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## Teaching the Holocaust and National Socialism

Approaches and Suggestions

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Entrance gate to the former concentration camp Buchenwald The slogans, which the Nazis chose for the entrance gates to the concentration camps, one and all testified to a cynical contempt for humanity: "Each to His Own" was the motto in Buchenwald.

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# Introduction

The statements and opinions could hardly be more contradictory, which have been discussed in the media and on specialist conferences in the past months. The demands on the topic are mounting as well as critical voices warning of asking too much of both pupils and teachers. What would, therefore, be more obvious than bring together the participants in the learning process?

*Pupils are tired of constantly dealing with the Third Reich, Pupils hardly have secured knowledge about National Socialism, Pupils show great interest in the subject and want to know more; Teaching about the murderous racism of the Nazis offers a compelling approach to prevent right-wing extremism and xenophobia as well as foster individual moral competence to judge, the adherents of Holocaust Education are consumers of the Holocaust industry and serve the legitimization of political interests.*

To capture the reality of teaching, mutually to inform each other of the diversity of the pedagogical situation and the materials at disposal for teaching was the aim of a conference, which the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Braunschweig staged in the Buchenwald memorial. It took place as part of the German presidency of the international "Task Force on Holocaust Remembrance" last year. Of the many contributions we include above all those, which concerned themselves with teaching projects and teaching experiences as well as with critical reflections and conclusions for the methodical-didactic *modus operandi* on the part of memorials in the context of National Socialist crimes and the integration of eyewitnesses. Some contributions have been newly included, for instance the one about the Jewish Museum Hohenems and the Museum of Contemporary History in the memorial of the former concentration camp in Ebensee, both of which relatively recent institutions in Austria, which break new ground in dealing with the National Socialist past, and thereby increasingly place to the fore independent work of young addressees.

Whereas in analysis and discussion adults predominantly concentrated on the differences in the national perspectives of the Holocaust, the limitations of each respective interpretation, the political interests and pedagogical objectives, which flow into these, and contributed comparisons with other examples of genocide; pupils, as a rule, very directly hit upon the inhumane core of the politically generated mass murder, which appears so overwhelmingly repulsive that further questions sometimes are not possible anymore. One academic asked a group of pupils that told about a visit to Auschwitz: "Has anything caused you particular distress?" A schoolgirl then replied: "I just kept asking myself how something like this could happen." And to the question about reappraisal, about comparison and parallels to the present, whether the Kosovo would have also played a role, there followed an astonished shake of the head and the answer of a female guide that a transfer had explicitly not taken place.

As monstrous as the crime has been as considerably different from one another are the methodical approaches, the selection as regards content, the time devoted to the topic during teaching in international comparison. Hardly anyone who places the topic in the history of our time fails to mention the universal importance of the National Socialist genocide; in contrast, the standing it occupies in teaching, as is swiftly evinced by a comparative, matter-of-fact analysis, is rather marginal. Special courses or project weeks are still the exception, not only in German-speaking countries. Many teachers follow the guidelines whose precepts or recommendations on this teaching subject are extraordinarily different within Europe alone. In most countries they designate between four and sixteen hours for the treatment of National Socialism and/or the Holocaust.

Yet – as Volkhard Knigge has pointed out in his critical reflections on the "imperative of memory" on the Buchenwald Conference – the perpetrators'/ victims' background is still essential on the one hand for the way of appraisal in the various countries. However, this raises – in the context of countries like Germany and Austria – the question at the same time whether "prescribed negative memory could make a lasting contribution to democratisation and humanisation". The multi-ethnic composition of many school classes necessitates a differentiated, inter-



cultural approach, when one takes the National Socialist crimes as the theme, today more than ever – a fact Angelika Rieber devoted special attention to in her observations.

Teaching guidelines and schoolbooks as well as teachers' attitudes are shaped by the experiences of the respective adult generation. Decrees of the ministries of education perhaps too little reflect the ways of perception of the young. Recurrent interventions and attempts on the part of politics and the media to make teachers and young people discharge their duties – be it on account of current political events or the publication of survey results about a lack of knowledge or awareness – seem questionable in this light and counterproductive in their effect; Reinhard Krammer has referred to some Austrian examples in his contribution, which has already been published before the Buchenwald Conference.

Memorials cannot spurn this situation, either, if they do not want, as Günter Morsch has explained on the basis of results from visitor research at the KZ memorial Sachsenhausen, to “animate active dozing”; and he summarises in the face of exhibition concepts that “clarity, structuredness, graphicness and,

most of all, a self-imposition of limits are in a direct, proportionate relation to pedagogical success”.

In Germany and Austria many of those, who bear responsibility in the educational system today, have formed their attitude towards National Socialism in the confrontation with the generation of parents and grandparents, who have themselves still been witnesses and participants. This approach has become obsolete for the generation of pupils today. The new generation is freer. It can thematically address resistance and collaboration, standing by or looking on in the same way without touching taboos. This new openness of the situation, which, however, at one and the same time gives National Socialism its place in history, must be taken into growing account in the future, in both training institutions as well as memorials and museums, which adopt this theme.

*Falk Pingel/Eduard Fuchs Oktober 2001*

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

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## Teaching the Holocaust in its own right – A Reassessment of current Pedagogical Orientations

The forming of a collective memory of the Holocaust or the Shoah, as is the Hebrew-Jewish term, or the genocide of the Jews, as is the adequate German term, has been a laborious and lengthy process. However terrible the murder of the Jewish population under National Socialist rule appears to us in retrospect, however central its importance is regarded today for an understanding of the National Socialist regime and genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it all but went without saying that this event attained a prominent place in historical tradition as well as historical-political education.

### Memory – Remembrance – Learning from History?

That the perpetrators, accomplices and the indifferent ones who had looked on or away did not want to keep alive the memory of the genocide, nor, what is more, want to cast into the official, state-sanctioned form of a curriculum might at least appear understandable. But it was difficult for the victims, too, who had survived to speak about experiences deeply carved into their memory, to make them the subject of objective science and instructive pedagogical endeavours. Could be conveyed at all to the young what they had experienced? Was it of any pedagogical use what they had to tell?

The stages in which knowledge of the Holocaust unfolded and spread in both science and at school level I should like to outline with the help of but a few examples, since current teaching of the topic ought to take

precedence. In view of the different standing, which the genocide of the Jews occupies in the curricula of various different countries, and considering the great variety of pedagogical methods of teaching it, we should remain conscious of the fact that the respective level of instruction we have attained in our country, in our school, is but the result of a development in which many factors have played a part: political balances and shifts of power and ideologies, scientific research contributions, the collected memories of survivors, above all victims, and not least the pedagogical will and insights displayed by teachers. The compulsory institution school possesses certain characteristic forms of historical learning. Thus, we will ask whether the so-called “authentic” places like memorial sites allow different insights and forms of learning from the classroom where textbooks still occupy a central standing. On the other hand, can we also bring “authentic” voices to school, let eyewitnesses speak? We must include the political background, which influences the contents and pedagogical objectives today. Does a generalisation or universalisation of values, of intended moral learning from history, correspond with the current trend of the globalisation of communication? Does the Holocaust become an obligatory part of official historical remembrance not only in Europe, but does it also lend once and for all to the world community a fixed point of remembrance and warning of genocide in its particular combination of the singularity of events and the universality of the

threat finding expression therein?

To us born much later who have not lived through the Holocaust, memory thereof is not possible. We reconstruct, piece together and assimilate history on the basis of the sources at our hands. Even for the eyewitnesses the past experience will soon be accessible solely through remembering; the present fuses with a past, which seemed as unapproachable as it seemed indelible. If I do not recall the past it eludes me, if I do recall it, I transform it.

*“It is April, 12<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the day after the liberation of Buchenwald. History is still fresh. There is no need particularly to strain the memory. Nor of credible, checked documents. Death is still in the present tense ...*

*And yet doubt comes over me whether it is possible to tell the story. Not that the experience would be unutterable. It has been unbearable, which is something entirely different, as one will easily understand. Something different, which does not concern the form of a possible account but its substance. Not its structure but its density ... only the skilfulness of a controlled account can partly convey the truth of the testimony.”*

However, the account that the writer Jorge Semprun, a former prisoner in Buchenwald, snatched from his memory “bit by bit, sentence by sentence” ate away at his life: “*I knew with certainty*”, he later wrote, “*that I would arrive at a point where I had to acknowledge my failure: Not because I did not succeed in writing: rather because I did not succeed in surviving writing.*” (Semprun: *Schreiben oder Leben*, p. 22/3 and 232)

It was not possible for Jorge Semprun really to forget, since the substance of memory was the concentration camp. But what this unsurfeitable experience consisted of can only be captured in an account. Thus, he eventually completed the account from pieces of his memory and, in the year 1992, returned to

Buchenwald.

Oppressive as it may be to hold a scientific-pedagogical conference at the place of events it is inevitable to concede that in the memory of eyewitnesses even this place, like many other similar ones, has become a place of remembering and commemoration, reflection, assimilation of experiences, and not merely of memory and mourning for the victims. In their assignment to keep awake memory the memorials in the succession of generations have become a place of pedagogy. With this conference we document ourselves a piece of necessary and thus acceptable "historicisation" of the Holocaust.

The account, however, in particular when it is supposed to be passed on to coming generations with the claim to pedagogical relevance, which it had completely lacked itself, since the experience of the camp perfectly represented the absurdity of human behaviour, so turns into an interpretation of an experience, which seemed so original itself, that it did not require interpretation nor was it capable thereof. We, however, cannot do without interpretation. This is precisely the deeper reason why remembrance, ritual, retelling, the literary or, even more so, poetical form have been to the fore at the beginning in the societies of the victims – especially in Israel – and not the form of description. It was about lending a collective expression to individual grief, getting closer towards an incommunicable experience in the most diverse forms of remembrance without ever being capable of reconstruction. Only the generations that followed the eyewitnesses asked questions which necessitated a reconstruction of history. They wanted to acquire knowledge in order to make remembrance possible.

### National History in the Fore-ground

Up until today history as a subject of historical education, as conveyed by the state, is taught, essentially, in most countries of the world as national history rather than as "history of mankind". The adjacency towards the own national history is the guiding criterion of selection as regards content; the periods of national history structure large parts of the presentation in curricula and schoolbooks and often make up the largest quantitative share. The embedding of our subject, too, into the respective national context is the reason also for the fact that for a long time no specific didactics of teaching the Holocaust developed. As long as the murder of the Jews was regarded as but one aspect of the crimes and events during World War II there was hardly any cause to examine the specific didactic challenges which, as a rule, do not show until the topic is reserved independent space.

When we take a look at the curricular situation in the countries in which the genocide of the Jews is dealt with more extensively at all, four different approaches can roughly be discerned. It becomes evident that the contextual dependency within the curriculum results in different focal questions and different forms of teaching and learning, respectively:

a) In *Germany* in the chronological passage of history National Socialism represents one of three central periods of German contemporary history (Weimar Republic/National Socialism/post-war period until the unification of Germany). The Holocaust is a compulsory part of this era. The guiding principle for the interpretation of the holocaust up until the nineties has been the question about the continuity of German history. Did German history run towards National Socialism and mass extermination, were there any special circumstances in German history, did the perpetrators come from within society, did they belong to the elite or were they only outsiders who usurped power? Three

interpretive phases can be made out:

- 1) For the teaching generation that had lived during National Socialism – mostly as bystanders or even perpetrators, more infrequently as victims – it was extraordinarily difficult to teach this subject. The monstrosity of the holocaust was largely denied or relativised by way of comparison with the own victims.
  - 2) For the post-war generation it was relatively simple to distance themselves from the perpetrator generation and demand extensive explanation. This demand was frequently connected to visions of a new social order that would render a repetition impossible. Comparative questions, which would include other examples of genocide, were asked neither by science nor in didactics.
  - 3) The personal-instructive involvement in the sixties and seventies has rather given way to scepticism amongst the following generation to understand how National Socialism could become possible. It belongs more and more to a distant era that requires detailed, as "objective" as possible, explanation.
- b) In *Israel* the Shoah is the horrible low point of an extensive history of persecution of Jews in the Diaspora. The experience of the Shoah was evidence of the failure of the Diaspora, Zionism the successful and forward-looking alternative. Until the sixties remembrance and not historical instruction had been to the fore. Not until the Eichmann trial did the generation that had grown up in Israel ask questions over the functioning of a murderous system and the victims' alternatives and options. A greater scientific rigour and an objectivisation of the topic paved the way for extensive presentations of the Holocaust in schoolbooks.
- c) In *Poland, France* and many other countries occupied by National Socialist Germany the holocaust is considered within the context of the respective national histories (and as

a history of both victims and perpetrators), but it did not and does not stand at the centre of the treatment of heteronomy and resistance, since the Jews represented only a minority of the population. They did not belong to the nucleus of the nation so that their fate

- 1) was either regarded as that of one amongst many groups that suffered in a similar fashion as the entire nation and thus hardly deserved special mention, as was the case especially in the former Socialist countries.
- 2) Or regarded as a very specific kind of persecution and thus singled out from the main flow of national history (predominantly in France where the fate of the Jewish population did not fit the long prevailing heroising view of the *résistance*).

In history textbooks in countries such as *England and France* for instance the Holocaust was hardly mentioned at all in the first decades after the war. It took lengthy research work and continuous public discussion to raise general awareness that the extermination of the Jews had been an event of World War II at least as memorable as the bombing of London, the invasion or the resistance movement. Until the present day the subject is introduced in a relatively abrupt way; in the schoolbooks there are often but one or two double pages, which confront pupils with the intended annihilation of an entire people. Only rarely are the emotional shocks taken into consideration the treatment of the subject might cause, or moral and political conclusions addressed which the pupils could draw.

- d) The Holocaust essentially stands outside the own historical experience, it does not have any, or merely indirect points of contact (e.g. through emigrants who survived the Holocaust) with the own national history. Here, persecution and annihilation of the Jews under National

Socialism are dealt with because they represent a monstrous event of world historical significance. From this view spring two, virtually opposite, interpretative approaches:

- The Holocaust represents a singular, incomparable event in world history that ought to be treated precisely for its unique dimensions.
- An understanding of the Holocaust is possible solely by way of comparison with other examples of genocide. It is perhaps the most atrocious yet only one amongst several examples of the fact that even in the modern world inhumanity can take the upper hand.

Both approaches can be encountered today especially in American course materials on the Holocaust. In books on American history for a long time the subject was either neglected altogether or merely referred to few and far between; the latter holds true also for history books on “Western Civilisation” and “European History”. It was only for many years of concerted efforts by Jewish communities and organisations that they succeeded in spreading the insight that one of the greatest mass murders in modern history should at least be optional part of classes. Today, the Holocaust is treated extensively in courses, which are compulsory only in some states, though.

Precisely because the topic was not part of obligatory education in American history, it required social didactic considerations to introduce pupils and teachers to the topic. Curricula were developed which right from the outset drew comparisons with other attempts at extermination in world history, since what happened in Europe otherwise had to seem to the pupils largely foreign, incomparable and thus not repeatable as such. Some curricula drew comparisons for instance with the annihilation of Native Americans.

So as to counter possible protests on the part of the parents who did not want to see their children un-

necessarily confronted with such inhumane and cruel events many pedagogues strove to explain in which way such intricate a matter could be made accessible and assimilated in class – thus a separate branch of the didactics of modern history developed: Holocaust Education, a research movement which even in the present day still does not exist in most European countries, although the Holocaust is treated in schoolbooks, classes and separate materials and youth books.

### Universal Relevance

Presently two, as a rule contrasting, tendencies dominate the didactic discussion: an increasing generalisation of learning aims and the historical context on the one hand and a critical examination of the hitherto relevant national historical interpretation on the other hand. Which is to say: on the one hand the Holocaust is increasingly regarded as one of the central events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from whatever view one seeks to approach it, on the other hand especially the respective references to one's own history must be rethought. The latter applies in particular to the Eastern European countries which in most cases are only becoming receptive to the topic as of now.

An unbiased and extensive treatment of the Holocaust encounters particular difficulties there.

- a) The mass murder of the Jewish population – especially where Jews formed a considerable share of the total population – stands in the way of the current yet to be overcome heroic presentation of World War II, which stresses the self-sacrificing struggle of the oppressed population against the occupying forces more sharply than suffering and pain. The Holocaust, however, did not produce heroes; it is not suitable for heroisation.
- b) In virtually all countries, which belonged to the sphere of Communist dominion, the Jews have



been an unpopular minority who have always led a somewhat marginal existence in national historiography. They remained largely excluded from national historical awareness.

- c) The National Socialist dictatorship was followed by the far longer and for the non-Jewish population often also harsher Soviet rule. Both systems of oppression are viewed together, as is evinced by the Hungarian government's new programme on the memory of both dictatorships.

As to counter these difficulties instruction must choose a wider approach. First of all possibly still standing prejudices or stereotypes towards Jews must be broken up for empathy with the victims of persecution and an understanding for their largely hopeless situation to arise. Otherwise instruction runs the peril of corroborating old prejudices, for, ultimately, nothing less is demanded than Jewish victims attain an equal standing alongside those amongst the non-Jewish population. It is definitively a long way to go until then, as surveys in Poland for example show, where a majority of the population is still of the opinion that "the Poles" suffered more than "the Jews".

Apart from this specific situation which came about from the collapse of the socialist system and the materialist interpretation of history the different initial conditions in the various countries will presumably gradually decline in importance. Milena Santerini writes about her project "Education after Auschwitz", she views the Shoah as an event on the basis of which the pressing problems of our day would be recognised in school. One comes across a growing number of didactic introductions into this topic that share this view. Some factors can indeed be listed which increasingly shape the pedagogical situation and cover up national specificities:

- a) Everywhere in our schools pupils are learning about the subject for

## Teaching about the Holocaust at Academic and School level in Contemporary Poland

Feliks Tych

*There is a general rule that in those countries, which were most affected by the Holocaust – like Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Hungary, Slovakia – Holocaust education is still in its infancy.*

*This is not only due to the communist legacy and its taboos.*

*While research on the Holocaust and its findings is of international nature, its transmission to the level of popular historical consciousness, which concerns above all the school system, depends to a large extent on wartime experiences in each country affected by the Holocaust.*

*In the case of Central- and Eastern European countries we are talking about societies steamrollered by the Holocaust, and that means teachers' and textbook authors' very own societies. A clear resistance persists to the introduction into general education of those scholarly findings already taking place in international research, which – in the opinion of the authors of school textbooks – offend the national "ego" of their given society and its self-perception. So far, the emphasis in historical education about the times of World War II has been on the heroic exploits of one's own nation, its suffering and its resistance to the occupier. However, there is more to history than that, there was also collaboration, indifference to the fate of Jews, denunciations and in some countries, like Lithuania, Ukraine, Slovakia, Latvia, Hungary, Rumania, Croatia – even direct complicity with the «Endlösung».*

*For several post-war decades this problem escaped any public debate. By now such problems are already raised in the media. The taboo is broken but those other aspects of war time history are making their way into history textbooks only with difficulties.*

*Some textbook authors writing about Poland in World War II are still almost completely ignoring the fate of Jews, the Holocaust. Many historians still do not consider the annihilation of Polish Jews by the Nazis as part of Polish national history and the Holocaust is still portrayed merely as an element of the Germans' policy in occupied Poland, rather than as a genocidal plan of civilisational dimension and with universal implications. But the number of such authors is diminishing.*

*Finally – as is the case in Poland – there is the absurd competition between victims: who suffered more, the Poles or the Jews?*

*In communist times, the official number of victims of the German occupation and the war was calculated in a purely political manner. The official number of Jewish victims could not exceed the number of Polish ones. As a matter of fact, only the aggregate figure of victims ("6 million Polish citizens") was given, as a rule, in the textbooks, so that the Holocaust phenomenon would not appear as a special topic of universal dimension.*

*Paradoxically, the principle that there could not be more Jewish than ethnic Polish victims is still prevailing in school textbooks, despite the fact that Polish historians have already come up with true figures many years ago, different from those from communist times, when political censorship has served as a guardian of lies and concealment in history teaching.*

*Many if not most history textbooks are written not by scholars, but by people who are teachers themselves. In those history textbooks that were written by academics, the problem of the Holocaust is usually presented in a way that is closer to the historical truth than in the case of textbooks written by other authors. Nevertheless, both groups of authors carefully avoid some topics. History in school textbooks and in classrooms is still presented in a highly ideological manner, upholding some old and new national myths. This also applies to Holocaust education:*

*Textbooks authors are rather reluctant in presenting the real proportion of wartime attitudes: they have a tendency to multiply the population of rescuers and to underestimate the degree of denunciation and collaboration.*

*The lessons following from the civilisational catastrophe called Holocaust that would awaken a special kind of sensitivity among the young against any danger of repetition of genocide are not present in most of the Polish textbooks.*

*In Poland there was one Jew for every six ethnic Poles before World War II. The*

country had the highest percentage of Jews among the population in the world. In towns, this percentage was even higher; on average there were four Jews for every six Poles. This means that the Holocaust in countries like Poland was not some marginal affair taking place out of sight of the Polish population: It happened right in front of their eyes. And here another important factor comes to the fore: the moral devastation produced by the Nazis among the local majority populations by the sole fact of making them a direct witness to the genocide, to an unpunished murder of a whole population. This switch in the morale of most direct witnesses to the Shoah is not mentioned in any Polish textbook. This, despite many credible Polish and Jewish testimonies and other archival sources, which explicitly describe the phenomenon.

Some taboos have been broken in Poland (and elsewhere) during the last years. Some authors have blown apart some myths that served to paint an idealistic picture of attitudes of societies in occupied countries towards the extermination of Jews. Breaking up such taboos, even if only occasionally, leads to the emergence of a new situation. The old "perpetrators-victims" dichotomy is slowly becoming a triangle: "perpetrators – attitudes of societies in occupied and dependent countries towards the extermination of Jews – victims".

Now, we are far from the situation we had a decade ago in Poland, when the extermination of the Jews was not mentioned in history textbooks. The presentation of the Shoah is gradually approaching the historical truth.

For the time being, there are only two (both non-university) institutions, which systematically conduct Holocaust research and Holocaust education for teachers on a scholarly level: the Institute of Jewish History (ZIH) in Warsaw and the Auschwitz Memorial Museum. Special courses for teachers are organized in both places at least twice a year. The teachers participate in these courses on a voluntary basis. The Ministry of Education, despite the fact that Holocaust Education was introduced last year into the national curriculum, has not yet commenced with systematically – through special and obligatory courses – preparing teachers for their new task. A program (the first of this kind in Poland) containing some basic methodological instruction for teachers was published a few months ago. But not a single textbook on the subject has been published till now. At least two are in progress now, but not before autumn 2001 will they reach classrooms.

This does not mean that teachers would not be able to find the necessary information on the Holocaust in Polish bookstores and libraries. Several important books on the subject have recently been translated from English (Christopher Browning, Martin Gilbert, Israel Gutman). At least two Institutions, the Institute of Jewish History and the Auschwitz Museum keep producing scholarly works on the Holocaust each year (mostly annotated and scholarly commented sources from their own rich collections), dozens of Jewish memoirs are available. The problem is that teachers are busy people. They do not usually have enough time to do historical research on their own, even if based on printed material or on information available through the internet. They need historical information, which would be easily accessible and ready to be used in the classroom. Not historical "fast food" but still something which will take into consideration the amount of time available to an average teacher. In other words: teachers need good textbooks, not extensive and meticulous anthologies of source material (containing documents, statistics, memoirs, diaries and maps), and they need compatible methodological manuals as well. There is no doubt now that in a year or two such material will be available in Poland.

mans stand as exemplary of the possibility of genocide in the modern world.

The tendency towards a generalising interpretation is certainly strengthened by the circumstance that approximately from the beginning of the nineties all important memorial places have been offering pedagogical seminars on Holocaust instruction which turn to an international audience and thus necessarily convey approaches and compare experiences which are no longer related to one country alone. With the passing away of the generation that can still appear as witnesses the time seems to have arrived to be looking for applicable insights to be utilised in the transportation of the history of the Holocaust. The conference in Buchenwald as well as the paper published here both serve this objective. At political level the international Task Force on Holocaust Remembrance and Research pursues the goal of enlivening the respective national discourse on the one hand and accentuating such perspectives that underline the universal or at least special relevance of the holocaust for an understanding of contemporary history in general.

### Critical Guiding Questions

History curricula in Europe are chronologically structured as a rule and reach the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the time of compulsory school in the eighth, ninth or tenth forms in most countries. This means a maximum of ten to twenty lessons can deal with National Socialist rule of which in turn only a part – and mostly the smaller at that – is devoted to the Holocaust. In view of the scarce teaching time, and thus the limited space at disposal in the schoolbooks for treating the murder and persecution of Jews under National Socialist rule, the corresponding chapters tend to concentrate on the worst phases of this history and have little opportunity to depict the various steps from discrimination

whom National Socialism represents a far distant period about which they can be instructed less and less through personal experience and memory.

- b) National taboos, which have not been taken up by historiography, or only by outsiders, are being broken up, such as collaboration

or anti-Jewish sentiments amongst the own population.

- c) With the mounting gap in time towards World War II and Germany's integration into the European and also the world community the holocaust is less viewed as a specific of German history; the crimes perpetrated by Ger-

and exclusion to extermination. From the outset Jews and National Socialist society are presented as adversaries. However, German – as well as to some extent also many Austrian and Italian – history textbooks represent a notable exception, since they also consider the history of emancipation and anti-Semitism in the time prior to National Socialism. Unfortunately, however, these parts are frequently skipped in the concrete situation of teaching, precisely because some teachers believe they will get to talk about the Jews anyway to a sufficient extent in the context of “National Socialism”. Thus, the murder of the Jewish population is often introduced without being able to fall back on previously acquired knowledge about the history of the Jews in Europe. A number of difficulties and foreshortened perspectives, which criticism of textbooks as well as a thorough look at the available reports of classroom practice discloses, result from this predicament. I should like to clothe this criticism in the following questions:

- How can I prevent pupils from being emotionally paralysed by the confrontation with the terror, from not daring to ask questions and form their own opinion? How must I prepare lessons when I speak for instance about the gas chambers? How can I create an atmosphere in which discussion and reflection are possible?
- Who comes to the fore of teaching, victim or perpetrator? Can I take both groups into equal account? On the one hand it is essential to individualise victims as well as perpetrators. On the other hand I must not inadmissibly personalise the group of perpetrators but must let systematic terror as well as the support by broad sections of the population become clear.
- Do I treat the Holocaust only within the context of National Socialism or shall I draw comparisons with other dictatorships/

examples of genocide? Can I also concern myself with victim groups other than the Jews without relativising their fate at one and the same time?

- How do I express myself when I tell about the process of murder? Do I take refuge in the apparently “realistic” and cogent language of the perpetrators or do I let the victims come to word? For, my lessons ought to make pupils articulate so that they themselves are capable of speaking about the Holocaust.
- How do I avoid the danger of “victimisation”, i.e. viewing the Jews solely as victims of persecution?

### Are the Goals within Reach?

Let us start our critical assessment by taking a look at the teaching aims, which stand in striking contrast to the actions of inhumanity on which the textbook presentation concentrates. The pupils are expected to draw positive conclusions from the negative example of a dictatorship, which had negated human rights in a singular fashion, and reject systems that are not based on democratic fundamental rights. Holocaust education is, therefore, human rights and democracy as well as anti-racist education all at once. A classification of mankind into races or cultures of different value is naturally out of the question in view of the consequences, which resulted from the racist National Socialist ideology. Surveys amongst pupils and teaching studies confirm that this objective, as a rule, can be fulfilled; this, however, might be but a superficial result over which upon closer inspection a question mark must then be put.

On the one hand it is certainly true that most pupils in a class spontaneously reject the murderous atrocities of the Nazis and feel emotionally gripped by the brutality of National Socialist policy. In this case the confrontation with the mass crime in all probability merely mobilises attitudes, which have already

been predisposed thus far. For, as a rule, our pupils do not require the negative example of the holocaust to gain insights into democratic values and the observation of human rights. The example at best serves to corroborate and remind of what to this point seemed perfectly natural. In moral outrage National Socialist dictatorship is easily transported so far away from contemporary history that principally no foundation can be laid for an understanding as to how terror can unfold in a modern society. The example, therefore, remains a purely historical one. Instruction only reaches the present when the violation of human rights also shakes the confidence in their being “given”, in their belonging to “our” world. Through the examination of the past we make somewhat easier accessible for ourselves the present, which in this case may mean, though, that we also discover the possibility of inhumanity in our day. Only then are the insights gained from the National Socialist past applied to our present. The question will then be whether we hold firm enough to counter comparable perils of today and to this very question pupils often enough answer but hesitantly, if not with a no.

