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Politics and the Past: Jörg Haider and the "Children of the Perpetrators" in Austria*

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The Struggle to Interpret

Jan Assmann has emphasized the number forty as an essential mark in the unfolding of collective memory. Forty years mark the threshold of generational change when later generations seek their own way into the past, a process that does not unfold without discussion and confrontation. The universality of this phenomenon may be seen from the political discussions of the past two decades in various European countries—not only in Germany and Austria, but also in France, the Low Countries, in Sweden or Denmark. In Israel, too, there have been questions and even some revisions of tenacious "myths about the founding years."

In terms of political memory, we are now, more than fifty years after the demise of National Socialism, on the threshold between *communicative* and *cultural memory*. As Assmann has described it, the generation that "experienced" events carries *communicative memory*; this form of memory disappears as members of that generation pass away. Eventually *cultural memory* is constructed, as memories take on symbolic form.

We are in a kind of transitional phase, as the generation that was directly involved in National Socialism disappears and later generations steadily gain influence. In fact the struggle now taking place for the control of memory is being conducted essentially by "those born after," abetted partly by "those that experienced," whose testimony serves to prove or disprove a particular account of history. The second (and now to a growing degree the third) generation comprises the majority of contemporary decision-makers and power-mongers in politics, journalism, and culture, and at universities and schools. These people are actively involved in forming today's political interpretations.

Meanwhile the facts as such are less essential than the interpretation of those facts; that is, debates about the past concern the struggle to interpret, and, ultimately, the struggle to legitimize a political view. The conservative German historian Michael Stürmer already alluded to this during the "Historians' Debate" [the debate among German scholars over the origins and uniqueness of the Nazi past and the uses of this history in contemporary West Germany] in the mid-1980s when he stated that whoever "provides the memory, the concepts, and the interpretations of the past, will control the future."

The Second Generation and Its Role in the Political Debate of the Past

The discussion of National Socialism as "inheritance" or "legacy" illustrates the way history leads out of the past into the present and the future. The pedagogical thrust of this view is clear from the demand that future generations should "learn from history." Indeed, the second and third generations are subject to various expectations.

On the one hand, there is the positive allusion to "bearers of hope": that is, future generations automatically receive appeals to them as the "younger generation." For this generation, perceived as unburdened by the past and capable of learning, his-

tory is actually remembered in a way that establishes a link between the past and the future. Such appeals are convenient components of official commemoration rhetoric—even Jewish victims like Leon Zelman and Simon Wiesenthal justify their memory work with an optimistic trust in the following generations.

On the other hand, there are negative allusions to those who "foul their own nest." In this case, the conflict is perceived as the "war-generation" versus the generation "born after." The latter is accused of ignorance and self-righteousness because of its critical approach to the past. At the same time members of this second generation refer to their status in one of two ways. Either they express readiness to accept the legacy and learn from the mistakes of their parents, or they point to the "blessing of being born later," a phrase is usually understood as a kind of collective exoneration. [The blessing of being born later is a phrase made famous by former German Chancellor Kohl.] This attitude is undoubtedly a defense strategy, based on a conscious or subconscious need for exoneration; it justifies not facing up to the past.

However, those "born after," are not born "innocent," but are the products of their family and social circumstances. The second generation exists in what Lutz Niethammer described as a *floating gap,* that gap between communicative memory and cultural memory. The mediation and formulation of memory come about on different levels; primary and secondary bearers of memory complement, confirm, or contradict one another.

Direct family circumstances play an essential role in the transmission of memory, with inter-familial communication about National Socialism essentially hovering between the twin poles of silence and memory. The latter is often selective, with parental narratives excluding the parents' own activities, or rendering them harmless, or even justifying them through a reversal of roles from perpetrator to victim.

This inter-familial communication must be placed in sociopolitical context, as well as in the context of the politics of memory. These wider contexts have as much to do as parental narratives with the way National Socialism is remembered. In the case of Austria, officially designated a "victim," the sociopolitical narrative conforms to the family narrative. In such a culture of memory, versions of history that are at variance with these narratives may be perceived as "irritating." These variant versions—popular historical books, factual information, and movies (such as the TV mini-series *Holocaust*) —allow other, new perspectives on the past and throw into question perceptions of history and self that heretofore existed in the family and society. Secondary bearers of memory such as schools, universities, literature, science, and the media may have both confirming and "corrective" functions.

National Socialism as "Historical Legacy"?

Assuming that successive generations are not only (through socialization) passive *products* of a prescribed collective memory, but also, increasingly, active *producers* of memory, the question arises as to how the second generation copes with the "historical legacy" of their parents' involvement in National Socialism. It is well known that a "legacy" can be inherited, but it may also be refused, or different consequences may be drawn from it. Roughly speaking, these are the possible scenarios:

1) Those who have *not examined* the Nazi past of their parents, because of this very lack of examination, do not express themselves and are therefore hard to identify. (This is probably a very large group.) Historical disinterest and ignorance go hand in hand with an ingenuousness and indifference toward their own past. This apparently apolitical attitude is, however, eminently political, because the absence of historical consciousness always has political fallout. For example, when the FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) was included in the government in February 2000, Austrians found it difficult to understand international criticism of the party's inclusion and categorically dismissed it. There is also the total lack of taboos or shame regarding anti-Semitism, demonstrated by the absence of outrage at and the facile excuses for the anti-Semitic statements of some Austrian politicians.

2) Some "children of the perpetrators" *have,* in a totally different way, examined their parents' involvement with National Socialism. This has usually happened when some discussion has been taking place within the family, and seems to follow a typical pattern: after a long period of no questions and no knowledge, the children abrogate the "treaty of silence." Confrontation follows, typically along the lines of self-righteous accusations and stereotypical reproaches from the children ("You're all Nazis") and massive defense ("What do you youngsters know about it?") by the parents. Any productive dialogue is thus impossible from the very outset. A tribunal-like atmosphere is much more likely, with these children stepping forth as the prosecution; they then come to grief in the face of an "aggressive refusal to testify" on the part of their parents.

In the 1960s such family confrontations, especially in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), often led to the politicization of the second generation (the "68ers") who opposed their parents' position with political challenges—political activism, antifascistic actions, solidarity with the victims. In Austria, however, the Nazi past played a very small role in 1968: political engagement was usually not derived explicitly from either National Socialism or their personal family situation. Direct confrontations between the children "born after" and their "Nazi parents" were relatively rare, and, in contrast to the situation in the FRG, took place on an individual basis in private. In *this* respect, one could almost say that "1968" came to Austria very late, namely in the mid-1980s with the "Waldheim affair" and subsequent debates centering on the past. From this point on the Austrian "victim myth"—long accepted without question, even by those "born after"—has been subject to greater critical examination. Although many of those "born after" studied National Socialism, for a long time they did not realize the extent of Austrian complicity in Nazi crimes. Above all, they did not make a connection between the crimes and their own parents. The general "externalization" of National Socialism in Austria continued to prevail even among younger Austrians for a long time. Only recently has a greater awareness of family involvement developed.

3) Frequently the second generation takes an *affirmative* approach to parental involvement in the Nazi period, based on understanding and defense. As numerous political discussions about the Nazi period prove, many of those "born after" stand up to protect and defend their parents who, they think, are attacked unfairly. In such cases the defenders are by no means simply incorrigible right-wing supporters of Nazi ideology; rather, the compulsion to defend one's parents and stand up to the "antifascist mainstream" is widespread in Austrian society. Recently this defensive attitude has been heard loud and clear in the lively, if not violent, discussion about the exhibition "War of Extermination. The Crimes of the Wehrmacht." Every family was caught up in this controversy. In discussions, press commentaries, countless letters to the editor, and in the visitors' book for the exhibition, the indignant voices of many of those "born after" sounded in unison, as it were: "My father (grandfather, uncle) was not a murderer!" Clearly the struggle over memory is not exclusively an inter-generational conflict. On the contrary, the generations often stand shoulder-to-shoulder and are of one opinion. Appeals to the "children" to step forth and defend the "honor" of their "fathers" fall upon open ears; those "born after" have emerged as defenders of the "war-generation."

Jörg Haider and his Generation

The political mouthpiece of this defensive attitude is the leading figure in the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, who, because of his controversial statements about National Socialism, has repeatedly been at the center of international criticism in recent years. His family background and political situation, as well as his own political position, are typical of this affirmative approach to parental involvement in the Nazi period.

