

## Holocaust Education in (West-)Germany - Now and Then.<sup>1</sup>

I do not find it easy to write and to speak about Auschwitz. The subject matter is so complex that it presents a particular challenge to the language in which we communicate with each other on this topic. The *limits* of the language reflect the *limits* of our comprehension and our understanding. It seems to me to be absolutely essential to keep reminding oneself of these limits. Perhaps it will become even more significant for me at this point while I am formulating my thoughts for American readers in the English language, which in view of the Holocaust - contrary to the German language - is free of any guilt. The bitter copyright on expressions such as *Endlösung* [final solution] or *Vernichtungslager* [extermination camp] is definitely German.

In the following text I, in my capacity as an educator and historian, will be outlining some important features of the pedagogic theories surrounding the Holocaust in (West) Germany. However I am aware that my scientific, objectivizing perspectives and distance also have their limits. As a German educator and historian and member of the *second* or *third generation* non-Jewish Germans after Auschwitz, I am part of the problem I am describing.

### Trends in memory

The memory of Holocaust and the confrontation with it obviously seems to be subject to its own trends. On the one hand cyclic elements, such as the periodically recurring "round-figure anniversaries" including the 50th anniversary commemorations last year, can be recognized as appropriate occasions for commemoration. On the other hand there are the anticyclic events which give rise to social and political debates. For example, I can think of the big NS court cases such as the *Eichmann Trial* in Jerusalem (1961/62) or the Frankfurt Auschwitz Case (1963-65) and the reactions to or of the cultural and medial events which focused the handling of NS history on new lines. Between 1950 and 1958 alone, for example, 700.000 copies of "The Diary of Anne Frank" were sold in West Germany [Wielenga (1993), 48]. The fact that the theater productions and films based on the diary drew huge crowds in Germany, in particular of schoolchildren, gives the Hamburg sociologist *Wolfgang Kraushaar* cause to speak of "a small mass movement". Special significance can be attributed to the televising of the film "Holocaust" in West Germany in 1979. Through events such as these, memory trends are given new anticyclic stimulus. The patterns of the commemorative cycle have hardly been researched into, analyzed or comprehended.

Before I single out two such anticyclic discussion topics which appear to me to be significant turning points in the public and pedagogic handling of the Holocaust in Germany, I will first try to explain my train of thought. One of my bases is a statement by *Mark Weitzman*, Director of the Educational Outreach in the Simon-Wiesenthal-Centers in New York, who in January 1995 at our Conference in Hamburg addressed the mainly German participants with the following words:

"If the Holocaust is the text of what we are studying, then the context exists in each country, in each family. The context is different, and must be approached differently. We can offer models and suggestions and offer assistance. You have the responsibility of instilling the subject into the curriculum, and not just in a formal sense. It also requires absolute honesty between teacher and students. It is not a normal subject that can be approached simply, academically as a list of facts and figures. Open up, be ready to challenge rigid roles, dialogue, debate, discuss. But be honest, both teachers and students. If it breaks the balance of tradition, maybe that is not a bad idea. What is preserved in a society, in museums, in curricula, in books, what is preserved and taught to the next generation, indicates what a society finds valuable. What is not preserved or taught, equally makes a judgment upon the values of that society. Think about what is going on in your situation and understand what is said about your societies." [Schreier / Heyl (1995), 372]

This makes it clear that any pedagogic efforts can likewise provide enlightenment on how a society and its members see and want to see themselves and their history and what picture

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Lisa Struck, Hamburg.

they would like portrayed of themselves. At this stage we should not forget that education which feels an obligation to its inherent rationalistic potential and command, is at the same time always a step deeper in the conflict with the society - it may not only formulate and transport a social consensus but must at the same time give its contribution to the social criticism and self-reflection, without which a democracy would lose its credibility and self-preservative energy. In his comments *Weitzman* formulates explicitly the necessity to regard and to decipher the pedagogic handling of the Holocaust as a form of social relations with this part of history. Indeed to me, some certain pedagogic phenomena only seem to make real sense when we regard them with a background of more general social and psychological events.

I regard the pedagogic forms of the handling of the history of the Holocaust as an expression of the general social efforts at putting things into context. *Putting things into context* here means a form of assimilation of history, into which it is possible to integrate the available continuities and discontinuities, turning points and fissures. At its most favorable, it is a process of conscious handling, a continual process of assimilation, which includes the dilemmas and ambivalences in our considerations. We are part of that context and to that extent to which we are trying to comprehend the context, into which we are intending to incorporate the Holocaust, we are being compelled and are compelling ourselves to think about the things that happened and about ourselves. Here, putting things into context means the memory process - in the sense of working on one's identity - and takes reflexive and reflected form.

The first detailed debates from the German side about aims and possibilities of treating the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust in educational institutions began - with regard to West Germany - in 1960. From 1945 until the founding of the two German states, the Allies in the Western zones had attempted to introduce new democratic elements into the classroom. As they had to rely mainly on teachers, who themselves had had a National Socialist past - no matter how this came about, the effect of these efforts should be regarded however with a certain amount of reticence.<sup>2</sup> With the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany, a period began in West Germany which was influenced by *national restoration, unpolitical objectivism, anti-Communism* and *social stabilization* [Meyers (1980), Pingel (1994), 222]. In the mid-sixties this phase was ended by a period of social upheaval.