Such a process can only be going if the Nazi regime is not portrayed as a system of oppression, which did not allow the individual any scope for action or decision. Admittedly, “frontal teaching”, which can frequently be encountered, can rarely provide insights into the complicated mechanisms and conditions in a dictatorship; this can probably only be achieved by way of debate and discussion in class, for which, moreover, one must have sufficient piece of mind and time. Especially when it comes down to deriving conclusions for the own behaviour in the present day the reality of the “Third Reich” seems very distant and foreign for the young people of today. The ambitious teaching aims are hardly ever realised in practice. Project work, which ought to be the



rule with this topic, remains the exception. It is to be recommended, should the circumstances not be suitable for project teaching, at least to include as many elements as possible, which distinguish project classes, also in “normal” classes oriented towards the timetable. As to provide such impulses we present various concrete projects in this reader. In any case, in addition to the textbook further teaching methods should be employed such as excursions to memorials, films, encounters with eyewitnesses etc. Biographical and micro-historical approaches ought to round up the introduction into the political and economic system.

### Language of Perpetrators versus Voices of Victims?

The schoolbooks in many Western European countries often offer separate sections, which present different interpretations and show alternatives ranging from “participation” to “resistance”. The pupils can thus reconstruct in a system-inherent manner constraints and alternatives and put themselves at least to an approximate degree in constellations of that time. This may help understand why this terror met little opposition, but it does not explain why the Nazis devised their murderous policy in the first place and subsequently translated it into reality. The most intricate problem appears to consist in giving reasons for the National socialist genocide. The implicit connection of German settlement plans and “starving” or murder of the local population is addressed only rarely in schoolbooks, and then above all in those of Eastern European countries. The texts in schoolbooks explicitly name almost exclusively the anti-Semitic, racist ideology as the decisive factor. As a result only the ideologists, i.e. most notably SS and the National Socialist party, appear as the actual perpetrators whereas technicians and administrators of terror, be they generals or soldiers, judges, physi-

cians or administrative officials, are hardly ever mentioned, shown on photographs or quoted in their zeal towards the murderous system. A figure like Eichmann for example, of whom we have trial testimonies aplenty, which led Hannah Arendt to coin her controversial term “banality of evil”, scarcely attracts the attention of schoolbook authors while Auschwitz commander Höß probably still remains most quoted when it comes to depicting the killing process on the basis of “original sources”. This takes me to another critical comment on the presentation in schoolbooks:

In many countries, in particular in Eastern Europe a factual account dominates. To attain “objectivity” and authenticity National Socialist reports are quoted most frequently yet we also have at our hands notes from prisoners’ diaries or messages by resistance groups. With the sources of the perpetrators their language and concepts also become established in the schoolbook at one and the same time so that rather often there is mention of “extermination”, “*Judenfrage*” (Jewish question) and above all “*Endlösung*” (final solution). These are National socialist coinages, which we should not employ uncritically and without comment when we talk about the genocide of the Jews today.

Many authors find it extremely hard to give even approximately correct figures of Jewish victims and accurately describe the fate of other groups such as for instance the disabled or gypsies who also became victims of mass annihilation. As a rule it will be asking too much of both teachers and pupils to take all groups into equal account. It is appropriate, therefore, to focus on the largest group, the Jews. But then textbooks should at least provide the opportunity to gain additional information about the suffering and hardships of other victims of persecution as well.

### Surfeit of the Topic?

Not only in Germany and Austria but also in the United States and Italy teachers report that pupils increasingly show defensive reactions towards dealing with the Holocaust in class, for they share the opinion of being already overfed with the said topic. We must keep in mind, therefore, that the topic is indeed not only addressed in history lessons but often also in religious and literary instruction. Moreover, schoolbooks and lessons are by far not the sole media that provide access to the topic. Television features and newspaper reports also comment on current debates of contemporary history and public commemoration. Films play in the time of National Socialism. “Innocent Jews” and brutal men in SS uniforms are stylised as stereotypes of defenceless victims and sadistic perpetrators. The pupils get the feeling they already know the historical roles. However, as a rule, it is not difficult to convince them that they possess but a superficial knowledge and opinions and have incongruous pictures in their heads. The confrontation with individual biographies or questions as to how the process of persecution could gain acceptance in most cases yield a swing in opinion and reveal curiosity and commitment. However, it would be wrong to shrink from comparisons with other examples of genocide either from history or the present of the pupils. The media report about politically motivated mass murders in Rwanda, former Yugoslavia or Indonesia to name but a few cases of recent years. Pupils in ethnically mixed societies perhaps contribute very different examples of historical traumatization to class, which must not be dismissed with reference to the singularity in dimension, and method of the genocide of the Jews. Pupils’ accounts about projects on the topic as well as their contribution to the Buchenwald Conference show that young people are scarcely interested in academic debates about the “singularity” of the Holocaust. They are so captured, as a rule, by

the monstrosity of what happened that they seek fully to get involved in this case without, however rejecting at the same time that in both history and present comparable cases can be found, which would allow a comparative introduction into the topic or generalising conclusions.

First and foremost our pupils inhabit the present. Their moral and political opinions are formed primarily by current experiences, only seldom in historical reflection or by way of the historical example. The examination on the basis of history constitutes the second step. This applies even to those who do not disapprove of National Socialism, but regard it as a model for the racist and xenophobic attitudes they adhere to. One should not primarily look for the reasons for this stance in the fascination a system of violence pertaining to the past might exert but in the inability to attain and see secured for the future an acknowledged place within society by peaceful means. History in the form of National Socialism offers a clue to the discontented fantasy to envisage a belligerent, idealised homogenous society. Holocaust instruction, therefore, can hardly undo right-wing extremist attitudes, which have already become established. Here, social-political measures must yield supportive effects, and in the context of school programmes for “awareness groups” must be implemented in which pupils learn to control and adapt to moral standards their behaviour in an interdisciplinary fashion throughout all grades.

### **Against Abuse as Pedagogical Panacea**

Teaching about the Holocaust is not a direct educative means. It could run counter to the pedagogical sense of this instruction to utilise it in an overriding manner so as to reach behavioural patterns on the part of the pupils currently in demand, and expect for instance statements against xenophobic tendencies – as an inevitable result, as it were, of Holocaust

instruction. We should instruct and inform about the National Socialist genocide above all because it happened. It swept away Jews, gypsies, the disabled, political adversaries and the socially underprivileged, but it also threatened us all in our humanity. It stands as a symbol of the fact that the fundamental values on which we build our living together are called into question and need permanent protection.

To think the memory of instruction about the Holocaust functions like a mechanism which makes young people immune against right-wing radicalism and xenophobia would mean generally to attribute to history a power which it no longer possesses, at least in the Western European societies and the USA. Wherever in Europe historical tradition is still capable of effectively determining present demeanour, Jewish history has never been a nuclear part of an officially, nationally or ethnically-culturally shaped culture of memory and the Jews have been so thoroughly eliminated from and driven out of these societies that remembrance alone can neither retrieve them nor attribute to their history a prominent place in the official view of history. For the moment it will suffice when this history is not ignored or even disowned anymore.

### **Jews as Part of Society – not only as Victims of Persecution**

This takes me to my last point. Precisely because Jewish history hardly anywhere occupies a central spot in national tradition and, where and when it is indeed considered in codified tradition in school and official commemorations, is narrowed to a history of discrimination and persecution, the impression young people can form of “the Jews”, necessarily, remains deficient. Jews remain outsiders and have no recognised social position and standing. Holocaust instruction would, therefore, have reached an important goal if it can give rise to interest in Jewish life and

culture and free the occupation with the Jewish community from the trammels of the ghetto of a history of hardship.

It is not possible to formulate a conclusive assessment of pupils’ reactions on Holocaust instruction even in only one country, let alone throughout Europe. Perhaps many teachers will accept the assessment, though, a German pedagogue gave at a further education course on the Holocaust:

*“... Genuinely nationalist motives are not widely spread among students. Their orientation, on the whole, is more universal than ethnocentric, rather cosmopolitan than national ... Questions of ecology, peace, and poverty in the Third World, thus questions pertaining to humanity, weigh heavier on their life perspectives than national values.”*

On the other hand, the teacher claims, *“in some cases, collective identifications and a feeling of belonging are strongly apparent, and are voiced in nationalism on the soccer field, or in sometimes xenophobic intolerance of foreigners.”* Even though the expectations of most students were rather sceptical on the beginning the teacher soon sensed, *“how the views of the students changed during the course of a teaching unit, and how the students’ interest increased instead of diminishing, how feelings of responsibility grew, and questions became more intense. Smart remarks as well as relativising remarks about other crimes in history ebbed away.”*

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

## **Shoa – A Journey to Memory**

### **A textbook on the Holocaust for High School Students**

In 1980, Holocaust studies became a mandatory subject in the upper classes of Israeli high schools; the program has undergone many changes over the past two decades. The Ministry of Education now mandates an intensive course of 30-40 lessons for all students.

Teachers and Holocaust educational centres have developed many new programs on the Holocaust, and a great deal of enrichment material has become available. The development of educational technology and the spread of interactive learning through computer communication has facilitated greater access to many interesting learning products dealing with Holocaust issues, some of them of high quality. Furthermore, Israeli students are exposed to Holocaust-related issues through the mass media, both electronic and written, and through feature films on television and in the cinema. In some cases, as with Spielberg's "Schindler's List", some institutes, such as the Ministry of Education, prepared educational materials for teachers and prescribed follow-up activities to the film. Lately, the Internet has become one of the most popular, if not always beneficial, references for Holocaust issues.

The trips to Poland, which are steadily gaining in popularity, have increased the interest and the emotional involvement of the students in the events of the Holocaust. Participants' exposure to the historical sites and the oral testimonies of the eyewitnesses add a very meaningful dimension to Holocaust studies, which usually take place within the framework of the classroom. At the same time, the intensity and immediacy of the students' lived experience on the voyages complicates and problematizes the discourse on the Holocaust within the study of history in Israeli high schools.

In recent years, the curricula of Israeli secondary schools in general, and the history curriculum in particular, are going through important conceptual changes. The main concept behind the new history curriculum integrates Jewish history into the context of general history. This means that finally, the ideology that for years considered Jewish history as apart from and beyond general historical processes, has surrendered to a new one. The current approach recognizes that Jewish history is an integral part of the cultures, countries and nations among which Jews have lived for hundreds of years. Jews and gentiles have had a mutual impact on each other; it is hardly possible to grasp the full meaning of most events in Jewish history in isolation from the wider world arena. This applies to the processes and events that prepared the ground for the Holocaust as well.

The historical narrative has also undergone important changes: As a narrative of all human society, history is no longer the province of politicians, ideological leaders, army generals and priests, but of ordinary citizens, artists and writers, men, women and children. This change is especially meaningful when applied to the teaching of the history of Holocaust. The way in which events of the Holocaust were engraved in the memories of the survivors often impacts us more profoundly than official documents, even if the latter are considered as more "authoritative". After all, what is more meaningful for us as human beings: the fact that these events really happened, or the ways in which these events affected the people who were part of it? Perhaps both perspectives are necessary in order to exemplify the complexity of the phenomena we are dealing with.

Many disciplines other than history try to "understand" the Holocaust: Sociology, social psychology, literature, theatre and plastic arts are considered important tools in the process of dealing with the events and their memory. Literature created during the Holocaust as well as paintings drawn by the victims may be extremely valuable documents in our attempts to deal with this chapter in human history.

In approaching the Shoah, we also do so as Jews. Even today, more than two generations after the end of the war, the Jewish people has not succeeded in reconstructing their lives as other nations have. The second and third generations are still looking for effective ways of coping with the residual tension of the past. The study of the Holocaust is a very meaningful part of the process of shaping the memory of this event. The comprehension of the events that took place during those years affects the way this memory will be passed on from generation to generation.

Any textbook must take the above-mentioned changes into consideration, while maintaining a historical framework. My personal credo is that the main task of a textbook is to present the events and facts in an organized, balanced and clear way, in a language accessible to students, without ignoring the broader historical contexts.

### **The Structure of the Book**

"Shoah – A Journey to Memory" tells the story of three major groups: the perpetrators, the victims and the bystanders. The main "heroes" of the Holocaust story are the victims. Very few of them have left us fragments of life stories, shattered memories, sometimes only their names. Those who have survived have withstood years of horror and agony, during which they struggled to maintain their human dignity, while surrounded by alienation and dehumanization. After liberation, they had to struggle for many years with memories which often left deep and painful scars in their tormented souls.

As for the bystanders – their silence and indifference



helped the murderers accomplish their mission. Yet among them there was a small but an extraordinary group of “Righteous Gentiles”, who were unable to “stand by and watch”. They endangered their lives in order to rescue Jews from the claws of the Germans (*Nazi Germans?*).

The book examines also the phenomena and the events that preceded the Holocaust as an introduction to the Holocaust itself. A second mandatory textbook deals with these issues on a wider scale without touching on the Holocaust at all! Separating the Holocaust from the general history of that time was based on an administrative-ideological decision taken by the Ministry of Education.

The chapters included in the first Section, “An Introduction to Genocide” present the general course of the events that preceded the Holocaust, focusing on Germany, as well as the course of the Second World War. The sequence of events is also presented by a detailed timeline that accompanies all the chronological chapters.

This graphic aid presents the central relevant events and thus anchor them within the wider historical context. In order to illustrate the isolation of the Jews and the separation between them and the rest of the world, we chose to show certain events that happened at the same time thousands of miles away. For example: *The Warsaw Ghetto uprising* began on April 19, 1943, precisely on the opening day of the *Bermuda Conference*. It now becomes clear, based on the present state of Holocaust research that by that time the Allies knew of the mass murder of the Jews in Europe. Did the world leaders relate at all to the Jewish tragedy? This is merely one illustration of how use of the timelines can help students achieve a wider view of the various processes and human responses.

Following the introductory chapters, the book is divided into three major headings: “The Murderers”, “The Murdered” and “Thou Shall not Stand by Your Brother’s Blood”. The first heading deals with the perpetrators and their helpers; the second, with the victims of the Holocaust – Jews and other groups like the *Sinti and Roma*, while the third heading deals with the responses of the free world, including the Jews of Palestine. This heading also discusses the world after the Holocaust – the Jewish people and the memory of the Holocaust.

Each of these headings is composed of chapters which follow the chronology of the relevant events. The first chapter of the first heading, “The Murderers”, is Chapter 4, “Separation, Isolation and Uprooting”. It describes the processes from their inception until the creation of the ghettos in Poland, and also describes the living conditions in those ghettos. Chapters 5 and 6 analyze the phenomenon of the concentration and death camps from their beginnings in 1933 until their climax, the mass murder of the Jews in the death camps in Poland.

The main principle guiding us was the need to present the Nazi policy and its implementation as a process that combined various components which gradually developed from one step to the other. The separation of Jews from

their socio-economic environment was intended mainly to harm the Jews, but it also accustomed German citizens (and later, the population in the occupied countries) to the Jews’ separation and isolation.

The decision to murder the Jews in death camps was initiated through the network of concentration camps built by the SS in 1933. But it was facilitated by the experience acquired by the Germans in the “Euthanasia” operation, at the beginning of the war, when many disabled and mentally ill German citizens were murdered.

It seemed to us that in order to achieve a better comprehension of the German policy against the Jews and its genocidal character, it was necessary to present a complete picture of the process. The *Shoah* is, above all, *The murder itself*. This emphasizes the understanding that the Jews had nothing at all to do with what was done to them.

It is for this reason that the next heading, “The Murdered”, which deals with the responses of the victims, is also presented within a chronological framework (chapters 7-14). Each chapter presents the Jewish behavior vis-a-vis the changing reality at each stage of the Nazi policy towards them. We truly believe that knowledge of the various processes which led to the “Final Solution” and of the mechanism and tools developed in order to achieve this ultimate goal will enable students to comprehend the differences in Jewish response at different places and periods, and arrive at a fuller understanding of the Jewish situation. Students will also appreciate how, at each stage, Jews demonstrated creative powers, spiritual and physical energies, and a deep faith, which enabled them to cope with their deteriorating situation.

In recent years, Holocaust research has attempted to familiarize itself with the daily struggles of various populations under German occupation. Scholars have explored, not only different peoples under different conditions, but also different groups among the Jews themselves. The Jewish youth had its own particular needs and concerns; Jewish women had special problems and found their own particular ways to solve them. Likewise in the case of religious Jews. Jews followed many different vocations. Among the many groups, we chose to focus on Jewish doctors, because of the unique character of their vocation and the weighty professional and ethical responsibilities they faced.

These issues seem relevant to the world of adolescent students, who often raise questions concerning their identity, their sense of belonging, their beliefs, their view of the world and their future. We believe that many students will be stimulated to research one of these specific groups, as part of their attempt to understand the Jewish responses in general.

The Title *Thou shall not Stand by Your Brother’s Blood* begins with an inquiry into the rescue possibilities and rescue attempts in the free world, as well as in the occupied and annexed countries. We chose to emphasize the rescue attempts on the part of individuals and groups

who merit separate discussion (chapter 15). Chapter 16 exposes the students to the complexity of the responses of the Jewish community in Palestine towards the news from Europe. This is a very complicated issue which has been a subject of public discourse in Israel for many years.

The last two chapters (17, 18) are dedicated to the world after the Holocaust. Chapter 17 deals with the attempts of the Jewish people to rebuild a new life after the Destruction, while living with the memory of their horrible collective and personal experiences. Chapter 18, which closes the book, attempts to understand the universal impact of the Holocaust and its increasingly lengthening shadow.

The book emphasizes the human aspects and human dilemmas present in almost every event or phenomenon we chose to discuss. We believe in the utmost educational value of presenting issues that express personal choices, personal and collective responsibility, and demonstrate values of morality and ethics.

Many documents and sources are woven into the text as an integral part of the narrative. Among them, there are excerpts from basic research works, personal diaries and memoirs, poems, etc. They appear in a different font so as to make it easier for the reader to identify them; we consider them, however, as an integral part of the narrative of Holocaust events. Our purpose in including the sources was twofold: first, they add authority to the main narrative and provide an unmediated view of the relevant issues. Second, they give personal and authentic expression to the many ways in which these events affected human beings as individuals at different times and places.

For example, when the book presents the mass murder in the occupied areas of the USSR, we wove two personal testimonies into the text: One – a report of an officer of one of the *Einsatzgruppen* – Karl Jäger, who informs his superiors about the mass murder of the Jews in Lithuania. The second text is the personal testimony of a local farmer, who has seen the murder with his own eyes. The two are eyewitnesses, but the juxtaposition of their reports demonstrates the dehumanization of the murderers, as opposed to the more humane attitude of an ordinary non-Jewish eyewitness. Excerpts like these appear also as subtitles of many illustrations. For example, the picture of the barbed wires of Auschwitz is accompanied by an excerpt from the diary of Rudolph Höss, the commander of Auschwitz, in which he describes his comfortable family life in this camp. (Höss' family cottage was located 100 meters from the gas chambers). By the picture of the Gypsy girl Stella Steinbach, at the entrance to the cattle-wagon that transported her to Auschwitz along with her mother and nine brothers, we put a poem by the Israeli poet Dan Pagis "Written in Pencil in the Sealed Wagon".

We did not consider illustrations such as maps, graphs and photographs as an esthetical component but as an integral part of the narrative. Photographs and posters, which document the event in real time, are of major importance. Posters played an important role in Nazi pro-

paganda and had an impact on the onlookers' attitudes. The drawings we included always serve as sources of information (visual text) which are not less important than written documents. The drawings may also help to bring out the deeper meanings of an issue. For example, there is a drawing of a German board game ("Juden Raus") – "Jews Out!", which serves as an illustration of the Nazi educational system. Later, there is an illustration of another board game – a Monopoly game created by educators in the Theresienstadt Ghetto, in order to cheer up and encourage the children, and to guard their childhood as much as they could. *Education versus education!*

Most photographs show human beings in various situations: German civilians and Nazis in uniform, Jews at various stages of the occupation, children and others (perhaps another word, "and others" is a bit weak). When we look at these pictures we are often disturbed by the question: What drove the photographers to document these people and these events? This important question may provide students with another key to understanding the murderers' way of thinking and modes of operation. Still more important is the motivation of the Jewish photographers who endangered their lives taking pictures, in order to leave authentic documents of the most atrocious crime in human history.

In this textbook, we decided neither to present the students with tasks or assignments, nor to pose any questions. Only in the introductory chapters did we raise several questions alongside some of the illustrations, in order to help students combine the verbal and visual texts. The idea was to have them read the chapters free of any assignment, free of the demand to look for ready-made answers to this or that question. We hope that students will raise relevant questions of their own, and share with us what really bothers them. In this way, we may facilitate discussions of issues that go beyond the written material, and stimulate the students to look for answers in other sources. There is great educational value in making students equal partners in establishing the discussion agenda, through posing their own genuine and heartfelt questions. We do, however, offer a variety of assignments and learning tasks in the Teacher's Guide.

## Remember or Reappraise? Critical Comments on Memorial Pedagogy

First: I will not present a paper on the methods of memorial pedagogy. Second: I will not speak about memorial pedagogy in normative terms, thus neither formulate educational aims nor present reasons for memorial work as such. My concern is rather to reflect on some guiding categories of our work, which dominate the public discourse all the more undisputedly and are considered indubitable, even self-evident, guidelines the more widely critical appraisal of National Socialist crimes against humanity appears to be accepted socially and/or politically. Eventually, on the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, which took place in January 2000, following an invitation by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson, this has been declared a type of global agenda in the presence of many heads of state. In Germany the concept of memory, respectively of what might be called the self-evidence of the *imperative of memory*, lies at the core of this reflective examination and debate. My principal thesis – paradoxically formulated – is that without a critical reappraisal of this imperative and without a reflected paradigmatical change there will be no future for memory.

### Stressing the German Perspective despite Internationalisation

Before I get to talk about my subject in the stricter sense I should like to outline the situation in Germany. Memorial work with regard to National Socialism and its victims here

stands for the examination of and reflection on perpetrated crimes, or such crimes the Germans are at least responsible for, as opposed to the comprehension of suffered crimes. In that memorial work in Germany differs fundamentally from the situation in other countries – with the possible exception of Austria and Italy, which have their own National Socialist and Fascist history, respectively. Coming to terms with suffered crimes is the traditional form of the creation of memory and one that can look back on a long history, whereas the lasting creation of a negative memory – which is how I should like to refer to it with regard to its content – is historically unprecedented. I mention this to call attention right away to two points: first that, despite all the internationalisation of the comprehension and study of the history of National Socialism and its countless victims, there is and will continue to have to be a specifically German perspective on this history, and second that there are no long-term experiences with the effect of negative memory. Whether it makes a lasting contribution to the democratisation and humanisation of society or whether – and under what circumstances – it can also backfire remains open, respectively a question, which should also be appraised from the perspective of pedagogy. The experience in the GDR, however, teaches us that prescribed memory eventually runs counter to its own aims, i.e. it ossifies in routine processes, provokes disinterest, produces rejection or makes outward assimilation take the

place of inner sympathy.

### Reflections on the Institutionalisation of the Memory of NS in Germany

When I indicate that pedagogical reflection in Germany these days does not only have the task of asserting negative memory but at the same time also that of observing its effects and dealing with them, it is not least for the very reason that over the past years we could experience a previously unknown thrust towards the institutionalisation of the memory of National Socialism in Germany. The marks hereof are – to cite but a few examples – the decisions by the Bundestag (the German parliament) to commemorate January 27<sup>th</sup> as the National Commemoration Day of the Liberation of the Concentration and Extermination Camps (more commonly: Holocaust Day) and erect a memorial monument for the murdered Jews (more commonly: Holocaust Memorial) in Berlin as well as a memorial for the murdered Sinti and Roma; a further sign hereof is mention for the first time in a coalition pact of a German government of the necessity to promote memorial work and translate this claim into reality. This has been done within the framework of a memorial promotion concept, which since the beginning of the year not only yields positive effects on the financial situation of memorials, but whose actual content comprises the principal recognition of memorial work as a genuine pillar of German historical culture and political education, which needs to be furthered and supported by the state. Considering furthermore that the study of National Socialism has been a mandatory part of curricula in every German province for many decades one will have to say that the critical appraisal of National Socialism has become a part of national education in Germany. This must principally be welcome, it does, however, not necessarily have to entail results, which are solely on the positive side.



Even if there is still opposition to this development: for young people dealing with National Socialism – in contrast to my generation or even older people – is a more or less conventional issue. The history of National Socialism does not hold the status anymore of an issue, which had to be wrested from the covers of silence, an issue, which to examine requires a firm and resolute attitude, it is treated in an obligatory manner instead, i.e. with more, less or even no enthusiasm or commitment at all.

Naturally, everybody who has experienced this process of the institutionalisation of the memory of the National Socialist crimes in Germany, outlined in merely an exemplary fashion here, knows that this process was by no means a straightforward one and not exclusively “intrinsically” motivated – the Holocaust Memorial is also the price Helmut Kohl had to pay for the “*Neue Wache*” (literally: new vigilance), and the federal memorial concept is a result above all of the “Survey Commission on the Reappraisal of GDR-Injustice in the Process of German Unity”, and thus a sort of crafty reflection and effect of the anti-totalitarian reflex of the early FRG, when criticism of Communism was held to be criticism of National Socialism at the same time – but in this context this is not what concerns me. The circumstance that the normalisation and historicisation of the negative memory coincide, when what I have referred to at the beginning as the imperative of memory is maintained at the same time is far more important from a pedagogical perspective than an ideological-critical appraisal of the depth and dimension of these changes in view of the political past.