Haider's familial and social background corresponds to that of many Austrian "children of perpetrators." His father, Robert Haider, was a member of the National Socialist party when it was illegal in Austria; he also joined the SA and the "Austrian Legion," participating in the putsch attempts in Austria before the *Anschluß* in 1938. Haider's mother was also a staunch National Socialist. Despite their involvement, Haider's parents were put in the category of "minor degree of responsibility" after 1945. Jörg Haider, born in 1950, grew up in the Upper-Austrian town of Bad Goisern among German-nationalists. As a student he belonged to the German-national fraternity "Albia," a fraternity that sanctioned dueling [a tradition still found in right-wing nationalist fraternities]. He was active in Freedom Party youth organizations and later in the FPÖ itself, where he soon emerged as a "young star" and began his political career, rising rapidly to the top.

Haider's childhood experiences are probably similar to those of many other "perpetrator children." To convinced National Socialists the end of the war meant a "collapse," and the loss of their political ideals and social status. Sometimes it meant political ostracism, exclusion from a profession and a concomitant social degradation, internment in Allied camps, and prosecution in the courts. Usually this phase did not last long and integration and "rehabilitation" followed after a few years, although it is futile to point that out. These "former" Nazis most often found a political home not in the two main parties, the ÖVP (People's Party of Austria) and the SPÖ (Socialist Party of Austria), but rather in the VdU (Association of Independents), founded in 1949, or in its successor, the FPÖ, or they withdrew from political life entirely. Their social circle was restricted to like-minded individuals, who viewed the Allied occupiers as the enemy and who did not accept the "victim argument" officially put forward by Austria.

The continuing political rootlessness and insecurity of these families largely determined the children's experiential world. The latter often viewed their parents as "losers" and "victims" of the post-war situation who were intent on maintaining earlier values—at least within the family. These children allied themselves with, and identified with, their parents for obvious reasons. Jörg Haider is a prime example of the way many of these children have remained defensive and have continued to justify their parents' behavior, although others show that it is possible to detach oneself from such a milieu.

Although Jörg Haider constantly alludes to the generations in debates about the past and designates himself the defender of his father's generation, statements about his own parents' involvement in National Socialism and his own personal connection to that subject are rare. When asked, Haider typically responds with the categorical statement that his parents were, to be sure, National Socialists, but did not participate in Nazi atrocities; he thereby releases himself from responsibility for a self-critical examination of his parents' behavior.

In an interview in the German weekly *Die Zeit* in February 2000, Haider dealt with personal aspects of his problematic relationship to the past for the first time. In that article he stressed his "very positive relationship" with his parents, at the same time admitting that he, too, needed "to learn what his own history was: we all suffered because we as young people hardly knew anything about recent history, since history as taught at school ended with World War I." To the question of whether he had been able to catch up on what he had missed with his parents at home, Haider responded in rather general terms: "If my parents were involved in National Socialism, this period was hardly discussed, as much as anything because of their own guilt feelings." To the follow-up question as to whether this applied to him personally, he said bluntly: "There were such discussions, but they were not very substantive."

However, there were controversial discussions within the Haider family. These were due, above all, to Haider's older sister Ursula who, at the age of seventeen, posed searching questions in order to understand why her parents had become Nazis. Jörg did not ask critical questions of his parents, but remained a "passive" listener. To this day Haider has never relinquished his affirmative, identifying regard for his parents, and has extended it to include complete loyalty to the "war-generation" as a whole. He has stated these views repeatedly in political forums.

If the old FPÖ can be characterized as the gathering point for former National Socialists, then the present-day FPÖ may be seen as the party of the sons and daughters of former Nazis. Indeed, many of them continue to hold leading positions in the FPÖ: Kriemhild Trattnig and Mario Ferrari-Brunnenfeld (a former political mentor of Haider) both come from incriminated Nazi families; a son of the war-criminal Franz Murer was an FPÖ member of the *Nationalrat*; and the current party leader, Susanne Riess-Passer, as well as the former FPÖ politicians Heide Schmidt, Helmut Peter, Friedhelm Frischenschlager all come from families with a Nazi past. In pointing out the Nazi background of these people, it is not a matter of "guilt by clan affiliation" [*Sippenhaftung* was the Nazi practice of holding relatives responsible for the "crimes" committed by individuals against the state] but of a demonstration of political beliefs and unbroken continuities. In this regard it is worth noting that Peter, Schmidt, and Frischenschlager left the FPÖ in 1993 and founded the Liberal Forum, thus demonstrating that it is possible to pry oneself loose, to a greater or lesser degree, from such backgrounds.

Although the personal and ideological continuities from National Socialism to the FPÖ are historical fact, Haider disputes this connection with his own peculiar cynicism: "The FPÖ is not a successor to National Socialism, because if this were so, it would have an absolute majority." In the *Gedenkjahr* 1995

(the year commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Austrian State Treaty and fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II) his analysis was totally different as he exhorted his followers with missionary-like zeal to "Go out and tell everyone the truth. That there were and are among us, just as in the other parties, former Nazis. And that we are proud that they became democrats. That there were and... probably still are also anti-Semites among us. That we will not tolerate them whenever we come across them." Usually, however, Haider tries to ignore National Socialism, instead connecting the party history to nineteenth-century liberalism. Contradicting himself and historical reality he characterizes the FPÖ as a party "that has absolutely no past that is at all incriminating. As Freedom Party members we can look back upon a long democratic tradition, whose roots lie in the revolution of 1848." Not only his personal family but also his political "family" must be defended and protected.

The Taboo Breaker

Recently a direct connection has been made between the socialist chancellor Bruno Kreisky and Jörg Haider (via Kurt Waldheim), as far as their reactions to National Socialism are concerned. In fact, Haider himself has claimed to be Kreisky's heir. This claim is totally absurd in reference to political values and goals such as social conscience, general openness to the world, and tolerance, and reveals Haider to be a kind of legacy hunter. But where it concerns political aspects of Austria's past, the claim is worth further study.

Chancellor Bruno Kreisky undoubtedly played an important role in integrating former Nazis into post-war Austrian society, taking the pragmatic view that it would not be possible to keep such a large group of people out of political life. Propagating the principle of political "re-education," he accepted that everyone had "learned from history" and had become a "good democrat." (This included former SS member Friedrich Peter who later became leader of the Freedom Party.) The complex reasons for Kreisky's positions, especially questions regarding his Jewish identity, cannot be dealt with here. For me it is not a question of Kreisky's intent but of his attitude's effect, influence, and function: Kreisky undoubtedly served as a means of exoneration for many former Nazis, a role that is not to be underestimated. Because of his Jewish heritage, Kreisky was often used as a sort of "alibi," a defense against accusations of anti-Semitism.

Jörg Haider has his own means of seeking exoneration. Although he cannot invoke a Jewish heritage, he can, and is happy to, invoke the "blessing of a later birth." What the generation caught up in the Nazi system was unable to say openly, Haider now says—as their representative. His controversial utterances regarding various aspects of the Nazi past, all too often described dismissively as "slips," or "verbal *faux pas*," are well known and well documented. Clearly these pronouncements are far from accidental, but are, at least partially, the result of things learned in the family or in society, as sketched above. Whether consciously or unconsciously, he adopts basic premises of the generation of perpetrators and uses them quite openly. Since these pronouncements are often linked to the so-called "counter-memories" either repudiated by the other parties or absent from their programs, Haider is breaking a taboo and living up to his electioneering claim: "the Jörg who goes out on a limb."

Haider's description of Austria as "ideologically deformed," his praise for the "Third Reich's decent employment policies," and his use of "penal camp" instead of concentration camp are just a few examples of taboos he has broken more or less deliberately and purposefully. Such pronouncements are received positively because Haider is addressing many of the persistent popular myths about the Nazi regime: Hitler got rid of unemployment, he built the autobahns, he established law and order, etc. While Haider gives voice to the generation that "lived through it all," for the younger generation the content of the broken taboo is probably less important than the act of transgression. In this connection the attempts of two women close to him to rationalize his behavior are interesting.

His sister Ursula Haubner, who admitted to being very much "concerned" about the phrase "orderly employment policies," explains it as a defiant reaction to provocation with a counter-provocation, behavior that is typical of her brother. For Heide Schmidt, his former political companion, he is giving voice to what he had heard as a child and what he had become accustomed to use as a kind of political rhetoric in nationalist circles.

