

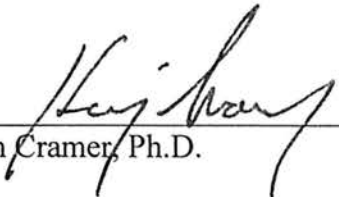
MEMORY RETRIEVED:  
THE MEMORIAL FOR THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Master of Arts  
in the Department of History,  
Indiana University

December 2004


Accepted by the Faculty of Indiana University, in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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## Introduction:

### The Problem of Memory

*For the essence of a nation is that all of the individuals have many things in common, but also that they have all forgotten many other things. No French citizen knows if he is Burgundian, Alain, Taifale, or Visigoth; every French citizen must have forgotten the Saint-Barthelemy, the 13th-century massacres in the Midi.<sup>1</sup>*

Why do we need to remember? What is the motivation behind the determination not to forget? Furthermore, how is our memory shaped and molded to fit into our national identity? And what about forgetting? Memory is also a selective process because there are things which are forgotten by remembering. I have learned something about how communities remember, especially about how a particularly important form of them, the nation state, bind themselves through memory, from Ernst Renan's 1882 essay, *What is a Nation?* He argued that nations are based not exclusively on race, religion, geography, or language, but on the fact that the people in them, for whatever reason, *imagine themselves to be connected to one another*. To accomplish this, they must both remember and forget. Finally, what does identity in the present have to do with remembering? This paper is concerned with one memory in particular, that of the Holocaust, and one identity in particular, that of Germany.

This paper deals with the ongoing memory-work dealing with the Holocaust in German speaking lands. I argue that Germany's memory-work, as it relates to the Holocaust, is unique by virtue of its status as a perpetrator nation. The Holocaust was certainly a turning point in the twentieth century. Mass death of this magnitude including men, women, and children, soldiers and civilians, people from all walks of

life and the world over were touched by WWII. Nothing of this nature had been experienced in the modern age. This mass death enable a “democratization of memory,” memory for all.

Specifically, I will address how remembrance of the Holocaust is shaping the memorialization process and in turn how the phenomenon of public memorialization is functioning to shape the national identity of a re-unified German nation. To reveal how the latter part of this process worked I will analyze the public discourse which surrounds the building of the national Holocaust memorial in Berlin. One of the questions to be addressed will be: How the city of Berlin proposes to house the memory of a people no longer at home there and what is going to become the “official” state supported history of the Nazi era? James Young aptly describes the atmosphere in Germany when it comes to the art of memory as free-floating anxiety.<sup>2</sup> The intent of this paper is to examine the reasons for this anxiety. I will argue that all of the angst and seemingly unending deliberations and debates surrounding the building of this memorial from its physical design to its intended meaning were not just so much hot air. Rather, following Young, I believe that the angst itself may just be the greatest tribute to those murdered during the Nazi regime. The very discourse itself may be the ultimate memorial. For how better to keep the past alive than constant debate? For if the Holocaust were to be consigned to the history books, like so many other atrocities, only to be discussed in a half page dialogue, would we remain passionate? Would we remain engaged? Germany can never “solve” its’

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Renan, *What is a Nation?* (1882).

<sup>2</sup> James E. Young. “Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Art of Memorial Architecture,” (October 30, 1997) in *Vorgänge anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrendoktorwürde an Daniel Libeskind*.

history or make it more tasteful. The very aesthetics of memorial, the tastefulness, gripped the memorial dilemma for some fifteen years. It is obvious that time does not heal all wounds. It is my greatest hope that many years from now the same debates, coupled with new ones, will still be waged, lest we forget and repeat our past transgressions.

Perhaps Saul Friedlander said it best when he observed that what we should strive for is not redemption but quite the opposite “an anti-redemptory history of the Holocaust that resists closure, sustains uncertainty, and allows us to live without full understanding.”<sup>3</sup> The systematic killing of millions of human beings in the most modern and civilized century yet is problematic for all of us not just the Germans. Mankind can not fully understand the madness of the Holocaust because to understand it would mean that we had rationalized and justified it and that simply is unacceptable.

Memory and memorialization are two of the most frequently used terms in societal discourse today, especially in light of the events of September 11, 2001. The design competition for the World Trade Center Memorial was the largest ever with a record 5,201 submissions from 63 nations. The winning design, *Reflecting Absence*, created by architect Michael Arad and landscape architect Peter Walker accomplished what many thought might be impossible, to incorporate a memorial into the fabric of the city and still make the area usable in an economical sense. The memorial is to be encapsulated within a field of trees that is interrupted by two large recessed pools. The pools will have ramps that surround them and encompass the footprints of the

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<sup>3</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 61.

twin towers. The pools are symbolic of large voids, open and visible reminders of the absence. The memorial grounds will not be isolated from the rest of the city; they will be a living part of it.<sup>4</sup> The design has drawn both criticism and accolades and asks the question: what ultimate purpose do memory and memorialization to serve?

To whom do memorials speak: the dead, the living, or future generations? For what purpose do we build: to heal, to pacify, to enlighten, or to reflect? Why in response to disaster and mass death, is there always such an immediate call for monuments and memorials? More importantly what do we mean when we refer to public memory or collective remembrance? Answering these questions is important to the outcome of this work. To begin to unravel this complex issue I might offer a quote by the eminent French historian Pierre Nora who eloquently attested that “memory is life, a perpetual bond to the eternal past.”<sup>5</sup> Andreas Huyssen echoed this sentiment when he declared that “remembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present.”<sup>6</sup> Memory is an integral part of society and our identity and much like reason, performs a sociological and ideological function.

The question of memory is almost as difficult to get our arms around as the one posed by Edward Carr in the title of his 1961 work, *What is History?* For both memory and history are subjective and subject to moral judgment. Neither are neutral

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<sup>4</sup> Information on the NYC memorial to the victims of the World Trade Center terrorist attacks is taken from the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation’s press release (Wednesday, January 14, 2004) “Architect Michael Arad and Landscape Architect Peter Walker Unveil Winning Design for World Trade Center Site Memorial: *Reflecting Absence*” from [www.WTCSiteMemorial.org](http://www.WTCSiteMemorial.org)

<sup>5</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire,” *Representations*, Volume 0, Issue 26 (Spring, 1989), 7-24.

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 249.

let alone inherently good. Neither are mutually exclusive. “Memory is life,” claimed Pierre Nora,

“It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations. Vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”<sup>7</sup>

However vague memory is, however it may be socially constructed, it is always about past experience and therefore its “pastness” is subject to interpretation. Memory is real, “a perpetual actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present.”<sup>8</sup>

However, all memories are different, all social constructs of it are different, and therefore all interpretations of the meaning of the past will be different. Once something is remembered then comes the slippery slope of determining precisely *how* that memory should be remembered so that it’s the same for an entire population...or is that out of the realm of imagination, for after all “memory is blind to all but the group it binds.”<sup>9</sup>

There are as many varied memories as there are groups. Just as there are no two identical snowflakes there are no two identical memories. For the individual and the collective memory is abstract, subjective, and above all, fluid. “Memory is certainly very much in fashion these days,” Arno Mayer asserts in the opening of his essay, *Memory and History: On the Poverty of Remembering and Forgetting the Judeocide*, “in Caen, in Jerusalem, in Washington, in Moscow, in Warsaw, in Berlin,

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<sup>7</sup> Nora, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 9.

in Oradour, on Goree Island.”<sup>10</sup> Across the globe memory is being packaged and sold for profit and political ends. The Germans have even developed a term to describe this phenomenon, *Erinnerungspolitik*, which translates to “memory politics.” Rudy Koshar, in “Building Pasts,” singles out historical preservation as being the one recurring theme in cultural politics of the past two centuries.<sup>11</sup> “Cultural politics,” by definition, explores precisely what is cultural about politics and what is political about culture. Furthermore, cultural politics emphasizes how cultural theories and practices intersect with and elucidate analyses of political power.<sup>12</sup>

Pierre Nora developed the term, *lieux de mémoire*, (sites of memory) in order to try and explain why and how monuments and other landmarks had become so important in group memory formation in the twentieth century – the century of total war. In German-speaking lands this phenomenon is referred to as the “cult of monuments,”<sup>13</sup> due in part to the enormous number of monuments, memorials, plaques, museums, etc. that have virtually transformed the physical landscape since WWI. One possible cause for this “cult of monument” is the phenomenon of industrialized mass deaths which have occurred in the twentieth century.

When considering memory one will undoubtedly run across discussions about *public*, or, *collective memory*. Public memory differs from individual memory in that public memory is negotiated by society’s beliefs and values, rituals and institutions.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Arno Mayer, “Memory and History: On the Poverty of Remembering and Forgetting the Judeocide,” *Radical History Review* 56:5-20, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Rudy Koshar, “Building Pasts: Historic Preservation and Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John R. Gillis ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 215.

<sup>12</sup> This definition of cultural politics comes from the *Cultural Politics Journal*, published by Northumberland University.

<sup>13</sup> Koshar, 215.

<sup>14</sup> Huyssen, 249.



The modern origins of the work on social/public memory began with Maurice Halbwachs in his 1925 *les Cadres sociaux de la Mémoire* and *La mémoire collective* (1950). Halbwachs argued that it was through membership in a social group, particularly through kinship, religion, and class affiliations, that individuals were able to acquire, to localize, and to recall their memories. A framework for public memory must be constructed and this construction is often times arduous and riddled with conflict. Present meaning must be assigned to past events, this is done through a “socially active” process.

Since the end of WWII the catastrophe of the mass murder of European Jewry has not been successfully incorporated into a compelling framework of meaning in the public consciousness.<sup>15</sup> There is a limit to how we can articulate the Holocaust. It resists closure. Therefore, the likelihood of different collective memories coming into competition is vast, even inherent to the process of collective remembrance. Like individual memory, collective memory is never permanent and is subject to constant mitigation and reconstruction. With so many competing memories the vantage point in which a society will choose to view its past is extremely difficult. What memories a society chooses to highlight and forget is the crux of their identity.

Jay Winter, in his work *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, argues that to an extent there has been an epistemological break in the twentieth century associated with the Holocaust. He argues that it might not also be linked to atrocities and episodes of mass death that preceded the Holocaust (such as the genocide of the Armenians in 1911 and Stalin's murder of

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<sup>15</sup> Saul Friedlander in Michael L. Morgan, ed. *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 276-277.

millions by famine in the 1930s and the mass death in the trenches 1914 - 1918) and to such post- 1945 horrors as the depredations in Cambodia and recent atrocities in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia? Can we compare responses to the horrors of war to responses to the horrors of genocide? For while the Holocaust and other episodes of mass death may, in their scale, make a mockery of the traditional vocabularies and rituals of consolidation (sacrifice, redemption, triumph over adversity, dying so that others may live), old-fashioned language persisted in the remembrance of the combatants of the Second World War if not the victims of Hitler's racial exterminations and civilians wiped out in massive bombings.<sup>16</sup> For with the conclusion of WWI remembrance of the common soldier made a huge progressive leap. So too with this "democratization of memory"<sup>17</sup> came the radical revolution in public memory. Such a drastic change that it concerns us still today with the building of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. Mass death enabled this democratization of memory because it touched so many lives on so many varied levels. The twentieth century was without doubt a turning point.

Memorialization has become a field of study in itself. Among those leading this research is Geoffrey Hartman. In his work, *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, Hartman primarily concerns himself with discussing what, if anything, will be gained by remembering the Holocaust. Hartman sees the most utility in remembering for those who survived or lived the nightmare, but he questions what good the avalanche of new material: films, novels, historical preservation, witness

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<sup>16</sup> Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas W. Laqueur, "Memory and Naming in the Great War," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*.

accounts, and perhaps the biggest affront to memory, monuments, can possibly do for generations so far removed from the actual event. When describing what memory is Hartman succinctly describes it as the “residue left in the mind by the ruins of time, and capable of retrieving and even restoring the past.”<sup>18</sup> For Hartman memory is a powerful tool capable of bringing back an event lost in time to prominent position within ones mind.

Another scholar who has devoted an immense amount of time to the study of Holocaust remembrance is James E. Young. In his seminal work, *The Texture of Memory*, Young is concerned not only with the *idea* of the monument, what significance it holds for people, but he also delves into a much more volatile arena when he explores what role monuments play in public memory. By exploring how Holocaust monuments and memorials work in Germany, where the idea of mass destruction was born, Poland, where the majority of the atrocities were carried out, Israel, the nation born of the destruction, and the United States, a country far removed from the European arena yet home to thousands of Jewish refugees, Young is able demonstrate how the Holocaust era is remembered differently according to each nation’s own traditions. For Young memory isn’t shaped in a vacuum and he argues that the motives of memory are never pure.<sup>19</sup> He also points out that “memory is never seamless, but always a montage of collected fragments, recomposed by each

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<sup>18</sup> Geoffrey H. Hartman ed. *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 1.

<sup>19</sup> James Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1993).

person and generation.”<sup>20</sup> Memory, according to Young, is constantly changing as it “shapes our links to the past, and defines us in the present.”<sup>21</sup>

What exactly is it that monuments and memorials *do* for people or societies? A clarification on the terms monument and memorial is appropriate at this time. In 1986 Arthur Danto, writing for *The Nation*, tackled this quandary with regards to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. He wrote,

we erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus, we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends...Monuments make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life. The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments, we honor ourselves.<sup>22</sup>

These definitions of what monuments and memorials seem to answer our question, but James E. Young offers us another explanation one which seems to fit better with the current discussion on the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. Young states that memorials can be either mournful or celebratory, citing memorial books, memorial days, festivals and commemorations. Monuments on the other hand are the plastic material objects, sculptures, and installations used to symbolize a person, thing, or event. Young argues that a memorial can be a place or thing, but it need not be a monument, whereas a monument is always a kind of memorial. The memorial under consideration in this work is the proposed Berlin Holocaust Memorial to commemorate the six million Jews murdered by the Nazi regime.

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<sup>20</sup> James Young, “Jewish Memory in Poland,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*. Geoffrey Harman ed., 215.

<sup>21</sup> Andreas Huyssen, “Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age,” *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, Volume 6, Number 2, 1993.

Germany is plagued with a set of quandaries, perhaps unique, in building this memorial: How does a state incorporate shame into its national memorial landscape? How does a state remember its barbarity? How does a state re-enact, commemorate, and weave into the fabric of its existence, and identity a crime of such enormity? Unlike other state sponsored memorials which are built by victimized nations and peoples to themselves in Israel, Poland, or Holland those built in Germany are by former perpetrators remembering their victims. Ultimately the Jewish question within Germany becomes the memorial question: How does a former persecutor remember its victims? This paper deals with a monument of shame, not of honor; a monument that does not celebrate anything. How can such a memorial be built? Once built would it only reinforce the act of forgetting? There are four other nations, Poland, Austria, the United States, and Israel that have grappled with the dilemma of how to properly memorialize the Holocaust, however each came at the problem from a very different perspective.

Poland played a unique role during the Holocaust. Officially it could be described as the killing fields of the final solution, as six of the death camps were housed within its borders. Poland was “the East,” the very mention of that struck Jews with a sense of terror. Today Poland houses more Jewish memorials than any other country in Europe, nearly 2,100.<sup>23</sup> Is this then their penance, a ubiquitous montage of tombstone-fragment monuments? It appears so. James Young, who has written extensively on Polish Holocaust memorials, describes the Polish landscape as one dotted with shattered *matzevoth*, traditional Jewish gravestones, where twin memorial

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur Danto, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” *The Nation*, (August 31, 1986).

motifs of absence and brokenness emerge. Jewish civilization in Poland can only be remembered, as it does not exist today. Once home to a thriving Jewish population of nearly three million only the hollow shell remains, a meager five thousand Jews. Fragments of shattered Jewish tombstones have become the predominant form of public memory. These fragments, once pieced together into a monument, remain broken yet are collected into an order, but retain the power to communicate to the observer a sense of disorder.<sup>24</sup> Young states that these memorials suggest that neither past worlds nor memory of them can be made whole again and that they will forever convey a void. In Polish memory-work it is the remnants of what once was whole that does more for the human psyche than a single monument ever could.

These “tombstone monuments” embody Holocaust memory, and they did so even as Soviet despots attempted to eradicate all reference to Jews from their memorials. During the Cold War monuments and memorials to Holocaust victims in the Eastern Block almost entirely erased the Jew. Instead of remembering the horror perpetrated on the Jew the Communists, in order to legitimate Soviet rule, chose to highlight the political prisoners and always highlighted the enemy as the fascist infidel and the “victims of fascism.” With the fall of the Communism memorial-work in Poland experienced a renaissance. As mentioned before Poland contains more Holocaust memorials than any other European nation. It’s odd that a nation bereft of Jews would have so many memorials, one must be reminded that memories’ purpose is never pure. The Polish government knows that with memorials come tourists, however there is something else at work here as well. When thoughts of WWII arise

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<sup>23</sup> James Young, “Jewish Memory in Poland,” in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, 229.

Poland would like to retain the role of victim on the world-stage. One way to maintain this status of innocence is via incorporation of Polish Jewry into the national heritage. It makes it very easy for Poles to cry “Look, Hitler went after us first...he wanted to eradicate the Pole too!” By equating the genocide of the Jew with that of the Pole, Poland in general can somehow absolve themselves of any responsibility.

In 2000 Austria witnessed the completion of its national memorial to Holocaust victims. The monument was the culmination of a four year introspective journey whereby Austrians were presented with their troubled past and charged with finding a way to incorporate it into their national history. It was built in the capital city of Vienna in a small picturesque square in the midst of the Judenplatz, on the site of a former synagogue burned during a 1421 pogrom, wherein several hundred Jews burned themselves inside rather than submit to baptism or execution. A sixteenth-century plaque still hangs in the square commemorating the death of “Hebrew dogs.”<sup>25</sup>

Like the Berlin memorial the one constructed in Vienna met with similar controversy, national embarrassment, and a delay of construction for years while dissidents and organizers alike debated its ultimate meaning and shape. As with the monument in Berlin a competition was held with nine artists and architects from Europe and the United States invited to compete for the design of the memorial. And as with the situation in Berlin the questions began to arise in Vienna: Who was the monument for? Was it for Jews as a site of mourning? Was it for non-Jewish Austrians as an expression of shame for past misgivings?

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “Behind Sealed Doors, Opening Up the Past,” *NY Times*, October 30, 2000.



Designed by British artist, Rachel Whiteread, the memorial stands as a testament of what was and what will be no more. The work is meant to resemble an inside-out library. The outside of the monument is eggshell in color with minimal flourish except for two double doors on the front that entice the observer to try them while remaining staunchly closed. The inside contains rows of identical books on shelves, spines facing inward. The names of Nazi death camps are inscribed around the base. Michael Kimmelman, writing for the NY Times, says that the symbolism is obvious clear. “The room cannot be entered...We will never know what is in the books or their names. They are forever lost to us,” just as a thousand year old civilization was.<sup>26</sup> Kimmelman goes on to say that it’s a sculpture about public conscience flipped on its head. In her design Whiteread makes public what many Austrians would like to keep shut away behind closed doors...their involvement in the killing of 65,000 Austrian Jews. The monument suggests that Austrians confront the void that they had created in their society and reconcile their Nazi past.<sup>27</sup>

The United States, though far removed from the “topography of terror,” has had its own battles over Holocaust remembrance.<sup>28</sup> It appears to the casual observer that within the charter of every city in the U.S. a provision is made for some form of Holocaust monument to be constructed, dedicated, and forgotten in the confines of a small public park. In today’s throwaway society, especially American culture, memorials are built to serve a purpose, political or social, yet fail to ignite any inner reflection that carries on beyond the boundaries of the park in which the visitor has

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> On Austrian guilt see Judith Miller’s *One, by One, by One: Facing the Holocaust*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Young, *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 283.



just trod. What is especially odd is that the Holocaust and WWII did not occur on American soil. So instead of having memorials anchored at the actual sites of destruction, as is the case in Europe, American monuments to the Holocaust are constructed on ideals.<sup>29</sup> American memorials are abstract and cannot begin to convey the same intensity of emotion as say the memorial and museum at Dachau. James Young suggests that American memorials must gesture abstractly to a past removed in both time and space and call attention to the vast distance between themselves and the destruction.<sup>30</sup> Whereas memorials in Germany and Poland composed of camp ruins can transport the visitor back to the actual experience, architects in America have to recreate this feeling as much as possible and attempt to reduce the distance between Europe and the American audience.

