



## The 20th century: an interplay of views



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# **THE 20th CENTURY – AN INTERPLAY OF VIEWS**

“Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”  
Final conference

Bonn (Germany)  
22-24 March 2001

European Cultural Convention

Council of Europe Publishing

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*Regards croisés sur le 20<sup>e</sup> siècle*

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The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 to achieve greater unity between European parliamentary democracies. It is the oldest of the European political institutions and has forty-three member states,<sup>1</sup> including the fifteen members of the European Union. It is the widest intergovernmental and interparliamentary organisation in Europe, and has its headquarters in Strasbourg.

With only questions relating to national defence excluded from the Council of Europe's work, the Organisation has activities in the following areas: democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms; media and communication; social and economic affairs; education, culture, heritage and sport; youth; health; environment and regional planning; local democracy; and legal co-operation.

The European Cultural Convention was opened for signature in 1954. This international treaty is also open to European countries that are not members of the Council of Europe, and enables them to take part in the Council's programmes on education, culture, sport and youth. So far, 48 states have acceded to the European Cultural Convention: the Council of Europe's full member states plus Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Holy See and Monaco.

Four steering committees – the Steering Committee for Education, the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research, the Steering Committee for Culture and the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage – carry out tasks pertaining to education and culture under the European Cultural Convention. They also maintain a close working relationship with the conferences of specialised European ministers for education, culture and the cultural heritage.

The programmes of these four committees are an integral part of the Council of Europe's work and, like the programmes in other sectors, they contribute to the Organisation's three main policy objectives:

- the protection, reinforcement and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms and pluralist democracy;
- the promotion of an awareness of European identity;
- the search for common responses to the great challenges facing European society.

The education programme of the Steering Committee for Education and the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research currently covers school, out-of-school and higher education. At present, there are projects on education for democratic citizenship; history; modern languages; school links and exchanges;

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1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

educational policies; training for educational staff; the reform of legislation on higher education in central and eastern Europe; the recognition of qualifications; lifelong learning for equity and social cohesion; European studies for democratic citizenship; the social sciences and the challenge of transition; learning and teaching in the communication society; education for Roma/Gypsy children in Europe; and the teaching of the Holocaust.

These multilateral activities are complemented by targeted assistance to the newer member states in bringing their education systems in tune with European norms and best practice. Co-ordinated under a strategy of “partnerships for educational renewal” projects are being carried out, in particular on education legislation and structures, citizenship and history teaching. The priority regions are South-East Europe and the countries sprung from the former Soviet Union.

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## PREFACE

The Council of Europe symposium “The 20th century: an interplay of views”, held in Bonn from 22 to 24 March 2001, was the final conference for the CDCC project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”. One of the special goals of this three-year project was to produce teaching resources for secondary schools which would encourage both teachers and students to approach the events of the 20th century (and historical events in general) from a critical and analytical perspective, using the same skills and assessment criteria as historians. This involves, among other things, the understanding that no single version of history should be considered as final or correct.

In addition to presenting and assessing these teaching resources, the final conference brought together distinguished historians and writers from across Europe to give their views on the past century. Their speeches focused on: the role of historical interpretation and memory in forming identity; uneasy confrontations with past roles in the second world war; history still dominated by prejudice and myth; the importance of updating history, particularly one ideologised by a communist past; and the role of history in contributing to tolerance and respect amongst Europe’s peoples. The speakers almost unanimously stressed the importance of “looking back” and confronting the past, no matter how painful the process, if Europe was to continue to progress in human rights and democracy.

The photograph on next page was taken at the site of the ruins of the National Library in Sarajevo, destroyed on 26 August 1992. Its strange power lies in its elusiveness: it sends messages out in all directions – horror, beauty, immediacy, disembodiment, healing – thus making us uncomfortable if we try to interpret it. But it does act as a reminder that this continent and the world were caught off guard only a decade ago when Europe was in full democratic expansion. From this point of view, its presence here conveys the clear message that the past can never be relegated wholly to the past.





This photo has been reproduced with the kind permission of the photographer Louis Jammes. It first appeared as a poster on the streets of Sarajevo and can be found in *Sarajevo n'est en réalité le nom de rien qui puisse être représenté*, Flammarion 4, Paris 1994. Photo © Louis James.

## FOREWORD

The project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century” is the fruit of three years’ work carried out under the aegis of the Council of Europe’s Council for Cultural Co-operation and is aimed at helping teachers to find ways of presenting 20th-century history from new angles, especially as this complex, war-stricken period is one that is often perceived as difficult to teach. It centres on theme-based and methodological “teaching resources” and uses the languages of the 20th century, ranging from images to cinema and the computer, to explore the period’s chequered history, from the emancipation of women to the crimes and lies associated with totalitarian regimes. A far cry from the lecture theatre and peremptory statements of fact, it encourages students to question history as they discover it, and also teaches them to be on the look-out for traps and manipulation.

Meeting at the Haus der Geschichte (House of History museum) in the German city of Bonn from 22 to 24 March 2001, the project designers, experts and members of the CDCC and of the various working groups, compared the project’s finished teaching resources with current needs in respect of history teaching in Europe as portrayed by the academics, education experts and journalists also at the conference. The Haus der Geschichte provided the ideal setting as an interactive museum where visitors progress along a path lined with everyday or symbolic pictures, films and objects that retrace fifty years of German history. It is a perfect illustration of how it is possible to give history teaching and the presentation of history a new lease of life by placing the visitor amidst surroundings that will trigger dialogue and emotions rather than bare statements of fact. History like this, that you can “touch” because it seems so near and so approachable, is one of the main aims of the project. Moreover, the project stresses the valuable role of museums and field trips in backing up school-based education.

### **The language of history and its meaning**

The Bonn conference alternated plenary working sessions with smaller workshops devoted to detailed presentations of the teaching packs. Participants were initially encouraged to reflect on history in terms of its content and to decipher its structure. In the wake of the 20th century, when facts were so often disguised and “re-arranged” for political or nationalist purposes by all kinds of propaganda made easier by modern sound and image technologies, teachers have a duty to warn their students that history can also lie, conceal and manipulate. From the 1939 German-Soviet Pact, for a long time presented in the Soviet Union as a defence against bourgeois regimes rather than an aggressive agreement for dividing up Europe, to the unmitigated glorification of Yugoslav partisans between 1941 and 1944, communist

regimes have done a particularly good job of re-writing history in their favour. As a result, present-day students studying this period of the past, notably in the countries that succeeded the former “blocs” of countries, need to know not only the facts but also how these facts were presented. While in itself information technology can be an excellent teaching aid, it increases the risk of falsification, so that the problem of the origin and authenticity of source material is now all the more acute. For all these reasons, it is essential that history teaching in the 21st century should include a critical study of the actual concept of history and historiography. The project encourages students to think about the “hows and whys” of both their distant and their immediate history. It also alerts them to the fact that the silences in history, seen as the “blank spots”, sometimes say far more about what really happened at a particular time than all the rumblings of gunfire.

Swedish journalist Bosse Schön spoke in this context about the history of his own country during the war. For a long time it was concealed by the memory of Sweden’s neutrality and it is only now beginning to reveal the concessions that were made to such neutrality so that Sweden could “buy” continued peace by allowing German troops to cross its soil or by selling ore to the 3rd Reich without asking too many questions about where the money used to pay for it came from. The “duty to remember” is a painful experience for the country. After remaining buried for so long, it not only reveals the compromises of the past but is also necessary for the immediate future. With a section of the population of young Swedes showing a morbid fascination for “mythified nazism”, it is high time that the country as a whole was reminded of how Europe has been affected by such mistakes in the past, and that where history is concerned silence can never be the answer.

Another major concept brandished about at the moment is that of identity. But is identity really as eternal as its defenders would have us think, and is there not a danger that in heightening our sense of identity we are actually sowing the seeds of incomprehension and further conflict? As historians Horst Möller and Jean-Yves Potel pointed out, identities also feed on a re-constructed past that is deliberately or unintentionally embroidered and sometimes distorted by memory. From “outright victimisation” to the unequivocal claim of an unbridgeable gap dividing two countries, the concept of identity lends itself to all forms of excess, as well as providing a reference point for people of all nationalities. The problem is not so much one of the need to erase or extol identity, as one of knowing how it works so that we can recognise its bias and substitute the search for dialogue and agreement for the causes of conflict. History is always more than simply an accumulation of the past. We often justify the present by looking to the past, but this approach can be far from innocent, especially when the reconstructed past corresponds more to idealised views than irrefutable facts.

### **Emotions and encounters: keys for discovery**

How, then, can we make sure that students are aware of these complex processes and yet acquire all the knowledge of history they need, when the classroom is the

only place that this may be done? That is why the Council of Europe's project is so important and why, on the basis of new teaching methods, it sets out to promote an approach to history that is not only critical and methodical but also sufficiently "attractive" to win the support of students even once they have left school. Above all, history is brought alive through the use of first-hand accounts, dialogue, emotions, and confrontations with the past, which are a far cry from the traditional textbook approach that leaves no room for discussion and reflection. In Israel, for example, teaching of the Holocaust centres on conjuring up the victims and torturers from this tragic period and encourages children to wonder what their own attitudes and fate would have been had they been alive at that time. In order to introduce students to complex events in history such as the Treaty of Westphalia or the Treaty of Versailles, schools in several countries have them acting out roles so that they can acquire a feel of what it must have been like to be one of the treaty negotiators. The Council of Europe's project copies and develops this approach and suggests new ways in which teachers can enable their students to experience history for themselves. For example, by presenting the life and fate of an actress or female factory worker, the project brings them alive as a comment on the history of women in the 20th century. Films, photographs and posters, backed up by comments from the teacher, are used as aids to teach children about past events and reveal the attitudes of people living at that time. They also encourage students to think about how the news is presented on television and in the media generally nowadays. Similarly, on-line and off-line information-technology tools can be used to bring a past period or theme alive by providing access to authentic or fictional images, audio documents and texts, all on the same programme, as well as links to further information or other points of view. In addition, through being taught how to master if not the sources then at least how history is represented on the Internet, students learn that the history presented is above all history seen through the eyes of whoever designed the different programmes they consult. In other words, computers are one of a range of different tools, and while they may be powerful communicators they are certainly not to be regarded as a source of absolute truth. This is a lesson that will be valuable for the future as it shows that even the best websites in terms of design or degree of detail can contain traps or distort facts by concentrating excessively on, or omitting, certain aspects.

### **Challenges for the future**

"Ready-to-use" and up-to-date, the project on the history of the 20th century now has to establish itself in the education sphere, precisely at a time when, as we embark on a new century, we are reminded that the manipulation and falsification of history did not stop in 1989. The "historicising" explanations given for the tension and wars in South-East Europe, the way in which all European countries celebrate, commemorate or forget their recent history, or, quite simply, the flood of information and claims to a somewhat dubious historic truth that circulate on the Internet are an illustration of the need for interpretation tools that will help young Europeans understand not only their past, but also how it is portrayed and how it

affects both the present and the future. As Robert Stradling, author of the history teacher's handbook, pointed out, the task will not necessarily be an easy one, especially as there are countries that tend to neglect history teaching, either because of a lack of funding or staff or because they support the dangerous assertion that it is not by studying history that students will find a good job.

The belief that science and technology are all-powerful can undermine the role of history, as journalist Michel Meyer pointed out, even though, on the contrary, history can place the present "race for progress" in a humanist context, retracing how it has developed, its consequences, and its implications. The desire to re-design history syllabuses can also cause an uproar. This is currently the case in Italy, where people are at one another's throats as the country tries to decide whether or not to reduce the number of hours of Italian history taught in middle and upper secondary schools in favour of a more comprehensive presentation of the history of humanity. Against the background of all these present and future challenges, and the challenge of reconciling young people with school-based education despite the fact that they are bombarded from all sides with all kinds of media and "historical" facts, the project, if it is to succeed, now has to establish itself in member states' education programmes. Owing to the interest shown in it by the European Union, and the favourable response from the education authorities in many countries, there is cause to hope that the project will not only come to influence European school curricula but will also become an integral part of history teaching and teacher training so that teachers and students alike will have access to it and will be able to consult the project publications both on paper and in electronic format.

*Denis Durand de Bousingen*  
*Journalist*

## OPENING ADDRESSES

### History education and cultural pluralism

*Walter Schwimmer*

*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

It is both an honour and a great pleasure for me to open the final conference of the Council of Europe's project, "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century".

First of all, I should like to express our sincere thanks to the German authorities for their support and encouragement for this conference, and to the Haus der Geschichte, or "House of History" Museum of the Federal Republic of Germany for the prestigious setting and excellent organisation of this conference. Our thanks go to the European Commission too, for their generous contribution.

The Haus der Geschichte is of course an excellent venue for this conference. Its multidisciplinary approach to our past, which comprises political aspects as well as their consequences on the grass root level and on people's lives, are as relevant to the work on history education carried out in the framework of our own project, as is its emphasis on collective remembrance. In your museum you strive to "promote an understanding of the principal operating machinery of the democratic state" and to "encourage independent reflection".<sup>1</sup> Obviously, these are also our aims as far as the learning and teaching of history are concerned. In particular, the notion of independent reflection on the past has been one of the priorities of this project and is a guiding principle of the Council of Europe's work on history education.

The Council of Europe's own history began as a response to the devastation of the second world war, with a view to achieving European unity. Winston Churchill, one of the early visionaries of a united Europe likened its creation to a United States of Europe with free trade, open borders and peace for all of its citizens. Set up in 1949 by ten European States, the organisation extended its activities to include some twenty member states after forty years.

Then, 1989 happened. Europe had to redefine itself overnight. The Council of Europe suddenly found itself once again a pioneer. We had to react very quickly to the desire and need of the newly emerging states to develop stable democratic societies and the relevant institutions. Accession to the organisation became a

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1. Hermann Schäfer, Director of the Haus der Geschichte, in *History and its interpretations*, Council of Europe Publishing, 1997.

milestone in the democratic development of the new countries, and an official recognition of the fact that they had achieved the basic requirements of membership with the Council of Europe: a freely and democratically elected parliament, recognition of the rule of law and a democratic constitution, as well as respect for and the protection of human rights, expressed through the signature and ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights and its law enforcing mechanism, the European Court of Human Rights.

Two months ago, Armenia and Azerbaijan joined the Council of Europe as forty-second and forty-third member states. The Organisation now guarantees a democratic living space for some 800 million people, and the new member states are equal partners in European integration. We hope that the remaining countries, in particular Bosnia and Herzegovina, and since the changes in Belgrade, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, will soon be able to fully participate in our activities.

A legal framework guaranteeing democratic institutions is a *conditio sine qua non* for democratic stability. However, a legal framework is only the basis – Europe is inhabited by people. These people represent a rich ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. They need a credible vision of Europe to believe in and a sense of belonging to it. The Council of Europe's work on cultural co-operation aims at promoting respect for and knowledge of other cultures on the basis of shared values.

History and history education – the reason you have gathered here today – have a crucial role to play in understanding and promoting respect for cultural differences. Learning about the “other” through the past is a culturally liberating experience if not approached through polarised concepts.

The learning and teaching of history in schools contributes to cultural identity and to national cohesion, including the values cherished by a people, and the development of a collective memory. This approach, however, has two major weaknesses, which come to light immediately: it lacks both a European or international dimension, and recognition of diversity within a given country.

Looking over the fence is always a useful exercise, because it allows you not only to find out more about your neighbour, but also, in her or his image, about yourself. It is the same with the teaching and learning of history: we have to go beyond the narrow traditions of the teaching of national history, and be open to finding out more about others and ourselves.

History comes much closer to the heart, when concentrating not on the representation of power struggles and heroic battles, but on their consequences on “the people”. Textbooks need therefore to put more emphasis on the history of minority and vulnerable groups, far too often the forgotten victims of the “glorious historical events”.

If cultural pluralism is to develop further, no single version of history is adequate. History must be comparative and students be given the analytical and critical skill needed to seek out and compare different and conflicting versions. A critical and

transcultural reading of history will reveal the presence of stereotypes and ideologies, and will raise awareness of multiple viewpoints. These are major steps forward towards accommodating differences and resolving conflict among different peoples and make it much more difficult to nourish a nationalistic vision of the past.

History learning has a positive political role to play. It must never serve nationalistic or narrow-minded political purposes. Both in the past and today, politicians have claimed territory, rekindled old hatreds, and encouraged ethnic distrust in the name of history.

This century has provided every country in Europe with sensitive and controversial issues, among which are ethnic cleansing, genocide, treaty violations, collaboration with occupying forces, treatment of migrant workers and religious persecution, to name but a few.

One aspect of the Council of Europe's work on history education was to provide practical advice to teachers in directly handling these issues in the classroom, rather than omitting them or treating them in a perfunctory manner. Facing up to sensitive issues is a pre-requisite to understanding the past, and alleviating the burden of memory which weighs too heavily on the present.

History teaching cannot be isolationist. Local and regional history is part of national history, which in turn is part of European and world history. Studies on languages and population flows allow students to discover cross-fertilisation, shared difficult periods and other elements that will help citizens understand that their roots have many histories. In this sense, pan-Europeanism has always existed, and it is our task to bring it to the forefront and to encourage "studies on commonalities, mentalities and lifestyles, and tasks which will allow students to exchange views on these subjects".

In the same vein, the Holocaust, another focus of our work, cannot be approached through a study of national history, but rather as a period that belongs to almost every country in Europe and a large part of the world.

Following an initiative of the Council of Europe, a Holocaust Remembrance Day will be set up in schools across Europe, to be commemorated by each country on the basis of their own experience. It is to be hoped that this Remembrance Day will also be part of a larger effort to critically reflect upon this event, and all of its victims, and in some cases be a step forward towards coming to terms with the past.

You have come to Bonn to exchange views on the last century. It is human nature to accord more effort to its upheavals, such as war, totalitarianism, loss of human life and dignity, and so forth, for these are the events that must be submitted to renewed understanding research if we are to leave them behind us. In spite of all the social and political progress which is still waiting to be achieved, let us not forget the positive development and democratic transformation of Europe, to which the Council of Europe has made an important contribution.



For if we approach the new century with a solid and open critical assessment of the 20th century, then “if there are catastrophes, they will be different”.<sup>1</sup>

The next three days will offer an occasion to discover the work of the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”. The project is rich in processes as well as in results. Teaching resources for classroom use approaching Europe’s past through population flows, the Holocaust, new technologies, the cinema, the study of women and a methodology based upon the principles of history education I have outlined in my talk. This is a very positive contribution towards how Europe’s people perceive one another. I should like to thank all those who have contributed to the success of the project, experts from all over Europe and my colleagues in the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, and I wish you an exciting and successful conference.

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1. Eric Hobsbawm, *The new century*, Little, Brown and Company, London, 2000.

## **Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century**

*Hermann Schäfer*

*House of History Museum of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Bonn*

In June 2001 the European Union member state, Austria, met five of the central European applicant countries to lay the foundations for future increased co-operation in the region. The result of this meeting was – as a first step – extremely positive, particularly for all Europeans interested in culture or history. Cultural questions and the goal of bringing history textbooks into line with one another were the main subjects.<sup>1</sup> It can only be hoped that the example will be followed because Europe can be fully unified only by creating as many ties as possible, particularly in the cultural field, and thus fostering mutual understanding.

The difficulty of such an undertaking is plain to see. The experiences of European nations in the 20th century have been too varied. Nonetheless nobody can seriously deny that the path towards a united Europe can be followed only if differences in opinion over our perception of the past can be openly debated. The Council of Europe feels it has a special duty to pursue this eminently political goal. With this conference “The 20th century: an interplay of views” it has succeeded, through tried and tested co-operation with the European Commission, the German Foreign Office and the House of History of the Federal Republic of Germany, in organising an international forum for dialogue during which historians, history teachers, writers, politicians and journalists from nearly forty European states have been able to look back on the 20th century together.

Discussion focused on the question of the challenges that would arise in the new millennium when it came to learning about the 20th century in Europe’s schools, museums and other educational establishments. How could we make future generations more familiar with historical knowledge, particularly knowledge about the history of Europe and its nations and the tension between unity and diversity which make Europe what it is?

In the last three years the Council of Europe project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century” has taken on this important task. At a whole range of colloquies, seminars and symposia, specialists from all over Europe have devised teaching materials and programmes for a broad spectrum of topics which will be presented to the public and discussed in workshops at this conference. An impressive amount of material has been produced and I am sure that much of what was presented will find its way into Europeans’ schoolbooks.

From the outset, the House of History has placed considerable emphasis on European themes, because it was aware both that exhibitions on post-war German

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1. The author revised his talk after the conference to include these remarks about the June meeting.

history have to be closely tied up with international relations and that European integration is and will remain one of the prime goals of reunified Germany. The museum's fundamental commitment to Europe from the outset was strikingly acknowledged in 1995, shortly after the opening in June 1994, when the Council of Europe awarded the House of History its prestigious museum prize because – among the other reasons given – of its outstanding contribution in the European context to the understanding of European culture and the interpretation of history. Scarcely a year later the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe took the – to this day unique – step of including a clause in its Recommendation 1283 in which it encouraged all the member states to “establish national history museums on the lines of the German House of History in Bonn”.

We are glad to honour this European commitment. For example in January 1999, in connection with the German presidency of the European Union, we hosted and publicised an internationally renowned symposium on the European approach to history in the 21st century, which also provided many points of reference for this Council of Europe conference.

In May 2000 the European Museum of the Year Award ceremony was held in Germany again for the first time in twenty years. The House of History provided a worthy setting for the award of the most sought-after of all Europe's museum prizes, attended by its patron, Queen Fabiola of Belgium.

In autumn 2000 we continued our renowned series of exhibitions on “Germany and its neighbours” with a travelling exhibition on the political, economic, social and cultural links between Germany and the Netherlands which was staged in Bonn and then in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum under the joint patronage of the German President, Johannes Rau, and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands. Prior to this, in 1996, we had focused on German-Polish relations while two years later the subject had been Franco-German relations. Both exhibitions were also staged in the capital cities of the partner countries after an initial period in Bonn. In 2003 we intend to publicise the House of History through an exhibition at the Forum of Contemporary History in Leipzig on the relations between Germany and the Czech Republic. In addition to this, planning has already begun for an exhibition on the relationship between Germany and Austria.

Other projects we have been involved in include an exchange of museum workers between France and Germany and more recently Belgium, instigated and co-organised by us and financed by the Franco-German Youth Foundation. Every year since 1996, 10 voluntary workers or employees of museums in these countries have taken a four-week language course before spending two months in a museum of their choice in France or Germany. The enthusiastic accounts of those who have taken part in these exchanges show how rewarding this scheme has been and how it has enhanced awareness of a European identity. We have launched a similar project for an academic exchange between Germany and Poland.

For the medium of the future, the Internet, and in co-operation with the Memorial for Peace in Caen, the Military History Museum in Vienna, the Imperial War Museum in London, the Museum of the Great War in Peronne and the World Centre for Peace in Verdun, we have produced a virtual exhibition on the theme of the experience of the first world war, as seen by artists in the warring camps. The exhibition consists of 100 paintings in which the horrors of what G.F. Kennan described as the greatest disaster of the 20th century are brought alive. As a member of the European Council of History Museums – with eighteen partners from sixteen countries – the House of History takes part in Euroclio activities, which provides a framework for virtual and actual exhibitions, devised by the partners and financed by the European Union. A short time ago we opened an exhibition on the Internet entitled “Brücken – EuroVisionen” (Bridges – visions of Europe) which takes visitors on a virtual tour through European history from antiquity to the present. Bridges and links of all sorts are used to symbolise various themes from political, religious, and cultural history and the history of technology and transport. Through the link between the Europe of the past and the Europe of the future the exhibition provides a fascinating view of the process of European integration. Visitors also have the opportunity to send us their views on Europe by e-mail. The aim of the project is to construct “bridges” of various forms – songs, books, films and many others – presenting people with the idea and reality of Europe from an international viewpoint.

The idea of a united Europe has lost none of its power to motivate despite the fact that this marvellous vision is not always sufficiently appreciated because, unfortunately, there are very few means of establishing any emotional ties with Europe. Many people still find it difficult to get passionate about the subject. Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg still seem far away. The introduction of the “actual” euro as a Europe-wide currency on 1 January 2002 will nonetheless get the idea of European integration into our heads via our wallets. The resulting emotions in the euro zone will foster feelings of togetherness and create a European identity. The degree of European unity that will have been achieved by this stage can be fully gauged only if it is set against the background of the situation in Europe at the end of the second world war. Satisfaction at this historical achievement should not tempt us to sit on our laurels. Europe is both a means and an end: it will never be a finished product but above all a process. I sincerely hope that the Council of Europe conference will have given the European ideal fresh impetus and that this volume of speeches and discussions will take debate on the question forward.