Still in the conservative and restorative Adenauer era, an event occurred which drew attention to the latent and manifest anti-Semitism present in the West German people. During the night of 24th to 25th December 1959 - as part of a whole wave of anti-Semitism - the synagogue in Cologne was smeared with swastikas. This event provoked the Federal Chancellor at that time, *Konrad Adenauer* (almost three weeks afterwards, on 16th January 1960) to give his - to a certain extent also pedagogic - comments:

"Today I turn to my Jewish fellow citizens and tell them they can be completely at ease. This state is behind them with all its power; I give you my word. To my fellow German citizens in general I can say: If you can catch a rascal anywhere, punish him on the spot and give him a good thrashing. That is the punishment he deserves." [Schönbach (1961), 49]

However, the anti-Semites were never alone in German society, as the Federal Chancellor at that time tried to portray in his statement. They were simply acting out the anti-Semitism which was present in the heart of society.

Awakened by the anti-Semitic events of the winter 1959/60 and with an obvious view to the reactions in other countries, the first serious social pedagogic activities towards a stronger contemplation of NS history began at the beginning of the sixties. These were supported by decisions made by the Ministers of Education concerning appropriate changes in the teaching curricula. On 11th and 12th February 1960 the Conference of the Ministers of Culture and Education of the member states hastened<sup>3</sup> to formulate a resolution concerning the "treatment of the recent past in history and social studies lessons in schools", whereby

<sup>2</sup> *Longerich* und *Schatzker* write: "To discuss NS crimes was increasingly regarded as an attack on the reforming of social order and was thrust into the background by the anti-Communist fundamental consensus. The tendency towards repression in this manner was also enormously benefited by the return on the old generation of teachers into the schools." [Longerich / Schatzker (1993), 98]

<sup>3</sup> In the Federal Republic of Germany the responsibility for education is placed upon the individual states. The permanent body for coordination is the Conference of the Ministers of Culture, Education and Church Affairs.

the topic Holocaust however was given no particular mention. But *Ekkehart Krippendorf* wrote at that time about a new trend in dealing with the topic:

"Did we not, after that hectic wave of swastika daubings everywhere around the end of last year, discuss, talk of, write about the necessary educational enlightenment concerning the Jews and anti-Semitism, the urgency of teaching contemporary history and the lack of political educational. [...] Indeed that upward trend has been running downhill since the middle of this year." [Krippendorf (1960), 15].

During this boom in 1963, the first thorough inquiry into the analysis of school books, with regard to the presentation of Jewry in German textbooks, was carried out by the Israeli authors *Saul S. Robinsohn* and *Chaim Schatzker* [Robinsohn / Schatzker (1963)].<sup>4</sup> Not until almost twenty years later did this work lead to the report by a "German-Israeli School Textbook Commission" in which German educators also took part [(1980), German-Israeli School Textbook Recommendations (1985)]. *Schatzker* later continued his inquiries [Schatzker (1981), Schatzker (1992), Schatzker (1994), Schatzker (1994a)], with the result that, merely from his own research work, the development of the West German school textbook becomes obvious during the period starting with the sixties and ending in the nineties. Also there was an examination by the American *Walter F. Renn* [Renn (1987)], which lent considerable support to *Schatzker's* results for the seventies until the beginning of the eighties. At this stage it is astonishing that the most significant contributions to textbook analyses originate from two Israelis and an American, whereas the essays and studies which mainly appeared later, concerning the presentation of the Holocaust in German school textbooks by German authors, appear rather more cursory and superficial. [Schallenberger (1978), Marienfeld (1985), Pingel (1993), Pingel (1994)]. A significant result of the school textbook analyses which *Longerich* and *Schatzker* formulated in 1993 in a contribution for an encyclopedia, is that the reproach of having held back information about National Socialism or the Holocaust for the period from the sixties until the nineties, is completely unfounded. [Longerich / Schatzker (1993), 99]. However the question remains as to which information, perspectives and approach should be conveyed. We will revert to this at a later stage.

A further important turning point for pedagogic confrontation with the Holocaust, as a result of which the word *Holocaust* first received its proper introduction to the German language, was the transmission of the TV program of the same name in 1979 by German Television. *Walther F. Renn* writes:

"Since the nationwide broadcast in West Germany of the NBC television series *Holocaust* in 1979, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of books, articles, films, television programs, conferences, commemorations, university courses, and local history projects, all of which signal a different kind of interest than the *Hitler Wave* of the early 1970s." [Renn (1987), 130]

*Renn* describes distinctly the difference between the reactions to *Holocaust* and the *Hitler Wave*:

"In addition to a natural curiosity of the young, the *Hitler Wave* included a great deal of nostalgia and furtive admiration of Nazism. The new interest is more firmly determined to ask difficult questions about Germans, Nazis, Jews, and genocide without the inhibitions and rationalizations, which characterized earlier generations." [Renn (1987), 130]

At about the same time came the success of the *German President's History Competition for Young People* [A competition for young people on the subject of Germany history to compete for the Federal President's Award], which in the years 1980 to 1982 was concerned with everyday life under National Socialism, and in which several thousand schoolchildren took part with essays and research work on local history [Körper Foundation (1995)], many of which were concerned with the persecution of the Jews by the National Socialists. One of the participants, a schoolboy from the town of Marburg, described an important experience gained through his work which points out a deficit in the customary depiction of the Holocaust.:

"For us it was particularly personal encounters [with Jewish citizens of Marburg], which prompted us to write about the persecution of the Jews in Marburg. [...] In our school only