Haider's much-used concept of "decency" can be explained in similar fashion. When speaking in political circles he often applies this moral category to all Austrians up to and including former Waffen SS members; for example, "decent Austrians" in contrast to immigrants or his critics. Such use belongs to a long tradition going back to Nazi times. For example, Horst Christoph, the son of a high-ranking National Socialist, remembers that unconditional adherence to Nazi principles was ranked very high in the category of decency even after 1945. For his parents (as for many other former Nazis), those Nazis who did not deny their own past and did not embrace democracy were "decent," while the others were considered to be "opportunists" and "traitors" and were despised accordingly. This concept lost any shred of "innocence" it might have possessed when the leader of the Freedom Party, "blessed" by his "late birth," praised the Waffen SS because they had remained "decent."

The Defender of the "Fathers" and "Perpetrators"

Haider clearly thinks and acts in "generational" terms. In innumerable instances he presents himself as a "good son" and fearless defender of an all-inclusive "war- and father-generation." In 1985, for example, at the "Ulrichsberg Reunion," a traditional meeting of war veterans, in which both members of the Waffen SS and right-wing extremists participate, he declared: "For me as the representative of the younger generation that was fortunate never to have been obliged to fight in a war, it is an honor to be allowed to speak to you. But it is also with a deep and sincere sense of gratitude that I now thank you for your action. I am not alone, for many young people feel as I do...." He spoke in a similar fashion in 1986 as he laid a wreath in honor of those who died in the two world wars: "It is shameful when we see how people who gave everything that they had to give—namely their lives—are pelted with filth by shirkers and political opportunists. This must come to an end once and for all.... I stand by this generation of soldiers, both living and dead." Even before the exhibition on the crimes of the Wehrmacht reached Austria he accused it of "turning the whole Wehrmacht into criminals... according to the motto: Grandfathers, you have done your duty, you have rebuilt the Second Republic.... We don't need you any more. Please show some understanding now that we are kicking you out." And he promised the "war-generation" that "We will prevent the graves of our fathers and grandfathers from being labeled as "Cemeteries of Criminals."

Haider acts as if he is an outsider when he makes such speeches, but there is nothing unusual about such attitudes. Rather he represents an opinion widespread in Austria, one that clearly divides the good Wehrmacht from the bad Nazis. Not only is he in accord with a broad societal consensus but also with leading representatives from other parties. When the Wehrmacht exhibition was in Salzburg, the local head of the People's Party, Schausberger, stepped forward to defend the "war-generation" vehemently. He augmented his dual role as an historian and a politician by producing his 93-year-old father, a "Catholic farmer's boy," who, for this reason, was naturally above any suspicion of ideological susceptibility.

To be sure, Haider often goes one step further, for, in his "praise" of the "fathers," he also includes war criminals such as Walter Reder, in whose defense he argued in 1985: "The fate of Walter Reder could easily have been that of any of our fathers." And he includes the Waffen SS in the collective "We" of the father-generation whom he has praised as "decent people" remaining true to their convictions. At the same time he has criticized the "besmirchers of our parents' generation": "And those who say... that the members of the war-generation, of the Wehrmacht, were all criminals are besmirching in the end event their own parents, their own families, their own fathers, and a whole *Volk*." Repeatedly he moves cleverly from the political to the private, justifying his praise of the Waffen SS by saying that "a people that does not honor its forebears is doomed," and concluding with the announcement that his parents too are again at Ulrichsberg—as they are every year.

Social psychologist Klaus Ottomayer has attempted to explain Haider's attitude as follows: "Haider is a kind of savior carrying an ideological cross on his back. As the long-awaited son, he generously and inclusively accepts the complicated problem of guilt or responsibility in the Nazi era. The transformation of Nazi history is demonstrably anything but an aberration; rather it is part of a widespread program of collective rehabilitation and idealization of the Nazi fathers." In my opinion, Haider's knee-jerk defensiveness can be attributed on the one hand to his unexamined familial ties and, on the other hand, to political calculation. Ultimately Haider functions as a transformer of the popular tradition of "counter-commemoration" and of its apologists, who are also found in succeeding generations.

"Siblings at War"

Haider, the "good son," needs someone to fight against; he directs his opposition against those who consider the Nazi past critically. These "left-wing anti-fascists," are often dismissed out of hand as the "old left," as "do-gooders," as "the generation of '68." Indeed, many nationalist youth functionaries viewed the student revolt of 1968 as a threat and dismissed their peers as "left-wing anarchists, who had no respect or reverence for either their parents or society." The political divisions at that time were similar to those of today, with right-wing extremists from the fraternities joining members of the Freedom Party Youth in opposing rebellious left-wing students. Today, in some cases, the same people once again oppose each other; some Freedom Party Youth are now established FPÖ members, while some of the left-wing students made political careers in the Social Democratic Party of Austria (the SPÖ).

Haider has successfully pitted the generations against one another. When he rehabilitates those of the "war-generation" by calling them the "reconstruction- generation," he thereby removes the right of those critics born later to speak with any authority; they contributed nothing to reconstruction and, furthermore, settled comfortably into the nest that had been made for them. Countless statements and polemics directed at "today's professional resistance fighters, who weren't even born in 1945," or at "re-educators" and "self-appointed judges from the later generation" emphasize the division he has drawn.

When asked whether he had ever sought a confrontation over the past with his parents, Haider, in the same birth cohort as the 1968 generation, responds with allusions to his "idyllic childhood" and to the "relationship of give-and-take" that grew out of it. He could not, and did not want to, change this relationship: "On the one hand there were my parents, whom I did not want to hurt in any way because they had experienced enough and had already atoned for any responsibility they might have had for National Socialism. And on the other hand there were the fanatics from the 1968 generation, who in a tone of utter conviction were saying: We would have done things much better. As a child of my parents I did not want to follow that example. In this situation I subscribe to the notion that I am 'blessed by my later birth.'"

Again and again we come across a dual strategy typical of Haider when he is dealing with the generations. On the one hand he constructs a generational conflict that cannot be resolved and to whose polarization he adds. On the other hand he writes with much emotion using the vocabulary of family and personal discourse, appealing to the sons and daughters to come to the rescue of their fathers and grandfathers, thus linking the "war-generation" with those "born later."

To this end, his defamation of those who insist on a critical examination of the past serves "public opinion." When Haider labeled the politically engaged artist André Heller a "father-hater" in his speech about the *Gedenkjahr* 1995, this topic coincided (by no means accidentally) with descriptions in the Austrian media of critical artists as "pompous, professional frauds" who "open wide their big mouths and insult the Austrian people." The media have also complained about "amply known slanderers of the people who rummage around in the murky past and hold it against a whole generation that has absolutely nothing to do with it." The topos of those who "foul their own nest" is integral to this raging struggle to defend and explain. The participants include not only the fast dwindling generation of witnesses, but also the generation of "those born later" that rushes to their defense.

The "Final Word"—Danger or Opportunity?

When Haider and his ilk repudiate the 68ers they also repudiate any serious examination of National Socialism. A critical assessment of the past and condemnation of the parent generation is automatically an unacceptable expression of self-righteousness by "those born later," preventing any positive approach in the future. That Austria examined its National Socialist past comparatively later is, for Haider, simply an "Austrian phenomenon," and he demands that one "concentrate more on the future in order to prevent these things from happening again." His aggression is barely concealed when he counters the skeptical question of how one might learn lessons for the future without first examining the past: "At some time or other it has to be possible to break free from the past.... This constant preoccupation with the past, this eternal going round in circles is a peculiarly German

thing. The Austrian has a different mentality."

In addition, as Haider maintains, the Freedom Party has a firmer grasp of the past, not least because it is very much a young party: "We no longer see National Socialism through the eyes of those directly linked with that time but from the distance of an historical observer." This quirky self-portrayal contains a grain of truth; the FPÖ not only has a predominantly young voter-base, but is also represented in leading positions by a new younger generation of politicians, including members of the third generation. In this context the question arises as to whether the change in generation has indeed caused a new approach to the Nazi past.

Vice-chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer and many other top-ranking FPÖ functionaries have made few statements on this subject. Whether this reticence is a result of political caution or plain lack of interest is an open question. For me, it seems perfectly possible that the FPÖ representatives from this generation do not regard themselves as complicit in any way and have no clearly defined position regarding National Socialism. On the other hand it must be said that the younger party members only rarely distance themselves from Haider's statements on National Socialism. Normally they rise to his defense or react with approval or applause.

