CHAPTER TWELVE

EVOKING AND REVOKING AUSCHWITZ

KOSOVO, REMEMBRANCE AND GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Christine Achinger

"Wenn wir Auschwitz betrügerisch künden, Könnten wir unsere nationalen Aufgaben zuordnen." "If we could come to terms with Auschwitz, then we would be able to get back to our national responsibilities." Martin Walser (1988: 20).

Eine "deutsche Identität" nach Auschwitz kann nur eine Nicht-Identität sein. "A "German Identity" after Auschwitz can only be a non-identity." Paolo Funke and Dietrich Neithaus (1989: 8).

Introduction

When in 2001 the American-British alliance started bombing Afghanistan in reaction to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, it went without any public debate in Germany that the country was among the nations offering troop deployment to the U.S. government. Only six years earlier, during the war in Bosnia, German troop deployment was a hotly disputed issue that met with considerable scepticism on the liberal and left wing of the political spectrum, and notably within the parties that today form the ruling coalition. The differences between these two conflicts notwithstanding, the case with which the German government made such an offer is an indication of the changes that the German attitude towards the international deployment of German fight-
ing units has undergone in the meantime—a development which would be impossible without substantial changes in the perception of the issue of German power in general among a large part of the population.

Decisive legal and political steps in this direction were taken during another armed conflict, the war in Kosovo. The participation of German air fighters in the NATO-attacks on Serbia in Spring 1999 marked Germany’s return to the ranks of belligerent nations, and was thus a crucial point in its post-war history. Or rather: the symbolic end of this post-war history and of the restrictions inflicted upon Germany by its Nazi past. As I will argue in this essay, however, the Kosovo-operation is but the most dramatic step in a series of developments starting with German unification, characterised, among other things, by a changing relationship to the past. The changes in dominant attitudes towards the crimes of the ‘Third Reich’ play an important role in the formation of a new national identity.

Ever since German unification, it has been an explicit political goal for many leading politicians to crown Germany’s new political importance and its undisputed position as an economic superpower with the return to the stage of international politics as a military power (see Glotz, 1994; Lüdeke, 1994; Jäger et al., 1999: 7-9; Wette, 1994 and 1998; Wiegel, 1998; Chrismann, 2000: 97–117). The importance of this step is political and symbolic: to show that now, finally, Germany is ‘normal’ again and entitled to act in the same way and as independently as any other powerful nation state (on the discourse of ‘normalisation’ see Habermas, 1993; Dubiel, 1994; Glotz, 1994: 9, 33; Jarasch, 1985; Berger, 1996; Kölsh, 1997: 295; Link, 1997; Schmid, 1998; Wolfram, 1999: 74, 133; Zuckermann, 1999: 20–23; Wilds, 2000), and to demonstrate that it has emerged from the shadows of the past and from the restrictions resulting from this past. The discourse of German ‘normalisation’, a concept dating back to the nineteenth century, has become central during the last decade, and after 1989, it usually meant ‘the end of the post-war period’, in that the division of Germany—perceived by many as a punishment for Germany’s Nazi crimes—is over, the sentence has been served (cf. Diner, 1995: 25–26).

The emphasis on this kind of ‘normality’ could be found—with obvious nuances—across political camps, from the ‘New Right’ to the Social Democrat and Green parties. In the early to mid-1990s, it was notably the neo-nationalist new German Right, which sailed under the banner of the re-emergence of a ‘self-confident nation’ (Schwilk and Schacht, 1994: 11; for a paradigmatic example of these developments see Schwilk et al., 1994; Klotz et al., 1997). A similar terminology, however, soon came to characterise the rhetoric of ‘normalisation’ within other segments of the political spectrum. In his programmatic first government statement from 10 November 1998, the Social Democrat Chancellor Gerhard Schröder reclaimed for the New Germany ‘the self-confidence of a grown-up nation which does not have to feel superior—but neither does it have to feel inferior—to anyone.’
... Our European neighbours know as well that they can trust us Germans all the more, the more we Germans ourselves are confident of our own strength. In the past, it was always the dangerous imbalances within our national self-confidence that led to extremism and discord (Schröder, 1998). What becomes apparent in this, as in numerous other speeches by the Chancellor and his cabinet colleagues from the Social Democrat and Green parties, is an attitude that Andrei Markovits characterised, as early as 1986, as the “new uninhibition” (Markovits, 1986: 148), a kind of “ingenue insouciance” that enables the younger generation to “work through” the Nazi past but also reassures them that it was someone else’s history, a left-wing version, in sum, of Chancellor Kohl’s “grace of late birth”, as Charles Maier (1997: 167) spells out.

For many observers, however, such a “return of the nation” only seemed possible at the price of a suppression of the Nazi past. As recently as 1997, Andrei Markovits and Simon Reich observed:

The entire debate over Bosnia featured the collective memory of Auschwitz. Its inescapable shadow loomed over the conflict. Whatever the road to normalcy involved, it was sure to feature many obstacles from the country’s ignominious past, a past that remains alive and well in the collective memories of Germans and Germany’s neighbours (Markovits and Reich, 1997: 148).

Sharing Markovits’s and Reich’s belief in a necessary contradiction between German national self-empowerment and the presence of the National Socialist past in public consciousness, but obviously with slightly less trust in the latter, Dan Diner predicted more pessimistically in 1995: “The more the Germans attain a positive attitude to the nation, the more contemporary German society is integrated into the continuity of national history, the weaker the memory of National Socialism and its crimes will become” (Diner, 1995: 21; see also Funke and Neuhaus, 1989; Wippermann, 1997: 126; Wolfrum, 1999: 74).

The assumption that a positive attitude towards the nation, and especially towards German military power, would only be possible at the expense of the memory of the Nazi past was shared by many experts in German politics in the mid-1990s. In debates like the one on the introduction of a national Holocaust remembrance day or the building of a national Holocaust memorial in Berlin, however, it became apparent that in future, not so much would the suppression of the past be at issue, but rather specific ways of invoking the past in order to neutralise it. The rhetoric that accompanied and legitimised the military operation in the Balkans, for example, has proven that the German past no longer stands in the way of German power. On the contrary, political discourse quickly moved towards the claim of a special German responsibility resulting from this past to prevent similar crimes elsewhere, and considerable energy was expended in pointing out the alleged parallels between the events in Kosovo and National Socialist crimes. Today, German military activity
no longer has to be justified despite Auschwitz, but is justified with Auschwitz instead.