## History today

*Lluís Maria de Puig*

*Committee on Culture, Science and Education*

*Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

I stand before you today not only as a member of parliament but also as a history researcher and teacher. It is my conviction that the study of history plays a key role in shaping individual and social attitudes. I am also convinced that it has been crucial since the 18th century (when it first came to real prominence) in forming public opinion and that it has an inspirational effect on political, national and social consciousness. What is more, I am a fan of history as a constituent part of culture and an instrument for raising civic and political awareness. Yet I have always been concerned about distortions of history, either in the way it is interpreted or, purely and simply, in its manipulation – a practice which is unfortunately all too common.

Over time, history itself and the role of historians have changed enormously. One need look no further than the construction of myths in Antiquity, where the aim was already to explain human development in terms of an all-transcending logical framework and arrive at an acceptance of human “destiny”. Historians subsequently replaced the gods with kings and emperors, and history became an apologetics for the prince. The idea persisted of fulfilment of a clear “destiny”; however, this destiny was suddenly no longer miraculous and written in the stars but an obvious and inescapable current bringing improvement to the lives of individuals and society. Later still, in the new framework of what was known as the modern age, the role of the prince was taken by the state, by government and by the middle classes. Through their retelling of the past, historians provided justification for the way in which regimes, nations and societies were organised and spread doctrines of society and the world. At this stage it became clearly understood that history had vast political influence and that interpreting the past was a mighty instrument with which to press national attitudes into shape.

Nowadays, noting on the one hand the work done by historians and on the other the impact of this work, it is recognised that authority has managed to turn the political and ideological strength of history-as-a-tool to its advantage. There have, undeniably, been efforts to protect history from becoming too much the instrument of authority. What is more, not a few historians have used historical analysis to criticise authority and even question its legitimacy – the entire social and revolutionary history of the 19th and 20th centuries is evidence of that. Yet until very recently, in spite of some historians’ attempts to employ scientific rigour and the most advanced methods, the results have often been lamentable, for the portrayal of history has been coloured by certain notions and variables which are so laden with error that they now need re-evaluation.

The first mistake was to believe that a grasp of “historical laws” would enable us to predict the future. There are of course no “historical laws” to that extent, and the lessons to be learned from the past will always be dependent on the will and interests of historians or politicians, who will invariably manage to exploit history with an eye on the very latest current affairs. Since our theme is the history of the 20th century in Europe, it seems to me precisely that the conclusion to be drawn from the events of the last 100 years of European history is that nothing is foreseeable; historical currents are not determined by some sort of ineluctable fate (or chance, depending on your viewpoint), which itself is laid down by the unfolding of history. “Historical laws” and historical lessons obviously depend on the choices we make; it is our decision whether or not to shoulder or accept them for what they are. That which shapes our conclusions about the past and enables us to ascribe a meaning to historical events is the present – and our place in that present. History is always an interpretation of the past as seen from the present, and this interpretation is never – ever – neutral.

The second mistake concerns the idea that history is permanently advancing down a one-way street in which all obstacles will inevitably be overcome. This idea sees humanity as progressing irreversibly through time. History itself gives the lie to such a unilinear perception. It appears obvious to me that history does not follow a linear course, given that certain societies have come to a standstill over time and that the centuries have thrown up a range of “dark ages” – let alone the disastrous setbacks of the 20th century’s major world wars and all the periods of stagnation and decline through which many nations have passed.

The principal failing of this view, which is espoused by both the right and the left, is that it comes with two preconceptions. One is that the prevailing state of affairs is intrinsically good (it is well known that history is always written by the victorious), and the other is that economic and technological progress are immutable. One side concludes that history, thanks to the succession of modes of production, is leading to an egalitarian workers’ paradise; the other associates the market economy and capitalism with the notion of progress and declares that history has come to a full stop. We have achieved the nirvana of globalisation, which is the final irreversible stage that will culminate in worldwide prosperity.

As we know, unfortunately, not one of these historical views has become reality, either as a “law of history” or as an ideological or political strategy. The collapse of “real socialism” with that of the communist world demonstrated to what extent one historical view (with its underlying political dimension) was completely misguided. The present state of the world, with its problems of globalisation, the poverty, famine and exclusion affecting so much of humankind, and those worrying elements which are causing some to speak of a “clash of civilisations”, forces the conclusion that the vision of triumphal global progress too has failed.

Two further views of history are also in crisis.

The first is that of “nationalist” history – note that I say “nationalist”, not “national” history. It was obvious throughout the last century to what degree nationalism was at the root of appalling conflict and slaughter. Nationalism was the 20th-century tragedy, and nothing has changed today. No instrument has served as well as history to shape nationalist attitudes and patriotic feeling. It is well known that such sentiments have always needed an external adversary or enemy. On many occasions the historical narrative has indicated the one and named the other. The resilience of the nationalist depiction of history can still be seen today in the Balkans, where it provides a pretext for aggression towards outsiders and justification for ethnic and religious hatred. We must put an end to this view of history which generates a group consciousness that is capable, in the name of the fatherland, race or religion, of carrying out barbaric acts such as those which have scarred our times.

Another approach which is considered by the most perceptive historical observers to be distorted and negative is that of Eurocentrism. This view of history starts from the idea that Europe is and was the centre of the world and that the history of progress is that of the West. There are several unfortunate aspects to this approach. Firstly, its scorn for other “histories” and ignorance even about past realities meant that for centuries Europe held aloof from other parts of the world. Worse still is the belief that western European civilisation marks a highpoint to which all others should aspire. The Eurocentric conception of history has been barren, but it has resulted in vast swathes of misunderstanding and resistance. That is all I wish to say about the matter.

Bearing in mind all the problems bedeviling the study and use of history, it is not hard to understand why it should be so impossible to conceive of putting together a “European history”, a genuinely rigorous analysis and description of our continent’s past that would be acceptable to all countries and historians. Attempts have been made, but to no avail. What concerns me is whether it might one day be possible.

Efforts are currently under way to find new approaches which will enable the historiographic mistakes and failings of the past to be overcome, the aim being to prevent history from once again being used for what we consider to be unacceptable ends (by this I mean ends which conflict with an approach that values democracy and respect for human rights). We need to develop a form of history which will accurately portray events, display scientific rigour and supply the methodological and philosophical means to present contemporary society with an analysis of the past which is both sound and valid for the future. Professor Josep Fontana calls this “the search for new paths towards a history for all”.

Because of the problems raised by the inappropriate use of history and the theoretical, cultural, educational and political concerns which it engenders, this is often discussed by the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly, and especially by the Committee on Culture, Science and Education. History was one

area addressed in our reports on the Jewish contribution to European culture (1987), the European dimension of education (1989), the contribution of the Islamic civilisation to European culture (1991), the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance (1993), religious tolerance in a democratic society (1993), Yiddish culture (1996), the Aromanian culture and language (1997), religion and democracy (1999) and the two reports on education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These being topical concerns, in every case we felt that history had a part to play, that it could and should contribute, through learning, to respect for others, openness and dialogue.

In these reports, therefore (for four of which I was rapporteur), we recommended *inter alia* that the Committee of Ministers:

- promote the teaching in schools of the comparative history of different religions;
- include the history of Jewish, Muslim and minority cultures in European history textbooks (in the interests of presenting a full and balanced picture);
- encourage initiatives to produce history textbooks grounded in the values of tolerance and respect for cultural diversity;
- push for a moratorium on teaching about the recent conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (in which stereotyping had reached new extremes) so that historians from all the communities, with the help of international experts, could formulate a common approach.

In addition to these more theme-specific texts, in 1996 we presented a report on “History and the learning of history in Europe”, in which we shared our thoughts on history and considered the views which every person holds about her or his own history and the manner in which these views influence behaviour.

We focused on learning rather than teaching alone because we believe that “schools are not the sole source of historical information and opinion. Other sources include the mass media, films, literature and tourism (including museum visits). Influence is also exercised by the family, peer groups, local and national communities, and by religious and political circles”.

In 1994, before starting our lengthy discussion of these issues, as Assembly members we had organised a colloquy in Paris under the guidance of Professor Marc Ferro. Another participant in this colloquy was Professor Hermann Schäfer, Director of this very Haus der Geschichte [House of History], who presented his “views from the museum”.

The intention of the report was to underscore the determining influence of history on the manner in which we all see ourselves and others. We stated in this connection that “people have a right to their past, just as they have a right to disown it. History is one of several ways of retrieving this past and creating a cultural identity. It is also a gateway to the experiences and richness of the past and of other



cultures. It is a discipline concerned with the development of a critical approach to information and of controlled imagination”.

We were all agreed that history also has a key political role to play in today’s Europe. It can contribute to greater understanding, tolerance and confidence between individuals and between the peoples of Europe – or it can become a force for division, violence and intolerance. This is why your debate and ours are so very important. It is crucial to challenge interpretations of history which marginalise a sector of the population concerned – women, say, or farming communities or minorities – or which limit the past experiences of other people to a secondary or peripheral role.

During our discussions we agreed that history, for most young people, begins in school. It should not simply be the learning by heart of haphazard historical facts; it should be an initiation into how historical knowledge is arrived at, a matter of developing the critical mind and nurturing a democratic, tolerant and responsible civic attitude.

In the report, which was addressed to politicians and members of parliaments, I sought to point out what history demonstrates: that politicians quite legitimately have their own interpretations of history, and that some are tempted to manipulate it. Virtually all political systems have used history for their own ends and have imposed both their version of historical facts and their definition of the good and bad figures of history. The only chance of escaping from political *dirigisme* lies in encouraging historians to be independent, supporting their research and responding to their criticisms. Even if their constant aim is to get as close to objectivity as possible, historians are also well aware of the subjectivity of history and of the various ways in which it can be reconstructed and interpreted.

In the course of debate about the purpose of history and the recommendations which needed to be made to our governments, the support shown for my views by my colleagues at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe strengthened my conviction that historical awareness should be an essential part of the education of all young people. The teaching of history should enable pupils to acquire critical thinking skills to analyse and interpret information effectively and responsibly, to recognise the complexity of issues and to appreciate cultural diversity. Stereotypes should be identified, as well as other distortions based on national, racial, class, gender, religious or other prejudice.

Bearing this in mind, I proposed that the subject matter of history teaching should be very open. It should include all aspects of societies (economic, social and cultural history as well as the history of politics and attitudes). The role of women should be given proper recognition, as should that of other groups expunged from history, such as servants, outcasts, mercenaries and slaves – people “without a history”. Local and national (but not nationalist) history must be taught as well as the history of national, linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities. Controversial, sensitive and tragic events should be balanced by positive mutual influences.

To round off this summary of the Council of Europe report on history, I would recall that the 16 concrete recommendations which we made to the Committee of Ministers included one encouraging member states “to establish national history museums on the lines of the German House of History in Bonn”.

We are well aware that our proposals to governments are no more than ideas for bringing about suitable conditions in which history can flourish and achieve its cultural, intellectual and civic objectives. Yet we are also aware that the inspiration for the history we impart must not come from governments. Neither must governments control historians, whose task is to write and teach a history based on enquiry and from which nothing is omitted – in other words a history for all.

I profess the belief which my mentors instilled in me, namely, that we can continue no longer with an approach which ignores the real concerns of women and men, which espouses the history of the dominant culture (that of the West, naturally) and which will always consider as peripheral everything that does not conform to the west-centred vision of globalisation. It is absolutely essential to resist a form of history which disseminates the mechanistic view of progress as something automatic and inevitable. This is an affront to the many thousands who live in poverty and are longing for the wealth which they have been promised. Far from determining the future, history must be a source of information for those with the task of making decisions. The message of history must be to provide options and alternatives; it must give people the critical wherewithal to face the individual and collective challenge of building the future. It is no longer possible to explain history “as something that happens”, as if there were no alternative and we had no power to change things. The Nazi and Stalinist eras were not unavoidable; they did not have to happen. The same can be said of the inter-ethnic wars in the Balkans. The clash of civilisations is perfectly avoidable too, if we really want to avoid it. For people like me who are still convinced that our world could demonstrably be improved and continue to hope that we will achieve this aim, there would be no sense in history if it were not recruited to the cause of peace, understanding, solidarity, mutual respect, freedom for the excluded and the task of building a fairer, more egalitarian world order.

To conclude with the words of Professor Fontana in his latest book *La Historia de los Hombres*, we, as modern-day historians, must take up “the major challenge of discovering reasons for the two failures of the 20th century: the causes which explain and leave their mark on acts of barbarity, so that these can be prevented from ever happening again, and the underlying mechanisms which have exacerbated global inequality, in contrast with the promises of development schemes which were going to extend the benefits of economic progress to all of the world’s under-developed nations”.

These are the most meaningful answers which we can require of history today.

## Looking back

*Christoph Stözl,  
Senator of the Land of Berlin*

The new century which has been talked about so much these past two years is still very young. It is brought home to us again and again that, despite the millennium celebrations, we have not yet fully apprehended the leap forward in time, and we can all find evidence of that in ourselves. We very often say “20th century” when we mean the 21st century; moreover, in the mental landscape of many adults, the 21st century lies somewhere ahead and the 20th century more in the here and now. From that point of view, we are lagging behind time.

Gauged by most people’s sense of time, the Council of Europe project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”, for whose concluding event we are gathered here in Bonn, has always been ahead of its time.

The early European-level approach to this important theme bears witness to the far-sightedness of those responsible, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education of the Council of Europe who supported the project, the officials in the Council of Europe, particularly the Council for Cultural Co-operation, and the national governments who backed the scheme by assigning staff or organising events.

At the end of what Eric Hobsbawm calls “the short 20th century”, there are several reasons why it is important to look back and examine which 20th-century history themes should be included in history teaching in European countries, and which methods offer the best guarantee of achieving sustainable educational outcomes.

I should like to discuss briefly two factors which I consider especially significant: the importance of an awareness of history for a Europe in the process of unification, and the transformation of history teaching.

### **The importance of history for the development of a European identity**

A review of 20th-century history clearly shows what a long road Europe and the European idea have travelled. This was strikingly expressed by Konrad Adenauer who, after the second world war, was instrumental in shaping that course from here in Bonn:

Europe was the dream of a few;  
Europe was the hope of many;  
Europe is now a necessity for us all.

The formula can and should be expanded: today, Europe is both a necessity and a *reality*. Integration is far advanced in many areas. The gulf between East and West created by the iron curtain is narrowing almost daily. The forces and oppositions which plunged Europe into the disasters and tragedies of the 20th century seem to have been overcome.

In the face of such a success story, one might be inclined to look resolutely ahead. Many would much prefer to draw a line under a painful and inglorious chapter of history than to come to terms with it.

On this issue, Václav Havel spoke as follows in 1990 in Salzburg:

A person who is afraid of what is yet to come is generally also reluctant to look in the face of what has been. And a person afraid to look at his own past must fear what is to come. ... Let us finally take a direct, calm, and unwavering look into our own countenances: our past, our present, and our future. ... Let us try to delve into the core of our doubts, our fears, and our despair to come up with the seeds of a new European self-confidence.

With these words, Havel gives heart most of all to the generations who were involved in 20th-century history as victims, as onlookers or as agents. Young people are more objective about what deeply moved their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents and, which, to this day will not release its hold on them. For young people, the cold war is just as remote as the thirty years war, and knowledge of either seems unhelpful to them in overcoming their present problems.

Against this background, the crucial questions are: How do young people acquire lasting interest in 20th-century history? How are they to realise that a study of historical developments can actually give them pointers to the world of today and tomorrow?

The indubitably tremendous successes in building the European home are marred by the observation that for many, Europe is not a matter of the heart. Jacques Delors' well-known saying that one does not fall in love with an internal market is a negative expression of what is lacking – an emotional bond, “a new European self-confidence” as Václav Havel put it. This bond can create awareness of the common heritage, interest in collective history, and conscious realisation of what has been achieved and could be forfeited again unless there is commitment.

In order to leave no room for misunderstanding, let me say that the task of the historian or history teacher cannot be to present success stories or visions, even if these are of importance to the emotional bond between Europeans and their collectively created political framework. Historians and history teachers, through their work, can however contribute to an understanding of Europe, nurtured by knowledge about the shared past with its regional and Europe-wide phenomena.

Exposure to Europe's post-war history and its origins in global historical development is precisely what makes young people realise that continuity and hiatus are the ordinary stuff of history. In particular, history teaching can counteract the formation of myths and legends that is current in the political sphere, and significantly contribute to mutual understanding through its detachment, dispassion and revelation of different perspectives. Twentieth-century history education enables young people to learn things which are crucial to Europe's common future: rationally analysing where one stands in history, seeing other people's points of view

and taking a critical attitude to them, using concepts carefully, and recognising ideological clichés and prejudices.

This brings us to another most important aspect. The national frame of reference, always a favourite setting for such clichés and prejudices, holds the same central position as ever in the transmission of history in most European states. This is borne out by the analysis of curricula and comparative examinations of history books, such as the project's study *The European home: representations of 20th-century Europe in history textbooks*. If awareness is to be developed without disowning or renouncing national identity, we must try to contemplate the history of our continent through European eyes, and what is more with critical objectiveness. But a unitary European historical picture taking too little account of the global components must not be developed, as it were in counterpoint to the national perspective which has predominated hitherto. An interpretation of European history as the early history of integration is also to be avoided.

Against this background, it becomes clear how important it is that a European project has been devoted to elucidating possible ways to make young people aged 14 to 18 better acquainted with the past century in a European perspective. The available publications of the Council of Europe project offer numerous incentives for this.<sup>1</sup>

### **The transformation of history teaching**

As the second reason for the importance of the Council of Europe project, I should like to talk about the change in the conception of learning and teaching, and particularly the learning of history. Let us not exemplify this by restating the findings of such worthy studies as the well-known survey "Youth and history"; indeed, the success and sustainability of history teaching are repeatedly called into question.

So it is not enough to agree on content alone. The decisive things in the final analysis are the knowledge, skills and convictions that school-leavers take away with them. This greatly depends on the methods applied in the teaching process. Twentieth-century history in fact lends itself to the integration of differing approaches, and the Council of Europe project has also paid attention to this aspect.

Acutely topical and uppermost in everyone's mind is the necessity of making profitable use of the information and communication technologies for learning about history. CD-Roms containing excellent material, simulations, games, and so forth, afford new gateways to history. The Internet seems to offer a positively unlimited range of sources, materials and interlocutors. It has never before been possible for students in several European countries to work together on a history project, present the results to each other and discuss contentious points.

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1. *Editor's note:* see the list of the project's publications at the back of the book.

Here I should draw attention to the importance of the tools used by historians: prudence and discrimination in handling information of very different types and origins is becoming a crucial skill in the information society. History develops this ability more markedly than any other discipline, because handling, dissecting, interpreting and assessing a large number of different sources is part of the historian's main task. Criticism of sources is not just something to be done at university, though: as early as primary school, it is possible and indeed imperative to nurture sensitivity to "messages", their contexts, their ostensible and hidden meanings and their reliability. Later in the school career, work with sources must then be placed on a sound methodological and rational foundation. This is how history teaching makes a decisive contribution to the cross-disciplinary exercise of coping maturely with the flood of digital data.

Aptitude for critical treatment of information cannot be confined to texts, however. Twentieth-century history teaching certainly cannot ignore the various media and their historical importance, and moreover needs to be amplified by a further area of learning: media history. The 20th century has been indelibly marked by the mass media, broadcasting, film and television. It was also a century in the course of which images acquired an increasingly important role. We have become a visual civilisation. History teaching, like the approach to textual sources, must impart proficiency in using static images and motion pictures as sources.

Students' autonomous learning elsewhere than at school should be stressed as a third focal point of methodology. All over Europe there are museums whose exhibits open up the history of the past century in a stimulating way; in many countries, public records are open to schools.

Memorials and monuments, together with traces of historical events which are discernible in architecture or landscape, provide opportunities for learning by discovery. Nor should "oral history" be forgotten, the history transmitted by word of mouth which is indispensable to modern education in history.

The old educational adage that the matter determines the method by which it is conveyed seems to be borne out by what has been said. The fact that many questions raised by the Council of Europe project have indeed focused on methods is particularly useful from the standpoint of a former museum curator such as myself whose chief duty was to make history accessible. Also important are the incentives given to initial and in-service training for history teachers. Indeed, history teaching in a European perspective is very demanding, and cannot be achieved without teachers who have been trained to the highest professional and methodological standard.

May I conclude with these words. Since 1978 the Standing Conference of Ministers of Culture and Education of the *Länder* of the Federal Republic of Germany, on whose behalf I am speaking today, has passed successive recommendations on European studies, always assigning a central role to history teaching. We should be sincerely grateful that the efforts of the German Ministers of

Culture to enhance the European dimension in education have been supported by a European institution such as the Council of Europe, in such a convincing way as through the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”.

From a specifically German viewpoint, further activities of the Council for Cultural Co-operation, relating for instance to the implementation of objectives under the Stability Pact for South-East Europe, are to be heartily welcomed. Thanks to its special position, the Council of Europe can perform a vital role as intermediary and instigator in the field of history teaching techniques. There is certainly no shortage of themes to be worked on, from the demonstration of connecting links in European cultural history and the presentation of significant European development factors such as 20th century population movements or inter-regional relations, to the production of a European database containing information and material for educational purposes.

Conceptions of history influence people’s behaviour. In the 21st century too, we are not immune to the nefarious influence of historical untruths, legends and myths. For that very reason it would be desirable for the Council of Europe to carry on its clarifying and constructive work in this field.

## **Dialogue, history and a vision of Europe**

*Detlev Clemens*

*European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture*

I am already very pleased, as a historian, to have been invited to this conference on “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”. But I am even more pleased, as a representative of the European Commission, to have this chance to tell you why, and to what extent, this theme has been of special significance for the European Union recently – and particularly at the present time.

A summit meeting of the heads of state and government of the European Union will be starting in Stockholm tomorrow, and questions relating to education and training systems in Europe will be high on its agenda. It will be taking stock of progress made with the process launched at the Lisbon summit a year ago, a process which gave education an outstanding part to play in the whole of EU policy – and not just in terms of the aim proclaimed in Lisbon of making the European Union the world’s most dynamic, most competitive economic area. The prospect of enlargement to the east – Nice is the keyword here – has made education even more important. I may say that I greatly look forward to hearing what the experts and colleagues from the applicant countries have to say on our theme.

Nice does not simply stand for the adoption of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights as the highly symbolic expression of our sense of a shared European spiritual and moral heritage. It also stands for the need to win greater acceptance and legitimacy for enlargement and the Union as a whole by engaging in genuine dialogue with the people of Europe – and for the EU’s firm determination to do that. Only last week, a “Dialogue on Europe” project was launched in Brussels in the presence of Commission President Prodi, the Swedish President of the European Council, Persson, and several commissioners. Relying mainly on the Internet, but also on a variety of other communication channels, it is intended to get EU citizens interested in Europe and to forge a stronger European identity. In fact, the only basis for fruitful discussion of the aims of European integration and ways of achieving it is knowing how the European Union came about.

We are what the past has made us. Europe’s future lies with its young people, and each new generation needs to be persuaded all over again that Europe itself is worthwhile. All of this is often said, and it shows very clearly that learning and teaching the history of Europe, particularly in the 20th century, is a vital element in this urgently needed dialogue. Education, including discussion of where we have come from and where we are going, has recently become outstandingly important for the European Union – probably more so than ever before.

Of course, the idea that we can give people a sense of belonging together as Europeans and sharing a European identity (whatever form it takes) by focusing, as learners and teachers, on the shared values and experiences which derive from our shared past, and now bind us together as Europeans, is not exactly a new one.



Admittedly, there is always the danger – as Thomas Nipperdey said in connection with 30 January 1933 in German history – of using the present to explain the past, instead of taking the opposite tack and, in Europe’s case, tracing an unbroken line from the ancient Greeks and Romans, or Charlemagne at the latest, to European integration. We shall certainly be discussing this whole question here. Moreover, it is by no means sure that the emergence of a European identity means saying “yes” to the EU as it stands. “Europe” and “European Union” are not necessarily the same thing. Incidentally, it would be a poor sign for the European Union if it could find no adequate justification for its existence in itself, and had to seek its meaning in a historiography teleologically constructed to explain the decisions taken in Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice.

By way of conclusion, I should like to put forward another idea, which follows from the basic thinking behind the European Commission’s programmes in the field of education and training. As many of you obviously know, the Socrates Programme for general education offers, in the Comenius school education projects, a whole range of opportunities for cross-border co-operation in the form of school exchanges and initial and further training for teachers. The Commission is supporting numerous projects in which pupils from different countries look at Europe’s past from their own, very different perspectives. And a notable number of further training projects for teachers, which usually lead on to international further training courses, are concerned with “cultural heritage”, “historical identities” and “EU citizenship”.

Perhaps the very special contribution made by these activities is not just a matter of their content and results but, above all, of the process itself, in which participants get first-hand experience of the wide range of perceptions, experiences and worldviews which can feed into a vision of Europe. We have already spoken of the need for an “emotional connection” with Europe. Perhaps it is not just the tracking down of a shared European history, but the shared tracking down of European history by participants – particularly pupils and teachers – which helps to encompass those aims which the European Commission shares with projects such as the Council of Europe project which is ending here today: the continued development of cross-border understanding and tolerance, and awareness of living in an area with a shared history and education, which is symbolised by Europe. That is why I rejoice at the success of this project, and hope that our final conference, too, will have the success it deserves.

