism coming from Germany would have the opposite effect." Nevertheless, Israel's "Holocaust bonus," meaning the political incorrectness of criticizing Israel, is no longer unconditional, since the FRG has integrated a common European policy on the Middle East, shaped together with nations that do not carry the same stigma.³⁷² Yet in Germany as elsewhere, anti-Semitism frequently is masked as "anti-Zionist" criticism of Israel's current policies.

Although denial of the Holocaust, at least in Germany and Austria, has been made a punishable offence,³⁷³ no legal consequences seem possible for trivializing it. In order to discredit political adversaries, politicians increasingly identify them with stereotype images from the Nazi past, levelling meanings and proportions. Since Nazi Germany remains the archetype of a destructive, genocidal regime, any massacre can be denounced as genocide or Holocaust, any aggressor or even domestic opponent can be compared with Hitler. For example, the 2002 election campaign in Germany was marked to an unprecedented extent by arguments taken from the heavy double German past.³⁷⁴ With the growing distance in time from WW II and the subsequent waning of knowledge of the true extent of the unique crimes committed then, Hitler has become a metaphor for evil, a secularised version of the devil. Even Jews who should know better have fallen prey to this inflationary misuse of superlatives. One of the last survivors of the Warsaw ghetto uprising called the Serbian war on Bosnia "Hitler's late victory,"³⁷⁵ a term that was later widely used by *pro*-Serbian analysts after NATO began bombing.³⁷⁶

In Germany, the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia brought about a complete reversal of the pre-1990 national consensus, not confined to the Left, that the uniqueness of Nazi war crimes ruled out forever any German military involvement abroad. Suddenly, media and politicians turned their moral argumentation upside down and justified their political and physical backing of the Western intervention in Yugoslavia by calling upon what they called Germany's historic obligation to forestall "another Auschwitz," by which they meant that Serbian ethnic cleansing was taking on genocidal dimensions. So the new-fledged coalition supported the deployment of German soldiers in the Balkans "on peace-keeping missions," asserting that not only did Germany's Nazi past not forbid such an intervention, but required it.³⁷⁷

In Western propaganda, particularly, "Hitler analogies have long been the stock-in-trade" – not surprisingly, since "WW II still retains near-universal legitimacy" in discerning good from evil.³⁷⁸ After equating Serbian President Slobodan Milošević with Hitler and Serbian concentration

camps with Auschwitz, the next easy step was to claim the need to deal with “equivalent situations” in equivalent ways, as then US President Bill Clinton urged the American Society of Newspaper Editors: “We must follow the example of the WW II generation, by standing up to aggression and hate.”³⁷⁹ Conjuring up D-Day provided seeming justification for intervening in Yugoslavia. The current US President George W. Bush gave a clumsy repeat performance in 2002 regarding Afghanistan,³⁸⁰ while proposals for falling back upon historic examples were rampant. Concepts from the aftermath of WW II also were invoked. Daniel J. Goldhagen referred to the conclusion made by the Western Allies that reorienting the Germans away from their proneness for militarism was the only way to prevent WW III, proposing a “German solution” for Serbia: Since aggressions, ethnic cleansing, and mass murder committed by Serbian imperialism were supported by a large majority of “ordinary people,” just as had been the case in Nazi Germany, NATO ought to conquer and re-educate the Serbs in order to transform them into peaceful democrats.³⁸¹ Accordingly, the Czech Prime Minister Miloš Zeman drew parallels not only between the Austrian populist leader Jörg Haider and Hitler but also between Yasir Arafat and Hitler, conveniently during a visit in Israel, suggesting to his hosts the “solution” of expelling the Palestinians, as his country had wisely done with its own “Fifth Column” – as he lumped together all Sudeten Germans, stirring up protest not only in conservative German quarters.³⁸²

A new climax was reached in 2003, with Iraq, when history became just one more piece of collateral damage. Since political hardliners and rightwing tabloids on both sides of the Atlantic, swept up in political hysteria, had equated Saddam Hussein with Hitler and declared action against him as being as “morally just” as WW II,³⁸³ it was consistent to denounce opponents of war as traitors or appeasers. US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned that a lack of decisiveness had caused the collapse of the League of Nations and claimed that millions had died because certain countries had thought there wasn’t “enough evidence” about Hitler’s plans. The *Daily Mail*, forgetting its own philo-Nazi past during the 1930s, charged France and Germany with “unforgivable betrayal.”³⁸⁴ The warmongers were even seconded by more serious voices. Jeffrey Herf, a well-known historian, expressed his profound disappointment that the German chancellor had been unwilling and “perhaps intellectually unable” to reflect “on the implications of facing the Nazi past for ongoing policy” – meaning to adopt a policy of “armed anti-fascism” as Churchill and F.D.R. had done – and join the war against Saddam. At the same time he conveniently traced the Iraqi Baath regime’s ideology back, below its currents of Arab nationalism, to “a combination of ideological legacies rooted largely in Europe’s twentieth-century totalitarian era – of French fascism, elements of Nazism, Stalinism” – hinting at association with the stance of the three main antiwar powers. The Pope was once again included among the appeasers, while British Prime Minister Tony Blair took top prize since he obviously had learned from Britain’s historical mistakes.³⁸⁵

Perhaps with more justification, the antiwar camp also did not hesitate to draw arguments from the context of WW II, reminding us that the warmongers were lining up “with the political heirs of Mussolini and Franco” and that Iraq was eventually attacked “on the very Hitlerian grounds of pre-

ventive war.”³⁸⁶ A German minister had to retire after comparing President Bush’s methods with those of Hitler, who, likewise, had used foreign issues to divert public attention from domestic problems. Bush and his crew were enraged since they clearly have “a vision of themselves as neo-Churchills, not neo-Hitlers.”³⁸⁷

For Washington, the proliferation of Holocaust analogies and the patronage of surviving victims of the Holocaust and Nazi slave labour finally backfired because they offered other victimized populations, in particular African Americans and native Americans, the opportunity to claim material and moral compensation for the “black” and “red” holocausts committed by white America. Black activists held up German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as an example just as the USA had done toward Japan in previous years. So blacks, despite a lingering anti-Semitic note in the contemporary American black community, even hired top Jewish lawyers specialized in WW II issues, such as the internationally known Edward Fagan, to demand reparations for slavery.³⁸⁸

Never-ending History?

*Until the end of time, mankind will remember
Auschwitz as part of our, of German, history.*

Philipp Jenninger

The German politician who made the horrifying but cogent prophecy quoted above unintentionally gave credence to the apprehension expressed by a Jewish psychoanalyst who predicted that Germans would “never forgive Auschwitz to the Jews.”³⁸⁹ Both were more than pointed *bon mots* and left heavy marks on the ongoing discussion of whether the Nazi period was a black but closed chapter in German history or was of constant relevance for the Germans (and their neighbours).³⁹⁰ Correspondingly, the long public dispute about the planned central historical triptych initiated in the heart of Berlin (the Jewish Museum, the Holocaust memorial site, the Topography of Terror exhibition in the former Gestapo headquarters; only the first has been completed) revealed both fears and hopes that the time had come to “historicize” that ugly past, to dispose of it by giving it a privileged but quiet place in the tidy museum of German history [*Musealisierung*]. Across the political spectrum this process of “historicization” was seen as necessary, although the many interpretations of the term produced by pundits varied even more than their political ideologies; once again “belches from an undigested past emerged from the belly of the FRG.”³⁹¹

When Peter Eisenman – designer of the Holocaust Memorial scheduled to be finished, after several delays, at least by May 8 [sic], 2005 – recently expressed his wish that the memorial would become part of the new debate on German identity,³⁹² he was annoyed by his wish coming true almost immediately. In October 2003 a survivor warned that she would not be able to set foot on the site if the chemical giant Degussa, with its infamous wartime past, would provide the graffiti-proof coating Protectosil for the 2,700 concrete steles (with a total surface of 56,000 m²) forming the centrepiece of the memorial site. Indeed, a company affiliated with Degussa’s wartime

mother firm had manufactured and supplied the pesticide Zyklon B with which millions of Jews were murdered in the death camps. With reference to this objection, the board of directors of the Memorial Foundation agreed, after a “long and painful meeting,” to bar Degussa from the project, although the latter’s anti-graffiti product was by far the best and offered at a bargain price. The decision to “de-nazify the stones” would delay construction and increase the budget of the 28 million euro project.

The board’s ban plunged Germany into “another agonizing debate over the hold of history through generations,”³⁹³ causing a torrent of commentary in Germany and abroad. While some public figures applauded the decision, others – including many Jews, among them Eisenman – branded the decision as surrendering to political correctness, which should not be allowed to hold people hostage 60 years after the event. In fact, Degussa’s past had been widely known since 1946 when a British Military Court sentenced and executed the two men mainly responsible for supplying Zyklon B. Degussa, however, was among the German enterprises that had sought to redress their sinful past by publicly acknowledging it and establishing the Foundation for Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future, which raised millions of dollars for a government-industry compensation fund distributed to victims of Nazi concentration camps and slave labour. As Eisenman angrily stressed, the firm had been exemplary in its attempts to come to terms with its past. And the *Berliner Zeitung* added in an editorial that “anyone who wants to have a memorial in Germany, by Germans, to recall the extermination of the Jews, will have difficulties to find people or companies whose ancestors had nothing – absolutely nothing – to do with the Nazi dictatorship.” Other left-of-center columnists expressed irritation, sometimes stronger than right-wingers, at critics who, some of them usurping the role of victim, insisted on a sort of “eternal and insurmountable German guilt” or “original sin,” passed on from generation to generation.³⁹⁴

In this ongoing debate evidently two irreconcilable principles confront each other. One, stated by Eisenman speaking for many others, considers it irrational to make all Germans responsible for the sins of their fathers and grandfathers, denying forgiveness to those who endeavour to atone for their (not even personal) past. None of Degussa’s 48,000 employees had worked for it 60 years ago, so it was wrong to penalize and stigmatize them in a collective and anachronistic manner. In addition, as many commentators pointed out, the memorial was expressly a project to be carried out not in a vacuum but in Germany by Germans, descendants of the perpetrators. Any exclusion after 60 years would contravene the concept of remorse and atonement. The other principle, in contrast, maintains that even though commitment to remembrance provided some measure of exoneration for firms with a tainted past, somewhere a line had to be drawn, and Zyklon B was obviously beyond this line. All considerations endorsing the first principle had to be subservient to the feelings of the Holocaust survivors themselves, who could not be judged by rational criteria only. This was stressed by Lea Rosh, initiator of the memorial project in 1988 (and ironically the board member who had insisted upon graffiti protection in the first place): “If someone lost his parents in Auschwitz through Zyklon B, he must be permitted to react emo-

tionally.” This argument already seemed the *ultima ratio* in the ongoing debate invalidating all attempts to bring Degussa back to the project, and it reopened the question: “At what point, if ever, can Germany’s succeeding generations be freed from the sins of their Nazi forefathers?”³⁹⁵

Apart from moral objections, however, practical difficulties increased when new information emerged that hundreds of steles had already been installed and, even worse, a concrete-thinning agent supplied by a Degussa subsidiary had been used in the site’s foundation. Only then, in order to save the entire undertaking (whose opponents in *both* camps were again taking the floor), did a majority of the board decide, “on both moral and practical grounds,” to continue the project with the original subcontractors, Degussa included. Critics insist that pragmatism was the main reason: “In order to save 2.3 million [euro in additional costs], Degussa became acceptable to Auschwitz sensitivities.” At the same time, the *gigantomania* of the whole project, trying to confirm the Germans as “world champions of facing up to their guilt,” once more was denounced.³⁹⁶

A few months earlier, when the present author had just begun working on this study, the above issue had almost seemed defunct. On the 50th anniversary of the June 1953 East German uprising, which was crushed by Soviet tanks, the conservative camp repeated their charge that intellectuals of the East and West, and the German Left in particular, had amnesia in dealing with communist crimes while focussing a highly acute memory on the Nazi period.³⁹⁷ The Left, however, was, and is, far from monolithic. The much-discussed *Schlussstrich* – the “final stroke of the pen” that supposedly would finish the painful discourse about the past and, according to polls, is desired by roughly half the population in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria³⁹⁸ – was no longer an exclusive demand of the conservative camp that had failed to impose it. The wish for the painful discourse to end has spread increasingly from the far right of the political spectrum to other sections³⁹⁹ of the population, even towards the left. The present left-of-centre German government, since assuming power in 1998, has given signals of adopting that wish in terms of establishing a new German normalcy and self-assurance, seeing these as indispensable prerequisites for a sovereign foreign (and domestic) policy.

Certainly, in spite of all Kohl’s ambiguities in applying policy, Germany’s current chancellor, the pragmatic Gerhard Schröder, has fewer historical points of reference than did his predecessor, who holds a Ph.D. in history. One of Schröder’s intellectual associates publicly complained that “our history, in particular that of the ‘Third Reich,’ is the obsession of the academies. In the German media there is a history lesson every day.” Even though it was “not necessary to abolish history lessons,” priority should be given to present and future challenges.⁴⁰⁰ Correspondingly Schröder, the first chancellor with no firsthand memory of WW II, early on showed a tendency to throw off the yoke of the past, such as when he skipped the usual wreath laying ceremony during his visit to Warsaw or when, in 1998, he turned down French President Jacques Chirac’s invitation to the 80th anniversary celebrations of Armistice Day. Fears thus stimulated of a leftwing-led *Schlussstrich*⁴⁰¹ trying to do more than provide normalcy to a “self-conscious nation”⁴⁰² are

out of proportion. In democratic countries in the age of globalization, any such intention would be impossible, since realizing it would require historical research to stop and the country to become isolated from similar discourses abroad.

In most national discourses – not only in Israel and Russia,⁴⁰³ whose people experienced the highest death toll – the reputation of WW II as being the most disputed period⁴⁰⁴ is very much alive, as was shown again on V-E Day in 2003. At that time, even in bucolically peaceful Denmark, justifiably proud of its lonely European record of saving almost all its Jews,⁴⁰⁵ new revelations suggested that it was time to revise the rosy official version and current historiography of what happened in the country during WW II other than in relation to the Holocaust.⁴⁰⁶ Indeed, on August 29, 2003, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen for the first time publicly condemned the Danish state's collaboration (which had been backed by all parties except the communists), on the occasion of the anniversary of the Danes' 1943 celebrated *August-oprøret* [uprising] that put an end to it.⁴⁰⁷ World War II memories frequently overlap with current strife – most visibly in Russia, where Victory Day celebrations in 2002 and 2003 were shattered by bomb attacks related to the war in Chechnya.⁴⁰⁸ In the USA, the 60th anniversary of Pearl Harbor in 2001 became the point of reference set against the most recent *day of infamy*, September 11, which had hammered the message once more into Americans that they were not invulnerable.⁴⁰⁹

Yet even in Central Europe, current policy is often the battleground on which rusty weapons from WW II are still deployed. In Prague, the Resistance Veterans' Association cancelled a commemorative speech by a top Czech politician because of his perceived accommodating attitude toward the expellees, while in Germany ministers were booed by Sudeten audiences for similar reasons.⁴¹⁰ A swath of articles reveal the "contest of [partial] truths" between Czechs and Sudeten Germans, who both see themselves as victims. Despite a solemn German-Czech declaration in March 1997 that "political and juridical issues originating from the past" should not encumber their relations, the conservative German opposition backed demands by the BdV (Association of Expellees) that before the Czech Republic could be admitted to the EU, Prague had to cancel the notorious Beneš decrees, named after Czechoslovakia's President Eduard Beneš, which right after the war had provided the legal basis for the wholesale expulsion of the Sudeten minority. Conversely, most Czech politicians and media warned that such demands were intended to overturn the results of WW II.⁴¹¹ When Prime Minister Miloš Zeman declared that expulsion submitted the Sudeten Germans to a "comparably mild" fate for a "Fifth column," Schröder in turn cancelled a scheduled visit to Prague, not making an official trip there for another eighteen months.⁴¹²

Obviously, the Nazi past will occupy the German discourse for many more years, since it "can only be superseded by an even worse catastrophe."⁴¹³ In any case, the desired new normalcy will be difficult to achieve in view of the enduring German discomfort concerning WW II-related matters, demonstrated here with episodes from two different periods: 1) In 1994, a soccer match in Berlin between Germany and England had to be cancelled after the organizers suddenly realized that the designated date coincided with Hitler's 105th birthday.⁴¹⁴ 2) When, in the summer of

2003, German state television followed a British example and conducted a mass poll for the greatest German of all time, Nazi (and GDR) figures were expressly excluded as candidates, provoking sarcastic comments abroad.⁴¹⁵

Substantial factors ruling out early *historicization* of WW II (to be understood as being accommodated in archives and museums) are media interaction and the wider trend toward cross-national approaches. This was first noticed in Holocaust-era related themes, such as restitutions⁴¹⁶ and indemnifications, on a practical level or a scholarly research level. International cooperation is also required when dealing with refugees or war criminals,⁴¹⁷ matters that cannot be investigated from the perspective of one country. More significant than this technical feature of facilitated global inter-linking is the increasing “Europeanization”⁴¹⁸ of national histories and historical perspectives. For instance, the Sudeten issue touches not only Germans and Czechs but also Austrians⁴¹⁹ and, indirectly, Poles and Hungarians. Particularly for the latter, ethnically based altercations are not things of the past but still affect relations with neighbouring Slovakia, Serbia, and Romania.