This new role that the memory of the Nazi past has come to play within German identity formation can only be understood when seen within the discursive context of recent years. To illustrate what seems to me to be the prevailing attitudes towards the German past, I will refer to some of the recent debates to do with history and remembrance. The first section of this essay presents some crucial features of the political rhetoric and the media debates that accompanied the Kosovo war. The second section briefly refers to the so-called Walser-debate, illustrating the fact that the new, active turn to memory can coexist very well with what might appear to be its opposite, the familiar attempts at ‘drawing a line under the past’ and an unabated and potentially aggressive defensiveness against what is perceived to be an intervention from ‘outside’. Section three argues, mainly with reference to the debate on the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, that the present developments of public reference to the past tend to ritualise memory in a self-serving manner and to camouflage and mythologise what is to be remembered. In these debates, a certain diffusion of the identity of victim and perpetrator can sometimes be observed. The concluding section gives a brief summary in view of the initial question of the changing relation of memory and national identity in Germany today; furthermore, I want to tentatively indicate some of the problems which result from these developments for attempts at resisting the functionalisation of the past.

In focusing on the dominant features of these debates, however, I do of course not want to imply that German public discourse is uniform. Although throughout all these debates, a number of critical voices have made themselves heard, on some of these issues these have been sparse and largely restricted to the fringes of the media. Especially within the realm of parliamentary politics, and notably within the government, opposition has been marginal (see Loquai, 2000: 157). This lack of audible and effective opposition is partly due to the fact that the SPD and the Green Party, in former decades the most likely opponents of German re-empowerment, are now in power, and the main proponents of these developments. And it is not just the party political camps that are being reshuffled. Continuing tendencies to silence the German past coexist today with attempts at ostentatiously remembering it for self-serving purposes and in ways that tend to disconnect it from contemporary Germany; the invocation of Auschwitz is no longer an argument against, but a vehicle for German national confidence and power. In such a situation, some of the answers to the questions why, how and to what end the Nazi crimes have to be remembered might have to be reformulated. Good intentions alone are less than ever a sufficient basis for taking a reflected, critical stance.
Fighting Hitler in Kosovo

The German engagement in Kosovo, the final step towards German ‘normality’, had to overcome particular historical and political obstacles. After all, this was not the first time in this century that German bombs fell on Belgrade, and bombardments were not the only crime Germans committed in Yugoslavia during the First and Second World War (c.f. Manosevich, 1995). A further need for justification arose from the fact that the attack was, according to many interpretations, a violation of international law, of the German constitution and of several other international conventions (Lütz, 2000a, 2000b; Lequien, 2000: 120–122). These obstacles had to be overcome by a strong moral legitimation. The eagerness to compare Serbian politics to German National Socialism and Serbs to Nazi perpetrators needs to be analysed in this context.

This eagerness is illustrated when foreign minister Joseph Fischer compared Milosevic to ‘Stalin and Hitler’ (lz, 13.4.1999: 3), called the Serbian police ‘Milosevic’s SS’ (Rohloff, 2000: 68; Fischer in Die Welt, 1.4.1999: 2), and stated that the Kosovars ‘must believe they have woken up in the film Schindler’s List in 1999’ (Rohloff, 2000: 68). Accordingly, for Fischer, the military intervention was ‘not a war, but [...] resistance’, comparable to the actions of the Spanish resistance fighter ‘La pasaran’; he exclaimed the Spanish Republican ‘No pasaran’ as a motto for the Kosovo war (Der Spiegel, 16.1999: 36). Fischer and Defence Minister Rudolf Scharping discovered ‘concentration camps’ in Kosovo (Die Welt, 1.4.1999: 1), and Scharping spotted ‘the hideous face of our own history’ (Frankfurter Rundschau [FR], 26.3.99: 6) and a ‘systematic extermination’ of the Kosovo-Albanian elite, like that of the Polish elite under the National Socialist terror regime (Die Welt, 1.4.1999: 1). When Chancellor Schröder was questioned about the lack of evidence for the existence of concentration camps, he countered that ‘it depends on what you understand by this concept’. Presented with the fact that the claim of tens of thousands of people being imprisoned in the sports stadium in Pristina had been disproved by the German army’s own aerial photographs, he retorted: ‘Those who see and want to see the misery of flight and expulsion do not have to wait for aerial reconnaissance evidence in order to see clearly’ (Der Spiegel, 15.1999: 35).

Misjudgements and even obvious misrepresentations and fabrications, thus, did not even require explanation – merely referring to the potential existence of concentration camps brings with it a powerful emotional resonance that turns the demand for proof into cold-hearted pedantry.

The parallels and equations between the events in Kosovo and National Socialist crimes, however, were not always made as explicit as in the above examples. Much more frequently, the connection was implicit, often produced by applying terms to the Kosovo events that had for a long time been reserved for references to National Socialism – such as ‘special unit’, ‘selection’, ‘genocide’ or ‘deportation’. The equation
merged into the description itself and was thus no longer subject to debate.

Such implicit analogies were particularly strong in the use of images. The most prominent alleged links between Serb and Nazi crimes were photographs and film sequences: pictures that quoted motifs known to the German public from publications and films on National Socialism. These pictures from Kosovo often showed relatively harmless scenes and acquired significance only through this transference. Film sequences of refugees on a train, for example, were explicitly linked by TV commentators to images of the trains to the concentration camps (Nachtpublikation, ZDF, 26.5.1999). The tabloid BILD (1.4.1999: 1) captured a full page photograph of a checkpoint at the Macedonian border, crowded with Albanian refugees, with the sentence 'They are driving them into the concentration camps'.

Not only did these pictures mobilise emotions more efficiently than texts. They were also able to replace real evidence by activating the link to similar pictures from World War II and the National Socialist genocide. During decades of public and mass media use, a number of pictures from the Nazi era have been canonised, becoming part of German collective memory. Although each of these pictures only shows glimpses of the mass crime, individual situations within the gigantic collective undertaking, they were turned by this process of canonisation into metonyms, into pars pro toto representations of the whole crime, into what Cornelia Brink has called 'icons of extermination' (Brink, 1998). A picture of the camp entrance at Buchenwald, or even, in the appropriate context, a picture of people with bundles waiting on a platform, or of rail tracks leading to the horizon, now stand for the whole killing machinery. This link between picture as signifier and genocide as signified is immediate. If we see emaciated figures behind barbed wire, we seem to 'see' the Shoah.