Peter Novick, professor of history at the University of Chicago, takes up this very question: Why the Holocaust has come to take such a prominent role in American life? In his work *The Holocaust in American Life*, Novick argues that American Jews have placed the Holocaust at the core of their sense of what it means to be Jewish.<sup>31</sup> He posits that Holocaust consciousness in America is a construct, chosen to prop up a weakening American Jewish identity and garner political and economic support among American Jews for what is perceived to be a perpetually threatened Israel. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum is the “principle symbol and ‘address’ of American Jewry, our ‘epistle to the gentiles’ about what it means to be Jewish.”<sup>32</sup> In Boston, the New England Holocaust Memorial is located on the Freedom Trail, along

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 283-284.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 204.

with Paul Revere's house and the Bunker Hill Monument. Novick tells us that all of this and more is due to the fact that Jews play an important and influential role in Hollywood, the television industry, and the newspaper, magazine, and book publishing worlds.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps the greatest spectacle in American Holocaust remembrance and the one which has clearly defined the Holocaust in American memory and history is the United States Holocaust Museum located on the mall in Washington D.C. As with memorials in Poland, Austria and Germany the construction of this museum caused controversy and upheaval. Originally proposed by President Jimmy Carter to "make Holocaust memory part of the official legacy of the American experience,"<sup>34</sup> the White House believed that the creation of a national Holocaust memorial would serve both as an act of reconciliation between itself and the Jewish community and as an appropriate memorial for the victims of the Holocaust. However, the memorial quickly became embroiled in a national debate, for if this was to be a *national* memorial, as opposed to a monument erected in a town or city, it had to encompass *national* sentiment, that of a democratic nation of equality and opportunity for all. Bitter controversy over site, design, meaning, and political gain belated the completion of this project nearly fifteen years.

No investigation into Holocaust remembrance would be complete without considering the case of Israel, for after all, the nation of Israel was created out of the

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<sup>33</sup> For discussions of the phenomenon, see Stephen J. Whitfield, *American Space, Jewish Time* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Book, 1988), chap. 7; J.J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1996), chap.11.

<sup>34</sup> Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 12-13.

ashes of the Holocaust and is sustained by memory of those lost. "The one suitable monument to the memory of European Jewry...is the State of Israel..."<sup>35</sup>

The physical act of remembering is a reoccurring theme in Judaism. Memory of historical events and the narratives which deliver these memories is central to the Jewish faith, tradition, and identity.<sup>36</sup> In fact Holocaust memorial culture was meant to be an integral part of the secular national symbolism of the Zionist movement and the State of Israel.<sup>37</sup> Young asserts that memory may be Israel's greatest natural resource: memory preserved, restored, and codified. Israelis have defined themselves as a people through "commemorative recitations" of their past and they now depend on memory for their very existence as a nation.

As with memorial work in other lands the work of remembrance in Israel is also met with conflict and each proposed project generates its share of debate. James Young states that "the official approach to Holocaust memory in Israel has long been torn between the simultaneous need to remember and to forget, between the early founders' enormous state-building task and the reasons why such a state was necessary, between the survivors' memory of victims and the fighters' memory of resistance."<sup>38</sup> This conflict between martyrs or those who were victims of the Holocaust and the freedom fighters is perhaps the most amplified argument and the one that has dominated the memorial landscape of Israel. On the one hand there is the exiled Jew, the victim who was forced to flee Europe in the Diaspora, or went

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<sup>35</sup> Quoted in James Young, *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 209.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>37</sup> Tom Segev. *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, Haim Watzman, trans., (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 427.

<sup>38</sup> Young, *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, 211.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

docilely into the gas chambers. On the other hand is the Israeli freedom fighter who is shrouded in the ideals of the nation, who has fought against the infidel to preserve his nation and Jewish way of life. One image of national identity is characterized by defeat and victimization, the other as an aggressive warrior defending a nation. These two conflicting images have, after years of controversy, been equally melded into the fabric of Israel's memory and identity. It has been accomplished "by ubiquitous twinning of martyrs and heroes in Israel's memorial iconography."<sup>39</sup> The victims are primarily remembered for demonstrating the necessity for Jews to have a nation of their own and a warrior ethos to defend it. In so doing the memorial message throughout Israel is easily discerned: as destruction of the martyrs is redeemed by those who fought, the Shoah itself is redeemed by the founding of the state.<sup>40</sup>

Holocaust memory in Israel differs from other nations in one way. Whereas nations such as Germany or Poland remember only the annihilation of the Jew and neglect to show the history of Jewish life in Europe, memorials in Israel locate the Holocaust in a "historical continuum" that includes Jewish life before and after the destruction. In Israel the Jew is celebrated for who they are and what they have accomplished and added to the human cultural family. Whereas in other nations the Jews are simply remembered for the six million lost in WWII, Israel's national Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, embodies all of the symbolism to satisfy both the exiled Jew and the Israelis. It stands as a testament to Jewish culture and faith and is successfully marks the end of Jewish life in exile. James Young summed Israel's memorial culture best: "In all cases, the Holocaust is integrated into a long view of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 213.

Jewish history: it may be a turning point, a confirmation of Zionist ideology, but it is linked nevertheless to a millennium of Jewish life in Europe before the war and to Jewish national rebirth afterwards.”<sup>41</sup>

The forthcoming chapters will highlight the memory-work that has occupied Germany since 1945. Chapter one will highlight how Germans have attempted to incorporate the crimes committed by the Third Reich within their nation’s fabric over the course of the last five decades. Neatly packaged into decades one will begin to see how perhaps it wasn’t until the close of the twentieth century that Germans were really able to confront their past in any usable way. In chapter two the differences in memory that developed between East Germany and West Germany will be discussed. The East, as part of the Soviet bloc, lost their Jews when it came to Holocaust memory. Whereas in West Germany, the Holocaust issue was shuffled and reworked between the dual emotions of forgetting and remembering so much that I will argue any real confrontation with their past was not to happen until post-unification. In chapter three the Berlin Holocaust Memorial is introduced. It is here that I will discuss the initiative behind the need for the memorial, the importance of the location of the planned memorial, and finally I will begin to unravel the varying arguments surrounding the aesthetics of the memorial. In the final portion of this paper I will discuss the monument itself, the two competitions involved in choosing the memorial, and the debate that the entire idea generated.

It should be evident at this point that other nations too have had to undergo great pains to complete their Holocaust memorials, monument, and museums as well.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 216.

Why is the situation in Berlin so unique? The most obvious answer is that Germany is the land which perpetrated the Final Solution. It would seem at this juncture that the Germans would simply want to build the memorial and move on. However, this is not the case entirely. With the resurgence of Neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic activities in Germany, and the world alike, we need to be on our toes to quell the voice of racism and hatred. Germany is setting a precedent for they are doing what no nation has done before they are atoning, remembering, and reflecting on a genocide committed on their soil by their hands.

So Germany is unique. It has taken almost fifty years of variegated historical themes and movements to get them to this point: a national memorial of shame, guilt, and grief. No one in western civilization has had to do what Germany is attempting to do. Germany is setting a precedent as a perpetrator nation. The United States does not have a comparable memorial for slavery. Yes Germany is constructing this memorial for the world at large however that comes in second to the mastering or reconciliation of itself to the crime. By building this memorial Germany is making its memory of the Holocaust active for however long that may be. They are engaging with it and confronting it head on.

# I

## Politicians, History, and Memory

*To remember is human, we could even say that it is the essence of humanity.*  
- György Konrad<sup>1</sup>

Within the past twenty years the Holocaust has taken an unprecedented leap into the consciousness of the entire world. The Holocaust is receiving more attention in the new millennium than it ever has before and not just by historians. The public has developed a fascination with the Nazi era and contributes millions of dollars in revenue each year to what many have termed “Shoah business.” Why do we mourn Hitler’s victims more so than some other genocides? Victims of Stalinism, Maoism, colonialism, Serbia, Rwanda and Burundi? The answer is that the Holocaust seems to carry a message about the twentieth century that concerns not only Jews but all of mankind. “The lessons of the Holocaust,” are taught in any history 101 lecture hall.<sup>2</sup>

It is perplexing that, while other wars and atrocities eventually lose their power to dominate public discussion, the Holocaust has not. It refused to be labeled or neatly categorized. It is too massive to be forgotten and too repellant to be incorporated into the “normal” narrative of memory. The image of the Holocaust

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<sup>1</sup> György Konrad, “Abschied von der Chimäre: Zum Streit um das Holocaust - Denkmal” *Der Spiegel* (April 17, 1995), 222.

<sup>2</sup> There are many scholars who trace the course of German history since the Nazi era. See Geoffrey H. Harman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity After the Holocaust* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1999), Geoff Eley, *The “Goldhagen Effect”: History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), and Peter Novick’s *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999) for a detailed discussion of the obsession of the Holocaust at the close of the twentieth century.



persists in our hearts and minds. We seem trapped, between remembrance and forgetting.

We stand at the beginning of a new century and the city of Berlin is building a Holocaust memorial. This stands out as a bit odd since the Holocaust ended 57 years ago. Why are the Germans just now getting around to constructing a memorial to the millions who died? Yet to those who have followed the tortured case of German Holocaust remembrance it doesn't seem odd at all. In fact it seems quite natural and fits in perfectly with the evolution of German Holocaust remembrance.

Locating the appropriate place of the Third Reich within the course of German history has occupied the mind of many a scholar. Over the past fifty years "historical disputes" have framed the way in which Germans have dealt with their past and catchy slogans have affixed themselves to each era of remembrance so as to neatly tie the whole controversy into neat thematic packages. Holocaust discourse seems to be cyclical with recurring debates and periodic outburst almost always initiated by new questions concerning the appropriate interpretation and representation of the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the course which the Holocaust memory debate within Germany has followed has not been straight or easily defined. With each passing decade since the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945 the Holocaust dialogue and memory-work has undergone revision. Much like a chameleon the tone of Holocaust memorial discourse has mirrored the social mood of the time. This chapter will trace this changing discourse, or series of "Holocaust moments,"<sup>4</sup> to use Geoff Eley's phrase, from its

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<sup>3</sup> Anson Rabinbach, "The Jewish Question in the German Question," *New German Critique* 44 (Spring/Summer 1988), 159-192.

<sup>4</sup> Geoff Eley, ed. *The "Goldhagen Effect" History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 94.



inception at the close of WWII to the current trends at the dawn of a new century. By including an analysis of the divergent approaches to memorial building in each decade I hope to illuminate the fact that remembering the Jews has become a necessary, though not consistent, act for the rehabilitation of Germany. I also hope to shed some light on the evolution of the collective German national psyche from 1945 to the present and further set the stage for the current dispute which is the crux of this paper, the Berlin Holocaust Memorial.

*1945-1959: How Does One Remember What They Refuse to Admit?*

How does one remember what one didn't experience? This is the Holocaust memorial quandary in contemporary society, but it was not the question that plagued those in the immediate post-war culture. There was not a problem of remembering the events but rather one of confession. Germans were quick to deny events and construct coping mechanisms to minimize guilt and responsibility, however Geoff Eley points out that this mechanism must be distinguished from "forgetting."<sup>5</sup> The events of the Holocaust were by no means forgotten during this time period, rather many have argued that memories were repressed in order that the two new Germanys and Israel could be constructed. Alf Lüdtke has said that in the 1950s and early 1960s the majority of West Germans colluded in "forgetting if not repressing those recollections of fascism that might recall its violent and murderous practices. Above

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 94.

all, one's own role and activity during fascism was "forgotten" or "cut out": people silently erased any remembrance of their own acceptance, support, and complicity."<sup>6</sup>

Ursula Hegi's novel, *Stones from the River*, tackles this very question in post-war German society.<sup>7</sup> The novel begins in 1918 and follows the life of a *Zwerg*, dwarf, woman living in Burgdorf, Germany and captures the "ordinary Germans" response to the events which transpired during WWII. Hegi does an extraordinary job of demonstrating the confusing of emotions which ensued in post-1945 Germany. Those ordinary Germans who were loyal to the Führer during the war were quickly deemed "castoffs" at the conclusion of hostilities. Daily, people wrestled with the question of how to come to grips with their new identity in the world community, as perpetrators of millions of deaths. Olaf Kuhlke tells the story of a German woman who never knew her father, a soldier in the Wehrmacht.<sup>8</sup> She was told he had most likely died on the Russian front during the war and was given the official classification of "missing," but he had never been declared dead. Upon unification of the two Germanys in 1991 and curious about her father's ultimate demise the woman applied to see the previously closed Nazi files which were now available for public viewing. The woman was prepared for every possible scenario except the one she was presented with. In a formal letter she was told that her father spent most of his time during the war at Auschwitz, as one of the leading officers responsible for the operation of the camp. One can imagine what a blow this would have been. The post-

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<sup>6</sup> Alf Lüdtke, "Coming to Terms with the Past": Illusions of Remembering, Ways of Forgetting Nazism in West Germany," *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 65, Issue 3 (September 1993), 554.

<sup>7</sup> Ursula Hegi, *Stones From the River*, (New York: Poseidon Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Olaf Kuhlke, "Body, Nation, and Place: The New Berlin Republic and the Spatial Representation of German National Identity," Ph.D. Dissertation (Kent State University, 2001).

war German society was awash with similar stories as this one serving to demonstrate what a very confusing and tumultuous time period it was that set the backdrop for the hush that descended on Holocaust memory.

The immediate German response to the events of WWII can be summed up in one austere word, *silence*. Quite simply, there was no interest in the Holocaust. Germans were more interested in rebuilding and feeding themselves than in atoning for any sins. Besides immediately after the war the “Final Solution” and all that it had entailed were not public knowledge. In fact the very term Holocaust hadn’t as of yet been coined. Why didn’t people talk about the largest human tragedy of our time? Why was there no interest in the immediate postwar society? Why did some persist in denying what had happened in their very town?

As a small portion of the German intellectual elite began their struggle with the Nazi era the majority of the population appeared unable to explore the Nazi past in any significant way. A psychoanalytic study spoke of the feeling which seemed to grip the nation as an “inability to mourn.” Whatever the critics have claimed, this voluntary period of silence during reconstruction after 1945, or *Trümmerzeit*, the time of ruins, and the economic miracle may have been necessary for the reconstruction of German society.

In an attempt to contextualize this line of reasoning some numbers will be helpful. It’s estimated that over fifty million soldiers and civilians died during WWII. Eleven million of those perished in death camps of those six million were Jews. Thirteen million Germans were left homeless at the end of the war amid 400 million cubic meters of rubble. One fourth of the country’s nineteen million residences were

destroyed. The monetary value of Germany's material losses alone were put at 35 billion Marks. One would have to that the inability to mourn may have had more to do with the need to survive than simple denial. Large parts of post-war German society also displayed traditional "defense" mechanisms in order to prepare for the work of remembering such as anti-Semitism and anti-communism and used slogans like "collective guilt theory," and "re-education." Wolfgang Benz also points out that many "covered memories" by diverting attention away from German guilt and onto Allied "crimes" such as Dresden, Allied war crimes, and the expulsion of Germans from Central Europe.<sup>9</sup> Another tactic identified by Benz used to alleviate the responsibility of remembrance in the immediate post-war society was reference to what he called "political fear formulas." Those buying into and using political fear formulas called on Germans to be fearful of Soviet imperialism and suspect of American economic penetration. A common tactic used by American presidents should illuminate this phenomenon. When things are going poorly with domestic policy it is often the case that the focus is switched to foreign policy.

The decade of the 1950's was when the least amount of attention was paid to Nazi victims and the most energetic effort to remembering German Victims was displayed. Robert Moeller has asserted that the most important representatives of German victimhood were the men, women, and children who left or were driven out of Eastern Europe by the Red Army at the end of the war and those who ended up in captivity in the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> This remembering of German victimhood was played

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<sup>9</sup> Wolfgang Benz, "Postwar Society and National Socialism: Remembrance, Amnesia, Rejection," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, Volume 19, 1990, p. 1-12.

<sup>10</sup> Robert G. Moeller, "War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *The American Historical Review*, Volume 101, Number 4, (October 1996), 1008.

out during denazification proceedings. At the 1945 Potsdam Conference in the summer of 1945 the Allies defined the eradication of Nazism from Germany as their objective during their occupation, but right from the start each Ally pursued a different route to accomplish this.<sup>11</sup> In the first postwar period alone, the Soviets fired 390,478 former members of the Nazi Party from their jobs. By April 1947, 850,000 former members of the Party had been examined by 262 denazification commissions.

Denazification proceeded a bit differently in the western zone. The denazification efforts in the western zone quickly turned into a bureaucratic machine that produced a lot of paperwork. Especially in the American zone they wanted a quick end to the denazification process and preferred a well-functioning economy. Therefore, many of the “functional” elites within the zone were left in power so as not to disrupt the administration of the country. With that said, in the American zone, for example, 3,441,800 people came under suspicion, three-quarters of whom were amnestied or had their cases closed without an indictment. Of 945,000 cases pursued, only 10 percent led to an oral hearing. Only 1,654 persons, 0.05 percent of the total, were judged to be in “Group I,” meaning “major guilt,” and 22,122 or 0.6 percent, were “burdened.”<sup>12</sup> Denazification results confirmed German self-pity and the notions of “we the victims” among the majority of Germans. The entire process tended to support the idea that most Germans were not responsible for the crimes of the Nazis, thus allowing them to perceive themselves as much closer to the victims than the perpetrators.

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<sup>11</sup> Lüdtke, 550.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 204.

Official hesitation regarding public ceremonies in the 1950's were based on the rational that the more public the commemoration the more emotion, and the more irrational the activities or voices it may spark. There was widespread fear that a backlash of neo-Nazi activity could be sparked from public ceremonies. "Therefore, the passivity of political authorities on all levels resonated with manifold desires "to forget" while ignoring those who called for enlightened discourse and self-criticism by the Germans." Even at the sights of former concentration camps almost nothing was done to offer a permanent opportunity to remember Nazi crimes and to construct a site for commemoration of the victims.<sup>13</sup>

In the fall of 1959 Theodor W. Adorno gave a public lecture in which he addressed the question "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" This lecture was important in many ways. Jeffrey Olick has described Adorno's lecture as being a classic of critical theory "combining psychoanalytic, philosophical, and political concepts to diagnose hidden perils in contemporary social forms."<sup>14</sup> Adorno's lecture is also an important marker on the historical record. It is situated at a moment in history where a growing shift in German political culture was afoot. In 1959, the lecture was delivered at a turning point between the era of "economic miracle" and the "social upheavals" that were to occupy the 1960's. This lecture was part of a series of such events as the publication in German of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1949), the 1958-59 anti-Semitic wave of vandalism, the 1961 Adolf Eichmann trial, the construction of the Berlin Wall (1961), and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963-66, that inspired a new generation's challenge to the don't rock the boat

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<sup>13</sup> Lüdtke, 555.

<sup>14</sup> Olick, "What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in German Politics Since 1989," *Social Science History* 22:4 (Winter 1998).

attitude of the early Federal Republic, particularly regarding the memory of the Nazi period.

Adorno's lecture has also been deemed a milestone for it is credited for inspiring a new and dramatic direction in Holocaust remembrance in Germany. In 1959 Adorno called upon intellectuals and ordinary Germans alike to begin the task of "working through the past," which demanded a critical self-evaluation and engagement with their past. Adorno claimed that the silence that Germans had been living with regarding the Nazi era was not beneficial to the healing of the nation's soul. Rather what was needed was a head-on confrontation. He takes the title of his lecture, and ultimately its content, from a phrase that was gaining currency as a slogan in the 1950's, "coming to terms with the past." For Adorno this phrase posed an impending sense of doom. "Coming to terms with the past" did not imply a serious working through of the past. Rather it suggested a "turning of the page" and if possible wiping it from memory.