### Historicisation and Normalisation and its Sideeffects

Historicisation addresses the circumstance that we presently experience how contemporary history turns into history and communi-

### About the Terms Holocaust and Shoah

*The terms “Holocaust” and “Shoah” for the National Socialist genocide of European Jews have found their place in our general usage, as well, over the past two decades. They are employed as subject-specific terms, without examining their meaning any longer in the respective context. These metaphorical terms, which sacralise historical events, may be used in an interpretively relevant manner by Jews themselves as terms denoting the atrocities perpetrated against their people or group, respectively, much as Sinti and Roma call the experience of genocide “Porrajmos” in Romanes, their language.*

*One must be conscious, however, that the use of these terms excludes other parts of National Socialist genocidal policy from examination that are indispensable to gain a general understanding:*

- 1) The murder of the physically or mentally disabled, euphemistically referred to as “euthanasia”, the first state-planned and state-camouflaged mass murder on the part of National Socialism, which at one and the same time served as trial case and model for the expansion of the method to other racially discriminated groups.*
- 2) The genocide of Sinti and Roma.*
- 3) Not least also the murder of millions of Slavic civilians in the course of the Generalplan Ost, that is, the strategy of the war of extermination in Eastern Europe.*

*Germans in particular, from whose nation the perpetrators emerged, but also others who do not belong to the mentioned victim groups cannot call the genocide of the Jews a “fire sacrifice” or “catastrophe” – which are the adequate translations of the metaphors – since both contain religious associations, which must be considered out of the question from other perspectives – especially that of the perpetrators’ society.*

*The image of the Jews as a sacrifice brought before God is as perilously false as the idea that the industrial mass murder would have come over them as a fateful catastrophe.*

*The use of these terms not only excludes the remembrance of other victims of National Socialism – alongside European states, not forgetting – but also creates a morally problematical hierarchy amongst the victims. At the same time it impedes the necessary insight into the common ideological reasoning behind the mass extermination, even though the respective victim groups assumed different political roles.*

*Above all Jews, Sinti and Roma and the physically and mentally disabled were killed because of their belonging to a biologically determined group. The core of National Socialist ideology was the premiss of human inequality as opposed to the principle of equality in the human rights declarations of the American and French revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The National Socialist racial policy turned against groups of people who were defined as “inferior” and “unfit for life” and eventually persecuted and eliminated as disruptive factors, since there was no room for them amidst the National Socialist utopia of a genetically and physiognomically homogenous competitive community. The National Socialist planners of genocide substantiated the extermination of “unworthy” life with the purpose of fostering and safeguarding the life of the “worthy”. The annihilation was propagated throughout the Reich as a public health programme for the recovery of “the body of people” and all over Europe as a programme for an “ethnic relocation of land” and a reorganisation of Europe, respectively, on a racial-biological foundation. The vehement reactions to the “Wehrmacht exhibition” may serve as an example that this comprehension of National Socialist population policy is largely not extant.*

*When, as in the German edition of the “Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust”, the exclusive reference to the genocide of the Jews by the term “Holocaust” is justified by the argument that this genocide alone was “an attempt at utter and immediate extermination of an entire people” “based on the principles of racism”, as opposed to “measures against ethnic groups, which the Nazis regarded as harmful from social, political and military viewpoints and, ultimately, sought to eliminate”, then National Socialist ideology is foreshortened to anti-Semitism, which was but one, albeit central, component of an extensive racial-ideological concept. What is more, with this distinction plausibility and justification are conceded at one and the same time to the mass murder of other victim groups,*

*as though these had been emotive acts or “normal” atrocities, as warfare escalated.*

*The reduction of interpretation not least means that examining the theses derived from it of the “uniqueness and incomparability of the Holocaust”, of the “civilisational rupture” (Dan Diner) – quotations, which are never likely to be absent in any commemorative speech these days – and inquiring into these theses in view of their problematic nature and logical coherence is tantamount to a sacrilege. Nonetheless, for obvious reasons this raises the question: if something was unique it cannot happen a second time, which is precisely why warning of a repetition is as absurd as demanding to draw lessons for the prevention of a repetition.*

*For the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman the question about the repeatability of the Holocaust always remains a question about genocide as such, and thus rhetorical, for genocide is a daily reality in the world of today. Between 1960 and 1979 there have at least been one dozen genocides or genocidal massacres around the globe – in distant places with unpronounceable names but also right at our doorstep, in former Yugoslavia. Bauman counters the thesis of the “civilisational rupture” by asserting that genocide per se is not a modern invention; the “Holocaust”, however, a modern further development in so far as the cruelty and inhumanity of this mass murder was perpetrated in the name of humanity and civilisation, with the use of the most advanced technology, a technology, which actually facilitated this mass murder in the first place. This is the best known, most thoroughly researched and most discussed genocide, because it happened in the midst of Europe, which had undergone a century-long civilisational process.*

*The specificity of the National Socialist mass murder and genocide referred to as “holocaust” was that it was planned and executed by a state authority, which possessed and exerted unlimited power of definition by excluding parts of the population as “unfit”, “dangerous”, “useless” or “redundant”, thus depriving them of their rights and, ultimately, physically annihilating them.*

*The terms “Shoah” and “Holocaust” are foreign words. Their usage in German veils this reality. “The adoption of the term Shoah by non-Jews, who have no command of Hebrew, appears plump, even in search of currying favour”, German-Jewish historian Michael Wolffsohn rightly points out. The attempt at identification with the victims is but falsely understood empathy. Historical-political learning and a pedagogy of remembrance commence with the clarity of language. I, therefore, argue for using the terms “mass murder” or “genocide” instead of “Holocaust” or “Shoah”, and I argue for relinquishing the category of “uniqueness” and “singularity”, respectively, altogether, since it is unproductive even from a pedagogical perspective, because thereby a ban on thinking is pronounced.*

*The pedagogical appraisal of National Socialism and the mass murder and genocide in the educational system as well as in memorials and at historical places in Germany, that is the perpetrators’ and their descendants’ country, must necessarily take place from a different slant and, as already explained, must involve a broader spectrum of themes than in any other country. Coming to terms with the perpetrators, i.e. also the emotional assimilation of the perpetrator role of the generation of parents and grandparents, cannot play but a subordinate role. After all, all victims and their history of persecution must be remembered, since a hierarchical classification of victims into more or less important and lamentable ones, would mean but to continue the presumptuousness of wanting to measure the worth of each human.*

Annegret Ehmann, Pädagogik des Gedenkens, Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten (Hrg.), *Erinnern in Gedenkstätten*, Wien 1998, pp. 38 (English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001)

cative becomes cultural memory, respectively. The embodiment of this process is the ever dwindling number of members of the eyewitness generation on both sides – victims as well as perpetrators. With this generation does not only die away the living veto instance against purely historiographical forms of the presentation and interpretation of this past but more so also the last element of direct presence. The imperative of memory, which has become ubiquitous and omnipresent on account of the normalisation outlined above, loses its meaning at this point at the very latest in two respects: first in terms of the very rudimentary notion that only what has been lived, experienced and preserved in per-

sonal memory can be remembered at all and second in the way that the imperative of memory in the history of the (west)-German creation of the memory of National Socialist crimes was linked extremely closely to the denial of these crimes, in particular amongst the generation of participants. “Remember!” in reality meant or still means, respectively, against this background: “Admit your actions or your personal share of responsibility!”, respectively, “Confess! Do not deny! Do not act as if you had forgotten!” In the rudimentary sense of memory as the process of evocation as well as in its subcutaneous semantic sense of the acknowledgment of personal guilt the concept of memory becomes unproductive

or even a pitfall: to exhort a twenty-year-old of today she/ he should remember the NS crimes means – if one is not inclined to take psittacine repetition or second-hand accounts for memory – to demand the impossible from her/ him, respectively to mobilise resistance, when personal recrimination is inscribed implicitly to the concept of memory. Therefore, it appears to be the order of the day with regard to memory to adopt the practice of replacing the “memory of the past” by the “critical appraisal of the past” and comprehend memory as a content of awareness with the aid of a concept of historical awareness, which must be far from cognitively restricted, in the sense of developing an

understanding of how past, present and future are interrelated or could (should) be, respectively. This all the more so since memory – although it is comprehended a priori and conventionally, as it were, in the context of NS crimes as oriented towards the values of an anti-anti-Semitic or universally humanistic perspective – does not have to be oriented towards the values of this perspective at all. This is evidenced by the history of the political functionalisation of the memory of National Socialist crimes as well as the circumstance that Auschwitz can also be remembered – see the increasing neo-nazi visits to KZ memorials openly claiming responsibility – so as to repeat Auschwitz. Besides, there has been and still is – far beyond the scope of National Socialism – a long tradition of remembering wars and other atrocities not for the sake of reconciliation but for the sake of the stabilisation of enemy concepts, revenge and vengeance. The fighting and the atrocities on the territory of former Yugoslavia are fed not to an inconsiderable degree by such memories.

### Memory needs Knowledge and a Horizon of Values

The result is, formulated in the style of the old paradigm: memory needs knowledge equally as much as a horizon of values. Without precise historical knowledge, which must be imparted and cannot simply be evoked, memory remains an empty concept that will increasingly turn on itself. Without embedding knowledge into a horizon of values every form of knowledge remains dead and without practical relevance. If one takes this at face value memorial pedagogy is confronted to some extent with a reverse, double task. On the one hand it has to forestall, as it were, the historicisation of the NS past caused by the passage of time with the help of a carefully considered development of new forms of representation and communication.

On the other hand this historicisation must also be evaded, in that the moral-ethical appeal, which is inherent in every critical examination and appraisal of this past, must not be historicized. This dual attitude is only plausible – beyond the scope of superficial moralising or a prescribed (victim)-identification – when core elements of NS crimes like the contempt for democracy, anti-Semitism, biological-political or nationalist substantiations for claims to superiority and power, trust in authority, blind obedience, greed, uncaring indifference, lacking active humanity and active resistance against civil and human rights violations, respectively, in the form of German National Socialism from 1933 to 1945 are considered as overcome on the one hand and at the same time regarded as a historical possibility that still exists – in whatever shape – on the other. But what would then be, so as to paraphrase the problem indicated above, the prerequisites for a pedagogy that treats Auschwitz as both a closed chapter in history as well as a still existing historical possibility, which should never be repeated?

1. The creation of transparent, discursive places of documentation: i.e. for instance KZ memorials as modern museums of contemporary history, which do not have us forget that they are authentic places of atrocity and suffering and graveyards at the same time and still face humanitarian tasks.
2. “Transparent places” means places where the (social) criteria of the interpretation of the National Socialist past are revealed. Places, which do not have us forget that one cannot have the past directly but only in the form of ideas and notions about this past, the constructional principles and contents of which are not independent of one another and must be well-founded and legitimised and may be called into question and criticised.
3. “Museums of contemporary his-

tory” implies the preservation of documents, realities and historical relics in the sense of historical vestiges, whose concrete historical reference and importance must be deduced and revealed in order for them to set in motion definite historical processes of acquisition and appraisal, and not merely function as symbols without a precise historical context, whose history of tradition and significance becomes more and more obfuscated.

4. Abandoning the notion that there are types of documents and realities, respectively, or ways of presentation (photographs, films, eyewitness accounts, new media and the internet), which guarantee *eo ipso* a direct and authentic contact with the past as well as a successful mode of presentation – i.e., which would be more than mere stimuli for the reflected use of one’s own imagination, in itself but the prerequisite for empirically meaningful empathy – as opposed to momentary dismay.
5. Dealing carefully with the fact that dismay has two meanings, which are not entirely congruous and yet through their interrelation lend the concept its full meaning as a didactic category. First: I am dismayed by something, i.e. an emotion of sympathy is provoked. Second: something concerns me personally in so far as it has real consequences for me. These, however, can only be recognised, when the comparison between the own present and the NS past, between own experiences and the historical facts is an elementary part of dealing with the past. From this point of view memorials are open places precisely for the reason that experiences of wrong and violence made by (young) people in the world of today must have their place therein, not only to keep alive a practical reappraisal of the NS past but also to clear up anachronisms and inappropriate



projections.

6. The replacement of the paradigm of guilt by the paradigm of responsibility, to which concept the atrocious past is a negative horizon, which to pull away from time and time again remains absolutely crucial. From this perspective the past is not a burden (as is so often claimed in Germany) but rather an opportunity. It must be permissible to determine and formulate both – proximity and distance – to this past on the basis of precise, concrete social examples.
7. For the endowment with meaning, no matter of what kind (political, religious, national), the central crime of National Socialism, the genocide of the European Jews, proves to be entirely inadequate, when taken seriously as a civilisational rupture. In this light the examination of the NS past means developing an awareness of the radical fact that the good (as exemplified by freedom, solidarity, tolerance, human dignity, human rights and democracy) does not come natural, does not go without saying. Successful pedagogy from this view is first and foremost pedagogy of distress and insecurity when it comes down to apparently self-evident civilisational certainties. Rejection, growing discomfort, the loss of speech can be indicators of a successful mode of presentation and must, therefore, not be dismissed but thoroughly reviewed and examined instead. A discursive culture of interpretation belongs to the culture of presentation as a necessary counterweight, in particular as regards apparently anti-scholarly, abstruse forms of acquisition and dealing with NS history.
8. Today's visitors to memorials are largely aware that the survivors' "Never again!" has at best been partially realised and only in certain regions of the world. They, therefore, have a right to be sceptical as regards memorial work.

Memorial pedagogy is ultimately only as credible as the society affording it. Scepticism with regard to memorial work must be examined in terms of its real (political, social) background.

9. Memorial work like other scientifically reflected forms of historical presentation is just one way of dealing with the NS past alongside multiple others. It should not imitate mass-cultural modes of presentation of the NS past but rather differentiate. Discarding stereotypical ideas, notions and clichés will probably be as important for the future as initial information.
10. Resistance and objections against dealing with the National Socialist past will have to be viewed and analysed in the future as a result also of inadequate pedagogical strategies, as a consequence of negative experiences with the presentation of history – e.g. moralising instead of informing, the combination of information and message, prescribed attitudes or identifications, imposed speech or silence for reasons of political correctness, taboo questions. Automatically to qualify this as "suppression", as denial, disregards that virtually no one in Germany has not made some sort of experience with the "subject" National Socialism, at least in school. The same goes for the mass-cultural overuse of the issue and the socially and politically implausible approach, respectively.

### **Holocaust Education at Risk of Decontextualisation and Hegemonialisation**

Two closing comments against the backdrop of the Stockholm Conference and the globalisation of "Holocaust Education" that has been demanded.

1. Holocaust Education, notwithstanding various respective ap-

proaches and methods, is to be viewed critically from the perspective of historiography precisely because it presupposes historical decontextualisation. This must be criticised all the more from the perspective of the German negative memory, which must preserve the preconditions for and the history of National Socialism as a crime of society in its entirety, as a narrowed view, without thereby calling into question that the mass murder of the European Jews constituted the central crime of National Socialism.

2. It is extraordinarily dubitable that "Holocaust Education" is the global "ideal way" for human rights education. The historiographical qualification of events – in this case the singularity thesis and the judgement of the Holocaust as a radical evil – does not automatically affirm their didactic quality. Whoever makes experiences of social violence and injustice today, perhaps even genocidal experiences, must have the right to bring these experiences as such before the eyes of the world, and will want to deal with them directly rather than by way of substitution with the Holocaust. When taken seriously the concept holds the danger of the hegemonialisation of the experience of violence and suffering, with all the negative consequences. Moreover, the history of the FRG teaches us that there is in fact an inner connection between negative memory and substantial – as opposed to merely formal – democratisation, but only in so far as the own criminal past has been received and thoroughly appraised. One will have to assume this holds true for other countries as well, according to their respective history – without the intention of thereby exonerating Germany.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*



## **Authentic Places of KZ-Crimes Chances and Risks from the View of Visitor Research**

The demands on a new historical awareness, as are formulated by modern Holocaust Education, in comparison to the connotations, which the previous concept of memory encompasses, have at least not become less ambitious. On the contrary, according to these demands, the presentation of knowledge must come to the fore increasingly. Thereby, mass-cultural forms of presenting the National Socialist era ought not to be imitated, but memorials should rather take a differentiated approach. In the following pages I should like to try to view these aims, most of which I share, against the backdrop of present results in the field of visitor research in museums and memorials. However, I will not look at the effects on school class visits to memorials, albeit a fairly popular subject for the time being, nor at the effects of didactic projects, but I shall instead confine myself strictly to interviews conducted with “normal” visitors to the Sachsenhausen memorial who though make up by far the largest share of the millions coming to visit the memorials every year. Let me say right away: the prototypical visitor to memorials, as is the ideal target of memorial pedagogues, has yet to be produced. This type apparently does not exist, or at least not in sufficiently relevant numbers. On the contrary, there might even be good reason to fear that with the gradual decline of traditional cognitive, structural and discursive forms of perception and communication this ideal visitor will get lost more and more amidst the “chatroom” of the flood of mass-medial information.

The conditions, however, for the development of the historical awareness in demand appear to be especially favourable at the authentic places of National Socialist crimes. The historical testimonial character and the quality of aural semblance produce a combined effect. The great opportunity of the authentic places of Nazi crimes, in principle, is the old idea of the integrated experience. Sensory perception, emotional aural semblance and the cognitive presentation of knowledge can blend into one impression and thus achieve a particularly emphatic effect. The authentic places of Nazi terror appear to facilitate integrated experiences of history, from which springs an especially distinct, high-level form of historical awareness. In a time of mounting xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism society continues steadily to raise its expectations of memorials. Preventive immunisation strategies, to a certain extent even hidden expectations of re-education, are linked and associated with the concept of the “open learning place”, which most memorials lay claim to.

In Germany, visitor research – above all the names of Graf, Klein and Treinen deserve mention here – has thus far been focussed exclusively on the various types of museums. However, industrial and open-air museums are comparable indeed to most of the memorials since they also combine an authentic set of buildings with historical museums. Treinen attempts to characterise the, according to representative evaluations, prevalent behaviour patterns on the part of

the visitors by employing the terms “cultural window-shopping” and “active dozing” respectively. The usual visit to a museum is motivated by the desire for as complete an experience of sensory stimulation as possible and to some degree for plain, excitable entertainment. The request for the presentation of knowledge on a general level, as expressed time and again by visitors, originates merely from a diffuse, culture-related display of curiosity. Intrinsic motives, that is, a distinct interest in the acquisition of specific, subtly differentiated knowledge, influence only a very small degree of visitors to museums. The behaviour of the average visitor is similar rather to other forms of mass-medial information assimilation. The predominant request made by visitors, to see as much as possible in the amount of time at their disposal in combination with the high surplus of information, which is typical of exhibitions, leads to a form of perception not at all dissimilar to what is known as zapping in the face of the electronic media. As a result, only a very small share of exhibits and contents, visitor research claims no more than five per cent, is received at all. The impressions gained in the course of this process are connected on a cognitive level only very rarely. The presented attractions and stimulations are linked associatively, in accordance with their emotional and sensory appeal, rather than discursively. The concept of the “learning place”, as Treinen succinctly sums up the results of visitor research at museums, is an illusion and a wishful projection on the part of exhibition makers and, especially, pedagogues who inadmissibly seek to equate museums with educational institutions at school level.

Owing to the lack of own research work, memorials could hitherto but speculate about their visitors whose numbers also go to the millions. Subjective impressions resulted from personal expectations. Even visitor books, an instrument largely

unsuited for the documentation of visitors' reactions, have been analysed and evaluated. Occasionally some of the staff at memorials felt a sense of distinct unease. On the one hand they fought against society's over-demanding attitude towards memorials, which they felt misused as a sort of "antifascist geysers". Some expressed their more or less unconscious forebodings with regard to the limits of exhibitions by dismissing, mostly only among colleagues, the majority of visitors as "terror tourists". But perhaps, and such was indeed the hope, memorials are faced with a different sort of crowd from the visitors to museums who, moreover, would also change and adjust their otherwise typical forms of reception in the face of authentic places of Nazi crimes? Over the past five years Sigrid Müller and Christiane Quadflieg, both working in Sachsenhausen, have contributed a number of different studies on the behaviour of the roughly 300.000 annual visitors. Included are not only the basic data elementary for every evaluation that wants to be taken seriously. They also worked out various longitudinal surveys that treated, *inter alia*, the specific behaviour patterns at a selected new museum, Barracks 38, teachers' expectations of and attitudes towards the memorial as well as the decisive factors for repeated visits. Without similar studies at other memorials it is bound to remain uncertain in how far these results may legitimately be generalised. However, the outlines of recent visitor research in Dachau suggest similar results. The average visitor to memorials, therefore, is scarcely different from the average visitor to historical museums in terms of age (16 to 35), gender distribution (a slight majority of men), (high) level of education and middle-class background. Most other basic data also tally: single visitors outnumber larger, organised groups, the visitors come from more distant regions rather than the immediate proximity, the main medium for

visiting the memorials are friends and acquaintances and the average time spent amounts to round about two hours. Thus, it hardly comes as a surprise, what with so many similarities, when statements on both cause and reason for visiting and behavioural patterns become ever more identical as well: the vast majority of visitors perceive the memorial as an authentic area of experience. They are looking for a sensory approach towards the material traces and desire a palpable vivification of their own personal knowledge. The expectation of an aural, emotional experience is combined with an overall, unspecific interest in the history of the National Socialist era. Intrinsic motivations are the exception, though. Only five to seven per cent of all visitors, for instance, are interested in the second part of Sachsenhausen's history, its existence as a Soviet special camp. The vast majority of visitors express their utter contentment about what they have seen, a scenario not unlike after a visit to a museum. Between 70 and 80 percent state that the memorial was completely worth the visit. Behind this sweeping approval visitor research, and quite legitimately so, suspects as a motive people's dislike to admit to themselves that their undertaking has been a failure. For, if conversely one asks those who have no intention of paying another visit for their reasons they primarily list dashed expectations as regards the "experienceable" quality of the place, which was perceived as too innocuous on the whole. Summing up, the high expectations of the aural semblance of the authentic places of Nazi crimes cause both the attraction as well as the rejection of visits to memorials. What is more, this connection becomes all the more forceful the younger the visitors are and the sketchier their previous knowledge turns out to be.

However, visitor research in historical museums has in fact raised a spark of hope that the idea of the

learning place might eventually be realised for certain sections of visitors. The degree of intrinsic motives and impulses rises with the so-called repeated visitors, the selection of museal departments becomes increasingly specific, more time is spent by the various exhibits and the connections established with knowledge acquired in advance become denser. At the same time the profile of the repeated visitor in comparison to the first-time visitor is shifting towards older age and a higher level of education. The open-air museums in particular can be pleased to report that about half their visitors decide to come back again. Thus, it is fairly evident, especially for memorials with their specific educational-political objective, to work purposefully towards an increase of the share of repeated visitors and perhaps even develop a so-called regular crowd – which in open-air museums amounts to a respectable 25 per cent – supposed to be both attracted and educated at the same time by special exhibitions. The result of our evaluations, however, shows a percentage of repeated visitors that is sharply below average, not even reaching the 25 per cent mark, and a mere six per cent are regular visitors. In this respect the subject presented at NS memorials proves to be a main hindrance, for the visitors of open-air museums, according to their own statements, are motivated chiefly by expectations of "sensory pleasure", i.e. sharing an experience perceived as entertaining with family, friends and acquaintances. The most important motive for a repeated visitor to Sachsenhausen was his intention to show the memorial to others and not any intrinsic interest in the acquisition of more in-depth historical knowledge. Even the regular visitors are interested in an aspect that has little to do with the history of the concentration camp or the Soviet special camp. They return, albeit intermittently, primarily to have a close look at what has changed meanwhile at the memorial in terms

of concept, creative and architectural design. For the vast majority of repeated visitors special exhibitions are not a cause for visiting, though; in this aspect they are not different from visitors to open-air museums. The authenticity of the place turns out to be, thus can these results be recapitulated in my view, both opportunity and burden at the same time for the memorials. This is precisely the main reason for millions of people every year to visit the KZ memorials. The somewhat excessive expectations of the sensory, emotional and aural quality of this experience which lie at the heart of these visits in the first place restrict the possibilities on the part of memorials, which view themselves as learning places, of fostering and promoting a critical and discursive historical awareness. They eventually also conflict with the development of a growing section of repeated visitors who consciously utilise the offerings of places that consider themselves museums of contemporary history to enrich and expand their knowledge about the structures of the exertion of power and force on the part of the SS in concentration camps.

My article shall not come to a close on this somewhat sceptical note, though. Surely you will not expect me to come up with patent remedies for dealing with the results of visitor research, we, too, are still searching and have not quite got there. However, the refusal to accept reality is not a feasible way, either. The memorials must reach an agreement as to how they wish to cope with the challenges posed by millions of visitors in our leisure society. Either conceptional conclusions for ways of representation and presentation must be drawn from the analysis of the visitors' receptive behaviour, or the memorials deliberately concentrate their concerted efforts on that small minority of visitors who, following intrinsic motives, seek the presentation of historical knowledge at authentic places. If so, the huge numbers of visitors will prove to be

a disturbance. In their conception the German memorials are largely the product of commissions of historians who attempt to transfer argumentative and critically distinctly appraising, extensive and discursive forms of presentation characteristic of this country, forms, it should be said, which are quite positive indeed, to the entire memorial and the connected exhibitions. However, we have to become more acutely aware that partiality and the associative character of perception on the huge areas of KZ memorials, which still have, despite the demolition mentality of years past, plenty of authentic edificial testimonies, remain inevitable. The roughly two hours spent on the many hectares of memorial ground by the average visitor has to be taken note of. In this span of time one cannot properly see a major part of the exhibitions and museums with the necessary amount of attention, let alone a combination of both which is the regular case at most authentic places. Whoever tries to justify the sheer scope of the exhibitions by saying the design is to attract repeated visits, according to the results of our survey, only fools himself. Only a diminutive share of approximately one per cent of repeated or regular visitors return with the intention to go and see special exhibitions. The contextualisation of relics, which like all monuments do not speak for themselves, is a demand, which to heed and incorporate into future planning is essential. Lacking contexts of the main exhibits, the relics, at authentic places on the one hand and exhibitions, which demand way too much of their visitors in terms of scope, differentiation, covering texts and intellectual structuring, on the other only further "active dozing". A middle course between catching exhibitions that reproduce the so-called "icons of extermination" on the one hand and sophisticated, detailed mammoth programmes on the other must be taken. The knowledge about the inevitable

particularity of perception should find reflection in an intended and carefully considered particularity of concept. It is furthermore essential to appraise the relation of importance and redundancy. Change and recognition, production/design and cognition, variety and reduction must be integrated into an overall concept, which encompasses the entire place as well as the various different exhibitions. Clarity, structuredness, graphichness and, most of all, a self-imposition of limits are, as visitor research clearly shows, in a direct, proportionate relation to pedagogical success. A majority of the activities on the part of memorials have to be directed at producing the desired effects prior to memorial visits. This holds true especially for class excursions where voluntary participation, preparation and also further study are the decisive elements to didactic success. The overdue paradigmatical change of memorials from places of sorrow and dismay to museums of contemporary history must be brought and transferred into society. This lies to a large degree within the responsibility of the media, which have previously covered large and new exhibitions at best in their domestic affairs sections as opposed to coverage in the (inter)national arts and culture section, thereby adopting a well-meaning, patronising instead of an objective-critical attitude. The schools and teaching staff who frequently still adhere to unreflected forms of "consternation pedagogy" also bear responsibility with regard to the memorials. This includes above all not having authentic places overfraught with unrealistic expectations and objectives. The lack of efficiency of such deductive educational concepts lies plain for everybody to see since the end of state-organised and state-controlled antifascism in the former communist countries. A large part of a generation that participated in ritualised commemorative events and routine one and a half hour gui-

dance tours around memorials misused as temples of antifascism show alarming dimensions of xenophobia and prejudices. The chances which lie in the authenticity of these places have not only been squandered but,

much worse, reversed into their anti-emancipatory opposite; this, and may we take it as a warning, can also happen.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

Gottfried Köbler

## Participation in Trauma? Eyewitnesses in the Pedagogical Approach to the History of the Holocaust

### Eyewitnesses of the Holocaust: Problems of Differentiation

The encounter with people, who have their own memories of the time of National Socialism and especially of the events, which are summed up by the term Holocaust, is comprehended today as a particularly suitable approach to this era. In schoolbooks and curricula eyewitness interviews are recommended time and time again. However, it often remains all but clear what persons with what perspective are actually meant by the term “eyewitnesses”.

The cooperation with eyewitnesses in pedagogical processes goes back to the oral history movement. In the USA it was part of the process of self-comprehension of the ethnic minorities, of the quest for their own history. Thus, positive identification offers were made with the recounted life histories, a collective memory was reconstructed. In Germany the reception of oral history commenced in the seventies in the context of the search for family accounts about the National Socialist period. Since these did not take place in most families – or remained overshadowed by adventure stories of the front – this offered an alternative. In the

first phase eyewitnesses from the resistance were interviewed, then one attempted to reconstruct the living conditions of ordinary people. Since the end of the eighties the accounts of the victims of persecution are at the centre of attention.

### Victims

Many pedagogues virtually take it for granted that “eyewitnesses” must belong to the group of victims of National Socialist persecution. The encounter is seen as a chance to experience the victims’ perspective. This is certainly one of the most important tasks of work with eyewitnesses in the pedagogical field, but here, in particular, one faces a wealth of didactic and, most of all, methodical problems. Since eyewitness interviews are often conducted especially with Holocaust survivors, and this requires particular diligence and caution at one and the same time, these will be discussed in more detail from a methodical perspective below.

At first it seems important to differentiate amongst this group itself. It should not appear a banality to point out in this context that those, who were murdered in the concentration and extermination

camps and in mass executions in the East were victims first and foremost of National Socialism and its anti-Semitic and racist policy of annihilation. They can no longer bear testimony, our remembrance goes out to them, and this should always be present in the background of work on this topic: the mass murder has also eradicated the memory of all these people. Thus, virtually all survivors of the camps, and most of those, who managed to escape or survived in sanctuaries, comprehend themselves as the representative voice of the dead.

### Spectators

Not only the victims of persecution have been witnesses to the events of murder, the development in the German Empire from the discrimination in the first years of the National Socialist regime until the murder during the war. All inhabitants of the Reich and the countries occupied by Germany could become and indeed often were witnesses of the Holocaust. Here, the preparedness to recount is much lower than with the victims of persecution, but with the growing distance in time there are more and more people, who find it makes sense to share with young people their view of these experiences, which were traumatic for them, as well. The task of pedagogues is entirely different here, however, from interviews with former victims. Nevertheless, there are extensive parallels. The mediation between the young audience and the old narrators requires precise factual knowledge here as there, which must be acquired beforehand. The teacher must also be aware, though, of the possible range of emotional reactions



on all sides.

It would be a mistake principally to characterise the account from the perspective of “average Germans” as that of perpetrators and place it in stark contrast to victims’ memories. Pupils’ compassion with victims does in fact not result from an ethnic appraisal, which teachers associate for themselves with the specificity of the fate. Moreover, it can only be the result of a process of reflection on the part of the pupils. The pedagogical function of such an encounter with the memory of people from the “majority society” offers the opportunity to change one’s point of view. However, in the pedagogical context this presupposes that these eyewitnesses have critically reflected on their experiences and their world-view from the time of National Socialism and have dissociated themselves from their attitude at the time.

### Perpetrators

The active participants in the murder are direct witnesses of their acts – but they are not “eyewitnesses” in the pedagogical comprehension. The didactic problems of such a confrontation could not be surmounted in the daily school routine. Such people’s accounts, which are part of a documentary adaptation in films or literature, should absolutely be part of the pedagogical occupation with the Holocaust. The memories of perpetrators are an essential aspect of eyewitness testimony; it is a central task of teachers to convey this view. For, an answer to the question why the murders could actually happen cannot be derived from the suffering of the victims of persecution, but only be circumscribed in the appraisal of the motives of the perpetrators.