Karl Grasser, in his thirties, the finance minister and FPÖ "nice guy," is a prime example of the "immaturity" of this generation. In his role as deputy governor of the province of Carinthia he was asked to take a position on these matters during the 1995 *Gedenkjahr* celebration; in doing so, he royally put his foot in it several times. He refused to honor Carinthia's resistance fighters and labeled them "enemies of Carinthia," a view consistent with Haider's and with the prevalent historical perspective of German-Carinthia. He also aroused criticism by refusing to participate in a school-children's memorial trip to Auschwitz. To be sure, he reacted to this criticism immediately, and duly accompanied a school field trip to the concentration camp at Loibl Pass [a sub-camp of Mauthausen] in Carinthia rather than, as he explained, to some camp "somewhere in Poland." Karl Grasser later changed his tune somewhat, and became one the few FPÖ members to criticize Haider for appearing before Waffen SS veterans; he also visited the wildly controversial Wehrmacht exhibition when it came to Klagenfurt. Regardless of how one judges these political actions, their self-contradiction shows how flexible and unformed the attitude of this young top FPÖ politician is toward the Nazi past.

Grasser is representative of many of his generation; he seems to see himself as personally uninvolved by virtue of his age and background and, for this reason, he can perhaps operate less emotionally. Unlike Haider, he no longer sees the rehabilitation of his parents' and grandparents' generation as his main task, but instead he has begun to examine National Socialism critically. He is ready to participate, to an extent, in official commemorative events. Perhaps this third generation, less inhibited because of its chronological distance from events, is beginning to close the book on the era of National Socialism, almost without even trying. This optimistic appraisal of the situation must be weighed against the fact that the younger FPÖ types persist in uttering problematic statements like the SS slogan "Our honor lies in faithfulness." Such statements are usually played down or defended with a reference to the "blessing of a later birth." Whether the possibility of an end to the spectre of National Socialism is seen as a danger or as an opportunity, it is not possible to close the book without first critically examining the Nazi past and without reflecting on the implications for one's own family and of one's own emotional response.

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"Landscape of Loss" at the Fleming Museum

"I went to Poland and met people, people lost, but present in an ineffable way," photographer Jeff Gusky, M.D. told a rapt audience during his talk. Theauditorium was packed for the opening event of his exhibit, "Landscape of Loss." Gusky's use of black and white photography highlights the disparate architectural styles of seventeenth- and nineteenth-century synagogues, thus visually affirming the millenium-long Jewish presence in Poland, a presence that was systematically destroyed in a mere three years, between late 1941 and early 1945. Gusky's choice of medium gives the destruction immediacy, erasing any evidence of rust on a showerhead in the gas chambers at Majdanek and adding chill to the snow being driven against the barracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Gusky's photographs reveal the traces of Jewish culture still visible in Poland. During a number of winter trips to Poland, Gusky has found Jewish homes, marked by traces of a mezuzah, transformed into bakeries and public toilets. He has discovered synagogues converted to warehouses and even up-scale furniture stores. He has found gravestones used as building material and two recent homes built on the site of a Jewish cemetery.

Although the Jewish population in Poland has become more visible of late, as Ginni Stern suggested in her recent article ("Journeys of a Second Generation Survivor," *The Bulletin of the Center for Holocaust Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 2001) 1-5), the renewal of Jewish life in Poland has not been easy. "Landscape of Loss" reveals many of the difficulties inherent in any attempt to connect to an indigenous Jewish past.

"Landscape of Loss" runs through 9 June 2002 in the East Gallery of the Fleming Museum. A number of related events are planned. For more information, call the Fleming Museum at (802) 656-0750, or visit the museum website: http://www.uvm.edu/~fleming.

About Our Contributors

Bernard Gotfryd, survivor of six concentration camps in Germany and Austria, has contributed to *The Bulletin* in the past. The retired *Newsweek* photographer frequently visits UVM. He will speak at the Fleming Museum on 26 March 2002, at 5:00 p.m. on "Walking in the Footsteps of My Childhood."

John O'Sullivan is a graduate student in the Department of History and an assistant soccer coach at the University of Vermont.

Margit Reiter is on the faculty of the Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna. Her research interests include Austrian-Israeli relations, Leftist anti-Semitism, exile in Shanghai, the politics of memory, and especially generation and memory with an emphasis on the children of perpetrators.

Announcements

French Compensation Fund

The French Government has established a Commission for the Compensation of Victims of Spoliation Resulting from anti-Semitic Legislation in Force During the Occupation (CIVS). Its mandate is to investigate and compensate claims by victims (or their heirs or successors) of anti-Semitic persecution in France during World War II. The commission examines claims relating to any property frozen, blocked, looted, or Aryanized in France during World War II. Victims whose assets were confiscated by the French or German Occupying governments will be compensated by the compensation committee set up within the Prime Minister's Office after their claims have been reviewed by CIVS.

If you or your family were Jewish or considered Jewish under German or Vichy laws, and if you believe that you or your family may have had any type of personal or business account at a bank in France during the periods from September 1939 to May 1945, you are eligible to apply for compensation. Even if you are not sure whether you or your family had an account, you may request a claims form and file an application. The deadline for applications is **July 18, 2002**.

The Commission will investigate claims in the order they are received, but will give priority to claims by the aged, those in precarious financial circumstances, those in difficult social situations, and those subject to referral to the fund.

Information and applications may be obtained from:

The Commission for Compensation of Victims of Spoliation
1 rue de la Manutention
75116 Paris, France
Toll free from the U.S.: 1-866-254-3770

The commission's website—www.civs.gouv.fr—contains information in French, English, and Hebrew. Forms may be downloaded and printed from that web site. They may be submitted to the commission by mail or by fax to 33-(0)1-56-52-85-73.

You may also contact:

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in the United States at 1-800-900-9036.

Barclay's Bank and J.P. Morgan & Co. have reached separate settlements. Information for these settlements is available by telephoning 1-800-714-3304. It may also be found on the World Wide Web at www.barclaysfrenchclaims.org and www.jpmorganfrenchclaims.org or by writing to the Barclays/J.P. Morgan Settelemnt Administrator at P.O. Box 9260, Garden City New York, 11530.

Correction:

The editors would like to correct the following errors in our coverage of the talk given by Wendy Lower, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 15. 200,000 Galician Jews were deported to Belzec. Following the massacre at Babi Yar, 350,000 Jews remained in Volhynia-Podolia. They were forced into ghettos beginning in the fall of 1941. Approximately 200,000-225,000 died in ghettos, labor camps, and at other sites.

My Journey to Dachau

by Bernard Gotfryd

It all began with an invitation I received from a young woman, the coordinator of the International Youth Gathering in Dachau, Germany, who had heard me speak at a high school while visiting New York city early in the year 2001. At first I wasn't sure if I was emotionally ready to handle a visit to Germany, and, moreover, to a place called Dachau. To be sure, I was never in Dachau before. However, I had been incarcerated in other camps, just as bad as Dachau, in Poland and Austria during World War II.

I was informed that I would have to spend about one week with a group of college students from twenty different countries who were coming to Dachau to study tolerance and the Holocaust. This made it very appealing, and yet I still had difficulty making up my mind. The last time I had been in Germany was in 1947, before I emigrated to the U.S.A.

After several weeks of mulling it over, I decided to go. I reasoned that if these young students were willing to give their time to study tolerance, then the least I could do would be to give them some of my time. My spouse, Gina, also a Holocaust survivor, would come along. At first she, too, was a bit apprehensive, but it didn't take her as long to decide.

Before going to Dachau, however, we decided to visit a young German friend of ours, whom we have entertained in our home, in New York City, on a number of occasions. He would be thrilled if we would visit with him, he had told us, and since he lived less than one hour's drive from Dachau, in a town called Gauting, it wouldn't be very difficult or time consuming to get there.

Our visit to Gauting with our friend was most pleasant. We were taken sightseeing, and wined and dined by his parents, who in turn introduced us to the most remarkable mayor of Gauting. This man had been instrumental in erecting monuments in several towns in Bavaria to commemorate the infamous Dachau prisoners' death march, in 1945, and had been recognized by Yad Vashem for his work. We saw the awards he had received in his office. We spent a very interesting evening filled with good conversation. It felt reassuring to be in their company.