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<sup>4</sup> A first study of German school books was made by *Hans Herzfeld* at the beginning of the fifties. *Herzfeld* drew attention in this study to "improper developments in the production of German school books" and "restorative tendencies" [Meyers (1980), 53]. A second, rather cursory contribution to the explanation of Jewry in West German school textbooks was supplied by *Ekkehart Krippendorf* in 1960 [Krippendorf (1960)].

the theories of fascism were taught or National Socialism was treated quite generally. The six million Jews were in fact mentioned, but that was all. In everyday life I found it impossible [...] to imagine the persecution of the Jews. One should put a face to the numbers [...]." [Galinski / Herbert / Lachauer (1982), 290]

Already in 1963, i.e. several years before the film *Holocaust*, *Robinsohn* and *Schatzker* had suggested treating the individual events more intensively in order to enable a more identifiable learning:

"The representation of the first anti-Semitic steps [...] depicted in the fate of one single Jewish family, is suitable for demonstrating the events clearly to the children and awakening their personal participation." [Robinsohn / Schatzker (1963), 32]

Identification with the victims - this soon became clear to *Robinsohn* and *Schatzker* - is ideal for penetrating through that coldness, the incapability of putting oneself in the place of others, which according to *Adorno* was one of the prerequisites for Auschwitz [Adorno (1966), 98]. The American *Evelyn R. Holt* expressed this similarly at the beginning of the nineties:

"The best way to teach about the Holocaust is by including the stories. This approach would also coincide with the *Bradley Commission on History in Schools report* which encourages the use of narrative and case studies as a way to test and illustrate concepts drawn from other disciplines, which in their turn give added meaning to the historical record.' What educators must do is to tell these stories realistically, to 'remember the faces' of those people who were affected and are still affected today. The stories of the Holocaust are accounts of courage, hope, selflessness and determination, combined with evil, degradation, selfishness, and pathos. Such a study in contrasts presents opportunities for students to develop empathy and skills in research and evaluation." [Holt (1992)]

This opportunity is often missed in German pedagogic practice. If the students learned something about the history of some Jewish individuals during the Holocaust, almost inevitably a void would be left where their Jewish identity is concerned.

In my courses at the University in Hamburg I have observed that the students have great inhibitions at voicing the word "Jew". They are uncertain what a Jew really is. They think of *Ignatz Bubis*, *Elie Wiesel*, *Martin Buber*, perhaps *Albert Einstein*, *Karl Marx*, *Sigmund Freud*, even *Jesus*. Clearly "Jew" is for them the word connected with the yellow star, the stigma they do not wish to continue, being as alert and compassionate as they are. Not having been confronted with it in everyday life, they cannot imagine that anyone could be proud of saying or expressing his own self-image, as a matter of fact, with the words, "I am a Jew". They only want to call someone a "Jew" if they are talking about the person's religion to avoid coming too close to the supposed racial expression used by the Nazis. The Jews - a religion? An ethnic community? A people, a nation? A group hit by the same fate? The idea of an atheist Jew confuses them. Those who know more, quickly begin pseudo-Halachic discussions: "A Jew is the child of a Jewish mother". The Jewish identity poses many insoluble problems for the students without their necessarily recognizing the fact that Jews also do not always find it easy to describe the Jewish identity. The students often ask: "How can Jews live in Germany after Auschwitz?", before they ask themselves how they propose living in Germany themselves as non-Jewish Germans after Auschwitz. To them the Holocaust seems to be a largely Jewish problem, not a German one. It is a difficult job developing the question of what attitude we - as non-Jewish Germans - want to adopt towards our history, towards that of the Shoah.

The vague picture of Judaism, which West German schoolchildren and students, have is attributed to the fact that here Jewish history was, and still is, categorized mainly as the history of the ancient Jews - at the same time the prehistory of the Christian culture - and as a history of persecution with regard to the National Socialist persecution of the Jews. The thousand year old history of the Jewish minority in Germany is usually left out to a great extent, just as the history of the Jews on the whole is also avoided. A lifelike impression of Jewish history and culture can therefore hardly be conveyed, but instead the impression that Judaism and the Jews are a largely antiquated artifact. This is an implicit continuation in West German school textbooks of the one-sided withdrawal by non-Jews after 1933 from the "German-Jewish symbiosis", upon which many German Jews had relied before 1933. After the destruction of a culture, once very much alive in Germany, its members follow the eradication of the memory of it. In educational practice it often seems that Germany is a country without any Jews and without any old or fruitful connections to the Jewish culture and

history, or that German history is, to use a bitter definition of the Nazis, *judenfrei* [free of Jews]. The impression can easily arise that the Jews first appear in German history in 1933 with the National Socialist persecution of the Jews only to disappear again from it by 1945 as a result of the Holocaust. The picture of Jewish culture and history, of Jewish life and of the close relations between the majority of the German people and the minority of the Jews will remain correspondingly vague.

The students have a similar conception of the community of non-Jewish Germans during the Third Reich. When I ask students whether they know *Nazis* and how they imagine them to be, I experience in their answers the dilemma that on the one hand they are aware of the history but on the other hand cannot, or do not wish to relate it to themselves. TV programs, whether feature films or news reports on NS propaganda, have conveyed to them an image of young blonde people resolutely looking forwards and thus appearing unnatural - clicking their heels in Aryan idiocy, their awareness so obviously obscured. This is a picture they cannot bring into perspective with the tales told by their grandparents. When they are first confronted with them, they see the Nazis quite often as a misled group, exposed to the magic of a demagoguery, or they regard them as persons of a distinct category which they would today not attribute to their grandparents, who are now old, grey and decrepit. They themselves are at the same time prisoners of the clichés of the "Nazi" and the veiling memories of their grandparents, and have even added some of their own. Therein they often remain the children of their parents or grandchildren of their grandparents, instead of growing up. The children and grandchildren of the perpetrators, bystanders, hangers-on and profiteers fear often enough that, during the course of their confrontations with their own parents and grandparents, they may happen to stumble upon some huge, monstrous crime which will prevent them from regarding the truth in the right light.