## PERCEPTIONS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

### **The death of God and technological dictatorships; communities or nation-states; genetic engineering or essentialism: on the barbarities of the 20th century versus the spirit of the Enlightenment?**

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#### **Introduction**

It is more than a little rash of me to address such a distinguished gathering of historians. Firstly because I am a journalist – a sort of historian of the immediate and a past master of a selective reading of reality – and secondly because I am a writer, and therefore a deliberate weaver of fictions. So am I equipped to give an overview of the vast tapestry that is the 20th century?

The very immensity of the task is enough to make one quake in one's boots, unless we can accept that history with a capital H, a science seasoned in humility, deserves to be approached, even by experts such as yourselves, from a number of different angles:

- general chronological history, which often legitimates power, though this in no way precludes literary creativity of the kind exhibited by Michelet, Spengler, Schnaebele and others;
- history as memory, which generally amounts to a kind of necessary memorial ceremony;
- experimental history of the *Annales* school – Braudel and others – which is to general history what Horkheimer's Frankfurt school was to traditional sociology. Hence the choice of themes, or the analysis of symptoms as meaningful reductions of a whole, which is thus rendered more comprehensible.

As a dedicated student of the whole of the human condition, I specialise in generalising and do not propose to adopt any one of these approaches; instead I shall go for subjectivity, for a different angle which is selective and which is partial, in both senses of the word, but which is, I hope, both honest and open. I do not claim to be an expert, for the simple reason that I have been told too often that an expert is just a scholar who knows too much about nothing for such a claim to hold any attraction for me. I shall favour analysis over predictions, since, as they say, "making predictions is always a risky business, especially when they are about the future".

### ***Kultur and Zivilisation***

At the outset, I would like, journalist that I am, to suggest a sort of telescoping, starting the 20th century late, in Sarajevo in 1914, at the outbreak of the first of two terrible, fratricidal European wars, and ending it early, in Berlin in 1989. Ever since the cataclysm that was the fall of the Berlin Wall, history has faltered. The famous domino effect, which for decades seemed to send the friable regions and states of the West tumbling inescapably into the Soviet net, went into reverse for good. Though the heart of Europe, geographically speaking, was moving eastwards, in terms of systems, the East was drifting westwards. This thawing of a Europe, which we saw as being in decline, condemned to division and sterility, or even, under the yoke of a Eurasian Sovietism, to an inescapable “Austrianisation” or “Finlandisation”, took us all by surprise.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 put an end not just to the Europe of Potsdam but also to that of Yalta. But what sort of Europe lay in store, and what would its place be in the world of the future? What if the happy events of November 1989, the conclusion to a cold war which had gradually, imperceptibly, become an armed peace, the real end of the post-war period, simply marked a change to a pre-war footing? Doubts suddenly creep in. New fears raise their heads at the sight of a Europe which, in Yugoslavia today, and tomorrow, still more, in the Caucasus, is once again coughing up blood. But I suggest we take a look back: the upheavals of 1989 were caused by a combination of very simple factors. First of all, a man, Gorbachev, who had set out to rebuild and consolidate the Scythian Empire, and who, almost by accident, and because he was unable to change peoples as he would have liked, ended up by dissolving the Soviet Empire. Next, the decline of communism, once the alpha and omega of the century but decayed to an extent that surprised only its bourgeois worshippers in the West. Then the irresistible attraction of a form of civilisation which was born in western Europe and gave rise to the still more attractive American model. Last of all, a few words uttered by a Polish pope, calling on the peoples of the East to be no longer afraid.

Since then, Europe seems to have become bandit country once more. Religion is embracing fundamentalism again, and patriotism is turning back into narrow-minded nationalism. The people of Europe, who have only just freed themselves from the shackles of the 20th century, appear to be resorting to the instincts of the past to cope with the future: as they enter the 21st century, they seem bent on contemplating their history in a rear-view mirror. The leaden cloak of totalitarianism has been lifted to reveal all the hatred of the past, as prehistorically savage as it ever was. The old nihilist Europe of years gone by, roused by voices baying for blood and by the calls of racists chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of ethnic purity, has sprung up again from the ashes of the Balkans and the Caucasus, refreshed and ready to do battle with the old enemy, the Judaeo-Christian West, which it scorns as the home of “libertarian Jews”, “scheming Freemasons”, and absolute liberals,

and where industry takes second place to money: the home, in other words, of undiluted globalised capitalism.

The spectre of the age-old battle between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* seems to be re-emerging from the mists of time to haunt us. At the centre of these reawakenings is the German question, which has again become the European question, with all its weighty complexity. Though a European question too, the so-called German question cannot help but loom large on the other side of the Rhine: it is above all a French obsession. The “German question” is a historical one: it has troubled the French psyche since the end of the Carolingian Empire, and even today, when the subjects of power or efficiency are raised, it continues to trigger the same complexes which tormented the France of the Capetians. France is haunted once again by the old fear that it might be absorbed into the German Europe of the Regensburg Franks. Because of this, every time “cosmopolitanism” raises its head, the French reveal their Celtic and Gaulish roots. The Celtic soul is troubled less by immigration from the south than by the obsessive, centuries-old fear of invasion by the Germans – in other words, the Franks or the Lotharingians.

### **Germany regained**

The deep-seated feeling that a united German nation cannot be a peaceful one refuses to go away. Hence the instinctive belief that western attempts to contain the German world should be kept up *ad infinitum*. It is true that, whereas the catastrophe of 1940 showed France where excessive weakness could lead, we cannot yet be sure that the rout of 1945 has convinced the Germans not to become over-powerful. Germany’s proximity, in any case, constantly clouds French thinking. Added to this is France’s realisation that its global role as a nuclear monarchy and a member of the club of four strategic powers of a bygone post-war period must be scaled down and is withering by the day. As a result France is suffering an identity crisis and a form of depression curiously contemporary with Germany’s *renaissance* and likely to worsen if Germany becomes established as the monetary and geopolitical cornerstone of Europe.

People have again begun to study Germany as one might a dormant volcano, attempting to ascertain the risk of a possible explosive reawakening. There is again a vague feeling that, though it might appear normal, a newly reinvigorated Germany would regress into immaturity and fall prey to a perpetual crisis of puberty. It would, all in all, be its old self again: a nation hopelessly behind the times, a frustrated nation and a nation which has never experienced a proper revolt of liberation. An unfinished nation whose revolutions have been played out on the world stage, through two world wars, the first to make the transition from the imperial authoritarianism of Wilhelm II to the stillborn Weimar Republic, and the second to progress from the disaster that was Hitler’s Third Reich to the Bonn-based democracy and the Stalinist caricature that was the German Democratic Republic.

Is this timidity or intellectual laziness? When Germany is discussed, the Parisian thinking classes too often scarcely look back further than the end of the 19th century. Beyond Verdun, Munich, the shame of 1940 and the horrors of Auschwitz there towers the trauma of Sedan and the surrender in 1871 to a Prussian reich which Bismarck had modelled on the French nation-state. The German student compelled his French master, after hundreds of years of puffed-up pride, to sink to his knees. German unity was no more than a brief interlude in the vast span of recorded history. It burst onto the scene with the Kaiser's empire at the end of the 19th century and foundered with the rout of 1945.

Yet, by the yardstick of historical memory, the reunification of Germany in 1989 was a profound upheaval with which her European neighbours have still not fully come to terms. The nagging question for them is still that of power. Few doubt that the *furor teutonica* and its demands will return, all springing from a desire to assert a will for power regained intact.

In many respects, modern Germany has become the very model of an open, democratic country, and can justifiably take credit for this abroad. Yet there remains a vague feeling that sooner or later, one way or another, anything might still happen. The critics voicing this feeling most clearly are not those whom one might expect. Though some of them have decided to take an historic pause before redoubling their vociferations, it has to be said that the new Germans are still, for the time being, much harder on themselves than the most vitriolic or malicious foreign observers. Unlike liberals and intellectuals anywhere else, those of Berlin, Munich and Hamburg still display the same haughty mistrust of the unpredictability of the character, temperament and behaviour of their own people. Could they be afraid that their own compatriots, militaristic to the core and born, as Erich Kästner put it, with spurs on their heels and their fingers sewn on to the seams of their trousers, might again turn into militant, bleating pacifists and anti-fascists like the hordes of demonstrators of the 1970s? Or vice versa?

The Germans' curious ability to consort with extremes, and even to indulge in self-loathing at times, has always given rise to the most persistent mistrust. Thus, when Germany was reunified in 1989, Helmut Kohl, a placid Rhinelander if ever there was one, was perceived as a sort of Hegelian hero who, though considered lumbering and ill-at-ease, managed to grab and hang onto the broad coattails of history. Did he want to build a European Germany, or rather a German Europe? Did he want Germany to support or to contain Europe? The countries neighbouring the exemplary republic administered from Berlin are still asking these questions. But there is no need to overdramatise the situation. I agree with Francis Fukuyama when he says that the old fears have faded. He even adds that Germany has become the main proponent of democratic values in eastern Europe and the principal force pressing for European enlargement. But can we any longer consider the 20th century solely in Euro-Germanic or strictly European terms? Of course not – such an approach would be entirely reductive.

## Religious fanaticism and the thirst for power

The 20th century which began in Sarajevo in 1914 ended, after two wars, in Berlin in November 1989. It is this broad sweep of history which still lingers in the memory. Should we be concerned that the people of Europe will enter the 21st century with their eyes glued to their historical rear-view mirror and use the instincts of the past to cope with the future? General history teaches us that there was more at stake in the first world war than hegemony in Europe: the war was about domination of the world, pure and simple. The domination Berlin lusted after had hitherto been exercised not by Paris but by London, the capital of the American-style superpower of the day. For this reason, Great Britain, like modern-day America contemplating China's potential eventually to become the dragon of a renascent Asia, saw the development of the German navy as a sign that Germany was no longer content simply to remain a continental military power.

The two fratricidal world wars of the 20th century were destined in any case to sound the death knell for Europe, the old continent, as the paragon of civilisations, like Sparta or Athens before the Peloponnesian War. It was only natural, therefore, for the 20th century to end with the global, or as we say nowadays, globalised triumph of Anglo-Saxon and transatlantic societies – or *sociétés*. I use the French *sociétés* advisedly, as it also means “companies” and to my mind reflects the primacy they accord to economics, economics that has assured, and continues to assure, their supremacy over the nation-states of the old continent. Though he hoped that events would take a very different turn, this development has demonstrated the truth of Karl Marx's claim that economics decides whether a people is enslaved or free.

It will not have escaped the attention of the distinguished scholars here today that the link between economics and military power was discovered at an earlier turning point in history: the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 demonstrated the importance of the interaction of the army and industry in a Japan which had until then been seen as being on the fringes of civilisation, as well as revealing how dilapidated the Tsars' empire had become. From then on war became more than ever a means of securing economic conquest which served as a source of inspiration for the strategists of the day – and of the present day, since the crest of Asia's formidable self-confidence mirrors the trough of Europe's self-effacement; until, that is, the pendulum swings towards inevitable confrontation with the other continent-wide economy that America still is?

After an eclipse lasting more than two thousand years, could the world re-enter Karl Jaspers's axial age – the period from 800 to 200 BC in the course of which India, China and the countries of the Mediterranean basin laid down the framework and the moral code for our two millennia of history? At the same time, we must recognise that the European nation-states which have in the meantime become modern social democracies are finding it difficult to overcome their own inertia and relative inefficiency when it comes to innovation. To borrow an

expression from a French intellectual, who was referring only to a France that was still Jacobin and élitist, some are even going so far as to resemble “new and improved” USSRs.

The 20th century, or at least the last third of it at the very least, was also the century of religious fanaticism, bringing its own train of massacres in its wake. The roots of these phenomena, or to be more precise, these urges, have been admirably identified by the British historian Norman Cohn. I agree with his assessment that, in common with every apocalyptic religious doctrine, they date back to a world vision which saw history as having a meaning, or even a transcendence, a messianic purpose, a vision in which the so-called good guys of the world would eventually defeat the so-called bad guys. This messianism, of which Jesus was the most famous incarnation, goes back, via the Essenians, to the Greeks’ Zoroaster, in other words to the Indo-European Zarathustra of Nietzsche, who believed that one fine day the forces of good would conquer evil, and go on to enjoy well-deserved immortality. It was the same messianism, soon to become dominant, which gave rise in the Mediterranean basin to western civilisation, despite the oppression and repression inflicted by the Romans on the Christians of the catacombs. These Christians in turn were the ancestors of religious families who, devilishly mediaeval as they were, later felt the need to rid the world of sorcerers, of Jews, of Arabs, who even merited a holy war – after which the Arabs themselves attacked the “infidels” – and then of Protestants, who, as Calvinists, dedicated themselves to ... and so on and so forth.

A vision of the world, then, as the setting for total war between good and evil. This religious cosmogony retained its influence, even over apparently atheistic doctrines, throughout the 20th century. When the Church is viewed as the opium of the masses, supermen defy the gods of the past and humankind is reduced to a material, “existentialist” state, how can we not be puzzled by the fact that three German superstars, in this case Hegel, Nietzsche and Marx, saw absolute evil and the violence it brings as the driving force behind history and the march of time? Some Roman theologians would undoubtedly add Freud, who thought that sex and the libido made the world go round, to this demonic trio of false prophets. I would not go so far, however, since if we add the word “love” to the word “sex”, we can produce a different reading which does not necessarily demonise Freud.

But to return to our central theme, I would argue that it was the total, not to say totalitarian exaltation of good or evil which fuelled the barbarities that allowed the spirit of nihilist demystification to triumph over the spirit of the Enlightenment. The product of this could not be more modern: an amoral desert where the “golden calf” of “money, money, money” is worshipped, with no credible alternative in sight – all in all, a sensual, provocative and ultimately sardonic late-Empire materialism, a materialism that subordinates creativity to economics – or effectively to speculation on the Stock Exchange, which is something of a lottery, given that, so we are told, a chimpanzee recently made forecasts by throwing darts at labels representing shares and beat the most accomplished experts on Wall Street.

## The Shoah

The Shoah naturally springs from religious and ideological fanaticism, and is the archetype of the phenomenon. Why, though, given the existence of other crimes against humanity in places such as My Lai in Vietnam, the Gulags, Pol Pot's Cambodia, or more recently the bloody mires of former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, should we *believe*, as Henri Raczymov put it so eloquently, in the "unique uniqueness" of the Shoah? The answer is simply that, for the first time in human history, the diabolical will sprang up to wipe an entire people of the Book, the Jews, out of existence, in the name of an essentially animist faith and world view, and to do this using the most advanced technology that human beings were capable of creating. Furthermore, the proponents of the barbaric philosophy of a Nordic-Germanic master race boasted – and Hitler, more of an anti-Christ than ever, did so right up to his death in the bunker – of eradicating what the nazis saw as the absolute evil of the Jewish stock of over the 2 000 years of western civilisation.

I am well aware that there is a thesis, still fashionable today, which places this crime on a different level: Ernst Nolte sees it as a defensive reaction on the part of national socialism to the Bolshevist and Stalinist threat looming over Germany and western Europe. It is quite true that just as national socialism aimed to remove the Jews, which it saw as parasites, by exterminating them, so Stalinist communism aimed, in the name of equality and peace, to liquidate a social class, the bourgeoisie, which was seen as the pillar of a social order based on private ownership of the means of production. The fact remains that there is an absolute distinction between the religious and metaphysical desire to create a human race without Jews and the wish to cleanse society of its bourgeoisie, and this distinction lies in the anti-Judaeo-Christian, pagan, and ultimately diabolical and barbarous nature of Hitler's undertaking. As regards any parallels to be drawn between the nature and scale of the crimes of nazi and Stalinist-Bolshevist totalitarianisms, the atrocities committed and the millions of victims alone make it difficult to refute, even if one does not agree with, the arguments of François Furet, the historian and former member of the French Communist Party who, in his major work *The passing of an illusion*, appears not to deny that there are similarities between them.

From a very personal and subjective point of view, and without wishing to pose as Heinrich Heine's "knight of the holy spirit", I would suggest that the resurgence of barbarism in various forms in the 20th century was only possible because the devil's greatest achievement of the era was, as Charles Baudelaire put it, to succeed in convincing humankind that he did not exist, or that he was asleep. This, moreover, would come as no surprise in a 20th century which saw Nietzsche and friends proclaim, prematurely, that heaven was empty.

In the light of these considerations, the issue of whether the Germans as a people were more consubstantially anti-Semitic than any other becomes an academic one. They were certainly considerably more active in this respect than all other



Europeans. In other words, I will not dwell on the opposition – a classic example of American-style media-hyping of history – between the university professor Daniel Goldhagen denouncing the Germans' anti-Semitic tropisms, and Norman Finkelstein, who is currently engaged in a curious crusade against what he terms the "Holocaust industry" – the ideological and financial exploitation of the Shoah by the Jewish-American lobby. The latter attitude displays a relativism which I believe, as memories are dulled by the passing of time, has a future.

### **Societies versus nation-states**

The transition to a new millennium is always a time for dramatic stock-taking. There is a sort of unwritten rule that each generation thinks of itself as living through crises unprecedented in history. For example, the crisis of divine-right nation-states, European in the original sense of the word, or western in the broader sense. Or the crisis of death-bearing ideologies, which Europe cradled almost exclusively before they went off to spread their barbarity elsewhere. And is our heaven still as empty as was claimed throughout the 20th century? Will the spiritual quest, the often frantic search for meaning, and the thirst for the divine form the weft and warp, natural or man-made, of the sails which will carry us through the 21st century?

We should also point out that the 20th century, with its opium-scented atmosphere redolent of Baudelaire's artificial paradises, was also, at least in its last third, that of the New Age, the revival of the religiosity, if not the religions, of the Far East. It also involved a form of communitarianism or particularism which, in the final analysis, goes far beyond the brotherhoods, sects and other schools of thought or emotion which sprang up in 1968 in the campuses of California and spread to Berlin and Paris via the east coast of the United States. It was also filled with worthy sentiments and pacifist humanism, and with poetry about peace and love, hippy flowers, and Katmandu-style mysticism, all of which is the ultimate proof that humankind is capable of thinking of itself as having a rose in its heart where happiness lies. The inevitable, though later, successor to these fashions and fads revolving around the essentially narcissistic search for one's own identity or for the identity of one's ethnic group or homeland is the "Balkanisations" which pepper the history of the development of Africa, Asia and the Americas, and which have reached their paroxysm in the Balkans today and will do so to an even greater degree in the Caucasus tomorrow.

This resurgence of drives stemming from a neolithic quality in the soul highlights a cruelty which is amply illustrated by current events. Some people fear, perhaps justifiably, that these phenomena might spread to the apparently stable democracies of the old continent, to the nation-states of the peninsula which Paul Valéry saw as the tiny tip of an unfathomable continental mainland which is both Slav and Asian. Let us be clear: the European nation-states, like America, are facing the slow breakdown of national consensuses based on the ideals of integration and assimilation, and a drift towards a much more fragile system of groups of

neighbourhoods, ethnic or corporate communities, regions, and so on. Even in France, the republican “integrationist machine” has to contend – and not always successfully – with what some term the “communitarian hydra”. The inescapable cosmopolitanism of globalisation and the World Wide Web is mirrored by the atomisation of societies into microcosms based on the premise that small is beautiful. Against a backdrop of democracy in crisis, the restructuring of society, a response to the disillusionment and scepticism felt by the people of Europe towards the political classes, is happening from the bottom up. “High” politics – or politics with a capital P – is giving way to politics on a minute scale. We need have no objection to this, except that, in my view, and at a time when there is a plan to create a federal Europe expanding eastwards, this rapid growth in particularism does not bring with it any corresponding growth in a new spirit of tolerance and openness – in other words, a modern rediscovery of the spirit of the Enlightenment. We seem a long way from the ideal order in which, according to the Italian Claudio Magris, from Trieste, cosmopolitanism would take the form of a “universal choir in which every people took a part”.

Nowadays, the search for identity is too often accompanied by a form of intellectual terrorism, if not simply terrorism, and this is especially true with regard to democratic societies which have attempted, successfully until now, to avoid authoritarianism. Beware of strictly delineated, reductive identities. As Montaigne writes, only madmen are certain and resolute.

It is difficult, in any case, to consider these questions in a climate in which, owing to the supremacy of the routinely reductive mass media, the fashion is for the relativism of all-conquering political correctness, in which everything has the same value as everything else and there is no ethical or intellectual hierarchy. This is without doubt the overdue, over-determined and anti-authoritarian reaction to the once prescriptive and repressive dogmas and truths of the great Jewish, Orthodox, Christian, Protestant or Islamic faiths of yesterday and even today. The legitimacy of authority, that of the Vatican as much as of nation-states, is demolished, to such a degree that one can say without fear of contradiction that from the point of view of humanity, if the 20th century has done anything, it has subverted Judaeo-Christian morality and the spirit of the Enlightenment alike, without providing any practical alternative.

### **The history of science**

At the same time, our outlook on the universe has changed more in fifty years than in the last 4 000. Not a month goes by without someone discovering new satellites orbiting Neptune, Jupiter, Uranus, Saturn and even Venus. We have charted our tiny solar system almost as comprehensively as a Michelin map, and it only remains for us to invent a space Concorde capable of flying us beyond it through the good offices of any number of tour operators.

We are continually revising our theories of the origins of the universe, from relativity to the Big Bang, and imagining a cosmology in which our own cosmos, already made up of an unbelievable number of galaxies, is only a ripple in an ocean which is even more unfathomably huge. Science has again become metaphor, and even poetry, in the sense that poems are God's herbs, so to speak. This is the mystery of inspiration, of revelation which defies all logic, since it springs from our primal, internal chaos. How can we think otherwise when we hear physicists dealing with the heart of matter discussing energy which they refer to as "quantum concepts of strangeness", or well-informed psychologists talking about the black hole of knowledge at the boundary between the psychological, the biological and the social?

Another factor in the acceleration and relativisation of the history of science is the exponential process of the globalisation of knowledge: the pooling of information in return for the distribution of work in a now worldwide competition. A gulf is opening up between scientific communities who specialise in geophysics, genetics and other fundamental disciplines, and the uninitiated, who now include the most cultivated politicians, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, writers, and even, whether they like it or not, historians.

Some thinkers believe that it is impossible for the human mind to comprehend the human mind. As a result, humans find themselves alone in the world and alone facing it, unable even to understand themselves, and the notion of an immortal God makes no more sense than do their own mortal lives. By this theory death alone carries meaning and even relevance, since in ensuring that the population of the Earth will be regenerated, it protects humanity, *de facto*, from a destructive monomorphism. In other words, we should be wary of interfering with embryos or embarking on large-scale cloning, a way of defying biological death, since to do so would be to stop cellular time.

This is the first time in its history that humanity has had to face such personally crucial decisions. This does not, however, prevent us, in the name of militant ecology and of the sacred respect for all forms of life, and in a surge of emotions and worthy sentiments, from experiencing rushes of renewed compassion for nature – for plants, but above all for the other members of the animal kingdom. This is a type of creationism – it is religious in essence – and would lead us increasingly to consider the human animal, the product of millennia of evolution, as the "higher sibling" to the "lesser siblings" Michelet already saw in the animals in the countryside.

The 20th century was an age in which disconcerting questions were asked of science, of the methodology of its branches, and of its history, to such an extent that science can be thought of, and indeed I do think of it as a discipline which can take the place of general history. One of these disconcerting questions was whether humans were great apes – chimpanzees blessed with the power of speech. The supposition is a plausible one, given the recent decoding of the human genome,

whose quantitative and qualitative complexity is not radically different from the genetic inheritance of a bonobo monkey or even a fruit fly, hence the temptation to interfere with the chemical make-up of genes. The considerable potential of such genetic manipulation leads us to ask a crucial question: what is the status of the biological being which, in the case of human beings, undergoes a transition from cell to embryo when it is fertilised for the purposes of cloning? Is an embryo simply a substitute for an ordinary cell, or is it a forbidden, sacred entity? This question goes to the heart of anthropological and theoretical thinking about human beings, nature, and the nature of human beings.

We resist the disillusionment of the world, and, understandably flushed with pride, we cannot concede that humans may be no more than the sum of their constituent amino acids, ordinary possessors of a function, but void of any calling or original or special status in creation. Organically speaking, humans are animals – simple biological mechanisms which, through unpredictable mutations, are capable of generating natural selection with no soul or design. Could they simply be the product of the law of chance and necessity enunciated by the Nobel laureate Jacques Monod? Could they be the product of a group of molecules that accidentally came together in such a way as to create psychological and social patterns of behaviour? Must we reject the possibility that human beings could be part of a plan – a form of genetic vehicle heading towards a higher, magnificent, transcendent destination which would take them to the pinnacle of creation?