The immediacy of this connection can be transferred to other pictures, taken in different historical situations, which are evocative of the familiar icons. Pictures like the BILD photograph depicting the checkpoint at the Macedonian border, which need to be interpreted in the specific historical and political situation, obtain the status of immediate evidence of genocide by being directly connected with the Shoah—a process that is further facilitated by the very form of the medium of photography which lends these pictures the status of authenticity and documentary evidence.

The fact that these analogies mostly did not take the form of an explicit claim, open to scrutiny, but were inherent in the representation itself, might have contributed to the lack of public discussion about what really happened in Kosovo. Furthermore, this use of images illustrates how the growing ritualisation and canonisation of the way in which the National Socialist crimes are remembered may contribute to robbing the Shoah of its historical specificity. It turns into a cipher or metaphor that can be extracted from its historical context, stripped from its essential connection with anti-
semitism and relocated and deployed in various ways – a development that can be observed in other contexts as well, as I argue below.

The eagerness to equate Serb crimes with German crimes had an obvious, pragmatic political function. Every discussion about international law, about the civilian victims of the bombings, about adequacy and possible consequences becomes cynical when – as was pretended – the prevention of ‘another Auschwitz’ is at stake. Such an analogy was no argument in a political debate. Rather, it was a means of disqualifying and preventing any debate in advance. Furthermore, assertions of similarity always work both ways – when the crimes against the Kosovars are seen as a case of genocide comparable to the murder of the European Jews, then by the same token the German crimes during World War II are perceived as similar to what happened in Kosovo. The Shehab can thus be seen as one ethnic conflict among many others, different only in size. Finally, in fighting Hitler in Kosovo, Germany had eventually made it to the right side, the side of the allies in World War II.

So far, the ‘Auschwitz’ rhetoric during the Kosovo conflict might be reminiscent of former attempts at relativising German crimes by comparing them with the suffering of the Germans in and after World War II, U.S. crimes in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Gulag, or – more recently – the suffering of Germans in the GDR (Gesell, 1998: 55–56; Kröger, 1998: 264). A new phenomenon was, however, that these parallels were not accompanied by an explicit attempt to keep quiet about or diminish National Socialist crimes. On the contrary, German politicians never seemed more willing to publicly acknowledge the nation’s infamous past. And, for the first time since 1945, military empowerment did not presuppose to play down this past, but the claim of Germany’s global political responsibility was derived from it (Wilds, 2000).

This marks a radical change in the way Germany relates to the Nazi crimes: as long as the consciousness of the nation’s continuity with the perpetrators, and an awareness of the fact that personal and collective identities in Germany continue to be linked with this past, were still alive – however unacknowledged – the Nazi crimes stood in the way of Germany’s return as a powerful nation state onto the stage of international politics. Today, however, the relation of the Federal Republic to Nazi Germany seems strangely contradictory. On the one hand, the connection seems to be severed; the Nazis were ’them’, not ’us’, and the crimes of the past are no longer a reason for today’s abstention. This matches the ubiquitous rhetoric of ’new uninhibition’, of the end of the past war period, of the New Germany and the new ’Berliner Republik’. On the other hand, some connection still seems to exist, for it is stated that a particular German obligation derives from that very past to prevent genocide all over the world. The National Socialist crimes are thus no longer something that cannot be mitigated or undone, but only accepted and admitted. Today, they can finally be compensated and paid off.
The link between past guilt and present activism is provided by the notion of a particular German ‘responsibility’ arising from Germany’s past. This notion became particularly prominent during the heated debate on Daniel Goldhagen’s book Hitler’s Willing Executioners (1996), perceived by many critics as advocating the Kollektivschuldthese, the thesis of collective German guilt. In the course of this debate, many commentators agreed with the formula: ‘not collective guilt, but collective responsibility’. Yet ‘responsibility’ can mean both ‘responsibility for one’s past deeds’ and ‘responsibility for future tasks’, and it is the latter that clearly dominates contemporary debates.

The emphasis on this responsibility, as well as the assertion that Germany can now be trusted, presupposes the acknowledgement of Germany’s ignominious past and the active integration of this past into national self-representation. This has been manifested in the creation of a number of new national institutions. Since 1995, Germany has had a national ‘Remembrance day for the victims of National Socialism’, and soon it will be able to present a gigantic ‘Memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe’ in Berlin, next to the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate, the symbols of national power. Memory is no longer an imposed burden, but an actively embraced ritual, and it is increasingly becoming a state affair.

This also means that, perhaps more than ever before, the German state and its representatives can actively shape what is remembered, how and to what end. The degree to which the nationalisation of memory determines which ‘lessons’ are allegedly to be ‘learnt from Auschwitz’ becomes apparent in the fact that Germany’s responsibility is much more eagerly embraced when it comes to preventing Auschwitz all over the world than when it comes, for example, to compensations for forced labourers (Surmann, 1999a and b). One might ask how serious can a lesson allegedly learned from the German past be taken if it only consists of fighting human rights violations wherever it is convenient for German foreign policy (Lequid, 2000: 158–160), while at the same time, Germany keeps up an ethnic definition of citizenship, tries to minimise immigration, and further closes its borders to refugees.

The fact that Germany’s past is no longer treated with embarrassment or passed over in silence has reinforced the claim to a monopoly on the ways in which it is remembered. Interventions from what is perceived to be the ‘outside’ can be met with aggressive defensiveness. Such mechanisms are exemplified by the so-called ‘Walser Debate’ in the Winter of 1998–99.

The Walser Debate

The writer Martin Walser – once considered to be left-wing, but who has developed, since the late 1980s, a profile as the author of increasingly
problematic articles in leading German newspapers, apologetic of growing nationalist sentiments – was awarded the ‘Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels’, the ‘peace-prize of the German book-trade’, one of the most prestigious prizes in Germany. During the award ceremony Walser delivered a speech in which, amongst other things, he attacked what was for him the omnipresence of depictions of German crimes during World War II in the media as the ‘Dauerrepräsentation unserer Schande’ (‘the permanent representation of our shame’) (Walser 1998: 15). Unlike the English word ‘shame’, the German word ‘Schande’ does not mean ‘feeling ashamed’, in the sense that it does not describe an emotion related to one’s actual deeds, but rather the fact that one’s honour was damaged in the eyes of others, and bears the connotation of ‘being disgraced’. This choice of expression construes the German past not as a problem in itself, but as a problem mainly in so far as it damaged Germany’s image in the world, reducing the problem to one of reputation. Walser insisted that many references to Nazi crimes – references which he described as using Auschwitz as a ‘moral club’ (‘Moralkeule’) – were nothing but exploiting Germany’s ‘shame’ for present-day purposes.