### **Generations of the Holocaust**

Please let me first try, at this stage, to describe in more detail what dynamic force was developed with regard to the confrontation with the inheritance of National Socialism and the Holocaust on the primary pedagogic sector, in German families, before I continue with the accounts I have already begun of the perspectives adopted by later German generations.

In German post-War society, the generation of perpetrators and bystanders made a great effort to avoid the confrontation with its own history. Psychoanalysts have examined this phenomenon in different ways and have come up with expressions such as "incapability to mourn" (*Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich*) or "suppression". Within German society, resistance towards the "collective blame thesis" for this generation has mainly been responsible for the fact that the motives for this silence have not been scrutinized any further. Were they silent because of shame or guilt? I believe that the Nazis succeeded, even during the Holocaust, in involving the German people in the persecution of the Jews and the murder of the European Jews as a kind of accomplice. Anyone could have known what happened and almost everyone knew something about it. The perpetrators knew more, but even the "normal people" who lived far from the ghettos, the annihilation camps and the firing squad sites in the East, at least suspected something of what was happening. In the reports by the National Socialist Secret Service on the prevailing mood in the German Reich, we find proof of it, such as in letters from soldiers who did not miss out what they had, for example, seen or done in occupied Poland and reported to their relatives and friends "back home". In the final months of the War, many Germans were frightened of revenge, of retaliation for the crimes committed to the Jews and this fear was not only limited to the group of obvious perpetrators. When still no reprisal came at the end of the War - what should it have been like? Is there any punishment at all imaginable which is adequate to the crime itself? - the willingness of the German people to come to terms with their own history was not particularly strong. The psychoanalyst *Helmut Dahmer* explains:

"Suppression of the truth was for the majority the simplest way out of the calamity of the *collapse*; it also proved to be the most disastrous. Germany therefore became the land of the "great forgetting". He who chose the route of suppression is 'saved' from political-psychological learning - the identity work - through splitting the person and petrifying the split pieces. The radical revision of the way of life and 'ideology' necessary after the dictatorship and the War years was repudiated by the fellow-traveler majority. This meant

that the mentality which had also given rise to the foundation of the NS ideology, was conserved." [Dahmer (1990), 134f]

The historian *Ulrich Herbert* writes, the tabooing of National Socialism was accompanied by a

"process of abstraction and unrealisation of the NS past [...], which to a certain extent robbed history of its personnel and its locations, so that it was possible to reject the past tyranny in public with some pathos, without paying any attention to concrete places and real people." [Herbert (1992a), 71]

The fact that the descendants of this *first generation* of perpetrators and bystanders - the members of the *second generation* - have difficulty in recognizing the history of National Socialism as the history of real people, is because they seldom met any parents, relatives or teachers who admitted to any participation in the events - to say nothing of any admission of guilt. The historian *Martin Broszat* noted that the history of National Socialism and the Holocaust in Germany is mostly narrated in the third person [Broszat acc. to van Vree (1995), 21], and also *Schatzker* became aware of a "retreat into the impersonal" in German school textbooks in 1981 [Schatzker (1981), 141]. The questions as to individual guilt, responsibility and participation were repudiated by treating National Socialism for a long time as an event for which people like *Hitler* and the concentration camp commander *Höss*, on a pedagogic level, as perpetrator, with whom a mainly anonymous mass of Jewish victims was confronted. The image of the two groups, both *perpetrators* and *victims*, remained extremely vague and indistinct. At its best the ensemble was supplemented by the members of the Resistance (keyword: 20th July) and, later, by the group the "White Rose". The *bystanders*, *fellow-travelers*, *profiteers* and *collaborators* were missing, as were also the *liberators*, and the representation of ambivalences and dilemmas in the decisive situations on the way to the murders was left out altogether. This meant that the image of the National Socialist society was morally eased, as if there had only been on the one side the unfathomably bad perpetrators and, on the other, the good, but faceless victims. But otherwise the German people had been involved so little with the happenings that their behavior, with regard to the persecution and murder of the Jews, was for the greater part disregarded.

The majority of German families after 1945 was enveloped in silence, partly right up till the seventies, where the history of the years 1933 to 1945 was concerned. The psychoanalyst *Sammy Speier* describes the profound effects this had on inner-family interaction: :

"After Auschwitz there are no more parents or grandparents who take their children onto their lap and tell them about the old days. Children need fairy stories, but just as much they need parents who can tell them about their lives so that they build up some relationship to the past. But in the narrative repertoire of the parents there are no longer "simple" wartime and adventure stories, but critical, shameful, even dangerous and terrible stories. Of these for them most important events too many fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers prefer to tell their children nothing. And the scenes which are faded out in these tales, simply leave a void with the children [...]" [Speier (1987), 486]

The students' movement in the sixties and the general revolutionary atmosphere around the same time contributed towards breaking the taboo in West Germany - many children of perpetrators and bystanders asked their parents about their experiences and their participation during the period of National Socialism, but sometimes with the result that the bold tone of their questions even further strengthened the vehemence of the silence on the part of the parents.