The four days in Gauting went by fast. The following day we were taken to the Youth Gathering Center in the town of Dachau. Driving through the narrow streets of small towns in Bavaria, one can't miss the flower boxes full of red and blue and yellow blossoms festooning the terraces and windowsills. Most of the houses are in excellent repair and reflected the bright sunlight off the white stucco walls. The roads are also well taken care of. Driving in and around Munich during our stay, I didn't see a single pothole. Everything seemed to be in first-rate condition.

Our first day in Dachau was spent getting settled at the inn, where all the participants were staying. There were some informal introductions, handshakes, and friendly smiles. Before long we met a larger number of participants, who came from near and far, from places like Kazakhstan, Italy, Japan, Spain, Moldova, Turkey, Russia, and a group from Poland, including three high school students from Radom, my hometown. I had no problem communicating with them in Polish. They seemed thrilled to have met the speaker, a compatriot.

Gina and I got settled in our assigned room, which was long and narrow, with two narrow beds standing head to foot. The window faced the street, one floor above the main entrance to the inn. The weather was quite warm, but nights were cool enough to keep us fairly comfortable, provided one kept the window open. There weren't any screens, and one could hear the occasional buzzing of an insect, or some commotion caused by some participants arriving late at night from their excursions into town.

During our meals in the communal dining room, I sat with different participants, discussing historical events of World War II or answering questions. Most of them seemed eager to learn.

Meanwhile, as I watched the German volunteer staff, I kept wondering whether their grandfathers had taken part in any of the atrocities while they served in the German Army in occupied Europe. I felt sure that the grandparents would have denied any involvement in the Holocaust, the way most Germans of that generation did. I still remember the German civilians I met after World War II who claimed they didn't know what went on in concentration camps which were as little as one mile from where they lived. Was this new generation different? I wondered. Are they less gullible and more politically mature than their grandfathers were? At least I hope so. I hope so for the sake of humanity and future generations to come.

One day we were taken to Dachau Concentration Camp, a perfectly sanitized relic that has very little to do with the Dachau of 1933-1945. But then, I wondered why one should expect to find the camps the way they were? The victorious allies destroyed some barracks for health reasons, in other cases normal decay and rot took their toll; repair and renovation would appear to be necessary. But doesn't sanitizing the camps somehow diminish the crime? The immaculate barracks we see today come across like a model for public consumption. Their stained and polished bunk beds seem to say it wasn't as bad as the survivors say, especially devoid of the wretched prisoners in their ragged uniforms packed two, three, or four to a bunk. But then again, with the old barracks destroyed or rotted away, who could tell the difference? Most of the survivors who lived in them are gone; the few who remain won't be here forever. Isn't this another way of covering up the truth and of twisting facts.

I know from personal experience how the truth is perverted. Only two years ago I went with a group of American students to visit Mauthausen Camp, in Austria. Among other half-truths the guide told us how, during the war, the villagers around the camp helped the inmates with food. I was certainly never aware of any such help, not while I was an inmate in Mauthausen and Gusen. "The only thing we ever got from the villagers on the way to the Messerschmidt Plant where I was a slave was garbage hurled at us as we trudged along the street," I told her.

At the Gathering in Dachau I participated in a workshop dealing with the German resistance against the Nazis during World War II. There I met an elderly German woman who, as a member of the "White Rose" group, was imprisoned and tortured by the Nazis. Most of the members of the "White Rose," many of them students, were summarily tried in the notorious "People's Court," and executed. The little "White Rose" lady sat next to me and we held hands. It was a heartwarming experience to know how much we had in common.

The discussion was with the participants of the workshop, the students, and the volunteer staff. I recalled deprivation and dehumanization in the camps, and eternal hunger. Some of the students' eyes welled up with tears. Those were very difficult moments for me. In the heat of discussion I became somewhat emotional and branded the Nazis heartless monsters that specialized in mass killing.

The following day a young German staff volunteer who had participated in the workshop let me know that I had displayed an aggressive attitude. I was shocked! Did she know what she was saying, I asked. Did she know what it was like to live under the Nazis? Will she ever know what it was like to be brutalized, undernourished, and close to dying? She didn't answer. "This is a very emotional issue," I said, "and chances are you will never understand what it was like, unless you were there. One can't talk about such experiences and be composed and relaxed." A faint smile appeared on her face. I didn't know what to make of it.

The evening came for me to address the Youth Gathering, as well as a group of middle-school youngsters who had been brought in from a nearby community. It was a warm evening and the hall was stuffy. I sat there facing the audience, perspiring profusely. Not for a moment in my life would I have thought it at all possible that fifty-six years after the end of World War II I would be back on German soil, talking about the Holocaust. How unbelievable....

I spoke as an eyewitness, describing my own experiences. I talked about the extent of man's inhumanity to man. But I also told about some acts of courage by others, or single cases of human decency. I recalled a scene from my book, *Anton, the Dove Fancier*, "The Execution," in which a young man, a prisoner, refused to participate in an act of killing—and—he survived. I spoke about freedom, and about how most of us tend to take it for granted, and that we all have a responsibility to take a stand, speak up and fight for it. I hope some of them will remember my words. I just hope so.

When it was all over, I was emotionally drained. I only wondered if they understood what I was telling them, or whether it was all in vain. Of course, I don't know the answer. Only time will tell.

Considering my own experience under the Nazis during World War II, I am not surprised I felt the way I did. Especially after one reads about Nazism showing its ugly face again among young people. How can I trust the political systems that allow them to march through our communities and spew their poisonous lies, or that allow them to destroy the old religious landmarks of other ethnic groups? Is this part of free speech? I don't think a movement that advocates hate, racism, and violence should enjoy such freedoms.

And yet, how can I forget the sudden phone call from the mother of a young German volunteer, whom I had befriended in New York a year before? She invited Gina and me to be her guests for dinner and drove quite a distance to meet us, as well as to take us back to Dachau; she later came back to listen to my talk before the end of the Gathering. How can I forget such kindness and hospitality? How can I forget her eight-year-old son Carl, animated, teaching me how to make paper airplanes and proving a formidable opponent at chess? I regret that there wasn't enough time to finish the game. Those are unforgettable moments.

In retrospect, I loved every minute of it. I was able to watch a real democracy in action, where young people from so many different cultures revealed how much they had in common, and, in spite of language differences, they were able and willing to debate and to communicate. There lies our hope for a peaceful world.

BROWNING VISITS UVM

by
Katherine Quimby Johnson

On Thursday, 18 October 2001, the Center for Holocaust Studies once again welcomed Christopher Browning, Frank Porter Graham Professor of History at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill. Professor Browning previously visited UVM during the 1991 symposium held to honor Raul Hilberg on his retirement, and he presented the inaugural Raul Hilberg Lecture in 1992. An audience of students, faculty, and community members filled Campus Center Theater to hear Professor Browning once again, as he spoke on "Post-war Testimony and Holocaust History: The Case of Adolf Eichman."

In this lecture, Browning used the testimony of Adolf Eichmann to date more closely the decision-making process that turned the Nazi treatment of Jews from "ethnic cleansing" to extermination. Adolf Eichmann was one of the few key players to survive. A total of seven different accounts given by Eichmann exist, including tapes and interviews, and their corrected transcripts, dating from 1951 and 1957, memoirs, a time-line, and trial testimony. However, Eichmann was a notorious liar: he claimed he was not an anti-Semite; he claimed to be an idealist, and an ideal 'crypto-Zionist' looking for a homeland for the Jews; he also characterized his behavior as passive and inactive and denied that his office had anything to do with the "Final Solution."

Despite the man's unreliability, it is possible, according to Browning, to assess Eichmann's testimony in a manner that sifts the truth from the lies. Certain questions can be asked: 1) Is the testimony against Eichmann's self-interest? 2) Is it vivid? That is, does it possess a degree of detail? 3) Is it consistent? 4) Is it possible? Does it correlate with other documentation, and if so, how? and 5) Is it probable? (Again, does it fit with documents?)

Browning demonstrated this truth-testing method using Eichmann's accounts of a number of events from the fall of 1941 to 1942. At the time of Eichmann's trial no documentation on these events was available. Current scholarship can thus assess Eichmann's testimony for accuracy in a manner not possible at the time of his trial.