Walser did not name the addressees of this critique, quoting an unnamed ‘thinker’ and an unnamed ‘poet’, identifiable as Habermas and Gress only for those in the know, and otherwise talking about ‘intellectuals’ and ‘the media’. At the time, however, the newspapers reported the debates about the attempt of former forced labourers to finally receive some small compensation, and a government spokesman commented that Germany’s European neighbours should get used to the fact ‘that Germany won’t let itself be pilloried with its bad conscience any longer’ (cited in Künitzel, 1999). In this context, Walser’s vagueness was careless, to say the least. As Salomon Korn (1998) has observed, Walser failed to ‘avoid the impression that this was again aimed at the “usual suspects”’, for example the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, the World Jewish Congress, or even “international Jewry”.

Although it remained unclear exactly who Walser’s enemy was, it was very clear who, for him, was being explicated and who was under attack.

Those who voice such sentiments want to hurt us because they think we deserve it. They probably want to hurt themselves as well, but us too, all Germans. For this much is clear: in no other language could one speak in this way in the last quarter of the twentieth century about a people, a population, or a society. You can only say that about Germans (Walser, 1998: 15).

Walser’s speech was disingenuous, vague and evasive; it was a speech that carefully left room for interpretation. On the one hand, he claimed to articulate criticisms nobody could disagree with – for who would not agree that the ‘instrumentalisation’ of Auschwitz, the ritualisation of memory and remembrance as a ‘compulsory exercise’ should indeed be criticised? On the other hand, doubts about who was the target of this
critique – and hence what it really meant – necessarily arose from his use of formulations reminiscent of the right-wing arsenal of aggressive, often antisemitic, defence against evocations of the German past (Krenn, 1999). Walser, however, refused to admit that his speech was liable to be misunderstood or open to interpretation by right-wing groups as support for their views. Somewhat surprisingly for a professional writer who, one might expect, is fully aware that texts are open to interpretation, he insisted, on the contrary, on the lack of ambiguity of his speech and emphasised its ‘liberating effect’ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [FAZ], 14.12.1998: 40) for large parts of the population.

Much more interesting and relevant than Walser’s personal opinions, however, are the public reactions to his speech and the ensuing debate (documented in Schirrmacher, 1999; see also Krenn, 1999; Klitz and Wiegand, 1999; Rohloff, 1999; Zuckermann, 1999: 9–32). Walser received a standing ovation from an audience of more than 1,200 people, which included many figures of German cultural and political life. Only a mere handful of those present remained seated, notably the chairman of the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, and his wife. And when Bubis, who later publicly criticised Walser’s talk, was attacked by the latter in the most arrogant way (FAZ, 14.12.1998), almost no voice was publicly raised in his defence. Instead, the debate triggered the publication of a number of laudably or openly antisemitic articles, not only in right-wing newspapers, while Bubis was left standing almost completely alone for a considerable time. Chancellor Schröder responded to the debate by saying: ‘It would be wrong to deny that the problem Walser has pointed out really exists. Some of his formulations were overstated. A writer is allowed to do that. I am not’ (Die Zeit, 6/1999).

Two points were made very clear by this incident, by the telling absence of critical media reactions and by what Sigrid Löffler called ‘the deafening silence of the politicians’ (Löffler, 1999; see also Markovits, 1999). First, there is obviously a certain amount of hypocrisy in all these official acts and ceremonies of remembrance. And second, as soon as a prominent German Jew like Bubis dares to comment on the ways in which Germany comes to terms with its past, then – in perfect keeping with Walser’s invocation of a community of the accused – this is perceived by many people as an attack from the ‘outside’ (see Bubis, 1999).

It is still the case today that many Germans see Jews as strangers whose presence is merely tolerated (Maier, 1997: 167), a viewpoint illustrated by a local politician’s question to Bubis: ‘Your home country is Israel, is that correct?’ (Bubis, 1999: 13). Such strangers can easily turn into enemies if they criticise the nation’s way of dealing with its past, and their mere existence can be perceived as such a critique. This became apparent when Walser reproached Bubis for visiting the scene of an arson attack on a building housing migrant workers and asylum seekers, which had been perpetrated by neo-Nazis: ‘I am asking you: in what capacity were you
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there? [...] As soon as you turn up, there is immediately a link to 1933" (FAZ, 14.12.1998: 40). The Jew is a living reminder and a living reproach, and as such, is an assailant; this is one of the core motifs of what has been described as 'secondary antisemitism' (Funke and Neuhäusl, 1989: 15; Bergmann and Erb, 1991; Kuhlen, 1997), a phenomenon that has also become apparent in other recent debates on issues to do with the Nazi past that involved Jewish protagonists, such as the Goldhagen debate (Aschheim, 1998).

The notion that it is the Jews who are blackmailing Germany with its guilt was, accordingly, the underlying theme in a commentary by Rudolf Augstein, the editor of Der Spiegel, Germany’s most influential political weekly, which is generally regarded as liberal. Starting with the Walser debate, Augstein ended with the planned Holocaust-memorial in Berlin – a 'blemish [...] directed against the capital and against Germany which is forming itself anew in Berlin' (Augstein, 1998: 32), forced upon us by 'the New York press and the sharks in barrister robes', those who represented former forced labourers in their claims against Germany. In Augstein's view, the memorial is being built due to fears of a 'publicity campaign' whose source 'was implied in Adenauer's [...] words: "World Jewry is a great power."' (Ibid.: 33).

Augstein's and Walser's outraged rejection of the memorial, as a blemish that should never be built, is clearly not representative of the majority of published voices. Although Augstein's position hardly provoked any critique, straightforward attempts to draw a line under the past have largely had their day. That today the dominant public attitude in Germany towards the past seems to be one of active moulding rather than repression, has been graphically demonstrated in the discussions on the central memorial in Berlin.