As well, cross-national approaches are often triggered by dramatic experiences in other contexts. For instance, during the post-Yugoslavia wars the daily flood of news and pictures awakened WW II memories of ethnic cleansing and mass rapes and sensitized broader international audiences to so-called peripheral subjects, such as the suppression and expulsion of minorities.⁴²⁰ With the shrinking of distances, this trigger effect works on a national, European, or global level. Thus, awarding the 2002 Nobel Prize for Literature to the Hungarian Auschwitz survivor Imre Kertész raised in his country, and perhaps in other former Eastern Bloc countries as well, the public’s extremely low awareness of the Holocaust.⁴²¹ Rwanda, in turn, serves internationally as a contemporary case-study of the rapidity with which victims [the Tutsi] are able to mutate into victimizers,⁴²² reviving memories of the bloody aftermath of WW II in many countries.

Revelations in one country often trigger similar processes elsewhere. The Belgians, for example admitted that they “needed the example of France to act,” before facing up to the tabooed subject of their own involvement in the Holocaust.⁴²³ Recently, news of a suppressed fact affecting many European countries became wider known. In late April 1945, the hard-core Nazis who fanatically defended the last Nazi perimeter in Berlin around Hitler’s bunker consisted mainly of young *Waffen-SS* volunteers from all over the continent; Frenchmen, Danes, Norwegians, Dutch, Latvians, even neutral Swiss and Swedes.⁴²⁴ For Denmark, the deployment of over 6,000 volunteers at the Eastern front, side by side with the Wehrmacht, had been the country’s largest military involvement since its war against Prussia and Austria in 1864.⁴²⁵

The new awareness of common similarities and continuities, in history and myth, increased sentiment for common features and fates, increasingly perceiving WW II as a European civil war.⁴²⁶ In consequence, the Europeanization of national histories has been stretched farther back chronologically, at least to the Balkan Wars and the First World War,⁴²⁷ beyond the Versailles Treaty – often taken as Hitler’s starting point⁴²⁸ – and even back to the Thirty Years War in the

17th century that wiped out one third of Central Europe's population.⁴²⁹ This Europeanization of WW II has at times been connected with fears or hopes of a dilution of German responsibility. When everyone is guilty of having wronged others, the conclusion can be reached that no one carries particular guilt.⁴³⁰

Such mistrust has become evident in connection with the escalation of a BdV initiative, seconded by the leaders of CDU/CSU, to found in Berlin a Memorial Centre for (i.e. against) expulsion and even decree an annual national holiday, to commemorate expulsion of in total almost 15 million Germans, of whom about two million died before they were able to reach the German rump state. However, in accordance with most of the Centre-left camp but not his entire government, Chancellor Schröder has declared his opposition to and refusal to provide government funds for such a predominantly "Germanocentric" approach to this delicate subject. The planned centre, because of its institutional connection with a specific victim group, would, despite all promises to the contrary, unilaterally focus on German sufferings, while there obviously are ulterior intentions to counterbalance the enduring anti-revisionist effects of the Holocaust Memorial in the same city. The chancellor's warning against the damage to foreign relations has proven immediately true. Poles and Czechs, the public at large much more than the elites, feel their old fears and images of Germany are justified. They consider the expellees' project as another attempt to minimize German responsibility and re-write history, another step of a new revanchist hegemonic *Drang nach Osten* [Drive towards the East]. Polish newspapers repeatedly have demanded: "No compassion for the Germans... who again are posing as a victim nation."⁴³¹

In fact, the Poles do not fear a rewriting of history only, but also more practical consequences of "German legal aggression": Recently the Prussian Claims Society was founded in Bonn to give legal and logistical assistance to expelled Germans mainly from Poland but also from Czech and Russian territories in efforts to reclaim their homes or sue for indemnification in German, European, and American courts, this last clearly following the promising example of the Jewish Claims Conference. There are even plans to request compensation for Germans forced to work under slave labour conditions in the East European states after May 1945.⁴³²

The dispute goes on at many levels. Prominent intellectuals from the five countries involved with the expulsion problem submitted joint counterproposals for a European Centre of Expulsions – referring to all (perhaps as many as 70 million) people expelled from their homes and their countries in the 20th century throughout the entire continent, starting and ending with the Balkans at the dawn and towards the end of the century. This centre should not be located in Berlin but in Wrocław (Breslau), Poland, or even in Sarajevo. Others prefer a touring exhibition or no centre at all. Whatever the outcome, freshly healed wounds have re-opened. Yet on the eve of the European Union's enlargement, it is time to be concerned not only with such issues as farm subsidies, but also with the controversial historical experiences histories of member states. These ultimately should merge into a common, multi-layered European identity.⁴³³

There is, however, one more important aspect of this crisis. In Germany but also in other countries,⁴³⁴ almost every time new historical interpretations and insights have grown out of scholarly disputes that then expanded to include large segments of the population. Public dissent broke consensual silence and standardized official commemoration that had lasted for decades. Similar developments can be expected again, not only in Germany (and, we hope, Austria). In Poland the issue of the expulsion memorial caused the first, after the Jedwabne massacre debate, great discussion about its own history, but this time virtually the entire nation, from the post-communist Left to the ultra Right, is unified in opposition to the BdV project. Nonetheless, there are signs of a softening in attitudes about general war-related stereotypes. In a Gallup poll, 57% of Polish respondents said that Germans *also* had been victims of WW II. This was a higher percentage than a similar poll had shown in Germany. The conservative paper *Rzeczpospolita* was at a loss to explain this surprising result, commenting, "Not only the Germans, but we too, are forgetting who was victim and who was perpetrator."⁴³⁵

Between Past and Future

The past has a future.

Stefan Ulrich, SZ, September 8-9, 2001

History is the future of the past's present.

Bernhard Schlink⁴³⁶

We must move on. That does not mean we should forget.

Peter Eisenman⁴³⁷

In recent disputes about real or alleged German provocations, the harsh style of argumentation used by many younger Poles and Czechs has surprised observers. Clearly, the descendant generations also have selective memory, with the victims' descendants tied more emotionally to the transgression than the perpetrators' descendants. The persistent notion that the gradual passing away of the war generation would smooth the stony path of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is only partly valid, even though direct confrontations between "good" and "bad" veterans are going to cease. This mainly refers to courtroom clashes between war criminals and victims/witnesses and to provocative performances by veterans of the Wehrmacht, SS, or collaboration units (e.g. in Latvia). The last annual gathering of one of the most bloodstained Wehrmacht units, the 1st Mountain Division, with logistical help from the *Bundeswehr* and the governing in Bavaria CSU party, stirred up considerable opposition, including the physical presence of some surviving victims, mostly Greeks and Italians, among them the 93-year-old "real Corelli," Amos Pampaloni. There will not be many more repeat performances.⁴³⁸ The quality of the descendants' memories (and commemoration culture) will depend on where these "memories" come from, with what they are compared, and how they are moulded by ancestors, education, and, inescapably, the ongoing (omni)presence of history in the media.

First, the often observed historic amnesia, ignorance,⁴³⁹ or disgust⁴⁴⁰ of the younger generation, deplorable in any case, will not help reduce ethno-cultural prejudices and stereotypes, but can even render them potentially more dangerous, as has been confirmed by recent research.⁴⁴¹ Similar reactions could be expected from superficial fascination with narrowly selected sensational chapters from a former enemy's history. In spite of more positive public opinion polls, British relations with Germany clearly are coloured by memories of war, largely cultivated. In the tabloid press and among politicians, suspicion is strong that Germany, via the EU, is still trying to win WW II, which, after all, was and is "for some Britons at least, a kind of icon or our inner superiority."⁴⁴² Even in the biggest London bookstores the German history section is limited almost exclusively to the Nazi period. Britain's Office for Standards in Education recently criticized the *Hitlerization* of high-school curricula, in which German history is narrowed down to those twelve dark years from 1933 to 1945, about which pupils are taught more than any other chronological period.⁴⁴³

The frequent identification of Germany with Nazi Huns – led by the notorious tabloid, the *Sun*⁴⁴⁴ – encouraged football hooliganism and even physical harassment of German students studying in England. After such an incident, the German ambassador rebuked British newspapers and school curricula for perpetuating stereotypes. Reaction to the ambassador's remarks was encouraging in several respects: A young German journalist on an exchange program in London commented publicly that the media, including war films "with those eternally imbecile Nazi Germans and the ever sharp-witted British," spread clichés, but she doubted that the populace was prejudiced against the Germans to a dangerous degree. Furthermore, she disagreed with the ambassador, instead backing the British curricula because "the Nazi part of German history is something that teaches a lesson not only to Germans." The *Guardian*, conversely, in an editorial, ("Prisoners of the Past") acclaimed the ambassador to have rendered Britain a great service by exposing "obsessive continuing equation of Germany with its Nazi past," which is "unfair to two great countries." Then the editorial extolled German society for being "far more serious than we are about facing up to the past, far more knowledgeable about it, and far more committed to putting its lessons to the service of the future."⁴⁴⁵

In connection with the dispute on Allied area bombing, some other British voices asked if, since the Germans had confessed their guilt, it was "perhaps time for us to express our regret?"⁴⁴⁶ In July 2003, the British ambassador to Germany honoured the 40,000 civilian victims of Operation Gomorrha, which sixty years earlier had demolished Hamburg. Three months later, he travelled to Kassel, where a British raid had killed 10,000 people in one night.⁴⁴⁷ By May 2005, when the 60 years' round of the commemorative marathon will come to an end, the British ambassador probably will have visited more German cities to lay wreaths, just as German diplomats and ministers increasingly do at sites where the Wehrmacht or SS committed massacres.⁴⁴⁸ It has yet to be seen if all this is a surge in political correctness or something more substantial.

In spite of frequent setbacks, these developments do seem promising. A common European future cannot be approached without reflecting upon one's own faults,⁴⁴⁹ by smugly harping

only on the transgressions of other member states. Such an attitude is counterproductive, especially when the most of the “guilty nations” have more or less accepted collective shame and responsibility, though not collective guilt.⁴⁵⁰ In autumn 2003, even Ion Iliescu, president of “unrepentant Romania,” established a committee of experts headed by Romanian-born Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel and promised to give access to all archives in order to clarify the nation’s role in the genocide, still denied a few months earlier.⁴⁵¹

The ostensibly simple idea of admitting one’s own transgressions in WW II is more difficult in former occupied countries than in those, like Britain, which went relatively unharmed by Nazi terror. At the same time it is unfair to require greater maturity from those nations that have little more than a decade of at least some form of democracy under their belts. A German journalist proposed a simple solution to unblock the current Sudeten dispute. Both sides, he suggested, should agree on two sentences: “The expulsion was a breach of human rights. Yet it was the consequence of Nazi terror, in which Sudeten Germans were not without guilt.”⁴⁵² A Czech probably would reformulate this to be phrased more sharply, but we are still waiting for any such high-level declaration to advance that of 1997, which has already been quoted. Meanwhile, the debate goes on, weighing down EU offices.

Nevertheless, it is not only in Western countries⁴⁵³ that images of WW II history have acquired greater dimensions compared with the previous clean but simplistic distinction between *us* (victims) and *them* (perpetrators). Such discoveries have increasingly been made in Czechia and Poland as well. This delicate process, however, must not be disturbed by self-righteousness gloating in formerly hostile countries⁴⁵⁴ or by self-defeating initiatives such as the one currently being pressed by the German expellee association. Certainly German victims are entitled to commemorate their own or their ancestors’ plights, but only as long as they do so in the proper context. Fear of revitalizing the post-Versailles fatal myth of the mistreated victim nation is still rampant.

Whenever *two* unresolved incriminating “pasts” exist, we must come to terms with both, not merely the convenient one at the other’s expense. Particularly Germany, which received the gift of its reunification thanks to the “mercy of history,” has an increased obligation to remember the lessons of 1945, since people mainly learn from negative experiences.⁴⁵⁵ In 1999, Weimar, Europe’s *cultural capital* for that year, honestly confronted its double past as “home to Goethe and to Buchenwald.”⁴⁵⁶

Since reconciliation is not possible unilaterally and should be done on an everyday basis, this process must be encouraged through bi- or trans-national initiatives that promote sharing histories and perspectives with neighbours so that they may learn from each other’s experiences. In reading the press, it is clear that such groundbreaking common projects, on a grassroots level or higher, are not frequent enough. Such projects as the German-Czech Foundation for the Future, which itself followed the lead of successful earlier examples from other countries, need to be copied.⁴⁵⁷ In contrast to previous bi-national cooperation between sister cities similarly destroyed by the Germans, current twinning programs are more ambitious, bringing together even the likes

of Coventry and Dresden with their antithetical symbolic connotations.⁴⁵⁸ Moreover, war graves are mutually tended by youth from the countries involved, as a memorial to peace.⁴⁵⁹ For the 60th anniversary of the Battle of Stalingrad German and Russian historians discussed the lessons from the battle and its myth, a co-produced TV series was transmitted on the same days in both countries with identical commentaries, and in the German-Russian Museum in Berlin a co-sponsored exhibition is dedicated to Stalingrad in the memory of both nations.⁴⁶⁰ On the 40th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty of French-German Friendship in early 2003, Berlin and Paris decided that a new common history textbook for German and French high schools would be prepared for distribution by early 2005.⁴⁶¹ As a Christmas present in 2003, President Jacques Chirac removed “one of the last thorns from the past” in German-French relations by inviting Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to join the 60 year commemoration festivities for the Allied landings in Normandy. The chancellor happily accepted the invitation that had been denied his predecessor Helmut Kohl ten years before.⁴⁶²

While the need to converge images of history seems obvious, methods and responsibilities loom large. Many older historians from the former Eastern bloc countries, with the prominent exception of Poland, seem unprepared for such a convergence,⁴⁶³ which for many of them would spark a personal *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. We will have to wait until a generation of unencumbered scholars, at present still heavily overshadowed by the older generation, dares to begin innovative scholarly discourses that can affect the public at large.