Teilhard de Chardin, a very controversial figure in his day, believed that the more elaborate nature's structures became, the greater was the consciousness with which these structures were endowed. Chardin, a Jesuit, saw this as an easily comprehensible manifestation of a divine progression. The appearance of inert matter was followed by that of living beings: the biological world succeeded the mineral, from amoebas, the shapeless ancestors of vertebrates, down to *Homosapiens*, *Homo heidelbergensis*, Neanderthals, and finally *Homo faber*. For Chardin, life was governed by a complex consciousness which culminated in the aspiration to reach another plane, to transcendence – in other words, to the divine as a goal to be reached. From beginning to end this vision is far more poetic than it is scientific, and I prefer it to many others which, for example, resign themselves to summing up our era merely in terms of “market”, “globalisation”, “sex” and “nothingness”. I certainly prefer it to the dogmatic and materialistic proclamations of a science which has been set up as a new god, or to a purely biological and reductive approach to mankind.

What meaning would the phrase “human rights” have if humans had no psychological, moral or spiritual identity? What would human rights amount to if the law decreeing that the strongest should protect the weakest, a cultural convention derived from altruistic transcendence, if such a thing exists, had not curbed natural selection? What value would human rights have if the eyes of a child, or of any

other being which was the object of love, were simply an equation based on so many quanta of light, and did not, fundamentally, represent a gaze, a unique and exclusive gaze which reveals to our own the mystery of the other.

## Conclusion

Could epistemology, the history of science and ideas, be on the way to becoming, more than ever, history *tout court*? We cannot rule this out at a time when an ever more rigid distinction is growing up between the “hard” sciences of physics and biology and the “soft sciences” of philosophy, sociology and psychology, not to mention history. In this context, it is difficult to be the “honest man” with a grasp of the essentials of knowledge who, having read “humanities” at university, became the essence of the Age of Enlightenment. In other words, it will be harder for the successors of this so-called honest man, who are now condemned to be experts in isolated fields, to share Edouard Herriot’s laudable optimism that “nothing is new – it has only been forgotten”. It will be harder still in view of the fact that, paradoxically, these rapid changes are taking place or will take place in periods of time which it is difficult for the human mind to imagine. As you may know, an interstellar probe, Voyager I, is currently speeding towards the constellation Ophiucus, which it is scheduled to reach in 5 billion years’ time – exactly the same length of time it will take for our own solar system to be snuffed out forever, and turn into a white dwarf, as cold as a dog’s snout.

All is relative, or insignificant – but on such a majestic scale! My French soul compels me to quote the words of Pascal, reinforcing their status as a cliché: “Man is but a reed, the most frail thing in nature; but he is a thinking reed.” Amongst all these explorations of new and uncharted territory, I find these consoling reflections very refreshing. It is delightful to discover that humans are still capable of thought, and that this faculty can be employed, in the name of reason, to adjust the intellectual and emotional barometers of the age, while of course retaining the scepticism of the artist, a human being who is all too human, or of that creator of myths and visions par excellence, the historian.

A historian who is able to make the past come back to life and to put it into strict perspective is in reality seeking meaning and coherence in the unpredictable morass of space-time and primal chaos. Like a physicist or a mathematician at the cutting edge of the intellect, the historian is also an intellectual, or rather an artist who, in the words of Raymond Aron, whom I quote here as a tribute to your noble discipline, is able to “bestow on the past the uncertainty of the future”. For, as Rainer Maria Rilke writes, being an artist means “not numbering and counting, but ripening like a tree, which doesn’t force its sap, and stands confidently in the storms of spring, not afraid that afterward summer may not come. It does come. But it comes only to those who are patient, who are there as if eternity lay before them”. And I hope, ladies and gentlemen, that you too can achieve this happy state.

## **Silence is not an answer**

*Bosse Schön*

*Journalist for Bokförlaget DN*

*Sweden*

I was born in a country which made me proud of its history. After the war, we were building a new society with a place for all. All had the same possibilities and the same rights. The Swedish model became famous in the world. We helped the poor countries of the world, and we were a world-leading industrial country with companies like Ericsson and Volvo. I learned to be proud of the film director Ingmar Bergman and Ikea's founder Ingvar Kamprad.

In school I was taught that Sweden was a neutral country during the second world war. The heroes of the nation were Folke Bernadotte and Raoul Wallenberg, who had saved so many Jews. To sum up, we were the cutest country in the world!

But there was a detail which the teachers never explained to me. It was said that German troops had passed through Sweden during the war. It sounded innocent, and after all we had been a neutral country. So I continued to be proud of my country.

In 1988 a colleague of mine, Maria-Pia Boethius, published a book entitled *Honour and conscience*. She wrote it for those of us who had been born after the war and who knew so little, not for those who had experienced the war and who had kept silent. Her book was an accusation against the way in which Sweden had officially written its own history. Its 158 pages revealed that Sweden's role during the war had not been as honourable as I had learned in school.

Now I learned that the troops were German rearguard soldiers who had travelled through Sweden on their way to and from Germany and the battlefields in northern Scandinavia. More than 2 million German soldiers had passed through our neutral country together with 100 000 wagons loaded with guns and ammunition. Boats full of iron ore and timber were shipped to Germany. And we received coal which had been stolen from Poland where 70% of all 5-year-old children were starving to death. The ore was paid for with stolen or "dirty" gold. In that way Sweden actively supported and prolonged Hitler's regime, including the Holocaust.

Maria-Pia Boethius turned the first stones, and in the following debate, she was attacked by historians and all those who had hidden the war history of Sweden. A couple of years later, I learned that Ingvar Kamprad had been an active member of the Swedish Nazi Party. And Ingmar Bergman had, according to himself, "adored Hitler" and had cried when Germany was defeated.

All these new facts filled me with shame and discomfort. Our history had not been so honourable. I started to look for the truth in the archives. I found documents which had been untouched since the war. I discovered that 260 Swedish young

men had fought as SS volunteers. They were prepared to die for a racially pure Europe. Some of them defended Hitler's bunkers during Berlin's last hours.

The Swedish nazis planned to exterminate the country's 8 000 Jews. All the Jews of Sweden had been registered in case of a nazi revolution or a German occupation, and there were plans for two concentration camps. I also found more than 30 members of the post-war parliament and 10 government ministers who had all been members of different Swedish nazi parties. Included with them, some of the most important of the country's historians. Did that explain why everything became so quiet after the war?

A year ago, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* wrote that Sweden had hidden so many dirty things because these facts did not fit, and I quote, "in the happy world of Pippi Longstocking".

The Swedish post-war model had a place for everyone except for the nazis. Maybe that is the answer to why the Swedish media kept silent when the neo-nazi movement started to make its presence known in our country. "Do not write about nazism, if so it will just increase."

The silence was inherited. In the shadow of this silence, the neo-nazis recruited, undisturbed, among the Swedish youth. Today Sweden is the world's leading producer and exporter of the so-called White power music, and the nazi movement has its grip on at least 5% to 10% of the young generation. When we were silent, the nazis recruited and organised. The Swedish officials did not react by force until two policemen and one union activist were shot to death by nazis.

At the International Holocaust Conference in Stockholm last year, Prime Minister Goran Persson promised to open the archives. He kept his promise. I am the first journalist ever to systematically go through all the files at the Security Police of the Swedish SS volunteers. So far, I have found several Swedish war criminals and eye-witnesses to the massacres on the eastern front, including one veteran, still alive, who may have participated in a mass murder of Jews in Rostov in August of 1942. Swedish nazi soldiers have, like the Swedish officials, always given a totally different picture of what happened during the war. They have always said that they were "soldiers like everyone else". That is as much of a lie as saying that Sweden was a neutral country during the war.

Today young journalists without any direct moral or family links to the war are digging up facts about the Swedish nazi movement. The tens of thousands of names which have been found in different archives show that the Swedish nazi movement was stronger and more influential than what has been said before. One of the nazi soldiers founded the Trade Union of Social Workers of Sweden, and he was also its first chairman. When I wrote about him, the trade union started to counteract. They have even employed a survivor of Auschwitz to speak to the trade union's young members at meetings.

That which has happened may not be forgotten or denied. We in Sweden are now re-evaluating our own history and our own self-concept. As perhaps the last nation of Europe to do so, we are in the process of dealing with our darkest past, and another national myth is rapidly disappearing.

But the neo-nazis are marching again in every country in Europe. The Polish born author Zenia Larsson has explained why it is so important to deal with the past. She has, herself, memories of German concentration camps and came to Sweden in April of 1945. Zenia Larsson says:

To not know the past, and draw consequences of its experiences, is to abdicate the right to influence the present and create the world of the future, because tomorrow is resting on the foundations of yesterday. Knowledge is thus our most effective weapon against intolerance, power misuse and violence, and our strongest protection considering the individual's dignity and integrity.

I will teach my own two sons to be proud of my country, but they have to know about the past and never fail to tell about it to others who want to forget, because silence is not an answer.



## **Building the Institute of National Remembrance**

*Wladyslaw Bulak*

*Institute of National Remembrance*

*Warsaw*

I would like to begin by saying a few words about the structure and aims of the Institute of National Remembrance, a great state institution concerned exclusively with history, if we are allowed to forget about the bureaucracy. The institute consists of three equal-ranking sections. The first of these is the “prosecutors’ department” officially called the Commission of Prosecuting Crimes Committed against the Polish Nation. This commission is currently conducting over 350 investigations chiefly into questions concerning nazi and communist crimes perpetrated against Polish citizens in the 1939-89 period, as well as other crimes committed in that period that may be classified as crimes against peace, mankind or war crimes.

The second section of the institute is the Access to Documentation and Archive Bureau. This is the actual counterpart to the German institute known popularly and eponymously as the Gauck Institute after the famous Pastor Gauck. This institute bureau is simply Poland’s biggest archive and it has been created to sort out documents. They shall then be made available to those that they concern and who have suffered at the hands of the system. The documents that had been gathered against the victims of the system by the so-called “organs of state security” include German documents, Soviet documents and above all those manufactured during the period of the communist dictatorship.

Currently the archive is in the process of taking delivery of about 95 kilometres of files. I do not have to add that the documentary collections of this nascent archive has been examined by historians only to a small degree.

I think however, that from the point of view of aims of the project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century” the most important part of the institute’s operations is the Bureau of Public Education which I have the pleasure of representing as its deputy director. I shall not hide that our bureau currently concerns itself with such key issues as the struggle for computers, desks and cardboard files (at present still empty). Naturally we are trying to dedicate an equal amount of time to our statutory activities.

The aims standing before us are twofold. On the one hand we are to research Poland from the perspective of “Europe of the Holocaust, Gulag and the cold war”, using – so far unknown – archive materials deposited with our department.

On the other hand, we are to present the registered volume of harm and atrocity inflicted on Polish citizens after 1939, though in reality, our aim is to explain the significance of these facts to young contemporary Poles, especially those for

whom even the seemingly not far off epoch of the Jaruzelski regime is already history. In other words we are to be simultaneously the chroniclers and interpreters of history.

We commenced our work with an attempt to answer a few basic questions, such as:

- what concrete problems (facts) should we investigate first of all?
- to what extent should social expectations as to research and educational priorities submitted (for example by victims' organisations) be taken into account?
- how to popularise research results relating to regional issues (for example, with regard to persecution of ethnic minorities)?
- how to include the institute's educational activities in the new system of education in Poland?

After some discussion we agreed that the basis of the Bureau of Public Education should be the so-called research-educational programmes, carried out by teams consisting of historical researchers and specialists in history education. Some of these projects are centrally steered (that is, co-ordinated from Warsaw) although regional offices may participate in their implementation. Others are co-ordinated by the latter. And some are strictly regional in character.

I shall offer a few examples here. The headquarters in Warsaw will co-ordinate the following research-educational projects.

*Trials and political prisoners 1944-89:* the aim is to produce a list of political trials and compile a list of people subjected to repression in Poland in 1944-89 by the Polish and Soviet security services and the communist system of justice. It will also collect, analyse and disseminate in the form of publications, testimonies of still surviving political prisoners as well as of other participants belonging to underground independence movements in that period. It is worth adding that this bureau intends to create a documentation centre on repression, that is, a computerised database accessible on the Internet, encompassing the fallen dead, the murdered and the repressed in the 1939-89 period at the hands of the nazi, Soviet and communist authorities. The envisaged schedule for this project is many years and it will be a sort of remembrance memorial.

*Martial law – a perspective after twenty years:* this aim is to expand the field of knowledge on the subject of December 1981 as well as the dissemination of basic information on martial law, especially among school and university students. The completion of the programme will be marked with an academic conference aimed at summing up the current state of knowledge about this event, the presentation of results of analyses of the newly acquired materials and outlining the most important directions of research in the future. The conference will be accompanied by a photographic exhibition. Our plans also include the publication of a volume of so far unknown documents concerning this topic as well as a multimedia package for schools.

*Extermination of the Jews*: the aim is to base the present Polish-Jewish dialogue on reliable historical knowledge. The project, “The extermination of the Jews on Polish territories” in its research component concentrates on three main directions, namely, on an analysis of the activities of the Polish underground state, on investigating the varied attitude of the Polish underground press to the Jewish question in the period of German occupation, and on a description of the influence of the Holocaust on Polish-Jewish relations. Of particular importance (on both a national and international scale) are the envisaged educational and publishing activities connected with the project. In January 2001, the IPN co-organised an international conference, Disseminating Knowledge about the Holocaust and the Martyrdom of Nations – Present Status and Future Plans. The plans include on-going co-operation between, among others, the state museum of Oświęcim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz-Birkenau) with the organisation of cyclical educational top-up courses for secondary teachers, concerning the Jewish Holocaust.

*War and occupation 1939-45*: the aim is to produce detailed and source-based documentation of the losses sustained by Polish citizens in the course of wartime operations.

In turn, among the projects for which the staff of our local branch sections are responsible one may mention: “Problems in Polish-Ukrainian relations” (Lublin branch); “Problems in Polish-Lithuanian relations” (Gdańsk branch); “Repressions against rural Poland” (Rzeszów branch).

Equally relevant in the question of choice of leading subjects was the identification of target groups/addressees for our educational activities. We tried in particular to define the groups of people who potentially could become our bureau’s partners and at the same time, “transmitters” of information to wider groups in society. The institute will co-operate with the academic community; teachers of history and related subjects; representatives of both local and national media; and with the “museum community”, in particular with the staff of small regional museums.

Co-operation with the academic community is of a somewhat traditional nature. We organise conferences and seminars; we publish collections of documents, monographs and testimonies; soon the first edition of our academic periodical *Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość* (Remembrance and justice – a bi-annual publication) will be coming out.

As a matter of course the co-operation proposals we are addressing to teachers of history and related topics are of greater importance. We are trying to ensure that the institute smoothly joins the new system of education that is now being introduced in Poland. I should explain here that in Poland the educational reforms on the one hand consist of a far-reaching decentralisation of education system, and on the other hand offer teachers freedom of choice with regard to the numerous equal-ranking text books and teaching programmes, (which apply to history as well).

In this connection our intention is to:

- co-operate with the whole gamut of institutions currently responsible in Poland for education (I have in mind here above all the Ministry of Education, local government at various levels, teacher-training institutes);
- evaluate school textbooks in the field of contemporary history;
- produce modern educational packages, including multi-media presentations and films;
- conduct training, workshops and professional supplementary courses for teachers. In addition, we are contemplating the possibility of commencing our own institute-run post-graduate studies for teachers in the field of contemporary history;
- organise educational exhibitions dedicated to various aspects of political repression and persecution that took place in Poland in the period 1939-89. The first exhibition concerning the workers' revolt in Gdańsk and Gdynia in 1970 was opened simultaneously in these two cities in December 2000, and currently it is being taken to many towns in Poland.

We are also working on how to inform the media about facts (for example, the latest research results) and events (like academic conferences ). Here we are resorting to classic instruments such as: press conferences; informal meetings with select groups of journalists interested in select research-educational projects; sending out to national and local media our monthly bulletin and more detailed materials devoted to various particular issues and research results.

My remarks may strike you as somewhat superficial and over-simplified. But today I adopted no other aim than to give you an answer to yet one simple question: what is the purpose of the institute that I have the pleasure of representing today. I hope I have achieved that aim.

## **Abuse of history in the Soviet Union: legends surrounding the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact – memoirs of a contemporary**

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The abuse of history for the purposes of seizing, maintaining and expanding power is one of the hallmarks of the totalitarian and authoritarian regimes that characterised the evolution of Europe in the 20th century. This process was particularly obvious in the recording and teaching of history in Nazi Germany under Hitler and in the Soviet Union under Stalin and his successors. Under the totalitarian regimes in these two countries historical facts were ideologised and politicised as never before.

In the Soviet Union it was virtually impossible to record history accurately and scientifically. Historiography was strictly tailored to the needs and directives of the governing classes and misused for propaganda purposes. There are countless examples of grotesque distortions in the history of Soviet domestic and foreign policies and of individual events. The 1918-22 civil war, the power struggle for leadership of the party, the roles played by Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, Bukharin, and others, collectivisation and industrialisation, the Stalinist purges (genocides) from 1934 to 1953, the second world war, the numerous crimes committed by the regime (for example the shooting of Polish officers in Katyn) – Soviet citizens could obtain only distorted versions of all these events. Anyone attempting to uncover and investigate “blank pages” in Soviet history was subjected to persecution.

Only historians who had been carefully selected by the authorities and who were faithful to the party line and its propaganda clichés were given access to archive documents. This also applied to secret “special holdings” in libraries, which stocked western literature or books by the “enemies of the people” spurned by the regime. They could only be read in strictly sealed-off rooms in the “special holdings” areas. Notes from such books could only be consigned to registered, strictly numbered notebooks, which were also kept in the “special holdings”. Secrecy techniques for the surveillance of historians were developed and perfected to absurd extremes. Only conformists could thrive under these conditions. Honest historians were at severe risk if they tried to tell and write the truth.

Spectacular legends were woven and circulated around the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact by Stalin and his supporters. My own clashes with the official party line in connection with these legends were probably fairly typical.

Probably the most sensitive taboo subject in the history of Soviet foreign policy was the interpretation of the causes, origins and consequences of the conclusion of the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of 23 August 1939. Whatever else might have changed in the Soviet Union from the beginning of the second world war up to the year 1989, the denial of obvious facts concerning this pact remained a *sine qua non* for Soviet politicians, researchers, journalist and political commentators, in defiance of all common sense. They all had to toe the official line, which stated that: (a) the pact was imposed on the Soviet Union by the anti-Soviet stance of the western powers and was therefore inevitable; (b) only when it became clear at the end of August 1939 that the western powers had torpedoed the Soviet-French-British negotiations in Moscow on the formation of a common front against Hitler's aggression did Stalin decide to conclude the pact with nazi Germany; (c) the pact was the incarnation of Stalin's great foresight, saving the country from the nightmare scenario, namely war with Germany, which began in 1939 and could have turned into a joint campaign by the imperialist powers against the Soviet Union; (d) there was never any agreement between Stalin and Hitler on the dividing up of Poland and eastern Europe into different spheres of influence and therefore no secret additional protocol to the pact.

Furthermore, the German-Soviet Border and Friendship Treaty, the protocol signed on 20 September 1939 requiring the Red Army to "annihilate Polish units" and other examples of co-operation between the Soviet Union and nazi Germany during the war against Poland and other European countries were passed over in shameful silence.

How are we to explain the fact that official Soviet policy doggedly stuck to the lie about the Stalin-Hitler pact for over half a century? The reasons were manifold. The main aim was to conceal the criminal nature of the pact as a "deal", a bit of shady horse-trading with the cruel dictator Hitler. It cleared the way for nazi Germany's attack on Poland and the countries of western Europe, and therefore for the unleashing of the second world war. In return for leaving him a free hand in the campaign against the West Hitler allowed the Master of the Kremlin, Stalin, to occupy eastern Poland, the Baltic states, Moldavia, North Bukovina and part of Finland. Hitler's aggression in central and western Europe was complemented by Stalin's expansion in eastern Europe.

His victorious campaign in the West having freed Hitler of any concern about his western hinterland, he was able to throw his whole weight into the attack on the Soviet Union. Thus the pact turned out to be extremely damaging to Soviet interests. Stalin's crime rebounded on him in the worst possible way. The pact became Soviet foreign policy's "uneasy conscience".

The Soviet dictator and his henchmen now had at all costs to justify the baleful pact with Hitler in the eyes of their compatriots, which could only be done by lying. This was the origin of the primitive legends about the Stalin-Hitler pact, first set out in the Soviet government publication "History forgers (historical

information)” in 1948. This publication contained the Stalinist guidelines on Soviet historiography concerning the events surrounding the Stalin-Hitler pact, and set the scene for decades of false historical and political interpretations of Stalin’s motives in concluding the pact with Hitler.

The lies about the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact pervaded schoolbooks, historical monographs and political writings. They even took on the form of a stereotypical way of thinking. And in his secret speech to the 20th Party Congress in February 1956 Nikita Khrushchev made no mention of the conclusion of the pact and the Friendship Agreement with nazi Germany in his indictment of Stalin.

Intellectual lethargy and the fear of breaking the taboo were so deeply rooted in minds that even in the 1980s renowned historians continued to cling to the old Stalinist guidelines in their historical writings. One notable example is Pavel Sevostyanov’s book *Soviet diplomacy against the fascist threat*, which was published in the Soviet Union in 1981 and in the German Democratic Republic in 1984.<sup>1</sup> This work comprises all the lies surrounding the Stalin-Hitler pact, despite the fact that by that time in the West, and even in Poland and the Baltic states, all the documentation on the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact had been published and was well known.

One of the main reasons for the falsifications with regard to the Stalin-Hitler pact was the misinterpretation of the concept of “reason of state”. Stalin’s successors were possessed by a subliminal dread: an admission that the dividing-up of eastern Europe between Stalin and Hitler had been contrary to international law would have forced the Soviet Union to restore its western borders to their pre-23 August 1939 positions. This would have meant the loss of Soviet sovereignty over the three Baltic republics, the western reaches of Ukraine and Byelorussia, northern Bukovina and Moldavia, the northern part of the Leningrad region and part of Karelia. That was why the Soviet party nomenklatura could neither tell the truth about the 1939 pact nor condemn Stalin’s policy of conquest.<sup>1</sup> Nor did they wish to know that the secret protocol to the non-aggression pact had been an open secret ever since the Nuremberg Trials.

When Gorbachev introduced glasnost (freedom of opinion) into the country, however, the days of the clumsily mendacious propaganda machinery surrounding the Stalin-Hitler pact were numbered. These lies were incompatible with the new way of thinking and an honest approach to laying the ghosts of the past. There was an urgent need to make Soviet foreign policy reliable, a decisive condition for ensuring agreement between the west and the reforming Soviet Union. Unless the truth was told about the 1939 pact and Stalinist expansionism condemned, there was no hope of solving the fundamental problems of dismantling east-west confrontation

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1. P. P. Sevostyanov, *Sowjetdiplomatie gegen faschistische Bedrohung* (Soviet diplomacy against the fascist threat), Staatsverlag der DDR, Berlin, 1984.

2. See “Falın warns about border discussions: Political manipulation of the Hitler-Stalin Pact”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 August 1989.

and furthering disarmament, which were vital for the success of Gorbachev's reforms.

As a scientist, citizen and advocate of democratic reform in the Soviet Union I saw it as my duty to play an active part in ridding Soviet foreign policy of the dead weight of its historical distortions. This has brought me into violent conflict in my writings with supporters of the old dogmas as maintained and promoted by influential party officials in the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and many Soviet historians.<sup>1</sup>

One tense episode in this conflict has stuck in my mind. On the occasion of the 49th anniversary of the beginning of the second world war, Soviet Radio 1 invited me to take part in a discussion on the causes of this war. The programme was broadcast on 1 September 1988. Listeners had been invited to phone in to the radio station with questions, which I was to answer. During the programme I severely criticised the Stalinist justifications for the conclusion of the pact with Hitler.

The reaction was not long in coming. At the beginning of October 1988 I received a letter from the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The department had enclosed a letter from someone called Nemirov, who had listened to the radio discussion, to the party's head ideologist, Yegor Ligachev. I was invited to reply to this letter, which was quite possibly commissioned by the propaganda department of the central committee. It comprised typical Soviet legends about the 1939 pact, and read as follows:

I am writing to you directly in connection with an outrageous falsification of Soviet foreign policy as conducted just before the second world war. This falsification was broadcast during the radio programme on 1 September.

On the morning of 1 September the whole country and the whole world read a comprehensive, well-argued political article in *Pravda* entitled "This was how the war began". This article set out all the relevant political pointers to a true perception of the pre-war situation in Europe.