The Holocaust Memorial

The 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' will be built in the centre of Berlin, in the vicinity of Hitler's bunker and the area where the Berlin wall divided the city, not far from the Reichstag and the Brandenburg Gate. On 25 June 1999, the German Bundestag decided to realise a design by Peter Eisenman, a vast field of upright standing pillars, narrow enough to allow visitors to enter only one by one and designed to produce a physical experience of insecurity and disorientation. In addition, as part of the memorial, a Documentation and Information Centre is planned. This decision had been preceded by a ten-year debate, conducted in the media, parliament and expert colloquia. The initial impetus for the project was initiated by a private association which, together with the Federal Republic and the State of Berlin, was to become one of its three sponsors. The final design was found after two design contests. The first, from 1992
to 1995, was open to anyone, and 529 designs were submitted; its result could not be implemented due to a veto by Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The second contest, restricted to 25 invited artists and architects and ending in 1998, also failed to produce a unanimous result, so that the final decision remained with the Bundestag (see Cullen, 1999: 252-256; Jeismann, 1999: 7-31; Schweppenhäuser et al., 1999: 6-11).

This process was ridden with problems from the outset. Even the name and dedication of the project itself was contested. Could, and should, a central monument commemorating the Shoah in the country of the perpetrators, focus on the victims? Or should it not rather engage with the crimes and the perpetrators? (Krugge, cited in Schweppenhäuser and Gleiter, 1999: 56; Korn, 1999b: 55 and 1999c: 174; Koselleck, 1999: 100; Wieland, 2000: 83). Why did its name not specify who murdered the Jews of Europe? And was it not problematic for the descendants of the perpetrators to restrict this memorial to just one group among the many victims while leaving all the other victims unacknowledged?

The dedication of the memorial predetermined to a certain extent the outcome of the first contest. Among the 529 proposals brought forward, the dominant interpretation of the character of the memorial was that it should be an expression of mourning. A large proportion of the designs (documented in Heinrich et al., 1999) were documents not just of helplessness, or even tastelessness, and many of them cited Jewish mourning traditions – stones laid on graves, lines of the *kaddish* (Wieland, 2000: 91-92). The design that won one of the two first prizes in the first contest even suggested scattering large stones from Massada on a gigantic memorial slab. If one of these designs had been implemented, Germany would have adopted the attitude of a mourning family member.

The confusion was not entirely new, echoing one of the many ways in which contemporary Germans are trying to come to grips with their country’s past. During the 1990s, a particular kind of sentimental philanthropism could be observed: an increasing number of people developed a lively interest in the “sunken Jewish culture” of Eastern Europe, loved Klezmer music, and kept *memorials* on their bookshelves, while in many cities, adult education classes offered Yiddish lessons. As many observers have noted (e.g., Geisel, 1998: 55-57; Kröger, 1998: 264), this interest was not always free of problematic features. The journalist Rafael Seligmann criticized this identification with the victims as “the passion of a butterfly collector who wishes to see the Jews almost exclusively as victims, and hugs them so heartily that the living Jews are no longer able to breathe” (Seligmann, 1995: 84). Even more poignantly, Elke Geisel diagnosed both “envy of the victims and a jealousy directed towards Jewish memory” (Geisel, 1998: 57).

German self-perceptions as ‘victims of history’ date back long before World War II, and since 1945, new variants have been evident: many Germans have seen themselves as ‘victims of Hitler, of the war, of the
bombs, of the allies, of denazification, of accusations of complicity and guilt’ (Kröger, 1998: 264; see also Geisel, 1998: Jacob, 1999, 55–56; Mühlhäuser, 2001). In the final parliamentary debate on the subject, several speakers deplored the catastrophic damage the Shoah did to German culture. ‘What did we do to ourselves by killing the Jews’ was Henryk M. Broder’s sarcastic summary of such laments, voiced during the memorial planning process, and specifically in the advertisement for the second design contest (Broder, 1999: 166). This self-perception of Germany as its own victim was aptly described by the U.S. journalist Jane Kramer: ‘Germans want their past to have happened to them. They want to have suffered from themselves the way everybody else suffered from them […] Right now Germans are absorbed in an elaborate exercise in “solidarity”, if not identification, with Hitler’s victims’ (Kramer, 1995: 49).

But these manifestations of identity confusion – or rather identity appropriation – are only one of the many problems besetting the memorial project. Some of these dilemmas are inherent in any attempt of commemorating the extermination in artistic form, and result from the character of the events that are designated by the term ‘Holocaust’. The problems and aporias of representing what can never be fully represented – in artistic or literary terms, or even historically – have been reflected on in many ways over since the killing machinery was set into motion (see Friedländer, 1992). Theodor W. Adorno wrote in 1958 about the problems of turning the Holocaust into a subject of art:

For these victims are used to create something, works of art, that are thrown to the consumption of a world which destroyed them. The aesthetic principle of stylisation […] makes an unthinkable fate appear to have had some meaning: it is transfigured, something of its horror is removed. This alone does an injustice to the victims (Adorno, 1977: 189).

If this holds for what Adorno calls ‘autonomous’ works of art, how much more does it apply to an enterprise as heterogeneous – designed to serve functions that do not have anything to do with the wish to give a voice to suffering – as the building of the Berlin memorial? If the memorial project was to fail only because it is supposed to fulfil an impossible task, it still might succeed in making this failure visible, and thus say more about the German past and present than any allegedly ‘successful’ memorial might have done. What is worrying is that it might be successful in fulfilling what, for many people, seems to be its possible task: to solve the problems of Holocaust memory in Germany once and for all, to help to remove what so far has been an antinomy – the opposition between the event “Auschwitz”, which can be no basis for any kind of identification, and the attempt to shape a positive historical identity’ (Schmid, 1998: 333). Adorno’s fear of turning the victims into the raw material for a work of art, of, however indirectly, deriving aesthetic pleasure from the horror, and of artistically introducing some kind of meaning or consolation into what is
the utter negation of meaning, seems all the more relevant in the case of
the Berlin memorial, whose construction is a national project and whose
inauguration will be a state occasion.

Memory, as Moshe Zuckermann has observed, can never remain
untainted by present individual and collective needs (Zuckermann, 1999:
13–14). The question, however, is whether these needs are themselves
acceptable, and to what extent they run counter to what might be seen as
an adequate reaction to the event. It is questionable whether memory as a
national act can escape what Hanno Loewy has called the 'underlay of a
desired identity formation: the Holocaust as a theme for the representa-
tion of the German nation, as proof of completed purgation, the Holocaust and
its remembrance as a cathartic act of purification' (Loewy, 2000: 9).