For many members of the second generation, school was the place for confrontation with National Socialism and the Holocaust, although, until right into the sixties, the teachers tried to avoid the issue. As the curriculum for history lessons in Germany is treated chronologically, some teachers preferred to go through the syllabus in such a way that the most recent period of history could either no longer, or just cursorily, be dealt with at the end of compulsory education. Not until the sixties did the stronger accentuation of this topic result in hardly any one schoolchild leaving school without having at least once treated this topic.

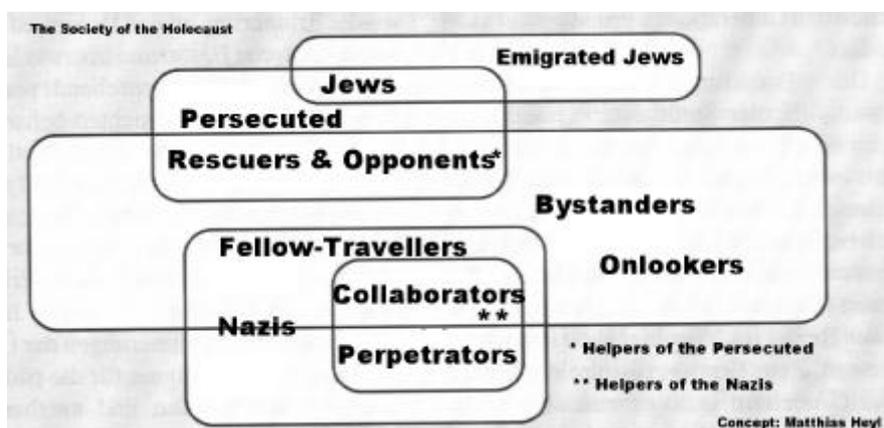
## Perspectives on the Holocaust

The psychologist *Birgit Rommelspacher* wrote in 1994:

"The assimilation of history means to reconstruct events from one's own viewpoint and from different perspectives. A personal relationship to history can be created by imagining the way of thinking, feeling and behavior of the people at that time. This identification must partly be annulled again by distancing oneself as after all those people lived in another time and under other conditions. Disassociations can also occur when one takes on the perspectives of the various participants. National Socialist history therefore demands the reconstruction of the history of the perpetrators, the fellow travelers, the indifferent and the opposers, as well as the deprived, the persecuted, the murdered and the survivors. [...] The changing identification with the various participants also makes it possible to relativize an "inside view" which only from the point of view of the parents and grandparents can even try to understand. ." [Rommelspacher (1994), 180f]

This *identificatoric learning* incited by *Rommelspacher* is made impossible by presenting the Holocaust in a pure perpetrator-victim-dichotomy. I am therefore keen to paint a more complex picture of the *Society of the Holocaust*, in which the reality of the events becomes clear.

For this I would like to introduce the following diagram at this stage:



This diagram should serve to illustrate that the "Society of the Holocaust" - I have taken the German society at the time of the National Socialist persecution of the Jews as my starting position - was more complex than as it appeared in the perpetrator-victim-dichotomy. For German schoolchildren, the problem of imagining what relationship their grandfathers and grandmothers had to the events, becomes very concrete. The assignment of any one individual to one of the groups in the diagram relies on conscious or subconscious decisions by the person himself and, on the other hand, on the interpretive performance of the observer. The decisions of the individuals can be integrated into the model. In decisive situations, which can be concretized with the help of biographies, the bystanders, for example, were able to decide on which side they wanted to be - if they chose the way of least resistance (as *bystanders* or *fellow travelers*), were they committed (as *Nazi helpers* or *collaborators*, as *Nazis* or even as *perpetrators*, or *helpers of the persecuted*; did they perhaps choose the way of resistance, which made them potentially persecuted)? For the group of the Jews the scope is much more limited - the policy of the Nazis gave them no choice, blocked off any possibility of being only bystanders to the events. Their situation which in the most extreme case was determined by "choiceless choices" (which for example can be seen in the elder in the Warsaw ghetto, *Adam Czerniakov*) stands apart from the norm, which is portrayed by the large group of bystanders.

Taking each individual, for example, it is obvious that it was possible for non-Jews to have some influence on their position within the "Society of the Holocaust". The model also enables changes and ambivalences to be traced in the course of a life's history. *Oskar Schindler*, for example, could be termed as a temporary *Nazi* (member of the NSDAP), *profiteer* of the Holocaust (as an "Aryaniser") and a *savior*, whereby he in his status noted changes in regard to this model and even occasioned them himself. By orientating oneself on this model, the presentation of conditions at that time becomes even more complex.

Work with biographies facilitates, at the same time, temporary identification, a more penetrating confrontation with the scope of decision and action and a concretizing of the abstracting model of the structure of concrete lives. By reconstructing such a narrative structure and texture, which in most non-Jewish German families was interrupted, obscured or totally avoided by taboos and suppression of facts, an offer is formulated which, on the one hand, offers a (varied and complex) substitute story and, on the other hand, poses the question as to why one's personal family history seems to be of a different nature. Through this combination of a structural and of a varied individualizing basis, moral decisive situations and dilemmas receive a concretization which demand reflection and one's own comments, beginning with an evaluation of the events at that time. But this should be incorporated in a structuring framework in order to be able to relate history in stories, but should nevertheless not be allowed to detract into a string of such varied tales.