The following points were made clear:

- it was the reluctance of the western powers to restrain the aggressor and their refusal to adopt measures for collective security in co-operation with the Soviet Union that led to the outbreak of the second world war;
- Britain and France betrayed Czechoslovakia and Poland with their policy of appeasing fascist Germany;

1. See my publications: "Yesterday and today", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 23 March 1989; "The pact between two dictators", *Rheinischer Merkur*, 21 April 1989; "Stalin wanted the war", *Ebenda*, 28 April 1989; "The baleful pact, *Znaniye – sila* (Strength through knowledge), Moscow, August, 1989; "So what was it like?", *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 27 August 1989; "The 19th Party Congress and the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact, *Moskovskiyе novosti*, 27 August 1989; "Towards historical truth", *Moskovskiyе novosti*, 3 October 1989. See also Elfie Siegl, "Full-blown conflict over the Hitler-Stalin Pact in the Soviet Union", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10 August 1989; "Who said no?", *Krasnaya zvezda*, 6 October 1989.



- the 1939 pact between the Soviet Union and Germany was an emergency measure taken by the Soviet Union to delay the onset of war with Germany;
- the Soviet leadership had a clear idea of the real strategic intentions of fascist Germany;
- the Red Army marched into Poland in order to protect the Ukrainian and Byelorussian populations in the eastern regions of Poland;
- there is no evidence of any secret documents or protocols indicating that Germany and the Soviet Union had divided up Poland between them, etc.

At 6.45 p.m. the same day I heard the opposite being contended on the radio. I would like to quote, verbatim, some of the statements made by a “certain” historian:

- “the 1939 Non-Aggression Pact with Germany had negative effects”;
- “Stalin did not want an agreement with Britain and France, he wanted a treaty with Germany”;
- “copies of the secret protocol to the 1939 pact have long since been published abroad, and only we are shamefully concealing them”;
- “the statements by Halder before the Nuremberg Tribunal must be considered truthful (?)”.

If we had heard this kind of thing from the western bourgeois gutter press we would certainly have dismissed it as political provocation against our country. Unfortunately we, and the rest of the world with us, heard it on the Soviet radio. This is not glasnost, this is political irresponsibility and instability, if not worse.

As a party member I consider that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union must draw political conclusions from this kind of “phenomenon”. I would recommend that the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party listen to a recording of this outrageous radio programme.

Yours etc.

Nemirov,

Moscow, 4.9.1988.<sup>1</sup>

This letter is significant in many respects. It reflects the mentality of a typical victim of ideological and political indoctrination and propaganda-induced anaesthesia: one-dimensional thinking, intolerance and ignorance, and “belief” rather than reflection. This “inoculated” mode of thought was peculiar to the average Soviet citizen. And it has not been easy to shift her or his deep-rooted political prejudices. In the Stalinist era and under the neo-Stalinists Brezhnev and Chernenko such people were dangerous, swelling the ranks of the informers. Even though the informers lost their political lifeline in the Gorbachev era, I could not help shuddering inwardly while reading Nemirov’s letter.

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1. From my personal files.

On 14 November 1988 I sent my reply to the letter via the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In fact the reply was intended more for the central committee than for Nemirov. It read as follows:

I have received a copy of your letter concerning the comments I made on the radio on 1 September last. You consider that in a scientific historical assessment of the past all facts must be unified and subordinated to a single point of view. The fact is that such an approach would signal the decline of science and politics, nay of society as a whole. You and I know this from our own personal experience. Why do you think that the authors of the article in *Pravda* (Rzheshovski and Kovalev) are “a supreme oracle”, while I obviously must be wrong? Rzheshovski is a specialist in American history, while Kovalev is not even a historian.<sup>1</sup> I, on the other hand, have conducted over twenty years’ research into the second world war and the policies and strategies of nazi Germany. In 1973 I published a two-volume work entitled *The collapse of the strategy of nazi Germany, 1933-1945* (one of over 100 publications on these matters). So why would you deny me the right to present my ideas on the 1939 pact? What you are in fact advocating is my political ostracisation.

I can only say one thing: politics and science must not be based on lies, otherwise they are sooner or later doomed to failure.

In connection with the Stalinist justifications for the conclusion of the pact with Hitler, with which Rzheshovski agrees, it emerges from the facts and the documentation that in 1939 there was no danger of the imperialist powers (Germany, Britain and France) forming a united front against the Soviet Union. Nor was there any danger of a war between Germany and the Soviet Union after the destruction of Poland or of a second front opening up in the Far East against the Soviet Union.

After the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1938, which tore up the Munich Agreement, Britain and France pressed for an alliance with the Soviet Union against nazi aggression, which was now a threat to them as well. Stalin, on the other hand, was only interested in agreement with Hitler. This was his biggest mistake, one which had tragic results for our nation. In concluding the pact with Hitler, he was also condemning the Soviet Union. The pact allowed Hitler to occupy virtually all of Europe and then to attack the Soviet Union.

If you would like further information on these events, read the aforementioned book. Incidentally, I did not have to compromise my scientific conscience in writing this book: in 1 500 pages I do not devote a single page to the 1939 pact, because at the time, namely in the sinister days of re-Stalinisation, it was impossible to discuss it truthfully.

Do you want to turn back the clocks and let our country continue to rot in intellectual, economic, cultural and moral terms, or even go back to the days of political reprisals? Your letter is redolent of such sombre thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately I did not suffer any political persecution after this incident. Political reprisals were already a thing of the past. Instead there were various attempts at intimidation from open and closet Stalinists, though most of these had no effect.

1. At the time A. Kovalev was Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union.

2. From my personal files.

This showed how difficult it was, even after Gorbachev had launched his reforms, to present the 1939 pact accurately.

The following is another anecdote from my fight with the Stalinist legends. At the end of August 1989 I made a speech at the international history conference in Berlin entitled “Stalin’s plans and failures on the eve of the war – the 18th party conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact”.<sup>1</sup> Drawing on protocols and directives adopted in January 1939 on this party congress, which took place from 10 to 21 March 1939, I demonstrated that Stalin had already taken his decision to seek rapprochement with Germany by the beginning of 1939. He, together with all the speakers at the party Congress, had described Britain and France as “warmongers”. He was thus clearly opting for conspiring with Hitler against peace in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Before I left for Berlin the Moscow weekly *Moskovskiye novosti* published a summary of my speech. A rather unwelcome surprise was awaiting me on my return. On 26 August 1989 the party newspaper *Pravda* had published the “Declaration by the *Novosti* press agency”, run by Valentin Falin. This text comprised severe criticism of my speech and a defence of the Stalinist legends surrounding the non-aggression pact with Germany. The hardliners were determined not to abandon their shaky positions.

Around that time the Russian humorist Sadornov sent me an amusing comment: “We are a country with an unpredictable past”. This was very funny, and it is good to take an ironical look at our past. Yet there is also a tragic side to this aphorism. The transition from a totalitarian system to a democratic one was accompanied by revelations of dreadful crimes, secrets, untruths and distortions of reality that had been used to keep the dictators in power in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev’s reforms gave Soviet citizens unprecedented opportunities to obtain an accurate picture of the country’s historical development. The past appeared before the eyes of our appalled contemporaries in a completely new light. Setting the record straight included getting to the truth about the Stalin-Hitler pact.

My efforts were not in vain. On 24 December 1989, after heated debate, the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union approved the “Resolution on the political and legal assessment of the 1939 Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact”.<sup>3</sup> The resolution finally admitted:

At the time of both the conclusion and the ratification of the pact the fact was concealed that the “secret additional protocol” had simultaneously been signed, dividing

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1. The Historical Commission in Berlin published the speeches delivered at the conference in the work “1939. *An der Schwelle zum Weltkrieg. Die Entfesselung des Zweiten Weltkrieges und das internationale System*”, (1939: on the threshold of the world war. The onset of the second world war and the international system), publ. Klaus Hildebrand, Jürgen Schmäddecke, Klaus Zernack, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1990.

2. XVIII Syezd Vsesoyuznoy Kommunisticheskoy Partiy 10-20 marta 1939 g. Stenograficheskiy otchet (The 18th Party Congress of the Communist Party, 10-21 March 1939. Stenographic report), Moscow 1939.

3. *Izvestiya*, 27 December 1989.

up the Parties' "spheres of interest" from the Baltic to the Black seas and from Finland to Bessarabia. The originals of the protocols have been found neither in Soviet nor in foreign archives [!]. However, graphological, phototechnical and lexical analyses of the copies, maps and other documents and the correspondence between the results and the content of the protocol confirm that it did indeed exist and was signed.

However, the congress did not have the courage or intelligence to declare that Stalin's main crime had been to sign the non-aggression pact, thus giving Hitler *carte blanche* to unleash the second world war. In comparison to this agreement the secret additional protocol was the "lesser of two evils", even though it marked the beginning of full-scale Soviet expansion, which led to Soviet supremacy throughout eastern Europe and to the cold war.

One further conclusion can be drawn from this document: Stalin, from his position at the helm of the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union, was able, unfettered by supervision from any of the social institutions, to decide the fates of many nations and help precipitate the world into war through his incompetent, highly ideologised and dangerous policies. To that extent the pact between Hitler and Stalin constituted a public exposure of the totalitarian system.

The upshot of this whole story was the total disgrace of the Stalinist regime and its political henchmen in politics and historiography. No sooner had the ink dried on the congress resolution than it was officially stated that the original of the secret additional protocol had been discovered in the archives of the Foreign Ministry of the Soviet Union.

## When violence of the past becomes a topical issue of history

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In my short contribution, I do not want to focus particularly on the research that has been done on the communist period or on the uses or misuses of history that took place during communist rule, as much as on “capital historical issues”, which are currently being discussed in public in contemporary Slovenia and other states that came into existence on the territory of former communist Yugoslavia after its demise in 1991. These public discussions which are taking place have in my opinion a more important influence on history teaching and the questions raised by students in schools than discussions between academic historians with their new and newest scientific research results.

As we all know, one of the main issues publicly discussed in former communist countries (in general) after the fall of communism was not the future, but the past.<sup>1</sup> The former Yugoslav republics, which became independent states after the demise of the federation, were in this sense no exception – their tragedy was even that they began their discussions earlier than elsewhere – at the beginning of 1980s already – thus controversies about the past, in an important, even fateful way, influenced the growth of national antagonisms, the rise of national and nationalist intolerance and to no small extent contributed to the violent demise of the Yugoslav federation. The post-communist “war about history”, as a Polish political scientist called it, became an important part of a real war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, one of the main reasons for this post-communist outburst of interest in history and the feverish search for “the truth about the past” was the communist practice of using and misusing history, the absence of any democratic discussion on the past during the communist period and the policy of silence on controversies which did not fit into rigid ideological models and schemes.

But on the other side were the new political, national (or nationalist) groups and movements, which emerged in the process of political change and which were not really interested in an objective version of past reality. Far more than looking for proclaimed (historical) truth, they were looking for their (possible) own historical roots to be used for their own historical justification and legitimacy. This resulted in a production of new historical mystifications, misinterpretations and legends, which – being simple, ideologically and politically efficient, and prevailingly anti-communist – spread quickly and became popular.

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1. Jerzy Jedlicki, “The revolution of 1989, The unbearable burden of history”, *problems of Communism* 39/199 (July-August), p. 39-45; Karel Bartošek, Les regimes post-communistes et la memoire du temps present, *La Nouvelle Alternative* No. 32, Decembre 1993, p. 3-4.

2. A. Paczkowski, “Guerre civile pour les traditions”, *La Nouvelle Alternative*, No. 32, Decembre 1993, p. 20-24.

Professional historians were (and still are) in a difficult position. Historiography in general lost a lot of credibility during the communist period and had first to regain its authority. And it was (and is) the same with history teaching. In the 1970s and 1980s, history teaching in Yugoslavia was even more ideologically and political deformed than in the first years after the second world war.<sup>1</sup> Thus it had little influence on public discussion and public attitude towards history, even when it tried to have a positive impact on forming Yugoslav patriotism or when it tended to prevent national and nationalist hatred. School history in communist Yugoslavia was so estranged from reality that it was simply unable to compete with the first secretly transmitted, but in 1980s the more and more publicly discussed non-communist interpretations of the past. History became in the atmosphere of growing nationalism in Yugoslavia, a hot issue particularly after Tito's death in 1980, when nationalists of all colours and from all the sides began to call attention to the injustices done to their ethnic groups after 1945 or before. It became clear very quickly that history taught in schools only poorly affected the historical horizon of post-second world war generations and that this horizon was formed in families and by oral tradition far more than by school textbooks and history teachers. Thus school history did not succeed in contributing to a more rational picture of the past and it lost its "war" for a more balanced understanding of the common Yugoslav heritage, before a real war in Yugoslavia had started.

The "topical historical issues" discussed in the states that came into existence after the fall of communist Yugoslavia – such as Slovenia, where I come from – are similar to those of the other post-communist countries. In the very centre of public and political focus is the second world war, with its divisions, its civil conflicts and its endless stories on the resistance, used and misused by both the communists and collaborators. According to its advocates and historians, collaboration was no more than a self-defence mechanism against the violence of the communists. The history of the second world war on Yugoslav territory was indeed, until 1990, in all parts of former Yugoslavia, written and interpreted mainly from the viewpoint of communists, partisans and Tito's resistance, minimising and neglecting the real inter-ethnic dimensions of hostility and violence inflicted upon the civil population. This interpretation did not take into account the large number of people involved in collaboration, anti-partisan and anti-communist activities. During some periods and in some regions, these people outnumbered those participating in Tito's movement.

Thus we in Slovenia are only now confronted with detailed, sometimes completely new evidence of communist revolutionary pragmatism and with new, well-documented reinterpretations of the events of the second world war, which show clearly that conflict divisions were far more complex than the version communist historians presented or even than as perceived and understood by

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1. Peter Vodopivec, "Die Entwicklung der Lehrpläne für Geschichte in Slowenien", *Beiträge zur historischen Sozialkunde*, 2/96, p. 63-65.

many of the active participants of the resistance. These new post-communist histories of the second world war are accompanied by a large wave of written and published memories by those, who have not yet had the possibility of telling their stories (or who did not, during the communist period, dare to do so).

There are also accounts, written by journalists and publicists, of the atrocities committed by both sides – communists and collaborators – being published. Thus the whole discussion continues to be a first class political issue which is highly charged with emotion. However, it has to be pointed out that attempts to discredit the anti-fascist and particularly anti-nazi character of the resistance did not, at least in Slovenia, enjoy wide public support. According to yearly research on public opinion, Slovenians' knowledge of history, even recent history, is generally very poor. But the majority of those interviewed are still convinced that the resistance was historically positive and there was no other realistic alternative to the nazi and fascist occupation. But at the same time, they also believe that the real history of the second world war, as it happened on Slovene and Yugoslav territory, has yet to be written.

The second “capital issue” which is being discussed in the states that were formed after the collapse of communist Yugoslavia – and in Slovenia particularly – is that of the post-war communist massacres of collaborators, anti-communists and other civilians. In Slovenia, this amounted to about 12 000 people who in 1945 after the communist takeover fled to Austria seeking British protection, and were secretly killed by the (communist) Yugoslav army. After fleeing to Austria, they were sent back by the British and were (murdered) executed (we have no precise figures on how many and how) without trial. Most were thrown into the Karst caves in southern Slovenia. This was without doubt the biggest post-war communist crime in Slovenia, but the problem for historiography is that there is no (or very little) evidence or documents left to support this. This fuels the widespread argument that professional historians are not to be trusted, and they have been publicly called upon to do the job they failed to do correctly under communism. This kind of criticism is however only partly justified. In the last ten years there has been a series of studies and monographs published dealing with the “overlooked” and not yet researched communist past, and which focuses extensively on different aspects of communist violence.

The third “capital issue” of recent history, which is at the centre of public attention in all the contemporary states that were until 1991 a part of communist Yugoslavia, is the history of the “first” and “second” Yugoslavia. However, this history is being researched, assessed and above all publicly discussed in a very limited way, that is, not from a Yugoslav perspective, but mainly from individual, ethnic/national perspectives instead.

One of the few points upon which all national interpretations agree is that Yugoslavia from the very beginning was a mistake and a failure. Once again it is true that in this context professional historians have produced a series of very

valuable works, which discuss and present aspects and problems of the past, and which could not be researched during the communist period. But in spite of all the research carried out, most of these new histories remain if not ethnocentric at least ethno-centred, and their general conclusion generally boils down to the fact that Yugoslavia was “a catastrophe”.

This brings me to the conclusion. The history of Yugoslavia and Slovenia in the 20th century from the point of view of public discussion and problems which are in the focus of the public interest today seems quite reductive and limited. As I said at the beginning, public discussions on the past have an important influence on teaching and should be without doubt discussed in schools – the question is to what extent and in what way. Silence cannot be the answer to anything – we all agree on that. But history whose principal focus is atrocity and catastrophe cannot be an answer either.

In 1939 Stefan Zweig in an essay called “Geschichte von Gestern” maintained that the history his generation was taught in schools was mainly a history of wars and that students could in the end get the impression that wars and violence were an inevitable “iron” law of history. The German historian Wolfgang Höpken<sup>1</sup> came to the same conclusion studying school history textbooks of the former Yugoslavia (and partly the textbooks of its successor states). Are we going to repeat the same mistake? Young people in Slovenia today seem to be tired of the stories on the violence of the past. The Slovene weekly journal *Mladina* (Youth) recently presented a new electronic game on the Internet. There are two groups of people on the screen – on one side, second world war Slovene-Yugoslav partisans and on the other, collaborators. In between is a cave and a player, and whoever throws the most opponents into the cave is a winner.

A very brutal idea (the murdered Slovene collaborationists and anti-communists were thrown into the Karst caves), but not without sense, commented one of my students. I was at first shocked and disgusted. But then I became more and more persuaded we should seriously think about it.

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1. Wolfgang Höpken, “Der Zweite Weltkrieg in den jugoslawischen und post-jugoslawischen Schulbüchern”, in: Ders. (Hg.), *Öl ins Feuer? Schulbücher, ethnische Stereotypen und Gewalt in Südosteuropa*, Hannover 1996, p. 159-178



## Memory (memories), history, identity

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Lessons can only be learned from history if history is taught. It has long been believed that lessons should be learned from history, and even Cicero said *Historia magistra vitae*. But every argument has its counter-argument, and Sir Winston Churchill said that the only lesson that could be learned from history was that nothing was learned from it. His 20th-century scepticism clashed with the optimistic view. The same situation exists in respect of memory: the truism that people who lose their memory thereby lose their identity conflicts with Friedrich Nietzsche's assertion that it is healthy to forget. Thomas Jefferson applied this idea to the collective memory at the end of the 18th century, when he wrote that the dead cannot impose their law on the living. Today, however, we draw the opposite conclusion, believing that people who suppress their feelings are, or will fall, ill.

But this position is not as unambiguous as it may seem. Memories are not the same thing as memory, and nor are histories a single history. There is a direct relationship between remembering and forgetting. And the concept of a nation's "identity" is also one which is, to say the least, questionable. In any case, it is true that no advanced civilisation manages, or has ever managed, without historical memory, and that a civilisation without history is theoretically inconceivable and impossible in practice. Even the most radical innovator or revolutionary deals with what exists and what has gone before, so depends on history. We cannot escape our history. That is a banal statement, but nonetheless a true one. So it is not a matter of whether a society considers its history, but of how it does so. As Marcel Proust wrote, reality is first formed in the memory.

One factor that makes a crucial difference is whether a society bases itself on tradition, regards its older members as sources of wisdom, lets them define standards and allows the old law, as during the Middle Ages, to determine the legal situation and society's values, or whether the new, and therefore the postulate of progress, create the law according to which society moves. The change is demonstrated by the *querelles des anciens et des modernes* in 17th-century France. Since the Enlightenment – which, with all its national differences, was one of the major pan-European movements – the leading role of the past has come under pressure from that of the future. Notwithstanding the "modernity fatigue" suffered by the great historian of civilisation from Basle, Jacob Burckhardt, in the second half of the 19th century, nothing much has happened to affect the dominance of progress as a guiding concept, leaving any conservatism under constant pressure to justify itself.

It was nevertheless precisely the 20th century which – like hardly any of its predecessors – cast doubt on optimism about progress, and it was not by chance

that Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer called their celebrated 1947 book *The dialectic of enlightenment*. Although they could know nothing at that time of the mapping of the human genome or of the possibility of cloning living beings, and George Orwell's negative utopia in 1984 had not then appeared, the first half of the 20th century had still shown the two philosophers, who had started out as Marxists, the dubious nature of ideologies relating to the philosophy of history which regarded progress and what the 18th century termed the "betterment of the human race" as the inevitable result of history.

Very much in contrast, the first world war, described by George F. Kennan as the "great seminal catastrophe" of the 20th century, had already taught them the potential horrors resulting from unrestricted technical possibilities and the technical progress that could no longer be kept under control. Yet the 10 million dead of the first world war, long regarded by the French historical memory as the "Great War" (*la Grande Guerre*), proved with hindsight to be just paving the way for the 55 million slain in the second world war.

After 1945, it was no longer possible for individuals' memories or for what the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs called the "collective memory", although others disputed this term, to remain as they had been. The excesses of totalitarian ideologies, which had not only led to the slaughter of millions, but also offered bogus justification to salve the consciences of the perpetrators and their fellow travellers, changed not just the world, but also historical memory. The problem is clear: Adorno remarked that it was impossible to write poetry post-Auschwitz, and contemporary authors of history very much came up against the question, after 1945, of whether history could still be written. Even if poetry and history continued to be written, Auschwitz raised fundamental questions about the premises regarded as valid since the 18th and 19th centuries by modern historians, and historical events, figures and developments had to be viewed in terms of the specific conditions applying to each, and not according to subsequent judgmental categories.

But that is not all. The 20th century was no longer dominated by a memory regarded as positive, but by one viewed in negative terms. The places of memory are (or at least were until the collapse of the communist-based dictatorships) no longer statues of liberty or places where freedom and human rights were won, but sites where human rights and freedoms were gruesomely trampled underfoot. So places of memory no longer celebrate military victories or historical greatness, as did France's Napoleonic memorials, the German Empire's Bismarck towers, Italy's statues of Garibaldi and the statues of Marx and Lenin, most of which were toppled from their plinths after 1989/1991. Instead they are places for remembrance of atrocious crimes. The late chairman of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Ignatz Bubis, laconically said during the initial discussions of a planned Holocaust memorial in Berlin that there was no shortage of authentic places in Germany to remind people of the mass crimes of the national socialist dictatorship.

The handbook first published in 1987 by the Federal Centre for Political Education under the title *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Memorials to the victims of national socialism) has a second, enlarged edition, published in 1995, which runs to 1 830 pages. The thousands of places of remembrance mentioned are referred to as victim remembrance sites, foremost among them concentration camps such as Dachau, Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Sachsenhausen, as well as the extermination camps located in areas occupied by the Germans during the second world war, including Auschwitz, Maidanek and Treblinka. To a quite unprecedented extent these terrible events left their mark on, and continue to leave their mark on, the memory of the Shoah. Jewish identity cannot subsequently be experienced without this singular horror. And, in another way, the foundation of democracy in West Germany and Germans' historical image of themselves post-1945 was in the grip of Auschwitz, an awful reality of which they inevitably remain aware, and which became a symbol of historical memory. The Jewish and the German identities are more closely linked than ever before, albeit in contradictory ways. This is the fundamental difference between the historical memory in Germany and in its (west) European neighbours. What is more, Germany had experience of both totalitarian dictatorships before democracy was achieved, which happened first in the West, in 1949, when the Federal Republic of Germany was founded, and then throughout Germany, when reunification enabled the democratic rule of law to be established. Thus, as Jorge Semprun remarked, there is a special German responsibility for historical memory.

The contrasting concept of “places of perpetration” is useful for making a distinction, when, for instance, describing places like Berlin's “District of terror”, the building where the Wannsee conference took place, the Nuremberg site of the National Socialist Party convention and the Obersalzberg, near Berchtesgaden, where a second seat of government was created. The Institute for Contemporary History was instructed by the Free State of Bavaria, after the withdrawal of American forces in 1995, to prepare documentation which, for the first time, brought together all the central elements of the national socialist regime in an exhibition accompanied by a volume entitled *Die tödliche Utopie* (The fatal utopia). This covered the theory and practice of the ideology of the national community, racist anti-Semitic ideology, propaganda, the power structure, the apparatus of terror, the marginalisation, defamation and persecution of minorities and of opponents of the regime, the mass murder of more than 6 million Jews from 18 European states, the second world war and the resistance.

While the “place of perpetration” label can be applied to the Obersalzberg, which is why there is no memorial but documentation instead, such distinctions are not usually completely unproblematic, since a place remembered for its victims is inconceivable without perpetrators. But there is a difference: any exhibition at such a place is almost always connected with a memorial, although there are also places purely of remembrance, such as the site of the execution of members of the German resistance movement against the national socialist

dictatorship, at Berlin-Plötzensee. At Yad Vashem (Jerusalem), various domains come together: a memorial, an exhibition, an archive and a research institute.