As has been made clear throughout in the remarks by politicians and
media commentators, the memorial is not just a place to commemorate
Germany's Jewish victims, but also a place to put Germany's willingness
and capacity for remembrance on show. It will undoubtedly also be a
place for public ceremony, for a farcical 'show of contrition' (Kröger, 1998:
262; see also Kittsteiner, 1999: 68), staged by leading politicians with opin-
ion from abroad in mind.

Past attempts to forget, diminish or relativise the Nazi crimes have been
partially successful, but could never reach their goal completely. At present,
such ultimately futile and often embarrassing strategies seem to be increas-
ingly replaced by a smeariness of commemoration. The Christian Democrat
MP Friedbert Pflüger, for example, emphasised during the final parlia-
mentary debate on the memorial: 'I don't know of any previous example of a
people being prepared, after years of painful discussion and based on a
parliamentary decision, to build a memorial for the crimes of their own
people' (Deutscher Bundestag, 1999: 4145). And something like pride is
apparent in the observation made by the historian Christian Meier: 'It was
only the scope of our own crimes, in combination with the relative openness
with respect to these crimes, partly forced upon us, but then also
something we proved capable of, that have made the planning of this
memorial necessary and eventually also possible' (Meier, 1999: 103–104).

The singularity of the deed results in a singularity of 'working through',
and both together guarantee the singularity of those who undertake it.
What for Walser and Augustin has been a blemish thus turns into
Germany's monument of honour. And it seems to make up for at least part
of what is remembered: 'The remembrance for which contemporary
Germany is prepared is liberating us to a significant degree from the dis-
grace of the previous state' (Meier, 1999: 104). Jane Kramer: 'They have a
stubborn, almost innocent German faith that their past is like their GNP —
something that with a good plan and a lot of attention can be adjusted'
(Kramer, 1995: 48). This presupposes not just historical distance, but also a
degree of abstraction of concrete events, a degree of ritualisation of mem-
ory that can be provided by the project of a central, official state memorial.
The proposals submitted for the first contest were dominated by contributions resorting to the aesthetic jargon of monumentality; the overwhelming and the incomprehensible; abysses, deep waters and black holes seemed to turn the reference to industrial mass extermination into an evocation of unfathomable, quasi-natural disaster. The plans for the Holocaust memorial demonstrate that the attempt to represent a crime that surpasses the limits of representation will most probably result — at best — in some kind of sublime (Brumlik, 1998; Schweppenhaus, 1999: 21-22).

This kind of design seems to have been inspired by a certain helplessness in dealing with what Robert Kudielska has called the ‘undertow of the inordinate’, provoked by the attempt to represent the unimaginable in an immediate manner. ‘The attempt to represent the monstrous is either naive or comical in a perverse way’ (Kudielska, 1999: 182-83). But it also satisfies the longing for a redemptory monument that would allow for catharsis. The need for ‘adequacy’ and complete representation, the desire that art should be able to do justice to Auschwitz, might well reflect a desire for closure. Does such a ‘desire for completion’, as the director of the concentration camp memorial site Buchenwald, Volker Krüger, has suggested, not reflect the longing for a hero — aesthetic and not historical — this time, who will erase the rupture in civilization in a stroke of genius? (Schweppenhaus and Gleiter, 1999: 81).

The memorial thus promised not to be a reminder of the banality and brutality of the crimes, but rather to create an aura of fatefulness, to provide a piece of architectural scenery that induces not horror or shame, but awe. The attitude that the debate seemed to inspire was, ‘Look at us — this nation committed the biggest crime in history and now we are building the biggest memorial’.

This process of aesthetic distancing implicit in using the language of the sublime is facilitated by the fact that building a central memorial to remember a crime which did not have a central scene, simply because it was not structured centrally, but is the product of a society that organised itself in the extermination of the Jews (Locwry, 1999), is a way of distancing oneself from this past rather than confronting it. Central national Holocaust museums in the U.S. or Israel have an altogether different function and rationale (see Tyndall in this volume). In Germany, where the remnants of the camps and other components of the killing machinery can still be found everywhere, in a country ‘that does not need a national Holocaust museum because it is one itself’ (Geisel, 1998: 65), a central memorial is obviously in danger of averting the gaze from the crude historical reality of the events to be remembered, from the specific acts and the specific perpetrators. It might even facilitate the removal of the crime to a sphere outside history altogether, to sublimate the Nazi genocide into an existential ‘evil’.

The decision to build the Berlin memorial has been taken at a time when the pedagogical, historical and preservation work on most of the
concentration camp memorial sites had been jeopardised or severely hampered through lack of financial support, and subsidies radically cut (cf. Korn 1999a: 39). This seems to confirm that only a peculiar kind of remembrance is officially sanctioned; in keeping with decades of East-German and West-German practice, it "minimises the reliefs in order to maximise the production of historical meaning" (Knigge, cited in Schweppenhäuser and Gleiter 1999: 51).

The initial worries, formulated by James Young, that the planned memorial would be a "burial slab for the twentieth century, a hermetically sealed vault for the ghosts of Germany's past", thus seem not altogether unjustified. Instead of inciting memory of murdered Jews, we suspected, it would be a place where Germans would come dutifully to "unshoulder their memorial burden, so that they could move freely and unencumbered into the twenty-first century. A finished monument would, in effect, finish memory itself" (Young, 2000: 194).

At first sight, a memorial in the centre of the German capital, commemorating the victims of Nazi Germany, or at least those who were murdered because they were defined as Jewish, seems to be exactly what many survivors and other critics of Germany's post-war politics of memory have called for: namely, at last a sign of public acknowledgement that the Shoah was not just something perpetrated by 'Hitler and his henchmen', but that, in the words of Raul Hilberg, 'the machinery of destruction was the organised community in one of its special roles' (Hilberg, 1961: 410). In building the memorial in its designated place, one might argue, this insight would be physically implanted into the symbolic heart of the New Germany, it would be a conspicuous reminder of the events that make an unreflectively positive German national identity impossible. Young, initially a sceptic, remembers having asked himself: 'Did I want Germany to return its capital to Berlin without public and visibly acknowledging what had happened the last time Germany was governed from Berlin? With its gargantuan, even megalomaniac restoration plans and the flood of big-industry money pouring into the new capital in quantities beyond Albert Speer's wildest dreams?' (Young, 2000: 195-96). Naturally, his answer was negative.