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, after the war generation departs, the quality of remembrance depends upon education and the media. Serious voices are sounding the alarm that any further decrease in the teaching of history demanded by economy-dominated lobbies is dangerous because it will further reduce knowledge as the basis for mutual and self-understanding. Modern history courses are needed to overcome narrow national perspectives, to take into account the new European landscape and avoid easy conclusions and stereotypes.⁴⁶⁴ In Görlitz, on the German-Polish border, pupils and their teachers approach Nazi history in the local context and helped restore a monument honouring the victims of a nearby concentration camp.⁴⁶⁵ Poles are honouring sites in their country connected with the German anti-Nazi resistance⁴⁶⁶ while international seminars are being held at the most famous site, Kreisau.

Even in Austria – named in the latest report by the Wiesenthal Centre as the country that has done the least to bring Nazis to justice⁴⁶⁷ and where “general awareness of history” is “still immature” – in a poll taken in 2001, 61% of the respondent youths said that it was “very important” to teach students about the Nazi period of Austrian history.⁴⁶⁸ A nationwide grassroots education project to keep the memory of Austrian Holocaust victims alive for post-war generations was highly successful by personally connecting pupils with events and individual victims.⁴⁶⁹

Because of its proximity, the media have the important task of making new scholarly knowledge, including information about formerly ignored subjects, more widely known to the public at large, although the dissemination of news often is restricted by political considerations. History televi-

sion, in particular, with its “colour, action, biography, and narrative” can bring “charisma and passionate argument to bear on the meanings of the past.”⁴⁷⁰ However, since “edu-tainment” aspires not only to entertain and excite but also to educate, there is a growing risk, at a time when even history students seldom read history books, that ambitious media moguls could stimulate historical imagination in self-serving ways. Even more, the inflationary surplus of documentaries raises the danger of overexposure, possibly resulting in aversion; the media stampede is racing ahead on a narrow path. We are able to check its progress almost on a daily basis because, with the 2003 Stalingrad event as a forerunner, a new commemoration marathon has already begun. TV teams have started working early on big documentary sequels for the 60th anniversary of D-Day⁴⁷¹ and other major events and topics, while others have not waited for the calendar. The epochal 1945 “returned” already after 58 years, in 2003. The media surge dealing with WW II in 2003 and apparently not slowing down in 2004 engages and thrills large sections of the public to an extent inconceivable even in 1995.⁴⁷²

In most countries, the argument between the defenders and the challengers of obsolete myths and shibboleths goes on. In Germany, one camp calls out, “Never again!” (meaning may we never see the likes and consequences of Nazism again)⁴⁷³ while the opposite camp bellows ever louder, “That’s enough!” (meaning we should end the confrontation with the Nazi past). Characteristically, the latter camp thinks it absurd when legal action against aged and mostly senile suspects is taken so long after the events concerned,⁴⁷⁴ whereas the former camp reverses the question and insists on asking whose fault it has been that legal action was not taken earlier. This strife has entered a new stage with still undecided dynamics. Readily or not, the *progressives* have accepted that the dimension of German victimhood, widely neglected (even considered suspect by themselves and most foreigners) for most of the post-war period, has finally become a legitimate part of the nation’s collective memory of WW II, provided this sense of victimhood does not proliferate wildly. If the mainstream accepts this condition and stops dealing with the new German victim culture out of context, the achievements of more than half a century of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* will continue to grow.

With good reason, prominent historians have warned that the “abundance of past” and negation of the past were “antithetical symptoms of the same inability to accept bygones, master the present, and ponder the future.”⁴⁷⁵ Still, I think that, in steering by necessity between Scylla and Charybdis, the fragile barque of collective remembrance should sail closer to abundance while not allowing the crew responsible for coming to grips with the present to be swept away: The past beneath the present, largely converted into history, should no longer dominate our time, but the present generation must learn the foundations upon which they move and build. Fifty years after V-E Day, a Jewish historian pleaded against keeping present-day Germans captive to a collective diachronic stigma transferred from generation to generation.⁴⁷⁶ Now, nearly a decade since this call, most people in the former Allied countries seem to agree, even accepting, with conditions, the unfamiliar image of German victimhood.

The Jewish psychoanalyst Aron Ronald Bodenheimer, while referring to the Jewish (and Israeli) tendency “to convert suffering into a virtue,” said, “We, the Jews, should forget the Shoah, the others never.”⁴⁷⁷ Half a century earlier, in the 1950s the French President Vincent Auriol, when asked by German students how long the French would need to forget German occupation crimes, gave virtually the same advice, “If *you* will remember them, it will be much easier for *us* to forget.”⁴⁷⁸

As we have attempted to demonstrate, there is widespread acceptance (with varying degrees of sincerity) of the necessity to keep in mind also the darker aspects of one’s own national history, while a growing public admits⁴⁷⁹ that this is not to be limited to the 20th century’s established villains on the international scene. Even so, redemption is not guaranteed to countries or individuals facing up to the grim aspects of their past, since no individual or group has the right, in exchange for repentance, to expect more than reconciliation and demand absolution and forgetting. Expressing impatience with delays in transforming the painful past into (academic or public) history has always been counter-productive. This double message should be broadened to all dimensions and to all bearers of the heritage of WW II, the mass media playing an ever-larger role.

¹ The original (conference) version of this paper was published in: *Kathimerini*, 3.2.2002, 17.2.2002. For reasons of space, quotations from newspapers usually do not contain authors and/or titles of articles, except where these are considered particularly meaningful. Dates are rendered according to the European system: day.month.year. Abbreviations: FAZ [Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung], FR [Frankfurter Rundschau], MT [The Moscow Times], NYT [The New York Times], NZZ [Neue Zürcher Zeitung], SZ [Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich], taz [Die Tageszeitung, Berlin].

² National Archives, Washington, Rg 59, 781.00, 3.12.1957 HBS, Confidential.

³ *Kathimerini*, 11.4.1999, 13.7.2001, 23.7.2002; *Eleftherotypia*, 14.7.2003. For the long-term causes, inherent in the outdated educational system, cf. Antonis Liakos, *To Vima*, 20.7.2003.

⁴ *Kathimerini*, 18.4.2003; *Eleftherotypia*, 18.4.2003.

⁵ Cf. "History's Cultural Comeback," *The Washington Post*, 26.12.2002; "Don't Know Much About History," *Time Magazine*, 5.5.2003.

⁶ From the plethora of films that "pulp the history" of WW II, *Saving Private Ryan* was singled out: "It's the way you tell it," *The Guardian*, 17.12.2002. Here we should mention also the US species of white vs. black (bad) "comic strip history" produced even by academics (Richard Evans, in: SZ, 28.7.2003). See, however, below for similar tendencies in other countries.

⁷ *The Guardian*, 9.12., 17.12.2002; MT, 2.8.2000.

⁸ See, e.g., "Making sense of Serb, Croat History," MT, 16.8.1997.

⁹ See, e.g., MT, 9.7.2002.

¹⁰ FR, 22.12.1994; SZ, 14.9.1995; *Kathimerini*, 7.7.1999.

¹¹ *To Vima*, 10.3.1996; *Kathimerini*, 24./25.3.2001, 17.2.2002.

¹² In this study, there are only few references to Greeks' facing up to their past of war and civil war, with which this author is dealing elsewhere.

¹³ *Die Zeit*, 6.6.2002; NZZ, 14.3.2001, 5.1.2003, and many others.

¹⁴ Because of its success already bought by foreign channels, among them the Greek state owned TV channel ET1.

¹⁵ This does not allude to sexually-tainted "medial sensations" asking, e.g., "Did gay affair provide a catalyst for Kristallnacht?" (*The Guardian*, 31.10.2001), or whether Mussolini had been cuckolded by Donna Rachele (quotes in: *The Washington Post*, 22.11.2001).

¹⁶ *The Times*, 20.5.2003; *The Guardian*, 20.5.2003.

¹⁷ NZZ, 21.1.2000; *Main-Rheiner Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24.6.2003 - Cf. for Russia: MT, 11.5.1995.

¹⁸ *The Guardian*, 17.12.2002, 21.7.2003, 25.7.2003; *The Independent*, 21.7., 22.7.2003.

¹⁹ On this see my "Nationalsozialistische Besatzungsherrschaft im Vergleich: Versuch einer Synopse" in Wolfgang Benz, et al. (eds.), *Anpassung – Kollaboration – Widerstand. Kollektive Reaktionen auf die Okkupation*. Metropolis, Berlin 1996, pp. 257-302. For an outstanding analysis of postwar dealings with this past, cf. Tony Judt, "The Past is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," in István Deák, et al. (eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe. World War II and its Aftermath*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, pp. 293-323.

²⁰ Susan Eisenhower, *Moscow Times*, 1.6.1994 [reprint from *The Washington Post*].

²¹ H. Fleischer, *To 'ζωτικό ψεύδος' της Αυστρίας, [Austria's Shameful Existence] To Vima*, 20.2.2000.

²² Often conveniently identified with ethnic or other minorities to be “cleansed” – particularly German ones, if they were available.

²³ Compare the case of Italy below.

²⁴ See, e.g., Hagen Fleischer, *Thetis*, vol. 7 (2000), p. 370f.; *Kathimerini*, 11.1.1998; *Athener Zeitung* 15./22.10.1999.

²⁵ *Pons - Collins, German-English Dictionary*. Unabridged 4th edition, Stuttgart et al., 1999, pp. 870, 139.

²⁶ The term “unmasterable” was used, especially for the Nazi past, by the then Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker in his famous speech giving viewpoints about WW II 40 years after its end (see below).

²⁷ NZZ, 9.3.1995.

²⁸ *Ta Nea*, 20.2.2002 / cf., among many others, *The Moscow Times*, 16.9.2000.

²⁹ Cf., e.g., *To Vima* [from *The Times*], 24.4.1994; *Freitag*, 22.5.1998; Thane Rosenbaum, NYT, 8.11.2003.

³⁰ On the medial picture of the “Third Reich” and WW II in the Fifties and early Sixties see: Reinhard Kühnl, *Das Dritte Reich in der Presse der Bundesrepublik. Kritik eines Geschichtsbildes*, Frankfurt 1966.

³¹ This euphemism, as if crimes had been perpetrated by others *usurping* the German name, prevailed in public discourse (e.g.: *Die Zeit*, 16.11.1990; for a recent example, see: MT, 7.8.2001).

³² NZZ, 21.8.1995. Cf. also Hagen Fleischer, “Kriegsverbrechen in Griechenland: Schuld *ohne* Sühne” in W. Wette and Gerd R. Ueberschär (eds.), *Kriegsverbrechen im 20. Jahrhundert*, Darmstadt 2001, pp. 208-221.

³³ Hagen Fleischer, “Der lange Schatten des Krieges,” *Athener Zeitung*, 15./22.10.1999.

³⁴ *taz*, 17.6.2003.

³⁵ Against Eichmann (Jerusalem 1961) as well as the “Auschwitz trial” (Frankfurt 1963-1965).

³⁶ Cf., among many others: *Die Zeit*, 11.12.1992 (J. Habermas); NZZ, 11.12.1999; *Die Zeit*, 1.2., 8.2.2001; J. Fest, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 9.5.2003.

³⁷ *Time Magazine*, 29.4.1985. On the dispute about Bitburg cf.: Jan-Holger Kirsch, “*Wir haben aus der Geschichte gelernt.*” *Der 8. Mai als politischer Gedenktag in Deutschland*, Köln, Weimar, Wien 1999, p. 79ff.

³⁸ *Die Weltwoche*, 21.7.1994.

³⁹ *Die Zeit*, 31.7.1992.

⁴⁰ Although in the GDR as in other communist states the onus soon was restricted to an ideologically as well as geographically remote influential clique of reactionary, chauvinist, and imperialist elements of plutocracy, thereby flattering an alleged majority of “anti-fascist-minded people.”

⁴¹ See, e.g., “Stasi kommt–Nazi geht?,” *Die Zeit*, 31.7.1992; MT, 15.9.1994.

⁴² Quotes from *Daily Telegraph* and *Evening Standard* in *The Guardian* 5.7.2003; and from German source in Detlef Bald et al., *Mythos Wehrmacht. Nachkriegsdebatten und Traditionspflege*, Berlin 2001, p. 163.

⁴³ *Der Spiegel*, 17/2001.

⁴⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 21.6.2003. See also footnote 90.

⁴⁵ Quote, e.g., in: B. Pampel, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 6.1.1995, p. 33; compare below.

⁴⁶ MT, 15.9.1994.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Eleftherotypia*, 21.10.1990; *Die Welt*, 13.4.1995; NZZ, 24.4.1996; *Die Zeit*, 30.7.1993, 5.7.2001.

⁴⁹ In some cities there was a quick change of all street names that commemorated members of the communist resistance, in others authorities abstained from renaming when the resisters had been executed by the Nazis! (*Die Zeit*, 31.7.1992) Already in April 1990 "Karl-Marx-Stadt" landed "on the garbage heap of history," when a plebiscite decided to rename the town in Chemnitz (*Die Welt*, 9.5.2003).

⁵⁰ When it was uncovered that Beate (and Serge) Klarsfeld, with their impressive record of (German and French) *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, and the investigative journalist Günter Wallraff had received information from the Stasi, it not only called into question their personal moral integrity but also left a taint on the content of their revelations (Cf., e.g., "O los tis Kyriakis," *Eleftherotypia*, 29.6.1997; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 12.8.2003; *To Vima*, 24.8.2003; *Der Spiegel*, 1.9.2003; NZZ, 9.9.2003; FR, 25.9.2003).

⁵¹ Apart from the discrepancy in the "quality" of victims, there were more distinguishing features between the two phases as to number and reasons of casualties. Though thousands died under Soviet control through "criminal neglect," no mass murder was planned or committed. Soviets had been killed in Nazi custody deliberately and in much higher numbers (*Die Zeit*, 30.10.1992; MT, 27.11.2000, cf. MT, 11.4.1995, 21.3.2000).

⁵² taz, 8.5.1995; O. Lafontaine, quoted in *Der Spiegel*, 24/2001, p. 169; G. Grass, quoted in NZZ, 12.1.2003.

⁵³ FR, 31.8.1994; *Freitag*, 23.12.1994; *Kathimerini*, 5.5.1995. Already on the eve of unification, a slight majority of all West German parties, other than the Greens, agreed on this. (*Der Spiegel*, 15/1989).

⁵⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Die Zeit*, 11.12.1992; in English: *New Left Review*, January/February 1993.

⁵⁵ *Die Zeit*, 30.10.1992; *Standard*, 26.7.2003.

⁵⁶ *Kathimerini*, 11.5.1993 [from *Liberation*]; *Freitag*, 23.2.96; FR, 30.1.1997; and many others.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Jacob Heilbrunn, "Revisionist Nationalism", MT, 20.4.2000 (Hitler's birthday!), [from *Los Angeles Times*]. Cf., however, the strange publicity in Greece rendered to the recent and, in addition to everything else, outdated Greek translation of "Hitler's War" (e.g., *To Vima*, 30.3., 13.4.2003).

⁵⁸ *Die Zeit*, 16.11.1990.

⁵⁹ *Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, quoted by: taz, 5.1.1995; also: NZZ, 24.2.1995.