For example, Eichmann's versions of one event fail to pass muster. In three different accounts he referred to flying to Kiev to report to Himmler on the "re-emigration of the Jews." He recounted the flight in vivid detail and placed it in the fall of 1941. However, Himmler's diaries date the visit to August 1942, when Eichmann reported on how many Jews remained alive. (A deadline of 1942 had been set for the death of all Jews.) Thus, although Eichmann was consistent, documentary evidence contradicts his testimony; clearly he was testifying in his own self-interest.

Eichmann's report on two visits he made to Lublin after the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942 is suspect. In an early memoir he dated these visits to March 1942; their purpose was to order of the killing of .25 million Jews. Later he changed the date to spring 1942 and said that he was to authorize the killings after they had already taken place. Not only was Eichmann inconsistent, but a comparison of his testimony with documents shows that the earlier chronology was correct. In this case, Eichmann was clearly trying to deny direct responsibility for the killings.

However, when it was in his best interest, Eichmann could tell the truth. In four of the seven accounts Eichmann related a visit to Auschwitz in late spring to look at early gas chambers. Rudolf Höss had testified that Eichmann was in charge in the summer of 1941; even though Höss' testimony was inconsistent, it was potentially damaging to Eichmann. In testimony during his trial, he dated the construction of the first gas chambers at Auschwitz to late spring 1942. The first gassings there are known to have taken place in May 1942. Thus Eichmann's self-interested testimony fits known facts.

Eichmann's most important testimony, in terms of dating the decision to implement the "Final Solution," is his report of a visit to Heydrich's office some time late in 1941. There he was told that Hitler had ordered the destruction of the European Jews. For this purpose anti-tank ditches in Lublin were to be used. All the accounts of this event that Eichmann gave to the Israelis are consistent. He describes his trip to Lublin, where he saw gassing already in progress. He names his driver correctly and describes the "fall colors at their peak." Christian Wirth, the head of the death camps in Poland was present, as was Odilo Globocnik, who led them to a group of buildings that were being made airtight, in order to kill Jews. This occurred shortly before preparations for the deportations were made, that is, before 15 October. Because a letter was sent from Lodz on 9 October complaining about Eichmann's double-dealing, he must have been in Lublin before this date. Therefore, Browning concluded, Eichmann must have visited the site prior to that date, meaning that he met with Heydrich sometime in late September.

Browning summarized several points against this hypothesis. Construction on Belzec did not begin until 1 November, and Wirth was not there until December. Browning then analyzed these arguments, noting that Eichmann was not necessarily visiting the camp at Belzec; he was visiting a place in the woods. Furthermore, some evidence suggests that Wirth was there in September and no evidence contradicts that suggestion.

Merging Eichmann's testimony with other documentation and evidence of events, Browning constructed a time frame for the implementation of the "Final Solution." In mid-September Hitler and Himmler met. On 15 September Himmler wrote a letter ordering the deportation of Jews to Lodz. On 23 or 24 September Hitler, Himmler, and Goebbels agreed to expand deportation. On 25 or 26 September Heydrich met with Eichmann, after which Eichmann traveled to Lublin via Prague. Some time around 1 October Globocnik requested a meeting with Himmler; Hans Frank, of the General Government in Poland, wanted to expel the Jews, sending them "over the Bug river," which Browning interpreted as a reference to Belzec.

At about the same time the German Embassy in France was holding some Spanish Jews in custody. Spain wanted them sent to Morocco. On 17 October Heydrich forbade their deportation, as it would remove them from post-war measures the Nazis intended to implement. On 18 October Jewish emigration was halted. Documents record gassings in late October in Riga, Mogalev, Chelmno, and Belzec.

Thus Eichmann's testimony fits with dates we now have, all of which show that by late October preparations for the "Final Solution" were well under way. Thus, despite the lies that fill Eichmann's testimony, it does confirm a late September, early October 1941 date for the crystallization of the Nazi goal to kill all the Jews of Europe. The "Final Solution" was not laid out in details, but Nazi policy had moved from a vision of expulsion to a vision of mass murder.

Further, Browning traced the source of this vision to the euphoria of victory; this followed a pattern begun in 1939. In that year, after the successful invasion of Poland, the Nazis implemented a policy of ethnic cleansing. Their victory in France led to a vision of Jews being expelled to Madagascar. Victory in the USSR was followed by the expansion of mobile killing operations to kill all the Soviet Jews. In fall 1941, as the Nazi armies pushed on to Kiev, Leningrad, and Moscow, plans were drawn up to extend the killing to all the Jews of Europe.

"Historians take their evidence where they can get it," Browning said. "Historians who want to get at the truth should use what sources are available." His lecture demonstrated to an appreciative audience the process of obtaining truth from even the most unlikely of sources.

IAN KERSHAW GIVES 10TH HILBERG LECTURE

John O'Sullivan

On 5 December 2001, Ian Kershaw delivered the 10th annual Hilberg Lecture at the University of Vermont's Billing's Campus Center Theater. Kershaw is Professor of Modern History at the University of Sheffield and also author of a highly acclaimed new two-volume biography of Adolf Hitler. Entitled "Hitler's 'Prophecy' and the 'Final Solution'," the lecture was an insightful analysis of one of Hitler's most notorious utterances, his "prophetic" warning of the annihilation of European Jews in his Reichstag speech of 30 January 1939. The lecture thus served to highlight Kershaw's position on one of the central issues of Holocaust studies: his belief that Hitler's "prophecy" was not the initiation of a "Final Solution" that had been planned since 1918 but one of the many events on the "twisted road to Auschwitz."

During the second half of Hitler's tirade celebrating the sixth anniversary of his so-called 'Seizure of Power,' Hitler proclaimed:

> In the course of my life I have very often been a prophet, and have usually been ridiculed for it....Today I will once more be a prophet: if the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevising of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe!

The true nature and purpose of the speech has been an item of contention and disagreement among Holocaust scholars. Lucy Dawidowicz has argued that the speech signaled the beginning of planning for the systematic mass murder of the Jews of Europe, and thus was a pre-ordained decision for the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish Question." On the other end of the spectrum, Hans Mommsen describes the speech as propaganda, merely an attempt to blackmail the Western powers by holding the Jews as hostages. Kershaw views the "prophecy" as neither the initiation of an extermination plan nor as a pure propaganda device inadvertently turned into political reality, but instead as serving a two-fold purpose. It was on one level a symbol of Hitler's deepest personal conviction that the Jews were responsible for the disasters that had befallen Germany in World War I and therefore the next war would be a war against the Jews ending in their ultimate destruction. Yet the "prophecy" also served as both a public and private "transmission belt" to those who needed to know of the increasing radicalization of anti-Jewish policy and thus obviated the need for a single, explicit order for the "Final Solution."

Kershaw argues that at the time the infamous speech was given, the path to genocide was still not clearly laid out. Coming on the heels of the stymied Rublee-Wohlthat talks about international financing for the emigration of 150,000 Jews, and only months after the violent anti-Jewish *Reichskristallnacht* of 9-10 November 1938, the "prophecy" served as much more than a device to put pressure on western powers, as Mommsen argues. Hitler had been convinced since 1918 that "the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been necessary if twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas," and his speech was a mark of his own genocidal mentality. Kershaw argues that this point is re-emphasized when we note that between 1941 and April 1945 Hitler referred both publicly and privately to his "prophecy" on more than a dozen occasions. He referred to it in talks with his inner circle, to the public in Reichstag and Sportpalast speeches in Berlin, as well as in the Hofbräuhaus and Löwenbräukeller in Munich, all of which were broadcast to the nation. Yet he dated the speech to 1 September 1939, the day of the German invasion of Poland. Kershaw argues that this misdating is a further indication of Hitler's conscious link of the war and the Jews.

One interesting aspect of the "prophecy" that Kershaw explores is that despite the frequency with which he alluded to it in his later years, it took Hitler more than two years after the original speech before first he returned to it on 30 January 1941. It is unclear what reminded Hitler of it, but given the political climate of January 1941—the failure of the Madagascar deportation option and the planning of an offensive against the Soviet Union—it is likely that the repetition of the prophecy at this juncture was, as Kershaw put it, "a hint that the hour of the showdown with the Jews was approaching." The date, time, and place of Jewish destruction were unknown, but for Hitler, their forthcoming annihilation was a certainty.