A memorial project such as this must confront problems that cannot ultimately be resolved. But perhaps, one might optimistically suppose, a memorial that incites reflections and debates about its insufficiency - and thus forces us to engage not just with the National Socialist past, but also with the problematic of historical memory and its significance for Germany today - is not that bad, after all. And the pros and cons of the initial project notwithstanding, at least now, when any decision against the memorial could only be a victory for those who would prefer to forget about the Holocaust altogether, it might be better to build the Eifelmann design than not to build it at all (Schweppenhäuser, 1999: 24-26; Young, 2000: 194).
However, even if one ignores all the other problems that are implied in the project of a central national memorial with this specific designation, the question of whether the memorial can fulfill the task of subverting the architectural symbols of national power and splendour that surround it remains. Is it really always the case that a monument necessarily transforms an otherwise benign site into part of its content, even as it is absorbed into the site and made part of a larger locale? (Young, 1995: 84)? The question seems to be whether the interaction can not also work in the opposite direction.

Eisenman's design might be more apt to resist recuperation than many of the other proposals, but it still seems to me to be an open question whether any kind of central memorial, in this setting, could avoid fulfilling the task which national monuments are traditionally designed for: to create a 'cultic space' (Mosse, 1975: 44-45) for national ceremonies, to become an integral part of the 'State-sponsored memory of a national past' which 'aims to affirm the righteousness of a nation's birth' (Young, 1995: 81; cf. Mosse, 1975).

In his speech in parliament, Friedbert Pflüger asserted that the memorial would not be a 'burden', but a 'Liberation [...]'. The new Reichstag with its grandiose dome that will soon become the symbol of our parliamentarism, the Brandenburg Gate, the Neues Museum and now the Holocaust memorial—these are the symbols on which we build our new capital, a good synthesis of history, present, and a look into the future. I am looking forward to the New Berlin' (Deutscher Bundestag, 1999: 4145). There is nothing that cannot be put into service of the construction of national identity.

The only way of dealing with this dilemma, the clearest statement on the issue of Holocaust memory and national identity, was proposed by the artist Horst Hoheisel: to demolish the Brandenburg Gate and let the rubble be the memorial. But this design, unsurprisingly, was never taken into consideration (on counter monuments in Germany see Young, 1992 and 1995; Schmidt-Wulffen, 1994; Korn, 1999b: 520).

The memorial will be a symbol of Germany's purgation, a marker of its rupture with the past — and at the same time might be understood as a reminder of the New Germany's special mission, based on its expertise in genocide. I think there is a serious danger that this memorial might become less a place that reminds Germany of its Nazi crimes than a symbolic manifestation of Germany reinventing itself, among other things, as a victim of its own history, as a tragic hero, as another 'chosen people' with a historical mission to fulfill: to prevent 'Auschwitz' — or what German politicians, as experts in questions of genocide, judge to be its equivalent — anywhere in the world, by any means deemed necessary.

Conclusion: Remembering to Forget

As I hope to have demonstrated, the recent turn to memory in Germany is a highly ambivalent process. At first sight, it seems to meet a demand
that has long been voiced by survivors and their descendants, as well as by other critical voices inside and outside Germany: that the significance of National Socialism for German history be acknowledged, and that the Holocaust should no longer be relativised or silenced, but be given a central place in German national memory. Contemporary German 'memory culture' seems to live up to this demand more fully than ever before. However, the reverse side of this nationalisation of memory – as we saw in the case of the Walser debate – seems to involve a copyright on the ways in which the Holocaust is remembered. This coexists with a persistent widespread wish to 'draw a line under the past', an unabated defensiveness against interference from what is perceived as the 'outside', and, accordingly, a potential for aggressive reactions towards survivors and other members of victimised groups.

After this essay was written, the developments I describe have reached a new climax in the context of the German debates on the Israeli reaction to the second Intifada. Not just at pro-Palestinian demonstrations, but also in the media and in statements by numerous politicians, the Israeli measures were likened to Nazi methods. By thus passing on the metaphors of the Holocaust to the country of the survivors and their descendants, the apologetic strategy of universalisation and neutralisation of the Holocaust attained a new quality. Furthermore, when in April 2002 the German participation in a possible military peacekeeping mission in Israel was discussed, both the media and its political proponents in the government cast the issue in the vocabulary of the 'normalisation of Germany's relation to Israel' and the overcoming of outdated historical inhibitions' (cf. Meng and Vombornen, 2002). The debate on the Middle East was characterised by an intensified rhetoric of secondary anti-Semitism – in an old collective performative self-contradiction, a flood of statements and articles critical of Israeli politics were introduced by variations of 'We all know it is not allowed to say anything against the Jews, but...'. The number of verbal and physical anti-Semitic attacks against German Jews rose to a level which was unprecedented in the last decades, and a number of incidents illustrated that German Jews are still not perceived as German compatriots, but rather as Israeli citizens in exile who have to be taken to task for Israel's politics and conspire in the suppression of righteous German protest against Israeli crimes. Most prominent among them was the case of Jürgen Möllemann, the vice chairman of the liberal party, F.D.R., who indirectly justified Palestinian terror attacks (cf. Reemtsma, 2002), and who attacked a Jewish politician and talk show host for allegedly declaring criticisms of Israeli policies illegitimate and for furthering anti-Semitism by his behaviour. The affirmation of the racial paradigm implicit in his statements notwithstanding, his party's reaction was telling: half-hearted in the most charitable of interpretations – a strategy rewarded by a brief boost in the polls for the September 2002 elections.
Some of the recent debates about memory and history in Germany are in danger of turning from self-reflection into national self-affirmation, as illustrated by the debates surrounding the central memorial in Berlin. The way in which Germany’s crimes are remembered seems to distance and generalise them, to turn them into an event altogether disconnected from history, a kind of fate that has befallen victims and perpetrators alike, as Germany’s catastrophic tragic flaw invokes both nemesis and reconciliation.

A similar ritualisation can also be observed in the formulaic ways of talking about the Holocaust, which risk turning what was once a critique into affirmation. The insight, for example, that the Shoah cannot ultimately be understood or represented in its entirety, was initially formulated, in particular by survivors, at the end of a painful process of attempting to describe and to understand; and the experience of these attempts and their failure was preserved in pointing out the limits of representation. Today, the ‘unspeakability’ and ‘incomprehensibility’ of the Shoah has become part of the common lore of the chattering classes and the stock-in-trade of politicians’ speeches. What were once insightful outcomes of sincere attempts to understand what happened are now cheap, hackneyed phrases that release us from closer engagement with the historical facts and glorify ignorance as profound reflection.