### The Ambivalence of Recounting and Listening

What happens in class, then – what experiences do the participants – that is, the pupils, the teacher and

the eyewitnesses – make in such a confrontation? So far, there are no empirical studies going into this question. Psychoanalytic research in some points of view pursues similar questions to those pedagogues should ask of the encounter with eyewitnesses. In a recently published volume of essays I came across some references. It is titled “No-one bears witness for the witness”, a quotation by Primo Levi, the Italian writer, who assimilated in literary form his testimony as a survivor of Auschwitz in novels and essays. The subjects of the book are the problems of testimony to a traumatic experience. It is presented from a psychoanalytic view: *“Testimony to trauma involves the listener in that the listener functions as an empty surface, on which the event is inscribed for the first time. (...) the person that listens must ... at one and the same time become both witness to the trauma witness and witness to him/herself”*. Transferred to pedagogical contexts this means not only listening attentively to the narrator but at the same time also considering and – above all – didactically controlling one’s own reaction to the story. The eyewitness needs a listener who is “there for him”. The pupils need a teacher who steers their learning process and absorbs where and when possible emotional overburdens. Thus, this is both cognitively as well as emotionally an especially straining form of narrating, from the view of the pedagogue, listening, which entails unusual demands. As a teacher listening is devoted professionally to the pupils. In a conversation with an eyewitness in front of class it becomes necessary to split this important stance into two different forms. The teacher must listen, as it were, with each ear to a different story. In the account of traumatic events this situation can trigger emotional crises on both sides, let alone the emotional strain on the teacher. “In trauma the capacity to regain the past is closely and paradoxically linked to the approach

to it proving to be impossible. (...) since events have not been fully integrated in their course, the event cannot ... become a “narrative memory” embedded in the closed history of the past”. During the narration a struggle for memory unfolds, in which the listeners assume a central role. Often young people are the first addressees of this account, which could not even be passed on to the own children. In this constellation the teacher recedes to the background. He belongs to a different generation and stands closer to the events than the young people. Even so, the teacher – according to the image of the role – is expected to supervise and present the process of communication.

There are very many eyewitnesses, who frequently tell their story to school classes and discuss about it with young people. This brings about a “professionalisation” of the narrators, which, however, must not be mistaken for dissociation from traumatic memories. Especially in conversation with these experienced eyewitnesses time and time again tricky situations surface, when subjects are addressed, which touch upon the severest injuries of the old people. Such subjects more often than not are not those, which one, from a lay point of view, might expect to evoke strong emotions; it is an everyday situation rather that can open access to buried feelings, which are hard to control then.

I do not want generally to warn of inviting eyewitnesses to class. For the integration of eyewitness accounts into the situation of teaching these problems mean the necessity of a multiple qualification of teachers, though. They must at one and the same time assume towards the eyewitnesses the position of therapists, as it were, who cannot and do not wish to treat, and on the other hand as pedagogues must take to the pupils. This is an arrangement, which seldom comes off. Thus, special offers in this working field are of crucial importance.

## Working Field School

### Offers for the Integration of Eyewitnesses into Learning in School

Today, as a result of a long process of research and local historical examination, we have a diverse array of oral memory accounts. In the sixties this development started with the radio broadcast of National Socialist trials, above all, however, with documentary theatre. In particular "The investigation", a play, which Peter Weiss culled and arranged from the protocols of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt, met with a broadly positive response. The gradual rise of the willingness to be confronted with the memory of the Holocaust began in West Germany with the anti-Semitic occurrences at the end of the fifties. One of the consequences was the introduction of social studies as a school subject and the activation of the *Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung* (Federal Centre for Political Education). However, the proximity in time to the events of mass murders and World War II was still so palpable that a didactically reflected approach to memory stood no chance of success. Instead, fierce controversies took place between the generation of participants and their post-war children.

The tradition of the integration of eyewitnesses began in the FRG with the first post-war generations turning their backs on the conflictive confrontation with the guilt of their parents. An identificational occupation followed with resistance against National Socialism and the role of the workers' movement at the time the Nazis seized power. In East Germany the glorification of political resistance was a firm part of the central forms of self-representation of the SED regime. The feasts of *Jugendweihe*, the bestowing of adult status on fourteen-year-olds, always contained a ritual element of veterans' reports about their struggle against Fascism. Everyday history was the keyword, in the name of

which a survey about National Socialism amongst eyewitnesses was conducted in Germany in 1980. Many schools took part in the competition for the Federal President's Prize, which the Körber Foundation, held for the first time on the topic everyday history in National Socialism. Emphasis shifted more and more distinctly towards the victims of persecution, which even led up to harsh criticism of concerning oneself with the memory of the majority society.

In public initiatives, which succeeded in having memorials erected at the places of National Socialist persecution in West Germany, survivors fulfilled an entirely different function. They became active in the phase of enforcing the demand for memorials as experts on the history of each place and as proponents in the struggle for memory.

Today the use of eyewitnesses is associated with the expectation of a certain efficiency of the authentic confrontation so as to have memory take effect. Correspondingly, there is general helplessness what about the change of generations. The feeling surfaces that with the death of the eyewitnesses of National Socialism the presence of the account of its horrors – and thus the warning of a repetition – may also get lost. Once public awareness of anti-Semitism within society rises, once right-wing extremist criminal offences are adequately prosecuted, political and thus financial support for programmes on the encounter with eyewitnesses and on memorial visits increases alike.

### School Practice

The expectation of a political – or perhaps rather moral – influencing of listeners to such interviews cannot be proved from experience, though. We know too little about how young people digest and assimilate these encounters. Letters young people wrote to eyewitnesses after their visit to class are the ex-

ception. However, they lie in the intermediate world of school lessons and private expression on an empirically precarious level.

One of the focal aims of teaching about the topic National Socialism is creating heightened sensitivity to human rights and tolerance. Here, practical suggestions revolve around the transportation of the capacity for empathy (compare the examples in the literature list). Reaching this goal presupposes many and diverse processes of learning and practice for individuals and groups. The standing of historical instruction is different from one programme to the other. In school practice there still seems to be the hope – or such I conclude from the experiences in further teacher education – than "authentic encounter" with eyewitnesses or a visit to a National Socialist memorial might produce something like a leap of insight.

Going into accounts about the for all parties traumatic experiences of the World War II generation already presupposes a capacity for emphatic listening. It is the prerequisite for an understanding of the other, for the acceptance of foreign perspectives as equal. When the encounter with survivors of camps or with former Hitler youths or BDM girls takes place in the sign of hope for the pedagogical force of authenticity this social qualification, as a rule, is not prerequisite but only too often aim of the pedagogical process.

Here, one must consider that – as described above – the demands on listening are very high from a psychoanalytic view. What can we ask of young people – and, to be exact, of the old narrators as well? Geoffrey Hartman follows Dominick LaCapra when he calls "voluntary testimony a sort of work", a "work of listening and attention, which exposes the self to an empathic understanding and thus at least to an attenuated form of trauma" (Hartman: 2000, 39). After more than ten years of practice with eyewitnesses of the Holocaust it is about time didactically to con-

### Geoffrey Hartman's Concept of "Intellectual Testimony" as Impulse for a Didactic Alternative

*The question as to what actually constitutes authentic memory becomes especially pressing in the face of the function of eyewitnesses for learning contexts. There is an event, which has made palpably visible the question about the "reality" of memory. In a television debate Elie Wiesel and Jorge Semprun recall the liberation of Buchenwald. Both had been prisoners there and both had experienced that day. During the debate it emerges that they do not have a shared, common memory. Semprun, as member of political resistance, was near the entrance gate at the time of liberation, whereas Wiesel, as one of the doomed, who had been deported to Buchenwald from Auschwitz, was in the "small camp", physically unable to grasp the situation. Both survivors have assimilated their memory in literary form and belong to the most important witnesses of the Holocaust. What exactly is authentic memory, then?*

*Not only this obvious incompatibility of memories remains a problem against the pedagogical backdrop. Moreover, we also face the aforementioned psychodynamic dimensions of the encounter with eyewitnesses. At the same time it is precisely this, the realisation of the traumatic nature of the memory of genocide and the individual quality of each experience, that is a central end of teaching about this topic. It cannot be that on the one hand we strive for a closer approach towards the horrors of the Holocaust and on the other we keep out of the learning context its manifest continuous effect and impact on the souls of the victims, perpetrators and of course also those born much later. In this dilemma of authenticity the analysis of the aesthetic forming of memory, as presented by Geoffrey Hartman, could lead the way: "As to have something to oppose the dissipation and dissociation characteristic of trauma and the resulting brittleness of tradition, it takes a medium, which is more durable than individual memory. Art and collective memory exert an influence on one another to attain this goal." (Hartman 2000:40)*

*Following Habermas Hartman speaks of the claim of the murdered to the "frail anamnestic power of solidarity, which those born much later can only exercise in the medium of continuously renewed, often desperate, in any event aimless, memory" (Hartman 2000:48). The great problem here – didactically speaking – is the threatening loss of distance, which result either in unreflected identification with the victims or in equally spontaneous rejection. For the pedagogical conception of testimony a great opportunity lies in the conscious assumption of aesthetic distance. Hartman writes with regard to Primo Levi: "I suspect that aesthetic distance seeks to come to terms with or convey an originally traumatic dissociation and create a balance between too little and excessive identification" (Hartman 2000:48).*

*Here appears a key term, which takes the words from the mouths of history teachers – irrespective even of the topic Holocaust: "discursive recreation of hermeneutical patience" (Hartman 2000:49). Reconstructing, even looking, at first requires practicing patience, and thus turning towards the topic, and perhaps the discovery of empathy can be built thereon.*

cern oneself with this observation. This means to account to oneself for what preconditions and what aims the arrangement has, which one puts together as a pedagogue. And – first and foremost – what consequences it might entail for all participants, which one is not quite capable of regulating in the role as teacher. A didactic arrangement for encounters with eyewitnesses of the Holocaust must provide for separate experts each for both narrators and listeners alike, experts who are able competently to guide and attend an assimilation and appraisal of the event. This is certainly not the case in the same way, where work with eyewitnesses on emotionally less straining topics is concerned, a differentiation, however, is urgently necessary here all the same, as with other media employed during teaching.

These demands are not unrealistic obstacles. I should like to outline the essentials of two initiatives, which have been on offer for the

past two years in Frankfurt. In the Youth Meeting Centre Anne Frank, an institution, which combines the remembrance of Anne Frank with activities in the field of conflict mediation and intercultural education, an eyewitness interview and discussion with the focal point National Socialism is offered each month. Experienced presenters conduct the conversations; the eyewitnesses come from different groups (victims of persecution and survivors, former HJ and BDM members, resistance activists). For teachers this concept means: the discussion takes place at an extracurricular learning place, the contact with the eyewitnesses lies within the responsibility of the presenters, and the teacher can concentrate on the side of the pupils. The purpose of this arrangement is to keep track of without making an issue the described psychological problems of eyewitness interviews. If the encounters pass smoothly for all participants long-term con-

tacts between the learning group and the eyewitnesses can develop, much as would be the case with conversations in the setting of daily teaching in school. If, however, one side feels the need to keep the encounter without obligation, this can happen without any particular difficulty. One of the collaborators recounts in an essay of the dramatic development of such a discussion, which turned into a great gain and benefit for the learning group due to the professional assistance provided by the Youth Meeting Centre Anne Frank (Fechler 2000).

Another example is the preparation and realisation of meetings with former citizens of Frankfurt, emigrants who are invited over to Frankfurt every year since the beginning of the eighties. Here, the thorough preparation of teachers for the encounter with the predominantly Jewish former citizens and for their encounter with school classes proves to be crucial. It has

become a focal issue to organise a meeting of generations. Together with the former inhabitants of the city their children – meanwhile adults the age of the teachers – come along every more often. The underlying theme to the background of this meeting has become more and more evidently in the course of years work on the alternate perceptions of descendants of victims and perpetrators. However, the dynamic of the encounter of former citizens with the multicultural present of their city of birth cannot be faced without adequate preliminary preparation, either. Thus, an offer for in-service training for teachers and a careful cultivation of correspondence with the visitors in advance to their visit lie at the core of this project. Correspondence between the visitors and young people often unfolds as a result of the emigrants' visits to school classes.

The offers by many regional memorials go into a similar direction. I should like to cite as an example the long-standing efforts undertaken in the commemorative and memorial place Düsseldorf and in the memorial Old Synagogue Essen. Both can be contacted through the homepage of memorials in the province of Nordrhein-Westfalen ([www.ns-gedenkstaetten.de/nrw](http://www.ns-gedenkstaetten.de/nrw)).

### **“Genuine” Witnesses and Electronic Documentations**

The encounter with eyewitnesses is authentic as such; this is the social reality, the perception of the other. Thus, moments of sympathy are created, moments of rejection, of deep emotion and insight about the persons that meet. These are dimensions, which cannot always be functionally related to learning in school, and which can have their own quality that goes far beyond.

Electronic recordings of memory accounts are entirely different from a pedagogical specialist and academic view. First, these recordings are historical sources. The account

dissociates itself gradually from the real person and becomes the subject of work. The chances of using didactically pre-structured material, which is at disposal as video or CD ROM, must be regarded separately each.

The methodology of using videos must principally be conceived differently from that of personal meetings. It is a media-psychological subject, a question about habits concerning the reception of television. Here, the psychological dynamic plays a far lesser, or at least entirely different, role. In most cases the account was recorded in a specific atmosphere, frequently not necessarily with the intention of being brought to use in classrooms. Thus, a didactic analysis of the material is the first and foremost prerequisite. Most memory accounts are incorporated into documentary films and edited according to their conception. One must clearly establish, therefore, whether the entire film falls in place with the subject of teaching and the group's state of knowledge. It stands undisputed, for instance, that Claude Lanzmann's “Shoah” is something like the documentary account of the Holocaust, which is compulsory for tradition. The film, which lasts several hours and demands prolonged concentration from its viewers on the various narrators, can only be used in excerpts for teaching. Finding such excerpts requires exact knowledge of the film and at one and the same time raises film-theoretical questions. The teacher creates his own product from an interconnected work of art. The use of video interviews, which have been produced specifically for use in pedagogical work, is to be regarded differently (Moses Mendelssohn Centre, Fritz Bauer Institute, memorials). Here the attempt is made to portray a person and at the same time capture the general theme as concisely as possible so as to provide material for teaching. The eyewitnesses have the possibility in such projects to

scrutinise the product and give their assent. The use of such videos can thus be a pragmatic alternative to an encounter in reality.

The publication of eyewitness reports on CD ROM makes accessible the accounts in a completely different fashion. Here, a single user above all can utilise the accounts to pursue individual interests. In the publication by the Spielberg Foundation ([www.erinnern-online.de](http://www.erinnern-online.de)) the eyewitness accounts are embedded in a diversity of possibilities to obtain information on topics, which can be derived from the accounts. Thus, a learning field is created, which ought not to be compared with a narration and least of all with an encounter with real people. As with most CD ROMs the difficulty of using them in learning groups holds true for this one, as well. This is a dialogic medium, which can be put to incomparably productive use by small groups and individual users. With larger groups, however, it threatens to turn into a monologue of whoever is in control of the mouse and thus the sequence of research steps.

The banal yet fundamental truth for the planning of pedagogical processes holds true here, as well: at first one must consider *who* is actually supposed and able to learn *what*. Only then must one contemplate what ways and means there might be. The electronic recordings of memory accounts are such a means. It could be, however, that for example fictional forms of the assimilation of the memory of National Socialism might be employed far more productively for a learning process.

### **Résumé**

The encounter with people, who have their own memories of the time of National Socialism and especially of events, which are circumscribed by the term Holocaust, is comprehended today as an extraordinarily suited approach towards this era. In schoolbooks and curricula eyewitness-



ness interviews are recommended time and time again.

What exactly happens in class, then, what experiences do participants – that is the teacher, the pupils and the eyewitnesses – make in such a confrontation? There are no empirical studies at our disposal thus far. The author attempts to derive approaches transferable to pedagogical observations from the field of psychoanalytic trauma research. The central question is that of emotional and cognitive demands, which an eyewitness conversation

makes on all participants. Listening to the memories of traumatic experiences as a many-layered demand is described as a demand for both teachers and pupils.

Ways of working are presented with the aid of project examples that seek to go into and explore the aforementioned difficulties.

Finally, the question is raised in a didactic perspective about the justification of the pedagogical hope for the effectiveness of the authenticity of direct encounters with eyewitnesses. The expectation,

in particular, to obtain a change in behaviour in the direction of more sympathy is viewed sceptically. The occupation with memory texts in literary form is suggested as a possible, albeit modest, alternative.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

Angelika Rieber

## **“I could comprehend many things from my own experience” The Topic Holocaust in Multicultural Classes**

The topic National Socialist era is a firm part of specialist history curricula as well as the corresponding textbooks. No young person leaves school without having come – in most cases repeatedly – into some sort of contact with the subject.

Even so, studies prove alarming gaps in knowledge. At one and the same time in the context of right-wing radicalism doubt is cast on the effectiveness of teaching

In this article I shall concentrate on problems of teaching and disruptive factors, which impede the learning process as well as possibilities to combat these. The question is, what forms of presentation and contents of teaching might provide an appropriate answer. My personal experiences, which I refer to, come from various different fields:

- Teaching and project work in school (at secondary level I and II)
- Further education for teachers, including encounters with col-

leagues from Israel, America and England

- Project “Jewish Life in Frankfurt”, in which historical research aside, encounters with eyewitnesses are at the centre of interest.
- Extracurricular youth work and German-Israeli youth exchange

### **The participants in the learning process**

First I shall take a look at the participants in the learning process:

- What attitudes, prejudices and images, questions and reservations do they contribute to the learning process?
- How do teachers assess the situation of teaching and the problems in dealing with young people?
- How do the young react? What problems do they see? What questions do they ask themselves

### **Teachers**

The majority of teachers today belong to the second generation. Their parents were mostly young adults in the time of National Socialism, and thus personally involved in a variety of ways, for instance as Hitler youths or BDM girls, soldiers, party members, spectators, or also as members of the opposition. Only rarely did the parents talk openly honestly and reflectively about their experiences during the era of Nazism with their children, who were born after the war. Often this silence led to fantasies on the part of the children about “skeletons hidden in the cellar”. Frequently accusation and recrimination dominated the relation with the parents, which, in turn, led to defensive reactions and attitudes of justification. This often caused a conscious or unconscious representative acceptance of guilt by the children. Problems with the identity as Germans have been and still are involved, which find multifaceted expression.

### **Pupils**

The young people of today are the grandchildren of eyewitnesses of National Socialism. The relation to their parents, consequently, no longer revolves around the question about their parents’ own personal entanglement in the crimes of

the National Socialist period, but around the assimilation of these crimes by the second generation, which the young people react to. The generation of the young, too, is ill at ease with its identity as Germans; the forms of expression of the second and third generation are different, though.

One must take into account that a mounting proportion of young people today come from migrant families. In Hessen the share of inhabitants without German passport amounted to 13,2 per cent in 1998, and to 28,6 per cent in Frankfurt. Considering the high amount of young people amongst this group of the population and, furthermore, the number of naturalisations, where

young people, again, are particularly strongly represented, the share of young people from migrant families increases even further. In the Ernst Reuter school in Frankfurt, a secondary grammar school, where I am teaching at, the “share of foreigners” officially makes up 38 per cent. Upon closer examination one quickly realises that by far more than half the pupils come from families of non-German origin or from bicultural families, respectively. They live as a minority with a different origin, religion, culture or colour of skin in Germany. Irrespective of their passports they predominantly define themselves as “foreigners”. Many come from war-shaken regions and

countries where they or others are or have been victims to persecution.

### Origin, adjacency or distance

Origin, adjacency or distance to the historical events as well as personal experiences has its repercussions on attitudes towards the Holocaust. A whole range of forms of reactions can be observed. The two poles of behaviour for teachers lie between avoiding the subject altogether and “overactivity” and for pupils in parallel between rejection and especially high motivation.

What problems do teachers and administration officials cite? What added problems do I make out? Let

### About Pedagogical Work with Pupils and Young People

*In the house of the Wannsee Conference for instance the groups individually picked their subject for one or more days of study from a broad spectrum of themes and problems about the history of National Socialism, the history of the Jews, but also of that of the other victims. Motivation and interests on the part of the pupils take precedence to those of the group guide or teacher, respectively, or the necessities of a syllabus or seminar curriculum. Tests after studying in the memorials should also be excluded. Methodically independent work in small groups with documents visual and acoustic sources and the offer of subject-specific literature of the house library is the preferred way of work. The range of topics is openly and flexibly geared towards interest in recent research findings and current debates.*

*For the preliminary planning of the field trip to correspond with the interests of the group, an extensive conversation with the group guide about the previous knowledge and learning conditions of the group remains necessary. Pupils preferentially tend to select topics that can somehow be linked to their patterns of life, such as “Conception of Man and Education”, “Youth in National Socialism”, “Fascination of Power and Violence”, “Reasons for Right-Wing Extremism Today”, “Racism and Anti-Semitism”. Very positive experiences have been made in this context with eyewitnesses, who critically and honestly account of their time as Hitler youths or BDM girls, respectively, and how they experienced “fascination” and influencing by National Socialist propaganda.*

*Despite encouraging examples from the practice of current memorial work I should like to tone down expectations that through the proper didactic transportation of National Socialist crimes participants would come out of the memorial better humans in an act of catharsis, as it were, after a day of studying. I do not only consider this pedagogical hybris but also overcharging young people in an unjustified manner with moral devices, which the adult world by no means credibly enacts. There are only very few empirical studies available thus far about the long term impacts of the confrontation with National Socialism on historical and political awareness, especially with young people, as well as general information about the reception of exhibitions in memorials. Equally, we do not know reliably about the emergence and, above all, transformation of historical-political attitudes on the part of the young. Whether these young people after an “intensive course” in the Holocaust, respectively a memorial visit – be it even for an entire day, when as a rule, however, this takes no more than two or three hours – are indeed so persistently “morally armoured” that in ten to fifteen years’ time they will shape a better world in their respective jobs – provided they find any, given the wretched situation on the labour market – may well be doubted. At one and the same time there cannot be any shade of doubt that this history must be learned in schools and memorials. It is an essential part of our history for all coming generations, as well.*

*Furthermore, I find the almost exclusive focus of offers provided by memorials on young people, at best still at the age of puberty, not only problematic; I think that this is also a form of repression. In the seminars for adults the experience has often been made in the house of the Wannsee Conference that adults are very interested in offers for historical-political further education and look forward to taking the opportunity to improve their sketchy and outdated knowledge of history. They seek such opportunities not least better to be able as parents and grandparents to discuss with their children and grandchildren, when they are confronted with the topic in school, about the history of National Socialism and about being born into a complicated political-historical background. Memorials can and must react far more decisively to these transformed conditions than they have until now.*

Annegret Ehmann, Pädagogik des Gedenkens, Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten (Hrg.), *Erinnern in Gedenkstätten*, Wien 1998, pp. 47 (English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001)

me give some examples:

- Many teachers complain about dwindling interest and growing attitudes of rejection on the part of the pupils.
- Many colleagues fear or observe that pupils no longer feel concerned due to the growing distance in time.
- Treatment of the subject would also be increasingly difficult, since “foreign” pupils on account of the lack of personal, familial-historical involvement showed little interest. Often these young people would demand that subjects be dealt with, which affect them personally, such as the situation in their countries of origin or experiences with racism and xenophobia in Germany. Furthermore, many Muslims are perceived to harbour either openly or latently anti-Semitic tendencies.
- Teachers as well as authorities occasionally complain every so often that the perspective would be backward looking. It would be more important to turn to the present rather than keep “rum-maging the past”.
- The endeavour to update on the other hand frequently leads to problematic comparisons with questions of the present day, which often intensify or awaken young people’s feelings of guilt. (“We’re there again”)
- On the other hand the Holocaust is often placed outside historical contexts for fear of relativisation.
- At the same time I note that the assimilation of the National Socialist period is occasionally delegated to the young by both teachers and those who are politically responsible or/ and the own motivation is concealed behind pupils’ interests (“I have already fought in 68”. “Now it’s the young people’s turn”. “The pupils have entirely on their own ...”).
- Often excessive expectations are placed into an immediate change of behaviour after talking to eyewitnesses, visiting a memorial

or a teaching unit, respectively, which mostly leads to disappointments.

- Many teachers remain stuck at the level of complaints, be it about problems with young people, colleagues or those politically responsible. Often they lose sight of what has already been achieved and the questions building thereon. The absence of a realistic perspective leads to a false definition of tasks. After a German-English seminar in London (The Aftermath of the Holocaust on Both Sides) the statement by a female colleague that she had been surprised we had not only done some learning but were also capable of giving, triggered a vehement counter reaction by one of her colleagues.
- Taboos as well as the effort to appear political correct sometimes prove to be an obstacle to an open and constructive examination of form, content and extent of the occupation with the past. What teachers and school administrators say and what they really think, at times seems to be poles apart, which in itself partially makes work more difficult.
- The second generation is hardly recognised as a potential addressee group, for instance for further education or exchange programmes.
- On the other hand there is huge interest on the part of teachers in further training seminars, exchange programmes and projects geared towards the second generation.
- Countless teachers have also been involved over the past years in projects with eyewitnesses and state that from such encounters not only the young but also they themselves derived a personal gain.
- Many local historical research activities would not have been undertaken without the initiative and commitment by teachers.

## Complaints of Pupils

What do pupils complain about? What attitudes towards the subject do they express?

- At first it is essential to state that I myself have no experience with right-wing radical thoughts cropping up massively, nor do my colleagues I work with report about anything in this vein.
- Many young people, however, give voice to a feeling of satiation, in the course of their school careers they have been confronted repeatedly with this topic in various subjects. It was simply too much for them. On the other hand their knowledge is still found wanting.
- Moreover, classes are perceived as boring and somehow always the same.
- Many feel exposed to a pressure of dismay.
- Others again complained about never having properly dealt with the topic.
- Most young people expressed a desire for normality. They do not want to be viewed as the guilty party but as normal humans. Thus, they insinuate or suspect that they are held responsible by others (teachers, abroad, Jews) and an imprint of guilt is stamped on them.
- Time and time again young people report about personal experience of verbal abuse abroad.
- Time and time again pupils refer to the fact that not only the Germans but other peoples had also perpetrated historical crimes.
- Occasionally a hardening of attitudes between migrants and Germans can be observed (“Why do the Germans always feel attacked when the topic is addressed?”) occasionally the migrants act as conscious or unconscious prosecutors. (“You Germans are still racists!”):
- A general problem of school, which comes to the fore especially, though, in dealing with National Socialism is the sense

of insecurity felt by many pupils, who do not know what they may say or ask. Therefore, they express what the teacher wants to hear or presumably wants to hear and why they regard as politically correct, respectively. This is evinced for example by the following statement, when I – prior to talks with eyewitnesses – ask pupils to prepare themselves for these encounters and think about questions.

“Can I really ask this question?” this is a familiar concern for many young people in advance. What is behind is on the one hand insecurity and awkwardness on the other hand, however, frequently also the endeavour to be politically correct.

And it finds even clearer expression in the remark: “I do not know what you want to hear” or when the pupils asked me before an interview: “Can we tell her what we really think?”

## Conclusions

- Mostly the desire for normalisation is taken by teachers as fundamental rejection and the comparison with other countries as relativisation.
- In contrast, I suppose that behind this there are problems of coming to terms with the identity as Germans. Which is to say, the young people are not uninterested but seek and need open and honest answers to their questions and concerns.
- Obviously, both sides have problems in dealing with each other. Each generation has its own experiences, patterns of reactions, questions. What with other topics is seen in everyday life as a “normal” generational problem, here turns into an explosive political controversy. Both generations perhaps project their own fears and anxieties on their respective opposite number.
- The feeling of satiation expressed

by many pupils relates to a problem, which needs to be taken seriously, and demands from us to subject the forms and scope of discussing the Holocaust to critical scrutiny. Nonetheless I gather the impression that the focal problem is not the quantity of the subject but rather young people’s apprehension in the face of real or presumed recriminations and how the second generations responds to these preset attitudes and fears.

- Despite the described problems I should like critically to relate the complaints about young people’s lack of interest in the assimilation of the National socialist period and the apparent failure of education after Auschwitz to the perception that hardly any other issue interests and stirs young people more than the Holocaust. This applies especially to the young migrants.

## Conditions, Forms and Contents of Learning

My impression is that under certain circumstances pupils and their teachers feel insecure. This raises the following questions:

- What conditions, forms and contents of learning can foster a constructive appraisal and examination of the Holocaust?
- What conditions and prerequisites are thus necessary?

My reflections include observations and experiences in my own classes as well as feedback by my colleagues.

## Learning Conditions

At first I regard it as important to state that teaching on the Holocaust is about a shared experience of learning rather than about teaching itself. The imparting of knowledge about the Holocaust and, hand in hand with it, the “never again!” in my view, is credible only, when the forms of presentation are designed in a democratic and value-oriented

fashion, when democracy is acted out.

This calls for pupils as subjects rather than objects of the learning process. When teaching is seen as a mutual learning process an atmosphere can develop, in which all participants – teachers included – learn from and with each other.