Raul Hilberg, sat very much alone in the 1940's when he began to compile information pertaining to the Holocaust era. Hilberg began his groundbreaking text, *Destruction of the European Jews*, in 1948. This work, which has been declared the single most important academic text on the Holocaust, was continually rejected by publishers until 1961, when a survivor family subsidized the expenses for it to be published. Similarly, Saul Friedländer has observed that German history writing of the late forties and fifties had been, in his words, "uneasy" about Nazism. Friedländer goes on to say that although Nazism was considered an abhorrent calamity in German history the worst crimes committed by the Nazis, i.e. those against the Jews, were



largely left unexplored. Until the close of the fifties and the publication of Karol Dietrich Bracher's work *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, The Dissolution of the Weimar Republic (1955). This work inspired a new generation of German historians who approached the Third Reich from the perspective of social history. Included in this group were historians like Leon Poliakov and Gerald Reitlinger. These scholars broadened their research into such areas as the social conditions behind the rise of Nazism, the role which bureaucracy played, and other various structural dynamics which allowed National Socialism to gain momentum. Still, if one looks at the Holocaust work going on today, which is methodologically diversified and studied from the perspective of multiple disciplines the work going on in the 1950's was still very streamlined and gave more of a summary of the events without much interpretation.

This was the overriding mood following the conclusion of WWII, forgive and forget and maybe it will go away, except for the small number of researchers who were beginning to unravel the period's intricate web of bureaucratic underpinnings. This standard of forgive and forget worked for a time, but once the economic miracle had drawn to a close and reconstruction was essentially complete the German nation was left to evaluate its misgivings. Jeffery Olick has given this period in German history, roughly from the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949 through the early 1960's, the title of "The Reliable Nation."<sup>15</sup> Olick states that Konrad Adenauer's government attempted to resolve the past with institutional reforms. By implementing a democratic constitution and legal changes, making reparation payments to Israel,

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<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Olick, "The Sins of Our Fathers: The Third Reich and West German Legitimation, 1949-1989." Ph.D. Dissertation, (Yale University, 1993).



and creating a solid western orientation Adenauer claimed that Germany was a rehabilitated sovereign nation which would hold to its promises of democratization and repudiate the crimes of the regime. Contrary to this line of thinking, Olaf Kuhlke strongly asters that the conservative government of Adenauer and many “ordinary Germans” alike continued to disembody, or belittle, the Jewish population as the Nazi regime had by trying to “erase” the Holocaust from national memory, “to silence it just like six million Jewish lives had been silenced in the years before.”<sup>16</sup> If Germany was, as Olick surmised, the “reliable nation” of the 1950’s, or if it continued to validate Nazi practices as Kuhlke argues, the 1960’s were very different. The German nation may have been doing what was morally right in the 1950’s or to say, “going through the motions.” However, there was no real confrontation with the past or the past transgressions. The 1960’s was when the sons of the perpetrators came of age. They entered the universities with an entire different perspective and agenda than their fathers and grandfathers. These young men and women identified the gulf which existed between making reparations and truly working through the destruction that had been visited on a singular group of people. With Adorno’s call to Germans to *work through their past* what more befitting title for the decade of the 1960’s than the “Moral Nation?”

### *1960’s: The Moral Nation*

The 1960’s ushered in an entirely new wave of sentiment. There was a rebellion against the silence on the subject of the Holocaust that permeated the 1950’s. If the “fathers” who had lived and fought during the war were left to grapple

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<sup>16</sup> Kuhlke, 359.

with the Holocaust question in the 50's, then it was their "sons" during the 60's who confronted the conspiracy of silence of the previous decade. Accusations were leveled against parents, especially for their silence. Memories of German victimization, domination the 1950's, were challenged by accounts in which Nazi crimes and the victimization of others by Germans were central. The left-wing student movement and the Green Party environmental movement culminated in the protests of 1968.

Among academics there was a new breed of scholar who had experienced National Socialism as adolescents and received their academic training after 1945. These scholars began a shift in the historiography of National Socialism. This group turned the *Sonderweg* theory on its head. The *Sonderweg* explained the peculiar route from an authoritarian *Kaiserreich* to an authoritarian Third Reich. This new breed of radical students, children of the rubble, who had little or no direct experience of National Socialism, discovered a new path, one leading from Hitler to Adenauer.<sup>17</sup> For them it was the capitalist system which had brought fascism to Germany.<sup>18</sup> These critical authors focused on suffering perpetrated by Germans onto others and explained WWII as a logical outgrowth of National Socialist ideology, not as an aberration attributable to Hitler.<sup>19</sup>

The memorial culture began in earnest in the 1960's when the 1961 trial of SS bureaucrat Adolf Eichmann in Israel accelerated confrontation with their responsibility. This acknowledgement of guilt was further propelled by the Frankfurt

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<sup>17</sup> Moeller, 1034.

<sup>18</sup> For a good introduction to the historiography of National Socialism, see Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretations*, 3d edn. (London, 1993); and Bernard Faulenbach, "Emanzipation von der deutschen Tradition? Geschichtsbewusstsein in den sechziger Jahren," in *Politische Kultur und deutsche Frage: Materialien zum Staats- und Nationalbewusstsein in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Werner Weidenfeld, ed. (Cologne, 1989), 73-92, and Jane Caplan, "The Historiography of National Socialism."

<sup>19</sup> Moeller, 1035.

Auschwitz trials, and the trials of concentration camp commandants, administrators, and employees.<sup>20</sup> Claudia Koonz has described the 1960's as a period marked by the "recovery of memory."<sup>21</sup> She argues that public consciousness in Europe and West Germany was jolted by discussions of the Holocaust in periodicals, books, radio, and film. Alain Renais's *Nuit et Brouillard* (1955), the *Diary of Anne Frank* (1962), Rolf Hochhuth's *Der Stellvertreter* (1963), and Peter Weiss's *Die Ermittlung* (1964) confronted Germans with the question of responsibility for Nazi crimes. Koonz posits that Margarete Mitscherlich's article "Inability to Mourn" in 1967 inspired Germans to prove her wrong.<sup>22</sup> Koonz states that in the 1960's "genocide entered official memory."<sup>23</sup> This is further evidenced by the year long debate in 1964 over extension of the statute of limitations for murder during the Nazi regime. This issue wasn't completely settled until July 3, 1979 when parliament decided to abolish any statute of limitations for murder.<sup>24</sup> Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, in a speech to the Federal Parliament, on November 10, 1965, stated that the postwar period was "finished," once again hoping to distance themselves from the mass murder committed two decades prior.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For example the investigation of 210 men in reserve Police Battalion 101 from Hamburg. See Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), and Gitta Serney, *Into the Darkness: An Examination of Conscience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 233, 251-66.

<sup>21</sup> Claudia Koonz, "Between Memory and Oblivion: Concentration Camps in German Memory," in *Commemorations*.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior*, trans. Beverley R. Placzek (New York: Grove Press, 1975).

<sup>23</sup> Koonz, 268. See Eric Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 70-75, and Anton Kaes, "History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination," *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* (1990): 111-128.

<sup>24</sup> Lüdtké, 570.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 570.

The decade of the 1970's began with a very symbolic event. In December 1970 German Chancellor Willy Brandt performed a dramatic genuflection at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial. By performing this single act Brandt demonstrated to Poland, the Soviet Union, the Jewish community, and the world at large that Germany, as a nation, had acknowledged its guilt over the invasion and repression of the peoples of Eastern Europe. Brandt's act of contrition at the base of the memorial was said to have marked another shift in Holocaust memory-work toward "commemoration and repentance."<sup>26</sup> Herf argues that memory of Germany's terrible past was indispensable for serving West German policy in the present.<sup>27</sup> What they could not change they must except and weave into the fabric of their political dialogue.

Triggered by the Speer Memoirs (1970), the notorious "Hitler Wave" of the Seventies with its best-selling Hitler biographies such as Harold Deutsch's *Hitler and His Generals* (1974), and Joachim Fest's *Hitler* (1974), may have signified at the popular level more of an ambiguous attraction and possible nostalgia rather than a true desire to remember and come to terms with the past.

The 1970's concluded with yet another monumental event which would serve as the impetus for the 1980's "explosion into memory." In 1979 an American television miniseries, *Holocaust*, was broadcast over four consecutive evenings and captivated a West German television audience. This media event demonstrated to historians just how limited the impact of their work on Nazism had been to this point.

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<sup>26</sup> Eley, 101.

<sup>27</sup> Herf, 346.

*Holocaust* has been judged by many to have evoked a turning point in Germany's confrontation with their Nazi crimes. *Holocaust* revolved around the experience of a single German family. Lüdtke says, "Thus, administrative discrimination and political repression were transposed into personal grief and individual struggle."<sup>28</sup> For several days millions of West Germans suspended the attitude most of them and their (grand)parents had pursued before 1945: that of bystanders.

The film told the fictitious story of the German-Jewish Weiss family. A record 20 million German citizens, fifty percent of the adult population of West Germany, tuned in to view it. The film did not offer any new information about the Nazi era which the German public was not already aware of. What the film did quite simply was to reflect the consensus, established by historians of the 1960's, that the apparatus of terror and total destruction visited on Europe's Jews was administered by the SS, Gestapo, and the SD. It was these groups who were identified as the agents of destruction.

For weeks prior to the airing of the mini-series television networks prepared the groundwork for the response that it knew this show would elicit in West Germany. Schools were provided with information packages; the network managers stirred public debate; and preparatory broadcasts and press previews partially outlined the film and its story. Through its' nearly sixteen hours of airtime *Holocaust* accomplished much more than the extensive educational activities in schools and in the media had achieved during the previous three decades. It successfully portrayed the drama of a single Jewish family and thus the abstract themes of discrimination and political repression were transformed into personal grief and individual struggle.

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<sup>28</sup> Lüdtke, 544.

When abstract history is transformed into a personal story, suddenly history becomes alive and has the power to evoke strong identification and attachment. For those brief hours Germans were called upon to suspend the attitude of *bystander* which they had been raised on and forced to see their accountability. *Holocaust* caused many for the first time to identify with the anxieties, misery, and desperation of those who had been made victims by German Nazis. More important to our discussion than the storyline of the film may be the controversy it sparked. The audience was provided the opportunity after each viewing to phone in and ask questions or offer comments. Panels of specialists were provided to answer questions and exchange opinions. Such notable scholars as Andreas Hillgruber, and Martin Broszat participated. Thousands of questions flooded the panel, which became overwhelmed. The question which loomed the largest among the scholars in these phone-ins was: Why had people neglected the knowledge that academia had provided on National Socialism? Why had they avoided looking it up in the books? How was it possible that “the masses” – that is, the average German – had “let it happen?” Who shared complicity in and with German fascism? Had “we” or, for that matter, “our parents” recognized what happened to neighbors as they were publicly mistreated beginning in March 1933? Questions of causation and moral judgment troubled thousands of those who phoned in. Along with the question and answer portion a survey was simultaneously done which served to gauge the impact of the film in numbers. To further emphasize the shift which was occurring in Holocaust memory-work the statement that all adults during Nazism “shared at least some guilt” was rated positive by more people after they had watched the film (22% up from 16%). Also, when asked if there was a

“moral obligation of Germany to pay compensation and restitution,” the approving votes shot up from 45% before the showing of the film to 54% afterwards.<sup>29</sup>

The final event to mark the decade of the 1970's was the *Verjährungsdebatten*, extensive debates held within the Bundestag over the extension of the statute of limitations for murder during the Nazi era. These occurred at four different junctures in time, 1960, 1965, 1969, and the last one occurring in 1979. These *Verjährungsdebatten* brought the issue of the Nazi past as well as the magnitude of judicial failure of the 1950's to center stage in West German politics. In each of these four *Verjährungsdebatten*, the Social Democratic Party led the fight to continue prosecuting crimes of the Nazi era.<sup>30</sup> On July 3, 1979, after lengthy debate, the Bundestag voted 253 to 228 to abolish the statute of limitations on crimes of murder and genocide.<sup>31</sup> The outcome of the *Verjährungsdebatten* was important because they led to continued prosecutions and, just as importantly I would argue, drew public attention to the crimes of the Nazi era. As we have seen in previous decades Holocaust memory-work in Germany has always had an “event” or instance in which to build itself around. At the close of the 1970's these *Verjährungsdebatten* and the airing of the American television docudrama *Holocaust* were the defining moments. Discussion of the Holocaust became more frequent in West German political discourse. And as Herf has identified, it was not long before the “emotive power of the term ‘Holocaust’ was put to use in contemporary politics. During the

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<sup>29</sup> Lüdtkke, 543-547

<sup>30</sup> It was estimated that from May 8, 1945, to the mid-1980's Allied and then West German courts accused 90,921 persons of participating in war crimes against humanity. Of this number 6,479 persons were convicted. Twelve were executed, 160 were sentenced to life in prison, 6,192 received extended prison terms, 114 paid fines, and one youth received a warning; 83,140 cases were closed without convictions owing to findings of innocence, non-opening of the proceedings by the court, or the death of the accused. See Herf, 335.

<sup>31</sup> For details of this debate within the Bundestag including all of the participants see Herf, 340-342.



bitter debates over nuclear weapons the term Holocaust was used in conjunction with deployment of American missiles in West Germany and of a “nuclear Auschwitz” to refer to a nuclear war between the two superpowers whose primary victims would be the two Germanys and Europe as a whole. This denial of the uniqueness of the Holocaust during the Euromissiles dispute would set the stage for the *Historikersstreit* of 1985-1986.<sup>32</sup>

### *1980's: Normalization as Relativization*

In German remembrance of the Holocaust during the 1980's the catchword was “normalization.” Thanks to the conservative leadership of Chancellor Helmut Kohl the Germany of the eighties wanted and in some ways succeeded in portraying itself as a “normal nation,” no different than France or Spain, with the same problems, highs and lows. The 1980's have been most commonly identified by the dual controversies of the *Historikersstreit*, and what has become known as the “Bitburg affair.” Saul Friedländer has said that minor events may take on a major symbolic significance. That was to become the fate of the Bitburg debacle and the yearlong historian's debate that was waged on the pages of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and other prominent newspapers.

The “commemoration culture” that developed in the 1980's was in part due to preparations for the fortieth anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe.<sup>33</sup> This preparation produced such products as the brochure titled “Germany for the Jewish Traveler,” put out by the German Tourist Office, and the revaluation of the content

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<sup>32</sup> Herf, 349-350.

<sup>33</sup> Koonz, 268.



and meaning of previously built Holocaust memorials. Dozens of German towns and cities invited former Jewish residents and their families to return for civic memorials. Following the example of Willy Brandt's genuflection at the Warsaw Memorial in 1970 Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Bundespräsident*, commemorated the German surrender in 1945 by admonishing Germans to accept the responsibilities of their past, "look truth straight in the eye – without embellishment or distortion."<sup>34</sup> Hundreds of German towns and cities were inspired to replace their rather vague memorial phrases such as "No more war" or "To all victims" with inscriptions like "To the memory of our Jewish fellow citizens." Koonz argues that things had so changed in German culture as it related to the Holocaust that an American president could speak of Wehrmacht soldiers as "victims" at Bitburg, but in 1988 when Bundestag President Phillip Jenninger made a clumsy attempt to confront anti-Semitism, a storm of protest forced his resignation.<sup>35</sup>

The Bitburg affair began as a nominal event but was to occupy the central spot in media coverage for more than two months. This "affair" has also been credited for planting the seed for the need for a central Holocaust memorial within the country of Germany. Bitburg symbolized "all the dilemmas of forgetting and remembering, for Germany and its victims, for the victorious allies and the vanquished enemy, for those who lived through the war and those born after 1945: the second generation and, by now, the third. For Germans and Jews, more than anybody else."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Richard von Weizsäcker, "Speeches for Our Time," David Clay Large, *German Issues* 10 (1992), 17-30, and Herf, 355.

<sup>35</sup> Elisabeth Domansky, "Kristallnacht, the Holocaust and German Unity: The Meaning of November 9 as an Anniversary in Germany," *History and Memory: Studies in Representation of the Past* 4:1 (Spring/Summer 1992), 60-87.

<sup>36</sup> Friedländer, "Some German Struggles with Memory," in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Geoffrey Hartman ed., (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 27.

The fortieth anniversary of the end of WWII and the liberation of the Nazi death camps came about in 1985. Many ceremonies were planned for its commemoration but as with all topics related to the Holocaust there were opposing views at work. At the heart of the controversy was an American president, Ronald Reagan, who felt, as many others did, that Germany had become a bulwark for democracy and that the exiled nation deserved to be rehabilitated spiritually. Conversely the number of people who had survived the Holocaust was declining everyday. The fortieth anniversary marked a time for them to tell their story before it was too late. This was an occasion for them to tell the world how they felt about the past and present, including things those following the rehabilitation line of reasoning, would have liked to see recede into history. President Reagan had hoped that his trip would serve to bring a sense that healing had taken place in the once afflicted nation. However, when he agreed to visit a German military cemetery in Bitburg where 49 SS men were buried it was not a sense of healing that pervaded but rather one of disdain. President Reagan made matters worse for himself when he said that young German soldiers were just as much victims of the Third Reich as the Jews were – this equation, even though inadvertent, struck a cord especially with survivors.

The *Historikerstreit*, the historian's battle over the nature of the Nazi past, provided the forum in which two distinct schools of historiography confronted one another. The argument, called by some the "war of the German historians,"<sup>37</sup> was born out of the desire by the neo-conservative intellectual right to reduce the burdens of the Holocaust in West German national political discourse by questioning its

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<sup>37</sup> Volker Berghahn, "The Unmastered and Unmasterable Past," *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 63, Issue 3 (September 1991), 546-554.

uniqueness.<sup>38</sup> This infuriated left-liberal thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas, who viewed this line of thinking as a revisionist attempt to relativize the significance of the National Socialist past. Begun quietly in the mid-1970's it escalated into a noisy international dispute in 1986 and ended in an uneasy truce. The dispute began when Frankfurt social philosopher, Jürgen Habermas, accused the well-respected German historians Ernst Nolte (Free University of Berlin) and Andreas Hillgruber (University of Cologne) of having written revisionist histories. Habermas was writing in response to an article by Nolte "*Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will*," the past that will not pass away, that appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* June 6, 1986. The debate had very little to do with Nazism and the crimes it perpetrated but rather with political and ideological controversy related to the then current German politics. History was but a pretext for the political ends it pursued.

The historian's involved were not arguing over whether or not the Holocaust occurred. What concerned those involved was the legitimacy of comparing the Holocaust to other episodes of mass destruction in the twentieth century. Could the Holocaust be compared to other tragedies or did it have a singularity all its own? Habermas leveled his argument against those he called "government historians" who attempted to relativise National Socialism and the Holocaust, *Schadensabwicklung*, in

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<sup>38</sup> For a thorough analysis of the *Historikerstreit*, see Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988). For the documents see *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? The Dispute about the Germans' Understanding of History*, trans. James Knowlton and Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993). See also Volker Berghahan, "The Unmastered and Unmasterable Past," *Journal of Modern History*, Volume 63, Issue 3 (September 1991), 546-554; Saul Friedländer, "Überlegungen zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus," in Dan Diner, ed., *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zur Historisierung und Historikerstreit* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1987), 34-50.

order to rehabilitate discredited German national traditions.<sup>39</sup> The debate, which would most likely have remained contained within the walls of academia was transformed into a national storm that unleashed its fury on the pages of German newspapers, radio and television talk show, and in other various public arenas. The two main questions of the historian's debate can be formulated as thus: What historical methods should be used to discuss and explain the Holocaust and the Nazi past? What are the political implications of such methods in Germany today?

Thus the *Historikerstreit* sought to find a way to talk about the twelve years of Nazism that would diminish the crimes that were committed and place the victimhood of Germany on the same plane as that of the Jews. This relativism of Nolte's is dangerous. If a crime of this magnitude can be relativised to the likes of any other mass murder then it loses its uniqueness and if that happens then we are in danger of repeating past transgressions. Germany has not been granted the breathing space to move on because we cannot allow it. The Holocaust must remain in the forefront of memory for as long as it can.

The interpretation of choice once unification was achieved was that of Germany as victim. Germans would like for their history to have happened to them. They want to have suffered from themselves in the same way that everyone suffered from them. Germans wanted to believe in the myth that Germany was "seized" in 1933 by Adolf Hitler and "occupied" for twelve dark years and then was "liberated" in 1945. This "victim Germany" was the only version that East and West could agree upon when the wall came tumbling down.

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<sup>39</sup> Karl Wilds, "Identity and the Culture of Contrition: Recasting 'Normality' in the Berlin Republic," *German Politics*, Volume 9, Issue 1, (2000), 85.