In times when the dominant attitude to the past was repression and denial, critical demands seemed comparatively easy to formulate: the German crimes should be acknowledged for what they were, and should become part of German self-perception. In times when the problem is instead ‘concealment through eloquence’, how to identify and criticise dubious ways of dealing with the past is far less evident, and it is much easier to contribute unwillingly to discourses which render invisible what they pretend to focus on. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the demand to integrate the memory of the Nazi crimes into German national identity — instead of questioning the latter — might have been problematic all along. Today, it has become evident that a national frame of reference will always develop a dynamic that tends to subsume, distort and functionalise what otherwise might blow it apart. This process became visible during the Kosovo war, which demonstrated the efficacy of passing metaphors of National Socialism on to the present enemy of choice and of flying under the flag of ‘active repentance’.

A statement attributed to the Jewish mystic Ba’al Shem Tov, inscribed in Yad Vashem: ‘Forgetting prolongs exile, and the secret of redemption is remembrance’, has gained great popularity in the discourse of German politics of memory. Germans want to return from exile into the bosom of the nation, and remembrance shall bring redemption from history.

During the final debate in the German Bundestag on the Holocaust memorial on 25 June 1999, a Christian Democrat MP described the function of the memorial as the ‘Victims of the so-called Third Reich’. ‘Es muss
speechen zu lassen' (Deutscher Bundestag, 1999: 4115) – which means both 'letting them speak to us' and 'making them speak to us'. By virtue of its very ambivalence, this is probably the most precise description of what is going on in German politics of memory today: while ostentatiously opening our ears to the massage from the past, we make the victims say what we want to hear. Germany is annexing the voices of its silenced victims in order to give itself a mandate for new self-empowerment. The attack on Yugoslavia was an act of self-creation of the Berliner Republik; the New Germany finally found a way to come to grips with its infamous past in the service of a glorious future.

Notes

1. In the nineteenth century, this discourse mainly focused on the perceived 'abnormality' of the fragmentation of what was perceived as 'Germany' into a multitude of large and small states and principalities – an abnormality for which the first German unification in 1871 was recommended as a cure. Though in an indirect manner, mediated by more than a century of changing discourses on German national identity, this constellation can still be traced in today's perceptions of unification and the problematic character of German nationhood.

2. The radical right-wing magazine National Journal applauded Schroeder for this speech because, according to the journal, he was the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic who gave the abused and humiliated German people back its self-esteem. He even broke the Holocaust-taboos – what a chancellor! (http://globalfiles.tny/nc/nachrichten).

3. One might argue that even if the military deployment was publicly justified by dubious parallels, it might nevertheless have been the right thing to do. This is not the place to argue the pros and cons of the Kosovo intervention and of the German role within it; however, an evaluation of the rhetoric that accompanied it would be incomplete without taking into account the fact that the German government was unable to produce evidence for the the parallels it made with Nazi and Nazi-like crimes. Moreover, as was later revealed, there is compelling evidence that politicians consciously and grossly misrepresented the situation on the ground (Loquai, 2000: 123-144; Rulff, 2000: 67ff, Angerer 2001). The sincerity of the vociferously asserted humanitarian motivation of military deployment might also be questioned in view of a number of other circumstances. One of them is that almost until the day of the first bombardments, Kosovar refugees were denied asylum, based on the assumption that there was no persecution of ethnically defined groups in Kosovo. According to Fischer's own Foreign Ministry assessment (see Link-Hovev, 1998), ALANNA, 1999, Frankfurter Rundschau, 23.4.99). After the end of the armed conflict, they – like the refugees from Bosnia previously – were deported as quickly as possible and the diche of the Albanian refugee as a natural born gang criminal was reestablished. Finally, the fact that in other cases of massive state violations of human rights, as for example by NATO ally Turkey, the German government proved far less sensitive, and even supported German weapons sales to Turkey, might cast some doubt on the genuinely humanitarian motivation of German foreign policies.

4. A closer look reveals that this process is indeed more complicated: While on the one hand, 1933-45 Germany is no longer perceived as the same nation as
today's Germany, while 'the Nazis' are perceived as clearly opposed to 'us', which makes it far easier to openly acknowledge and discuss National Socialist crimes, a reverse movement can also be observed: the temporal and generational distance, the comfortable knowledge that the issue at stake is no longer the personal guilt of present actors, makes it easier to develop an empathetic understanding of the grandfathers' generation, of how they could become what is perceived as 'fellow travellers' [Mitläufer] and cogs in the machine - a form of understanding that avoids the pitfalls of imagining the NS as inexplicable barbarism, absolute evil, part of a world that follows fundamentally different laws than ours, but can come dangerously close to being apologetic and to losing the monstrous of the crime out of sight in a close-up on the banality of many of the everyday activities of thousands of people without whom the Holocaust could never have happened. These phenomena seem to be influenced by a desire for reconciliation with the generation of the fathers and grandfathers.

5. The perception of being the victims of such an indiscriminate charge of guilt has haunted Germans since 1945. The history of the Kollektivschuldthese would doubtless be worth writing, as it is one of the best examples of the interplay of guilt, projection and aggressive defence that characterises much of the German attempts to come to grips with the past (Renz, 1990; Frei, 1997: 390; Wippermann, 1997: 107–113).

6. The same point was made by one of the memorial designs submitted to the first contest, which suggested to build a bus station on the central memorial site from where buses to the German concentration camp memorial sites would leave.

7. The text of the advertisement for the first design contest is formulated in a peculiarly subjectless way. The first sentence informs us that 'the so-called final solution destroyed millions of Jewish lives' (Kullen, 1999: 252). The only human actor explicitly mentioned in the text is Adolf Hitler, and it was, according to the text, his words 'which led to the acts that irreversibly changed the fate of all Jewish citizens in Europe through suffering, exile and death' (ibid.: 253; I owe this insight to Schumacher, 1999).

8. The memorial at the Neue Wache in former East Berlin was the first disputed attempt to build a national memorial for World War II. It was severely criticised, not just for its aesthetic design, but notably for its dedication 'to the victims of war and despotism', which honours victims of the Holocaust in the same way as fallen soldiers of the Wehrmacht or East Germans suppressed by the Stasi.

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