⁶⁰ Cf. MT, 7.6.1994; SZ, 31.3-1.4.1994. Liberal voices expressed support for those wanting to commemorate on their own a victory that, in the end, also helped liberate Germany. (*Die Zeit*, 3.6.1994). Other observers, conversely, considered this argument valid only for celebrations confined to veterans.

⁶¹ MT, 7.6, 8.6, 16.6, 22.6.1994, and many others.

⁶² Similar arguments were made by Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of Dwight D. Eisenhower and chairperson of the Center for Post-Soviet Studies (MT, 1.6.1994, from *The Washington Post*).

⁶³ FR, 9.3.1994; *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.3.1994; NZZ, 18.3, 19.3.1994.

⁶⁴ FR, 9.3.1994; *Freitag*, 27.5.1994.

⁶⁵ "Berlin is still a siren to Allied soldiers," MT, 9.9.1994.

⁶⁶ Cf. Foreign minister Klaus Kinkel's jubilee speech stating that, "May 8th brought freedom and democracy to the West, tyranny to the East." (Bulletin [issued by the *Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Bonn*], 15.5.1995).

⁶⁷ MT, 8.6, 25.6, 30.8.1994, 22.2.1996. The Berlin authorities had "forgotten" that without Gorbachev giv-

ing the green light in 1990, the city and all Germany would still be divided! (*Eleftherotypia*, 8.5.1995).

⁶⁸ *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 31.8.1994, quoted in *The Moscow Times*, 3.9.1994.

⁶⁹ See the text of his meanwhile canonized speech in: *Bulletin*, 9.5.1985.

⁷⁰ "Only a thinly veiled way of saying defeat over Germany" (MT, 9.5.1995, cf. also MT, 6.5.1995)

⁷¹ *Die Welt*, 21.3.1995; and quotation from FAZ, in: Michael Naumann, *Die Zeit*, 3.2.1995.

⁷² FAZ, 23.1.1995.

⁷³ Published in a sequel of three large ads, in which numbers 2 and 3 served as retort to the "aggressive campaign of Leftist media" (FAZ, 7.4., 28.4., 5.5.1995).

⁷⁴ E.g.: MT, 8.4., 6.5., 11.5.1995; SZ, 10.4.1995; NZZ, 11.4.1995; cf. Kohl's speech on 8.5.1995.

⁷⁵ For a recent example, see: FR, 10.6.2003.

⁷⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Die Zeit*, 31.3.1999. Cf.: MT, 30.8.1994; FR, 31.8.1994; FAZ, 18.12.1996. Similar all-round dedications can be found at German military cemeteries in the former USSR (*Die Zeit*, 9.9.1994).

⁷⁷ FAZ, 8.5.1995; similarly: *Die Welt*, 17.6.2003, stating that May 8 for "many" Germans meant not liberation but the "final fall of [good?, H.F.] old Germany"; cf. FR, 17.6.2003.

⁷⁸ MT 8.4., 9.5.1995; SZ, 6-7.5.1995; *Kathimerini*, 7.5.1995; *Eleftherotypia*, 8.5.1995; *Die Welt*, 8.5.1995.

⁷⁹ *Die Welt*, 4.5.1995; MT, 9.5.1995. Cf. polls in 1994 (*Neue Ruhr-Zeitung*, 1.6.1994).

⁸⁰ J. Willms, "Siege und Sieger," SZ, 10.5.1995.

⁸¹ The French president, the Russian and British prime ministers, and the US vice president.

⁸² Speech by Finance Minister Weigel, *Bulletin*, 15.5.1995.

⁸³ Cf. FR, 22.3, 29.3, 31.3.1995; FAZ, 22.3.1995. As substitute, Kohl invited Foreign Minister (and ex-detainee in Auschwitz) Wladyslaw Bartoszewski for a separate commemoration ten days earlier in the German Parliament.

⁸⁴ *To Vima*, 21.5.1995; *Kathimerini* 27.5.1995; *Apoyevmatini*, 28.5.1995; FAZ, 8.5.1995; SZ, 10.5.1995.

⁸⁵ A few samples from the dispute: FAZ, 18.12.1996; *The Economist*, 15.8.1998; *Der Spiegel*, 25.5.1998.

⁸⁶ *Die Welt*, 17.6.2003; *Kathimerini*, 5.5.1995; Cf. *Newsweek*, 17.3.2003: "Searching for an identity that consists of more than just crimes."

⁸⁷ "New Book Reopens Door on German Guilt Debate," MT, 6.5.1996.

⁸⁸ Cf. the Neonazi slogan on t-shirts "Grandpa was o.k." (Note 352).

⁸⁹ MT, 3.9.1994, 25.12.1997; FR 3.5.2003.

⁹⁰ *Die Zeit*, 5.11.1993; NZZ 11.11.1995. However, the post-Communist *Neues Deutschland* still (21.6.2003) counts three dozen Bundeswehr barracks named after Wehrmacht officers.

⁹¹ *Lübecker Nachrichten*, 28.11.2001; *Bayernkurier*, 13.12.2001; The *Bayernkurier* – the central organ of the Christian Social Union (CSU), the (even more to the right) sister party of the CDU, governing in Bavaria for almost the entire post-war period – had attacked the people behind the exhibition of "leading a campaign of moral annihilation against the German people" (e.g., 22.2.1997).

⁹² *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 29.11.2001; *Die Zeit*, 9.11.2000; SZ, 27.11.2001; *Der Tagesspiegel*, 28.11.2001.

⁹³ E.g., *Die Welt*, 26.3.1995; FR, 27.3.1995; cf.: taz, 3.12.2001.

⁹⁴ NZZ, 11.12.1999.

⁹⁵ Cf., e.g., SZ, 21.11.2000.

⁹⁶ *Bulletin*, 16.9.1998; cf. *The Guardian*, 9.12.2002.

⁹⁷ NZZ, 2.6.1995. Cf., however, the obituaries on Riefenstahl's death (all German papers, 10./11.9.2003).

⁹⁸ The present author was responsible, thematically, for "reprisals and executions of hostages" and geographically, for the Balkans, including Greece, which had not been included in the first exhibition.

⁹⁹ *Die Zeit*, 30.11.2000; *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 29.11.2001; and hundreds more.

¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, even in some serious foreign papers, this "biggest-ever neo-Nazi march" and the subsequent clashes received almost more attention than the exhibition proper. See, e.g., *The Guardian*, 2.12.2001; *The Independent*, 2.12.2001.

¹⁰¹ E.g., *Die Zeit*, 6.12.2001.

¹⁰² K. Pätzold [one of the leading WW II historians of the former GDR], *Junge Welt*, 22.10.2003.

¹⁰³ *Die Welt*, 9.12.2002; cf. *The Times*, 12.2.2003.

¹⁰⁴ taz, 27.11.2002; also *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 24.6.2003.

¹⁰⁵ E.g., *Der Spiegel*, 6/2002; *Freitag*, 8.2.2002. Cf. also the motto of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁶ *London Review of Books*, 28.11.2002; Beevor, MT, 5.6.2002; *Die Welt*, 2.11.2002; *The Observer*, 3.11.2002; taz, 27.11.2002.

¹⁰⁷ J. Friedrich, *Der Brand. Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940-1945*. Munich, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ "Speaking the unspeakable," *The Guardian*, 27.8.2003 [from *The London Review of Books*].

¹⁰⁹ Friedrich, pp. 512 ff., quoted in most press reviews.

¹¹⁰ Friedrich, quoted in *The Los Angeles Times*, 28.3.2003; cf.: *The Times*, 12.2.2003; *Die Welt*, 24.7.2003.

¹¹¹ *Der Tagesspiegel*, 9.1.2003; *Nürnberger Zeitung*, 5.4.2003; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 27.11.2002; *Junge Welt*, 22.10.2003; a.o.

¹¹² Cf. Kurt Pätzold, "Deutsches Leid," *Junge Welt*, 22.10.2003.

¹¹³ Cf., e.g., *Die Welt*, 9.12.2002; FR, 23.12.2002; *Die Zeit*, 50/2002; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 4.2.2003.

¹¹⁴ *Die Welt*, 21.11.2002; see also *Die Zeit*, 49/2002.

¹¹⁵ Some critics felt reminded of Goldhagen, his form of self-presentation and "blood-seeking historiography" (*Die Welt*, 9.1.2003); cf. *Der Spiegel* 49/2002. A reference to Auschwitz stresses an *Allied* fault, i.e. the American and British decision not to bomb the railways leading there (Friedrich, *op. cit.*, p. 130).

¹¹⁶ *Die Zeit*, 49/2002; FR, 23.12.2002; *Die Welt*, 9.1.2003; e.g., Friedrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 110 ff, 378. Cf. note 134.

¹¹⁷ NZZ, 5.1.; 12.1.2003.

¹¹⁸ *Neue-Ruhr-Zeitung*, 12.12.2002; *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 25.11.2002; SZ, 27.11.2002; FAZ, 26.11.2002; *Heilbronner Stimme*, 4.12.2002.

¹¹⁹ *Die Welt*, 21.11.2002, 16.12.2002; *Nürnberger Zeitung*, 5.4.2003; and many others.

¹²⁰ *The Times*, 12.2.2003; "Mr. Important," *Die Welt*, 7.8.2003.

¹²¹ Quotes from *Al-Ahram* in *Die Welt*, 16.12., 19.12.2002.

¹²² "The carpet-bombing campaign of the great democracies," *Ha'aretz*, 8.10.2003.

¹²³ *Kathimerini*, 13.4.2003; *Los Angeles Times*, 13.4.2003; cf. *Indian Express*, 11.2.2003.

¹²⁴ *Die Zeit*, 25.4.2002; *The Times*, 12.2.2003; *NZZ*, 12.1.2003.

¹²⁵ *Boston Globe*, 20.4.2003; *New York Review of Books*, 12.6.2003; cf., among many others, Sp. Moskovou, *To Vima*, 21.4.2002; *Le Point*, 27.9.2002; *The Guardian*, 10.5.2003.

¹²⁶ *SZ*, 27.11.2001; cf. *NZZ*, 12.1.2003.

¹²⁷ *Der Landser* uses the sympathetic vernacular term for the ordinary frontline soldier.

¹²⁸ "So realitätsnah wie möglich," *FR*, 11.8.2003.

¹²⁹ *Die Zeit*, 14.2.2002, and 40/2003.

¹³⁰ *Die Zeit*, 23.10, 30.10.1992; *FR*, 30.10.1994; *Berliner Zeitung*, 12.9, 13.9.1998; cf. however, note 432.

¹³¹ Quoted in: *Junge Welt*, 22.10.2003. Cf. also notes 72 and 73.

¹³² *FAZ*, 18.2.1995; cf. Kirsch, 72. FRG president Herzog considered it necessary to stress the "fundamental difference" between Dresden and Auschwitz (*FR*, 13.2., 14.2.1995). Much earlier left-of-centre papers called Dresden's destruction "a barbarian act." (*Die Zeit*, 30.10.1992).

¹³³ *The Economist*, 6.5.1995. Cf., however: *The Guardian*, 7.2.2004; *The Independent*, 13.2.2004.

¹³⁴ Eric Markusen and David Knopf, *The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing: Genocide and Total War in the Twentieth Century*. San Francisco and Oxford 1995. Remarkably, Friedrich does not mention this title in his bibliography, although he most probably knows it. Similarly, the present author was not able to find any reference to it in the plethora of reviews on Friedrich's books.

¹³⁵ A. Beevor, *London Review of Books*, 28.11.2002. Beevor's explanation of silence about mass rapes, i.e. that German men had obstructed revelation of this, their worst humiliation (*MT*, 5.6.2002), is also insufficient.

¹³⁶ *Die Zeit*, 25.4.2002.

¹³⁷ Recurring charges of revisionism against Friedrich were rendered undeserved because of his former scholarly work (*FR*, 23.12.2002; *To Vima*, 5.1.2003; *Die Presse*, 5.4.2003) and his ex-Trotskyite background. (*Die Welt*, 9.1.2003). Indeed, his former publications have no revisionist undercurrent but we know of similar cases where left-of-centre historians allowed themselves to get adopted by the conservative camp and only then became prominent. Already in context with the first Wehrmacht exhibition, Friedrich had attacked an allegedly dominant "Left totalitarian opinion climate" (*FR* 30/31.10.1999).

¹³⁸ *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 24.6.2003; *The Observer*, 5.10.2003; *SZ*, 18.10.2003. Recently, the author's identity was revealed.

¹³⁹ *taz*, 27.11.2002. In consequence, Beevor's book is highly disliked in Russia, while in Britain it is even much more popular than in Germany (*MT*, 5.6.2002; *The Observer*, 3.12.2002).

¹⁴⁰ *Die Zeit*, 8.6.2000, 42. I am not referring only to rather crude ventures, such as *Le Livre noir du communisme* (Paris, 1997).

¹⁴¹ *Die Zeit*, 49/2002.

¹⁴² A few years ago, the following, not isolated case would have been unthinkable in the mainstream press

– in spite of its elements of truth. A journalist lamented that “horror (and evil) per se” was still depicted in the millennial crime of Auschwitz, and not, for example, in the destruction of Indians in North America, in the Turkish genocide against the Armenians, in the mass murders committed by Stalin or Pol Pot against *their own* people. According to this view, any change in the stereotype of Germans as a nation of culprits was hindered by the universal “commercialization of Nazi wrongs in word and picture.” Even FRG state television would, “every grey November” [alluding to the “Crystal Night” pogrom on November 9, 1938] indulge in “documentation and elucidation work.” In consequence, at home and abroad, the multi-faceted German history was “narrowed down to those 12 dark years from 1933 to 1945” (*Heilbronner Stimme*, 4.12.2002).

¹⁴³ *Die Zeit*, 25.4.2002.

¹⁴⁴ Bernd Ulrich, *Die Zeit*, 30.10.2003.

¹⁴⁵ *Die Welt*, 24.7.2003, and many others.

¹⁴⁶ J. Friedrich, *Brandstätten*, Munich 2003. Cf., e.g., *Die Welt*, 16., 24., 27.10.2003; SZ, 18.10.2003; *The Guardian*, 21., 22., 24.10.2003; FAZ, 24.10.2003; and many others.

¹⁴⁷ “Germany’s forgotten victims,” *The Guardian*, 22.10.2003.

¹⁴⁸ MT, 1.2.2000; *Die Zeit*, 14.2.2002; *The Guardian*, 10.5.2003, 23.1.2004.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. “Debate over tolerance hangs over Germany,” *Los Angeles Times*, 13.7.2003: “A country where the Constitution is a paean to political correctness but the soul is often a place of quiet prejudice.”

¹⁵⁰ NZZ, 3.4.2002. Indeed, the tide does not seem to abate, even in media considered as “progressive.” Cf., e.g., the cover story in *Der Spiegel* (6.1.2003), initiating a new series on German suffering.

¹⁵¹ *Die Zeit*, 30.10.1992.

¹⁵² Cf. Spyros Moskovou, *To Vima*, 5.1.2003 and Titika Dimitroulia, *Kathimerini*, 13.7.2003.

¹⁵³ *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 2.9.2003; *Ha’aretz*, 8.10.2003. Friedrich (pp. 122 ff.) rightly refers to these cases in order to demonstrate the brutality of, particularly, British strategy. Characteristically, he left out the devastating bombing on the “periphery” (e.g. Piraeus in January 1944). Cf. note. 113.

¹⁵⁴ FR, 22.9.2003; cf. *The Observer*, 5.10.2003, and others.

¹⁵⁵ The Wehrmacht signed the document of unconditional surrender twice: first at Eisenhower’s headquarters in Reims, then, almost two days later, in more official form, at Shukov’s headquarters in Berlin-Karlshorst. This explains the West’s and East’s different dates for celebrating the end of WW II.