Here, however, the concept of remembrance comes up against a fundamental problem: places of remembrance are often referred to, but in the strict sense, only people who were there at the time can really remember, such as the survivors of Dachau who are still alive today. In Germany, as in the other states, the age structure means that the number of people with personal memories of the period before 1945 is declining steadily. In 1999 already, fewer than 5 million German citizens – from a total population of 82 million – were aged 75 or more, representing around 6%. In other words, 94% of today's Germans had not been born or were under 20 in 1945, and over 80% of the Germans alive today were not born until after the end of the war in 1945.

Personal memories are therefore increasingly being superseded by historical knowledge – and unfortunately often by ignorance – but always in a form involving reconstruction or admonition. An exhibition, a museum, a memorial replace the indissoluble connection between the personal experiences of those concerned and the authentic site of their sufferings. Certainly, the aura of such places can and must be used to remind people of the victims and to serve as a warning to them, but this cannot be done without information.

On the other hand, individual memories are subjective and selective. This is true not only of terrible memories, but also in respect of positive or banal events. The historian has difficulty here. While contemporaries are absolutely convinced that they know more about their era than historians, the opposite is in fact the case, if only because there are, at any given time, innumerable scenes, events and persons, and even the most observant of those present to witness these can only know about a tiny percentage of them. And it must particularly be borne in mind that contemporaries are never aware of the effects of events, which can only be assessed and explained with the historian's perspective. They are unaware of the main causes even of just the key events and of the complex dimensions of significant historical events and developments, having just personal experiences and their own perceptions, accumulating to give individually coloured memories, but not what could be called memory – historically objectivised memory comes later, after reflection.

History, and thus memory as well, do not exist immediately, being reconstructed at the original scene or in museums and exhibitions, but especially in scientific studies. As well as historical remnants in the form of written and material sources, there is tradition, which is consciously built up. The recalling of history by historians is an empirical, systematic, controlled reconstruction and interpretation, an ordering of historical phenomena, events, persons and developments viewed in relation not only to the relevant context, but also to cause and effect. At exhibitions and in museums, exhibits detached from their historical context are arranged, explained and designed on the basis of historical research and placed in a new

context accordingly, but museum reconstructions do not represent any given spatial, temporal or causal continuum.

This scientifically based form of memory, deliberately shaped for communication, is not, however, the only possible one. Fragmentary elements of what has been handed down survive in nations' and societies' collective memory, and legends and myths, not to mention the specific political use of history as an instrument, play at least as important a role in historical awareness, and this is also true in present-day democratic states. There was a recent example of this in Germany, when historical misrepresentation supported a claim that it was not until 1968 – and then by anti-democratic and unlawful means! – that a democratic, cosmopolitan political culture and the rule of law were secured, as if the rule of law, a democratic parliament, integration with the west and a critical memory of the past dictatorship had not actually characterised the federal republic right from 1945 or 1949. The use of – appropriate or inaccurate – historical memory for political purposes is a problem even in democratic societies, where there can be no official history and where science is free.

Historical memory is not just a matter for historians, as the media play a not insignificant role and must therefore bear a greater responsibility. As demonstrated by the large numbers of commemorations and celebrations marking “round figure” birthdays and anniversaries of deaths, and by a recent new celebration of the 300th anniversary of Prussia (1701), nothing is now spared marketing and commercialisation. While that may sometimes serve a useful purpose, it also entails risks. Making historical memory topical at will, sometimes artificially, turns events into items of entertainment. History no longer “belongs” first and foremost to historians or to those who have had historical training. Marc Bloch wrote, in his *Apologie pour l'histoire*, that, even if history served no other purpose, at least it was entertaining.

But this is not the only problem. It is not only contemporaries and the persons involved who often have different recollections, but the memory of a single event and of a single place differ even more significantly at different times, in different nations, and often also in different social groups. The meaning of Sedan differs for the French and the Germans: it was on 2 September 1870 that Prussian troops defeated the French army at Sedan and captured Napoleon III, and that date became a day of celebration in the German Empire and a day of mourning in France. The day means little or nothing to members of the present generations, unless they are historians. Stalingrad and the defeat of the German army early in 1943 of course means different things to the Russians and the Germans, while the French public knows it as the name of a metro station. The hall of mirrors at Versailles, like Verdun, literally bundled together symbolically the problems of Franco-German history and became a symbol for both nations; in the case of the dreadful *débâcle* of Verdun, it was not until several generations later that the lesson was learned.

We have become accustomed to speaking of the identity of a nation, a term that I, too, have used occasionally. In our context, this means identity shaped by historical memory. In practice, however, this is a completely unacceptable simplification. As the identity of an individual is already far too complex to be encompassed by this singular noun, the same is even more true of a community or even a whole nation. The collective identity, including national identity, also makes its mark on the individual. The identity of each person results from the intersection of quite different roles and role expectations of individual, social, regional and national origin. Each person is a member of a particular generation, a specific denomination, a nation, a social group, a profession, and has a particular educational background; each goes through a succession of situations: from childhood to motherhood or fatherhood, from schooldays to teaching, from youth to retirement, and so on. So one's identity does not remain unchanged throughout life. Each person has, to some degree, several identities, and one's perception of both the events of one's own life and historical phenomena changes. Max Frisch's novels, *Stiller* and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, provide a very fine literary demonstration of the identity problem. If we speak only of a consistent identity, there is a latent risk of a totalitarian pretension.

Of course key events do occur, having an effect on the way in which a nation views itself. France had its revolution in 1789, but the memory of it frequently changes. As we know, the Germans have a divided past, having been separated until 1989.

It is not the past, but the present, that defines in each case the symbolic value of people and of events and the consequently specific historical memory. The present selects from history what is of interest to it – this shapes the historical memory – thus falling outside the scope of the historian's work, which is in any case more extensive.

During the course of history, new and previously unsuspected patterns constantly arise, while others fade away. Thus every nation has several identities, changing or being changed according to time and place, of a complex nature and subjected to never-ending change during each individual period.

To this must be added altered values from one generation to the next, associated with a change in historical memory. Such memories are constantly reconstituted, and reconstitution has to preserve the recollections of the 20th century, but memory must not bear the marks just of disasters, but also of the lessons learned from them.

The pioneering seven-volume work by Pierre Nora, *Lieux de mémoire*, gives 130 highly eloquent examples of this process, and another 120 relevant articles are to be included in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, the first volume of which has just been published by Etienne François and Hagen Schulze, in which the term *Erinnerungsort* (place of memory) is used with a metaphorical sense.

The culture of memory itself is part of this – and this culture is one of the great achievements of the federal republic – but so is the development of a shared European awareness, such as the individual states' culture of the rule of law and democracy, encompassing inalienable human rights. The foundation of the federal republic in 1949 is, to this extent, also a response to 1933, while 1989-1991 responds to 1917 and 1939. Fortunately for those whose lives have started or continued since 1945, the 20th century, too, does not have just a single identity.

## The political use of memory and the historian's responsibilities

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Memory, which both fuels and feeds on history,  
only strives to save the past in order to serve  
the present and the future.  
Let us endeavour to ensure  
that collective memory serves human liberation  
rather than human enslavement.

Jacques Le Goff

Memory and history are often at loggerheads, whether seen from Warsaw, Budapest or Sarajevo. They have sometimes brought out the best in people, but more often they have fanned controversies and disputes, or indeed bring out the worst. The collective identities that started reconstituting in the late 1980s are based not so much on future-oriented political projects (apart from such bare hopes as “freedom”, “democracy” or “Europe”) as on cultural frames dominated by a specific relation to the past and a tradition. A leading Hungarian historian, Gyorgy Litvan, pointed to this fact in 1993: “The relation to the past is sometimes more important in understanding the present political combat than any disagreements on economic or social problems. The divergences are more clear-cut (in this relation)”.<sup>1</sup> Very recently, in fact, the invariably delicate relation between history and memory has been compounded by a third element: history, memory and politics now form a triangular relationship.

In late 20th-century central and eastern Europe, political forces have seized on history as a raw material for constructing their legitimacy. This has not always been easy, but the historian cannot afford to ignore it: researchers are constantly coming up against “blind spots” and “blank pages”, while teachers are exposed to various ideological manipulations. This is why young historians in central and eastern Europe are so sensitive to the constraints of the profession and less attracted to the major interpretative philosophies.

Four preliminary remarks will shed some light on this specificity.

### A quest for identities

First of all, we should remember two salient features of the post-1989 era: the constant raising of stakes in the debate surrounding memory, and the emergence of more and more local identities. These two features are present to varying extents in all European countries. The memory issues include the many unsolved disputes

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1. Gyorgy Litvan, “La mémoire officielle de l’histoire du temps présent en Hongrie”, *La Nouvelle Alternative*, No. 32, Paris, 1993, p. 13.



with the communist regimes and the Soviet Union, the dreadful massacres of the second world war, with attempts to pinpoint specific local responsibilities for the bloodbath, and the traditions of resistance against, or compromise with, the major empires that had held sway in central Europe for three or four centuries. Again, separate local identities have become easier to express with the collapse of the political control and regulating centres of the single-party states. The three single-party “federations” which used to structure the multitude of regions and nationalities in eastern Europe (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia) have collapsed, leaving a whole series of small states assumed to be prone to conflict or even war: “local idiosyncrasies have re-emerged as our overshadowing destiny”, as the now stateless Yugoslav writer Pedrag Matvejevic commented in 1992.<sup>1</sup> Local specificities reawaken suppressed memories, imagine new communities and galvanise resistance.

Secondly, explaining these features by the new “thaw”, as was common in the early 1990s, is far from adequate. This theory presented the communist system in retrospect as a kind of deep-freeze for ancestral national quarrels, which then re-emerged with the collapse of the dictatorships. In fact, the communist era had itself integrated these quarrels, developing official histories and counter-histories, with many more or less independent bodies or institutions preserving sometimes conflicting, rival collective memories. We need mention the national questions at the time<sup>2</sup> to realise the extent of the official ideological takeover of these age-old traditions and disputes. The Romanian example, with the construction of a “national communism” rooted in native traditions<sup>3</sup> is far from being a one-off. In fact all the regimes, and the factions or lobbies within the apparatus in power exploited such local resources to underpin their legitimacy, particularly after the main Stalinist period in the 1950s.

Thirdly, in fact, what we are seeing is a quest for collective and individual identities. This complex and debatable concept is a good reflection of a phenomenon which pervades these thoroughly disoriented, if not completely forlorn societies. The rejection of the established authorities and the relative vacuity of the new leadership’s politico-social projects has led to a feeling of loss or emptiness, individual and/or collective insecurity and the end of the integration (disintegration?) of the peripheries (the working classes and poorer regions) by the centre. The discrepancy between the official discourse and actual living reality is making it ever more difficult for people to identify with the state. In this maze of collective imaginings the few discernible points of reference are valuable, disputed, indeed mythical. Commissions and parliaments have sat endlessly to decide on planned monuments, street name changes or commemorative dates, a phenomenon which

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1. See article by Pedrag Matvejevic in “Identité(s) d’Europe centrale”, *Revue des cultures et des sociétés de l’Est*, No. 21, Paris, 1994.

2. See Jean-Yves Potel, “Sous le communisme, le nationalisme” in Alain Gresh (ed.) *A l’Est, le nationalisme contre la démocratie*, Paris, 1993.

3. See Catherine Durandin, *Histoire des Roumains*, Paris, 1995.

has taken on dramatic dimensions where territorial issues or emblems are concerned (Macedonia was even embargoed for three years over the flag issue!). After so many years of oppression, self-affirmation has led to the negation of the “Other”.

Last, this return of collective memories is not, however, peculiar to post-communist societies. It is part of a general trend in Europe over the past twenty years or so towards challenging of the major ideologies that had structured the post-war era: “The era which has just come to an end”, notes Immanuel Wallerstein, “was one of hopes, most of which were no doubt disappointed, but people did at least hope. The era just ahead will be one of turbulence and fighting, born more of despair than with confidence in the future”.<sup>1</sup> In the east, however, collective recollection takes specific forms marked by recent experience of the Soviet system. The history/memory relationship in this part of the continent has often been confused with the traditional opposition between “them” and “us”. The institutions, with their speeches, ceremonies, rituals, lapses of memory and denials embodied an external, distant, hostile or ill-intentioned world, whereas the family circle, network of friends or religious communities operated as cocoons, a nearby, authentic world. The reality was obviously less black and white, but in the depths of these societies the diffuse awareness of this opposition between “immobile history” and “confiscated” memories often dominated.<sup>2</sup>

### History and counter-history

History and historians were given a particularly rough ride under the communist regimes. As a teleological ideology aimed at giving “meaning” to history with a capital “H”, Marxism-Leninism manipulated it, taking on the mantle of the “natural law of history”. The Communist Party wanted historians to be hagiographers or, to use Stalinist terminology, “chroniclers of Marxist-Leninist science”. Václav Havel has shown us how, as the system turned in on itself, “History was replaced with a pseudo-history punctuated by the various anniversaries, congresses, celebrations and Spartakiades, in other words by the sort of artificial activity which lies not in encounters between subjects but in one-dimensional, transparent, utterly predictable self-accomplishment (and self-celebration) of the single central subject, the keeper of truth and power. And since we can only experience time through histories, stories and history, the experience of time itself began to disappear”.<sup>3</sup>

In this way national histories were hijacked to legitimise the “people’s democracy” or “the revolution”. This is what happened with the revolutionary traditions of the 19th century. Hungarian communist historiography presented the regime as the direct descendant of the wars of independence. For twenty years the idea

1. *L'histoire continue*, Paris, 1999, p. 37.

2. See Václav Havel’s fine essay, “Histoires et totalitarisme” in *Essais politiques*, Paris, 1989.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 167.

prevailed that Hungary had been “colonised” by Austria and the nation oppressed by the Habsburgs. From this ideological perspective, “true” history boiled down to a 400-year-long struggle for independence. University professors, members of the academy and honourable secondary teachers were dismissed for asserting the contrary or expressing a more qualified point of view.<sup>1</sup> Other national sagas were complete fabrications based on marginal facts: the citizens of East Germany were suddenly the heirs to the German anti-fascist and anti-Hitlerian movements, whereas history as experienced by society suggested something quite different. “Until the mid-1970s the GDR had seen its history as beginning in 1945. Just as the national idea was losing its legitimacy, it was thought appropriate to replace it with a compensatory patriotism. The ideological patriotism proposed by the new social order was compounded by a less abstract patriotism based on a community of men, Germans who had fallen victim to Nazi terror for having fought against Hitler. The GDR based a great deal of its legitimacy on the cult of such heroes (who had been more or less forgotten by the other Germany). The East German state exploited the memory of these martyrs to encircle society with monuments to anti-Hitlerian resistance, erecting more and more memorials and statues of heroes. The factories, streets, stadiums, schools and parks all bore the names of these men”.<sup>2</sup>

Historical research, archaeology, museography and anthropology were all harnessed for ideological purposes. Excavations in Transylvania endeavoured to prove whether the Hungarians or Romanians had arrived there first; conservation of Orthodox monasteries in Yugoslavia and searches for signs of the first Albanians along the Illyrian coasts fuelled controversies which had direct political consequences. Specialists in Antiquity were still holding heated debates in post-Tito Yugoslavia about the ethnic origins of the Dardanians, the earliest inhabitants of present-day Kosovo: “the Albanian side declares that the Dardanians were Illyrian in an effort to demonstrate that this territory has belonged to the Dardanians thus the Illyrians thus the Albanians for a very long time, at least since the earliest text, the Oleveni inscription dating back to 345 BC. In Belgrade the thinking on this matter seems to have evolved: in 1978 (historians) readily acknowledged that the Dardanians belonged to the wider Illyrian ethnic group, although they stressed their separate political history; in 1986 they apparently place the main emphasis on this political separation”.<sup>3</sup> However, such disputes, mystifications or commemorations are also fostered by the development of certain related sciences such as the art of embalming.<sup>4</sup>

However, right from the outset, in the Soviet Union *inter alia*,<sup>5</sup> intellectuals were able to work more or less independently on subjects more or less remote from the

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1. Miklos Molnar, *Histoire de la Hongrie*, Paris, 1996, p. 321.

2. Sonia Combe, “RDA: des commémorations pour surmonter le passé nazi”, in Alain Brossat, Sonia Combe, Jean-Yves Potel, Jean-Charles Szurek, *A l’Est, la mémoire retrouvée*, Paris, 1990, p. 270.

3. Pierre Cabanes, *Passions albanaises*, Paris, 1999, p. 225.

4. See the extraordinary account of the *Embaumeur de Lénine*, Actes Sud.

5. See Maria Ferreti, *La memoria mutilata, la Russia ricorda*, Milan, 1993, with an outstanding bibliography.

concerns of the regime. Ancient (especially Greek) and medieval history were obviously more conducive to such research, although the issues at stake were often very topical, as we have just seen. Such work began on the fringes, and often gradually gained a place of honour in academic research, producing major historians and internationally acclaimed research. This applies particularly to two specific countries. The first is Poland, where research on economic and social history centred on Witold Kula, working in co-operation with the *Annales* school in Paris. It also boasts such writers as Krzysztof Pomian (who has been working as an 18th-century specialist in France since 1966), Bronislaw Geremek (a medievalist who gave up historic research for political action in 1980), Karol Modzelewski (a medievalist who conducted original work on Poland under the Piast dynasty), Andrzej Paczkowski and Marcin Kula (contemporary historians). Catholic-inspired historiography is also energetically represented by Jerzy Kloczowski of the Catholic University of Lublin. In this country the fight against official contemporary history began in the early 1960s with alternative publishing houses and émigré magazine networks. The period of legal existence of the Solidarność trade union (1980-1981) also provided an opportunity for launching new debates, including discussions on Jewish-Polish relations. One of the best books on the work done during this time was no doubt Krysyna Kersten's *The establishment of communist rule in Poland, 1943-1948*, which was first published clandestinely in 1984. In Hungary, as early as the 1960s, a number of historians from the Institute of History began to contest official historiography, particularly in connection with the "dualism" established in Austro-Hungary:

Gyorgy Ranki and Ivan T. Berend demonstrate in their economic history studies that while the dualist era penalised industrialisation because of Austrian customs pressure, it did promote general modernisation and growth. Peter Hanak, who has conducted a great deal of research into the cultural and political aspects of this period, concentrates on analysing progress in society, refuting the communist dogmas to the effect that only the exploiters of the working classes supported dualism.<sup>1</sup>

So a Hungarian school of history grew up that concentrated on analysing and explaining an era rather than justifying the present by the past. Despite insidious repression, this school gradually began to address all the major contemporary issues. The more committed writers, such as Gyorgy Litvan, concentrated on the history of the 1956 revolution, setting up a Committee for Historical Justice in 1989.

The emergence of independent historical work within the official academic research sphere can be noted to varying degrees in most countries, despite the occasional temporary regression, for example in Czechoslovakia.<sup>2</sup> It was encouraged by the developing East-West scientific exchanges, particularly with Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and France. These ventures proceeded alongside an increasingly discredited official production. This gave

1. Miklos Molnar, *op. cit.*, p. 321 (unofficial translation).

2. See Bertold Unfried, "Tchechoslovaquie: l'historiographie indépendante depuis 1968", *A l'Est la mémoire retrouvée*, *op. cit.*, pp. 465 ff.

historians rather an ambivalent status under the communist regimes: sometimes eulogising and sometimes opposing or criticising the regime, some of them subsequently became the main political protagonists of the change that had been under way for ten years.

Similarly, collective memories have received starkly contrasting treatment. Some were obliterated or manipulated by the regimes in power. The authorities negated the collective memories of various social, ethnic, political, cultural and other groups. The Soviet Union had seen the case of the “punished peoples” who had been deported in the 1930s and 1940s and of whom the regime had destroyed all traces (which had led to a ban on the publications of the prominent historian Aleksandr Nekrich, and subsequently to his exile),<sup>1</sup> in central Europe certain cultural or religious traditions were “forgotten”, and such a strict taboo was placed on the 1939 German-Soviet Pact, which had had so much impact on the whole region, that in 1989 the mere fact of commemorating it was regarded as a subversive incident. However, the wave of deportations at the time scarred the living memories of millions of Baltic, Polish, Ukrainian and Romanian families. The murder of several thousand Polish officers by the NKVD (Russian police and secret police), the fact that Moscow and Warsaw refused to recognise this crime and the maintenance of fictitious graves by their families in Polish cemeteries spoke volumes on this whole issue, as did the disappearance of Imre Hagy in Hungary. The name changes of historic towns and cities (for example Königsberg)<sup>2</sup> and families (for example Turks in Bulgaria)<sup>3</sup> pursued the same aim.

Other memories were hijacked, manipulated and stripped of their own history. Cashing in on an event of great significance for a given community (a positive, usually dramatic event), the authorities harnessed collective memories and rewrote local history for their own ends. This is what happened with the aforementioned struggles for national liberation from imperial forces, but also with the memory of the destruction of the Jews during the second world war. The specificity of the genocide is hardly ever, if at all, mentioned in the monuments “to victims of fascism” (for example in Auschwitz in 1967 or in Vilnius), whereas the assistance provided for persecuted Jewish populations is often exaggerated to the advantage of the communist resistance organisations.<sup>4</sup>

Even those combating the regime were drawn into this competition between memory and history: several generations passed on the flame, collecting accounts, maintaining archives and transmitting evidence, while the regime continued hedging on the facts. Cases in point are the exact number of deaths occurring during various confrontations, the number of deportees from different countries to

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1. See Aleksandr Nekrich, *The punished peoples*, WW Norton Company, 1978.

2. See Pascal Cauchy, “Königsberg, trophée de l’Armée rouge”, in Alain Brossat, Jean-Yves Potel *L’Est, les mythes et les restes*, No. 55, *Communications*, Paris, 1992, and *Lettre inter*.

3. See article “Bulgares-Turcs ou Turcs-Bulgares” in *La Nouvelle Alternative*, No. 22, Paris 1991.

4. See, for instance, Jean-Charles Szurek “Le camp-musée d’Auschwitz” in *A l’Est la mémoire retrouvée*, op. cit., pp. 535 ff.

the Gulags,<sup>1</sup> or quite simply the problem of naming events. The Hungarian authorities long referred to October 1956 as a “counter-revolution”, then in the early 1970s Janos Kadar made it a “Hungarian tragedy”, and finally in January 1989 one member of the Politburo admitted that 1956 had been a “popular insurrection, not a counter-revolution” (Imre Pozsgay).

Naturally, these manipulations came up against individual or collective resistance. Counter-memories were maintained and transmitted by opposition movements, churches and families or by cultural institutions and movements. The latter were a powerful vehicle for consolidating alternative communities as sound foundations for combating the regime. Drawing up an exhaustive map of these memory-oriented places and issues in central Europe under communist rule, would entail pinpointing dozens of centres in each country and differentiating three separate types of places: those of disputed national memories, those of anti-fascist memories and those of resistance against communist regimes.<sup>2</sup> The memory issue therefore occupies a central position on an equal footing with politics or social issues, in structuring long-term political divisions. The case of “worker memory” in Gdansk, whereby the August 1980 strikers demanded a monument for their colleagues who had been murdered in 1970, is a classic example. For about a decade the identity of this particular social group grew up around memory, producing associations, commemorations and rituals and maintaining political visions vital for understanding the unity and tenacity of the founders of the independent *Solidarność* trade union.<sup>3</sup>

Yet this does not immunise such collective memories from ambiguity: they are memories of oppressed persons, if not victims, and have preserved a “counter-history” with all the biases and tendentious lapses of memory this entails. They have also tended to “bury” or manipulate the past, leaving just as many “blank pages” as in the official version of history. In 1989, when taking stock of such attempts to conceal the truth in recent Polish history, Adam Michnik noted that “each ‘circuit’ undeniably has its own blank pages: the communist camp has just as many as Pilsudski’s admirers abroad, the Catholic Church has just as many as *Solidarność*”.<sup>4</sup> This similarity, which does not reflect any equality of arms between both sides during the communist era, led to the base acts committed by these “counter-histories” in the 1990s. From being tools for democratic opposition they often became propaganda tools for partisan interests. Two fundamental aspirations of the post-1989 period came face-to-face with these ready-made ideologies: the determination to have done with the communist system (and its pseudo-reforms), which raises the difficult problem of “decommunisation”, and the desire for national independence from the major powers, fuelled by nationalistic and religious

1. See Jean-Yves Potel, *Les cent portes de l'Europe centrale et orientale*, Paris, 1998, pp. 129-133.

2. See preliminary cartographical inventory, Jean-Yves Potel, “Lieux de mémoire et de résistances” in Michel Foucher (ed.) *Fragments d'Europe*, Paris, 1993, pp. 68 ff.

3. See Jean-Yves Potel, *Gdansk, la mémoire ouvrière (1970-1980)*, Paris, 1982.

4. Adam Michnik, *La deuxième révolution*, Paris, 1990, p. 174.

imaginations. They transform the simple “them” and “us” dichotomy into a complex game in which history loses out, handing over the stage to disputes, hatred, score-settling and fanaticism.