This would mean that the demand for concretization, which in the beginning was still rather blurred, would become more definite and finally be continued. But by putting the Holocaust into its context in this way, not only in regard to one's own community, or rather the context conveyed within the family, the horizon and the perspectives are broadened at the same time. The confrontation with the dilemmas of the bystanders (which could be described as starting point, at least of the non-Jewish Germans; this should be undertaken at different levels) and with the hopelessness ("choiceless choices") of the Jews created by the Nazis would build a bridge which would make the complexity of the events even clearer.

Finally, this illustrates that basically, the social center of the "bystanders" is responsible for the decision as to how much courage is needed to oppose the majority and the trend. This train of thought invites an up-dating - the relation to the present becomes obvious. Decisive situations continue to exist and the argument of the fellow travelers at that time, that they had made an effort once and learned from their failure that it is not worth while, becomes recognizable as the reverse of their identification with National Socialism at that time.

A second narrative structure can be described as having its focus on the history of the Holocaust which on the one hand, was to be integrated into the German and Jewish history and on the other hand, into European and world history. This means that basic structures would be introduced in a certain chronological order, into which biographical studies (presented in documents, photos, fragments of the memory, letters and, where possible, video tapes of interviews) can be incorporated. These should help in concretizing and exploring historical structures, obligations, conditions, scope of decisions and actions.

### **Memory, commemoration and anamnestic solidarity**

For the survivors and their children the days of remembrance are days of mourning and *concrete* thinking. For the non-Jewish Germans it would be better if these were occasions for concretizing historic memory work. They must be repeatedly reassured of the historic occasion which only *appears* to have left no traces in their personal and family environment. The mourning of the Jews for their relatives cannot be simply shared by the non-Jewish Germans, and they are still far away from the "anamnestic solidarity" demanded by the German-Jewish educator *Micha Brumlik* [Brumlik (1988)]. *Brumlik* writes:

"It seems that the decision, as to whether forms of commemoration, which can only slightly portray the moral monstrosity of the mass destruction, will be possible in the future, will depend on the question of a not self-reflecting, anamnestic solidarity, which is quite the opposite of spontaneous mourning for people they know and love, namely making oneself feel responsible for far-off and unknown events. [Brumlik (1988), 119]

In the years before the Holocaust, the murdered Jews were not the far-off and unknown entities for the non-Jewish Germans - not until the process which led to the Holocaust, did they define them as the far-off and unknown. This process of definition has received such reality regarding the murderous crimes, that later generations of non-Jewish Germans do not hold any responsibility for (and could not even bring redemption for this guilt if it were basically possible), but still the burden of the prejudice connected with it.

The problem of German mourning for the Jewish victims of the Shoah and commemoration seems to me, however, to be even more complex and profound. The commemoration of the dead is the result of a mourning process. Mourning, according to *Freud*, has a definite intrapsychic function: it is said to

"release the memories and expectations of the survivors from the dead." [Brumlik (1988), 356]

It is directed at someone or something whom or which one has loved. Mourning rearranges life and the world after the loss of the loved object and accompanies the process, during which the ties to him or it are loosened [Bastiaans (1989), 6; Heyl (1994d), 71]. *Brumlik* writes that mourning represents

"the common relation to the world with which the members of a society react quickly, spontaneously and without reflecting on any other circumstances, to communally or individually suffered losses and bring their experiences to a purgative conclusion." [Brumlik (1992), 197]

*Mourning* is an individual process which relates primarily to an object, a person or a group of persons to whom or which the mourner is, or was close. This makes the collective character of mourning clear, even if the community only relates here to a single deceased and his dependents. Commemoration is often celebrated communally [Bastiaans (1989), 6], in order to relieve the mourning of its individual burden in favor of a mourning community [Brumlik (1992b), 200; Steffensky (1995), 227]. Whereas *mourning* means the necessary *release* of the emotional preoccupation with the lost object, *commemoration* represents the attempt to *maintain* often transcendental bonds to it.

Mourning and commemoration belong together, or commemoration gradually relieves direct mourning - whereby, in view of the indicated ambivalences in commemoration, the obligation to commemorate the deceased (dead) on the part of the descendants (or survivors) is doubly strong. On the one side, it is expected that one fulfills the right of the deceased to be remembered (only in this way can the descendants assure themselves of their own right to be remembered) and, on the other side, the feelings of guilt of the commemorators should find mitigation.

Collective mourning rituals appear to relieve the mourning in two respects - individual bereavement is replaced by a collective ritual and unindividualized, but at the same time takes on the task of excluding the deceased from the circle of the living and marking the boundary between the dead and the living:

"Whereas mourning represents the deceased person in public, i.e. it calls him/her by name and praises him/her, the taboo excludes the dead person from the community by not mentioning his/her name." [Brumlik (1992), 194]

Between the members of a community an obligation regarding the right to be remembered exists over generations. To be able to commemorate beyond the boundaries of one's own community, requires an identificatory effort which first creates an emotional relationship to the deceased [Brumlik (1995a), 8f]. *Brumlik* limits identification as follows:

"In particular the victims of the National Socialist industrial mass extermination are to a certain extent very distant from us - because what happened to them was so unimaginably heinous and beyond all measure morally terrifying. What can it therefore mean, to take sides with them, to identify oneself with them? Does not every effort towards identification - no matter how strenuous - represent anything other than the attempt to suppress their fate? Should we therefore not conclude - at least in this case on an actually paradox solution of solidarity without identification? Is such a thing at all conceivable and psychologically plausible? Does not every form of solidarity point to concrete, well-known and familiar persons whom we know, with whom we can identify ourselves, whom we understand? [...] The problems of a theory of anamnestic solidarity, which is imperative for a morally and philosophically distinct historical science, are by no means solved - really they are not yet even posed properly." [Brumlik (1990), 318f].