¹⁵⁶ MT, 5.4, 6.5.1995, cf. MT, 8.9.1994.

¹⁵⁷ *Die Zeit*, 15.9.1992, and many others.

¹⁵⁸ In the western half of Europe to be compared only with Spain. (See below).

¹⁵⁹ Such as the Hungarian soldier who was captured by the Red Army in 1944 and “buried” since 1947 for more than half a century in a far-off Soviet psychiatric clinic. This made headlines also outside his home country, where he returned in 2000 (e.g.: *The Moscow Times*, 15.9, 18.10.2000, 30.10.2001).

¹⁶⁰ The holders of Hitler’s skull fragments, “99.99% authentic,” in the former KGB archives, want to keep their trophy “forever” in Russia (*Der Spiegel*, 18/2000; MT, 25.4.2000). In any case, neither Austria nor Germany has yet applied for its “repatriation.”

¹⁶¹ NZZ, 1.10.1993.

¹⁶² MT, 11.6, 29.7, 30.7, 2.8, 4.8.1994; *Die Zeit*, 22.7.1994; NZZ, 2.8., 3.8.1994. Cf., most recently: Adam Zamoyski, “Solving the Polish conundrum,” *The Spectator*, 1.11.2003.

¹⁶³ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 31.7.1992, p. 48; *The Moscow Times*, 18.7.1998.

¹⁶⁴ *Die Zeit*, 3.9.1993; NZZ, 26.8, 6.9.1993. Subsequently, Budapest urged Boris Yeltsin to return the remains of Count Istvan Bethlen, pre-war democratic prime minister, who had been deported in 1945 to Siberia because he was a potential rallying point against a communist regime. Since his ashes had been disposed of in a mass grave, the reburial ceremony centred on a coffin draped in the Hungarian flag, containing three shovels of Russian earth (NZZ, 18.6.1994).

¹⁶⁵ *To Vima*, 27.10.2002 [translation from NYT]; see also below. Maybe serious consideration should have been given to the idea to bury the tsar along with the embalmed Lenin (e.g., MT, 8.7., 17.7.1998).

¹⁶⁶ "Burying Past Confusion," MT, 17.7.1998; FR, 17.7.1998; MT, 18.7.2002; *The Guardian*, 15.7.2003.

¹⁶⁷ See the stunning difference in the caring of the "privileged" Polish section of NKVD mass graves and the neglected Russian part. Even better care was given to the war graves and memorials honouring the former German invaders. See, e.g., MT 26.6.2001.

¹⁶⁸ Together with 5,000 Ukrainians: "Memorial honours massacre victims," MT, 20.6.2000.

¹⁶⁹ MT, 20.6.2000.

¹⁷⁰ MT, 7.6.1996, 8.8.1998, 22.4.1999, 16.9.2000; *Der Spiegel*, 43/1998, 19/1999.

¹⁷¹ See, e.g., "Germany's Return to Yugoslavia," MT, 6.12.1995, cf. 24.6.1995.

¹⁷² On October 21, 1941, the Wehrmacht slaughtered 2,300 Serbs in Kragujevac.

¹⁷³ Cf. *Junge Welt*, 2.11.2002; see also below.

¹⁷⁴ So the headline in MT, 26.6.1999, referring to the discovery of thousands of skeletons in Slovenia.

¹⁷⁵ NZZ, 24.4.1996, cf. "Skandale und Skelette", NZZ, 12.5.2000.

¹⁷⁶ MT, 24.9.1998.

¹⁷⁷ "Man finds World War II mass grave," MT, 27.8.1998, cf. 21.6.1994.

¹⁷⁸ "Yalta Jews' Bones Remain Unburied," MT, 9.9.1994.

¹⁷⁹ See, in particular: "In Honour of the Dead," MT, 1.6.1996, cf. MT, 21.6.1994, 29.12.1995.

¹⁸⁰ At the previous celebrations in the Western capitals he had been represented by Vice President Al Gore.

¹⁸¹ This boycott, because of the parallel Russian war of suppression in Chechnya, was attributed by many observers to Kohl's pressure attempting to offset the German defeat, the occasion for the celebration, with the new German role as principal victor of the Cold War. (See, e.g.: Spyros Linardatos, *To Vima*, 21.5.1995; *Apoyevmatini*, supplement "An," 28.5.1995; and other Greek papers.

¹⁸² Cf. e.g., MT, 6.5., 9.5.1995, 12.5.1998; SZ, 9.5.1995; *Die Welt*, 8.5., 10.5.1995.

¹⁸³ "Russia lays its bitter legacy to rest," MT, 18.7.1998.

¹⁸⁴ "Yeltsin shows country 80-year Civil War is over," MT, 18.7.1998.

¹⁸⁵ MT, 2.2., 4.3.1993, 24.2.1994, 23.2.2000.

¹⁸⁶ The reconciliation process with nationalist anti-Communist traditions goes on. See the rehabilitation of "White" generals (MT, 8.8.2002; *Der Spiegel*, 15/2002), excluding explicitly collaborationist anti-Communism [General Vlasov, hanged in 1946] in WW II (MT, 2.11.2001).

¹⁸⁷ Putin referred also to peaceful achievements, such as in health care, science, space travel, and sports.

¹⁸⁸ *Moscow Times*, 5.12.-21.12.2000, on a daily basis; cf. *Die Zeit*, 14.12.2000; *Der Spiegel*, 51/2000. Recently, to the dismay of Communists and Liberals, the Duma accepted Putin's proposal for a new Red Flag for the army featuring Soviet-era stars and a large tsarist-style double eagle (MT, 5.6.2003).

¹⁸⁹ "Russia seeks an ideology you can sing," MT, 8.12.2000.

¹⁹⁰ See for the ongoing discussion: *The Guardian*, 28.7.2003.

¹⁹¹ NZZ, 21.8.1999. Only a few NGO's, in particular the Memorial Society, go on collecting evidence.

¹⁹² Thus the title of an article from which this author took his (first) introductory motto (MT, 9.5.1995).

¹⁹³ MT, 16.3.1995, 23.5.1998, 22.8., 23.8.2001; 5.2.2003; NZZ, 2.2.2003; cf. *The Observer*, 1.12.2002.

¹⁹⁴ " 'We are one,' Yeltsin tells War Allies," *The Moscow Times*, 9.5.1995; cf. MT, 15.3.1995, 29.1.2000.

¹⁹⁵ G. Roberts, *The Guardian*, 28.2.2003, cf. *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 16.9.2002; *Junge Welt*, 1.2.03; MT, 5.5.1995; *Die Zeit*, 50/2002; *The Guardian*, 13.2.2003.

¹⁹⁶ *The Daily Telegraph*, 5.3.2003, 21.2.2003. See also: *The Scotsman*, 4.3.2003; *The Times*, 3.3., 5.3.2003; NZZ, 6.3., 19.3.2003; *The Washington Post*, 5.3., 6.3.03; CNN, 5.3.2003.

¹⁹⁷ Jean MacKenzie, "Confessions of a Russophile: V-E Day party has fresh face," MT, 12.5.1998.

¹⁹⁸ MT, 4.5.1995, 28.1., 3.2.1999, 6.12.2001, 3.6.2003, and many others.

¹⁹⁹ MT, 3.2.2003.

²⁰⁰ "The Great Patriotic War," MT, 5.5.1995; MT 5.3.1993, 25.6.2003; *Die Weltwoche*, 11.5.1995. *The Guardian*, 13.2.2003, contrasting the Russian losses of perhaps 27 million people with the 135,576 US casualties in the European theatre. The Soviet strategy contrasted sharply with that of Communist Yugoslavia, which grossly exaggerated casualties in order to substantiate Tito's founding myth. Among others, there were similar tendencies in Greece to maximize (material and human) losses [e.g.: *Kathimerini*, 14.12.1997], though or even because the Greek resistance movement failed to gain power after the war.

²⁰¹ See, e.g., "Putin honours Army past and present," MT, 23.2.2000. (The ceremony took place at the gigantic Mother Russia statue in Stalingrad.)

²⁰² I.e., the submarine *Kursk* and the sacrificing of hostages taken by Chechen guerrillas in a Moscow theatre (MT, 11.11.2002).

²⁰³ MT, 5.6.2002.

²⁰⁴ See below. Similarly, Moscow objected to revisionist tendencies in German commemorative policy in the two-phase concentration camps with a potential to play down Nazi crimes (e.g., MT, 27.11.2000; *Der Spiegel*, 3/2002). Indeed, Russia connects both its imperial pasts with current polemics. When Denmark gave shelter for the separatist Tchetchenian World Congress, the Danes were accused by *Isvestija* of having committed repeated "treacherous" acts against Russia – from refusing asylum to the Romanovs in 1917 to Danish SS volunteers fighting along with the Wehrmacht on the eastern front (*Der Spiegel*, 45/2002).

²⁰⁵ MT, 8.12.2000; *Die Zeit*, 14.12.2000.

²⁰⁶ MT, 9.5., 11.5.1995.

²⁰⁷ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10.5.1995.

²⁰⁸ "The other side of the war," MT, 5.5.1995. The same question often came up in the context of German unification: Mitterand had qualms, while Thatcher even expressed fear that united Germany would, before long, have won WW II (e.g., "Britain and the war," *The Economist*, 20.2.1999). Correspondingly, after the

disintegration of the USSR, Russian veterans were bitter that finally Germany emerged victorious (MT, 22.2.1996). See also, in the Baltic context: A. Liakos, *To Vima*, 13.7.2003.

²⁰⁹ "Polish anger at 1939 invasion lingers," MT, 16.9.1999, see also MT, 18.9.1999.

²¹⁰ "Poland's President honours victims of [...] Nazism and [i.e., Soviet] totalitarianism," MT, 18.9.1999.

²¹¹ Remembrance of terror sells: In Cambodia – along with Angkor Vat, designated a World Heritage site – the "killing fields" of the Khmer Rouge outside Phnom Penh are the biggest tourist attraction, where "horror, memory, education, and livelihood commingle." (*National Geographic Today*, 10.1.2003).

²¹² *Die Zeit*, 5.7.2001; A. Liakos, *To Vima*, 13.7.2003. Lithuania has also the "Gulag-Park," a Disney-Land of (Soviet) terror (*Der Spiegel* 18/2001), much better attended than the Jewish (Holocaust-) Museum.

²¹³ "Budapest revisits its recent horrors," *Boston Globe*, 6.4.2003; cf. NZZ, 25.2.2002; *The Times*, 10.2.2003; *Der Standard*, 6.8.2003.

²¹⁴ MT, 8.12.2000. Anyhow, the bulk of Russian modern history museums are still limited to the Great Patriotic War (e.g., MT, 16.5.1995).

²¹⁵ "Stadt der Erinnerung," NZZ, 21.7.2003.

²¹⁶ In Croatia, for instance, not only "classic" communist-era monuments have been removed but also those honouring the guerrilla movement (NZZ, 24.4.1996).

²¹⁷ *Kathimerini*, 7.5.1995, and many others.

²¹⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 14.6.2003; taz, 19.6.2003; *Boston Globe*, 18.6.2003; *Los Angeles Times*, 18.6.2003. See, e.g., for the Romanian pogrom in Iassy: NZZ, 6.11.1999, 6.2.2002, 21.11.2003.

²¹⁹ See, e.g., NZZ, 30.11.1996, 20.5.2000; MT, 6.2., 11.2.1998; *Der Spiegel*, 17/2002, 40/2002.

²²⁰ Compare, e.g., *The Guardian*, 16.8.1993; MT, 20.8.1996; NZZ, 30.11.1996; *Der Spiegel*, 48/2002.

²²¹ E.g.: "Lukashenko visits Jewish grave site," MT, 7.5.1997.

²²² The head of the Serbian collaborationist government is extolled as "Serbia's saviour" by many exponents of the mainstream and new/old academic elites. (*ak - Zeitung für linke Debatte und Praxis*, 15.8.2003).

²²³ In 2002, to convince the West of Romanian suitability for admission to Euro-Atlantic alliances, the Iliescu regime passed legislation making it illegal to revere fascism and war criminals (i.e., the war leader Marshall Antonescu [1940-1944], executed in 1946). Meanwhile post-1990 Antonescu monuments have reportedly been removed and streets bearing his name were renamed yet again. However, the second strongest party (For Greater Romania) has already declared its intention to rehabilitate Antonescu for good if it is victorious in the 2004 election (taz, 31.7.2003).

²²⁴ The "improved" version of Croatian history tries frantically to distinguish between the creature and the creators, i.e. between the NDH – the first "Independent Croatian State," 1941-1945, which realized a "thousand-year-old dream" – and the Ustaša movement that had created and ruled it.

²²⁵ O los, *Eleftherotypia*, 21.10.1990.

²²⁶ See below, note 256 (Jedwabne).

²²⁷ *Die Zeit*, 9.5., 6.6.2002; NZZ, 17.4.2002; SZ, 14.10.2003. In Western countries also, taboos were often broken by outsiders from abroad.

²²⁸ See, e.g., *Die Welt*, 6.6.2003. Cf., below, the case of Poland.

²²⁹ The most significant exception is Poland, where the regime change was the result of a "negotiated" rev-

olution (on a round table between regime and opposition) and internal peace was considered more important than “searching for [divisive] truth” (e.g.: NZZ, 14.3.2001). In consequence, incriminated old elites were not removed, as long as they cooperated with the co-called *lustration* procedure, a kind of catharsis by elucidation, and were even able to return to power in the November 1995 elections.

²³⁰ NZZ, 14.5., 5.10.1999.

²³¹ MT, 10.12.2001; see below.

²³² MT, 25.4.1998; cf. also: *Die Zeit*, 5.7.2001.

²³³ MT, 6.2.1998; NZZ, 20.5.2000.

²³⁴ MT, 25.1.2000; NZZ, 20.5.2000.

²³⁵ See, e.g.: *The Moscow Times*, 9.2., 24.6., 30.6., 21.7., 2.11.1993, 10.7.1996, 10.3., 18.3.1998. The mayor of Moscow spoke even of “a consistent policy of genocide” (MT, 25.4.1998).

²³⁶ “The marked difference in the parade’s reception illustrated the passions that divide the country’s two communities when it comes to WW II.” (MT, 17.3.1998).

²³⁷ MT, 25.3., 25.4.1998; 17.3.1999, 26.2.2000; NZZ, 20.5.2000.

²³⁸ MT, 12.11.1993, 24.11.1998.

²³⁹ “Baltic States must face their past,” MT, 27.9.1994.

²⁴⁰ MT, 12.11.1993; 24.12.1997; 11.2.1998, 28.9.2000, 10.12.2001; NZZ, 9.1.1999; SZ, 14/15.7.2001.

²⁴¹ NZZ, 20.5.2000; MT, 20.6.2000, 10.12.2001.

²⁴² BBC News, 29.11.2002.

²⁴³ At times “Jewish-Bolshevist terror”. It was conveniently forgotten that in the multi-national inner circle of the NKVD and its forerunner agency as well as in Lenin’s entourage, there were strong Latvian factions.

²⁴⁴ MT, 25.4.1998; NZZ, 9.1., 26.11.1999, 20.5.2000.

²⁴⁵ NZZ, 20.5.2000; MT, 16.1.2001. Cf. the introductory motto for this chapter.

²⁴⁶ NZZ, 14.10.2000.

²⁴⁷ FAZ, 22.3.1995; MT, 2.8.2000; *Die Welt*, 8.5.2003; and many others.