By autumn of 1941, with the war in the east raging, the "prophecy" acquired symbolic status as the Nazi Party's Propaganda Department distributed posters to all Party branches containing the words of Hitler's original speech. It thus served as propaganda to prepare the German population for the upcoming deportations of the Jews throughout Europe. Within Hitler's in-

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ner circle, it began to take on more symbolic meaning, for his repetition of the "prophecy" at decisive junctures served, in Kershaw's words, as "a form of camouflage language fully understood by those 'in the know' without Hitler having to resort to more direct expression...." Over the next years, the "prophecy" would serve "as the transmission belt between Hitler's own inner conviction that the war would bring about the final destruction of European Jewry, and the actions of his underlings, determined to do all they could to 'work towards the Führer', in turning Hitler's presumed wishes into reality."

Kershaw argued that, in the last years of the Third Reich, the "prophecy" was no longer needed as a weapon of propaganda, nor to spur the Nazi underlings to radical action. Yet Hitler did call upon it to legitimize the war he had launched and the "necessary, inevitable and warranted" catastrophe towards which Germany was edging. It also served Hitler's need for self-justification, for even on the eve of his suicide, he dictated to his youngest secretary, Traudl Junge: "I left no doubt that if the nations of Europe are again to be regarded as mere blocks of shares of these international money and finance conspirators, then that race, too, which is really guilty of this murderous struggle, will be called to account: Jewry." The "prophecy" in Hitler's eyes had been fulfilled.

Kershaw concludes that in light of the collected evidence, the "prophecy" has a claim to be regarded as both an insightful key to Hitler's mentality and a "guideline for action." In 1939 it symbolized his deepest personal conviction that the Jews were to be held responsible and made to pay for the tragedy that had befallen Germany in 1918. After a two-year hiatus, the "prophecy" returned to a prominent place in Hitler's rhetoric, with its invocation often resulting in increasing radicalization of Nazi anti-Jewish policy. It came to obviate any need for an explicit reference to genocidal activity, which remained taboo throughout Hitler's rule, even among his closest entourage. There was never a need for a single order for the "Final Solution." The "prophecy", in Kershaw's words, allowed Hitler to "do no more than provide requisite authorization at the appropriate time to Himmler and Heydrich to go ahead with the various escalatory stages which culminated in the murder of Europe's Jews." It was the symbol for and transmitter of the "Final Solution."

Kershaw's lecture was another example of the high quality of scholarship that the Hilberg Lecture series attracts to the University of Vermont. As one of the leading world authorities on Adolf Hitler, Kershaw was able to construct a roadmap of the "Final Solution," and successfully show what a twisted road it was. He was able to look at events from inside the mind of Hitler, and draw upon numerous archival and personal documents to conclude that the "prophecy" was a multi-purpose instrument in the symbolism and transmission of the destruction of the Jews. In the end, the lecture was a fabulous opportunity for faculty, students, and the Burlington community to gain insight into one of the world's great tragedies from one of its leading authorities, and an enlightening experience to all who attended.

The Jedwabne Controversy in Context

Jonathan Huener
The University of Vermont

When Jan T. Gross' book *Sasiedzi: historia zaglady zydowskiego miasteczka* (Sejny: Pogranicze, 2000) appeared two years ago, it elicited a controversy that has since spread to the United States. Since its publication in English last year, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) has been the subject of academic conferences, a public symposium at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and dozens of reviews. *Neighbors* is the story of the torture and massacre of some 1,600 Jews in July 1941 at the hands of Polish gentiles in the town of Jedwabne, located in the Bialystok province of German-occupied Poland. According to Gross' account, shortly after the German occupation of the region in the summer of 1941, gentile Poles tortured and murdered the Jews of the town in an orgy of brutality that culminated in burning alive the majority of the victims.

The story of the Jedwabne massacre is not new. Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute has had on file a deposition from the survivor Szmul Wasersztajn describing the massacre, and the Polish Ministry of Justice and District Courts undertook proceedings against local residents in 1949 and 1953. For decades, the massacre was officially condemned and commemorated as an act of Nazi brutality against Poland's Jews, and a monument erected in the town recorded it as "A site of torment of the Jewish population–the Hitlerite Gestapo and Gendarmerie burned 1,600 people alive, 10 July 1941." Not until Gross began to publish his findings, however, was the broad spectrum of Polish society forced to confront this painful story. The public discourse surrounding Gross' findings has marked a turning point in the post-war history of Polish-Jewish relations and in the process of post-communist Poland coming to terms with its wartime past, for at issue here is not the common suffering of Poles and Jews during the German occupation, or the extent of Poles' indifference towards or aid to Jews in their midst. Jedwabne is the story of Polish villagers actively and enthusiastically participating in the murder of their neighbors.

Poland's memory and commemoration of the German occupation during World War II has traditionally been constructed and maintained almost exclusively within the framework of national trauma, national sacrifice, and national redemption. This memorial framework did not exclude the destruction of Jews in Polish lands. The Shoah has, however, received varying degrees of emphasis over the years, and for most of Poland's post-war history, the annihilation of Jews on Polish territory was not adequately specified as a trauma distinct from the suffering of gentile Poles.

It is also important to note that Polish memory of the occupation could be instrumentalized in a variety of useful, and even

redemptive, ways. In the broadest terms, Poland's suffering and sacrifice under the Germans was a source of national pride, national identity, and national resolve. Solidarity in suffering and heroic resistance had helped Poland defend itself against invaders in centuries past, and had helped the nineteenth-century Polish nation survive in the absence of a nation-state on the map of Europe. Solidarity and resolve had been at the core of Polish national myth and identity in the past, and they could surely empower Polish society in facing the challenges of post-World War II reconstruction. In the immediate post-war period, the legacy of suffering and heroism could be deployed in the service of the state, albeit in different, and less conventionally nationalist terms, serving, for example, as a justification for Polish control of its so-called "recovered territories" in the west. Under Polish Stalinism in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Polish publicists and the leaders of ZBoWiD, the government-sponsored organization for veterans and former prisoners, could rally support for solidarity with the Soviet Union and opposition to Anglo-American imperialism by appealing to a heroic past. Political leaders and ZBoWiD also evoked this heroic past during the "anti-Zionist campaign" of the late 1960s, citing instances of Polish aid to the Jews during the occupation as a defense against charges of government-sponsored anti-Semitism from abroad. Even the controversy surrounding the establishment of a Carmelite Convent adjacent to the Auschwitz base camp in the mid-1980s was defended in nationalist terms, invoking the vocabulary of common suffering and martyrdom.

In sum, although the vocabulary and instrumentalization of the past varied according to the ideological proclivities and political exigencies of the day, the basic characteristics of the memorial paradigm remained: Polish martyrdom in the service of higher ideals, solidarity in resistance and suffering, Polish aid to Jews or, at the very least, identification with the Jewish plight under the Nazis. Moreover, the perpetrator—whether designated a German, Hitlerite, fascist, or imperialist—was not a Pole.

Jan Gross' revelations about the Jedwabne massacre suggest otherwise, and this is the problem at the core of the controversy surrounding his book. The details of the massacre as related by Gross are horrifying, and were bound to cause a resonance in the scholarly community and Polish public at large. Moreover, the controversy surrounding Gross' book has reflected the normal and predictable scrutiny to which scholars will put any controversial work. Historians and publicists, both in Poland and the United States, have criticized Gross for, among other things, his approach to survivor testimony, his lack of attention to German archival sources, and for his minimization of the role of Germans in the massacre. Most importantly, however, Gross' book has introduced a story that falls entirely outside of the framework of wartime memory cultivated and nurtured in Poland for more than fifty years. The book threatens, but does not destroy, notions of shared Polish and Jewish suffering under the Germans; it challenges notions of universal Polish resistance to the German occupation and occupation policy; it undermines the narrative of Polish aid to Jews in their midst; it contradicts the assumption that Polish indifference to the Jews' plight was the "worst case" behavior under German occupation. In short, Jedwabne has challenged Polish historical and national identity.

In the process, the story of Jedwabne has also exacerbated the difficult relations between Poles and Jews—relations that have, over the past few decades, been making incremental progress towards reconciliation and understanding. It is convenient to regard certain "flash points" in the post-war history of Polish-Jewish relations as moments of contention and manifestations of a "traditional animosity." Pope John Paul II's visit to Poland in 1979, the controversy aroused by the Convent at Auschwitz, the debate sparked in 1987 by the publication of Jan Blonski's article "The Poor Pole Looks at the Ghetto," or more recent controversies surrounding the presence of religious symbols at Auschwitz—as acrimonious as these debates have sometimes been, they all represent steps in the overdue and protracted process of Poles and Jews addressing their common past in Polish lands. We would all probably be more comfortable if the pace of confronting the past had remained more moderate, and if the "terms" in "coming to terms" with the past had been less brutal. The revelations about Jedwabne have made this impossible, and have instead thrust us into a sudden confrontation with this painful episode. Jedwabne has accented once again the problem of Polish-Jewish relations before and during the war, sharpened the tone of the debates, and raised the stakes, for Poles are now being forced to confront the question of how and why their forebears could assume the roles of both victims and perpetrators.