This takes openness, honesty and mutual respect. When hidden taboos, as described above, impede the learning process, it is essential to take into consideration attitudes, preconceived opinions and images, also prejudices, to take them up and address young people’s fear, embarrassment, anger, questions and interest and deal with them. When we encourage young people to formulate their problems with the topic and take seriously the broached concerns and questions (e.g., their request for normalisation) and do not interpret these as a stance of rejection, in most cases we will have already won them for mutual learning.

Instead of hidden taboos the boundaries of free speech and personal behaviour, respectively, ought to be open and clear and defined together as far as possible.

When different personal backgrounds – experiences, attitudes, opinions, origins – are recognised by the participants in the learning process and incorporated into teaching everybody can profit and make some sort of contribution. The principle of such an attitude is subject and biography orientation. Taken as a general principle of teaching, which enables pupils to contribute their experiences to the various subjects, attitudes of rejection on the part of migrants towards the topic National Socialism, in my impression, can be prevented or at least attenuated.

A further abovementioned problem is the fact that migrants, even if they hold a German passport, predominantly define themselves as “foreigners”, and are also regarded as such. The question of the integration of people of non-German



## Teaching in multicultural classes

*Another problem is dealing with different images transported in the family or surroundings and the contents taught in school. What grandparents tell or what is communicated in migrant families is more often than not poles apart. To take these discrepancies as a theme and make them the object of learning is certainly no mean feat. I would like to but outline some aspects.*

*They come down to the relation of subjectivity and objectivity, to the classification and appraisal of subjective perception and memory.*

*In this context great importance must be attached to a critical reflection of our role as teachers. We cannot expect openness and honesty on the part of the young when we ourselves do not display these qualities. Wherever insecurity is looming large the danger exists of hiding behind our knowledge instead of contributing our experiences, questions and self-consciousness to the learning process.*

*When we comprehend ourselves as learners, too, we need not hide behind the pupils or use them as pretexts or frontlines, when it comes to presenting projects and results. What young people work out always remains a joint project, in which we, the teachers, equally participate. We have interests, provide the setting, ask questions, provide help, stimuli, suggestions and impulses and, in due course, learn a thing or two ourselves.*

*Perhaps such an attitude on the part of the teachers is more likely to give pupils the feeling of being called upon to think for themselves, ask their own questions and find their own answers. A schoolgirl of Kurdish origin formulated this as the foremost aim of dealing with the Holocaust in the context of right-wing radicalism. For migrants the entanglement of the grandparents and related questions seldom play a role. Nonetheless most pupils' countries of origin are affected by the events of World War II in one way or the other, as a result of which a personal point of reference might develop. However, for the time being there is not enough research and material, which would enable us adequately to consider this aspect.*

*Mostly, young people from migrant families show a special interest in dealing with the topic owing to their own personal situation. Since they live in Germany as a minority or land have their own experiences with persecution and emigration time and time again they establish connections and references with personal experiences in classes on the National Socialist past. The abovementioned schoolgirl, after talking to an eyewitness, who lives in Israel today, wrote: "I could comprehend many things from my own experience, for example immigration into an entirely foreign country and the difficulties involved in the beginning. Many circumstances have become clearer to me." She then considers the question as to whether her counterpart feels hatred and notes: "I do not bear any hatred within me, either, because I believe that amongst every nation there are good people as well as the so-called «black sheep»".*

*As this example illustrates, the young people establish connections of their own accord to themselves, their lives, their experiences and questions. The intricate task we face as teachers lies in providing support so that they can establish these connections, while simultaneously making clear the differences between the Holocaust and problems of today. From such a view this is less about topicality and not about parallelisation, but about the question of the relevance of historical experiences for those learning in the present.*

origin, which has yet to be satisfactorily resolved in our society, in this context now and then exerts a disruptive effect and might result in mutual compartmentalisation. At teaching level we cannot solve this problem, though, but must seek adequately to cope with it. On the one hand this involves accepting and respecting differences, on the other it is about defining a common ground, a consensus. For the migrants the feeling of being received and respected is highly significant and an important basis of the willingness to develop common objectives and strategies, for instance combating right-wing radicalism. Here, openness, honesty and a conflictive capacity are also essential, since it is crucial to find forms for a constructive acknowledgement of multicultural diversity.

Nevertheless, I do not necessarily find it advisable to close a teaching

unit on the Holocaust with a sequence about the life of minorities in Germany. The following problems spring to mind:

- The topic becomes overcharged as regards content
- The perils of parallelisation
- An intensification of feelings of guilt in young people of German origin
- Excessive expectations placed in immediate behavioural changes

I have made positive experiences with working on the topic minorities in a different context (e.g. in the teaching units "Democracy in Germany" or "Melting Pot America"), and creating connections from there and then.

It appears more important to me to take a look at learning conditions during lessons and reach an atmosphere in class, in which being different and thinking differently is

respected within the boundaries that have been defined together. Learning from the past in this context means learning to work together with people of different political position, origin, culture, religion and personal experience and constructively to cope with differences.

## Learning Contents

The selection of learning contents is determined on the one hand by the historical subject and its consequences and on the other by the question as to what pupils ought to learn in order to understand what happened. On the other hand the relevance for our present life is of crucial importance. An essential criterion for the selection of teaching contents in this context is what pupils contribute on account of their origin, culture, religion and perso-

nal experiences.

With reference to the aforementioned problems in the daily routine of teaching I should like to mention some aspects, which are especially important in this context:

### *Biographies and Situations of decisions*

The occupation with life accounts and everyday life is of great importance for various reasons.

- Biographies of victims of persecution place the perspective of those affected, their self-conception, fears and hopes, their dilemmas and their attempts at a solution at the core of attention. They depict them as thinking and acting persons and not as passive victims, who “let themselves be led like sheep to the slaughter”. They evince the dimension of human tragedies. They show the victims of terror as human beings, give them a name and a face and, thus, create empathy.
- Biographies facilitate the look at the years before and after National Socialism. Continuities as well as discontinuities and breaks become evident.
- Biographies provide insights into situations of decisions, decisions taken and dismissed, as well as into the respective scope for action (amongst other things humanity, contradiction, opposition, resistance).
- Biographies provide insights into social structures and processes, which involve a broad spectrum of different groups (neighbours, colleagues, superiors, authorities, etc).
- Biographies and situations of decisions relate to fundamental questions of human coexistence (e.g. the relation of majority and minority, civil courage, the role of bystanders, etc). Questions of the present, which we seek answers and solutions for (e.g. dealing with right-wing violence), create relevance for us.

- The crimes of the Nazis did not take place somewhere in outer space, but they are the result of People’s decisions and actions. To the objection that this change in direction towards a closer inspection of human decisions and wrong decisions might lead to a banalisation of genocide one can reply that rather the opposite is the case. When the origin of these crimes is seen in society and human behaviour this underlines the danger such developments hold and the possibility of repetition. “Buchenwald has also demonstrated me that such a thing can or could indeed be translated into reality” a pupil commented his thoughts after a visit to the memorial place.

### *Multiperspectivity*

Additionally, I should like to contribute further reflections on the importance of a multiperspective view of the topic Holocaust, and thereby directly and indirectly refer to the aforementioned complaints voiced by pupils.

Multiperspectivity is important when taking a look at society in Germany and embraces, amongst others, victims, perpetrators, bystanders, onlookers, conformists, spectators, crowds, dissenters, lateral thinkers, objectors, helpers, resistance activists, etc.

What can we learn from that?

- The question of guilt and responsibility becomes considerably more differentiated and more complex.
- We can discover a variety of alternatives, which contradict the view frequently conveyed by parents or grandparents that one could not have done anything about what happened.
- Who realises that there was scope for action in times of terror in the past, might possibly broaden his spectrum of eventual decisions today.
- The examination of the behaviour of other nations during the period

of National Socialism and the occupation with the past in those countries should be seen as a valuable addition in terms of content rather than as relativisation:

- Here, too, a whole variety of further alternatives can be found: military intervention, resistance, collaboration, taking up refugees as well as the approach towards the topic in the various countries in the present day (inter alia by way of such projections as young people vociferously complain about).
- Relevance is created on account of the fact that today we concern ourselves with comparable questions (e.g. the role of bystander in international conflicts, the right of asylum).
- A further element is the occupation with the pupils’ countries of origin. In this context it is about the role of these countries during the Nazi era on the one hand and the assimilation of these historical experiences. It would seem to be appropriate to cast a look at for instance the presentation of World War II in the schoolbooks of these respective countries. On the other hand the question also hangs in the air as to how Germany reacts today in the face of human rights violations or conflicts in these countries.

### *Consequences*

The mounting distance in time to the events, the transformation of society in Germany and the increasing globalisation of worldwide co-operation as well as of diverse problems and phenomena result in the National Socialist period being viewed more and more distinctly in the context of European and international history. Comparisons with other genocides are thus called for, whereby the classification into historical contexts underlines the specific importance of the holocaust rather than relativising it. The Holocaust has become a worldwide symbol of inhumanity

and terror, and at one and the same time universal questions come to the fore increasingly.

### Methods and Forms of Learning

Teaching methods and contents should create an atmosphere of esteem for each individual, a precondition for the willingness on the part of the pupils to contribute their own experiences to the learning process. The corresponding of teaching should establish a close relation to each person, the other participants in the learning process and to the contexts of the subject.

I shall go into three forms of learning, which are suitable for creating such a close relation:

#### Encounters

Encounters open up the way for a dialogue, in which there are those who ask, those who listen and those who tell, who exchange experiences, mutual images, fears, anxieties and hopes.

We will not much longer have the chance of speaking to the eyewitnesses of the National Socialist era, but we could and should continue this dialogue with their children and grandchildren, i.e. the second and third generation (for example against the backdrop of German-Israeli exchange programmes, European school or further education projects, etc.). I should like to stress the importance and educative function of such encounters by quoting from letters written by two schoolgirls after an encounter with two English women of German-Jewish origin, who both belonged to the second generation.

*"It was very important for me to hear the opinion about the topic of National Socialism and Nazis from a person that does not live in Germany or is not a German. It takes some of my fear away, because my fear is / was always to come to a country and to be called a Nazi (...). I think to speak to each other like we did is the best way to avoid such prejudices and*

*misunderstandings between people of different countries."*

Like this pupil, many young people feel relieved after such encounters. The feeling of being accepted as partners and regarded as normal humans creates openings for coming to terms with the past and its consequences. The schoolgirl, from whose letter I quoted above, was delighted all the more, when she realised that her English counterparts occupied themselves with questions, which are important for her, as well.

*"I was pleased, as I realised that there are people who put their interests on things like: How could that happen and how do people at that time and later handle their life or what to do to stop the pain of those who were refugees or children of refugees?"*

A girl of Tunisian origin realised after the same conversation much to her surprise that her opposite number was confronted with similar problems to those she had had to face, such as the parents' immigration into a foreign country, their problems in adapting, life as a minority in this country, etc. The emotions of her English counterpart showed her how deeply the second generation, too, is affected by the past.

*"It was also very interesting and sad to hear or see your emotions while you were talking to us."*

Additionally, this girl compares her own picture of Jewish history with the information received from her counterpart and eventually reflects on the English woman's image of Germany.

*"But there was one thing which I wondered about. I recognised that you didn't know before that there are a lot of foreign people living in Germany today and that you wondered that we were many foreign pupils in the group. But I can totally understand why you wondered. I think after all what happened in Germany it is a little bit hard to imagine that foreign people are so brave to live in such a country."*

Subsequently, the girl explains how she views Germany.

Both schoolgirls were pleasantly surprised to learn how many common points they could discover in the course of the conversation.

Even if the Holocaust assumed a focal role in these encounters, the quotations above and further letters illustrate that the perspective was not backward but forward looking. What possibilities do such encounters offer?

- Examination of the question of guilt and responsibility, of fears and reservations, of prejudices and images
- Perception of individuals who are part of a collective at one and the same time
- Appreciation of the respective perspectives
- Connection of past, present and future
- Building a relationship that contains both elements, which set apart, and those, which bind together.

I should like to emphasise, however, that careful, diligent preliminary and further didactic assessment and evaluation are a necessary prerequisite for the success of such encounters. This also calls for taking as a theme in advance expectations, images, fears or one's own awkwardness and, subsequently, reflecting on impressions, irritations, surprise and a change in images, respectively.

#### Regional References

Furthermore I would like to outline the importance of regional references:

- The familiarity of places (school) furthers the willingness to ask questions
- Regional history specifically calls for an occupation with the fate and behaviour of people who either lived or still live there in the present day.
- The proximity of the places establishes ties between the past and the present (e.g. memorial plates, exhibitions, etc ...)



- Researching and discovering learning is an obvious option
- Authentic places (synagogues, cemeteries) create proximity

Many teachers have been using materials on regional history in their lessons for years and they report about positive experiences. To some extent they themselves or their pupils participate in the exploration of local and school history, respectively.

### Memorials

Memorials are authentic places, which exercise an especially stirring effect on young people – given that they are adequately prepared.

I shall not go into the following questions, which I regard as important in this context, but merely mention them in short:

- Regional historical connections between Frankfurt and Buchenwald
- Importance of eyewitness reports by survivors of concentration camps or victims' biographies
- Integration of the memorial visit into teaching as well as preliminary and further assessment
- Arranging and organising a visit to a memorial
- Importance of the authentic place

I shall restrict myself here to a few questions, which arise in the course of further assessment of a visit to Buchenwald in September 2000.

I come back to the problem that many young people fear dismay of some sort would be expected from them. Precisely for this reason I find it particularly important during a visit to a memorial to give the participants the possibility to search and find their own points of reference and forms of expression. Assessment, therefore, commences with the question what touched each participant most deeply during the visit to Buchenwald: The memorial plate with all the different nations, the warmth of the memorial plate and its symbolism, the emptiness of the appeal square, the cold they felt

### About the Function of Memorials

*The primary function of most memorials, especially such as former concentration camps, still remains that they are large cemeteries, that ceremonial commemoration takes place and will probably continue to take place there in the future on remembrance days, as well. Yet, one must consider how this can happen in the future. For today's young people ritualised, pathetic remembrance often appears incredible.*

*A further function is that of the documentation of events at the authentic place, even if – through delapidation and conceptual intervention – often not much is authentic anymore. The artistic design of memorials generally takes as its theme death and destruction, the iconography of memorials is that of a death cult.*

*At many places research had to and still has to be caught up on. This task, however, is manageable in its dimensions and does not change a thing, where fundamental insights, which must be imparted, are concerned. To turn memorials into academic research institutes would be deceptive, since research presupposes emotional distance, which will be problematic in a concentration camp memorial. The function of memorials as learning places, which again does not concern teaching in schools, points far stronger into the future. These places are about transporting knowledge but not about informing and instructing the visitor by way of cleverly devised curricular strategies, which is what school and university must and mostly manage to achieve. They are rather about making history individually cognitively and emotionally experienceable. This can help each one become conscious of him/herself, his/her national identity and the state of being involved in historical contexts and a resulting responsibility – not guilt. This cannot be achieved by way of one to two hour guided tours of exhibitions for large groups, as happens predominantly in memorials, but only by offering possibilities of a deeper individual approach and appraisal.*

*Such questions and comments, which can often be encountered in visitor books at memorials, as "How could it happen?" "How could humans do such a thing to fellow humans?" or bold and simple appeals, such as "Never Forget!" "Never Again Fascism!" all these helpless phrases, never absent also in speeches at official commemorations, in my view, are the result of diffuse perceptions, which are caused not least by the ways of illustration in memorials. Mostly, visitors are exposed above all in concentrated form to shocking photos and accounts of humiliated and abused humans and the atrocious conditions in ghettos and concentration camps, all of which remains stuck in memory. The confrontation with this "horror" occurred and occurs time and time again in good intentions. Exhibition makers and pedagogical offers by memorial personnel aim especially at young people as addressees of a moral instruction. On an international conference in the memorial Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in October 1996 the expectation was expressed that "Holocaust Education" ought to enable young people to "create a better world".*

*Little critical reflection is devoted meanwhile to the question whether by looking at violence and brutality and eyewitness accounts from the victims' perspective, where the presentation of hardship and cruelties is to the fore, the proneness to prejudices and latent racism is in fact persistently broken down. Insight into the reason for and causes of injustice and suffering are scarcely furthered by this form of presentation. Young people react defensively to a pedagogy of shock and consternation, much as to the conventional forms of transportation, lecture and guided tours – as well as to uniform repetitions of ever the same subject. In contrast to school a memorial is free from curricular constraints, marking and examinations. Thus, opportunities present themselves for and emancipatory, participation-oriented educative approach. Through less common, not schoolbook-conform, introductions into National Socialist history – from the history of technology, science, art and aesthetics, biographies to everyday history – the syndrome of satiation frequently to be observed with pupils, which finds expression in ostentatious disinterest, can be tackled and overcome.*

Annegret Ehmann, Pädagogik des Gedenkens, Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten (Hrsg.), *Erinnern in Gedenkstätten*, Wien 1998, pp. 46 (English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001)



both outside and within, the contrast between the private zoo and the camp, the installations for executing inmates with a shot through the base of the skull, the crematory, the arrest cells, the clock, which has come to a standstill, or the huge entrance gate.

Each pupil developed an emotional connection with a different spot and also individually appraised the importance of the excursion to the memorial very differently. The following statement gave me particular cause for thought.

*"Buchenwald has also made me think about my rights and my life in a "foreign" country, respectively, since I feel at home in Germany – I have never been to Eritrea – and regard my rights here as a matter of course. But the visit to Weimar has also taught me that I began to entertain slight doubts, since I did not feel at ease there, for all the stares I got, which affected me more than once."*

In Buchenwald and in Weimar this pupil felt his being different and saw where racism and intolerance can lead to in the extreme case. His anxiety and distress showed him that rights are not simply a given matter of fact but have to be fought for time and time again.

*"People must learn to be tolerant, for who is not tolerant, lays the foundation for hate and the use of violence."*

This is the conclusion drawn by another pupil of Afghan descent. These pupils have established a connection between Buchenwald and their own experiences, which gives them food for thought, makes them insecure or serves to exacerbate their own positional stances. These issues attain their relevance, as the aforementioned statements illustrate, by way of personal impressions, emotions, associations and thoughts, and at one and the same time questions form about a common responsibility for the future.

Tasks and conclusions for indi-

vidual and collective action are not abstract here but result directly from the questions, with which the learning group and each individual member, respectively, are confronted in daily life.

### Conditions and Preconditions

I shall concern myself here with two aspects, curricula as well as teacher training and further education.

#### Curricula

It is a fact that curricula partly still take as their starting point a composition of classes, which no longer exists in reality. The question of guilt, shame or responsibility for the "own" history is often still at the core here (e.g. structural course curricula for history in grammar school upper forms in Hesse).

Here, an adaptation is in urgent demand, where the definition of teaching aims ought to take into account the change in composition of society and classes, respectively. In my view this is about a common responsibility for both present and future, which includes dealing with the past, rather than about the question of guilt. Apart from reworking the curricula, the development of new materials is imperative, correspondingly.

#### Further Teacher Education and Teacher Training

Instead of delegating the appraisal and examination of National Socialism to young people alone, attention should be focussed more strongly on the group of disseminators. When teachers do not succeed in coming to terms with their own self-consciousness and cannot manage to understand themselves, an unsolved potential for tension hangs in the air, which is a considerable obstacle to work with the pupils.

Further teacher education in this

field of content should, therefore, be intensified. We have to face two important tasks:

- a) Reflection of one's own, individual relation to the topic and dealing with one's own self-consciousness
- b) Expansion of professional competence, since demands surpass the knowledge acquired at university and during initial teacher training

There are the following main points particularly suitable:

- Encounters
- with eyewitnesses
- with the second generation (e.g. German-Israeli teacher exchange, German-American or European exchange projects and seminars, etc.)
- Development and testing of new approaches in seminars and in class
- Exchange of experiences about successful projects as well as about problems

To conclude with, let me quote Ludwig Marcuse, who adapts a well-known proverb «Time is a healer»:

*"Time does not heal everything, but perhaps it distracts the focus from what cannot be healed."*

Possibly this development has already taken place. The Holocaust, admittedly, is still ever-present for young people in our day, but maybe no longer central. It is perhaps a problem of the second generation to understand that. Perhaps we must simply learn to cope with that.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

## “... Disappeared in Izbica” A Search for Traces ...

*Study trip and German-Polish Seminar/Youth Exchange 02.10.99-11.10.99*

*Lublin-Lublin/Majdanek-Sobibor-Wlodawa-Kazimierz Dolny (Poland) Concept, realisation and report by Hannelore Lutz, Düsseldorf, 1999.*

*Organised by:*

*Begegnungsstätte Alte Synagoge Wuppertal*

*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Abt. Gesellschaftspolitische Information, Bonn*

*Verein gegen Vergessen – Für Demokratie e.V., Bonn*

*Here in this transport*

*I am Eve*

*With my son Abel*

*If you see my oldest son*

*Cain, son of Adam*

*Tell him that I*

*(Dan Pagis: Written in Pencil in the Sealed Wagon)*

### Introduction

In 1941 the deportations of Jews “to the East” begun all over Germany. To Poland, Latvia, Belarus and to the ghettos and, later, to extermination camps. Jews from Wuppertal were also amongst those deported to Łódź, Riga, Minsk, Terezín and Izbica. The name Izbica can be read frequently as the final stage of transport, it is there that the traces of nearly all arrivals vanish. After the Jews from the region around Lublin predominantly Czech, Dutch and German Jews passed through this town. The small town in Poland which is still virtually unknown today was the “collection point” for

further transport on to the extermination camps of Sobibor and Belsec, in a few cases also to Majdanek.

*“The Germans brought Jews from all over Europe to Izbica. Most of them came from Czechoslovakia. The various groups were held at Izbica for several days at a time (sometimes for up to ten days), primarily to the end of depriving them of all their valuables. In conversations with Jews I learned that prior to the transport the Germans had told them they would be used for work. Therefore, the Jews took along with them everything they possessed, especially their valuables”(1)*

Whereas Auschwitz is present in memory not only as an extermination camp but also stands as a symbol of the mass murder of European Jews, the camps of Majdanek, Treblinka, Sobibor and Belsec are largely unknown. Majdanek, named after a suburb of the town of Lublin, situated at the thoroughfare to Zamosz, was infamous for its unimaginably horrid living conditions. For the Polish non-Jewish and Jewish population in the Lublin region and for Jews in Western Europe the concentration and extermination camp is a symbol of the deepest humiliation at the hands of other humans. Alongside the extermination camps of Belsec and Sobibor, both also in the Lublin region, the concentration camp Majdanek played an important role, significantly, in the mass murder of the Jewish population in the so-called *Generalgouvernement* (“*Aktion Reinhard*”).

The period when Lublin, capital of

the region, developed into the centre of Jewish scholarship and became the meeting point of various different cultures shall not be forgotten. The “Jewish Oxford” was famous for its schools, universities and rabbi seminars. Isaac Horowitz, the seer of Lublin, was one of the foremost scholars. Numerous visitors, most of them from the U.S.A, still come to see his grave on the largely destroyed Jewish cemetery in Lublin to the present day.

Today Lublin is a provincial town where 22 Jews still (or again) live, the youngest of whom 65 years old. There is nothing left of the flourishing Jewish culture; the Jewish quarter is destroyed.

The “new” town is characterised and influenced by the two universities, a large number of schools and many young people who live and study here.

### Preparation

The continuous updating of the Wuppertal Memorial Book and the commemoration of 63 Jews from Wuppertal who were deported to Izbica in a mass transport on April 22nd, 1942, provided the impetus to plan a study trip to Eastern Poland with young people.

In the course of preparatory work for the study trip and the search for traces in Lublin, Izbica, Sobibor and the archives of the Majdanek memorial a second focal issue involved meeting and working together with young people from Lublin. Here the attempt was to be undertaken by dealing with and reappraising the past to build a “bridge” to the present, with regard also to a common future in Europe.

Youths aged 16 to 19 were welcome to participate and, teachers and educators at youth institutions were asked to supply the young people with information. Participation should take place exclusively on a voluntary basis. Further prerequisites included an interest in historical and political subjects

and the willingness to take part in the (extensive) preliminary and final analysis and debate. Study trip and German-Polish exchange were scheduled for the first half of October 1999.

Sixteen young people from Wuppertal and Krefeld listed up; and the group was not intended to be larger anyway since we expected about the same number of interested Polish youths. The participants got to know each other, expressed their ideas and requests concerning the trip to Poland and the planned activities. In small groups they worked with sources, materials and documents, photos, literary texts and memoirs and witness reports. They learned about the “*Generalplan Ost*” and “*Aktion Reinhard*”, Jewish culture and some of the predominantly Jewish small towns in Lublin’s vicinity (Zamosz, Kazimierz Dolny).

Preparation also included a city tour of Wuppertal along the traces of Jewish life in the city to the railway station of Wuppertal-Steinbeck from where the deportation to Izbica took place. With the help of Dr Ulrike Schrader the participants learned about the memorial book project and together with her they picked the names of the persons whose biographies they wanted to take along to Poland.

In Lublin twelve young Poles wanted to participate in the exchange and joint work experience. Preparation, programme and requests for changes were discussed and arranged with Mr Wiesław Wysok, a pedagogical consultant of the memorial museum at Majdanek. During a seminar in Lublin and Majdanek I had managed to present our concept to Mr Wysok and contrived in winning him as a partner for the realisation of our programme in Poland. This made work much easier since he could establish contacts with eyewitnesses there and then and prepare the archive work in Majdanek that had been arranged between the groups.

### Encounters in Poland

### Lublin

It was not “love at first sight”, but there was both an interest in and an inquisitive curiosity about the town, its population and the young people whom the German group wanted to work with, go about town, make excursions and go out in the evenings. Even on the journey from Warsaw to Lublin they were astounded, despite the theoretical preparation, to see the rural character of this part of the country we were going through.

At our accommodation in Lublin, an old monastery at the foot of Lublin’s old town, we were immediately confronted with the town’s Jewish history. This monastery had been deserted for many years until it was bought from the Catholic Church by a Jewish businessman. He let the monasterial cells to the poorest Jewish families in town for little money and his heirs continued this tradition until the year 1940. After the clearing of the ghetto, which was nearby the monastery, the building was uninhabited until some years ago when sisters of the order moved back in. The house for religious exercises is now an accommodation open for groups and single visitors from Poland and abroad.

The ghetto and the large synagogue were destroyed, the old town, predominantly inhabited by poor Jewish families, is still preserved, as was the Jewish orphanage. Non-Jewish Polish families moved into these houses – there were no Jews left. Similarly to the situation in Kazimierz, the Jewish quarter of Craców, people who existed at the fringes of society lived in Lublin’s old town for many years as well. The houses are dilapidated, there is no money for renovation, and property rights are not quite clear. However, for some years visible efforts have now been undertaken to restore the old town; it gained in image and – much to the delight of the local young crowd – there is an underground disco now.

An “exploration of town”, undertaken by German and Polish youths

together, helped dispel some of the initial bias. Four, instead of the initial twelve Polish participants, all of them young girls, eventually took part – the boys had withdrawn their commitment. Besides, it emerged that the young Polish girls could hardly speak German or English although they learned both languages at school. In the following day communication between the groups became better, our interpreter and the only Polish-speaking boy in the German group helped clear up eventual misunderstandings and difficulties.

The tour of “Jewish Lublin” made all participants at least to some extent envisage the old Lublin. A memorial plate on a house of the former *Szeroka*, today’s Castle Square, reminds of the “seer of Lublin”. Another plate reminds of the former Jewish quarter and the large synagogue. Somewhat irritated and in silence the young people had a look at the four-lane through road, Castle Square, the large area of green with trees here and there and tried to imagine that right where they were standing there had once been houses and about 40.000 people had lived here. A *Jeshiwa*, today a technical college, and the old Jewish cemetery are still preserved. Compared to the photographs we had seen back in Germany the cemetery was in a rather sorry state.

### Majdanek

*“I saw watch towers and row after row of ugly barracks. Huge gates swung open on us and when we passed though we set eyes on men in prisoners clothes (... Suddenly I began to recognise faces. They were no criminals. Some of them even were from my own hometown. I saw businessmen and store-owners, gage proprietors, teachers and librarians (...)”*(2)

We had planned three days for joint work in small groups at the archives and the library of Majdanek. The Polish girls knew the grounds but

had neither been to the archives nor to the library.

The German group knew about the dimension and location of the Majdanek concentration camp from their preparatory studies but still they were taken aback by the sight itself. Even back in Germany they kept saying they could not imagine a camp of such dimensions, a concentration camp as such alongside a heavily used through road. Now they saw that the public bus we took every morning to get to Majdanek stops almost directly at the concentration camp's former main gate.

*"Reality, however, the first look at a camp in operation, filled me with terror even though in thoughts I was prepared (...) It was the entire horrible atmosphere at such a place I felt was so utterly revolting; it got up my nose like the stink of congealed blood" (3)*

The first day began with a guidance tour around the campgrounds. The

The suggestion by a young girl to light candles together and lay down flowers was accepted, but they all wanted to think about it.