²⁴⁸ For Katyn see, e.g., *To Vima*, 22.4.1990; MT, 26.8.1993, 29.10.1994; FAZ, 13.4.2000; SZ, 17.9.1999.

²⁴⁹ MT, 2.6.1995, 9.4.1995, 18.9.1999.

²⁵⁰ MT, 17.1.2002; SZ, 17.1.2002.

²⁵¹ “Polen als Siegermacht in Berlin,” *Die Welt*, 8.5.2003.

²⁵² “Gedenken an Katyn in Polen,” *Die Welt*, 3.6.1995.

²⁵³ See, e.g., *Der Spiegel*, 39/2000; *Die Welt*, 14.6.2002, 11.4.2003; cf. below.

²⁵⁴ *Die Zeit*, 10.12.1993; MT, 24.4.2000; *Der Spiegel*, 15/2002; *Die Welt*, 17.5.2003; SZ, 8.1.2004.

²⁵⁵ See below, notes 431-432.

²⁵⁶ Jan Gross, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton, 2000.

²⁵⁷ “Polen empört sich über jüdische Klage,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 4.8.1999.

²⁵⁸ The ex-Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland, renamed after the regime change as have been many such institutions, now deals with “crimes against the Polish people, 1939-1989,” but also with Polish post-1945 offences against Germans and other ethnic groups.

²⁵⁹ Cf. *Freitag*, 30.3.2001; *Le Monde*, 31.3.2001; *Eleftherotypia*, 26.4.2001; *Berliner Zeitung*, 15.7.2001; *Der Spiegel*, 10/2001, 22/2001, 28/2001, 29/2001; *The Economist*, 28.4.2001; SZ, 10.9.2001; taz, 20.12.2001, 4.11. 2002; *The Guardian*, 19.12.2002; *Die Welt*, 12.7., 5.11.2002, 1.5.2003; FR, 14.1.2003.

²⁶⁰ This observation applies also to the Asian war theatre, see especially for Okinawa: NZZ, 9.9.1995.

²⁶¹ FR, 28.7.2003; cf., e.g.: *The Independent*, 17.12.2002; *The Times*, 15.5.2003; *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 14.5.2003; *Neue Ruhr-Zeitung*, 10.8.2003.

²⁶² taz, 10.5.2003; cf. *Der Spiegel*, 12/2000, 44/2003; *Kathimerini*, 30.4.2002 [from *The Guardian*].

²⁶³ In Greece, civil war began before liberation. The fronts became blurred, and the occupiers' terror often overlapped with the “white” and “red” terrors imposed by the two principal domestic camps. Consequently, doubts remain about the accuracy of body counting (and attributing them in precise percentages to their respective killers), as recently is en vogue (Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Red Terror: Leftist Violence during the Occupation,” In: Mark Mazower (ed.), *After the War was Over*, Princeton and Oxford 2000, pp. 142-183). In this context cf., e.g., media speculations on whether an accidentally unearthed mass grave originated from WW II or the Civil War, or if the bones were much older (*Athens News*, 6.7.2001).

²⁶⁴ In Spain about 50,000 Republicans were summarily executed by the Franquists and buried in mass graves between 1939 and 1946, i.e. after the “official end” of the Civil War (*Der Spiegel*, 43/2002).

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*; *Berliner Zeitung*, 22.8., 24/25.8.2002; *Eleftherotypia*, 18.7.2002 [from *The Guardian*]; *To Vima* 1.12.2002 [from *Le Monde*]; FAZ, 21.11.2002; *The Guardian*, 1.12.2003.

²⁶⁶ “Massengrab des Spanischen Bürgerkriegs entdeckt,” *Der Standard*, 1.9.2003; *Der Spiegel* online, 1.9.2003.

²⁶⁷ Such as, even in model countries Norway and Denmark, appalling treatment of native women accused of “horizontal collaboration” with the German enemy and of the offspring of such liaisons, see, e.g., FR, 2.10.1998; *Der Spiegel*, 34/1998, 8/2001.

²⁶⁸ Particularly in connection with the postwar decolonization process involving the often brutal (“Nazi-like”) suppression by the colonial powers such as France, the Netherlands, and Belgium. See, e.g., Pierre Nora's reassessment of the Algerian war of independence: *Die Zeit*, 14.3.2002. While the German public followed the revelations on their neighbours' offences with a certain degree of *schadenfreude* [gloating], in early 2004, it was shocked by new research publicized on an early case of German genocidal policy when the Kaiser's troops systematically decimated the defiant Hereros, women and children included, in “German South West Africa” [Namibia]. Cf., e.g., SZ, 10.1.2004 (2 articles); taz, 10.1.2004 (4 articles!).

²⁶⁹ *Journal*, [Esch, Luxemburg], 6.12.2002.

²⁷⁰ “Holocaust-era related assets,” a broader term than the previously used “Nazi gold,” indicated the scope of the international conference held in Washington in 1998 and attended by over 40 states and a dozen (mostly Jewish) NGOs. The present writer was a member of the Greek delegation.

²⁷¹ NZZ, 30.11.1996.

²⁷² NZZ, 13.5.1995; see below.

²⁷³ *The Economist*, 6.5.1995; FR, 28.4.1995; FAZ, 4.5.1995.

²⁷⁴ *Ibidem*; NZZ, 10.6.1995, 20.6.2000.

²⁷⁵ *The Economist*, 6.5.1995.

²⁷⁶ MT, 9.12.1994, 12.1.1995; *Daily Telegraph*, 21.8., 16.12.2003; *Junge Welt*, 21.11.2003; *Los Angeles Times*, 25.1.2004. After the waning of the perceived Soviet threat in the early '90s, anti-Japanese sentiment in the USA increased, although, unlike before 1941, the concern now was mainly economic, as exemplified by a bestseller just in time for the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor with the eye-catching title, *The Coming War with Japan*. Cf. note 409.

²⁷⁷ Files released in 1992 shed new light on large-scale collaboration by residents of the Channel Islands, the only German-occupied part of the UK, as well as on post-war cover-up to avoid tarnishing Britain's image (*Athens News*, 3.12.1992; Madeleine Bunting, *The Guardian*, 4.5.1992, 24.1.2004). British agencies had encouraged resistance throughout occupied Europe with the sole exception the Channel Islands in order not to expose *British* subjects to German reprisals. In addition, during the Cold War Britain allowed many thousands of East European Nazi collaborators to immigrate because of their anti-Communist backgrounds.

²⁷⁸ "Memories of war. No end of lessons," *The Economist*, 6 May 1995; cf. *The Economist*, 20.2.1999.

²⁷⁹ Cf., e.g., "Tabu Vichy," *Der Spiegel*, 38/2001; "Le masque de Vichy" (Interview with Robert Paxton), *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 8.1.2004.

²⁸⁰ Cf., e.g., *Die Zeit*, 30.9.1994 (interview with the historian Henry Rousso).

²⁸¹ SZ, 1-2.6.1994; *The Economist*, 6.5.1995.

²⁸² See, e.g., *Der Spiegel*, 38/2001; Interview with Pierre Nora, *Die Zeit*, 14.3.2002. The only Jews who arrived in Auschwitz from *unoccupied* territories, came from Vichy-controlled Southern France, which was not occupied by German troops before November 1942.

²⁸³ FR, 24.1.1997, 1.4., 3.4.1998; *Die Welt*, 3.4.1998. Another milestone was the report by the Matteoli Research Committee about "heirless" Jewish property (FAZ, 19.4.2000).

²⁸⁴ *Die Zeit*, 8.4.1998 (Alain Finkielkraut), 14.3.2002 (Pierre Nora); NZZ, 14.9.1998; *Berliner Zeitung*, 6.10.1998.

²⁸⁵ H. Rousso, *Le syndrome de Vichy*, Seuil 1990. This book caused considerable stir in French public opinion.

²⁸⁶ Title of a book published by Rousso (together with the journalist Eric Conan) already in 1994, see also: "Besessen von der Vergangenheit," *Die Zeit*, 30.9.1994; FR, 3.4.1998; *Le Monde*, 7.4.1998.

²⁸⁷ NZZ, 14.9.1998, 14.3.2001.

²⁸⁸ E.g., *The Spectator*, quoted in NZZ, 19.5.2001; cf. also "A Nation shamed," *The Guardian*, 23.1.2004.

²⁸⁹ FAZ, 4.5.1995; FR, 12.8.1999; *Der Spiegel*, 32/1998; cf. J.H. Brinks, in *History Today*, June 1999.

²⁹⁰ See, however, "Inquiry into Belgium's Nazi record," *The Guardian*, 23.9.2002; "Belgian prime minister apologizes for his country's actions during the Holocaust," *Ha'aretz*, 7.10.2002; "Belgian historians examine country's role in atrocities against Jews," *The Guardian*, 27.5, 28.5.2003.

²⁹¹ Ian Buruma, *The Spectator*, 18.1.2003. Cf. also quotations in NZZ, 19.5.2001.

²⁹² "On Liberation Day celebrations, every April 25th, the Allies' part in the freedom business is rarely mentioned" (*The Economist*, 6.5.1995).

²⁹³ Johannes von Dohnanyi, *Die Weltwoche*, 23.8.2001; Wolfgang Schieder, SZ, 7.1.2002.

²⁹⁴ Rory Carroll, "Italy's bloody secret," *The Guardian*, 25.6.2001. Cf. another famous film, Giuseppe Salvatore's *Mediterraneo*.

²⁹⁵ *Freitag*, 29.4.1994; FR, 26.4.1994; FAZ, 22.11.1994; *Corriere della Sera*, 26.4.1995.

²⁹⁶ "Italians grow nostalgic for the days of Mussolini," *The Guardian*, 10.9.2001; *The Washington Post*, 22.11.2001.

²⁹⁷ "Criminali di guerra nostrani," *Corriere della Sera*, [weekly supplement "Sette"], 28.6.2001.

²⁹⁸ In 1998 finally sentenced to life imprisonment.

²⁹⁹ SZ, 4.11.1999; *Die Weltwoche*, 23.8.2001; *Der Spiegel*, 17/2001, 38/2001; SZ, 18.11.2000, 7.1.2002.

³⁰⁰ Filippo Focardi and Lutz Klinkhammer, "La questione dei 'criminali di guerra' italiani e una Commissione di inchiesta dimenticata," *Contemporanea*, July 2001, pp. 497-528. Not surprisingly, none of these documents had been included in the official source edition, *Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*.

³⁰¹ "Italiani bravi boia [executioners]," *La Stampa*, 24.5.2001, also 9.6., 27.7.2001; *Corriere della Sera*, 28.6.2001; *L'Espresso*, 2.8.2001; *L'Unità*, 1.10.2001.

³⁰² *The Guardian*, 10.9.2001.

³⁰³ A recent example was his invitation by the Italian Senate – in conjunction with V-E Day (*Tagesspiegel*, 8.5.2003). For his honouring by the staunchly conservative Germany Foundation, see *Die Zeit*, 8.6.2000.

³⁰⁴ *The Independent*, 29.6.2003; cf. *The Guardian*, 5.7, 19.7.2003; NZZ, 18.11.2003. The term, however, was applied also to Germany's decision not to back Bush on Iraq as "a policy of anti-anti-Fascism," thereby missing "its opportunity to support the first war to overthrow a government with significant residues of the Fascist and Nazi past since 1945." (Jeffrey Herf, *Front Page Magazine*, 26.5.2003).

³⁰⁵ *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 17.5.2003; Hagen Fleischer, *To Vima*, 26.10.2003; cf. Antonis Liakos, *ibidem*.

³⁰⁶ J.F. Bergier, head of the international Swiss commission, singled out, negatively, Portugal as having done only superficial work, in contrast to the serious investigations carried out by other countries (*Der Standard*, 6.6.2003).

³⁰⁷ NZZ, 13.10.1997, 24.6.2000.

³⁰⁸ Sweden reflects the all-too-familiar pattern of the neutral states. For half a century the country enjoyed an almost flawless image, since during the last stage of the war it had gradually disengaged from the Reich. In the 1990s, US/Jewish pressure mounted concerning the tons of Nazi gold that had gone to Sweden. Stockholm soon gave in, though it obstructed requests made by researchers outside the (inactive) mainstream to look into the forbidden subject of Swedish SS volunteers. Only when this request was seconded from abroad did the Swedish prime minister allow access to state archives (NZZ, 3.5.1997; *Der Spiegel*, 51/1999; FR, 10.1.2000).

³⁰⁹ NYT, 8.2.1997; FR, 21.4.1997; NZZ, 4.1.2000; *Kathimerini*, 4.12.2001 (translation from the NYT).

³¹⁰ *Der Standard*, 6.6.2003.

³¹¹ NZZ, 28.1.1997

³¹² NZZ, 30.11.1996, 13.10.1997, 15.9.1998, 12.7.1999; the tone of letters to the editor usually is much sharper, see, e.g., NZZ, 16.5.1995, 25.4., 23.6., 26.6.1997. Foreign interference in one's own (moral and material) issues provokes anger in most countries, cf., e.g., NZZ, 5.10.1999.

³¹³ NZZ, 14.1.1998; *Generalanzeiger*, Bonn, 6.11.1998; MT, 20.4.2000.

³¹⁴ According to the Bergier research panel, "the Swiss authorities knowingly contributed to the Holocaust by turning away Jewish refugees," *The Guardian*, 22.3.2002; cf.: *Time*, 24.2.1997.

³¹⁵ "Ein Mythos wurde zu Grabe getragen," *Weltwoche*, 11.5.1995; "Abschied vom Mythos Schweiz," FR, 21.4.1997.

³¹⁶ See, e.g., FR, 6.3.1997; NZZ, 23.1.1997, 14.1.1998.

³¹⁷ Cf. *Die Zeit*, 10.2.2000, 13.6.2001.

³¹⁸ MT, 8.8.1995. Cf. the even more courageous attitude of the mayor of Nagasaki (NZZ, 23.4.1997).

³¹⁹ *Die Zeit*, 15.5.1992.

³²⁰ SZ, 1.2.2000, 14-15.7.2001.

³²¹ Thus the Japanese Right stopped the *Tenno* [emperor] from apologizing for Pearl Harbor without the US apologizing for Hiroshima (SZ, 30.5.1994, cf.: MT, 5.8.95). There is a similar stalemate between Germans and their eastern neighbours on the expulsion issue.

³²² See above section on Poland.

³²³ "Entschuldigen. Eine politische Mode erobert die Vergangenheit," *Die Zeit*, 3.2.2000; *Bulletin*, 25.2.2000.

³²⁴ "Israeli president says he 'cannot forgive,'" MT, 17.1.1996; cf.: FR, 26.4.2003; *Die Welt*, 21.6.2003.

³²⁵ K. Naumann, *Die Zeit*, 3.2.1995; Thane Rosenbaum, "The Price of Forgiveness," NYT, 8.11.2003.

³²⁶ Expressions of sorrow were frequent but delivered after devastating earthquakes as well.

³²⁷ Cf., e.g.: *Athener Zeitung*, 7.4.2000; *To Vima*, 16.4.2000. To be on the safe side, Rau made clear that indemnifications did not fall within his competence.

³²⁸ Wording is important, especially when different languages with diverging connotations are involved. When Queen Elizabeth took part in a reconciliation service at a Dresden church, she conveyed regret *ipso facto* but not in words. The event was a fiasco (*Die Zeit*, 30.10.1992; MT, 14.2.1995). Speaking in the German parliament, W. Bartoszewski (Polish foreign minister, historian, and Auschwitz survivor) admitted and regretted brutalities committed by Poles against German deportees; but this was no apology, as the Germans mistakenly understood (cf. German press from 29.4.1995; *Bulletin*, 4.5.1995; NZZ, 14.10.2000).