What a better starting point for our discussion of German memory of the Nazi period in contemporary society than 1989, which witnessed an event that set off a domino effect all across Eastern Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall and Germany's rush toward unification. "Forward, but forgetting nothing" was the phrase emblazoned on a sign carried by demonstrators in East Berlin during the last tumultuous days of the GDR. These lines were meant to show support for the political transformation that was underway and offer to the world that sat in trepidation of the unification of Germany this pledge, "don't worry, we won't forget what happened." The world didn't have to worry because with unification Germany's scholars, as well as ordinary Germans, began debating German history with renewed vigor that surprised most observers.

With much jubilation the world watched as the much-despised Berlin Wall came toppling down in the fall of 1989. One reaction to this event, given German history and its tortuous waltz with national identity, would have been to surmise that since Germany was whole again all of the problems which had plagued the divided nation would now dissolve. Naïve thing such as this was one-hundred and eighty degrees from reality in the newly united Germany. Rudy Koshar has posited that reunification was more than a process of economic and political synchronization: it was also a struggle over symbols.<sup>40</sup> The symbols which Koshar mentions will become evident as I proceed.

Immediately following unification three basic public controversies surrounding the Holocaust surfaced. Viewed together these controversies serve to

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<sup>40</sup> Koshar, 3.

shed light on the role that the Nazi atrocities continue to play in the formation of a new national identity for post-unification. The first of these controversies was a traveling exhibition called "Crimes of the German Armed Forces," which was accompanied by loud protests from right-wing and neo-Nazi groups. The exhibition touched off a wider discussion and called for a re-examination of the traditional roles of certain sectors of society, especially the role of the armed forces.<sup>41</sup>

The second of these controversies was over the publication of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (1996). Within this work Goldhagen describes anti-Semitism as the driving force behind the willingness of Germans to participate in the mass murder of Jews. He argues that there was precious little protest when it came to measures against the Jews, because of a virtually unchallenged image of Jews as enemies of Germany. This perception, argues Goldhagen, made it relatively easy to mobilize against unarmed men, women, and children. Goldhagen's book-tour through Germany opened up a new debate on the issue of individual guilt of "ordinary Germans" under National Socialism. So shocking was his work it generated a yearlong discussion in Germany. Prior to the German language edition his book, its theses and Goldhagen himself were rejected, but with the publication of his work in Germany the reception became one of tentative reluctance. Perhaps what was most shocking was the acceptance of his work in Germany by the general population. By the close of the year, Daniel Goldhagen and his work, received much acclaim for having affected an important change in how Germans regarded their national past and won him the Democracy Prize.

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<sup>41</sup> Rüdiger Graf, "The Battle Over the Berlin Holocaust Memorial," *The New Presence* (July 1998).

The “Goldhagen debate” began as most things do in Germany, on the front page of the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. The protagonist for the discussion begun on April 12, 1996, was Volker Ullrich, political editor for *Die Zeit*. Ullrich claimed that with his work, Goldhagen had provoked a new *Historikerstreit*, referring to the 1986 *Historikerstreit* over the uniqueness of the Holocaust in the normalization of German history. Ullrich pointed out that Goldhagen’s work had stirred-up old fissures which ten years had not been able to heal.<sup>42</sup> The Democracy Prize was awarded to Goldhagen not so much on his work alone but rather on what his work achieved in the public realm. I quote the speech given by Habermas at the awards ceremony who decreed that Goldhagen had received this award on the following grounds: “through the urgency, and forcefulness, and the moral strength of his presentation” Goldhagen has “provided a powerful stimulus to the public conscience of the Federal Republic,” he has sharpened “our sensibility for what constitutes the background and the limit of a German normalization.”<sup>43</sup> The third controversy which was to grip post-unified Germany was the proposed Berlin Holocaust Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. This controversy will be taken up at length in the pages to come.

Once the wall fell in November 1989, “victim Germany” was the only view of history that both East and West Germans could agree upon. Even now the two conjoined Germanys share one common desire: they are determined to consign the Nazi past to “history.” They feel compelled to resolve the contradictory duty to both

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<sup>42</sup> I need to mention an ironic occurrence, when Goldhagen was awarded the Democracy Prize from the *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, Journal for German and International Politics, the man who gave the laudatory remarks was Jürgen Habermas, the man who had initiated the 1986 *Historikerstreit*.

<sup>43</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Goldhagen and the Public use of History: Why a Democracy Prize for Daniel Goldhagen?” in *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, Robert R. Shandley ed., (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 263.



remember and to forget. Jane Kramer has argued that today Germans want “symbolic simplicities of objectification.” They no longer want to deal with the “painful plain truths” and refuse to further capitulate to the haughty stares of the rest of the world which continued to call up pictures of obsessive forms of order, domination, and pure evil anytime “German” is mentioned. Rather, Germans today prefer the ritualized monuments, memorials, and “commemorative sites” that “take memory and deposit it, so to speak, in the landscape, where it can be visited at appropriate ceremonial moments, but where it does not interfere unduly with the business of life at hand.”<sup>44</sup> It’s unclear as to why Germans realize that ritualization was all form with no substance. This is where the necessity of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial enters. There is a fragmentation of memory within Germany today. This new memorial is going to serve to join these together into one. The memorial is not going to be a ritual that consoles through its’ banality of memory. Berlin needs a memorial to encourage future generations to reconcile themselves with the past. Alongside the sites of former concentration camps, which serve as authentic markers of Nazi crimes, a central memorial in Berlin could serve as a symbol of the new Germany.

After fifty years of suppressing and ritualizing the crimes of WWII Germans are now prepared to say yes, it happened, it is part of our collective identity. Germans are unique they cannot move on, they cannot master their past. Remembering must become an active part of their new identity. This new Germany isn’t looking to suppress its legacy of guilt but rather considers this legacy to be an integral component of its collective identity. They must embrace their past and their memory

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<sup>44</sup> Jane Kramer, “Letters from Germany: The Politics of Memory,” *The New Yorker* (August 14, 1995), 48-65.



of it and be actively engaged. The Berlin Holocaust Memorial will cultivate this active discourse.

## II

### History and Identity: Cultures of Commemoration East and West

*Ich waiss, Ginterchen, em Wasten is baser em Osten is scheener.*  
- Günter Grass<sup>1</sup>

Throughout its long, fragmented, and violent history the German nation has undergone tremendous shifts in leadership, policy, borders, and ideals. One should not be surprised to find then that the post-war process of remembering the Nazi era, a particularly problematic time, would also be characterized by discord and restlessness. Why and how Germany should recall this era of its past is of enormous importance because of the questions it raises about the connections between memory and identity. I hope to highlight in this chapter the general trends which have prevailed since the conclusion of hostilities. Further, my hope is that by taking the observer through Germany's chronology of remembrance since 1871 one will be able to speculate where the future of German Holocaust memory is headed.

Rudy Koshar has analyzed modern societies' "anxious call for memory." Koshar cites a quote by Gertrude Stein as a fitting aphorism for his anxiety, "everything destroys itself in the twentieth century and nothing

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<sup>1</sup> Günter Grass, "Truth in a Broken Mirror," *The Guardian* (January 27, 2001). "Günter, love, I know the west is better, but the east is more beautiful." This is a phrase that Günter's aunt whispered into his ear in 1958 and he says has run throughout his books, weighing up the east and the west, and still today gives him a perspective.

continues.”<sup>2</sup> There is this prevailing pessimistic fear that modern society, with all its technological advances, has no place for memory of our past. There is also a sense that society is moving at such a fast pace that if left unchecked and unpreserved we will soon forget our past as if it had never existed at all. As a modern society we are not engaged with our past, that is, we are a self-absorbed people with limited time and interest in our past culture. This in turn breeds anxiety or alienation: anxiety about our future and alienation from our past. The anxious calls for preservation comes from what Koshar calls the “self-betrayal” of identity through architectural preservation. He argues that the process of reconstructing the past has always been limited by what was physically possible, and that preservationists and their political allies have developed historically specific rhetorics to deal with this self-betrayal. This self-betrayal that Koshar mentions is essentially about the use of history in the public realm and describes how the micropolitics of historical preservation in Germany “subverted the larger political goal of building pasts, which was the ‘imaging’ of national continuity, stability, and identity in the built environment.”<sup>3</sup> In describing this self-betrayal Koshar issues a warning about positing identity and affirms that collective memories outcomes are never predictable.

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<sup>2</sup> Rudy Koshar, “Building Past: Historic Preservation and Identity in Twentieth-Century Germany,” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, John R. Gilles, ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 215. Stein was describing Picasso here and the fact that he knew the earth was not the same as it had been in the nineteenth century and he inevitably made his work different. Stein said of the twentieth century, “[it] has a splendor which is its own...things destroyed as they have never been destroyed.” From Gertrude Stein, *Writings 1932-1946*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

Koshar describes the plethora of movements for historic preservation, the maintenance, restoration, or recycling of buildings, districts, townscapes, and the historical memory attached to them in both the North American and European theaters. So intense has this anxiety been in German-speaking lands it has been referred to as the “cult of monument.”<sup>4</sup> Koshar, and others, have attributed the driving force for this phenomenon in Germany to its preoccupation with continuity, which has been sorely lacking in German history.<sup>5</sup>

*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, mastering the past, is the German word used to describe the efforts of Germans to come to terms with, the Nazi past, especially the murder of the European Jews. But what does this phrase, “Coming to terms with the past,” coined by Theodor Adorno, mean? Adorno addressed this issue in an article entitled, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?” published in 1959. He stated that “Coming to terms with the past does not imply a serious working through of the trauma.”<sup>6</sup> It suggests, rather, a wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory. This process, begun perhaps while WWII still raged, continues to this day in Germany. The Berlin Holocaust Memorial may serve as the capstone of this process. The construction of this monolithic memorial, and the two-decade long process to decide on the memorial, just might be the largest historical

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 215. The twentieth-century usage of this term began with Austrian art historian Alois Reigl when he used it in 1905 and later in the 1970s when Hessian conservator Reinhard Bentmann used it to criticize West German nostalgia.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 215-238.

<sup>6</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean,” in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, Geoffrey Hartman ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986), 225-129.

“eraser” ever constructed, the working through, rather than recognition, which Adorno described. This “mastering the past,” never having been an easy task, became even more cumbersome in 1991 with the official reuniting of the two Germanys into one nation. Like two dancers in search of the right partner to achieve a beautiful, fluid waltz the two Germanys melding of Holocaust memories has not been without a few bruised toes.

This chapter will seek to answer four questions. First, why did public memory of the period 1938-1945 diverge along political or ideological lines?<sup>7</sup> That is, why was it that West German public memory of the Holocaust found sympathy for Jewish victims and their plight while in East Germany such feelings were suppressed and Jews found not sympathy but rather indirect recognition garbed in an antifascist cloak? Second, how did public memory and the democratic left and right in the West and the Communist dictatorship in the East approach the dual issues of memory and penance? Third, how did the Cold War affect discussion of the Jewish tragedy in both Germanys? Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, how have the two nations of East and West Germany combined their remembrance of the Holocaust in order to rebuild as one nation?

A short discussion on the concept of nation identity needed. Among intellectuals and social historians the primary assertion made regarding national identity is that it is first and foremost a human construct. It is an “imagined community,” in which its participants may never personally

encounter each other.<sup>8</sup> National identity is only evident when a sufficient number of people believe in the same version of the collective identity. Further, for this abstract concept to become a social reality in which it is recognized throughout the population and perceived to be legitimate by those not participating in its construct, namely outsiders, it must be transmitted via institutions, laws, customs, beliefs, and practices. As Mary Fulbrook argues, in many quarters this belief in and quest for national identity is remarkably strong.<sup>9</sup> Germany is and will remain to be for many decades to come the textbook case for this phenomenon. In a sense this overriding desire to achieve a “correct” national identity has become an obsession for the German people.

The quest to define a German national identity is not a new concept. The pursuit of people living within the loosely defined borders of the Holy Roman Empire to find a sense of sameness, of nationhood, of German-ness took them on a twisted and often times destructive voyage through time. This trek has been labeled by some analysts as the *Sonderweg* thesis. *Sonderweg* postulates that Germany pursued a “different” path in national development compared to other Western. The argument is that Germany never experienced a liberal revolution as had Britain, France, and the American colonies and as a consequence Germany’s “torturous” past. There are many others who describe

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<sup>7</sup> Public memory defined as that which is adopted and supported by the national government through narratives, museums, education, ceremony, etc. Throughout this work public memory will refer to the official, state sponsored, memory.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imaged Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity After the Holocaust*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1999).

the uniqueness of German nation building by demonstrating a direct link from Luther's *Wittenberg Thesis* to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. These schools of thought about German national development illuminate Germany's quest to "get it right" when struggling with its Nazi past and post-war identity. To most observers at that time the process which post-war memory of the period 1938-1945 took within the divided German nation was of no consequence. It is only with hindsight that one sees the radically different processes that were at work as the Holocaust was remembered in the two Germanys and the effects they produced upon their citizens.

Most commentators argue that the answers to questions regarding the divergent course which memory took in the two post-war nations of West and East Germany lie somewhere other than the Nazi era itself.<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Herf, in *Divided Memory*, finds his answer to the riddle in pre-1933 Germany, namely the Weimar Republic.<sup>11</sup> In order to explain the differences in the public remembrance of the crimes of the Nazi Herf makes his argument for *multiple restorations*.<sup>12</sup> This term refers to the continuities that link the German political tradition of Weimar to the anti-Nazi period after 1945. What he argues is that all the political leaders in both East and West Germany

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<sup>10</sup> The literature on narratives and meaning of the Holocaust is extensive. See Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); Peter Hayes, ed., *Lesson and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991); Saul Friedländer, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); and James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

“reentered” political life after WWII. Herf argues that these men were all involved in German politics prior to the Third Reich. These men all came of age between 1900 and 1930. They experienced Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust in their mature years rather than in their tender, formative age. Among the West Germans were such notable men as Konrad Adenauer, Kurt Schumacher, Theodor Heuss, and Ernst Reuter. On the East German side, Walter Ulbricht, Otto Grotewohl, Wilhelm Pieck, and Paul Merker. Herf posits that the inherited traditions and ideologies of these leaders carried with them in their hearts and minds and became a precious source of meaning in which to interpret the present and shape the memory of the recent past.<sup>13</sup>

Germany’s struggles with its problematic past have continually mutated. There is a consensus among historians as to what this mutation resembles. Anita Grossmann describes those who make a career out of observing Germany’s tussles with its past as remaining intrigued by a moving target, “swinging between anxious remembrance and resentful denial, that just won’t go away and keeps mutating, seemingly with increasing speed and intensity.”<sup>14</sup> Geoff Eley believes that a constant feature of German politics and culture is an oscillation between the drive to forget and establish a sense of normalcy in their history and a compulsive need to remember, commemorate and work through questions of guilt and responsibility.<sup>15</sup> These perspectives capture the mood of German memory work. This is precisely

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>14</sup> Anita Grossmann, “The ‘Goldhagen Effect’: Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany,” in *The “Goldhagen Effect”: History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past*, Geoff Eley, ed., (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 89.



because those involved in the debates over the meaning of the German past are a much larger group than the limited audience of academic historians. The debate encompasses all levels of civil society.

Every decade since 1945 has been characterized by attempts to remember the Holocaust which are linked to very specific aims of German rehabilitation. I will examine each of these periods of remembrance and discuss the unique memory work that mark each. These observations are divided between considerations of the German Democratic Republic, the “East” and the Federal Republic, the “West.”

In Germany as a whole the struggle over what to do with their Nazi past began at *Stunde Null*, the “zero Hour,” of 1945. However, after the *Trümmerzeit*, Germany’s time of ruins, the West’s economic miracle, and the East’s isolation within the Soviet bloc, all worked against any significant confrontation with the Nazi past. Saul Friedländer cites the onion-cutting ceremony in Günter Grass’ *The Tin Drum* as symbolic of a Germany that was unable to shed tears without artificial stimulation.<sup>15</sup> In her work, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990*, Mary Fulbrook argues that Germans repressed their past entirely and allowed the public soul to wither and die.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, in a 1983 article, political philosopher Hermann Lübbe asserted that, “A certain silence was the social-psychological and politically necessary medium for the transformation of our postwar population

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<sup>15</sup> Geoff Eley ed., *The “Goldhagen Effect,”* 90-91.

<sup>16</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 3.

into the citizenry of the Federal Republic of Germany.”<sup>18</sup> Rudy Koshar argues that even though “Silence has been the dominant metaphor for historical accounts of the German memory of Nazism in the immediate postwar years,” the notion of “commemorative noise” would more aptly define this period.<sup>19</sup> Koshar contends that “amnesia” about the crimes of the Nazis is a more accurate diagnosis of the problem of German remembrance than believing Germans deliberately remained silent about the regimes crimes. Worldwide expectations that Germans would mourn their lost Jews were disappointed. Jost Hermand provides a plausible explanation for why this failed to happen. “Most Germans,” he writes, “who themselves went through much suffering, and who during the postwar period were concerned at first above all with sheer survival, simply said nothing about these things.”<sup>20</sup> And Günter Grass wrote that in the immediate postwar years “there was no collapse, no absolute beginning, just sluggish and murky transitions.”<sup>21</sup>

Historians have viewed the first postwar phase that Germans underwent in confronting the Holocaust and its consequences differently. Wolfgang Benz argues that the collapse of National Socialist rule was followed by a phase of public remembrance and working through of what had happened characterized by a plethora of personal accounts of prosecution and resistance and an explosion of cultural and political media commenting on

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *The Divided Nation: A History of Germany, 1918-1990*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 163, 176.

<sup>18</sup> Hermann Lübbe, quoted in Anson Rabinbach, “The Jewish Question in the German Question,” *New German Critique*. No. 44 (Spring/Summer 1988), 159-192.

<sup>19</sup> Rudy Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts: Preservation and National Memory in the Twentieth Century*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 199.

<sup>20</sup> Jost Hermand, ???

National Socialism. However, this period of confrontation with their transgressions was brief. Benz links the end of this period of retrospection with the end of the Allied occupation, the establishment of a new sovereign state and a sense optimism about the future created by the “economic miracle.” Germans quickly slipped into a new phase in their remembering, which has been labeled amnesia, and from that forgetting they quickly turned to rejection.<sup>22</sup> Anita Grossman argues against Benz and says that this is hardly a history of amnesia. Rather she posits that in every decade remembering the Holocaust has been necessary for the rehabilitation of Germans even if that remembrance has taken different forms.<sup>23</sup> By the close of the 1940’s the “Iron Curtain” bifurcated German memory and the two Germanys began to pursue very different paths of public memory.

The perfect launching point for the discussion of divergent memory work in the two Germanys is provided by Herf’s summary of the place occupied in public discourse by anti-Semitism and the Jewish catastrophe in the immediate post-war years:

...it was the West, not the East, German government that offered financial restitution to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, established close relations with the state of Israel, gave the Holocaust a place – in time a rather prominent place – in the national political memory, and, after disastrous delay, even conducted more trials of suspected perpetrators of crimes committed during the Nazi era. Conversely, East German leaders kept the Jewish question on the margin of narratives of the Nazi era, refused to pay restitution to Jewish survivors or to Israel, purged those Communist leaders who sought to give it

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<sup>21</sup> Günter Grass, “Kopfgeburten, oder die Deutschen Sterben aus” *Continuity and Change*, 205.

<sup>22</sup> Wolfgang Benz, “Postwar Society and National Socialism: Remembrance, Amnesia, Rejection,” *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte*, Volume 19, 1990, 1-12.

<sup>23</sup> Grossman, 92.

greater prominence, and even gave tangible support to Israel's armed adversaries.<sup>24</sup>

After the war the top priority in the American zone of occupation was to “cure” the Germans of their “megalomania, the ideology of race and their claim to world domination.”<sup>25</sup> Germans, in the opinion of the free world, had allowed the greatest human tragedy of historical record to unfold in their backyards. The world had at one time viewed Germany as an intellectual breeding ground for great thinkers, which had produced the likes of Kant, Goethe, Nietzsche, and Fichte, all commenting on the human condition. However, Germany's reputation as a land of education and high culture was obliterated. After 1945 Germany was looked upon as a barbaric land which was in need of recivilizing and a deep catharsis from within. The re-civilizing procedures such as “de-Nazification,” and education in democracy under Allied tutelage were initiated and carried out by the respective occupying forces. Similar to the plight of a chastised child, once Germany's repentance was acknowledged to be complete by the rest of the world they would then be invited to take their place again at the table of civilized nations.