During our tour we met an Israeli group with film cameras and recorders; our German-Polish group and the Israeli group were the only visitors at the time. The Israeli security staff thought we were Czechs; when they heard we were Germans a strange "race" around the barracks unfolded. As soon as we were about to set foot on an exhibition room our group was either denied entrance or they tried to "drive us out", respectively. All of the sudden a strange, tense atmosphere was building; the Polish girls reacted angrily and were appalled. A fiery debate arose between the instructors and the young people. We calmed them down and agreed to include this situation in our subsequent analysis and discussion. We chose a different route for the rest of our tour in accordance with Mr Wysok, who accompanied and guided us through the exhibitions and around the campgrounds, because we sought to avoid confrontation and could not find a way of communicating properly with the Israeli guides and security staff. The Israeli group followed us with quick strides in an almost military formation with flags flying along the former camp streets.

We decided to put off dividing the young people into groups for archive and library assignments till the next day. The German group, apart from one or two of them, had been for the first time on the grounds of a former concentration camp. They needed time to digest their impressions and talk about them with others.

Contrary to the common practice we did not start the second day with a documentary about the Majdanek camp. The film would eventually be shown during the evaluation period in the afternoon.

The forming of the groups that wanted to work together went very swiftly. The young people had already agreed on what subjects they



*Majdanek: former camp grounds, crematory and trenches. Young people during group work in the library.*

© Hannelore Lutz et. al., Düsseldorf

tour, which took several hours, and the discussions along the way, but most of all the visit to the gas chambers, the crematory, the trenches where people were shot and the sight of the huge pile of ashes lying under a stylised urn by and by let the group fall silent. Almost everybody expressed the request to visit the camp again, on their own.



wanted to work with each other the day before. Two Polish girls summarised (unpublished) diaries of former prisoners and translated them with the help of our interpreter. Other work groups concerned themselves with material on the subjects “perpetrators”, “camp administration”, “hygiene and social conditions”, “the women’s situation in Majdanek” and on the Majdanek trial. Two participants searched the archives for information about deportees from Wuppertal. They had with them a list of the 63 Jews that were deported to Izbica. In the archive they did not find any of those names, nor other clues. They asked a member of the pedagogical department and learned that of a transport containing 1.500 to 2.000 people thirty to forty men capable of hard work at the most were brought to Lublin and on to Majdanek.

On the third day of work all participants walked around the campgrounds either on their own or in small groups and visited again all the places important to them, took notes in their diaries or took photographs. We had agreed not to hold a memorial ceremony together. Everybody who wanted to should light candles and lay down flowers for himself.

On the day there was also an Israeli group around. A German girl met the Israelis when she laid down flowers in the former crematory. The Israelis placed their lit candles around the flowers, had the young girl between them and sang and prayed together with her. A conciliatory, positive end we were all very relieved about.

The groups presented the results of their work in the afternoon in the workroom of our accommodation. Some of the young people were utterly fascinated by the wealth of material and the opportunity for once to work with documents in an entirely different atmosphere; others again took relatively little time to complete their assignments. However, virtually all participants

showed slight symptoms of fatigue so that we postponed the remaining presentations till the next day.

For the evening we had invited Mr Gorski, an eyewitness from Lublin, who had survived Majdanek, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Dachau. The eyewitness we had initially invited who had also testified in the Majdanek trial in Düsseldorf could not come because of illness; the journey from Warsaw to Lublin would have taken too much out of her.

All the young people were deeply impressed by Mr Gorski’s accounts. I had long hesitated to invite him since I had already experienced him in conversation several times. Then he had never gone into the questions of his audience. Thus, I asked him to make a break after his account this time and give the young people time to ask questions. A lively discussion developed in the course of which Mr Gorski explained a lot about the situation in Lublin and the camp itself.

### Izbica

*“We came through formerly Jewish small towns. Garwolin, Leopiennik, Krasnystaw, Izbica. Bleached plaster, dirty wet patches. Fallen down wooden houses at ground level. (...) Between lumps of brick grass was growing. The face of these towns was faded and withered, distorted by exhaustion or fear.” (4)*

In Izbica we left our bus at the small station. A look of surprise and discomfort on the faces of the Polish girls, slight irritation on the part of the Germans. Then the question which the young Poles had contemplated several times in the past few days was asked out loud: “What do you want here? There is nothing going on here, it is not even a nice place to be. What are you looking for?” As during our work in Majdanek we explained again that we were looking for traces of the Jews from Wuppertal who had been de-

ported to Izbica. That we did not simply want to accept and live with the fact that they “disappeared in Izbica”. There had to be at least some vague clues, traces also as to the whereabouts of tens of thousands of Polish, Czech and Dutch Jews who had passed this town. And to the Jews who once had lived here in Izbica, at least three to four thousand of them, about 40 per cent of the town’s entire population.

The Pole Jan Karski recalls a secret visit to Izbica and the horrors he encountered there in his memoirs (5). He describes the ramp at the station and the terrain, which was warded off with walls and barbed wire fences where new arrivals sometimes were forced to vegetate for up to ten days until they were eventually transported on to the extermination camps of Sobibor or Belsec. The small station building is still the same; now a heavily used road cuts through the slope (which was part of the former ramp) falling down sharply to the station grounds, and the adjacent pastures were the terrain surrounded by barbed wire.

Our tour takes us along the road up to the former house of the Jewish Council. The house is derelict, amidst a row of similar small houses that seem to support it. It is the parental home of Tomasz Blatt, one of the survivors of the Sobibor revolt. His father had been appointed the chairman of the Jewish council by the occupants.

*“My dear ones! This is where we got after the long and exhausting journey. We have to recover first from the terror, all expectations are exceeded, we may have little parcels and money, soap and toothbrushes are very much requested ... (...) Everything is missing because our belongings have not yet arrived.” (6)*

There are no Jews in Izbica anymore. Neither are there remains left of the synagogue or the school. The entire place conveys the impression as though there had never existed a Jewish population here. If it were



*Izbica, railway station, ramp and marketplace with war memorial.*

© Hannelore Lutz et. al., Düsseldorf

not for the Jewish cemetery, or rather what is left of it, at the edge of the village up on a hill. The access is difficult to find, it leads past a small farmyard, between the house and the garden fence along on a small dirt path. This path across the old cemetery is also a short cut to the neighbouring village.

The talk and chatter amongst the young people gradually subsided along the way. On the cemetery they were silently looking for the remains

of gravestones, for any signs that people lie buried here. Some few stones are to be found: the gravestone for instance, erected on behalf of a Polish priest, with his name and that of his brother living in Israel on it. Both had spent their early childhood days in Izbica, survived in hiding places and found each other again many years after the end of the war. They wanted to be buried together here in their hometown.

The overgrown mass-graves hold the ashes and the mortal remains of the dead who had been shot at the cemetery. On a small stone plate at one of the mass-graves a son had put up to the memory of his mother who had been murdered in Izbica we read that German Jews were also killed here. The way to the market square is a short one, Izbica being a very small town.

*“On the market square travelling musicians played and sold the texts of their latest hits for five pennies. Tojwele bought “Madagascar” – Hej, Madagascar, hot country, black country, Africa ...” (7)*

On the market square the Jewish citizens of Izbica had to report for transports, later on their successors as inhabitants of the ghetto. In a side street, near the market square, there was the commandant’s headquarter. In vain we searched for a sign, attribute to the memory of the deported and murdered Jews who lived or partly lived in Izbica. We found a large wooden cross and a monument to the memory of all the Poles killed in the wars of freedom and revolts.

And old man talks to us: “Whom are you looking for? Do you come from Israel?” Anna, our interpreter, translates our question concerning the Jews of Izbica, all the humans that passed this small village. He shrugs: “Do you know names of people from Izbica? Then I might be able to tell you something”. With a vague gesture he points towards our group, utters a few names, points at the building where the Gestapo had their headquarters, talks about the owner of a public house who was

shot by Germans.

Time is pressing, our bus is waiting, and the guide urges us to hurry up. (In later conversations in Lublin and also back in Germany we wondered why we did not take our time, and what we could have asked. And why we did not ask.)

### Wlodawa, Sobibor

On we went from Izbica to Wlodawa – our guide could not quite be convinced that we wanted to visit Sobibor first...

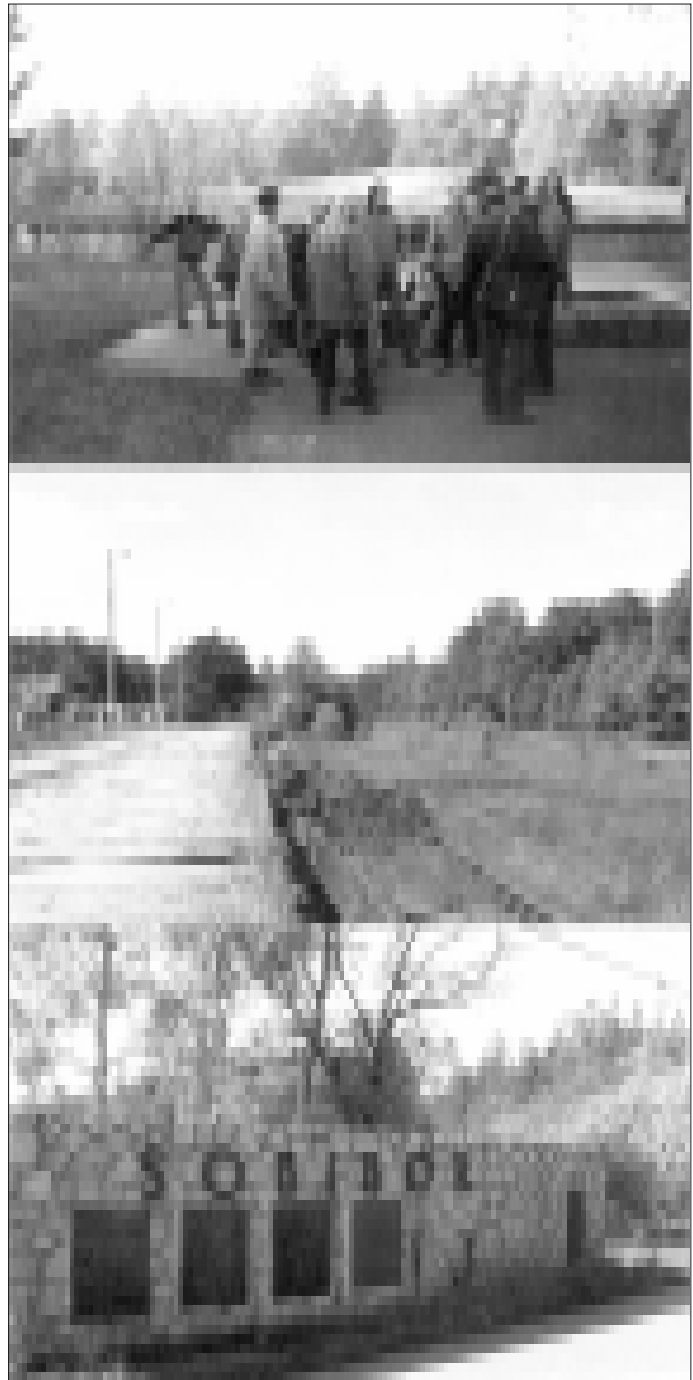
In Wlodawa, too, a small town near the Ukrainian border, almost half of the inhabitants were Jewish. The synagogue – although it has been restored in the meantime – the rabbi's house and the Jewish school still stand here. The synagogue has become a simple museum where the history of Wlodawa's Jewish community is presented on a few show tables and some cultic objects, which were found at excavations, are at display.

The young people were impressed by the inhabitants' commitment at whose initiative the museum was launched and who look after it. In Wlodawa there are no Jews anymore, either; they were murdered in Sobibor, some thirty kilometres away.

*"Before the war Sobibor was a very small insignificant railway station, between Wlodawa and Chelm in the east of Poland. (...) Almost daily transports of 1.500 to 2.000 Jewish deportees from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Holland, France, Austria and other occupied countries reached Sobibor. Apart from the large number of SS men and Ukrainian assistant police who guarded the camp from within, Sobibor was also surrounded by four rows of barbed wire fences, ten feet high, a gorge filled with water and a minefield. In July Himmler arrived himself to inspect the operations. As a result of this visit the "production" was increased and at time reached a figure of 15.000 bodies that were burnt on a single*

*day" (8)*

One of the two employees of the museum in Sobibor accompanied us and showed us a small exhibition on the former campgrounds. Our Polish partners did know the name Sobibor as a concentration camp but they were here for the first time. We were the only visitors of the memorial at the former extermination camp. During our guidance tour around the camp and during the explanations some of the young



*Sobibor, hill of ashes, former ramp and entrance to the memorial.*

© Hannelore Lutz et. al., Düsseldorf

people were talking about their plans for the evening, the weather, the evening before. Now it was the turn of the supervisors to get irritated, and I myself wondered whether the complete transformation of the place and the extinction of all traces of the former extermination camp were indeed not much good to the young people. Some trudged around the piled up hill with the ashes of thousands of murdered humans, others stood before the smashed urn, others again went back to the bus.

The journey back to Lublin was very quiet. In the evening the participants poured out the questions that had not been asked during the day. How can one eradicate so thoroughly all traces of human beings? What were those people thinking who had the campgrounds blown up, rails torn out and all separate parts removed? Who had all documents destroyed, trees planted and all prisoners who knew murdered? Had there not been the revolt with the ensuing flight from Sobibor no one would probably have been able to tell about the camp and its atrocities. Today Sobibor, like Belzec, still ranks amongst the “forgotten” camps. Hardly a visitor group comes here, “there is nothing to see” after all.

An additional problem is that the Sobibor memorial is linked administratively to the museum in Włodawa therefore lies within the responsibility of the Wojwoda. There simply are not sufficient funds for the maintenance of the memorial and research work. Closure and total oblivion are imminent threats.

How much information the young people “processed” in their heads showed in the discussions in Lublin – and also in conversation after our return to Germany.

#### **Kazimierz Dolny**

On this day the Polish schoolgirls were in their element. They showed us the magnificent renaissance town; we visited a church and the

remains of a castle high above the River Vistula. We learned a lot about the history of the town.

Christoph, who does his alternative service at the Majdanek memorial, showed us the large old Jewish cemetery just outside Kazimierz. A wall of smashed gravestones, which can be spotted from the road leading to the cemetery, had been erected after the end of the war. The preserved gravestones are arranged to form a field of graves. In the forest, up to the hilltop, we found gravestones on our way: broken ones, knocked over ones, but also some well-preserved ones. Christoph took us around town and told us about the 400 years of Jewish history.

In the inner city he showed us the small synagogue, which was erected in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the traditional style from stone. Today there is a cinema. There are no Jews in Kazimierz Dolny anymore.

#### **Analysis and Discussion in Poland**

Together with the Polish participants we assembled the results of our search for traces and the work assignments in Majdanek. It emerged that, even though some Polish participants had already mentioned this in between as a remark in passing, they had only scarce, if any, knowledge of the Jewish history of the Lublin region. Through our seminar, the persistent search almost all German participants took part in, the young people from Lublin became inquisitive, too, and occupied themselves with history in turn.

Our choice of form, a seminar, i.e. a mixture of presentations, self-study (e.g. with the help of the material in Majdanek), reading literary texts and diaries, discussion and films, was taken up positively by almost all participants. The offer on the part of the supervisors and instructors to be amenable to all sorts of questions at any given time was felt to be convenient and reassuring. The predominant part of communicati-

on took place amongst and between the groups. Arising conflicts were resolved in such a fashion and only very rarely did a participant ask for mediation on our part.

The entire group discussed the behaviour of the Israeli group on the first day during our guidance tour around the campgrounds in Majdanek. “They act as if everything belonged to them” one of the Polish girls angrily remarked. The reference on our part to the countless murdered Jews was not of much avail. “Why do they not talk to us? We made every effort!” Moreover, they expressed their fear that the attempt to seek an understanding between our group and the Israelis might be dubbed “Polish anti-Semitism”. We could not come up with a solution for future encounters of this kind.

They also extensively discussed the visit to Sobibor. Should one visit memorials where “there is nothing to see”? Almost the entire Polish group found Majdanek more informative, as did two of the German youths. The same held true for Izbica although this assertion met with some opposition. The general opinion was that in some way one should there and then remember the many murdered humans.

To some participants the three seminar days in Majdanek were too long; they thought one day would have been enough. The majority of the group, however, found the amount of time appropriate or too short.

There was a little surprise shortly before our departure. The young people from Lublin asked whether we would not like to return and work with them again. They would be very interested. And the next question was about a return visit to Germany on their part ...

#### **Final Analysis in Wuppertal**

During the first session of further analysis and discussion it showed that all participants took up very positively both the study trip and their



encounter with young people from Poland. They regarded their stay in Poland as a unique opportunity to appraise history, gather experiences and, above all, come to know the lives of young people there. They viewed the "Lublin Theatre Days", which they participated in as far as possible, as an element of relaxation and an additional experience. Since most of the actors were also put up at our monastery vivid conversations developed at mealtimes.

The visit to the former concentration camp Sobibor still, or even more, occupied almost all of them. "I have pictures in my head of what

happened, of what could have happened" said one girl. "It made the whole place uncanny for me. I would have needed more time." There were similar statements on Izbica. By then they could give expression to their dismay at this apparently innocent little village and the fact that a stone or an inscription to the memory of the people driven away from Izbica and those for whom the town was but the transitional stage to death was nowhere to be found. "More time, also to talk to the town's inhabitants" was the general comment and request.

In Lublin we watched the film

"The last Jews of Lublin". At the request of the participants we arranged to watch more films after our return to Germany. On three Sunday afternoons we watched the films "The Trial" by Eberhard Fechner on the Majdanek trial in Düsseldorf, "Flight from Sobibor", based on the memoirs of Tomasz Blatt and "Jacob, the liar" by Frank Beyer.

Some of the young people presented the work they had done in Poland to their classmates and teachers, or worked out papers. "... Disappeared in Izbica" is the theme of the evening at the Wuppertal Old Synagogue community

### Dimitri Khourine, Wuppertal

*When I was six years old, my father told me about concentration camps. I found it very interesting and it made me read about them. I had a big book about the Holocaust, in which there were various photographs. I looked at them again and again. I could not imagine how everything could have happened. That is why I took part in this project. I went along to Poland because I wanted to have a look at everything and feel for myself how things were at that time. I wanted to get to know the Polish youths. I saw a lot of things there. Of course, I liked everything a lot.*

*The first concentration camp we visited was Majdanek. There we did most of our work. At the end of the visit we had to write a paper. Afterwards we visited the other concentration camps (Sobibor). In each concentration camp we attended a guidance tour by trained historians. I could not sleep peacefully for a long time after all I had seen there. I kept thinking I am lucky that I live in the world of today. Had I lived there and then I could have also died in a gas chamber of any given concentration camp. I was asked by a teacher what my father thought about my taking part in this project. He said: "Well, you must go there in any event. You must know how some of your relatives have been murdered". I must never forget.*

*After the trip we met again several times. We watched the films that deal with this topic. All participants brought along photographs. With this photographs we staged a public display. We invited people to come and have a look. There were not that many visitors but the exhibition was well made.*

*In school I discussed about it. It was very interesting for everybody. All teachers and pupils made a project six years ago, "School without Racism". Our motto is "Everybody is equal!" I feel at ease in my school.*

*I think I have told everything. I want to apologise for every mistake you have found. I have only been living in Germany for three years. I am not so good at dealing with the German language. However, I will master it.*

### Julian Jentjens, Krefeld

*I liked the study trip very much. During preparation for the trip we learned a lot about the original Jewish community in Wuppertal at the community centre at the old synagogue. We made a tour around town and were looking for the houses Jews had lived in. every one of us chose the names of two Jews from Wuppertal who were deported to Izbica in Poland. The names, dates of birth and information about their occupation we took with us to Poland, because we wanted to find out whether they might have been brought from Izbica (this is where they were deported to in the first place) to Sobibor or Majdanek. And whether we would find additional information.*

*I have learned a lot about the extermination and labour camps of the Nazis in Poland throughout these two weeks, beginning with the days of preparation that preceded the trip. We received a reader with plenty of information and data. I have not completely read it; it was simply too much for me. Perhaps I will finish it anyway.*

*Prior to the study trip I had never visited a concentration camp. When we went by bus to both Izbica and Sobibor all in one day I was rather exhausted in the evening. We were also in Włodawa and did get some time off there but it was not enough to come to terms with all the information.*

*Therefore, I found it particularly important that we did many things together with a group of Polish schoolgirls. We did not only work together with them but we also went out with them a lot in the evenings in the old town of Lublin. We used to have lots of fun and I think it is very important that you have time to relax when you work critically on the Holocaust. Moreover, in Germany there are scores of prejudices against Poland and her citizens. I think at least those of us who have been to Lublin know that they are untrue.*

*In school I gave a paper on the trip because everyone was rather interested and wanted to know what we did in Poland. I am glad that I went on this trip. Despite all the work. I would have never learned that much in history lessons in school.*

centre when participants will tell about their study trip and the search for traces.

We could not find any traces of the Jews from Wuppertal who were deported to Izbica but we received plenty of impulses for thought, gathered many useful experiences. Most young people have expressed their wish actively to participate in the Wuppertal Memorial Book, to contribute their knowledge gained in Poland. A small group prepared

a commemorative celebration for the anniversary of the deportation of Jews from Wuppertal to Izbica on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2000, at the memorial stone at the Steinbeck railway station.

Almost all participants want to embark on another trip to Poland to pick up work where we /they left or had to leave, respectively. The profound impact of this trip to Poland created by the encounters there is evinced also by personal contacts

that have developed and even at such an early stage are already continued and deepened by way of correspondence and private invitations.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

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*On their self-designed homepage pupils and teachers of the vocational college Herford account of their excursion to Auschwitz (HYPERLINK "<http://www.european-migration.de>"). Young people and teachers of this school also gave an account of their excursion on the Buchenwald conference*

## Memorial Work and Youth Exchange at Volkswagen

### History and Current Involvement

At the centre of our memorial work are young people who are not confronted with the subject "Holocaust" on the horizon of school or study but in professional training, i.e. in their work place, trade unions or youth groups.

Since 1986 Volkswagen PLC has combined its financial commitment to the building of the International Youth Meeting Centre in Auschwitz (IYMC) and the historical research into the history of the Volkswagen works in the period of National Socialism by Professor Hans Mommsen also with a pedagogical initiative and assignment.

Today, three groups of about 15 trainees from all German Volkswagen sites visit Auschwitz every year. Pupils and trainees from Poland and Germany work together to help maintain the concentration camps, in particular Birkenau. In the last ten years the pedagogical focus has shifted visibly from educational work in seminars to a mutual German-Polish exchange, including working assignments in the memorials.

The young people themselves provided the direct impetus for practical work at memorials. In 1992 they saw a news item on television about the delapidation of the memorials and wanted to utilise their labour and specific know-how for memorial maintenance work. This commitment could build on the experiences and the consensus of the Volkswagen Youth Exchange. Originally funded by the "rest penny" of wages and salaries, initiated as a war graves maintenance programme to the end of "reconciliation across

the graves" in Belgium and France, Volkswagen's youth exchange has made understanding between nations a personal concern of the entire staff.

Since the eighties youth exchange has further developed in three directions on account of the concern's internationalisation and the opening of Central and Eastern Europe:

- Technology and Mobility in Europe
- Mobility at Concern Level
- Memorial Work

These three lines of development of the Volkswagen youth exchange pursue the same goals: meeting other people, working environments and forms of life, learning and practising understanding and tolerance and developing a sense of responsibility towards a common future.

Today memorial work in Poland counts on the efforts and activities by instructors at trainee workshops, department managers, youth representation groups and the works committee. Trainees of various backgrounds, occupational groups and professional qualifications come together in these programmes and measures. Participation is neither an "incentive" nor an obligatory component of professional training.

### Practice of Memorial Work

Since 1992 common maintenance work in the camps at Auschwitz has developed as the core of youth exchange within the IYMC. Trainees from Wolfsburg, Hannover, Emden, Braunschweig and Kassel join forces with pupils from Bielsko-Biala at the junction of peoples and religions from Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern Europe: they mend fences or uncover camp streets and

find spoons, heels, cigarette-holders or coins.

Also, they have conversations with former inmates and follow the lives of perpetrators and victims in the archives. Whenever their professional know-how is in demand, be it at the Meeting Centre, the partner school or in the city, they lend a helping hand: to build a door, lay wires or install a pneumatic test stand. The foundation of exchange and memorial work is its evident, tangible use to the benefit of the partners.

The nearer these encounters inch towards everyday life the quicker a common ground of interests is reached. In Auschwitz and the young people's other hometowns trainees and instructors meet citizens and politicians, pupils and masters of the partner country. Germans and Poles live and celebrate together. For a few days they share their lives in their work places, at home and at the International Youth Meeting Centre. Thus Auschwitz becomes a meeting place.

Against the background of youth exchange memorial work also includes further extensive discussion and analysis and a five-day return visit by the Polish group to the German trainee centre. Here activities are discussed with the participants: what the stay meant to them personally, the resonance within the family, amongst friends, at the local bar, in their work place.

### Pedagogy in the Rear Mirror

Part of the pedagogical dimension of the exchange is the experience that young people who are firmly embedded in their working lives acknowledge abstract values like responsibility, understanding between nations, tolerance and humanity only when they involve a tangible personal benefit for the participants. For young people in particular it is only the tangible usefulness of a measure and the challenge of a concrete task that awaken personal commitment – both in the works



*Youth exchange: renovation and maintenance work, museum visit.  
© Dirko Thomsen et. al.*

and at the memorial. After all nobody wants to produce “high-standard scraps” as it were, that are discarded once the object of training has been attained.

It is only joint work on a project that makes comprehensible the foreign working environment, common discussions and celebration make transparent other, different patterns of education: “The Poles are really not that ...” both the willingness to personal commitment and the own self-esteem are heightened when an instructor senses that participants eagerly await work. The development of the own personality becomes apparent in retrospect when the trainees take a look back on the problems overcome during project work. Tolerance and humanity amongst the trainees grow with each success of joint work, the joy

of living together and the curiosity about foreign lives.

Conversely, trainees are quick to see through and disenchant, as it were, of pedagogical concepts, academic verdicts or political rituals that do not rely upon a personal experience and attitude. The reason for this scepticism lies mainly in the divergence of theory and practice even in professional training and at school: they do not learn for life but for the examination commission. It is a very different process of learning in the works that leads to real mastery of everyday life.

How young people react to concepts like “understanding between nations” or “coming to terms with history” depends on their “patterns of life”. If a trainee in the building profession encounters guest workers from Ireland and Poland in his work place it is an approach towards multiculturalism entirely different from a student of sociology seeking refuge and enlightenment in Tibet.

Volkswagen’s memorial work has developed without the support of a detailed pedagogical concept. Youth exchange and maintenance work at Auschwitz are subject to a self-regulating learning process on the part of all participants. In practice this successful leaning process in memorial work is not very different from those in professional training or working life.