³²⁹ L'Unità (Ed.), *Memoria e giustizia*, Roma 2003, p. 30. The Germans slaughtered about 5,000 members of the Italian army's Acqui Division on the Greek island of Kefallonia in September, 1943 (cf. note 438).

³³⁰ Visits to Israel by statesmen from countries with a guilty past, from Lithuania to Austria, usually involve a speech in the Knesset conveying remorse (FR, 19.11.1994, NZZ, 7.1.1999; SZ, 14/15.7.2001).

³³¹ Probably the only time Franjo Tudjman apologized for the Croatian role in the Shoah was at a Zagreb reception in honour of the film's co-producer, Branko Lustig, a Holocaust survivor (FAZ, 30.3.1994).

³³² "Argentine leader offers apology," *The Washington Post*, 14.6.2000.

³³³ NZZ, 13.8.1998, 15.11.1999.

³³⁴ *Der Spiegel*, 43/1997, 11/2000, 16/2001, 31/2001; *Die Zeit*, 9.3., 16.3.2000; FAZ, 6.9.2001. A Catholic-Jewish expert committee set up to look into the subject resigned in 2001, protesting that evidence was withheld. In 2003 the Vatican released a large number of records in order to mitigate criticism against planned beatification of Pius XII. These records show no collaboration but a "non-aggression pact between heaven and hell" (*Der Spiegel*, 19.4.2003; BBC News, 15.2.2003).

³³⁵ FR, 2.10., 5.10.1998. Later, Stepinać protested against mass killings of Jews and Serb "schismatics" but, in a 1943 memorandum to Pius XII he was still asserting that the killings were committed by lower, irresponsible, organs. The Ustaša regime itself had made many achievements. In addition to supporting the Catholic Church in all possible ways, it had radically reduced the number of abortions and Communists and had wiped out pornography; all three former domains of Jews and Serbs! (*Die Zeit*, 27.3.1992).

³³⁶ "GM, Ford equipped Nazi Army in WW II," MT, 2.12.1998; *The Washington Post*, 30.11.1998; *Die Zeit*, 14.1.1999, 15.2.2001; *Der Spiegel*, 7/2001.

³³⁷ *Newsweek Poland*, 29.5.2003; *World Socialist*, 5.6.2003; MT, 6.6.2003.

³³⁸ Wernher von Braun was later named by *Life* magazine one of the 100 most important Americans of the century, though – to the best of my knowledge – he never expressed remorse for building the V2 or using slave labour. (MT, 12.4.1995).

³³⁹ "Newly declassified files confirm United States' Collaboration with Nazis," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 7.5.2001; MT, 29.6.2000 (from *The Los Angeles Times*); *To Vima*, 29.4.2001 [from *The Sunday Times*]. By 1955, the "Gehlen Organization" had evolved into the FRG's main foreign intelligence agency.

³⁴⁰ *taz*, 8.5.1995; NZZ, 20.6.2000; *To Vima*, 29.4.2001.

³⁴¹ FR, 10.1.2000; *The Washington Post*, 27.12.2002.

³⁴² *Ibid.*; MT, 11.2.1998; NZZ, 20.5.2000; and many others.

³⁴³ *Die Welt*, 16.6.1998; *Die Zeit*, 5.8.1994; 3.2.2000. People of Japanese ancestry (110,000 from the US and others deported from Latin America), with their only crime "looking like the enemy," were concentrated in camps under miserable conditions as Tokyo's potential fifth column. After more than half a century, the US government admitted this to have been a "national shame" and paid compensation to surviving victims (*The Washington Post*, 30.9.2001; *Los Angeles Times*, 8.12.2003).

³⁴⁴ *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, 7.5.2001.

³⁴⁵ "History proves we're doing fine," *The Washington Post*, 20.7.2003; "History in the Remaking," *Los Angeles Times*, 8.12.2003.

³⁴⁶ Other attempts go back to the early phases of national histories. In Australia, conservative historians are backed by the government, to rewrite the accepted notion that the white colonists had massacred the Aborigines (*The Guardian*, 17.1.2003; *The Sidney Morning Herald*, 30.11.2002; FR, 10.2.2004). Cf. the "White washers of black history" in the United States (*The Miami Herald*, 9.3.2003).

³⁴⁷ See, e.g., "Pro-Franco book a bestseller in Spain," *The Guardian*, 22.4.2003.

³⁴⁸ Jacob Heilbrunn, "Revisionist Nationalism," MT, 20.4.2000 (from *The Los Angeles Times*).

³⁴⁹ Mainstream US public opinion, with the champions of the current president's entourage, promulgate an version of history deriding as disloyal and revisionist any challenge to their account of the Iraq war, and any other war with US involvement. ("Giving revisionists a bad name," *The Washington Post*, 24.6.2003).

³⁵⁰ See, e.g., NZZ, 31.3.2001; MT, 27.4.2001; *Los Angeles Times*, 5.12.2003.

³⁵¹ "Schauplatz Tokio," NZZ, 9.9.1995. Cf. the success of the epic film *Pride* glorifying the wartime leader Hideki Tojo, who was hanged as a war criminal in 1948 (FAZ, 30-31.5.1998; *Der Spiegel*, 23/1998).

³⁵² *Die Zeit*, 11.3.1999; *taz* 8.5.1995. Cf. Neo-nazis demonstrating against the Crimes of the Wehrmacht exhibition, wearing tee-shirts with the slogan "Grandpa was o.k." (*Ostsee-Zeitung*, 22.8.2003). Cf. note 88.

³⁵³ FR, 24.4.1998; *Berliner Zeitung*, 13.12.2000; NZZ, 31.3.2001. *Los Angeles Times*, 5.12.2003.

³⁵⁴ *The Economist*, 6.5.1995; NZZ, 10.6.1995; *Der Spiegel*, 45/2000.

³⁵⁵ NZZ, 1.9.1997, 18.3.1999, 31.3.2001; MT, 27.4.2001; *The Guardian*, 3.12.2002; *The Independent*, 4.12.2002.

³⁵⁶ TAZ, 8.5.1995; *Eleftherotypia*, 14.11.1995; *Kathimerini*, 19.9.2001, 9.6.2002.

³⁵⁷ SZ, 2.1.2004.

³⁵⁸ For the shades of the past on Japanese-South Korean co-organization of the World Cup soccer championship in 2002, see *Der Spiegel*, 41/2001; cf. *Kathimerini*, 9.6.2002.

³⁵⁹ *Nihongo Journal*, 1/2003; cf. NZZ, 23.11.1998; *Der Spiegel*, 45/2000; *Los Angeles Times*, 5.12.2003.

³⁶⁰ MT, 12.11.1996; cf. *Der Spiegel*, 44/2001.

³⁶¹ There are though increasing voices asserting a greater need to commemorate the victims of the Gulag. The supporters of Holocaust uniqueness are even criticized as arrogant champions of "First World" culture, ignoring the same phenomenon elsewhere. (NZZ, 7.5., 25-26.10., 11.11.1997; 22.1., 14.3.2001; *Die Zeit*, 4.5.2000). A growing number of Israeli intellectuals feel awkward because the Holocaust *myth* has acquired its own existence, superseding the Holocaust as an *historic phenomenon* (e.g., Yoram Kanink, *Die Zeit*, 19.8.1994).

³⁶² See, in particular, the German government's decision – the Conservatives voting against – to erect a memorial for gay victims of National Socialism (*taz*, 13.12.2003; *Chicago Tribune*, 14.12.2003).

³⁶³ See this explanation for the reserved Russian reaction to *Schindler's List* (MT, 17.9.1994).

³⁶⁴ Characteristically, Walesa and the distinctly Catholic Polish government distorted the real "meaning" of Auschwitz by giving the 50th anniversary commemoration of its liberation an intense Christian symbolism. At the same event, heavy criticism was stirred up by the deplorable Greek boycott of the 50th anniversary commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz justified by the Greeks on the grounds of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia participating under the name "Macedonia" (A. Liakos, *To Vima*, 5.2.1995). Cf. also, Hagen Fleischer, "Griechenland. Das bestrittene Phänomen," in Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder, Juliane Wetzel (Eds.), *Vorurteil und Rassenhaß. Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas*, Berlin 2001, pp. 207-226.

³⁶⁵ The German word for memorial/monument, *Denkmal*, is a loan word, constructed in the 16th century in translation from Greek μνημόσυον. The first component refers both to *gedenken* (remember, commemorate) and *denken* (think about, reflect on). In connection with the Holocaust, because of its uniqueness, the term *Mahnmal* has been preferred, containing the component *mahnen*, i.e. reminding debtors/sinners of their debt/guilt as well as exhorting, admonishing wrongdoers, even potential ones.

³⁶⁶ For the following, cf., e.g.: "Doch eine Kollektivschuld?" *Berliner Zeitung*, 15.4.1996; MT, 6.5.1996; NZZ, 16.12.1996; *Die Zeit*, 20.6.2002; *Der Spiegel*, 3.6.2002.

³⁶⁷ The prominent writer Martin Walser, in a disputed 1998 speech, introduced the term 'Auschwitz cudgel' [*Keule*] into political rhetoric, meaning the using the memory of German guilt for political ends (See, e.g.: NZZ, 13.11.1998; *Der Spiegel* 49/1998, 44/2000 and 3.6.2002, *Heilbronner Stimme*, 4.12.2002).

³⁶⁸ See: Letters to the editor, NZZ, 14.5.1993; FAZ, 12.12.2000. Cf. criticism that the Western powers, which looked away from the slaughter of 200,000 Bosnians between 1992 and 1995, "were the same ones then opening Holocaust museums and solemnly promising, 'Never again.'" (*The Observer*, 29.6.2003)

³⁶⁹ *Bulletin*, 28.4.1983, 21.4.1993.

³⁷⁰ SZ, 6.6.1994, 23.8.2003; the gaffe was perpetuated in FAZ, 4.5.1995.

³⁷¹ See e.g., *San Francisco Chronicle*, 29.11.2001 and NZZ, 24.2.2000, respectively.

³⁷² Cf. *Generalanzeiger*, Bonn, 21.11.1998; *Die Zeit*, 25.4.2002.

³⁷³ See, e.g., FR, 7.3.2000.

³⁷⁴ Bernd Buchner, *Die Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Hefte*, Juli/August 2002; cf. *Financial Times Deutschland*, 23.9.2002; and many others.

³⁷⁵ *Die Zeit*, 20.8.1993 [Marek Edelman]; *Berliner Zeitung*, 6.10.1998; cf. *The Guardian*, 1.5.2003.

³⁷⁶ Cf. the Greek press in spring 1999, passim; similarly, W. Manoschek, in: *taz*, 27.4.1999.

³⁷⁷ See, e.g., *Die Woche*, 7.5.1999; FR, 4.7.2000, 29.11.2001; J. Herf, *Front Page Magazine*, 26.5.2003.

³⁷⁸ *The Guardian*, 13.2.2003; cf. FR, 14.11.2001 and many others.

³⁷⁹ *The Washington Post*, 16.4.1999. Cf. ibidem: "Kosovo as Holocaust Analogy."

³⁸⁰ See, e.g., *Kathimerini*, 8.5.2002.

³⁸¹ SZ, 30.4., 1/2.5.1999. Goldhagen publicized similar schemes for Iraq, pleading for a more comprehensive punishment of murderers than had been carried through in Serbia and even in Germany. (FR, 27.12.2003).

³⁸² SZ, 20.2., 22.2.2002.

³⁸³ *The Washington Times*, 7.1.2003. Bush's visit to Auschwitz, "choreographed to serve immediate policy objectives," invoked Nazi horrors as a "reminder" that evil must be fought, assuming that he and his alliance embodied "good" (*World Socialist*, 5.6.2003; cf. NYT, 1.6.2003; *Le Monde*, 3.6.2003).

³⁸⁴ Quotes from: *The Globe and Mail*, 16.1.2003; *The Guardian*, 13.2.2003.

³⁸⁵ Jeffrey Herf, *Front Page Magazine*, 26.5.2003; CNS News, 8.3.2003; cf. also note 196.

³⁸⁶ *The Guardian*, 13.2.2003; MT, 6.6.2003; and many others.

³⁸⁷ *The Guardian*, 25.9.2002; cf.: *The Daily Telegraph*, 20., 22.9.2002; *The Washington Post*, 24.9.2002.

³⁸⁸ *The Boston Globe* 11.6.2003; cf. *The Miami Herald*, 9.3.2003; FR, 27.2.1998, 14.3.2000.

³⁸⁹ *Die Zeit*, 16.11.1990; *Der Spiegel*, 44/2000, 23/2002. Cf. fears and resentment by descendants that the stigma of Holocaust will stick to the Germans just as the stigma of Christ-killers stuck to the Jews (*Kathimerini*, 5.5.1995, from the *Wall Street Journal*). On the other hand, the particular insistence by many German scholars on the uniqueness of the Holocaust has been interpreted as a "tendency to guilt narcissism" (NZZ, 22.1.2001; Cf.: Natan Sznajder, "Der Holocaust gehört uns!" *Die Welt*, 21.6.2003).

³⁹⁰ Cf. the title of a cover story in *Der Spiegel*, 3.6.2002, adorned with Hitler's satanic scheme: *Playing with fire. How much Past can the Present endure?* There is a similar discussion in France about Vichy, which, according to the headlines, seems "more present than the present" and could be so for 100 more years. (H. Rousso, *Die Zeit*, 30.9.1994).

³⁹¹ J. Habermas, *Die Zeit*, 31.3.1999; cf.: NZZ, 30.1.1993, 28.12.1996; *taz*, 3.12.2001; *Die Zeit*, 24.1., 25.4.2002.

³⁹² *Berliner Zeitung*, 18.8.2003.

³⁹³ "Nazi-Linked Firm Barred from Role in Memorial," *The Washington Post*, 31.10.2003; cf. "Holocaust Legacy: Germany and Jews Debate Redemption," NYT, 29.10.2003; *Der Spiegel* 45/2003.

³⁹⁴ "Fetisch Holocaust-Mahnmal," *Berliner Zeitung*, 29.10.2003; M. Naumann, *Die Zeit*, 30.10.2003; Mariam Lau, *Die Welt*, 28.10.2003; "Nazi gas firm's memorial ban angers architect," *Daily Telegraph*, 31.10.2003; and many others.

³⁹⁵ Peter Finn, *The Washington Post*, 31.10.2003; cf., NZZ, 27.10.2003; SZ, 27.10.2003; FAZ, 27.10.2003.

³⁹⁶ *Berliner Zeitung*, 14.11.2003; "Germany to Resume Memorial Construction," NYT, 13.11.2003; "Berlin Holocaust Shrine Stays with Company Tied to Nazi Gas," NYT, 14.11.2003; and many others.

³⁹⁷ *Die Welt*, 6.6., 16.6.2003; FAZ, 4.6.2003; FR, 17.6.2003; cf. *Die Zeit*, 6.6.2002.