### **Melancholy memories**

So the collective memories that took front stage during the great moments of 1989-1990 were fragile and sensitive. As for the historians, they were swept along in the political turmoil. Some refused to wear two hats (this was the case of the Polish historians Bronislaw Geremek and Karol Modezelewski), while others placed their historical knowledge at the disposal of the present (Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, the Academy of Science in Belgrade) and turned it into a partisan ideology.

Over the last ten years historical work has seldom contributed to the kind of secularisation of memories which is vital if present-day passions are to be pried away from the past. The necessary distance is beginning to emerge only in those countries which have initiated a veritable “grieving process” for the past. In such cases historical research and political debate are elucidating the facts and their contexts, pinpointing political responsibilities, and so forth. To use the Freudian analogy, such catharsis is making it possible to accept and understand the loss of the love object and to open up to new prospects. Otherwise, the grieving, the mourning, turns into melancholy. The subject withdraws into himself and, crouching in his lair, loses interest in the future. He ends up hating everything around him in his “delirious expectation of punishment”.<sup>1</sup> Mythicisation of the past and the flight from history thus conspire to keep melancholy memories alive. They generally unite social or ethnic communities that have been passed over as casualties of progress: they reappropriate old symbolisms, rediscover forgotten heroes and become a source of legitimacy. They are easy to manipulate. Anyone able to flatter them can quickly gain a huge amount of public trust.

Of all the modern techniques of political manipulation of collective memories, three are thriving particularly well in central and eastern Europe. The first consists in posing as the perpetual victim, rewriting history and reviving the primal myths defining the community, whose members are flatteringly referred to as the “eternally oppressed”. This makes all the defeats and disasters the basic reference points of groups and populations who do indeed feel that they have lost out during the upheavals of the post-communist era. They are demanding explanations and compensation. This is one of the main undercurrents of national or ethnic populism. Human living conditions, a question which is both social and political, or even a health issue, are equated with the fight for the nation’s “survival”: “The question of the integrity of the Serb people and its culture throughout Yugoslavia”, we read in the *Memorandum* of the Belgrade Academy of Science, “is crucial for

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1. Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and melancholy”, quoted in *Métopsychole*, Paris, 1968, pp. 149 ff.

their survival and development”.<sup>1</sup> This construction gives the impression that the time has finally come for all the past humiliations to be avenged. “The peculiarity of the victimist view of, as we wrote in connection with the Kosovo war,<sup>2</sup> “is that it provides a modern perpetrator with an inexhaustible stock of reasons and means of self-legitimation for acting outside of civilised norms”. But the fact is that this view is not confined to the extreme Balkan situation: it is to be detected in most nationalistic discourses, especially in the case of “small nations” that had long been dominated by an empire, that is all the nations of central and eastern Europe. From the Baltic countries which suffered Russian “demographic imperialism” to the Romanians under the “Hungarian boot”, through Poland as the “Christ of the nations”, this exaltation of the victim inspires sacrifice and a delirious future projection of oneself and one’s group.

The second technique, which is often combined with the first, consists in using stereotypes to establish one standard group memory (or identity). Stereotypes are quickly disseminated by conversations, without any need for proof. They are highly flexible, blending perfectly with the most ancient (rumours) and modern (media and Internet) communication techniques. For instance, as Robert Frank has noted, the national stereotype sets up a behavioural detail or a noted event as “a whole charged with a categorical and categorising value”. In such cases melancholy memories provide inexhaustible sources of “information” on Others and of solace for oneself:

In simplifying the representation of the Other, national stereotypes simultaneously simplify the representation of the self. They therefore play a vital role in the construction of the collective identity, and more particularly of the individual’s specific national identity. The process by which one nation “categorises” the others enables it in turn to categorise itself, to construct itself in relation to the others: facing them, confronting them or standing alongside them. This construction is in perpetual motion, and the stereotyped images of the Other help fuel this identification process like the eternal reflections in a hall of mirrors.<sup>3</sup>

This mechanism came into full operation as soon as the Soviet Union abandoned its infamous doctrine of “limited sovereignty” enabling the nations in question to become genuinely independent. The stereotypes either adapted to the new realities or else manipulated the memories that had been upheld to counter official history. Some peoples became scapegoats for the misfortune of others: Russians in the Baltic countries, Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, Albanians or Turks in the Balkans. Others remained laden with “original sins”: Polish anti-Semites, Ukrainian

1. Quoted in Mirko Grmek, “*Le nettoyage ethnique, documents historiques sur une idéologie serbe*”, Paris, 1993, p. 256 (unofficial translation).

2. See Alain Brossat and Jean-Yves Potel, *Au miroir de la guerre, réflexions sur la guerre du Kosovo*, Paris, 2000, pp. 140 ff.

3. Robert Frank, “Qu’est-ce qu’un stéréotype?” in Jean-Noël Jeanneney (ed.) *Une idée fausse est un fait vrai, les stéréotypes nationaux en Europe*, Paris, 2000, p. 23. See also Pierre Laborie, “*L’opinion française sous Vichy*”, Paris, 1990.



mafiosi and Gypsy thieves. In fact, the Roma/Gypsies are the last of the banished peoples in this geographical area, even though they account for over 10% of the population in many countries.<sup>1</sup>

The third technique exploits ultra-modern versions of a traditional instrument of memory, the image. From time immemorial, even before the invention of writing, the image has always been a medium of memory. With the mass media and the new information technologies which the authorities can monopolise, the image (photographs and film) is in the forefront of this combat. Pictures are no longer just censored or manipulated, they are now actually fabricated. This was distinctly seen throughout the Yugoslav area from the 1980s onwards, with the tragic consequences of which we are painfully aware.<sup>2</sup> More generally, the main television channels have become formidable tools for forming or “describing”<sup>3</sup> the new national or group identities. Religious memories (or religion as memory)<sup>4</sup> and political discourse have exploited these resources, leading to intense “media wars”.<sup>5</sup>

### **The historian’s responsibilities**

Such manipulation, however, is not confined to a single closed universe. Memories, which are often rooted in political and social despair, also come up against external constraints. The collapse of the communist bloc and the globalisation process have encouraged the free movement not only of assets and persons but also of information, ideas and memories. Even though the authorities (which have in fact been rather inefficient on this front) have been tempted to close off the areas under their control, minds have opened up to larger spaces and the memories of one group have encountered those of others. This trend, which became decisive after 1989, has often been accompanied by in-depth historic research and discussion. Otherwise, memories overrode history and fossilised positions in recurrent and often tragic wars. Two examples suffice to illustrate the extent of this difficulty over the past decade: memories of the Holocaust and of communism.

The disappearance of the Jewish people from central Europe was primarily the result of the nazi extermination during the second world war. However, local regimes and other populations did not always react in the same way. Some states formed alliances with Hitler and participated to a greater or lesser extent in the nazi effort at extermination, while others were, on the contrary, destroyed by the German occupying forces. Similarly, back-up troops were recruited among terrorised or consenting local populations, while “the righteous” helped and rescued

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1. See Jean-Yves Potel, *Les cent portes de l’Europe centrale et orientale*, op. cit., pp. 300 ff.

2. See “Reporters sans frontière”, *Les médias de la haine*, Paris, 1995.

3. Jean-Yves Potel, “Le pouvoir de description”, in Kristian Feigelson, Nicolas Péliissier (ed.), *Télé-révolutions culturelles*, Paris, 1998, p. 269.

4. See Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *La religion pour mémoire*, Paris, 1993, and Patrick Michel, *La société retrouvée*, Paris, 1988.

5. See the documentation on “the new media landscape” collected by Marcin Frybes and Anne Nivat, issue 32-33 of *L’Autre Europe*, Paris, 1996.

many Jews. Such behavioural differences obviously cannot be reduced to Marxist-Leninist schemas or stereotypes, as shown by the archives and historical research, particularly that conducted by Raul Hilberg.<sup>1</sup> However, where no comparisons or clarifications are conducted, these differences can fuel all sorts of hatreds and reproaches. In all the countries in question, stereotypes have been handed down from generation to generation, with one set of memories being opposed to other equally painful ones. At the time of Lithuanian independence, for instance, Vilnius housed the survivors and children of tens of thousands of families deported to the Gulags in the 1940s and the descendants of Jews exterminated by the nazis between 1941 and 1944, sometimes with the help of Lithuanian militias.<sup>2</sup> The former had generally been living in Vilnius since the war, were emerging from fifty years of Soviet domination and humiliation and were for the first time free to discuss their memories of their families. Most of the latter, on the other hand, had come back from other countries, where they had been forgotten despite the fact that their ancestors had made Wiln  the “Jerusalem of the North”, the birthplace of Chassidism but also of modern Jewish thought.<sup>3</sup> The clash between these two memories was initially extremely painful, especially when the new nationalist regime wanted to honour a post-war personality who had been executed by the Soviets and who, while no doubt being a national hero, had also been a member of the anti-Semitic militias under the nazi occupation. Subsequently, as historical clarification gradually followed historical controversy, the authorities officially recognised both memories and contributed to the construction of monuments and to commemorations. In fact, the Lithuanian Parliament has introduced an annual public holiday in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

This is a typical example of the conflicts surrounding the Jewish memory in the region,<sup>4</sup> and emphasises the decisive responsibility of historians as mediators in the requisite pacification, but also that of the new political authorities. Unfortunately, some of the latter still have a tendency to support stereotyping and ease their electorate’s “guilt feelings” by demagogical means. There have been recent examples of this phenomenon in Romania<sup>5</sup> and Hungary.<sup>6</sup> All in all, however, international influence is helping take the heat out of these conflicts.

Attempts to address the memory of communism has stirred equally antagonistic imaginations and raised even trickier political questions. The experience of the regimes and the attempts at reforms vary considerably between, for example,

1. See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, victims, bystanders: the Jewish catastrophe 1933-1945*, Harper Collins 1993.

2. See Catherine Gousseff, “Wilno, Viln , Wilnius capitale de Lituanie” in *A l’Est, la m moire retrouv e*, op. cit. pp. 489 ff.

3. See Henri Minzeles and Yves Passeraud, *Lituanie juive 1918-1940*, Paris, 1996.

4. See Jean-Yves Potel, *Les cent portes de l’Europe centrale et orientale*, op. cit., pp. 153 ff.

5. See Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine “Fascisme et communisme en Roumanie: enjeux et usages d’une comparaison” in Henry Rousso (ed.) *Stalinisme et nazisme, histoire et m moire compar es* (Stalinism and nazism, comparative history and memory), Paris, 1999, pp. 219 ff.

6. See Randolph L. Braham, “Offensive contre l’histoire: les nationalistes hongrois et la Shoah”, in *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 606, Paris, 1999, pp 123 ff.

Poland, which had never ceased rebelling against the system, and Romania, which had seen few uprisings because Ceaușescu's national communism had been more or less to the liking of a large section of the population. The Poles and their like are heirs to a culture (and a memory) of resistance, with its romantic or realistic variants, its heroes, its traitors and its abnegations. In the end they can envisage their country's communist past relatively dispassionately (though this does not preclude the occasional spate of score-settling). Such peoples as the Romanians, on the other hand, live with a culture of guilt, remorse, a sullied conscience and an obsession with purification in all the senses of the term, particularly restoring the nation's purity. This explains the fierce anti-communism of part of the Romanian intelligentsia, who are clamouring for a "Red Nuremberg". They hush up all the blemishes of the pre-communist era (including the Antonescu regime) so that they can accuse the Romanian communists of supreme evil.<sup>1</sup>

All the oppositions broadly outlined above combine memories, history and political struggles, with a predominance of the latter, which are, more often than not, apprehended in the short term. The success in central and eastern Europe of the *Livre noir du communisme*<sup>2</sup> is explicable not so much by the authors' thesis equating fascism with communism, as by the fact that it presents communism as a suffering endured, thus echoing the melancholy memories of the many victims of this system. Conversely, the historical debate on pre-war political experiments and the subtle analysis of specific events during the communist era or of the role played by certain figures are helping the countries in question to stop mulling over the past. Hungary is a case in point. The arguments among historians during the 1990s revealed "lasting resistance" from part of the "historical and academic corporate bodies to partisan pressures" at a time when "many in the conservative camp were trying to induce feelings of guilt about the communist years in order to improve their electoral chances".<sup>3</sup> Even though these controversies are still firing passions, this resistance as passed on to the younger generation is a precondition for pacifying the past.

So we can see that historians in post-communist Europe, whether researchers or teachers, have special responsibilities in breaking out of the history/memory dichotomy in order to guarantee pluralism of methodology and responsibility on the part of their fellow citizens. Nor can they afford to abandon contemporary history to the ideologists. "It is only right that historians should become involved in this severely politically contaminated dispute about history, because if they remain aloof this might be taken as acquiescence in letting history, as enslaved by the politicians, deal with them".<sup>4</sup>

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1. Alexandra Laigne-Lavastine, op. cit.

2. Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean-Louis Margolin, *Le livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreur, répression*, Paris, 1997; this work has been translated into all central and eastern European languages.

3. Paul Gradwohl, "Les historiens et les enjeux politiques du passé en Hongrie", in Henry Rousso, op. cit., p. 248.

4. Adam Michnik, op. cit., p. 157.

## **The challenge of teaching history in the 21st century**

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I would like to use this opportunity to explore some of the challenges and problems of teaching history in the 21st century at all educational levels: in schools, in teacher training and in academic history courses in universities.

I do not have a crystal ball nor was I born with second sight and the gift of prophecy. Speaking as a historian I find it difficult enough to explain the past without also trying to predict the future but it is possible, at least, to identify some trends and patterns which emerged in the 1990s which are likely to continue well into the 21st century.

The first problem or challenge is recruitment into the profession of teaching history at all levels. In many parts of Europe now we have an ageing profession of historians, teacher educators and history teachers. Often it is difficult to encourage young people to choose history teaching as a career. Now, of course, this problem is not confined to the discipline of history. Universities in various parts of Europe are experiencing recruitment difficulties in many subjects. Like Dracula we are becoming desperate for “new blood”. In some countries the education authorities and individual schools are also experiencing major recruitment problems.

This is partly an issue of resources, relative incomes and career opportunities. But this problem is also related to status. In much of Europe now the status of teaching is declining, partly because of changing social attitudes and partly because some governments no longer regard teaching as a self-regulating profession. In much of eastern and south-eastern Europe, and especially in the countries of the former Soviet Union, I suspect that the declining status of the history teacher is also the result of public perceptions that history and history teaching under the old regime had a role to play as a propaganda tool.

Elsewhere in Europe the declining status of history teaching has been linked to an instrumentalist view of education which now increasingly underpins secondary and higher education. In other words, there is a view in official circles that the primary objective of education is to help the recipient to get a good job and that all education must be perceived to be relevant to the achievement of this purpose. In such circumstances it would not be surprising if many young people did not regard an education in history as particularly relevant to their futures.

So, declining recruitment to the profession is a major problem that will need to be solved as soon as possible. Otherwise the discipline will become marginalised in the universities and in schools it will become, increasingly, an optional subject or it will be combined with other subjects or taught by teachers who were trained to

teach other disciplines, such as geography or social studies. The problem will be particularly severe in the more remote, rural areas of Europe.

Another problem inherited from the 20th century is the crisis of identity which the discipline has been experiencing for the last decade or more. While the post-modernist critique has raised some interesting issues and concerns and made us all think about the uses and misuses of history, I suspect that many historians have found it difficult to recognise their own practice in the caricature which some post-modernists have presented, particularly, I would suggest, those post-modernists better known for writing about historians than for doing any history. Nevertheless, the whole debate has left the profession to some degree on the defensive, and just at a time when it needed to be more reflective, more self-critical and evaluative about the quality of history education at university level, and the direction it is taking. In particular, there needs to be more critical reflection about how university students are introduced to: the methodology and practice of history; the study of historiography; the philosophy of history; and the interrelationship between history and other disciplines.

This brings me to a third problem or challenge which relates specifically to the training of history teachers. In some parts of Europe acute problems have already emerged in both initial and in-service teacher training, particularly in those countries which have been experiencing ten years of political and economic transition.

First, there is an urgent need to provide effective training for the teacher trainers especially in the use of new didactics and methods. They are often familiar with the theory but not the practice. A common complaint from teachers and students is that the teacher trainers do not use those pedagogies and methods which they advocate for the classroom teacher. They rely on lectures and seminars rather than active learning approaches.

Second, in some systems there is also a need to provide more opportunities for the student teacher to have practical, pedagogical training alongside their academic and theoretical education.

Third, there needs to be more networking and communication and collaboration between the universities, the schools, the history teachers' associations and those who have responsibility for planning and validating school curricula.

However, it is extremely difficult to find practical solutions to these kinds of problems in a context in which, in real terms, the financial resources for teacher training have been substantially cut across much of Europe; where some of the institutions which deliver initial and in-service training have been closed; and the materials have not yet been developed that teacher trainers could use to help them introduce more active and innovative approaches. A persistent problem is turning in to a crisis in history education.

To some extent that crisis has been made worse by the combined effects of the decentralisation of some educational systems and the prolonged economic recession

in parts of eastern Europe. The overall result has been that many people engaged in teacher training are keen to introduce changes and improvements but lack the resources and the institutional support and infrastructure to make this happen. At the same time many history teachers are looking for action from their local and central education authorities, particularly in terms of implementing new history curricula, new approaches to history teaching and new textbooks and teaching materials.

One unfortunate outcome of the problems I have been describing here is that we can often see a serious gap between the rhetoric and the reality of history education. For example, at the level of rhetoric there is a growing commitment across Europe to teaching students historical skills and ways of thinking and not just providing them with pre-packaged historical information and knowledge. But many courses at school level and, I would suggest, at university level as well, are so packed with content that has to be covered that there is not sufficient time or scope for helping students to actually practise and apply these skills and historical thinking.

There is also a rhetorical commitment to exposing history students to a wide range of historical sources; not just documents but also visual sources, audio-visual material, oral history and artefacts. But many of the historians teaching these courses are not really all that familiar with the use and analysis of some of these sources. They were trained in the days when the document and, better still, a sequence of documents, was paramount.

There is a widely-held and rhetorical commitment to multiperspectivity in the study and teaching of history but as yet we have seen few history books and textbooks which adopt a genuinely multiperspectival approach. And, finally, there is a rhetorical commitment to developing new dimensions of the discipline of history, such as environmental history, the history of landscape, opening up new areas of cultural history, historical anthropology, and so on (all of which can offer interesting and valuable perspectives on the last century). There are some fascinating new developments in all of these fields and gradually these are trickling down into the teaching of a vanguard of innovative history teachers in all levels of the educational system. But, in practice, these developments are very much on the margins of mainstream history education, and the same could also be said of most attempts to establish links between history and other disciplines.

Now I do not want to be over critical or unduly pessimistic here. There are some exciting new developments and directions in history education, and signs at the university level that some lecturers are beginning to recognise that the practice of history teaching is just as important as conducting historical research and writing articles and books. But we need to be aware that in 2001 we have inherited some serious professional problems from the 20th century and we need to address them with some urgency and find practical, realistic solutions or they will simply get worse.

I now want to move on to a rather different question from the one I began with. I started by asking the question: ‘What will be the problems and challenges of history education in the 21st century?’ My second question is ‘What challenges will the 21st century pose for the history educator?’

For some years now we have been talking about the profound changes which “globalisation” is bringing into people’s lives. I think the historian Eric Hobsbawm is right when he suggests that globalisation is primarily based on the need in many spheres of commerce and communications to eliminate technical obstacles but that its political impact may have been more limited. Nevertheless, we can see trends towards globalisation in communications, finance, technology, the ownership of the means of production and distribution and even some of the regulations that now govern our lives. I would expect to see more historical research in the next few years on the various manifestations of globalisation with a strong emphasis on tracing the roots of particular changes.

However, at this point I am more interested in how history educators at all levels will approach this theme. If students are going to be helped to understand globalisation in its historical context it will clearly be necessary to introduce a global dimension into their history education. I do not simply mean that they will need to study courses in recent world and regional history as well as in national history. What I mean here by introducing a “global dimension” into their education is that they will need opportunities to set national and local history into a regional and global context in order to understand the connections. They will need to understand how what happened (and is still happening) locally and nationally has been influenced by and has had an effect upon what is happening regionally and globally. And that brings me to another concept that is often linked with globalisation, “interdependence”: the inter-connections and shifting spheres of power and influence within international relations, world trade and commerce.

If students are going to be able to effectively explore and understand processes such as globalisation and interdependence within their contemporary and historical contexts then this will have implications for the structure of history courses and the ways in which contemporary history is taught. In particular, it calls for:

- more comparative history;
- history teaching where the teacher can draw on the outcomes of work being done in the various sub-disciplines of history – economic history, social history, cultural history, environmental history and intellectual history;
- history teaching which introduces the student to a multiplicity of perspectives to show that the same processes and developments (for example world trade, development aid, environmental protection, greater political integration within Europe, etc.) will not be perceived in the same way or experienced in the same way across a region or more globally.

However, whilst globalisation and, to a lesser degree interdependence, have brought increasing uniformity and integration in some aspects of our lives we have

also seen in recent years a growth of political diversity, pluralism, even political fragmentation – and these processes will pose another challenge for historians and history teachers in the 21st century.

These recent political tendencies and trends are not just the result of the fall-out from the break-up of a super power and the consequent re-establishment of national sovereignty in many nation states. It has also arisen from growing demands by national, cultural and linguistic minorities for a greater degree of political autonomy even self-determination. In the United Kingdom, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish have recently acquired a greater measure of control over their political affairs. Within all three national groupings there is also a resurgence of commitment to languages and cultures such as Scottish and Irish Gaelic and Welsh, all of which predate the formation of the nation-state. The same could be said of the Bretons and the Basques and those who speak other minority European languages such as Occitan, Friulian, Ladin, Sard, Galego, and so forth. They have all watched with envy the successful renaissance of the Catalans, the Galicians and the other linguistic groups in Spain and want a similar degree of autonomy and political recognition.

Now that the idea of a Europe of the regions has emerged it will not easily go away again. It will certainly have implications for the ways in which the political and cultural history of Europe is taught, researched and written about. The period of political and economic transition which took place in central and eastern Europe in the 1990s initially meant that there was a resurgence of interest in such questions as “Who are we?” “Where do we come from?” and “What is our history?” It would not be surprising to find that in trying to answer such questions we saw a renewed interest in history as grand narrative.

I think the millennium celebrations in the rest of Europe also brought about a renewed interest in public history and again this often emerged in the form of grand narratives on national history. In such instances the history of minorities was usually ignored but I suspect it is only a matter of time before an interest in studying and teaching about these “other identities” re-emerges.

At the same time we can also see that many of the traditional bonds that formed a person’s identity: the family, community, neighbourhood, religion and other social institutions have been weakened by many developments in the late 20th century. As a result it will not just be the sociologists and social anthropologists who will be interested in the history of everyday life. We may well see it becoming one of the faster growing areas of historical research and this in turn will filter down into all levels of history education. We are already beginning to see signs of this.

There are several other issues and themes which I could have mentioned here. Many of them were discussed at this conference:

- the changing roles and circumstances of women;
- the implications for Europe of the continued expansion of the European Union;



- the likely impact within Europe of zero population growth not just in western and northern Europe but also in parts of central and eastern Europe;
- the continued changes in agricultural methods of production is also likely to have a major impact on the environment as well as changing social and working patterns.

Perhaps we should all return to Bonn in a few years time and hold another conference to review how Europe's historians and history educators are rising to the challenges posed by these new problems, trends and patterns.

## **Overview of the final conference**

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### **Introduction**

History is not the dim and distant past – something we can simply forget and put behind us. It is present in our political, economic and social structures, and it shapes our attitudes, behaviour and relationships with others. It looks different when seen from different individual, social or national standpoints. There is no such thing as a disinterested view of history. Even today, European peoples use historical arguments to fuel their sometimes murderous conflicts.

It was therefore logical that the Council of Europe – founded in 1949 to heal the divisions of the past and provide a first impetus for the building of a united Europe, should, from the start, have paid special attention to the way in which history is seen and taught. There was never any question of producing an “official” history of Europe. The Council’s aim was to help Europeans to discover their shared history – and all its contradictions – together.

The project “Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century”, which tackles the most delicate aspects of our recent past, marks a further step in this direction. When the fall of the Berlin Wall brought an end to the divide in Europe, the leaders of the Council of Europe member states, at their 1993 and 1997 summits, gave the Council special terms of reference for this project, covering a period which many historians regard as the hardest to study and teach.

### **A forward-looking project reaches its conclusion**

The presentations and discussions at the final conference made it clear that this was not the end of the project – but a decisive step towards putting it in orbit. Indeed, the activists and experts who were meeting to review the results of this complex co-operative venture, covering numerous European initiatives, and conducted with enthusiasm, energy and the Council of Europe team’s special skills, found themselves in a situation not unlike that of engineers preparing to launch Europe’s Ariane rocket. Like them, they had to check components and overall assembly, the energy needed to overcome gravity, and the complex climatic data with a bearing on lift-off.