It is determined by:

- a policy of small steps
- transparency
- being free from the pressure of a high production quota
- possibilities of repetition for the acquisition of routine
- “breathing space” for experiments and continuous improvement
- instructor-guided individual and group learning

In the field of memorial work there are no formulated learning aims, learning methods or even learning media, let alone means of controlling all of the above. The challenges may lie in both the National Socialist past



## International youth exchange Auschwitz – Memorial Work

*Oświęcim is the Polish name for Auschwitz, which stands as a symbol of the biggest ever mass-murder in the history of humankind.*

*Of course we had heard, read and seen films about Auschwitz in history classes. But it was just history to us – something we did not experience personally – in our thoughts Auschwitz was far away and, moreover, it was a very long time ago.*

*The International Auschwitz Committee in a two-day preliminary seminar on Poland past and present, the memorial itself and our trip prepared us in advance. We did have our own ideas about “Poland” and “the Poles”, though, it must be said. So, via Berlin we went to Forst at the Polish border. From there it is still some 400 kilometres across Poland to Oświęcim. We soon realised that everything was not much different from our own country – almost the same infrastructure of villages and towns. Only the road surface told us that we were going through another country. The journey went by with us eagerly awaiting what would expect us there:*

- How will we be put up?*
- How are the Polish exchange youths?*
- How will we be received?*
- Are we considered heirs to the Nazi crimes or will we be treated as normal young people?*

*These questions were on our minds all at once. Now we realised that Auschwitz really was not that far away, for we had reached our goal, the international Youth Meeting Centre at Auschwitz. We were welcomed by friendly staff at the reception and in the dining hall. One could sense that we were well-liked guests – in Auschwitz. We immediately felt at ease – in Poland. We were very surprised and were already beginning to change our opinions about Poland. Now we were eager to get to know the Polish group from Bielsko-Biala who were to share quarters with us here at the International Youth Meeting Centre for two weeks. On the very first evening together we soon realised they were normal youths just like us. There are not that many differences between German and Polish young people. Even the language barrier did not turn out to be an obstacle.*

- They like to go to discos – just as we do.*
- They listen to the same sort of music.*
- They dress in a modern fashion – just as we do.*
- They have the same hobbies.*

*Later on our Polish friends told us that – just like us – they had also had prejudices against the foreign group. However, we all agreed that all these prejudices burst like a bubble on the very first evening together. How quickly our picture of the Poles changed. Only by talking to each other.*

*The other day we began, supported by the International Auschwitz Committee, to look back on and appraise history there and then. For the first time we faced the main gate of the former concentration camp in Auschwitz I, the main camp. Right before us we saw the infamous slogan on the gate, WORK LIBERATES. After a short while of silence we went through the gate and entered the campgrounds. Here, as would be the case in the following days, the history of this place was explained to us. We visited the blocks and exhibitions, we stood at Appeal Square, in front of Block 11 and we looked at the Wall of Death at Block 11. The next day we went to Auschwitz 2 Birkenau, which was the actual extermination camp. Here, everybody was overawed and bereft of speech by the camp's sheer dimensions which no one had anticipated.*

*In the main camp there was only one crematory. Here there was another four. We stood on the ruins of the crematories, we saw the surviving barracks and we also stood before the monument.*

*We could not comprehend nor understand. There was a sense of general helplessness. One cannot put into words what and how every single one of us received and attempted to digest what has happened at this place but we learned the following: Guilt for things past is not inheritable but responsibility for a better future certainly is.*

*All of us became aware that what happened here was the worst atrocity that could be perpetrated on human beings. Auschwitz was a death factory.*

*There and then we all worked together to uncover several camp streets, which, more than fifty years old, are overgrown with grass now. By making these streets identifiable the old structure of the camp shall be made visible again. At the end we remembered the countless murdered humans at Auschwitz and many other places by laying down flowers and lighting candles at the monument.*

*We are all very glad to have participated in such a programme and, thanks to the support by the International Auschwitz Committee, to not only have learned but also grown up somewhat. Above all, we are aware that we have worked for others. Here we made our contribution for the many visitors from all around the world who come to see this memorial every year. We have been told time and time again that our work is much appreciated here.*

*Auschwitz reminds us to let our behaviour be guided by the following principles:*

- A strong stand against xenophobia*
- against the destruction of Jewish institutions*
- against attacks on the disabled and on minorities in our society*
- against intolerance*
- for respect and human dignity*
- for humanity and mutual tolerance*
- for solidarity with the weakest and those in need of our help*

*Not least also for the reason that a sense of responsibility, tolerance and mobility are qualities, which are decisive for a successful, working atmosphere in an ever-uniting Europe and in an internationally active concern. This fortnight of youth exchange has, therefore, been extraordinarily productive as regards a better understanding of the history of Poland, dealing with one's fellow people and getting to know our neighbour, Poland, so that no-one would have wanted to do without this trip.*

**Lutz-W. Jordan, Volkswagen Coaching GmbH Ndl. Wolfsburg**

as well as a common German-Polish future at the same time, in the installation of an electric motor for a sliding door or also in the pain of separation from the girlfriend back home. Experience shows that participants find their actual learning aims only in the course of this process and in most cases they are not where that have been intentionally placed in advance. The real test does not occur before an examination commission but perhaps at the local bar when Poles are the butt of a joke going the rounds.

Pedagogical supervision is a decisive factor in a learning process as flexible as that. Experience shows that this is asking too much of the instructors alone, and, therefore, the cooperation with experts from the Meeting Centre, the international Auschwitz Committee, former prisoners or the museum has proved to be of irreplaceable value.

### Concern Environment and Memorial Work

Memorial work takes place against the backdrop of professional training within the horizon of working life. The horizon of experiences trainees take with them on their visit to Auschwitz is that of their learning and working lives at the company. It is perfectly natural, therefore, that they should also apply their own successful learning patterns to Auschwitz as a place of learning, just as they visit Auschwitz not only with their fellow workers but in the back of their minds always with their parents, godfathers and friends as well.

It was not the original concept to include these personal and social references in memorial work but it proved to be the foundation for success in the development, which was actively pushed ahead by the trainees themselves. In memorial work, too, we have to pick up the young people where they stand.

How does the concern environment relate to the topic Holocaust? The Mommsen study *“Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich”* or memorial work show that scientific and pedagogical work on the Holocaust indeed goes together with the world of work.

Memorial work should find a supportable basis in the culture of the company without economic targets having to dictate the content of programmes and measures. Without the support of each constituent of the company memorial work is not practicable in the long run, and without conceptual and creative freedom and pedagogical openness there will be no educational success with young people.

Memorial work also indirectly fulfils a qualitative function for the company as such. Not only does it foster political judgement, human tolerance and cultural openness on the part of the participating trainees but it also propels motivation, personal confidence and professional self-assessment during training.

Every single employee is a citizen, husband and father, child or bowling mate at the same time. This is precisely the reason why involvement and commitment such as Volkswagen's memorial work always find greater support within the company than

is generally assumed and also find expression in the economic targets. Thereby, companies and memorials can only profit from one another. The inclusion of the complex environment of young people keeps memorial work from musealisation and historicisation much as the inclusion of memorials saves in-work training from only too rigid “professional blinkers”.

Work on the Holocaust at company level takes place within an entirely different context than in school, without curricula, materials or tests. However, it bears exactly the same share of responsibility towards – for the most part – the same young people. The economy therefore is an appreciative recipient that neither wishes to neither be ahead of school nor lag behind the discussion. Thus I hope that school and company will stay in touch.

*English version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

## Communicative Work as Memorial Work Museum Pedagogy in the Jewish Museum Hohenems

Ten years ago the Jewish Museum Hohenems was opened. Nation-wide attention amongst specialist circles and the press, the bestowal of the Austrian Museum Award and an impressive visitor statistics document the astonishing professionalism for a regional museum, where conception, structure and management are concerned.

The high standing, which personal communicative work has occupied in the Jewish Museum Hohenems ever since its inception, is also quite unusual. A professional post for museum pedagogy in a rather small regional museum, endowed with its own programme budget, might well be considered a rarity in the Austrian museum scene. The determination with which both the director of the house as well as the president of the maintenance society see to museum pedagogical affairs also quite probably possesses rarity value.

### The Practice of Personal Communicative Work

A necessity-oriented use of the Jewish Museum seems possible for eight-year-old elementary pupils as well as for students. Even as the subjects history, social studies and religion dominate visitor statistics, the museum can still convey impressive aspects from the field of art, local economic history in Vorarlberg and, in particular, political education. In this context the circumstance is remarkable that such addressees as the disabled, apprentices, youth groups

and adults working in the educational professions increasingly make use of the personal communicative offers of the Jewish Museum.

Accordingly differentiated and respectively appropriate communication programmes, conceived as a system of guiding questions, as a rule, ought to further an effective visit to the museum according to age, subject and interests. Independent work and discovering learning, mostly in the stimulating social form of small groups, takes precedence to forms of transportation oriented towards the character of guided tours. The museum is used heterogeneously and extensively. Not a one-sided transfer of knowledge, but creative processes of thought are aspired at, researching and discovering learning is to the fore.

These open offers of transfer and communication are widely and mostly positively received by pupils, since, contrary to the still frequently practised teacher-centred teaching, they can largely determine for themselves their own tempo and contents. However, it also happens that older pupils prefer dialogue to working in groups. This is no problem for the staff, though, since they leave this decision up to the young people.

### Project-oriented Forms of Communication

It is rather rare that a class, a group or individual pupils plan the visit to the museum in the context of a project. All-day or repeated visits are taken into account as well as work

in the museum's library and the archive. With half-day or all-day visits the Jewish quarter and cemetery are also included as additional sources of information in the exploration of the Jewish history of Hohenems. The product-oriented objective of such project works, as a rule, is a catalogue, an exhibition or a school event.

### Apprentices' Projects

In the context of the project series "The Useful and the Foreign" ten projects with approximately 200 apprentices could be conducted over the past five years.

The project series is not a one-off cultural initiative. It pursues a concrete educational-didactic objective: to make cultural education a natural part of training for apprentices, and thus react to cultural potentials of the apprentices, which possibly lie fallow, and tie to already extant internal educational and recreational offers at company or school level, respectively.

The conception is guaranteed in each project by a team of experienced and competent staff and artists.

The realisation takes place in collaboration with various cultural institutions such as museums, art galleries, theatres, youth organisations, but also with several creative artists and cultural initiatives.

### Brief Description of Three Apprentices' Projects

#### *A FOREIGN HISTORY?*

#### *Screen Print Posters on a Visit to the Museum*

The project with apprentices of the company Hilti Thüringen began with a visit to the Jewish Museum Hohenems, where small groups worked on Jewish history. The impressions gained were supposed to be cast into the form of a poster. In a large screen print workshop the project group was introduced to screen-printing, a graphic designer

explained important design principles.

Then followed the optical realisation of each idea into useful print drafts, partly through patterns, partly through direct drawings and inscriptions, occasionally also through film exposure. The prepared print drafts were exposed onto covered screens and then printed, mostly in multi-colour. For some apprentices the designs were also printed at their request on T-shirts, which were intended as presents for their respective girlfriends.



*Project work with apprentices*  
© Sammlung Jüdisches Museum Hohenems

The final meeting took place a week later in an inn, and the Jewish museum staged a small exhibition displaying the project results.

#### «KAMERA ÄKTSCHEN» (SHOOTING ACTION)

*Search for Traces with the Video Camera in Jewish Hohenems*

The project group consisted of nine chemists who concerned themselves professionally with hygiene and body culture. Taking this as their starting point they were supposed to examine the cultural history of this complex of themes.

On the first project day the group explored the Jewish Museum Hohenems and the Jewish quarter. Many Turkish migrant families live in these

houses today. The Turkish girls in the project group were thus given the task to establish the necessary contacts while shooting was done.

After developing a script acting and filming commenced with each part allocated to a different participant. This also included interviews conducted with inhabitants of this formerly Jewish quarter. Finally, the film was edited and sound-tracked at the cutting table in the museum.

One week later the project group presented their video during a press conference at their school.

#### «TRÖDELTANZ» (SAUNTERING DANCE)

*A Theatrical Event with Workshop, Exhibition and Painting Performance*

The core of the project and the common starting basis for all apprentices was an English play in a translation by Barbara Frischmuth, which the entire project group took to approach their work. This play deals with memories of the time of National Socialism. The main character carries her traumatic memories of this time in a suitcase, but she never opens her “memory suitcase” throughout the entire play. Following the workshop the apprentices had the choice either to opt for designing an exhibition or a painting performance. One group arranged an exhibition from the suitcase, as it were, with pictures, text fragments, posters and objects, which were attached to magnetic tables. The time of National Socialism was taken as the theme.

In parallel a second group attempted artistically to visualise these fields of themes. Consternation, fear and aggression were realised pictorially and shown together with the results of the “exhibition group” at their vocational school.

At the end the topic “Memory” was taken as a theme and discussed in the Jewish Museum Hohenems.

#### Materials and Contacts



In order to prepare and further assess in school a visit to a museum in terms of content the Jewish Museum offers materials on didactics for use at schools, which contain information texts and source material in three booklets as well as teaching models for pupils of all school types. A slide series on the Jewish quarter and on Jewish religion complements the didactic booklets as well as an elaborated programme for an independent exploration of the Jewish quarter by small groups.

## Display

### Contact Model School - Museum

This newly developed communicative model is designed to establish or facilitate contacts between pupils and the museum, and thus make the museum's pedagogical offers even better known. Thus, a special display with exhibition character was developed. Schools in Vorarlberg and the Tyrol but also in the other Austrian provinces are the addressees.

Museum pedagogy has hitherto already offered as open as possible forms of guidance for pupil groups in the museum. With the recently completed "display" interested pupils are given an impulse independently to plan and organise visits to museums and other excursions. What is more, the display motivates to use the museum and its facilities for individual work and take advantage of the support provided by staff members.

Representative for the diverse life stories of members of the Jewish community in Hohenems the display informs of the fate of Ivan Landauer and his family. With this concrete picture the small touring exhibition permits a look into a detail of the permanent exhibition.

Eyewitnesses are also placed with schools throughout Vorarlberg as well as project impulses and project materials of the Department of Political Education in the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Art, as a rule, on topics related to

recent contemporary history and current tendencies.

Every year further education events take place in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institutes designed to make teachers from different school types and subjects familiar with the Jewish Museum and its museal pedagogical offers. Furthermore, contacts with adult education centres, the Pedagogical Academy Feldkirch, social academies and educational institutions are intensively fostered. Such addressees are an especially appreciated clientele in their quality as multipliers.

## Extensive Communicative Work

That personal communication enjoys a high standing at the Jewish Museum Hohenems is manifested in particular by the circumstance that the Ministry for Education, Science and Art finances the professional post of museum pedagogue, and thus invests an essential share of



the entire expenditures for staff directly in personal communicative work, while the province Vorarlberg grants a full teacher's waiting period for this post.

On account of the growing demand for guided tours several free lances take care of adult groups

*Display: young people independently organise their museum visit.*

© Sammlung Jüdisches Museum Hohenems

alongside to the museum's pedagogical department. For special exhibitions separate pedagogical programmes are developed, and artists, curators and scientific consultants also offer guided tours around their exhibitions.

The claim also to comprehend the Jewish cemetery and Jewish quarter as part of the museum plays a significant role in the transportation and communication of Jewish history in Hohenems. This happens in form of guided tours but also in form of excursions in small groups. Apart from the historical search for traces the examination and exploration of the quarter also takes as its theme the structural state of edifices and the circumstance that the Jewish quarter today is predominantly inhabited by Turkish families. More than in the museum it appears to be commendable to develop a relationship of tension between past and present, to go into current, controversially debated, questions and, if and when the need arises, address them thematically.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

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*Writing workshop  
Dance workshop  
Searching for traces  
Learning with audio guides  
Theatre workshop  
Guided tour around the old Jewish cemetery  
© Sammlung Jüdisches Museum Hohenems*

Bernhard Denkin-  
ger U Irike Felber  
Wolfgang Quatember

## Museum of Contemporary History and KZ-Memorial Ebensee

### Examination of the Past in Historical Museums and at the Authentic Places

In Ebensee, in the Salzkammergut, a museum was opened in March 2001, which offers an extensive examination of Austrian contemporary history from 1918 to 1955. The museum's objective is to present Austrian history until the regaining of national sovereignty regardless of a party-politically motivated need of justification or attempts at harmonisation, as can be frequently encountered with presentations of regional and local history. Since the mid-eighties some two kilometres away from the museum there exists a memorial of the former concentration camp at Ebensee with authentic remains, a victims' cemetery and a permanent exhibition as well as regular guided tours for visitors. Both institutions seek to take as their theme political discontinuities, social conflicts and economic problems in the region and facilitate an active look into and appraisal of the recent past that goes beyond the geographical confines of the Salzkammergut. In view of the foreseeable future, in which the historical experiences of this period of Austrian history will no longer be preserved in living memory this also means an obligation and special responsibility to protect, preserve and make accessible to a broad public historical knowledge on the basis of scientific examination. The museum and the memorial are both committed, furthermore, to the conviction that the occupation with and examination of history cannot

be limited to ritualised memory but under the ever-changing circumstances of patterns of life must be oriented towards people and their current needs.

#### Inception of the Museum and the Memorial

Ebensee was the site of a concentration camp external command pertaining to the complex of the Mauthausen camp. From November 1943 to the liberation of the camp on May, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945 approximately 27000 prisoners were deported from Mauthausen to the camp at Ebensee,

8200 of whom died at this camp. The prisoners of the "SS Labour Camp Cement" – such was the project's cover name – had to build underground facilities in forced labour which were designed to be used for the rocket production to be moved from the research and production site in Peenemünde, which had been severely damaged by allied air raids. The prisoners came from all over Europe, the largest national groups were of Polish and Russian origins, but numerous Hungarians, Italians, French, Yugoslavs, Spaniards, Germans and Austrians were also amongst the concentration camp prisoners in this camp. About one third of the inmates were Jews. On May, 6<sup>th</sup>, 1945, American troops eventually liberated the camp.

In the years immediately after the liberation treatment of the national socialist past was dominated for various reasons by repression and endeavours in practice to wipe out the traces of terror, since the local population perceived itself primarily as "victim" of a choice of location do to with strategic criteria. However, the community as well as local enterprises and some individuals



*The main entrance to the former concentration camp. On the former camp grounds a workers' estate was built in the nineteen fifties.*

© Oberösterreichische Landespresse,  
F. Linschinger

had gained considerable profit from the existence of the camp, amongst other events because the SS command regularly left prisoners at their disposal as workers.

After being used as an American “POW-camp for members of the SS Panzerdivision Hohenstauffen” for a span of roughly six months, displaced persons – survivors of Ebensee and other concentration camps but also displaced persons from the German-speaking areas in the east – had been put up in the remaining barracks and the adjacent civil workers camp. This entailed repeated protests by locals who, themselves suffering from a severe shortage of food, criticised the preferential treatment given to displaced persons in terms of supply with food by the American occupation authorities. The buildings on the grounds of the former concentration camp were torn down little by little; of the original camp at least the main entrance gate was preserved thanks to the commitment of the “KZ Verband Salzkammergut”. In the fifties a workers’ housing estate was erected on the grounds of the Ebensee concentration camp, the site of the former crematory was also used for development. On the initiative by former inmates a memorial to the honour of the victims of National Socialist terror was erected in 1946, which was moved in 1952 from its initial site at the old through road to Bad Ischl to the less exposed area to the south of the former camp.

The strategy of the community of Ebensee to make unrecognisable the place, where the crimes were perpetrated during the period of National Socialist rule, by removing the remains of the concentration camp was furthered by the attitude on the part of the young Second Republic, which focused its entire “memorial work” on the former concentration camp Mauthausen and did not take into consideration the other sites of concentration camps. The republic of Austria concentrated the remembrance of victims of National Socialist terror on Mauthausen, which

was presented as a symbolically elevated place of National Socialist atrocities. At one and the same time numerous manifestations of National socialist terror, testimonies also to its hold on the normality of everyday life, disappeared at various other places. Focusing the remembrance on Mauthausen permitted an exterritorialisation of the past throughout the whole of Austria – a disentanglement of history from its authentic ties, its transfer to one single symbolic spot of remembrance, which fitted the self-conception of an “ahistorical” post-war society influenced and shaped by the “victim thesis”.

In the eighties research work on the part of a new generation of historians led to a change in the appraisal and perception of National Socialist rule in Austria. Viennese historian Florian Freund published the volume “Labour Camp Cement” in 1988 on the history of the concentration camp Ebensee. In 1988 a society named “Verein Widerstandsmuseum” was constituted, which pursued two goals: first to create a museum of contemporary history with the intention to instruct and inform about local resistance activities against National Socialism and thus further democratic awareness, on the other hand to secure as far as possible and make accessible to the public the remnants and topographical traces of the concentration camp.

At first the idea of a museum was founded on the documentations by Peter Kammerstätter – a survivor of the concentration camp Buchenwald, who originally came from Linz – about the resistance activities in the region, which were to be incorporated to form an Integral part of the exhibition “Resistance Against National Socialism”. The original plan underwent some repositioning after Viennese architect Bernhard Denkinger and historian Ulrike Felber were called in in 1993 to develop a conception as regards museological issues, content and ex-

hibition design. In cooperation with the director of the planned museum, Wolfgang Quatember, the initially envisioned theme “Resistance” was integrated into an extended contemporary historical concept of the portrayal of Austrian political culture from the founding of the First Republic to the regaining of national sovereignty.

Parallel to the work on the focal contents of the museum of contemporary history a permanent exhibition – based on the research results of and in collaboration with Florian Freund – was developed in Gallery No 5 of Area B of the former concentration camp about the Nazi armament project at Ebensee, the system of forced labour and the life of prisoners in the camp (conception and design: Denkinger/Felber).

### Conception and Content

Both content and design of the *Museum of Contemporary History at Ebensee* aim at information, which seeks to impart the latest state of knowledge based on the findings of contemporary research. As opposed to the often ahistorical presentation of regional specificities in traditional museums concerned with regional and local history the museum in Ebensee displays a rich variety of sources pertaining to regional history (about 1000 photographs, posters, films and documents) in their connection to the development in Austria as a whole. Unlike many of the more recent exhibition or museum presentations the Ebensee Museum carefully steers clear of the temptations to create through artistic approaches or graphically illustrative stagings a “suggestive climate”, which is supposed to permit the visitor a “cognitive” slant. On the contrary, it considers itself a documentary centre that offers the visitors information on various levels. Apart from the permanent exhibition which is founded on extensive research work in both Austrian and international archives,



the archive and the library of the museum are at the visitors' disposal with their offering of extensive stocks of volumes on contemporary history, including data files containing the names of over 14000 former prisoners at Ebensee, name lists of forced labourers in various labour camps in the region as well as the labour camp for Viennese Jews (1940–42) in Traunkirchen. From autumn of 2001 the museum will offer pedagogical programmes adapted according to age, subject-specific and thematic requirements.

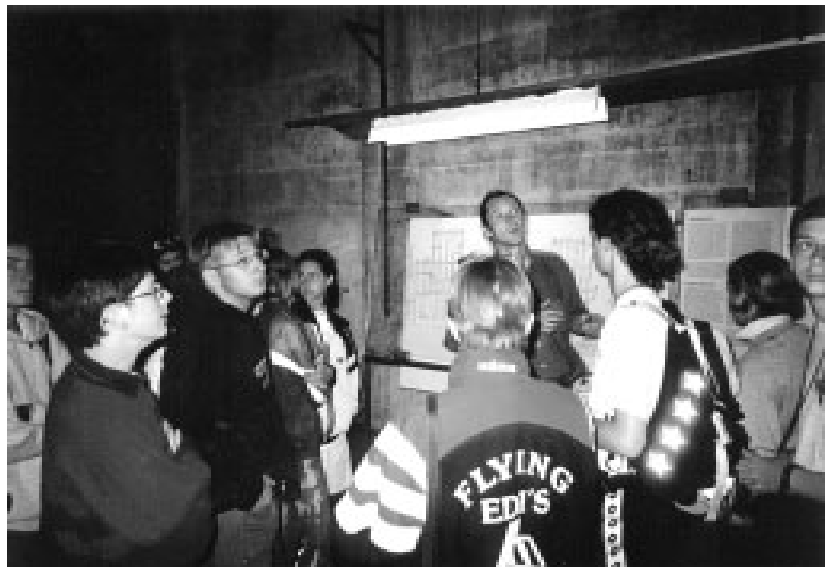
### **Exhibition Presentation and Design**

The design of the exhibition makes use of two different levels: first, in the front, glass elements which display various exhibits – photos, documents, quotations from newspapers, protocols and accounts – and secondly, at the back, a row of show tables, cement-coloured and made of unworked asbestos cement, which the accompanying commentary – texts and captions – is attached to. The natural light was incorporated into the exhibition; pictures arranged in the windows attain a floating quality and character on account of the effects of sunlight in the background. Views of the place and the surrounding countryside are also integrated into the complete round of the exhibition. Historical events are not sealed off hermetically in the museal showrooms but maintain their interactive quality with social life outside. At that particular juncture for instance in the exhibition tour which shows how – after the liberation of the concentration camp in Ebensee – local National Socialists were brought in to do clearing and burial work a view presents itself of the village and the quarry visible in the background, the site of the underground production facilities.

Reference and turning points in terms of content become tangible as breaks of the three-dimensional rhythm, as for instance in the area

that deals with arms production and the shortage of workers that is spatially connected to the subjects forced labour and concentration camp. Show tables with documents on the work of foreign civil and forced workers in industry and agriculture rise up in narrow, vertical wall slits in the parallel area on the history of the Ebensee concentration camp, which was initially designed as a “labour camp”, where prisoners from Mauthausen were deported to build underground tunnel installations.

The use of audiovisual media is confined to a concept committed to documentation, which withholds from staging medial presentations. Shootings are shown, filmed by American soldiers, of the camp a few days after its liberation.



*Project work with pupils in one of the former tunnel installations in which a permanent exhibition is displayed now.  
© Sammlung KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee*

### **The Reception of History in Museum and Memorial**

Historical museums and especially memorials generally remain with the impetus to represent a sort of prescribed memory. For pupils in particular, whose visit in most cases will be anything but voluntary and who quite naturally cannot possess any memory of the crimes of National Socialism, a climate of well-meaning moral indoctrination created by teachers or partly also by

memorial pedagogues might well be perceived as awkward and encourage refractory behaviour. Memorials have to concern themselves to an increasing extent with this field of tension of conveying the principal values of social life without moral indoctrination. The examination of the history of “negative places” (V.Knigge) requires value horizons which correspond with pupils’ lives



*The former prisoner and eyewitness Wladyslaw Zuk takes pupils on a guided tour around the former camp grounds.*  
© Sammlung KZ-Gedenkstätte Ebensee

and hold relevance also for the present day; however, the visitors (pupils) must also be granted scope to develop for themselves their own associations. For this very reason the designers of the exhibition in Ebensee were convinced that a reduction to the documentation of historical facts at the authentic place of the concentration camp but also in the museum itself without stagings of whatever kind best meets and suits educational demands. The exhibitions inform and instruct about what has been, has happened, that is all. They leave room for associations and independent assessments as well as for establishing one’s own connections with personal experiences. This conception is committed to one further objective: in Germany and Austria the political, scientific and conceptual responsibility for memorial places lies in the hands of those who must ultimately answer for the fact that their countries have

to take the blame for the crimes of National Socialism. This is an essential precondition as to how the visualisation of National Socialist history ought to be tackled. Whereas the victims and their descendants in Israel or the USA must be permitted to give expression to their memories, personal experiences, feelings and emotions in the form of stagings, symbolism and artistic productions, this kind of presentation is to be considered inadequate as for Austria and Germany. Stagings and artistic variants of portrayal imply a suggestive interpretation of historic reality; they represent accentuation through symbolic elevation and attenuation through selective depiction. In Germany and Austria memorials and museums of contemporary history, partly also in those states where Nazi crimes and collaboration have occurred, a stringent historical documentation is what is required. The presentation must be confined to authentic photos, documents and other authentic materials. Every concept which goes further, every artistic stylisation is, apart from memorials and monuments, inappropriate, all the more since the reproach is hanging in the air that we would resort to artistic means of expression so as to spurn factuality.

The aura of authentic concentration camp sites such as Auschwitz, Mauthausen or indeed Ebensee, especially when, as is the case in Ebensee, pupils can experience it with a survivor of the camp, inevitably causes and evokes consternation and dismay. Experience tells that such dismay often stands in the way of cognitive comprehension and the direct willingness immediately to acquire knowledge in the memorial, respectively. Dismay prevents communication, as is aspired to by pedagogues and guides; in the face of eyewitness accounts a sense of unquestionability proliferates and paralyses. Dismay is a natural reaction and as such ought not to be “talked over and over”. All the more

importance should be attributed, though, to further debate and analysis of what has been experience in the next few days in school.

### **The Memorial and the Museum of Contemporary History in the Context of Austrian Memorial Policy**

The memorial and the museum of contemporary history in Ebensee might serve as an example of an ambitious and committed project in Austria that is presentable at the same time, nonetheless there is still no sound and secure financial basis for continuous work. This fact has much to do with the practice of Austrian memorial policy. In comparison to the situation in Germany the official Austrian memorial policy must be described as underdeveloped. Apart from the memorial in Mauthausen activities at the sites of other former concentration camps are limited to private initiatives by committed historians and people with a special interest in the subject. And even in Mauthausen itself the scarce federal funding does not permit modern and, naturally, personnel-intensive scientific and pedagogical work. Motivated alternative servants and employees at the memorial places who find

themselves hopelessly confronted with heaps of work ultimately produce frustrated teachers and bored pupils as visitors to the memorials. While activities on the part of the state are confined to absolutely necessary maintenance work to preserve the historical building stock and investments in "hardware", the development and realisation of new didactic exhibition concepts, the transportation of pedagogical approaches and scientific research in and around the memorials, which has been neglected for decades, falls by the wayside.

Democratic and historical education of the young in the memorials which both regional and federal politicians eagerly demand on every possible occasion needs a financial foundation to employ qualified pedagogical personnel in the required numbers and produce exhibitions on a solid scientific basis. These requirements can only be fulfilled and realised when the republic of Austria consciously accepts her responsibility and provides a sufficient financial basis for the memorials, which should be viewed as educative institutions alongside school, so that professional work can be guaranteed which does not come unstuck in the tribulations of asking too much of

each employee's capacities and of voluntary participation.