If 1945-1950 was a dismal time in Germany the beginning of a new decade saw a shift in accelerating affluence that began with the “economic miracle.” The Cold War had crystallized into the form it would maintain until 1989 and the Berlin Wall was under construction. The Allies of the war were now adversaries. The decade witnessed the return of German soldiers from Soviet prisoner of war camps which served to initiate an energetic remembering of German “victimhood,” while the

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<sup>24</sup> Herf, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Benz, 1.

remembrance of Nazi victims became less prominent, or subordinated to building the new West German state.

In the East, or the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as it was formally known, the process of remembering was entirely planned and implemented by the government. As Claudia Koonz suggests the East forgot the genocide of the Jews, but did remember the Nazi crimes because it benefited their state formation. In fact one could argue that the history of the GDR was founded on the Communist interpretation of Nazism and fascism as extremes of capitalism. This ideological position indicted NATO along with the Federal Republic. Koonz summarizes this development; “Brutal Nazi crimes and heroic Communist opposition became part of the founding myth of the Socialist state.”<sup>26</sup> Soviet officials ambitiously carried out the de-Nazification policies of the Communist government. Thousands of suspected war criminals and Nazi sympathizers were jailed or placed in former concentration camps. The communist occupiers were as adept at propaganda as Hitler had been. They transformed the causes of WWII through Marxist theory into a struggle between workers and capitalists. Jeffrey Herf argues in *Divided Memory*, that this assertion was derived from the Comintern’s belief that fascism was essentially a dictatorial, terrorist, and imperialist form of finance capitalism. The communists were always very careful to refer to Nazism as “German fascism” and were able to thus link the whole war to class struggle. The anti-Semitic element of Nazism was in essence swept under the carpet and thus “the East forgot the Jews” as the Soviet Union enforced an official narrative of how Eastern Europe had been liberated from the evil

fascists by the Red Army. So problematic were the Jews for the “East” that the Soviets were unable to mention the Jews which were murdered at Babi Yar. The memorial erected in 1974, contains Ukrainian text that reads: On this site there will be a monument for the victims of fascism (during the German occupation of Kiev, 1941-1943.” The killing of an estimated 100,000 people, over a period of months (some sources say years), and included mostly Jews is to this day not mentioned.

One may ask what’s wrong with this imposed official history after all, isn’t history always written by the winners? Koonz cites a 1975 letter written by Václav Havel to the Czech President Gustav Husák that described the effects of an imposed official history. Havel stated that, “Organized oblivion in totalitarian states imposes a single narrative that vindicates the leaders and vilifies their enemies, but leaves the average citizen cynical and alienated from what really happened.”<sup>27</sup> This became particularly troublesome in Germany after 1991. East Germany in the immediate years following the end of the war became a vast sea of plaques, small monuments, gravestones, and historical markers in which there was no mention of Jews not even in the former concentration camps which had been declared memorials to the “victims of fascism.”<sup>28</sup>

The West, or the Federal Republic of Germany, received its international legitimacy as a nation from its commitment to Western democracy and restitution to Jewish victims. Its internal legitimacy of Adenauer and the CSU/CDU politicians was

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<sup>26</sup> Claudia Koonz, “Between Memory and Oblivion Concentration Camps in German Memory,” in *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity*, John R. Gillis, ed., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 264.

<sup>27</sup> Václav Havel, “Dear Dr. Husák, in “*Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1964-1990* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 73-74. Cited in Koonz’s essay “Between Memory and Oblivion”.

<sup>28</sup> See Claudia Koonz’s essay “Between Memory and Oblivion” for a discussion of the significance of concentration camps as memorials.

based on compassion for German “victims,” which had the added benefit of moderating the Allied efforts at de-Nazification and punishment of Nazi war criminals.

There is a widely held opinion that in the 1950’s the citizens of the Federal Republic largely avoided all memories of the years of Nazi rule. Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, writing in 1967, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, *The Inability to Mourn*, formulated the central theme of this point of view. They posited that West Germans became so caught up in the “expansion and modernization of [their] industrial potential right down to the kitchen utensils,” that they were able to avoid the past.<sup>29</sup> They described this phenomenon as the German “inability to mourn,” a famous diagnosis that demonstrated the need for the onion-cutting ceremony in Grass’s *The Tin Drum*. Robert Moeller asserts that with few exceptions the Mitscherlichs’ theme has become part and parcel of most accounts of the Federal Republic’s first decade. Wolfgang Benz uses the trial of Veit Harlan to illustrate this point. Harlan, the director of the notorious National Socialist film that became the prototype of all anti-Semitic films, *Jud Süß*, (1940) was tried in 1949 for crimes against humanity. His defense consisted of denying any and all responsibility for the National Socialist dictatorship in Germany. Harlan asserted that he too had been abused by the regime, that he had been placed under massive pressure by Goebbels, that he had tried to refuse the commission to make the film, and finally, after this had

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<sup>29</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen Kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich, 1967), 19. In Robert G. Moeller “War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany.” *American Historical Review* (October 1996), 1011. Using Freudian categories to analyze the postwar German psyche the Mitscherlichs argued that after 1945 Germans should have come to an understanding of their deep identification with Hitler and his national community and thus acknowledge the crimes that were committed by the regime that they supported in



failed, had undermined the anti-Semitic message of the film in an artistic way.<sup>30</sup> The Harlan case is significant in several ways for individual and collective structures of consciousness and memory. Like others, Veit Harlan, was a beneficiary of the regime and when charged he withdrew to the position of unpolitical and completely naïve artist. Harlan is a fitting aphorism for the rest of German societies inability to mourn because of their perceived lack of guilt and professed naiveté.

By 1961 the completion of the Berlin Wall completely separated the German people into two states and the two divergent memories of the Holocaust era were entrenched. Claudia Koonz describes the division of memory, “East Germans forgot the Jews. West Germans forgot the Nazi and for a time also submerged the memory of genocide.”<sup>31</sup> This mentality was not to hold true for the entire decade. In the 1960’s the framework for a safe and ritualized official memory of the Holocaust was broken apart in the Federal Republic.<sup>32</sup> A tremendous shift in public memory was about to take place as many West Germans began to call for a more complex analysis of the National Socialist regime and the war. A recovery of Holocaust memory was beginning to take place in the West. The Eichmann trial in 1961, Raul Hilberg’s, *Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), Hannah Arendt’s, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963), and the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials (1964), which have been poignantly illustrated in Bernhard Schlink’s recent novel, *The Reader*, all inspired mass public comment. Coupled with the student movement in the last half of the decade “whose

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overwhelming numbers. The Mitscherlichs argue that by creating for the future Germans were forgetting the past.

<sup>30</sup> Benz, 2-3. Veit Harlan’s de-Nazification proceedings were never officially concluded, but de facto he was placed in the category of “guiltless” in December 1947.

<sup>31</sup> Koonz, 263.

<sup>32</sup> Geoff Eley, ed., *The “Goldhagen Effect” History, Memory, Nazism – Facing the German Past* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 1.



forceful challenge to the comforts and conventions of West German society was heavily dependent on an accusatory confrontation with the older generation's Nazi past," a new awareness of Nazi crimes all lent themselves to a "recover" of memory for a new generation.<sup>33</sup>

The 1960's ushered in the beginnings of a new memorial culture in Germany. The past in which Germans were victims receded and was replaced by a history of the Third Reich in which Nazi atrocities took center stage. German's memory of themselves as victimizers rather than as victims was starting to take shape. It was the mid-1960's which saw the establishment of exhibits and memorials at the former death camps of Dachau and Neuengamme in 1965 and Bergen-Belsen in 1966.

Grossman claims that even a modest memorial culture was developing in the GDR during this decade, though I would argue that it was radically different from the one initiated in the West and with very different motivating factors. In 1958 and 1961 the East German government dedicated two major memorials to the victims of fascism at the sites of former Nazi concentration camps, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. These memorials set into stone the official antifascist memory in the East. Both ceremonies praised fallen soldiers and the German resistance more than they mourned the Jews. Walter Ulbricht delivered the dedication speech at Sachsenhausen on April 24, 1961. Herf has taken a segment of this speech and used it to highlight the memory path that the East traversed:

With deepest respect we turn to our precious dead, the fighters against war, fascism, and militarism, and to the victims of Nazi terror. This place is dedicated to memory and warning: to the memory of countless martyrs and heroes of the antifascist resistance struggle and to warning coming generations never again to allow fascist barbarism to break out

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 1.

among our own people, or among other peoples. Every foot of this earth is soaked with the blood and sweat of ten thousand martyrs from many countries, and of many different worldviews. They were driven and tortured to death, and murdered only because they loved their people, because they loved freedom, peace, and democracy more than their own life, because they were socialists, because they rejected hatred among peoples and rejected genocide, and because they dedicated their lives to humanism and to friendship among peoples.<sup>34</sup>

Ironically enough this speech was delivered just four short months before Ulbricht ordered the construction of the Berlin Wall. One can see that he clearly drew a line connecting the anti-Nazi resisters who died in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp with the East German propaganda offensive against West Germany. There was no mention of Jews whatsoever in his speech. Though he mentioned “martyrs and heroes” who had been murdered only because of their political convictions he failed to state that the Jews at Sachsenhausen and elsewhere had not been murdered because of their political actions, but rather simply because they were Jews.

Mass emigration at a rate of 150,000 to 200,000 people a year, economic failure, unsuccessful efforts to gain diplomatic recognition, and the acceptance of West Germany into NATO left the East German government isolated and lacking support from their populace during this era. One way to divert attention away from their domestic problems was to focus on the West. In what has been described as East Berlin’s most effective propaganda themes of the Cold War, Albert Norden, director of the *Ausschuss für Deutsche Einheit*, Committee for German Unity, led the assault on the West and Adenauer’s administration. With numerous press conferences, speeches, and essays he alleged that ex-Nazi and war criminals were in positions of power within the West’s government and held posts in the judicial, military,

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<sup>34</sup> “Walter Ulbricht bei der Einweihung der Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen: Von der DDR wird stets der

economic, and diplomatic branches, as well as maintaining positions among the intellectual elites.<sup>35</sup> One statement Norden released on October 14, 1957, titled "Hitler's Special Judges – Pillars of the Adenauer Government."<sup>36</sup> In 1959 the Committee for German Unity published *We Accuse: Eight Hundred Bloodstained Nazi Judges Uphold the Adenauer Regime*. The report claimed that the judges were guilty of crimes under the Nazi regime that they had been a willing tool in the regime.<sup>37</sup> In short all the leaders in East Germany had participated in anti-Nazi resistance.

December 1970 took Holocaust remembrance into yet another direction with Chancellor Willy Brandt's dramatic genuflection at the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial. Because of *Ostpolitik* Brandt felt that it was time to put aside the provincial Cold War anticommunist sentiments. He and his supporters asserted that had Germany not invaded the Soviet Union in 1941 the Red Army would not have found itself in the middle of Europe in 1945. This event has been described by some as having set off a new culture of commemoration and repentance. Brandt's genuflection marked the first time a West German chancellor had so publicly acknowledged and expressed remorse and atonement for what the Germans had done to the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during WWII. This shift in politics of memory was seen as a necessary step for diplomatic success in Eastern Europe and Moscow. Brandt was hoping to communicate to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that West

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Frieden ausstrahlen," *Neues Deutschland* (April 24, 1961), 1-3. Quoted in Herf, 178-179.

<sup>35</sup> Herf, 182-183.

<sup>36</sup> Committee for German Unity, *Hitler's Special Judges – Pillars of the Adenauer Government*, International Press Conference of the Committee for German Unity, October 14, 1957 (East Berlin: Committee for German Unity, 1957), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Committee for German Unity, *We Accuse: Eight Hundred Bloodstained Nazi Judges Uphold the Adenauer Regime* (East Berlin: Ausschuss für Deutsche Einheit, 1959), 5.

Germany was not the fascist regime bent on regaining lost territory that the Communist propaganda machine had spewed for twenty years.<sup>38</sup>

Social commentators have characterized the decade of the 1980's in West Germany as having seen an explosion in memory, kicked off by the American produced series *Holocaust* in the fall of 1979. Andreas Huyssen has commented that the problem with Holocaust remembrance in the 80's and 90's was not forgetting what happened but rather the ubiquitousness of memory. With each generation's increased distance from the actual events there is more room within collective memory to focus on more than just the facts.<sup>39</sup>

Some scholars, such as Saul Friedländer, have suggested that the call for a central memorial to victims of the Holocaust actually began with an American, namely President Ronald Reagan. The "Bitburg affair," as it became known took place on 5 May 1985 when Ronald Reagan and Helmut Kohl jointly visited the Bitburg military cemetery. The event was planned to commemorate 8 May 1945, the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II. However, Reagan's planned visit set off a string of protests both in the United States and Germany. The problem was that the cemetery in Bitburg was the burial site of forty-nine *Waffen Schutzstaffel* (SS) troops. Though these troops were essentially shock troops, used to stiffen the collapsing fronts with the advance of the Allied forces, they were part of an organization that carried out the Final Solution and were responsible for most of the more egregious war crimes committed by German forces in WWII. What Helmut Kohl had wanted to achieve by initiating this wreath-laying ceremony was to unite

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<sup>38</sup> Herf, 345.

the oppressors and the victims in a common dialect. Kohl's argument was that his generation had not experienced WWII and therefore it was time to move history on into a new direction. Charles Maier suggests that the Bitburg ceremonies were intended to wipe away the last moral residues of probation under which the Federal Republic still labored.<sup>40</sup> He continues that it was intended to be a ritual reconciliation which ended in a catharsis of sorts. Maier says that it was at this moment when memory escaped from its normal custodians' grips – politicians and academics – and became, in his words, a powerful and unpredictable force, "Bitburg history."<sup>41</sup>

Jeffrey Herf has argued that the anti-fascist bent never abated in the East until the 1980's. Unlike the West, which witnessed significant shifts in public memory since 1945, the East maintained a constant stance toward public remembrance of the crimes of the Third Reich. However, this was to change in the 1980's when East Germany broke with their official polity of anti-fascism.

Saul Friedländer, in *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, suggests that a major question concerning German memory since the official reunification of the two Germanys in 1991 is whether this event marked the end of the post-war period and, if it has, will it induce a major change in the German encounter with the Nazi past? Will the new identity of unified Germany move its Nazi past from memory into mere history? Debates surrounding the issue of how to preserve memory have only become more acute since the fall of the Berlin Wall. With the Wall gone historians and politicians found themselves engaged in an entirely

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<sup>39</sup> Andreas Huyssen, "Monument and Memory in a Postmodern Age," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* vol. 6, no. 2, 1993, 257.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Maier, *The Unmasterable Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9-16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

new dialogue, the era of divided memory ended. The climate of Germany during the 1990's can only be described as electrically charged.

The *Wende*, the turn, is now the term most closely associated with the monumental changes in 1989 that led to the unification of the two Germanys. Although politically the creation of a unified Germany in 1990 was achieved in a relatively quick vote people became acutely aware that creating a new common national identity was going to take much longer. Because unification was achieved on West German terms many intellectuals raised virulent criticism. Among these was East Germanys refusal to reshape their version of WWII along the West German model. "Forward, but forgetting nothing," was the phrase that encapsulated the events in the autumn of 1989.<sup>42</sup> This socialist slogan expressed support for the political transformation then underway, but it cautioned that a reunified Germany could not leave history behind.<sup>43</sup> Within a fortnight speculation arose over the possibility of a new bout with amnesia. A new, young right had emerged and dubbed themselves the "generation of 1989," as opposed to the leftist "generation of 1968."<sup>44</sup> This group attacked Adenauer's option of Westernization and called for an end to the "rituals of atonement" of the Bonn Republic. Neo-Nazi and skinhead violence erupted against foreigners and Jews alike and brought fear among the global community that the unified Germany would again unleash its racist ghosts. From the beginning of 1991 to the fall of 1993, German government officials listed 4,500 acts of violence attributed to right-wing extremists groups directed at immigrants and Jews. These attacks

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<sup>42</sup> Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870-1990* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 1. This line came from Bertolt Brecht's 1931 "Song of Solidarity," written for the film *Kuhle Wampe*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

resulted in 26 murders and 1,800 injuries.<sup>45</sup> Thousands of Germans marched in the streets to protest the wave of violence.

One of the first major national political statements about the Nazi past following German unification was delivered within this climate. Rita Süßmuth, president of the Bundestag, delivered the speech that served to encapsulate the sentiments held by the new nation and put a public face on underlying issues that had been fermenting since 1989. The date Süßmuth spoke was the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary of the pogrom of November 9, 1938. By recalling the events of the pogrom Süßmuth eloquently connected memory of the Nazi past with defense of human rights in the present. She described November 9, 1989 as the end of German division and the beginning of a common memory. Common memory, she continued, would help to guard against intolerance and violence. She expressed shame and anger over the recent attacks against Jews and immigrants within Germany. She called upon Germans to fight against anti-Semitism and hatred of foreigners, and use courage, just as the citizens of the CDR had done to win their battle for freedom, to defend “human dignity and democracy in all of Germany.” She continued:

Memory of the negatives of your own past does not weaken us, as we once feared. Rather it frees us from its burdens, transforms weaknesses into strengths, and leads us toward one another rather than against one another. Vigilant and alert memory [*Wachsames Erinnern*] is the protector of freedom. If we forget unfreedom, persecution, and annihilation, we endanger our own freedom...Memory does not stop when the Germans regained freedom and unity.

While memory would continue to be subjected to political dispute, Süßmuth’s speech marked the beginning of a “vigilant” and “common” memory in unified Germany.

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<sup>44</sup> Herf, 366.



She called upon both traditions of official memory from West Germany and the dissenters in East Germany to fashion this common memory of the Nazi past and the Holocaust, and to apply its lessons to the defense of human rights and democracy in the present.<sup>46</sup>

The symbol of this new drive toward a common memory for unified Germany has become invested in the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. Everything that Germans want to achieve, everything which they see carrying them into the third millennium has become affixed to the Monument. Half a century after the Holocaust, it is no longer the atrocities themselves that are at the center of attention but rather how the heirs of the victims, perpetrators and bystanders are adjusting to the influx of memories and how they intend to keep these memories alive for the future. There were two forms of forgetting happening in the FRG and the GDR. The Monument is going to make this forgetting impossible by bringing the two forms together into a shared memory of the Jews. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider attest to this recognition of the “other” which serves to diffuse the distinction between memories of victims and perpetrators and what remains, they argue, is the memory of a shared past.<sup>47</sup> What remains is the memory of the Jews.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>46</sup> Herf, 366–367. “Präsidentin Dr. Rita Süßmuth,” *Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestages* 12. Wahlperiode Stenographische Bericht 1990, vol. 171, 187-200 Sitzung (November 9, 1993), 10181.

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, “Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5(1): 87-106.

### III

## The Berlin Holocaust Memorial Initiative

*We're not building this memorial  
for the Jews or for other victims.  
We're building it for us.*

- Wolfgang Thierse  
Bundestag Speaker

*A few months more and the  
debate over the Holocaust  
memorial would have lasted as  
long as the Nazi regime that  
caused it.*

- Malte Lehming  
Op-ed editor  
*Tagesspiegel*

If ever there was a case of an idea whose time had come a national Holocaust memorial in Germany was it. This idea, conceived with good intentions, was initiated with a naive speculation that it could be achieved with relative ease. Daniel Goldhagen has said that the Holocaust marked Germany's departure from the community of "civilized peoples."<sup>1</sup> The completion of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin may be the final step Germany needs to take in order to reenter the world community after spending decades in exile.

The question *why* a national monument to the "Murdered Jews of Europe" should be erected in Berlin is "multi-dimensional" and finds its answers in political,

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, (Alfred A. Knopf: NY, 1996), 4.

cultural, and historical contexts.<sup>2</sup> The controversy surrounding the memorial has gone well beyond the polemical debate over whether there should be a monument or not. Over the years the multifaceted issues have been aired in similarly diverse venues: the media, professional conferences, the floor of the Bundestag, and around the tables of *Biergartens*.