- ³⁹⁸ NZZ, 5.3.1997, cf. 28.1.1997. There is plenty of evidence for similar tendencies in other countries.
- ³⁹⁹ Cf., e.g., a characteristic survey of German students (*Die Zeit*, 11.5.2002).
- ⁴⁰⁰ Michael Naumann, *Die Zeit*, 21.2.2002; cf. already: Egon Bahr, *Die Welt*, 12.11.1998.
- ⁴⁰¹ NZZ, 13.11.1998; cf. *Der Spiegel*, 12/1999. Cf. "Jewish warnings that Germany was not in a position to declare the end of history one-sidedly." *Der Spiegel* 49/1998, quoted also in: *Eleftherotypia*, 17.12.1998).
- ⁴⁰² Prominent Russians, for instance, had long advised Germans to overcome "their uptightness as a nation and come to terms with the highs and lows of their history" (MT, 6.5.1995).
- ⁴⁰³ Russia, where war losses touched almost every family, still reserves three days to commemorate WW II: Fatherland Defenders' Day, Victory Day, and 22 June (anniversary of the German invasion, "Operation Barbarossa"). Recent polls show that June 22 it is still observed by 65% of Muscovites, who visit war museums, memorial sites, or cemeteries on this day (MT, 5.6., 22.6.2002, 3.6.2003; NZZ, 21.7.2003).
- ⁴⁰⁴ *The Copenhagen Post*, 8.5.2003.
- ⁴⁰⁵ FR, 23.8.2003; NZZ, 29.9.2003.
- ⁴⁰⁶ *The Copenhagen Post*, 8.5.2003; cf. already: NZZ, 23.11.2001.
- ⁴⁰⁷ "Samarbejdspolitikken war et moralsk svigt," *Politiken* (Copenhagen), 29.8.2003; *Der Standard*, 29.8.2003.
- ⁴⁰⁸ *Die Welt*, 10.5.2003.
- ⁴⁰⁹ "Pearl Harbor's Infamy is Echoed by 9-11," *Los Angeles Times*, 7.12.2001; SZ, 7.12.2001; NZZ, 7.12.2001. Cf. also note 276.
- ⁴¹⁰ Cf., e.g., SZ, 8.5.2003; ZDF-Heute, 18.5.2002.
- ⁴¹¹ Cf., e.g., *Die Zeit*, 22.7.1994; *To Vima* 24.2./ 28.4.2002; taz, 29.6., 6.7.2002; *Die Welt*, 25.6.2002.
- ⁴¹² "Schlimmes Trauma," *Der Spiegel*, 15/2002; *Die Welt*, 16.8.2003. The Chancellor finally made up his visit to Prague in September 2003, to attend memorial ceremonies marking the 65th anniversary of the Munich Agreement. ("Sudeten Germans continue fight for right of return," *Ha'aretz*, 3.9.2003).
- ⁴¹³ Joachim Fest, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 9.5.2003.
- ⁴¹⁴ SZ, 5.4.1994; *Berliner Zeitung*, 7.4.1994; *Rheinischer Merkur*, 8.4.1994. Cf. the warlike headlines in British tabloids before battles against the "Huns" panzer team (quotes in: *The Economist*, 20.2.1999).
- ⁴¹⁵ Quotes in: *Der Spiegel*, 1.5.2003; *Eleftherotypia*, 6.8.2003; *Die Welt*, 7.8.2003.
- ⁴¹⁶ See, e.g., "Holocaust conference targets looted art: Global search of museums planned," *The Washington Times*, 4.12.1998.
- ⁴¹⁷ Many cases, after being shelved in the 1960s, now have been reopened, often involving extradition of suspects from other countries and continents. (See, e.g., MT, 9.2.1999; SZ, 18.11.2000; FR, 7.6., 10.6.2003; *The Guardian*, 1.5.2003).
- ⁴¹⁸ This is not to be confused with earlier attempts to "Europeanize" the responsibility for WW II by connecting it with general cultural decadence and moral nihilism that led to a self-destruction of the continent (See, e.g., *Die Zeit*, 16.11.1990; cf. *Die Zeit*, 25.4., 6.6., 20.6.2002).
- ⁴¹⁹ Austrian-Czech relations are heavily encumbered by the past, since Austria began only a few years earlier (1986) than the Czechs to confront their part in Nazi history honestly. Cf. *Die Welt*, 14.6.2002; FAZ, 6.2.2002 (with quotations from the notorious rightwing Austrian tabloid *Kronen-Zeitung*).

⁴²⁰ See, e.g., *Frankfurter Hefte*, June 1999, p. 528.

⁴²¹ *The Independent*, 11.10.2002.

⁴²² Cf., e.g., *Die Welt*, 17.5.2003.

⁴²³ *The Guardian*, 28.5.2003.

⁴²⁴ *Der Spiegel*, 12/2002, p. 76; Neal Ascherson, *London Review of Books*, 28.11.2002.

⁴²⁵ *Information* (Copenhagen), 2.2.1998; FR, 26.11.1998.

⁴²⁶ Pierre Nora called it “collective suicide” (*Die Zeit*, 14.3.2002).

⁴²⁷ In 1996, Russia celebrated Armistice Day for the first time, although in WW I, too, Russia had suffered more casualties than any other country (MT, 12.11.1996). Cf. A. Liakos, *To Vima*, 13.7.2003.

⁴²⁸ According to a favourite revisionist argument, Hitler came to power in consequence of the Versailles Treaty in 1919 supposedly dealing much too harshly with the defeated Germans; so in this view the Entente is at least partially responsible for what occurred afterwards (Cf. SZ, 10.4.1995; *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 3.12.2003). Even liberal journalists, on the occasion of Greek indemnification claims for the Distomo massacre in June 1944, justified their refutation of war compensation by arguing that many nations would otherwise see their future endangered by debts stemming from the past and hence become ripe for demagogues, as had been the case with reparation-stricken Germany after WW I. Therefore, it were not possible to compensate for the misdeeds of history like a car accident; “the past had to offer this sacrifice to the future” (Stefan Ulrich, SZ, 8./9.9.2001). Cf. also the second quotation at the beginning of this study.

⁴²⁹ Many celebrations were held on the 350th anniversary of the Westphalian Peace (1648), the first multi-lateral peace congress in history and recognized as an epochal event for most of the continent. See, e.g., NZZ, 13.12.1996, 6.3., 17.11.1998, 17.2.1999.

⁴³⁰ *Die Zeit*, 15.2.2001.

⁴³¹ Since the BdV’s president, Erika Steinbach, asked for pity also for German victims, a prominent Jewish veteran, Marek Edelman, retorted in several interviews that, “only God can show pity for the hangmen. I am not God.” (See, e.g.: *Die Welt*, 14.8.2003; *Die Jüdische*, 21.8.2003; SZ, 19.8., 23.8., 2.9.2003).

⁴³² *Daily Telegraph*, 7.10.2003, 12.2., 15.2.2004; FR, 20.10.2003; SZ, 1.12.2003; taz, 13.2.2004.

⁴³³ I concur on this with Pavel Machcewicz, head of the Polish “Institute for National Memory,” who also proposes the foundation of a European Institution (*Die Welt*, 14.8.2003). At this preliminary stage, only a few more references from a daily torrent of press articles will be given: *Die Zeit*, 20.6.2002; *Die Welt*, 19.7., 27.7., 16.8., 1.9., 23.8.2003; *Der Tagesspiegel*, 23.7.2003; SZ, 23.7., 24.7., 19.8., 1.9.2003; FR, 25.7., 20.8.2003; *Berliner Zeitung*, 15.8., 18.8.2003; *Der Spiegel*, 32/2003.

⁴³⁴ See, e.g., the Vichy debate in France, or, in Germany, among others, the Fischer controversy on the causes of WW I, the *Historikerstreit*, as well as the debates about the commemoration of May 8, 1945, the Wehrmacht exhibition, the Goldhagen hypothesis of “ordinary Germans” being prone to “eliminative [i.e., murderous] anti-Semitism,” and, last but not least, the Holocaust Memorial issue.

⁴³⁵ Cf. *Rzeczpospolita*, 28.8.2003 and [the left-of-center] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 28.8.2003, both quoted in SZ, 29.8.2003; cf. also: SZ, 2.9.2003.

⁴³⁶ See his essay “Auf dem Eis” in *Der Spiegel*, 19/2001.

⁴³⁷ Architect of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, *Die Zeit*, 30.10.2003; *Daily Telegraph*, 31.10.2003.

⁴³⁸ “Germany confronts Nazi atrocity,” *The Guardian*, 7.6.2003; *The Sunday Times*, 8.6.2003; FR, 7.6., 10.6.2003; taz, 10.6.2003.

⁴³⁹ “The younger the interviewees, the less knowledge, opinion and interest.” (FR, 17.6.2003); cf. MT, 25.6.2003.

⁴⁴⁰ E.g., in the Latvian context: “Youth sees history as their parents nightmare” (FR, 14.10.2003).

⁴⁴¹ Xanthippi Kotzageorgi-Zymari with Tassos Hadjianastassiou, “Memories of the Bulgarian Occupation of Eastern Macedonia: Three Generations,” in Mazower (Ed.), *After the War Was Over*, pp. 286 ff.

⁴⁴² Martin Woollacott, *The Guardian*, 24.3.1994, also in: David Cesarani, “Lacking in Convictions: British War Crimes Policy and national memory of the Second World War,” in Martin Evans / Ken Lunn (Eds.), *War and Memory in the 20th Century*. Oxford / New York 1997, here: p. 27. One explanation for British Euro-scepticism is that the British were clinging to the memories of wartime victory as a sort of comfort blanket for the post-WW II decay of their empire. (*The Economist*, 20.2.1999).

⁴⁴³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 15.6.2003; *Der Spiegel Online*, 18.2.2003 [from *The Independent*]; *Heilbronner Stimme*, 4.12.2002.

⁴⁴⁴ See, e.g., 24.3.1994: “The *Sun* Bans the Hun”; cf. headlines chanted in the stands during matches: “We’ll beat you, Fritz” or “Two world wars and one world cup.” At international matches against France, however, the visiting supporters were treated to a chorus: “If it wasn’t for the British you’d be German” (“Britain and the war. Don’t mention it,” *The Economist*, 20.2.1999). Cf. “How relentless references to the war are poisoning young Britons against Germany,” *The Independent*, 5.7.2003.

⁴⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, 9.12, 10.12., 17.12.2002; cf. already: “No end of lessons,” *The Economist*, 6.5.1995.

⁴⁴⁶ *Echo*, 29.11.2002; cf. also A. Beevor in *The Times*, 12.2.2003.

⁴⁴⁷ *Die Welt*, 24.7.2003; *The Guardian*, 22.10.2003.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ostsee-Zeitung*, 6.10.2003. In Greece, also, members of the German embassy remarkably increased their participation at pertinent ceremonies in 2003. For the previous years, cf.: Hagen Fleischer, “Δάφνες, πολιτική και μνήμες: Γερμανικά στεφάνια σε ελληνική γη,” *To Vima*, 9.10.1994.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. the revelations that Britain – as did the United States, Canada and Australia – allowed many “anti-Communist” ex-Nazi collaborators from Eastern Europe (8,000 from the Ukraine alone, of which 1,500 are said still to be alive) to settle in the UK and acquire citizenship without thorough checks into their former activities. The 1991 War Crimes Act, which passed after heated domestic debate, entitled British jurisdiction to search for those who had slipped into the country “with blood on their hands” (*Evening Standard*, 15.4.1996; MT, 9.2.1999, 9.1.2001; FR, 10.1.2000). Cf. also Cesarani, note 442.

⁴⁵⁰ Cf. assessments by well-meaning observers claiming that nearly all Germans recognized their nation’s guilt, while, however, “openly contending the right of outsiders to tell them when and how to be ashamed of themselves” (MT, 11.5.1995).

⁴⁵¹ “Wiesel to Head Panel on Nation’s WW II Role,” *Los Angeles Times*, 23.10.2003; taz, 11.11.2003.

⁴⁵² Daniel Brössler, SZ, 20.2.2002.

⁴⁵³ A recent Danish documentary gave evidence that after WW II German civilians (evacuees and refugees) were treated “like animals” in Danish camps to the extent that in 1945 alone 13,500 died, mostly children. This revelation stirred fierce objections, particularly from resistance veterans and the (revisionist) “Denmark’s Documentation Centre Against Historical Falsification” (*The Observer*, 9.2.2003).

⁴⁵⁴ See, e.g., the Baltic-Russian *double monologue* on WW II or the newly acquired “popularity” of other perpetrators’ massacres (Katyn and Jadwebne) in German and Austrian media.

⁴⁵⁵ For a leitmotif of post-1990 discourse, see, e.g., Habermas’s speech in the *Paulskirche* (FR, 8.5.1995).

⁴⁵⁶ MT, 3.9.1999. “Triple” past would be even more correct, if you take into account the two-fold history

(first Nazi, then Stalinist) of the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar. Cf. the complaint by the head of the Memorial for Stasi Victims that he received “only” 1,000,000 euros annually in financial support from the state while a multiple of this sum would go to memorials for Nazi victims (*Die Welt*, 6.6.2003).

⁴⁵⁷ SZ, 7.3.2002.

⁴⁵⁸ MT, 14.2.1995.

⁴⁵⁹ MT, 18.8.1995, 16.9.2000.

⁴⁶⁰ NZZ, 23.1.2003; *Die Welt*, 11.11.2003; *Berliner Morgenpost*, 17.11.2003; and many others.

⁴⁶¹ See, e.g.: “Der fremde Nachbar,” SZ, 30.10.2003; *To Vima*, 12.10., 31.10.2003.

⁴⁶² SZ, 3.1.2004; taz, 3.1.2004; FAZ, 3.1.2004; *Die Welt*, 3.1.2004; and many others.

⁴⁶³ Cf. A. Liakos, *To Vima*, 13.7.2003 – referring also to EU programs that sponsor such a convergence.

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. *Wiener Zeitung*, 21.5.2002; *The Guardian*, 9.12.2002.

⁴⁶⁵ “Gedenken an Nazi-Opfer,” *Sächsische Zeitung*, 6.10.2003.

⁴⁶⁶ Adam Krzemiński, “Zweierlei Widerstand,” *Die Zeit*, 20.7.2000.

⁴⁶⁷ See, e.g., *Wiener Zeitung*, 21.5.2002; *The Guardian*, 1.5.2003.

⁴⁶⁸ “Austria still coming to grips with Nazi past,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22.6.2003.

⁴⁶⁹ *Der Standard*, 2.5., 24.11., 12.12.2003; *Ha’aretz*, 5/6.5.2003; *The Star*, 13.5.2003.

⁴⁷⁰ Richard Garner, *The Independent*, 21.7.2003; cf. *The Guardian*, 21.7., 25.7.2003.

⁴⁷¹ *Main-Rheiner Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24.6.2003; and many others.

⁴⁷² SZ, 30.10.2003.

⁴⁷³ “The unwritten first article of the German constitution” (President Roman Herzog, *Bulletin*, 16.9.1998).

⁴⁷⁴ The same arguments can be heard from Great Britain (cf. *Sunday Express*, 27.5.1990) and France to Croatia and the Baltic countries. (See above).

⁴⁷⁵ See, in particular, H. Rouso, NZZ, 14.9.1998.

⁴⁷⁶ *Kathimerini*, 5.5.1995 [translation from the *Wall Street Journal*].

⁴⁷⁷ “Kein Rabbi auf dem Taschentuch,” SZ, 12.8.2003 [from the Jewish weekly *Tachles*].

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in *Der Spiegel*, 49/1998, p. 53-54.

⁴⁷⁹ Compare also Suzanne Goldenberg’s request that “most Israelis have yet to internalise their share of the responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian tragedy [Nakba], and until they do so, there is no chance for peace.” (*The Guardian*, 10.12.2001). On the other hand, it is deplorable that only few Palestine intellectuals apprehend the meaning of the Shoah (FR, 31.8.99), while radical views like those of the Hamas weekly *Al Risala* are rampant, declaring that “when we compare the Zionists with the Nazis, we insult the Nazis” (quoted in *Der Standard*, 1.9.2003).