In how far the initiatives and moves towards reform devised in the past year, which contain the abovementioned points of criticism, will be put into practice for the Mauthausen memorial and the sites of former adjacent camps remains to be seen.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

#### **Kontakt:**

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*Büro Denkinger und Felber Wien  
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## CD ROMs on National Socialism

New media offer a good possibility to convey the topic National Socialism especially to young people, since multimedia images particularly correspond with the young generation's habits of reception. A series of CD ROMs has appeared on the market in the last years especially on this topic, which turn to addressees interested in contemporary history and provoke reflective appraisal.

In their conception, as far as content, structure, addressees and function are concerned, they are very different from one another. All in all they offer ranges from monographies, works with encyclopaedic character up to adaptations of comics. These works have generally been positively received, as a rule, by public criticism. The fact alone that this medium deals with this serious and intricate subject seems to be cause for a positive appreciation. However, with these CD ROMs, as well, the question arises whether one is encouraged to form one's own judgement, or whether prefabricated, respectively already existing, images are transported or consolidated, respectively. The *"desire for as much authenticity as possible, for an illusion of time travel as perfect as possible ... irrespective of all concerns for anachronisms or the loss of reality"* is also problematic (Wolf: 1996, p.537). *"Serious history teaching in contrast ought to strive to make plausible decisions taken by people or groups of persons in the historical context"* (ibidem).

In the following paragraphs two aspects of the analysis of CD ROMs on the topic National Socialism currently on the market shall be broached

1) The new media go for a special

aesthetics. One must ask here whether it does justice or whether it can do justice at all, respectively, to this sensitive and intricate topic? So that the design of a CD ROM does not dominate awareness, the form should always be selected dependent on the contents and the aesthetics appropriate to the contents. However, one must also warn of the perils of an over-aestheticisation in this context. The CD ROM "Against Forgetting. A Documentation of the Holocaust" may serve as an example hereof. Here, particular importance is attributed to aesthetics. Dark shades like grey and anthracite, interspersed partly with green and blue nuances, are prevalent. Moreover, the surface design is extremely lacking in contrasts. The texts consist of white typewriting on black, and it is accordingly difficult to make out and read the various pages. The appearance is characterised by acoustic, optical and colour elements pitched to each other, which create a peculiar atmosphere. Whereas to the upper left area of the picture a non-stop loop of edited sequences taken from contemporary film material is running, different acoustic and optical elements are activated when the cursor touches the headlines. A faint swastika is put to the headline *Hitler Germany*. At the same time one hears a column marching in step, whereas the headline *The Holocaust*, for instance, is contrasted with a Star of David and background sound effects, which consist of a swirl of a hollering voice shouting commands, barking dogs and other noises that are hard to identify, all of which create a feeling of extreme tenseness and threat. Thus, the user is constantly exposed to background

noises and music (which, admittedly, can also be switched off). Together with the optical and colour design a solemn yet menacing overall impression is created; the confrontation with the Holocaust so attains an almost sacral component. However, the question arises if this type of aesthetics, which evokes ambivalent reactions with the user – in one case consternation, in the other distance – facilitates or rather impedes an appraisal of the Holocaust.

2) With what perspective are people presented, whose history is the subject of the CD ROMs? What strikes the eye here is that for instance very frequently there is mention of *the Jews*. Thus, one tends to overlook that this is about the history of individuals, with their own respective life history and personality. This collective presentation is only rarely broken up, as two examples taken from the CD ROM "Against Forgetting" will illustrate:

- (1) Until a newly selected chapter appears, photographs of prisoners are regularly inserted. The portrait of a prisoner is shown, both in profile and frontally – like a photo from criminal records – without listing the name or any further biographical information. The individual is thus disparaged as a stopgap image.
- (2) In the chapter *The Exposure of Horror* a survivor recalls the situation immediately after the liberation of a camp. At this one juncture the victims come to word, as it were. Apart from some exceptions they otherwise only appear anonymously and remain silent in this (and also several other) works, whereas the perpetrators – thanks to the rich variety of recordings of their speeches and addresses – are permitted to pierce our ears with forceful eloquence, for example Adolf Hitler's bawling voice dominates as background noise or speech excerpt in many works. In the CD ROM "Against Forgetting", for example, like in a night-



mare, our ears keep ringing with always the same sentence: *"The German does not like the Jew, the Jew does not like the German..."*

Despite all analysis of the design and presentation possibilities of multimedia use, the conception as regards content and reflection on both the conception of man and history, which ought to be transported, must not be neglected. In many works an adequate consideration of (famous as well as lesser known) proponents of resistance and victims of persecution and internment in concentration camps – and by that I mean letting them come to word in the literal sense – simply does not take place. What is more, most of these works do not feel committed to an approach of everyday history, and thus far too little attention is devoted to a perspective oriented towards the respective scopes for action and hardships of the population and thus of various different social as well as political groups. The questions for instance, as to how Jewish citizens experienced exclusion and persecution, how neighbours and colleagues reacted and in what way they perhaps even participated in the process of the so-called Aryanisation, hardly find any attention. Furthermore, an approach oriented more distinctly towards life history would seem a gain, in view also of the photo material employed in the CD ROMs, and would additionally have given a voice to the anonymous mass of victims and thus have personalised history.

Peter Wolf's position, albeit principally related to computer games,

is still transferable to the context in discussion here: *"In view of technical perfection and intensive efforts to provide factual historical accuracy it is at times very regrettable what old fashioned, long dated conceptions of history... become resurgent. Even if data and pictures might be correct (which is by no means the case throughout), what historical simulations should actually further in the first place, is lacking in most cases: the capacity for historical empathy (Wolf 1996: p.547). Hartmann Wunderer follows a similar line of argumentation, when he confronts the possibilities of ideal-typical history teaching with the use of computer simulations: "History teaching feeds on the 'authentic conversation', on identification and critical reflection, on precise scrutiny and not on a broad, diffuse panorama and hectic leaps to further information. It feeds on weighing up and sounding out discriminately the scopes of action available to people in their historical conditions" (Wunderer 1996: p. 534).*

Similar to history schoolbooks the new media should also be evaluated according to such criteria. Thus: taking into account the necessity for didactic reduction, information through the medium ought to be as extensive as possible. The presentation must in no way occur in a lopsided, foreshortened manner. The documentation of historical facts and events must be differentiated. A fusion of presentation as

well as verdict and evaluation must be avoided. Not only perpetrators' sources but also victims' sources should be considered. One must cast an eye at how information is imparted (source documentation, narrative presentation; or combination of both). In what proportion are text, image and audiovisual documents? An evaluation of language is also necessary. Are substantives and verbs employed, which tend to veil or play down? Are attitudes expressed implicitly or explicitly? Are bold and simple stereotypes used? Or is a contemporary diction used, without making it identifiable as such and expounding its problematic nature, respectively?

The aim of using media should ideally be to enhance the pupils' ability to judge and criticise. This means that an integration of multimedia uses into teaching must be connected to the development of medial competence. By that I do not primarily mean the technical command of the medium but an ability critically to appraise transported information and contexts as well as the way of presentation. This does not only go for CD ROMs but in particular also for the internet, where all information enjoys equal access and standing, and which, used as a work of reference, possesses a certain authority.

*English Version: Stefan Menhofer, 2001*

## New Media on the Topic

### 1. CD-ROMs

#### **The Nuremberg Trial, Berlin: Directmedia 1999, ISBN 3-89853-120-1, PC-Version**

Collection of the official pre-trial documents, indictment, opinion and extensive minutes of all 218 trial days on the basis of the official publication by the International Military Court of Justice in 1947.

An introduction into the edition of sources by Christian Zentner additionally contains an overview of the course and findings of the trial, portraits of the defendants, a time chart and numerous illustrations.

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~history1/cda.htm#digbib20>

#### **Wolfgang Benz et al. (Hrsg.): Enzyklopädie des Nationalsozialismus, Berlin: Directmedia 1999, ISBN3-89853-125-2, PC-Version**

Work of reference on National Socialism, which covers this era as a whole as well as in its various specific aspects; The encyclopaedia, worked out by 132 authors, sums up – as laconically and objectively as possible, but at the same time as extensively and critically as necessary – the collected state of knowledge about National Socialism, and is thus an indispensable aid to all those, who concern themselves with that time.

The encyclopaedia was envisaged by its editors as a combination of a manual with essayist overview presentations, a subject-specific lexicon and a commented register of names.

**Part 1 – Manual** (22 extensive articles, which amongst other things shine a contextual light on ideology, politics, economy, art, culture, science, technology and sport during National Socialism. Resistance, emigration, war as well as sources are separately presented)

**Part 2 – Lexicon** (approximately 1.400 articles on data, names, terms, events, institutions and organisations of the National Socialist dictatorship and its opponents)

**Part 3 – Index of Names** (1.100 short biographies with basic data and functions of important persons, numerous illustrations, maps and tables)

Book: © 1997 J.G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger GmbH, gegr. 1659, Stuttgart.

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~history1/cda.htm#digbib25>

#### **Ulrich Chaussy: Die Weiße Rose. München: Systema 1995, PC-Version**

A multimedial documentation of German resistance. Archive, exhibition and monography on CD-ROM. With numerous texts.

The CD-ROM “Die Weiße Rose” (“The White Rose”)

contains materials and texts on the resistance movement “White Rose”, including more than four hours recordings and approximately 500 pictures. These materials have been collected and selected in close cooperation with the “Weiße Rose-Stiftung” (White Rose Foundation). Specifically, you find the following materials on CD-ROM:

- Preface by Franz J. Müller, chairman of the “Weiße-Rose-Stiftung, München e.V.”
- The White Rose – rororo-monography by Harald Steffahn
- Catalogue of the exhibition “The White Rose” – About the Resistance of Students Against Hitler in Munich 1942/43, edited by the “Weiße-Rose-Stiftung”
- Auch in der Tat Gesinnung zeigen - New Sources on the History of the “White Rose” by Michael C. Schneider und Wilfried Süß
- Songbook, Diary 1933, Diary 1942/43 – Notes by Willi Graf (Facsimile-Reproduction)
- Letters by Alexander Schmorell (Facsimile-Reproduction)
- Allen Gewalten zum Trotz sich erhalten – A Radio Feature by Ulrich Chaussy (produced by Bavarian Television)
- Conversations with Marie-Luise Jahn, Anneliese Knoop-Graf, Franz J. Müller, Dr. Erich Schmorell u.a.
- Glossary: National Socialism – Excerpts from the work by Kammer/Bartsch

This CD-ROM is a product from the beginnings of multimedia uses for PCs. The user surface in so far hardly corresponds with up-to-date standards anymore; the self-chosen labelling “multimedial documentation” seems out of place in view of the strong emphasis on text. A benefit is the fulltext-retrieval on all implemented documents.

<http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~history1/cda.htm#rose>

<http://www.ng.fak09.uni-muenchen.de/gfn/multimedia/rezenswrose.html>

[http://www.gedenkstaette-moringen.de/cd\\_fs.htm](http://www.gedenkstaette-moringen.de/cd_fs.htm)

#### **Lernen aus der Geschichte. Projekte zu Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust in Schule und Jugendarbeit (Learning from History. Projects on National Socialism and Holocaust in School and Youth Work),**

Annette Brinkmann, Annegret Ehmann, Sybil Milton, Hanns Fred Rathenow, Regina Wyrwoll (Hrsg.) Ein wissenschaftliches CD-ROM-Projekt mit Begleitbuch. ARCult Media Verlag Bonn 2000 ISBN 3-930395-23-1

The project was made possible by: Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, Berlin, Goethe-Institut e. V., München, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart, Fördergesellschaft Kulturelle Bildung e. V., Bonn, specialist advice and support: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D. C., Association of Holocaust Organizations, New York

“The CD-ROM is a unique presentation of German school projects on this specific complex of themes. Together with the accompanying volume it shows in German and English how the topic is assimilated in current historical-political education in Germany. The CD-ROM also presents projects with relations to present phenomena such as xenophobia and right-wing radicalism

The entire project was developed by a group of edu-

cationalists from Germany and the United States. Since 1997 extensive academic basic researches preceded, as a result of which 50 separate projects on the part of schools and memorials in all German provinces as well as by independent maintenance societies – as for instance the Körber Foundation – are presented.

The accompanying book to the CD-ROM in German and English shows users the process of the examination and occupation with the theme “National Socialism and Holocaust” in historical-political education since the end of World War II in divided and, since 1990, unified Germany. Necessary background information on the importance of the so-called Holocaust Education in the United States in its differences to Germany is also provided.

#### **About the Aims**

The CD-ROM for the first time permits non-specialists in Germany and abroad a direct look at the work of learning groups on National Socialism and the Holocaust. All 50 projects that have been selected by the international consultants from a wealth of materials are based on authentic reports by teachers and works by pupils. The often interdisciplinary projects are presented in their multimedial diversity on CD ROM. The users can print out the texts and pictures and also download them on the computer. The CD ROM can be read both by PC as well as by MAC.

The CD-ROM consciously places young people to the fore, who – representative for many others in Germany – attempt to tackle with great commitment the perhaps most difficult chapter of German history. It is the wish of editors and supporters that in this light the overall project “Learning from History – Projects on National Socialism and Holocaust in School and Youth Work” will be received as a contribution to intercultural understanding.

#### **Contents of the CD-ROM**

In addition to the project presentations, further documents and historical photographs the CD ROM contains a wealth of materials, which expound the broader spectrum of themes for users. Thereby, the CD ROM can also serve as a work of reference in context with the treatment of the Holocaust in school: for instance the state guidelines on dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust in the German system of education, addresses of German institutions, which concern themselves with the Holocaust in the pedagogical field, the addresses of all German memorials in honour of the victims of National Socialism, information provided by the Association of German History Teachers about history teaching in Germany, an extensive bibliography, film lists or original documents, amongst others the protocol of the Wannsee Conference and much more.

#### **About the Emergence of the Project**

It is scarcely known internationally that this difficult chapter of German history has been taught for decades in German classes. Apart from the specialist academic occupation with the Holocaust the public debate has also been triggered by artists, radio and television in the post-war decades. The artists themselves had often been victims to persecution and eyewitnesses of the Holocaust.

The aim to facilitate an exchange of experiences about the

results achieved in nationwide youth education since the unification of Germany 1990, and thus close a gap in knowledge led to the initial ideas for this project. As to guarantee greatest possible public acclaim and circulation for this CD ROM the project was developed bilingually, in both German and English. Straight away American experts were also called in alongside their German counterparts, e.g. from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Association of Holocaust Organizations, New York, representative for Holocaust centres in North America but also in other, mostly English-speaking, countries.

#### **Tasks**

Authors and editors asked themselves the following questions upon beginning work on this project:

What tasks does historical-political education have in Germany after the unification 1990?

How are the curricular guidelines with regard to the treatment of National Socialism and the Holocaust, which are formulated by the Ministries of Culture of the sixteen provinces, realised in school practice, and how was the situation before 1990 in divided Germany – FRG and GDR?

What thematic and methodical approaches do pedagogues and young people choose for dealing with National Socialism and the Holocaust?

What problems are they confronted with?

How do young people acquire history, and how do they form political awareness?

What do extracurricular learning places offer young people (for instance memorials)?

What experiences do young people make in international encounters with young people their age from e.g. Poland, Israel or the United States ?”

*From the online presentation by the die Fördergesellschaft Kulturelle Bildung e. V., Bonn:*

#### **Contact**

*Further information on the CD-ROM and related projects: [www.holocaust-education.de](http://www.holocaust-education.de) bzw. bei: Fördergesellschaft Kulturelle Bildung e.V. Annette Brinkmann / Mario Solis, Dahlmannstr. 26, 53113 Bonn, Tel.: 0228-24 22 829, e-mail: [info@kulturelle-bildung.de](mailto:info@kulturelle-bildung.de)*

#### **Das Dritte Reich – Daten, Bilder, Dokumente, Digitale Bibliothek ISBN 3-89853-149-X, PC-Version (The Third Reich – Data, Pictures, Documents)**

Daily chronicle by Manfred Overesch, Friedrich Wilhelm Saal, Wolfgang Herda und York Artelt; from the end of January 1933 until the beginning of June 1945 information is provided on political, economic and cultural events. The new edition also includes a collection of roughly 1800 contemporary photographic documents from the archives of Heinz Bergschicker, numerous illustrations as well as more than 400 text documents (laws, orders, commands, etc.). Inhalt: <http://www.digitale-bibliothek.de/scripts/ts.dll?s=5&id=34713&ap=pi/1/>

**Erinnern für Gegenwart und Zukunft – Überlebende des Holocaust berichten, Cornelsen Verlag,**

**PC- and MAC-Version**

CD-ROM developed for use in schools, containing interviews in German from the archive "Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation", which was brought into being by Steven Spielberg (<http://www.vhf.org/> – there is also an English double CD-ROM available from this archive, titled "Survivors – Testimonies of the Holocaust", with the biographies of four survivors as well as additional information).

Recorded documents by Jewish survivors, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals, Jehovah's witnesses and political opponents, rescuers and helpers of victims to persecution are linked to a great number of original documents, explanatory texts, photos and film sequences.

The main focus is on the approach via the personal life accounts of the two Jewish survivors Irmgard Konrad und Hans Frankenthal; the historical contextualisation of their testimonies is facilitated by two time charts; events, experiences and testimonies of other eyewitnesses are grouped around their life accounts, and thus permit an approach to the history of the Holocaust and its historical, political and cultural context before, during and after the time of National Socialist rule. The CD ROM was worked out by a team led by American historian Sybil Milton and Hamburg educationalist and historian Matthias Heyl.

Accompanying materials can be found in the internet forum of the Cornelsen-Verlag [www.erinnern-online.de](http://www.erinnern-online.de)

**Das Anne Frank Haus, Mattel Verlag, für PC und MAC**

Virtual tour of the Anne Frank House. Navigation through the rooms of the house is possible, stories are told – partly in form of interviews (audio and video files) – on the basis of objects and documents –; these stories can also be reached by way of a separate navigation set. The CD-ROM received the awards Milia d'Or 2000 as well as the Euro Comenius Medal 2000.

**Materials on the Internet****Lernen aus der Geschichte. Projekte zu Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust in Schule und Jugendarbeit**

<http://www.holocaust-education.de/>

Compare: information on the CD-ROM of the same title

**Fritz Bauer Institut - Homepage**

<http://www.fritz-bauer-institut.de/>

Fritz Bauer Institut – Study and Documentary Centre on the History and Effect of the Holocaust, Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

General information on the Institute; overview of exhibitions staged by the Institute, "Cinematography of the Holocaust" – research project to explore the central stock of films on the history of the annihilation of European Jews; conference reports, reviews on the topic, overview of publications, events and links

**Stiftung Topographie des Terrors (Foundation Topography of Terror)**

<http://www.topographie.de/>

Internet page of the New Exhibition and Documentation

Centre of the foundation "Topography of Terror" on the former grounds of the Gestapo and SS headquarters as well as the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* in Berlin; alongside information on the permanent exhibition and current exhibition projects and events the site also provides access to the memorial forum with an overview of German memorials in honour of National Socialist victims as well as a very detailed collection of links about relevant specialist memorials, museums and archives, libraries and research institutions. (<http://212.68.78.12/gedenkstaettenforum/links.htm>)

**House of the Wannsee Conference – Memorial and Educational Site**

<http://www.ghwk.de/>

- Memorial Sites in different countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, generally)
- Educational and Scientific Institutes and Museums
- Jewish Organisations
- Links relating to Shoah/Holocaust

The site is, apart from English and German, also available in six other languages.

**Museum of Tolerance**

<http://www.wiesenthal.com/mot/index.cfm>

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, Kalifornien, USA

- Multimedia-Learning Center (Jews, Nazis, Anti-Semitism and "Final Solution", Resistance and Rescue, World Response, Righteous among the Nations, After the War (all topics structured along Places, People, Organizations, General Topics)
- Virtual Exhibits (Online versions of past exhibitions at the Museum of Tolerance like "Visas for Life", "Dignity and Defiance", "And I still See Their Faces")
- Teacher's Resources (glossary, timeline, bibliography, 36 questions about the Holocaust, curricular resources for Teachers, Genocide – critical Issues of the Holocaust etc.)
- Special Collections (Collection of English, German and Hebrew documents along 93 topics)

**shoa.de – Ein Projekt zu Shoah, Holocaust und Antisemitismus**

<http://www.shoa.de/>

Study Group Shoa.de, Stefan Mannes, Düsseldorf, Germany

Introductions into the topic: from "Anti-Semitism" and "GESTAPO" to "NS-Foreign Policy"; biographical and bibliographical review of "victims and perpetrators" (Anne Frank, Oskar Schindler, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels); links and literature on the topic.

**Shoah-Projekt "Gegen das Vergessen"**

<http://www.shoahproject.org/>

privately designed homepage by Birgit Pauli-Haack und Ralf P. Graf, Munich, Germany

- Press review on current topics
- Online work on the Holocaust: "Das Gift der bewegten Bilder" (The Poison of Moving Images), "Doppelmord" (Double Murder), "KZ-Dachau"; information on the "Weiße Rose"
- Accounts by Holocaust survivors



- Interviews with Holocaust researchers
- Bibliography and reviews
- Commented, partly also thematically arranged, collections of links

#### **ShoaNet – Ein deutschsprachiges Informationsangebot zum Thema Holocaust**

<http://shoanet.iuk.hdm-stuttgart.de/shoan.htm>

privately designed homepage by Bettina Brenner through the student web server of the University for Library and Information Culture, Stuttgart, Germany.

German online information on the topic Holocaust with information on the backgrounds, course of events and impacts of the persecution and annihilation of European Jews by the NS regime;

- Glossary of the Holocaust (Explanations of terms and important explanations on more than 300 entries)
- Biographies of the Holocaust (more than 60 life histories)
- Chronology of the Holocaust (chronological outline of events and developments of the years 1933-1945)
- Statistics of the Holocaust (figures on emigration, detention and extermination camps, Nuremberg Trial, forced labour/reparations, the "righteous")
- Collected links (current debates (Finkelstein, Holocaust memorials, Walser/Bubis, Nazi gold, reparation, war of annihilation, films/literature, memorials/exhibitions, research/theory, Third Reich, Judaism)

#### **U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Learning Center**

<http://www.ushmm.org/>

Extensive collection of resources on the topic Holocaust; essays, pictures, photographs, films, eyewitness interviews, charts and chronologies on such topics as Anti-Semitism, the liberation of concentration camps, Jewish resistance, World War II etc.; full text search.

#### **Cybrary of the Holocaust –Voices of the Shoah – Remembrances of the Holocaust**

<http://remember.org/>

Essays, photographs, biographies of survivors, extensive commented biography, education forum

#### **Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research**

<http://taskforce.ushmm.gov/index.html>

Mission Statement / Fact Sheet, Stockholm Declaration, Meetings, Projects and Working Groups, Calendar of Events, Educational Activities, Directory of Archives, Remembrance Activities

#### **War of Annihilation – War Crimes of the Wehrmacht from 1941 to 1944**

[http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/exhibits/WoA/map\\_g.html](http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/exhibits/WoA/map_g.html)

Information on the partisan war in Serbia 1941, on the campaign of the 6. Army to Stalingrad 1941/42, the occupation of Byelorussia 1941–44, the deliberate covering up of traces and the annihilation of memory, language, judicature and the practice of killing of the Wehrmacht command and included Wehrmacht units as well as an information block

on images of the post-war years and an index of literature and photographic sources. Also available in English.

#### **A Look Back At Nuremberg**

<http://www.courtstv.com/casefiles/nuremberg/>

Background information on the Nuremberg Trials in autumn 1945, transcripts of various final speeches and testimonies

#### **The Nizkor Project Home Page**

<http://nizkor.org/>

Internet page containing information on Holocaust and Holocaust denial, Nuremberg Trials, glossary of persons on Nazis and revisionists, revisionism on the Internet, FAQs and answers; links; collection of documents that can be copied (e.g. on the Eichmann trial 1961), comments, suggestions for further reading etc.

#### **Crosspoint Anti-Racism**

<http://www.magenta.nl/crosspoint/>

Hyperlink collection for each respective country dealing with anti-racism; topics: indigenous peoples, materials on Judaism/Shoah, human rights/refugees, Sinti/Roma, disabled, lesbians/gays, women, etc.

#### **Netz Gegen Rechts**

<http://www.netzgegenrechts.de/>

Information portal against right-wing extremism organised by German newspapers, TV stations and agencies  
News, forum, questions, answers

#### **Internet Resources on Genocide and Mass Killing**

<http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/genocide.htm>

Very extensive documentation of genocides and mass killings; documents, pictures, glossaries, biographies and collections of links on topics such as "East Timor", "Poles in the Third Reich" or "Rwanda and Burundi"; discussion forum, full text search.

#### **Crimes against Humanity –Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit**

<http://www.kassiber.de/crimehum.htm>

Extensive index of links on past and present war crimes and genocides

(compare also the very detailed list of links on the page "Holocaust & Genocide Studies" <http://www.webster.edu/~woolfm/holocaust.html>)

#### **Internet addresses with reviews or data files on NS/persecution and extermination of Jews and other ethnic, social and political groups, resistance, revisionism**

📁 **Catalogue of CD ROMs und CDs for research and teaching** (A.E. Imhof / FU Berlin) <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~history1/cdcoll.htm#vermit>

📁 **Collection of reviews on CD ROMs on NS-related topics** [http://www.gedenkstaette-moringen.de/cd\\_fs.htm](http://www.gedenkstaette-moringen.de/cd_fs.htm)

📁 **The Education Software Atlas** is a non-commercial offer, which is provided by the IBI – Institute for Education in the Information Society (Berlin) and by the IfB – Institute for Educational Media (Frankfurt a.M.). <http://www.>

[bs-atlas.de/ibi/](http://bs-atlas.de/ibi/)

- ☞ **Data File of the State Institute for School Pedagogy and Educational Research Munich (ISB):** pedagogues evaluate interactive, multimedial CD-ROMs resp. DVDs for educational purposes. <http://www.i-cd-rom.de/index.html>

- ☞ **FAS – Neue Medien (FAS – New Media)**  
[www.fasena.de](http://www.fasena.de)

- ☞ **Reviews of History CD ROMs** of the Historical Institute of the Univ. Munich, <http://www.ng.fak09.uni-muenchen.de/gfn/multimedia/cdrom.html>

- ☞ **The Software Documentation and Information System (SODIS):** catalogues and assesses multimedia products for teaching and further education according to media technical, specialist, specialist didactic as well as media didactic aspects. <http://www.sodis.de/>

- ☞ **Software Rating of the Medienberatung NRW:** process-oriented rating building on experiences from school practice <http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/angebote/medienberatung/software/170101gl.htm>

- ☞ **Contemporary History Information System** commented

selection that can be reached via data file, containing presently 756 Internet addresses for historical studies, which takes special account of contemporary history. <http://zis.uibk.ac.at/>

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The "Verein für Geschichte und Sozialkunde" ("Association for History and Social Studies") is an academic organization primarily devoted to activities of research and publication in the field of history and social studies. The journal *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde* has been published since 1971. It addresses mainly topics of social historical research and concentrates on introducing issues of social studies in school history education. Over the 30 years of the journal's existence we have achieved a remarkable collection of publications in social and economic history.

Since 1992, the Association has also published a series of academic books. This series is called *Historische Sozialkunde/Internationale Entwicklung* and will soon include eighteen volumes. These textbooks have different aims. Firstly, to offer easy and readable basic information, secondly, to provide survey studies, and thirdly, to cover controversially debated issues for a wide reading public interested in historical and social studies.

In 1998 we took up the production of a further series of books under the title *Querschnitte. Einführungstexte zur Sozial-, Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte*. This series concentrates on European topics. The volumes which have been published until now dealt with the revolutionary year 1848 in a European context, the history of the European expansion, the history of sexology, and the history of the world trade since 1500, the Economy of the Holocaust, environmental history in general, basic and human rights.

The publication activities of the Association are extended by two other series of books: "Edition Weltregionen", "Geschichte-Entwicklung-Globalisierung". In spring 1999, the first book of essays based on an explicitly regional approach – in this case East Asia – was published. Titles on Africa, the "New World" and Global History followed in 2000 and 2001. A volume on South Asia is currently in preparation. The so far published volumes of the series "History-Development-Globalisation" deal with "Hindu-Nationalism in India" and "Culture and development". A further series will seek to explore the themes expansion, acculturation and globalisation. An interdisciplinary approach attempts to trace key elements of European history and its intercultural embedment.

In addition, the Association engages in smaller research projects, including social history, training in social history, the organisation of workshops and the collection of classroom-oriented materials for teachers.

The work of the Association is attracting wide support, from both home and abroad. A number of internationally well-known researchers in the field of history and neighbouring disciplines can be found among the list of authors and subscribers of our publications.

The homepage of the association (<http://www.univie.ac.at/wirtschaftsgeschichte/vgs>) provides an overview on the programme of publications including detailed information about authors, content, previews and subscription.