The memorial initiative has struggled over meaning and intent, form and function, and ultimately political verbiage. The memorial initiative has been helplessly suspended in a political quagmire for almost two decades. It has been the subject of debates ranging from the frivolous to the spiritual. But when it comes right down to it the debate is centered on one and only one problem: that different groups in Germany want to represent, remember, and memorialize the death of six million people in different ways. This chapter, then has three objectives:

First, I will discuss the initiative behind the planned building of the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. I will show, as Kuhlke claimed, how the Memorial is the result of forty years of conservative politics of memory in Western Germany, which persistently blurred the boundaries between Nazi victim and Nazi perpetrator, and successfully marginalized the memory of Jewish life and death in the Holocaust both socially and spatially.<sup>3</sup>

Second, I would like to discuss the location, which was selected for the memorial. Karen Till posited that “Place is the cultural and spatial context within

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<sup>2</sup> James E. Young, “Germany’s National Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe: A Report to the Bundestag Committee on Cultural and Media Affairs,” *Zeitschrift für Kultur Austausch* (March 3, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> See Olaf Kuhlke, *Body, Nation, and Place: The New Berlin Republic and the Spatial Representation*

which we construct and locate our individual and collective identities.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the actual, physical site for the proposed memorial, I would argue, is worthy of our consideration. By placing this memorial in the heart of Berlin, this “concrete embodiment of memory,”<sup>5</sup> conjured up a long-lasting debate over the issues of embodiment of memory in German society and in the public sphere.

The idea of place has a dual meaning whether being discussed in an objective or subjective light. As an object, place means a region, or a material landscape fixed in place and time. As a subject place is something that we “belong” to and attach subjective meanings to. Geographic concepts of place have tended to be divided into one of three meanings: location, locale, and sense of place. The richness of a place resides in its ambiguity, complexity, and multiple/contradictory meanings. It is within and through social and spatial contexts that we frame our collective memories. Central to the construction of collective memory and group identification is the creation, representation and interpretation of particular places.

In the third section of this chapter I will begin to unravel the varying arguments surrounding the construction of the Holocaust Memorial. Given that the discourse surrounding the Memorial is entering its second decade and the construction is barely underway there has been ample opportunity for all sides to voice their opinions. Even outside of Germany discussions encompassing government officials, eminent historians, art critics, journalists, Jews who lived through the

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*of German National Identity*, (Kent State University, 2001), 322.

<sup>4</sup> Karen Till, *Place and Politics of Memory: A Geo-Ethnography of Museums and Memorials in Berlin*, (University of Wisconsin – Madison, 1996), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Kuhlke, 323.

Holocaust, and scores of others have voiced their concerns over the construction of yet another Holocaust memorial. Many argued that there is no need for another Holocaust memorial in Germany.

More often than not local initiatives were undertaken to remember Holocaust victims. Unfortunately they usually focused not on Jewish life prior to the Holocaust, their numerous contributions to science, the arts, society in general, but rather on their death in the Holocaust. An entire people and all their contributions past, present, and future were virtually eliminated and what most Holocaust memorials contain is the death not the life which had been lived. Specifically this marginalization in death, as represented in the former concentration camps, focuses only on the death of European Jews not on the life that was extinguished. Just as the Nazis kept their genocide operations out of sight and away from major metropolitan areas so too are the concentration camp memorials. As centers of memory they are marginalized away from everyday interaction with them and being that most camps were outside of Germany's borders they are literally and figuratively, "out of site, out of mind, and hence out of social conscience and memory."<sup>6</sup>

The idea for a central memorial began with Lea Rosh, a popular television chat-show host.<sup>7</sup> Born in the city of Berlin in 1936 she was given the name Edith Rosch. David Irving, a staunch critic of Rosh's, posits that she changed her name when she discovered that the path to a successful career in post-war Germany was to

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<sup>6</sup> Olaf Kuhlke, 331.

have Jewish origins. Rosh studied history, sociology, and journalism. Many years In 1988 a circle of media figures, historians and private individuals decided that Germany needed a central Holocaust memorial. After forty years of avoiding a head-on confrontation with the Holocaust, Lea Rosh and Eberhart Jaeckel founded *Perspektive Berlin* and later the *Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, (Foundation for the Building of a Central Holocaust Memorial), to bring it back “into mind” and “into sight.” This however was only the very beginning of what was to become a very long and difficult trek, the culmination of which came on June 25, 1999.

In 1995, at ceremonies marking the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII, German political leaders along with thousands of others traveled to former Nazi concentration camps to remember the former crimes committed during the Nazi era and to speak out for human rights in the present. If one was to judge by the number of speeches given, attendance at memorial ceremonies, and press accounts, it appeared that the Germans’ focus on the crimes of the Nazi past in the spring of 1995 was greater than at any time since WWII. Thousands viewed Nazism within museums in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Kiel, Hannover, and other cities. A new museum on the “topography of terror” opened on the site of the former headquarters of the SS in Berlin. Even a few of Germany’s leading companies, Daimler-Benz, Volkswagen, and the Deutsche Bank, hired historians to give a full account of the slave labor

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<sup>7</sup> For newly published writing on the memorial see Lea Rosh, Eberhard Jaeckel, and Tilman Fichter, *Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal*, (Bodenheim, 1999), and M. von Jeismann, *Mahmal Mitte* (1999).

practices employed by their companies and the profits made off of stolen Jewish property.<sup>8</sup>

Bundespräsident, Roman Herzog, delivered the central political statement of the fiftieth anniversary events. Speaking to representatives of the United States, France, Russia, and Britain gathered at the Reichstag Herzog stated that Germany had unleashed “the most horrible war there had ever been” and had suffered terribly as a result. He warned against dwelling on German suffering, she continued, “today we do not need to discuss that. “ Today Germans know very well that the Nazi regime was responsible for the Holocaust and the whole of Europe’s suffering. Herzog continued, after 1945 there was no shortage of efforts to minimize or deny the events that unfolded during the Third Reich, but “the basic feeling of collective shame, as Theodor Heuss put it so well, was there and became clearer with time.”<sup>9</sup>

A high point in the extended public debate over how best to remember the destruction of the Third Reich came on April 7, 1995: in an advertisement in one of Germany’s most important papers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, some three hundred prominent German citizens including politicians, journalists, and academics, called upon the public to remember May 8 as a day of liberation and destruction. The ad referred to the war’s end as “the most tragic and questionable paradox for all of us.” May 1945 brought an end to Nazi terror, but, the ad explained, it also “marked the beginning of the terror of the expulsion and a new oppression in the East and the

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<sup>8</sup> Ashley Seager, “Some German Firms Highlight WWII Slave Labor Use,” *Reuter Asia-Pacific Business Report*, May 1, 1995, 4.

<sup>9</sup> “Der Bundespräsident zum Kriegsende vor 50 Jahren: Am 8. Mai wurde ein Tor in die Zukunft aufgestoßen, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 9, 1995, p. 6.

origin of the division of our country.” The ad exhorted readers to “*Gegen das Vergessen*,” guard against forgetting, and made it clear that they should remember more than one German past.<sup>10</sup>

On May 9, 1995 Ignatz Bubis, leader of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, proposed that either January 20, the date of the Wannsee Conference, or January 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, become the German national day of remembrance for the victims of Nazi persecution and genocide.<sup>11</sup> A majority voted in the Bundestag on June 1 for the January 27 date.<sup>12</sup> Speaking in the Bundestag on January 20, 1996, Bundespräsident Herzog stated that an ever sharper and more detailed memory of the crimes of the Nazi era was not part of the national political recollection of a unified Germany. Memory, “is in our own interest,” he said, because it makes learning possible. “Remembrance gives us strength, since it helps to keep us from going astray.” January 27 was intended as a day of remembrance specifically to draw attention to the victims of an ideology “that propagated a [doctrine of] ‘Nordic master race’ and subhumans and denied the right of the latter to exist.” It was also to remind younger Germans to recognize and resist the first signs of intolerance and racism. It was their “collective responsibility,” said Herzog, to keep memory alive in order to overcome evil and to understand the precious nature of democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and human dignity. The “generation of witnesses to those times” which “drew their conclusions from those experiences” was now stepping down from the political stage. Herf affirms that with

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<sup>10</sup> “8. Mai 1945 – Gegen das Vergessen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 27, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> “Bubis dringt auf Gedenktag für die NA-Opfer,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 9, 1995, p. 3.



the passage of time and earlier generations public memory of the Nazi era became more, not less, important for German society and democracy.

This assertion is affirmed by literature. Shortly after WWII the first “wave” of “Allied” novels emerged and tended to dwell on the experience of battle and of life on the home front. In Germany these writers consisted of Heinrich Boll, Siegfried Lenz, Ingeborg Bachmann, and Günter Grass. Their writing was full of self-loathing and self-doubt. The next “wave” consisted of a handful of survivors, personal witnesses such as Primo Levi and Viktor Frank, as well as the unsilenceable Anne Frank, who gave back images of what had been nearly hidden in the shadow of war and nearly “obliterated from collective memory.”<sup>13</sup> By the mid 1990’s a younger generation of authors, known as the third “wave,” had risen to stardom. Within the year (1997) Christoph Ransmayer’s, *The Dog King*, Bernhard Schlink’s, *The Reader*, Italy’s Paolo Maurensig’s, *The Lueneburg Variation*, and the *Karnau Tapes* by the German Marcel Beyer had all been published. These fictitious novels lend credibility to the fact that the specter of the Holocaust is moving into the next millennium.

In 1998 politics of remembering took another turn when Christian Democrat Union Chancellor Helmut Kohl was replaced by a “Red-Green” (Social Democrats and Green Party) coalition header by Gerhard Schröder. Along with tax reform, treatment of immigrants, and unemployment the Holocaust Memorial and memory of the Nazi era became divisive issues in the 1998 chancellor elections. Schröder was opposed to the construction of a Holocaust memorial in Berlin. His successful

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<sup>12</sup> “Auschwitz Anniversary to Be German Remembrance Day,” *Agence France Presse*, June 1, 1995.

election seemed to suggest that the German public wanted to move away from the shadow of WWII imposed on them by Kohl. However, shortly after Schröder's victory a fiery debate broke out between Martin Walser, a well-respected novelist, and Ignatz Bubis, leader of Germany's Jewish community that was to have a profound impact on the policies of Gerhard Schröder.

After receiving the top prize at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Walser expressed his discontent with the "routine of accusations" that he argued had developed against Germans.<sup>14</sup> He remarked, "Auschwitz is not suited to becoming a routine threat, a tool of intimidation that can be used anytime, the moral stick or merely a compulsory exercise." Following this speech many Germans wrote letters to the press, praising Walser's articulation of what many felt but were unable to say – that Germans no longer wanted to be burdened by a past that they could not remember. On the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, Bubis declared Walser's words "moral arson." He argued that Walser's reference to the Berlin Holocaust Memorial as a "nightmare" was unacceptable.<sup>15</sup> This occurred at the same time as a survey was published was published by the Forsa Polling Institute. The survey concluded that 31 percent of German teenagers could not answer the question: "What was Auschwitz-Birkenau?"<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile growing unemployment, especially in eastern Germany, was leading to a rise in neo-Nazism and neo-Nazi crimes. Between 1997 and 1998 in the city of

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<sup>13</sup> Kai Maristed, "European Novelists Continue Grappling Anew with Nazi Era," *NY Times* (November 23, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Diana Moreno, "Echo of the Past: Germany's Stifling Indecision," *Harvard International Review*, June 1, 1999, vol. 21, issue 3, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

Magdeburg, where unemployment hovered around 20 percent, xenophobic crimes had increased by 19 percent.<sup>17</sup> Schröder realized that he could no longer avoid the issue of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial.

The year 1999 saw a decision by the German Parliament on the issue of the Memorial. In a vote of 314 to 209, with 14 abstentions the design was approved with support of Chancellor Schröder's center-left Government. Perhaps there was no greater way to end the millennium in Germany than with a decision to construct the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. It symbolizes a willingness to engage with the past and to learn from it. And draws a clear line in the sand from suppression to ritualization to ultimate engagement with the past. Construction of the memorial cannot stop xenophobia. However, it can serve to highlight what could happen if it is not tempered. Even though we are embarking on a new century the ramifications of the total war and mass death still linger and still impact the identity of generations twice removed.

After eleven years of debate, the new German *Bundestag* voted to build a national "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe" on a prime piece of Berlin real estate. Measuring five acres, or two football fields, the local for the proposed memorial lies a stone's throw from Hitler's bunker, between the Brandenburger Gate and Potsdamer Platz. This decision has had a major impact on the political self-image of reunified Germany and subsequently dictated the official politics of memory for the nation.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10.

*Location, Location, Location: Why Berlin?*

“Just how does a city house the memory of a people no longer at home there?”<sup>18</sup> This was the question James E. Young posed to his audience at Humboldt-Universität in 1997. He was referring to Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum. Young characterized the dilemma surrounding the proposed museum as the “uncanny quandary” of Germany trying to invite Jews back into its official past after having driven them from it so murderously in the not too distant past:

Nothing in Berlin’s history ever changed the city more than the persecution, expulsion, and murder of its own Jewish citizens. This change worked inwards, affecting the very heart of the city.<sup>19</sup>

Rudy Koshar has said that “Berlin is the only place where one can live out fully the Holocaust neurosis.”<sup>20</sup> This is true for many reasons. Berlin was the command center, the staging area, for Hitler’s Nazi regime. It was in Berlin, in the suburb of Wannsee, that Hitler’s “Final Solution” was launched, and it is Berlin that will forever wear the scars of the Holocaust, its loss of its vigorous Jewish life and community. Berlin, once again the capital of Germany, sits with a large gaping hole in the middle that many believe the new Memorial will fill.

Prior to 1933 Berlin was home to 170,000 Jews. Today the Jewish population of Berlin hovers somewhere around 20,000, mostly due to the large influx of Eastern European Jews. During the Nazi regime an entire culture was obliterated, wiped clean from the pages of history were a thousand years of Jewish contributions to society.

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<sup>18</sup> James E. Young, *Daniel Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin: The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture* (October 30, 1997) Vorgänge anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrendoktorwürde an Daniel Libeskind.

Theodor Adorno avowed that after Auschwitz there must be no more poetry.<sup>21</sup> What kind of capital city can Berlin be after Hitler?

To say that Holocaust memorials are bountiful in the city of Berlin would be an understatement. Most memorials can be found in obvious locations, like the courtyard of the Jewish Community Center, or in one of the busy shopping districts in western Berlin.<sup>22</sup> There is of course the Neue Wache, New Guardhouse, rededicated in 1993 by Kohl as the new “Central Memorial to the Victims of War and Tyranny,” which has its own set conceptual problems. Others, perhaps summoning the most emotional impact, are situated in more out-of-the-way locales. These obscure memorials when stumbled upon by the casual observer offer an unexpected pull toward memory. Small, neighborhood monuments usually provide a very personal touch incorporated within them, remembering an individual or family that once lived there. So if memorials like these abound why does Berlin need another one, especially one costing millions of Deutschmark? Berlin needs another memorial because Germany, not the city, needs one. The power of place, Berlin, will make the Nazi past vivid, comprehensible, and inextricable from the lives of today’s Germans.<sup>23</sup>

The chosen site for the Berlin Memorial is located between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz. The location itself has a great deal of history attached to it

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<sup>20</sup> Rudy Koshar, 269.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, by Brian Ladd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) 167.

<sup>22</sup> In front of the KaDeWe department store and at Kaiser-Wilhelm-Platz

<sup>23</sup> Ladd, 172.

and understanding that helps explain why there is so much dissent over the location of the Holocaust memorial. In the 1920's Potsdamer Platz was known as Europe's busiest junction and was an exciting place for leisure and entertainment with the legendary Haus Vaterland and Café Josty along with numerous other bars, cafés and posh hotels. During WWII the square suffered extensive damage. During the Cold War Potsdamer Platz became the city's black market center because it was where the three sectors, British, American, and Soviet, met. The wide border zone on the East side of the Wall was a no- man's-land and no one was interested in the area on the West side because it was too close to the Wall. The only attraction in Potdamer Platz after WWII was an observation deck where tourists in the West went to peer over into East Berlin.

However, once the Wall collapsed a unique opportunity became available to investors: where in the world could one build so extensively right in the middle of a major metropolitan city? Within two years DaimlerChrysler had erected nineteen buildings at a cost of around two billion Deutschmarks. Not far behind was Sony who had just as quickly thrown-up eight buildings for around seventy million. From the mid-1990's thousands of visitors watched the construction progress, and they have not stopped coming. Potsdamer Platz boasts the highest concentration of cinemas in Germany and one can shop and eat in three stories of air-conditioned comfort the whole year round. One can also get a glimpse of the city as a whole from 90 meters up in the Potsdamer Platz No. 1 Building. The city building director, Hans Stimmann, in writing about the development of Potsdamer Platz, assured Berliners that all the

gleaming new buildings did not mean that the city was trying to suppress memories of Nazi terror – as its approval of the Holocaust memorial showed.<sup>24</sup>

In 1998 Berlin city employees acknowledged that they had discovered a bunker used by Hitler's propaganda chief, Josef Goebbels. The bunker butted right up against the 215,000 square-foot site for the proposed Holocaust memorial. This discovery rekindled the debate about whether the proposed location for the Holocaust memorial atop Nazi ruins was appropriate.<sup>25</sup>

The location of something is an important way in which to examine the relative importance of the ceremonial and educational functions of a type of place. If the official German Holocaust Memorial were to have been located in Munich rather than Berlin it would have translated an entirely different meaning. A national memorial representing exclusively the murdered Jews, located in the capital, should carry the self-image of a whole nation having targeted this ethnic and religious group, and represent this self-interpretation of one's national history to the nation and the global community. Places of memory contain the maximum of meaning with the fewest amount of signs.

### *Difference of Opinion?*

Centuries ago commemoration was more straightforward. Public art was commissioned by kings, queens, popes and dukes, who answered to no one. Democracy and modernity have altered all that. Now *consensus* is sought. In an effort

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<sup>24</sup> *Foyer: Magazin der Senatsverwaltung für Bau – und Wohnungswesen*, 4, no. 2 (June 1994): 26, quoted in Brian Ladd *The Ghosts of Berlin*, 170.

to appease even the smallest of voices all sides to any memory-work are heard, which leads to our case in point, the decade long indecision over Berlin's Holocaust memorial. Essentially there are three sides to this argument: the citizens, the city planners, and the government.

As Kirk Varnedoe, curator at the Museum of Modern Art, points out "art has the capacity to transcend history that history doesn't have by itself."<sup>26</sup> This perhaps is why the form which the monument would take is so problematic for so many. Varnedoe adds that great art causes people to want to return to it long after the events which prompted the artist to make the work join 1066 and 1848 as dry facts in high school textbooks. This by far is the greatest fear: that the Nazi era will recede into the footnotes of history and people will no longer feel compelled to put a voice to their innermost struggles over meaning and memory. There is overwhelming anxiety that the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, whatever form it will ultimately take, will be visited by future generations of German youth who will deposit their feelings at the foot of the memorial and then just as briskly turn on their heels and leave their reflections on the murdered Jews there, not to be thought of again until the next school organized bus trip.

This, I argue, is the fear in Germany today and the largest obstacle blocking completion of the memorial: that the memorial will serve as the final commentary on Holocaust memory. Many feel that the new reunified Germany is going to be able to successfully put the Holocaust and all its atrocities behind it with the construction of

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<sup>25</sup> Alan Cowell, *The New York Times* (February 5, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, in Michael Kimmelman "Turning Memory into Travesty," *New York Times* (March



this new national memorial. Still others, particularly intellectuals and politicians, say that a monument such as this one would not kindle memory but rather take the place of it.

As I have suggested, and as one can probably imagine, when the idea for a central memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe was initiated there was a large outpouring of both approval and dissent. The largest and most vehement dissension came to be over the two highly important points. The design of the memorial and how victims were to be represented within it. Would only Jews be remembered or other members of the European community that had been victims of the Third Reich be included as well?

### *Memory Meets Politics*<sup>27</sup>

One of the first people to voice their concern was Eberhard Diepgen, the then conservative mayor of Berlin. Diepgen spoke out saying that the large memorial was too “monumental” and would turn Berlin into a “city of mourning.”<sup>28</sup> Others, primarily intellectuals, fear that the memorial will serve as a “final solution” and end to remembering rather than a place for remembrance and reconciliation. There was a widely held concern that the memorial was not being built for Germans but rather for foreign dignitaries and would simply become a site for wreaths and ceremonial flourishes. Günter Grass questioned if it would even be possible to represent the atrocities of the Holocaust.