This concluding fact could be adapted for educational science. *Commemoration* appears to me to be by no means a "genuine educational process" [Boldt (1995), 301], but - with a view to descendants of another community - as the desirable result of an educational process. *Brumliks* demand "to instruct and at the same time to commemorate" [Brumlik (1995), 92f; Brumlik (1995a), 8] and to understand this as an aim of *education after Auschwitz*, confronts us with the necessity to think about collective attribution and individual identifications, about commemoration and historic learning and remembering with great analytic selectivity.

Traditional forms of commemoration are dedicated to the deceased in one's own family, in one's own social or national collective and emphasize one's identification with the dead; they serve, amongst others, to strengthen each community. This means that commemoration

belongs in the canon of collective forms of assimilation of history and the creation of identity. *Brumlik* warns about the immanent danger posed by this moment of commemoration which relates to one's own identity i.e. of missing those who are to be commemorated:

"Because there, where the obligation to commemorate finally serves simply to extend one's own perspectives and one's own self-understanding, consideration for the perspectives of others is neglected at least at a stage of reasoning. Also this reconstruction of commemoration has not freed itself completely from the fetters of moral solipsism." [Brumlik (1995), 114]

It becomes all the more difficult, to imagine an appropriate method for non-Jewish Germans to commemorate the Jewish victims of the Shoah. *Steffensky* formulates *one* option and function of commemoration of the murdered victims on the non-Jewish side:

"At least this can be learned from the dead: What should **not** happen and what should **not** be done to people." [Steffensky (1995), 224]

*Bodo von Borries* on the other hand gives food for thought:

"We should take a look at the perpetrators, not only because we cannot understand the events until we have done so, but because the risk of repetition lies with the perpetrators and not with the victims. Adorno already recognized this fact." [von Borries *adapted from Schreier / Heyl* (1995), 369]

As far as the *perpetrator* is concerned, it seems to be useful to take a look at the perpetrator in order to learn what should **not happen and what should not be done to people**. Thus it would be appropriate to arrive at a non-passive description: *At least, that can be learned from the what happened: What people should not do to other people.*

The historic remembrance of the perpetrators demanded by *Borries* and *Monika Richarz* [von Borries and Richarz *adapted from Schreier / Heyl* (1995), 367] does not necessarily provide competition for the commemoration of the victims, but simply points out precisely the collectively handed-down responsibility of the descendants.

There is a trend amongst the non-Jewish Germans to rather practice a vague form of commemoration than to take on the strain of concrete and *concretizing memory work*. But this would be the prerequisite for an *anamnetic solidarity* which concerns historic, inherited and up-to-date responsibility. Commemoration should not become a substitute for politically historic memory. And before memory, that which I have described as memory work has priority: the unveiling of history, confrontation with what has happened and the study and evaluation of the events and their actors. The descendants should assimilate their history in order to make it the basis for their memories. *Raul Hilberg* pointed out at the beginning of our conference that the survivors, the witnesses and the actors of the events all have their memories; but the impressions of the descendants are distorted by their being handed down, so if they are to become memory, they must first be experienced. This assimilation of history is possible for us through confrontation, study, research and learning.

The assimilation of history is always selective. This means that it does not only shelter the danger of parts of history being obliterated; this is a *necessary* part of the assimilation process: i.e. that not everything can be remembered. If we all wanted to remember history we would feel like the man, whom *Alexander R. Lurja* described, whose memory could remember absolutely everything, but who could no longer sense the necessary relevance of it all [Lurja (1991), 147-249].

Assimilation of history through memory, whether it is a matter of one's own (i.e. to the same extent in the sense of *personal* or *collective*) or of history in general, depends on conscious and unconscious moments. Psychoanalysis provides certain explanations for the forgetting of events and experiences. The term *suppression* enjoys particular popularity in the discussion about the German treatment of their NS past and the Holocaust. *Dierk Juelich* has repeatedly pointed out the incorrectness in the use of this term in the German discourse of the past from psychoanalytic perspectives [Juelich (1992), Juelich (1994)], and *Wolfgang Kraushaar* suggests the use of the term "forcing aside" [Kraushaar (1994), 208] in order to depict the conscious moment in the avoidance behavior of the generation of perpetrators and bystanders. Already in 1959 *Adorno* wrote:

"The eradication of memory is rather the deed of a too lively consciousness than of its weakness with regard to the superiority of unconscious processes. In forgetting the recent past the anger at having to talk oneself out of something that everyone knows before one can talk others out of it." [Adorno (1959), 129]

Through the silence of the *first generation* the "void", as already described, in the biographical and historical conveyance within Germany, which has limited the horizon of historical memory in this country - unpleasant history, the memory of which awakens ambivalent feelings, is forced aside and apparently, at the appearance stage, is caused to disappear. But the accompanying anger of which *Adorno* spoke has been unconsciously conveyed to the descendants. Here it is less a question of the phenomenon of necessary selectivity but rather of the restriction of existential bases for the education of one's own, no longer borrowed identity.