The essential aim of the final conference was to test the validity of a European approach to 20th-century history which had never before been essayed on this scale. Involving the whole of greater Europe in a process of transnational confrontation with the past, and over it – the full difficulty of which had been revealed

in the decades of Franco-German and, more recently, Germano-Polish rapprochement, and in the wide-ranging work of other bilateral commissions on history – was a major challenge.

From the very start, the conference showed that all of this went far beyond the didactic problems involved in teaching 20th-century history in schools. To understand and compare plural, and often conflicting, perspectives, one first has to grasp their motivation, and also the visions of the future which – consciously or unconsciously – underlie them. To study and teach history, one inevitably has to engage in intellectual archaeology, and think about the future too.

In his opening speech, the Council of Europe's Secretary General, Walter Schwimmer, made the issues clear:

If cultural pluralism is to develop further, no single version of history is adequate ... A critical and transcultural reading of history will reveal the presence of stereotypes and ideologies, and will raise awareness of multiple viewpoints. These are major steps forward towards accommodating differences and resolving conflict among different peoples, and make it much more difficult to nourish a nationalistic vision of the past. History learning has a positive political role to play.

### **German questions**

The fact that the conference was being held in the Haus der Geschichte, a museum devoted to Germany's recent past, was more than symbolic. The museum's gripping and powerfully interactive presentation of that story – from nazi atrocities and the war's final stages, through reconstruction to reunification – reflects the open, resolute spirit in which Germany is preparing its future by facing up to its past. The same spirit animates the external cultural policy unswervingly pursued since the 1960s by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which played a major role in helping to plan and run the conference.

From the lead-in statement by Michel Meyer, a journalist well known for his sometimes hard-hitting comments on Franco-German relations, to the forward-looking views on "Germany in the new Europe" expressed by Richard Schwartz, a Swedish journalist and expert on central and eastern Europe, Germany's role in Europe's past and future occupied a central place in the discussions. The extent to which democratic Germany's way of confronting and clarifying a past dominated by two dictatorships, nazi and communist, determines its capacity to exercise responsibility in 21st century Europe soon became apparent.

Hans-Joachim Gauck, the federal German official responsible until 2000 for processing the archives compiled by the Stasi, the GDR's secret police, discussed this question and stressed its importance. The vital thing was to allow the victims to recover their dignity. Horst Möller, Director of the German Institute of Contemporary History, stressed the need for a memory culture capable of learning from the disasters of the past. Auschwitz would always be a central part of Germany's collective memory.

Yehuda Bauer, academic adviser on the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, established at the Stockholm Summit against Racism in 2000, said that grasping the unique character of the Holocaust held the only key to comparing it with other genocides past and future – genocide being, alas, a universal phenomenon. Exploring this specific memory in depth was the best approach to prevention. One of the task force's functions was to develop an international preventive warning system against intolerance, racism and violence.

It was in the light of points like these that the conference assessed the project, discussed its political and educational scope and pondered its capacity to transcend its historical and geographical limits.

### **Assessment of the project**

#### *Themes and instruments*

The first step in international co-operation on history teaching is normally to make a detailed study of textbooks and current teaching practices. This was done with great continuity and patience in the bilateral projects run by the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, but could not be done exhaustively for all the countries participating in the project. However, the institute has made a comparative, example-based study of ways of bringing European themes into history teaching – *The European home: representations of 20th-century Europe in history textbooks* by Falk Pingel. This reflects the extreme and persistent diversity of the ways in which the various elements in this history are presented and developed.

This study illustrates widely varying approaches – but they all remain strongly focused on the national history of the country concerned and pay scant attention to history shared with other countries and regions, particularly those which that country regards as marginal. We therefore need to find a way of stretching the perspective, while respecting the constraints of time and space.

Looking at textbooks alone would not have allowed us to consider the effects of the technological and educational revolution which is radically affecting history teaching. In fact, universal, permanent access to a more or less limitless quantity of information and visual material is bound to transform both the role of teachers and the use of textbooks and teaching packages.

Telling case studies were used to highlight the dangers of “misusing” history – a subject covered in the booklet *The misuses of history*, which presents a critical analysis of different forms of nationalism, among other things – but the project was less concerned with correcting distortions than with changing perspectives and bringing in new methods. It focused on selected examples of thematic and educational innovation. Shedding the shackles of the past depends – above all – on teaching in a new way.

At the same time, laying down educational principles and making general recommendations is not enough. Many teachers who were trained in the old way, and work in often difficult conditions, need detailed guidance on methods and materials before they can start to innovate. The project thus tried to keep practical classroom requirements in mind, while remaining true to its intellectual and methodological ambitions. This practical, realistic approach will help to broaden its impact, particularly in the central and east European countries – the target of a specific Council of Europe project, “History in the new Europe”, which ran from 1991 to 1996.

The fixed ways of thinking, and above all narrow nationalism, of the past can best be overcome by getting teachers and pupils to focus on themes which lie outside the traditional paradigms of national and international history. Accordingly, the project made no attempt to substitute general European history for national history – but it did set out to bring frequently neglected topics into the classroom and into teacher training. It selected themes which made it possible to take a fresh look at the history, not just of states, but also – and above all – of individuals. A first series of thematic approaches was worked out along these lines, although the method clearly could, and should, be extended.

The first theme selected was the role of women in 20th-century society – how they experienced the century and what they thought about it. An eminently practical teaching resource, *Teaching 20th-century women’s history: a classroom approach* by Ruth Tudor, shows teachers and pupils how to explore an often neglected, but vital topic: women’s contribution and reactions to a century which revolutionised the relationship between the sexes. Holistic in its approach, the book reveals the complex and sometimes hidden connections between work, family, culture, war and politics. The question of equal opportunity leads on directly to that of our societies’ democratic character.

The second revelatory theme was migration. In all parts of Europe, the 20th century was marked by a sometimes dramatic speeding-up of that vast process of mixing and mingling of populations which has always typified European history. The story of migration is a record of severance and suffering, but also a record of vitality – and of the capacity for integration shown by migrants and also by the people who accepted and welcomed them. The study of migration is the surest antidote to theories of racial or ethnic “purity”, and the project hopes – by focusing on the real-life experience of individuals – to overcome deranged racist and xenophobic fantasies.

The brutal reality of those fantasies is hideously illustrated by the history of the Holocaust, which future generations must not be allowed to forget. To guide teachers through this vast and complex area, Jean-Michel Lecompte has prepared a special resource, *Teaching the Holocaust in the 21st century*, giving an accurate and succinct account of the sources and the facts, which speak for themselves. It is these bare, undeniable facts which give lessons on the Shoah their full ethical and

preventive impact. Understanding the Holocaust and comparing it with other genocides is the best form of civic education against racism.

Approaching history in this way also involves using instruments which formed no part of the old, textbook-based strategies. The first of these instruments is film – visual narrative which makes viewers feel they are watching things as they happen. Massively present in our era and society, film is an ideal means of teaching contemporary history, but pupils must first be taught to view it critically, appreciating its value, but resisting that manipulation of images and emotions of which the 20th-century dictatorships were masters. Dominique Chansel’s teaching resource, *Europe on screen: cinema and the teaching of history*, contains a wealth of information on the material available on various themes – but also methodological pointers for using it critically in the classroom.

In the same way, information technologies like Internet and CD-Roms are both an asset and a danger. They give users instant access to a vast range of data and visual material – provide, in other words, information on a scale which the framers of old-style curricula could never have imagined. Here again, however, training pupils to be critical is quite as important as teaching them how to access these data. Information is not knowledge, and selecting and collating the relevant data needs careful thought. This is why the project paid special attention to “the challenges of the information and communication technologies” – the subject of a symposium in Andorra and a booklet by Jacques Tardif.

In any project focused on the real-life experience of individuals, oral history – first-hand accounts, collected by pupils, of the way in which selected people experienced certain aspects of the past – is particularly valuable. But here, yet again, a careful approach is as important as the personal impact of interviewees or the vividness of their recollections. Learning how to conduct interviews effectively and evaluate replies has, even on a small scale, an educational value which goes far beyond history teaching.

Museums of 20th-century history (a guided tour of the Haus der Geschichte showed conference participants a German example), which use authentic objects and documents to present a certain vision of the past, are another useful way of giving people a new angle on history. The design and use of these museums was one of the “good practice” themes highlighted, when instruments which could be used to supplement traditional classroom approaches were discussed.

### **The importance of methods**

This first look at themes and instruments already makes it clear that questions of method are vital in a project of this kind. Method is not just a matter of finding the most effective way of transmitting pre-determined knowledge, but is central to any enlightened approach to 20th-century history – and inculcating an honest and thoughtful approach to methods is the best contribution which history teaching can make to civic education.

It therefore comes as no surprise that the project's main product should be *Teaching 20th-century European history*, in which British historian Robert Stradling sums up the lessons learned from the various studies and initiatives. Stradling surveys traditional approaches to history teaching, which vary greatly between countries, and provides concise accounts of the best new ones. He provides a practical, yet sophisticated introduction to the development of history teaching, and also valuable practical pointers for teachers.

His book eases the way to the hardest part of understanding history and its interpretations: allowing for plural perspectives, all of them justified, and analysing their sources in different experiences, interests and beliefs. It tries to lead teachers and pupils to make the often difficult distinction between facts and opinions, and look critically at assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes.

In this way, history teaching becomes an ongoing exercise in critical reflection on the sources, ideologies and interests which determine the ways in which data, documents and images are put together. Understanding history through plural perspectives, narratives and arguments thus becomes a rigorous form of intellectual and ethical training.

All of this calls for sound training in the use of concepts and sources. In other words, history teaching is no longer just a matter of transmitting knowledge – it also means giving pupils access to the skills of the historian's trade. Turning textbooks into working instruments, which open the way to a multiplicity of documents and perspectives, instead of a single narrative, is a logical consequence of this development. The critical use of films and the new information technologies, and the prudent use of oral history, are part of a practical approach to learning, which the author presents with the help of numerous examples, while also laying down criteria for application of these approaches to other subjects.

## **Educational and political scope**

### *Educating pupils, training teachers*

Over and above specific teaching methods, the project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century" thus offers an educational vision for 21st century Europe. This vision comes straight from the Enlightenment, which was fiercely opposed to obscurantism, prejudice, identity-based fundamentalism, discrimination, violence and oppression. Human rights and democracy were its answer to the forces of darkness.

Rationality, both discursive and respectful of others, thus became the new cultural ethic of an enlightened Europe, which was simply a transnational republic of letters to start with, but later surmounted nationalism and the horrors of dictatorship to become a political reality, based on shared principles.

At the same time, it is precisely the history of the 20th century which should put us on our guard against easy optimism. In a situation where the horrors of war,

dictatorship and genocide made the whole concept of progress seem doubtful, philosophers like Adorno and Horkheimer began to explore the dialectic of reason, which never arrives at final certainty, but repeatedly finds itself facing the forces of the irrational.

Teaching young people history, as the Council project understands that process – that is, training them to take a critical, thoughtful view of the past, make a semi-scientific use of sources, visual material and first-hand testimony, and retain a multiple perspective – requires great maturity from them. It obliges them to face uncertainties clear-sightedly.

Approached in this way, the study of history becomes a school in modesty. But this modesty is a long way from passivity. The project invites participants to practise what might be termed active tolerance – the kind which is ready to question both other people's certainties and its own. Leaving abstract dialectics on one side, the project thus applies what Edgar Morin called the “dialogic principle” in his *Penser l'Europe*.

To give young people this kind of maturity, teachers must have it themselves. The basic and further training of teachers is thus the key element in applying a method which sets out to modify the European consciousness in depth.

The project rightly pays close attention to teacher training, as it is – and should be – practised. In fact, its methods and principles mark a radical departure from the traditional training provided in many countries. As A. Ecker's forthcoming report shows, it transforms the teacher's role. No longer the sole repository of knowledge, she or he now becomes the pupils' guide and counsellor in an ongoing process of research and reflection.

In this way, teachers become the chief protagonists in what Yehuda Bauer, speaking at the conference, called the “truth business” – a task which, honestly performed, often lands them in serious dilemmas.

#### *The challenges of identity: the past and its impact on the future*

At the very beginning of the conference, Michel Meyer rightly pointed out that every representation of the past is a construct, reflecting interests, anxieties and deep-seated visions. The fact that these visions are often unconscious makes it all the harder to bring them to the surface and discuss them. Oscillating between a real or imagined past, and a hoped-for or apprehended future, they – and the historical constructs they generate – play a major part in shaping history. The language used may be clumsy, and many of the images naïve, but these visions still embody the complex and often contradictory mix which individuals and groups, institutions and nations, increasingly mean when they speak of identity.

When groups and peoples feel that their traditional social, cultural and political references have been destabilised, they react by asserting their identities – projecting onto the national plane anxieties generated on wholly different levels. This is



one of the reasons for the alarming and unexpected resurgence, at the end of the 20th century, of nationalist, racist and fundamentalist attitudes considered long dead and overcome.

These self-assertive impulses can be used and manipulated for political, discriminatory, nationalist and totalitarian ends. Admirably analysed in *The misuses of history*, manipulation can range from the simple telling of lies to the massive use of images and symbols favoured, above all, by the fascist and communist regimes.

Teaching young people the right uses of history thus has a more general aim – teaching them to manage the problems of identity in an adult, pluralist manner. This necessarily involves going beyond the history of 20th-century Europe and extending the reference frame, both to earlier periods and to the future.

### **Overcoming frontiers**

#### *The long-term story*

For obvious reasons, the project's teaching materials take in developments and events well before the 20th century. This applies to the situation of women, migration and the lead-up to the Holocaust. Nationalist propaganda and identity narratives often refer to a distant and mythical past. True or false, historical consciousness looks well beyond contemporary history for its sources.

The Council of Europe must continue its efforts to promote understanding between peoples in a spirit of respect for human rights and democracy, and so help to shape a clear-sighted European identity, but it also needs to look beyond the 20th century. The booklet, *Lessons in history – the Council of Europe and the teaching of history*, actually refers to past projects and exhibitions in which the Council focused on periods pre-dating the 20th century. Such major exhibitions as those on Tuscany under the Medici or the Treaty of Westphalia made countless people realise that Europe was a transnational entity, long before the nation-states emerged and the barriers went up. Transforming paradigms is thus the best way of overcoming a vision of history which is too narrowly national and too limited in time.

In fact, many of the factors which are shaping our societies' development at present – such as the new information technologies, globalisation, the rapid growth of transnational interdependence in Europe – suggest that nation-states, as they emerged from the 18th century on, may no longer be viable. In terms of both current upheavals and future prospects, today's Europe is closer to the 16th than the 20th century. Similarly, Hanseatic Europe is a more useful clue to the meaning of present developments than Europe of the Vienna, Versailles or Yalta treaties.

In the educational and cultural spheres, the challenges of the information society bring us closer to Renaissance models than to those of the 19th and 20th-century national education systems. The humanism we talk about today was a philosophical and educational response to the challenges of that era, and the parallel precepts

of Erasmus, the Jesuits and the Protestant schools established by the Lutheran princes were the starting points from which our education systems developed. The differences between those systems lie at the heart of Europe's cultural diversity, with all the benefits it brings and the problems it creates. At a later stage, it would be useful to take our intellectual archaeology further and track down, in the history of education, those shared and divergent values and attitudes which help us to understand how social structures, ideas and outlooks – that is, the foundations of national identities – developed. It would be useful, too, if this kind of comparative exercise, which holds great promise for the future, were pursued jointly.

### **Beyond Eurocentrism**

Obviously, too, a sound education in European history must look beyond Europe, which is merely one limited regional context. The presence and contributions of a Japanese delegation were thus a vital element at the final conference.

The International Society for Education Information of Japan presented two major contributions, taking the kind of questions asked in the project and applying them to 20th-century Japanese history. One dealt with the portrayal of Japanese history in selected films, the other with immigration. The discussion showed how useful a comparative approach could be, in helping to deepen the overall dialogue and throw up new ideas concerning methods.

### **Into orbit**

All of this makes it clear that the project itself marks the start of a process which must be continued – and indeed, solid foundations have been laid for going further. In concert with its partners, the Council of Europe must take the wide-ranging action needed to permit application of the methods and materials developed for the project to the current teaching of history in the various national systems.

The governments of Council of Europe member states are accordingly urged to implement the approaches validated by the project. These now stand as yardsticks for relevance and quality, and all teaching and teaching materials in this field must be measured by them.

Educationalists and teachers, and also the media, must respect these criteria, both in what they do, and in public discussion of history teaching. Care must be taken to ensure that the ministers' recommendations at the end of the project are implemented, and any initiative making this possible encouraged.

Above all, the basic and further training of teachers, which holds the key to all educational reform, must be strengthened. The teaching materials produced in connection with the project must be widely distributed, making a suitable use of information and communication technologies – particularly by developing the website and producing CD-Roms.

Increased support must be provided for the preparation of new curricula and standards for history teaching, including the production of new textbooks. The potential utility and critical use of information and communication technologies deserve special attention.

While stepping up educational development activities at national, regional and local level, the Council of Europe, educationalists and teachers must maintain and extend the European and international dialogue and co-operation initiated by the project. This holds the key to making the most of this initiative, which is central to the future of a Europe based on democracy and solidarity.

## CLOSING ADDRESS

*Albert Spiegel*  
*Department of Culture and Education*  
*German Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

You have spent three very busy days discussing the subject of 20th-century history. I am very pleased to see that a great many participants from over twenty-eight countries accepted the Council of Europe's invitation to attend this conference in Bonn. Your work here has been valuable. The academic distinction of the speakers and the audience's active participation have made a decisive contribution to the success of this final conference, which promises to have lasting results.

I would like to thank the Council of Europe for taking up this important project at European level. The Council of Europe, whose main aim is to promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law, has, with great far-sightedness, demonstrated its politico-cultural competence and tackled this sensitive educational and politico-cultural issue. The Council of Europe quite rightly stresses the fact that learning and teaching about the history of Europe does much to help forge a European cultural identity.

I also thank the European Commission, which, by supporting this conference – with all due respect for the principle of subsidiarity and complementarity – has underscored the obvious “European added value” of this project.

Finally, I would like to extend warm thanks to the Haus der Geschichte, which has hosted this conference, and in particular Professor Dr Hermann Schäfer and his colleagues for the excellent organisation. The Haus der Geschichte has once again shown, through its pluridisciplinary, varied approach to historical subjects – from major political issues to everyday matters – that it is a pioneer in the methodical reappraisal of history.

I am gratified to note that this final conference has taken up the ideas pinpointed in the valuable work of the conference on *Europäische Geschichtskultur im 21. Jahrhundert* (the European approach to history in the 21st century), that was held in January 1999 during the German Presidency of the EU under the aegis of the Haus der Geschichte.

Ever since human beings began to write history down, they have wondered about why and how it should be done. The endeavour to be objective – “to show how things really were” as Leopold von Ranke once said – is now an important aim for historians but one which is still frequently hampered by national bias. Of course, history can never be fully objective. History can only be an interpretation of facts,

a reconstruction and a reproduction of the past. The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga describes history as “the intellectual form in which a culture renders account of its past”. Our present-day culture and knowledge also influence our view of our history.

Our continent’s strength lies in the diversity of European cultures. This also means that many different versions of history can exist side by side. The aim is to foster students’ ability to discover different points of view and consider them with a critical eye. History has been and often is misused by regimes to justify their territorial ambitions, hate campaigns or even worse their racial prejudice. History and the teaching of history play a decisive role in the teaching and learning of understanding and respect for cultural differences.

Looking ahead to European political integration and unification, it is urgent that we pass on historical knowledge to our children, which will help them to transcend local, regional and national history to look at the unifying aspects of European history through their neighbours’ eyes. The idea of a united Europe gathers force through awareness of our common history.

The forging of an identity is recognised as one of the noblest aims of history teaching. By teaching the history of Europe we can make our children aware of a common European spirit and make every European student feel that they are part of a single entity. Anchoring young Europeans firmly in knowledge of their past is the best way of preparing them for the challenges of the future. They cannot aim at common goals until they fully understand the strong roots that have grown out of the creative interaction of unity and diversity.

European citizens must study their history linked by a common enthusiasm, be it by reading history books or by visiting museums. History is fascinating because of its complexity, its upheavals and tragedies, its beauty and surprises; one obvious example being ten years ago when the fall of the Berlin Wall, which many believed would never happen, brought not only Germans but also all Europeans together again.

*Europäische Geschichtskultur* does not, of course, mean that we should strive to achieve some kind of uniform historical picture of Europe. *Europäische Geschichtskultur* means heightening our awareness of common points and differences in the history of European populations, exercising the ability to change our perspective and look at historical events from our neighbours’ point of view, and developing our understanding of how various customs and social traditions came about.

The further we get from the last world war, the more Germany comes to terms with the crimes committed under its national socialist rulers. We have endeavoured to draw lessons from the history of the 20th century and our efforts have been recognised by our European partners and friends.

One substantial contribution has come from the international textbook research project conducted mainly by the Georg Eckert Institute, which is also funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The comparison of representations of historically, politically and geographically significant events in textbooks in the Federal Republic of Germany with those in other states and recommendations for rendering them objective were and still are the basis for and an expression of the desire for reconciliation. The support given to the entire textbook research project and the youth-oriented approach vouchsafe promising long-term prospects for the future.

The joint Franco-German School Textbook Committee was a significant example of this work. This committee had a strong influence in the preparation of textbooks in both countries. Germany also took the opportunity to co-operate with Poland in generally difficult political circumstances, long before the political changes that took place in the early 1990s. The reconciliation process was particularly difficult at that time, not only on account of the historical facts but also because of the political circumstances.

The very close ties that we have forged and continue to develop with both of these neighbouring countries on the basis of co-operation and friendship treaties are the fruit of an ongoing process which began, to a large extent, with the school-book co-operation project. The Georg Eckert Institute has also been asked to help launch a cross-border communication process for the whole of south-eastern Europe and to initiate an exchange of school textbooks and curricula within the framework of the Stability Pact.

The Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which was set up in 1998, has become an important body of international co-operation in the field of history. It is a politico-diplomatic umbrella organisation that was designed to help make the task of coming to terms with the Holocaust an international one and to support relevant initiatives. School education and learning from history are vital elements in achieving the goals set by the task force. The task force has set up liaison projects involving the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Argentina, at the request of their respective governments. In accordance with the wishes of the participating countries, these projects place emphasis on further training for teachers.

A representative from the Council of Europe took part in the task force's last working session in Berlin, in February, for the first time. Given the many common points between the work of the task force and the Council of Europe, we have agreed to co-operate closely in the future. The task force will implement the recommendations on teaching the Holocaust in the 21st century emerging from the project, in teacher training institutes. This first example of our co-operation will soon be followed by others.

Within the framework of the activities conducted by the task force, the federal government and the Goethe Institute Inter-Nations have devised a CD-Rom on

“Learning from history” which can be accessed in German and English. It is available from the Goethe Institute and presents fifty innovative teaching projects on learning about the Holocaust in German schools. The idea is to prompt discussion on how the Holocaust can be taught to a generation that has little or no contact with eyewitnesses.

The themes of the CD-Rom are further developed on the website (<http://holocaust-education.de>) set up by the Goethe Institute, which will soon be available in Spanish and Polish in addition to German and English. Anyone consulting the site can make interactive use of the teaching projects and also suggest new projects for inclusion on the website. The website has therefore become an international forum for the teaching of the Holocaust in schools. We hope that it will make a practical and user-friendly contribution to the theory and practice of teaching about the Holocaust, and not only in Germany.

The cultural achievements of our old continent have survived all of the divisions, appalling mistakes and European civil wars it has experienced. But these achievements were also a part and sometimes the cause of these terrible events. However, they are also what gives Europe its place and image in the world today. The cultural and historical dimension of European unification cannot therefore take second place to European economic policy and monetary union or a common foreign and defence policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, I rejoice that this Council of Europe project has so successfully contributed to the teaching of European history in the 20th century. It is a major contribution to our children’s generation and to the future of Europe.

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The Council of Europe symposium "The 20th century: an interplay of views", held in Bonn from 22 to 24 March 2001, was the final conference for the CDCC project "Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the 20th century". One of the special goals of this three year project was to produce teaching resources for secondary schools which would encourage both teachers and students to approach the events of the 20th century (and historical events in general) from a critical and analytical perspective, using the same skills and assessment criteria as historians. This involves, among other things, the understanding that no single version of history should be considered as final or correct.

In addition to presenting and assessing these teaching resources, the final conference brought together distinguished historians and writers from across Europe to give their views on the past century. Their speeches focused on: the role of historical interpretation and memory in forming identity; uneasy confrontations with past roles in the second world war; history still dominated by prejudice and myth; the importance of updating history, particularly one ideologised by a communist past; and the role of history in contributing to tolerance and respect amongst Europe's peoples. The speakers almost unanimously stressed the importance of "looking back" and confronting the past, no matter how painful the process, if Europe was to continue to progress in human rights and democracy.



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