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4, 2001). Mr. Varnedoe is a curator for the Museum of Modern Art.

<sup>27</sup> The subtitle is taken from James E. Young’s work *At Memory’s Edge*, 216.

The issue of the memorial became a political pawn almost from the beginning. The 1998 national elections the opposition Social Democrat candidate, Gerhard Schroeder, opposed the monument in Berlin because he believed it would not increase awareness and remembrance. With that Schroeder's cultural czar, Michael Naumann, threw caution to the wind and injected a hitherto taboo topic into the campaign: should Germany abandon its project to build a huge memorial to the Holocaust?<sup>29</sup> Naumann predicted that Mr. Kohl's plans for a huge memorial would represent "a memorial for memory, a suspension of guilt in art." Naumann argued that the most appropriate place for a Holocaust memorial was at the former concentration camps where the sheer shock would evoke more psychological working through rather than a mere moment of reflection. Schroeder's successful campaign seemed to suggest that the German public had had enough and wanted to move away from the shadows of WWII.

A survey conducted by the Forsa Polling Institute found 31 percent of German teenagers could not answer the question, "What was Auschwitz-Birkenau?" Why was this so alarming? Perhaps because within another generation this percentage could be even higher. With each passing day we lose more and more of those who actually lived through the Holocaust. With each passing day the memory of it recedes further into the epochs of time. Ultimately even Schröder had to conclude that he could no

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<sup>28</sup> *BBC News* "Bundestag Approves Holocaust Memorial" (Friday, June 25, 1999)

<sup>29</sup> Alan Cowell, "An Opponent of Kohl puts Taboo Topic into Election," (*The New York Times*, July 26, 1998).

longer avoid the prospect of the Berlin Holocaust Memorial, it must be built.<sup>30</sup>

The construction of the Monument has taken on more meaning than I think anyone could have ever anticipated. It appears that with the monument comes an entirely new catharsis of memory. The Monument is inextricably linked to politics and place. Within its core lies the ability for a new Germany to unite and confront their shared past.

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<sup>30</sup> Diana Moreno, "Echo of the Past," (*Harvard International Review*, June 1, 1999) Vol. 21, Issue 3, p 9.

## IV

### The Monument

*A central memorial is the fundamentally wrong way to mark the Holocaust!*<sup>1</sup>

-Die Zeit

*Away with the monuments!*<sup>2</sup>

- Nietzsche

In the new federal government quarter of the new German capital of Berlin a plot of land was allocated for the memorial. An impressive, 15 million Mark (\$10 million) budget was set and a groundbreaking ceremony scheduled. The only thing missing was a design for the memorial. At this point the discussion seemed to stall. Organizers began by assembling a series of forums in Berlin which brought together 70 historians, artists, politicians and community and religious leaders to address why it was necessary to have a memorial, how it should look, and where it should stand. Several panelists pointed toward the Vietnam Memorial in Washington and Vienna's Holocaust memorial as projects which had succeeded in helping countries to heal their historical wounds. Ultimately the planners hoped that the memorial in Berlin could serve as the appropriate legacy of the generation that accepted the need to honor the memory of those who died in the Holocaust. This generation is comprised of the grandchild of the perpetrator generation. Peter Radunski, Berlin's Culture Senator, speaking at the Berlin forum noted that "Future generations may see things in a different way, but they should and will see how our generation tried to deal with the need to remember six million murdered European Jews."<sup>3</sup> A society that is now

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<sup>1</sup> *Die Zeit* (19 März 1998)

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 14-17.

<sup>3</sup> Bradley R. Smith, *Germany Agonizes Over Memorial to Jews, The Revisionist* (January 28, 1997)

two generations removed from the Nazi era may have felt the pull to establish a memorial more strongly than prior generations because of their very distance from the event. Jürgen Habermas asks, “Do we make the critical memory of Auschwitz...an explicit component of our political self understanding?”<sup>4</sup> However, after the generation of Radunski passes there will be no more living memory of the Nazi period and that just may be the driving force behind the impetus to have this memorial completed. “Already three-quarters of the people in this country were born after the Second World War.”<sup>5</sup> The monument thus has been depicted as the antidote for the flawed memorialization of previous commemorations which avoided a full reckoning with the crimes of the Nazi era. Memory must be created for the next generation, not simply catalogued and stored. It was on this note that the proceedings to find that appropriate legacy for which to define “official” German Holocaust memory began. The monument would “speak” as part of the discourse of remembrance or active engagement and identity.

### *Minimalism in Memorials: Friend or Foe?*

The monument has undergone a radical transformation over the course of the twentieth century. The monument is now the intersection between public art and political memory. It is called on to do double duty as it reflects the aesthetic and political revolutions of the century. The result has been a metamorphosis of the monument from one of heroic, self-aggrandizing to the anti-heroic and self-effacing “marking the national ambivalence and uncertainty of late twentieth century post-

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<sup>4</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Der Zeigefinger. Die Deutschen und ihr Denkmal,” *Die Zeit* (March 31, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Alan Cowell, “Bleak Debate in Berlin on the Holocaust Memorial,” *New York Times* (January 11, 1997).

modernism.”<sup>6</sup> The new monuments attempt to return the burden of memory to visitors themselves by forcing visitors into an active role. The most important space for the artists which create these monuments is the space above or below, but the space between the memorial and the viewer. Even more so the space between the viewer and his own memory: the place of the memorial in the viewer’s mind, heart, and conscience.

We have become uncomfortable with literal representation in memorial art. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that encapsulated within minimalist memorial work is a sense of timelessness. These artists are attempting to build into these memorials the capacity for changing memory. Each new generation will find its own significance in the past. “The past has a claim not just on us, but on the future.”<sup>7</sup>

Minimalism, as an art movement, came to being in the late 1950’s. Artists such as Frank Stella began to turn away from the “gestural” art of the previous generation. The Minimalist movement really flourished in the 1960’s and ‘70s with Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, and Robert Morris becoming the movement’s most important innovators.<sup>8</sup>

One usually thinks of art as representing an aspect of the real world (a landscape, a person, or an item); or reflecting an experience such as an emotion or feeling. With minimalism however, no attempt is made to represent an outside reality, the artist wants the viewer to respond only to what is in front of them. The medium, or material from which it is made, and the form of the work is the reality. Minimalism is characterized by single or repeated geometric forms. Is usually takes the form of a

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<sup>6</sup> Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory,”

<sup>7</sup> Catesby Leigh, *Weekly Standard* Volume 6, Number 24 (March 5, 2001)

<sup>8</sup> For notes on Minimalism as a movement , see Barbara Reise, *Minimalism as a Style Label*.

sculpture or installation though there are a number of Minimalist painters as well. There is a deliberate lack of expression in Minimalist art. Tropes of minimalist interior design include pale wood, white walls, understatement not ostentation. Minimalist memorial art directly engages with the space it occupies and encourages the viewer to be conscious of the space involved. It relies on simple elements – falling water, smooth stone, hushed spaces, the contrast between above ground and underground – to evoke emotions.<sup>9</sup> Minimalist artists believe that they are creating the possibility for a more direct and pure relationship between the viewer and the work, in this case, less is more. Curator for Tate Gallery, Simon Wilson, speaking with the *Guardian* (1 Dec 2001) said of Minimalist art:

Order; it is extremely ordered; purity, because it is perfectly stripped down. But, above all, truth because it doesn't pretend to be anything else. And, like Shelley says, truth is beauty and beauty is truth.<sup>10</sup>

With this said minimalist memorial art refuses to comment upon what those emotions are which it evokes.

Michael Kimmelman, for the *New York Times*, wrote that “Minimalism, of all improbable art movements of the last 50 years, [has] become the unofficial language of memorial art.”<sup>11</sup> From Berlin to Oklahoma City, Kimmelman says, deciding how a memorial is to look has met with unprecedented angst. Memorial art has definitely seen a change over the last century, what used to be great men sitting astride horses with valiant looks on their faces has been replaced with plain walls and

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<sup>9</sup> Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany,” *Harvard Design Magazine* (Fall 1999) Number 9, 1-10.

<sup>10</sup> From the web site for Tate Gallery.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Kimmelman, “Out of Minimalism, Monuments to Memory,” *New York Times* (January 12, 2002).

boxes.<sup>12</sup> The modern art form of Minimalism which is characterized by “less is more” has somehow won over the hearts of a vast amount of the population. The term minimalism has become a household word due to the huge influx of home improvement and design shows that proliferate today’s cable networks. It appears, according to Kimmelman, that those very blank slates and bare walls are where we now project our “deepest commonly held feelings.”<sup>13</sup>

The most obvious example of this form of art is Maya Lin’s Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C., where visitor’s faces are reflected off the black granite like mirrors in order that one may “see yourself reflected in the names.” The grid of chairs in Oklahoma City, representing the victims of the terrorist bombing there, is another and Rachel Whiteread’s Holocaust memorial in Vienna, Austria, a big eggshell-colored box made to resemble an inside-out room with shelves of books, is yet another. So it should not come as any great surprise to find that the Berlin Holocaust memorial’s second selection was of the Minimalist genre.

Can a space that is filled by a completely non-representational monument work as a spur to remember? Is this “blankness” the appropriate medium for Holocaust remembrance in Germany? I would caution the observer because reflection may be stimulated by a Minimalist memorial but what the “content” is of that reflection one does not know. Minimalist memorials are so far removed from what a memorial is, a gravestone, that perhaps they are asking too much of the observer.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



### *The First Competition*

It was 1994 before an international competition was organized and designs were requested for Germany's national "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe."<sup>14</sup> The competition's guidelines were nondescript and simply advised participants that they had five acres at their disposal and that the memorial was for the Jews killed during the Holocaust; there were no other specifics given. From around the world designs poured in until by the close of the competition some 528 designs had been offered for consideration.

As one may guess, the designs ran the gamut in taste and aesthetic sensibilities, from high modern to low kitsch, and from architectural to the conceptual. There were beautiful ideas with breathtaking dimensions, such as Dani Karavan's proposed field of yellow flowers laid out in the shape of the Star of David, and some that were simply grotesque. Horst Hoheisel proposed that the Brandenburger Gate be blown up, the remains ground into dust, scattered over the memorial "area," and then the entire field covered with granite plates. Within his proposal Hoheisel asked: How better to remember a destroyed people than with a destroyed monument? Hoheisel's work was considered too outrageous for the German government to ever except.

Perhaps the most offensive proposal was a plan for a gigantic Ferris wheel in which the amusement park swinging chairs would be replaced by the type of railway

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<sup>14</sup> For a record of this competition, see *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Kurzdokumentation* (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Bau – und Wohnungswesen, 1995), For a collection of essays arguing against building this monument, see *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas": Eine Streitschrift* (Berlin, 1995).

cattle cars that transported the Jews to their deaths.<sup>15</sup> There were various proposals for obelisks that were round, square, and triangular in shape, and numerous variations on gardens of stone, broken hearts, and Stars of David. Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock proposed a series of bus stops whereby coaches would take visitors to the sites of actual destruction throughout Berlin, Germany, and Europe. The variance in ideas was vast, the task of deciding the most appropriate even greater.

The panel of judges that was assembled for the first competition contained fifteen members. There were laypeople and experts all appointed by the three sponsoring agencies involved, the Bundestag, the Berlin Senate, and the original citizen's group created by Lea Rosh. Though the deliberations over the monument were not held in a public forum there is reported to have been very little consensus amongst the organizers. Many of the jurors told of heated debate particularly between the experts and the lay people. The citizens' group resented the experts, who they regarded as having elitist taste with an affinity for minimalist design: "This is not a playground for artists and their self-absorbed fantasies," Lea Rosh is reported to have reminded her colleagues on the committee.<sup>16</sup> The experts, in typical highbrow fashion, snubbed their noses at what they considered to be the kitsch and emotionalism of the lay members, and the Bundestag's appointees "glanced anxiously at their watches as the right political moment seemed to be ticking away."<sup>17</sup> As with any project where people from different backgrounds and agendas are called upon to come to a consensus the air was rife with animosity and contention. That the entire world waited to see how Germans would choose to "officially" commemorate their

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<sup>15</sup> "Vom Mahnmahl zum Wahnmal," *Der Spiegel* 35 (1998)

<sup>16</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 189.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

misdeed added to the pressure to make a decision and forced the committee into a decision I don't believe they were prepared or ready to make.

In March 1995 a winner was announced. However this so called "decision" was merely a tactic of delay, for the committee had not picked one winner but two with eight other proposals being considered as finalists. Of the two winners only one would be built with elements of the other incorporated into it. The jury had badly misrepresented themselves to the rest of the world for their choice was only cloaked as a decision. It appeared to the world at large that they had decided not to decide which further proved that Germany had a *major* problem with it's collective remembrance of the Nazi past. It was not that the jurors didn't want to decide or that they didn't want a memorial to be built. They did, however, suffer what I believe to be a crisis of confidence. They really did not know what they wanted before the competition began, therefore they didn't know exactly what they were looking for in a winner. If one revisits the guidelines for the first competition the entrants were simply given the dimensions of the plot and not much else.

The "semi-finalist" winner, Berlin architect Christine Jakob-Marks', proposed building a gargantuan, twenty-three-foot thick concrete gravestone in the shape of a three-hundred-foot square, titled at an angle running from six feet high at one end to twenty-five feet high at the other. It was to be engraved with the recoverable names of 4.5 million murdered Jews, and in the Jewish tradition of leaving small stones at a gravesite to mark the mourner's visit, it was to have some eighteen boulders from Masada in Israel scattered over its surface. The design seemed to contain the elements of sentimentalism, and remembrance which the jury, and

Germany as a whole, were looking for. However, the design was the winning design for only a few hours before it was recalled by Chancellor Kohl, who criticized it as being “too big and undignified.”<sup>18</sup>

What the jury had failed to consider, but was quickly brought to their attention, was the symbolism involved with Masada. According to the early Jewish historian Josephus, Masada was the stronghold against the Romans at the end of the Jewish revolt of 66-73 C.E. and also the site of a collective suicide of Jews that prevented the Romans from taking them as slaves.<sup>19</sup> A German national Holocaust memorial with Jewish self-sacrifice as part of its theme would just not do. An avalanche of artistic, intellectual, and editorial criticism erupted that decried the monument as too big, too heavy-handed, too divisive, and finally just too German: a German national Holocaust memorial with Jewish self-sacrifice as part of its theme? The leader of Germany’s Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis, hated it and told Chancellor Kohl that the winning design was simply unacceptable. Kohl, exasperated with the whole thing, and fearing that it would cast a permanent funerary shadow over the restored capital, withdrew the government’s support.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile all 528 designs were put on display at Berlin’s *Stadtratshaus*.

Henryk Broder, writing for *Der Spiegel*, described the exhibition of the 528 as a “quarry [where] anthropologists, psychologist, and behaviorists could examine the condition of a confused nation wanting to create a monument to its victims in order to

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>19</sup> Micheal Wise, “Totem and Taboo: The New Berlin Struggles to Build a Holocaust Memorial,” *Lingua Franca*, (December/January 1999).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Wise, “Totem and Taboo...”

purify itself.”<sup>21</sup> James E. Young wrote in response to the competition: “Good...Better a thousand years of Holocaust memorial competitions and exhibitions in Germany than any single ‘final solution’ to Germany’s memorial problem...If the aim is to remember for perpetuity that this great nation once murdered nearly six million human beings solely for having been Jew, then this monument must remain uncompleted and unbuilt, an unfinishable memorial process.”<sup>22</sup> Within a matter of weeks after the first competition an entire volume was produced filled with objections of some three dozen critics, artists, and intellectuals.<sup>23</sup>

Another year of stormy debate ensued over whether another competition should be called, another site should be chosen, or whether the previous winners should be invited to refine their proposals. From January to April 1997 a series of public colloquia were held; invited were a number of distinguished artists, historians, critics, and curators. Jürgen Kocka, Michael Stürmer, Christian Meier, are just some of those to participate. These men and women were assembled to discuss how the present designs might be modified to suit the commission’s desires. Designs would come via invitation only and the jury was much smaller and more expert.

The first two colloquia held in January and March roused considerable public interest, but the mood amongst the organizers was acrimonious at best. Lea Rosh insisted that the “five aims” of the project remain inviolable: (1) this would be a memorial only to Europe’s murdered Jews; (2) ground would be broken for it on 27 January 1999, Germany’s newly designated “Holocaust Remembrance Day” marked

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<sup>21</sup> Henryk Broder, *Der Spiegel* “Deutschmeister des Trauens,” 222.

<sup>22</sup> Young, *At Memory’s Edge*, 191.

<sup>23</sup> James Young, “Gegen das Denkmal, für Erinnerung,” in *Der Wettbewerb für “Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Eine Streitschrift*, (Berlin: verlag der Kunst/Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst) 1995.

to coincide with the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945; (3) its location would be the five-acre site of the Ministerial Gardens, between the Brandenburg Gate and Potsdamer Platz; (4) the nine finalists' teams from the 1995 competition would be invited to revise their designs and concepts after incorporating suggestions and criticism from the present colloquia; and (5) the winning design would be chosen from the revised designs of the original nine finalists.<sup>24</sup> Not only did the designs continue to come under attack but it appeared that the very aims of the project were being called strongly into question.

Among the speakers at the first colloquium was historian Jürgen Kocka, who suggested that although there was clearly a need for a memorial to Europe's murdered Jews, the need for a memorial to encompass the memory of Nazis' other victims was just as clear. Other speakers, such as Michael Stürmer, questioned the site itself, "whether its gargantuan dimensions somehow invited precisely the kind of monumentality that had already been rejected."<sup>25</sup> Other critics focused more narrowly on the first colloquium's theme: "Why There Should Be a Holocaust Memorial in Berlin," and concluded that with authentic sites of destruction scattered over Berlin there shouldn't be a central memorial at all. Berlin Senate Speaker Peter Randunski, who had been appointed to convene the proceedings, appeared indifferent to this dissent, he contended that since these criticisms had no place on the agenda, they need not be addressed here, which led them to their third and final colloquium scheduled for April.

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<sup>24</sup> From Radunski's "Opening Remarks" to the First Colloquium on Berlin's Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, (January 11, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Young, *At Memory's Edge*, 192.

Lea Rosh opened the final meeting with a bitter attack on what she called the “leftist intellectual establishment” responsible for undermining both the process and memory of Europe’s murdered Jews. Her words served to antagonize the critics and solidified the positions of the memorial’s opponents, which included some rather elite historians, writers, and cultural critics such as Reinhart Koselleck, Julius Schoeps, Solomon Korn, Stefanie Endlich, Christian Meier, and eventually Günter Grass and Peter Schneider.

James E. Young offered some closing remarks at the third and final colloquium. He says in his work *At Memory’s Edge* that he discarded his prepared lecture and instead began by telling the story of other fraught memorial processes in Israel and the United States: the furious debate in Israel’s Knesset surrounding the day of remembrance there, and the memorial “paralysis” in New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. All of these debates had ultimately resulted in completed memorials, and all of them were contested. “I could almost hear the collective sigh of relief,” Young says, as he continued to validate the German’s position.<sup>26</sup> Young told his audience that they may have failed to produce a monument [referring to the first competition], “but if you count the sheer number of design-hours that 528 teams of artists and architects have already devoted to the memorial, it’s clear that your process has already generated more individual memory-work than a finished monument will inspire in its first ten years.” With the audience left to chew on Young’s words Peter Randunski assembled a jury for another competition.

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<sup>26</sup> Young, 193.



## *The Second Competition*

In 1997 the German government announced a second competition in which some fundamental changes were made. First, the panel was smaller, only five men would be deciding the final design, and it also contained more experts. The directors of the German Historical Museum in Berlin and of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bonn, Christoph Stoezel and Dieter Ronte, were asked to participate. One of Germany's most eminent art historians Werner Hofmann and Berlin architect, Josef Paul Kleihues, were asked to participate as well. Rounding out the top five was an unusual choice, for he was both a foreigner and a Jew. This fifth candidate was James E. Young a professor of English and Judaic studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Kleihues said of Young, "he was the most important person," because of his religion, "he had an entirely different legitimacy."<sup>27</sup> Young agrees that his selection as a juror owes something to the fact that "whenever they [Germans] try to make any kind of decision with a Jewish component, the Germans are paralyzed."<sup>28</sup> This was demonstrated by the first memorial competition.