In psychoanalysis one speaks of parental delegations which the parental generations pass on to their children. *Ilse Grubrich-Simitis* has described the burden of such tasks for the second generation of survivors of the Shoah in more detail:

"For their parents children should be a bridge to life, they should, after year-long confrontation with death, actually in reverse of the natural order of things, give them psychic life; they should replace for them the lost idealized objects of their love [*the murdered*], and at the same time creep into their interrupted biographies and there begin to live where these had to stop living, therefore in principle to make undone the murder of parents, brothers and sisters, children, relatives, friends; they should return as saviors into the psychotic world of the concentration camps and make sure that the parents do not emerge this time as injured, humiliated victims; acting out the resisted hatred of the parents, they should avenge the crimes committed to them or, petrified in their own un-lived lives, bear witness as memorials for these crimes; they should demonstrate by their presence the generative potential of their parents and refute the fact that the intention of the persecutors to exterminate a whole people that had been declared unworthy of life was not fulfilled after all; they should comfort their parents, help to relieve their suffocating feelings of guilt and shame, revoke their denials and do their mourning work for them" [Grubrich-Simitis (1984), 226]

We can assume that, with regard to the NS past, there are delegations also on the part of the non-Jewish Germans. But - as far as I am aware - they have not been registered as exactly as was the case with the delegations of the survivors to their children. Neither in a clinical nor in general literature have I found such a description as that quoted for the community of perpetrators and bystanders. I presume however, that the children of the survivors have become bearers of memory through the delegations of their parents, while the children of the perpetrators and bystanders have rather become bearers of parental suppression and obscurity. They should not interfere with a history which was to be carefully hidden by taboos and forbidden questions, but which, in fact, was there and stayed there.

### **Identification, conversion and identity**

We often experience that non-Jewish Germans who let themselves be touched by the fate of the Jews during the Shoah try to escape from the fissures in their own identity, which can only be covered up with great effort by a fantasized conversion. They imagine themselves as Jews, show a strange, often kitschy and stereotyped Philosemitism or try to bridge the cracks in their own identity by taking the actual step of conversion to Judaism. We often find forms of *temporary identification* and *conversion*. Also these can take on the function of causing the actual Jews to disappear. "Tremendous shock" at the understood fate of the Jews at the time of the Shoah, makes us speak of ourselves and our feelings instead of about them. We place ourselves on the "good" side, silence the ambivalences in us and can avoid, if only apparently, the burden of history which rests upon our shoulders, without our being able to do anything about it. The Jews become - contrary to the clear statement by *Cynthia Ozick's*: "Jews are not metaphors" - mere metaphors of our own situation, exchangeable cards in a game, where our own identity is the marked joker. We revert to this when things get critical. This is far from the "anamnetic solidarity" in which we recognize the Jews as the others, but to whom our solidarity must be given; not because they are like us but also out of respect for them because they are different - because their history is different, with regard to the Shoah and **because of** the Shoah, or: that we have become different from our ancestors before Auschwitz. To quote the words of the poet *Arnfried Astel*:

"Innocence wears a ring made from Jewish gold tooth fillings."

*Anamnetic solidarity* could stand at the end of our assimilation of history with its fissures and our ambivalences.

If commemoration is not to replace the attempt at reconstruction and assimilation of history but to supplement it, it would seem to me to be necessary to give priority to learning, research and study before remembrance. If we are capable of remembering what we have learned, researched into, studied and comprehended (and for this the condition would be that we have learned, researched into, studied, analyzed and comprehended it) we can continue by looking for ways of commemorating. Rituals as a surrogate, as a substitute for confrontation and reflection, must remain hollow.

The trend towards commemoration appears to have surpassed its temporary climax in 1995. After the 8th May "record files were closed in German public offices with a distinct sigh of relief: Commemoration of the 8th May was legally overruled, as *Charlotte Wiedemann* [DIE WOCHE, 12. May 1995] described it. The following years promise a *baisse* as far as the memory of the Shoah is concerned. Recent history is no longer so young and many people regard the years 1989 (German reunification) and 1995 as the "end of the post-War years". In political speeches one only hears a certain amount of contemplative content which gradually disappears. Politics, as one can assume from a series of speeches, places preoccupation with National Socialism and the Holocaust in the hands of the teachers. In the classrooms they are supposed in the 45-minute rhythm of the timetables, and contrary to the trend towards commemoration, to put that into effect that the parliaments and our society altogether in the past five decades have had difficulty doing: The Refurbishing of the "recent" past, which is now even old itself. Hereby it is a question of the appraised "lessons from the past" - a term which has pedagogic origin but which often remains too vague to withstand everyday pedagogic life, the questions of the schoolchildren and the demands of teaching.

Education after Auschwitz should, as the Dutch educator *Ido Abram* emphasizes in various ways, lead to reflection [Abram (1992), 196; Abram (1994)]. A condition for this and at the same time the aim of this is that in the German context the *suppression of the facts* of history is counteracted [Heyl (1994), 88]. To not only analyze, but also to change the "Texture of Memory" [Young (1993)] becomes more difficult the further away in time the Holocaust becomes. The facts the generation of perpetrators and bystanders *forced aside* and kept quiet will no longer be known in the generation of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The *delegations*, which would still be decipherable in the relationship between the *first* and *second generations*, have become almost unrecognizable in the further conveyance via the third to the fourth generation. A thorough analysis would be necessary in order to create a framework in which our future efforts towards an enlightening, reflected handling of this history and its conveyance could first gain a foothold. For this we need your help.

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