The confrontation has resulted in what we might regard as a *Historikerstreit* among Polish historians and historians of Poland at the turn of the century. Like the Historians' Debate of the mid-1980s in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Jedwabne controversy is also a turning point in the process of a country coming to terms with its past, and like the German debate, Jedwabne is already calling forth comparisons with other countries and their relative levels of complicity in the crimes of the Holocaust. Unlike the German debate, however, the Jedwabne controversy has been aired and discussed at all levels of society. While the German debate remained within the ken of academics and learned publications, the implications of the massacre in Jedwabne, as challenging as they are to Poland's identity and collective memory of the war, have reached the public at large. Among the many defensive reactions to the controversy, it is important to keep in mind that this sort of public conversation is healthy and may, in the end, also be cathartic.

By bringing to light the Jedwabne story and continuing to engage in the debate surrounding his conclusions, Gross has forced many to raise, again, painful questions—questions that are pertinent regardless of how exceptional the massacre was. Under what circumstances did Poles come to the aid of their Jewish neighbors? Where and why did Poles respond to Nazi persecution of the Jews with complicity? Where, and why, did Poles initiate anti-Jewish actions on their own? Where, and why, did Poles respond with indifference? To what extent were these responses motivated by a medieval hatred of Jews, by modern anti-Semitism, by the desire for anti-Bolshevik revenge, or by a combination of the above? And at the broadest level, how do we introduce these questions into the dominant historical narrative that has traditionally extolled Polish suffering and virtuous sacrifice during World War II? Poles are now faced with the challenging task of including the Polish rescuer, victim, bystander, and perpetrator of the Holocaust in that same narrative, placing Poland's wartime past, like the past of every other European country, in what Primo Levi has called the "gray zone" of moral culpability.

Book Review

The Seventh Miracle. Jorge I. Klainman. Translated and edited by Kal Wagenheim. www.xlibris.com/bookstore. Xlibris.2000. ISBN: 0-7388-5612-6. $16.00 plus shipping. Electronic edition, $8.00.

Israel "Srulek" Klainman's *via dolorosa* through the Holocaust makes numerous all-too-familiar stops: from a middle-class household in Kielce, to flight to Dzialoszyce, transport to the forced labor camp at Prokocim, and then Plaszow Camp. His father was selected to be killed before the transport, and Klainman was separated from his brother when he went to Plaszow. In Plaszow, he initially had more luck than most, caring for the daughter of one of the Jewish police, but eventually he was selected to be shot at "The Little Mountain of the Damned." However, the detail carting away the corpses discovered that he only had a leg wound and left him with a camp doctor, who saved his life and gave him a new identity.

Klainman was transferred to Mauthausen in summer 1944. There he once again found lighter work, gathering hair in the barbershop rather than carrying rocks from the quarry. From Mauthausen he was sent to Melk, to work on the tunnels, and then to Ebensee, where the Nazis had left the prisoners to starve. Both Melk and Ebensee housed not only Jews, but also Greeks, and Russian prisoners of war. On 4 May 1945, the camp was abandoned and Klainman was free.

Klainman's search for surviving family members took him to Italy, and he presents a vivid picture of that country in the early post-war era. Numerous encounters demonstrate the absence of anti-Semitism among the Italian population and provide a stark contrast to the attitudes of several Austrians with whom he has dealings.

While he was in Italy, he heard from his mother's sister. As a young woman she had eloped to Argentina and had been cut off from the family. Now she urged her nephew to come to Buenos Aires. He delayed, still hoping for news of his older brother and sister, who were the most likely survivors from his family. Eventually he learned that his brother had successfully escaped from a transport and was with the Jewish Brigade. However, in the summer of 1946, Klainman dreamt of his brother's death, a dream that led to a nervous breakdown. Soon after he began to recover his strength, he received word from his brother's fiancée that his brother had in fact died of peritonitis in June 1946.

Eventually Klainman decided to go to Argentina, to be with his aunt. On the boat to South American he met a first cousin, who had seen his sister in Auschwitz-Birkenau and who informed Klainman that she had died there of typhus.

Traveling from Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires proved no less hazardous than many of Klainman's other travails. Argentina was closed to Jews at that time; the only way to enter was illegally, through Paraguay. By bribery and luck, Klainman and a companion made it into Argentina with no more than the clothes on their backs. Once he was in Buenos Aires, the first thing Klainman's aunt told him was, "Srulek, from now on your name is Jorge." At that time he put away his memories of the past decade and began a new life.

This volume is remarkable for reasons of content and format. Although Klainman's experience of the Holocaust covers familiar ground, the picture he gives of life as a DP in Italy is less familiar than that of life in Germany or Austria. The same is true for the trials and tribulations of emigration to South America after the war. In addition, this book has been put out by an Internet publisher, and is available in both paperback and electronic versions. The paperback has a solid spine with flexible covers, making it durable, and the printing is well done.

The translation, it must be said, is inconsistent. The English is generally smooth, although occasionally unidiomatic ("son of a whore" is consistently used instead of "son of a bitch"). However, foreign languages are handled inconsistently, with translations provided for some, but not all, Italian phrases. The German, whether it is the place names or the orders and curses shouted by the German guards, is full of misspellings, from "Bierkenau" instead of Birkenau in one place to "Anzeiscarteen" instead of *Ansichtskarten* (postcards) in another. The German guards' curses are spelled more like Yiddish than like German: "Farfluchter drekiker schvein due ferschteist gar nicht!" All of these are matters that an editor should have checked and corrected. A proofreader would have caught a few other typographical errors.

The book is called *The Seventh Miracle*, because six miracles saved Klainman's life, including a guard at Mauthausen whom he had known from Prokocim, who gave him the job in the barbershop. Klainman describes the seventh miracle as his ability to write the book after blocking these memories from his mind for so many years. This is a remarkable book, as much for Klainman's frankness as for his story. He includes accounts of the times he beat people up during his time in Austria and Italy—once his target was a Nazi sympathizer, but on the second occasion, it was a border guard who was doing his job. His description of what it felt like finally to be free is also one of the most convincing this reviewer has read: "I began to wake up in the mornings without rushing, without shouts or curses, washing myself with soap, and drying myself with a clean towel. Most important of all, I stopped smelling the nauseating stench of burned human flesh, which pursued me day and night for all those years."

Katherine Quimby Johnson

The Miller Symposium:

Business and Industry under the Nazi Regime

21 April 2002
Campus Center Theater
Billings Student Center
The University of Vermont

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"'Aryanization' and the Involvement of German Banks"

Gerald Feldman, University of California, Berkeley
"Financial Institutions and Nazi Germany: Reluctant or Willing Collaborators"

Simon Reich, University of Pittsburgh
"Who was in Charge? American Investment and the Question of Culpability"

Peter Hayes, Northwestern University
"The Chemistry of Business-State Relations in Nazi Germany"

Ulrich Herbert, University of Freiburg
"Forced Labor in German Industrial Firms: Shapes, Dynamics, Results"

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The Center for Holocaust Studies at The University of Vermont was established in 1993 to honor the scholarly and pedagogical legacy of Raul Hilberg, Professor *emeritus* of Political Science at The University of Vermont. His monumental work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, changed the way historians and students around the world view the Holocaust. Since Dr. Hilberg began his research in the late 1950s, what was a reluctance to confront the facts of the Holocaust has given way to a hunger for the truth.

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Events to Note

"Torn by Love, Hate, and Guilt: Suffering and Despair of a Holocaust Survivor"
Thirteenth Annual Harry Kahn Lecture
Lisa Kahn
Texas Southern University
Monday, 15 April 2002
4:00 p.m.
Memorial Lounge, Waterman Building

Business and Industry under the Nazi Regime
Symposium
Sunday, 21 April 2002
8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Campus Center Theater
Billings Student Center
The University of Vermont
(See page 15)

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