In an effort to avoid a third memorial competition and global embarrassment the *Findungskommission* for Berlin's "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe" agreed to write a precise conceptual plan for the memorial. This was perhaps the fundamental flaw in the first competition, there was no clear direction given to those wishing to enter the competition. Rather the artists and architects were left to flounder in a sea of "formal, conceptual, and political ambiguities."<sup>29</sup> To make the project aims more concise the jury began by specifying (1) that the memorial would not be an

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<sup>27</sup> Michael Wise, "Totem and Taboo," 39.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>29</sup> Young, 197.

attempt to replace the nation's other memorial sites, (2) this memorial would not speak for Nazis' other victims but may, in fact, necessitate further memorials to them, and (3) the memorial will not paper over the difficult questions driving Germany's memorial debate, but instead should reflect the terms of that debate: "the insufficiency of memorials, the contemporary generation's skeptical view of official memory and its self-aggrandizing ways."<sup>30</sup>

In this way the *Findungskommission* described a concept of memorialization which they thought befit a memorial in Berlin as opposed to the first competition's nondescript guidelines, which simply advised participants that they had five acres at their disposal and that the memorial was for the Jews killed during the Holocaust. They did not establish an exact form that it should take, but they did provide some very much needed parameters. Ultimately they envisioned the new entrants submitting designs that would include: a clear definition of the Holocaust and its significance, address Nazi Germany's role as perpetrator, and reunified Germany's role as rememberer, portray the contemporary generation's relationship to Holocaust memory, and the aesthetic debate swirling around the memorial itself:

Instead of providing answers, we asked questions: What are the national reasons for remembrance? Are they redemptory, part of a mourning process, pedagogical, self-aggrandizing, or inspiration against contemporary xenophobia? To what national and social ends will this memorial be built? Just how compensatory a gesture will it be? How artiredemptory can it be? Will it be a place for Jews to mourn lost Jews, a place for Germans to mourn lost Jews, or a place for Jews to remember what Germans once did to them? These questions must be made part of the memorial process...so let them be asked by the artists *in* their designs, even if they cannot finally be answered.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 197

The jury was also concerned over another issue also shared by the memorials opponents. Should the memorial be a contemplative site only, or pedagogically inclined as well?<sup>32</sup>

Not only had the jury been pared down and a concept established but so too had the number of invited entrants. The nine finalists of the 1995 competition and to a dozen or so other world-class artists and architects were asked to submit new designs. Out of those initial entrants only twenty-five were chosen to submit a sketch and conceptual design. Among those who had initially accepted the jury's invitation were architects Peter Eisenman, Jochen Gerz, Rebecca Horn, Dani Karavan, Daniel Libeskind, California light artist James Turrell, and sculptors Richard Serra and Rachel Whiteread. James Turrell was not heard from again, and Rachel Whiteread withdrew, explaining that her Vienna memorial was still in flux and she didn't think she could stomach a similarly fraught contest in Berlin. The Berlin Senate publicly announced the list, stating that the *Findungskommission* would be selecting a winning design by November 1997 and ground would be broken in January 1999 to coincide with the return of Germany's capital to Berlin and Germany's Holocaust remembrance day. Unfortunately this is not exactly how the story unfolded.

The search committee reviewed all nineteen designs, compiled a list of the eight strongest proposals and invited the artists to present their work to the jury and organizers in November 1997. Once again the designs ran the gamut of creativity and meaning. Markus Lüpertz's design of a conciliatory figure of the biblical matriarch Rachel and Rebecca Horn's design of ash encased behind a glass cylindrical wall descending into the ground, though both well intended, may have given mixed messages. Dani Karavan's yellow flower garden in the shape of a Jewish star was determined to be a badge of shame in Jewish eyes and therefore not an appropriate memorial to the victims. A collaboration from Schiltach, in southern Germany, proposed leaving the site entirely vacant, except for the placement of four large

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<sup>32</sup> "Vom Mahnmal zum Wahnmal," *Der Spiegel* Vol. 35 1998.

billboards along each of its sides. These would then be inscribed with the following text:

Between 1933 and 1945 more than six million  
European Jews were murdered.  
The children and grandchildren of the  
perpetrators wanted to build a monument  
here to the victims. This attempt failed. Berlin 1997.

Another proposal would have turned a short strip of the Autobahn into a penitential path. One kilometer of the eleven-thousand-kilometer national highway network – a public work project initiated under the Nazi regime – would have been repaved with large, cobblestones. This project of Rudolf Herz and Reinhard Matz would have required motorists to slow down to a crawl on a highway that knows no speed limits. A large overhead road sign that said MONUMENT TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE would have proclaimed the entrance. Another entry by Jochen Gerz called for creating a vast plaza studded with thirty-nine pillars of stainless steel and illuminated with the word “Why?” in the various languages spoken by the persecuted Jews. Visitors would answer the question on computerized screens at various podiums throughout the instillation.<sup>33</sup>

Daniel Libeskind, the architect of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, delivered a lecture along with James E. Young and Christina von Braun at the Humboldt-Universität im Berlin. The lecture was given on the occasion of the presentation of his honorary doctorate. In his address, *Beyond the Wall*,<sup>34</sup> he discussed architecture and the fact that it’s undergoing an amnesia. He posits that architecture itself is struggling to remember the past what with the countermonument and deconstructionalist

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<sup>33</sup> For an insightful summary of the entire process up to September 1998, see Wise, “Totem and Taboo,” 38-46.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Libeskind, “Beyond the Wall,” Vorträge anlässlich der Verleihung der Ehrendoktorwürde an Daniel Libeskind (October 30, 1997).

movements. Nothing, not even architecture, remains the same. To illuminate this fact Libeskind describes the most difficult personal decision he had made in a long time, which was the decision to enter the competition for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. He describes it as an unprecedented task: a Memorial for the world's biggest crime: the murder of 3% German Jews and 97% European Jews. In order for Libeskind to "do" the monument he says he had to reinvent himself. He didn't think of himself as someone doing it for the Germans, or instead of the Germans; nor as an architect of just another nationality doing a German project, but rather Libeskind said he had to think of himself as someone who has no single identity; himself a product of the Holocaust era. For Libeskind the Holocaust touched the entire world not simply the Jews and Germans. Humanity in general has suffered for the evil which could not be contained and to involve oneself in a competition for an appropriate memorial to those murdered would require a global view of the event. To view it simply as an event in German history and only consider the losses to Germany and the Jewish community would not be sufficient.

Ultimately it was the design of Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra that was chosen. "He [Peter Eisenman] wanted to 'do something that was not either kitsch or nostalgia or representational. I hated *Schindler's List*,' he says. "I hated any of these things that attempt to sort of make a theme park out of the Holocaust..."<sup>35</sup> So how does an architect go about depicting one of the most inexplicable episodes in world history? Peter Eisenman's answer to this question is simple; he plans to simply "unrationalize" it.

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<sup>35</sup> Simon Houpt, "Building a Different View of Memory," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, (7 February 2001).

His final design consists of 2,700 grey concrete pillars, or standing stones, spread over an area of two football fields. Each pillar averages 5.5 meters in height and bear no inscription, no words of explanation. "It is a field of pillars that attempts to decontextualize the Holocaust, in the sense of trying to see it as a cut in the history of Germany," explains Eisenman, "not to try and locate it, not to try and make it a thing of nostalgia, not to try and make it be able to be rationalized, but to be able to be unrationalized."<sup>36</sup>

Most Holocaust memorials, Jerusalem's Yad Vashem and Washington's Holocaust Museum included, provide the visitor with scores of facts, figures, photographs, artworks, and personal stories. They stand as testaments to the individuals who perished. Visiting these sites can be emotionally draining and frequently cathartic. Eisenman, in his design, went in the opposite direction, no nostalgia, no representation, and no theme park draw.

I'm hoping that this monument will establish a different view of memory, a different view of monument, because it doesn't speak, he continues. The city speaks: You look at that building, it speaks. Most graves have names on them, most memorials have names. This is an absolutely blank field. Furthermore, it is a field that people must experience on their own, as there will be less than one meter of space between each stone. The whole idea is, What does it feel like to be alone in space? What it is to be without a goal...no beginning, no end, no direction?<sup>37</sup>

Eisenman explains that the reason behind the controversy over his project is its scale, its sheer dimension. He suggests that "had it been the weeping Burghers of Calais"<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Simon Houpt, *Toronto Globe and Mail* "Building a Different View of Memory," (7 February 2001)

<sup>38</sup> This is a reference to Rodin's work commemorating an event in the Hundred Years War between England and France whereby six elite citizens of the city of Calais voluntarily became hostages of Edward III in order to spare their city. The six men were spared death due to the plea of Edward's pregnant wife Philippa.



under a tree someplace, nobody would have said a thing.” It’s the sense of anonymity which his design conveys, its autonomy, its coolness, its silence, that has caused all the controversy.

Many years ago as a child Peter Eisenman walked into an Iowa cornfield and soon found himself lost in the height and rippling expanse of the stalks. The effect that this episode had on the young Eisenman was so unsettling, evoking such an incomparable feeling of loneliness in the architect that he used the experience as a basis for the Monument to Europe’s Murdered Jews. Eisenman believes that “the experience of walking through the memorial might be something close to what it’s really like to be alone in some place.”<sup>39</sup> Speaking to a standing-room only crowd at Columbia’s Deutsches Haus Eisenman was eager to point out that the memorial itself will offer no formal descriptions and will not make any specific reference to Judaism or the Nazi atrocities. “I didn’t want names,” he added. Eisenman is firm in his conviction that “The space isn’t a graveyard. It should be absent of meaning.” The memorial, commissioned by the German government and entitled “Forest of Pillars,” will feature some 2,700 stone pillars of varying height spread over an uneven, sunken field measuring nearly 11 acres. The field will be accessible from all four sides, not possessing any official entrance or point of destination. Pathways will only be wide enough for one person to walk at a time. An underground visitor’s center will be constructed featuring exhibition rooms and an information center. But above ground, to preserve the absence of context, the blank stones and distorted walking paths are all that will be available to visitors.

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<sup>39</sup> Jason Hollander, *Columbia News*, “Peter Eisenman, Architecture ’60, Designs New Holocaust Memorial in Berlin,” (10 July 2003)



Once the design was settled upon the controversy did not abate rather it took a sharp turn. In order raise much needed funding for the project Lea Rosh embarked on a shocking ad campaign that was intended to “shake up the indifferent and motivate the hesitant.”<sup>40</sup> In July 2001 there appeared billboards, television advertisements, and the mailing of half a million free postcards with the following content: printed atop a serene picture of a mountain lake and snow-capped mountains are emblazed the words “den holocaust hat es nie gegeben,” the Holocaust that never happened. Bold words in a country where it is illegal, and punishable with up to five years of jail time, to deny that the Holocaust occurred. The much smaller text underneath the picture reveals the campaign’s real message: “There are still people who make this claim. In 20 years there could be even more. Make a donation to the memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe.”<sup>41</sup> Rosh was banking on this shock-value campaign to net \$2.18 million in donations however after a little less than a month the billboards were pulled down. The fundraising would continue with a much milder content: “The future requires memory – get involved in the construction of the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe.” The Jewish community was heavily divided over the campaign and eleven claims were filed that stated the campaign was illegal.

August 16, 2003 was a momentous day in Berlin. “It’s been a long road,” wrote Lea Rosh, who first proposed the project in 1988, as the first stark charcoal-gray concrete slab was presented by Peter Eisenman. The first proposed completion date was penciled in for January 27, 2004 to coincide with the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the

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<sup>40</sup> von Dirk Kurbjuweit, “Welches Plakat?” *Der Spiegel* 30 (2001).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

liberation of Auschwitz death camp. However, the latest plans call for completion by May 8, 2005 sixty years after Nazi Germany's defeat in WWII.

The project, now under way after more than a decade of planning, is still not exempt from controversy. The latest problem is with Degussa, a German chemical company that is to coat the memorial with anti-graffiti material. In October 2003 production was brought to a standstill while organizers tried to reconcile the idea that Degussa, who had supplied the poisonous gas Zyklon B to the Nazis who then used it in their gas chambers during the Holocaust, would be having a part in the memorial. Alexander Brebberm, the representative of the Berlin Jewish community, told the *Berliner Morgenpost* that it would be absurd to restrict Degussa's participation because of the company's past relations with the Nazis. Utz-Hellmuth Felcht, Chief Officer at Degussa, said that they were honored to be asked to contribute to this memory-work.<sup>42</sup>

The new projected completion date for the memorial is May 8, 2005, sixty years after the end of WWII. Ironically enough sixty years after the Holocaust, as we are approaching the end of living memory, the Germans may now, through this memorial, have just begun their active memory. For the issue of the perpetrators and victims has been settled. The new, active memory of the Holocaust lies within this memorial and perhaps it makes remembrance easier for the Germans when the shared memory they have is of their lost Jews.

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<sup>42</sup> "Holocaust-Mahnmal: Weiterbau mit Degussa," *Berliner Morgenpost*, (Nov 14, 2003).

## Conclusion

*It is not enough to ask whether or not our  
memorials remember the Holocaust, or even  
how they remember it. We should also ask to  
what ends we have remembered.*

- James Young<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to believe that in 2004 Germany has been reunited into one nation. When the Berlin Wall was toppled so too were all the previous assumptions of the past forty years. With Soviet control gone and East Germans free to express their desires the issue over German identity took on a whole new meaning. Suddenly everything was much more complicated.

Berlin is now rebuilt as the capital of a new Germany and the debate over how to commemorate the Holocaust within the new capital is already itself a decade old. Part of this debate centers around the fact that the murder of Europe's Jews was directed from Berlin, but there were no killing centers in Germany itself. Unlike the concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen or Dachau or Sachsenhausen, the extermination camps were located some distance away. After WWII there were no witnesses, so few people survived who entered the camps that there were few people who were left to tell the story of the camps. Alexandra Richie sites that it is precisely this reason that the Holocaust has entered German memory as something of a figurative rather than a literal experience.<sup>2</sup> It is also why Germans have had a problem with their Holocaust memory. As James Young has put it,

had it not been for the massive, last-ditch evacuations of Jewish prisoners from death camps in Poland...the mass murder might have

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<sup>1</sup> Young, *Texture of Memory*, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Richie, *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1998), 887.

remained a foreign phenomenon altogether. German experience of the prisoners' plight in the camps was limited largely to either helping Jewish neighbors or watching quietly as they disappeared, guarding the camps or being forced by Allied soldiers to march through them after liberation. As a result, what we call Holocaust memorials in Germany tend to be highly stylized when remembering Jews.<sup>3</sup>

This can be felt no place better than in West Berlin's existing memorial to the camps. Located in the Wittenberg Platz U-Bahn station one sees a sign which looks like a bus timetable. There is another nearby. As one comes closer one sees that it is not a timetable at all but rather a list of twelve concentration and extermination camps headed by the words PLACES OF TERROR THAT WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET.<sup>4</sup> The signs were erected in 1967 and demonstrated just why so many in Berlin feel that a central monument to the Holocaust is needed.

Attempts to commemorate the Nazi evil in Berlin history have often reflected contemporary politics. West Berlin's first monument to WWII was created in 1952 at the former Plötzensee Prison. It was here that 2,500 German nationals were hanged or guillotined; the site was dedicated to all victims of Fascism.<sup>5</sup> A bit later a memorial was erected at Bendlerblock, where Stauffenberg was shot after the failed 1944 assassination attempt, it was dedicated to German resistance.<sup>6</sup> Though these memorials were well intended they seemed to echo the post-war West German tendency to focus on the "good" Germans – the 1944 plotters – to the exclusion of others. Richie argues that it is right for Germans to have a place to mourn all those lost in WWII, however this "community of victims" glosses over the very important

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<sup>3</sup> Young, *Texture of Memory*, 53. See also Wulf E. Brebeck et al., *Zur Arbeit in Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus: Ein internationaler Überblick* (Berlin, 1988).

<sup>4</sup> The sign reads, Orte des Schreckens, die wir niemals vergessen dürfen.

<sup>5</sup> Richie, 884.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 884. In 1989 this memorial was expanded to include all members of resistance including that mounted by conservatives, liberals, socialists, and communists, Christians and Jews.

aspect of the Nazi regime. These memorials imply that a young man who was forced into the army against his will and then died on the front can be compared to a young man killed in Auschwitz. There is a difference between those that were victims of the “horrors of war” and those who were specifically targeted, hunted, and murdered not just by the Nazis but by the Germans themselves.<sup>7</sup>

The Nazi past is never far from the surface in Germany. Berlin was the center of the Third Reich. Here the worst crimes ever committed by Germans were discussed, ordered, codified, registered, and approved.<sup>8</sup> The rebuilding of Berlin as the capital of the new Germany has brought the evidence of Nazism to the forefront. Reminders of Hitler are everywhere: in the tunnels which planners must take into account when developing new buildings; in the segments of Goebbels’s Propaganda Ministry; in a war-time bomb which exploded in a construction site on September 15, 1994 killing three people; the remains of Goebbels’s bunker and Hitler’s Chancellery bunker have been exposed: and construction workers frequently come across skeletons of those who died in the Battle of Berlin.<sup>9</sup>

The big question which has been at the center of this work all along is Germany’s search for a usable memory of the Holocaust. And in finding this memory Germans have also found their identity. A proud German national identity will one day emerge again it may take ten years or forty but it will emerge. What the Germans need to ensure is that it does not ever again take on the destructive nature it once did. As Richard von Weizsäcker put it, young Germans “are not responsible for what happened over forty years ago. But they are responsible for the historical

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 885.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 885.

consequences...We must help younger people to understand why it is vital to keep memories alive.”<sup>10</sup>

Berlin cannot build an identity out of nothing. That has been tried with disastrous results. Identity can be influenced by politicians, historians, and architects but it cannot be created by them. Identity, just like memory, is fluid and the product of a thousand factors. Any attempt to tear down and rebuild over the bedrock of mass murder doesn't work and speaks of totalitarianism, and *Stunde Null*. Germans must work with what they have this includes their legacy of crime.

Berlin was the center of the Third Reich but it has also been the center of a great deal more. Rather than dismissing their entire past because of what transpired between 1933 and 1945 Berliners should embrace their history and learn from it. Richie states that for the first time in decades Berliners are in a position to choose which values they wish to emulate.<sup>11</sup> A clear view of history will help in that endeavor. The clock can never be turned back or the lives taken by the Nazi Regime replaced, but something good can come of it. More than anywhere else in the world Berlin can contribute to an understanding of the Holocaust by exposing the insidious nature of evil. “Berliners should not try to draw a *Schlussstrich*, a line under the past, or repress it, or turn it into a mere tool of contemporary party politics, or counter it with proof of the terrible crimes committed by other dictators.”<sup>12</sup> In the end, only the victims can forgive the perpetrators. The only thing Germans can do is to try and

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<sup>9</sup> *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, (September 17, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> Department of State, *Documents on Germany*, pp. 1403-10. See also Dennis L. Bark and David R. Gress, *A History of West Germany* (Oxford, 1993), vol. 2: *Democracy and Its Discontents 1963-1991*, p. 430.

<sup>11</sup> Richie, 890.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 889.

remain worthy of forgiveness by remembering the past and try to build a society in which something like the Holocaust will never be allowed to happen again.

The actual memorial is the controversy around the memorial.<sup>13</sup> Active memory is now accepted as part of the German identity. The sixty years it took to work the memory out in order for it to be articulated is what makes Germany unique. Germans have now proclaimed that they will engage with the memory of the Holocaust for as long as it takes. They have now accepted the responsibility to remember more than anyone else. One hopes that the new Berlin and the new Germany as a whole will choose to live by Voltaire's dictum, "we owe respect to the living; to the dead only truth."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Sven Kellerhoff, "Überzogene Erwartungen," *Berliner Morgenpost* (January 27, 2003)

<sup>14</sup> Voltaire, *Oeuvres*, vol.I: *Première Lettre sur Oedipe* (Paris, 1785), 15n, quoted in Richie, 891.



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## RELATED EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Indiana University  
Indianapolis, IN three semesters  
Dr. Gondola, Dr. Zhang

- Planned and led discussion portion of world history
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Instructional Assistant - Fishers Junior High  
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