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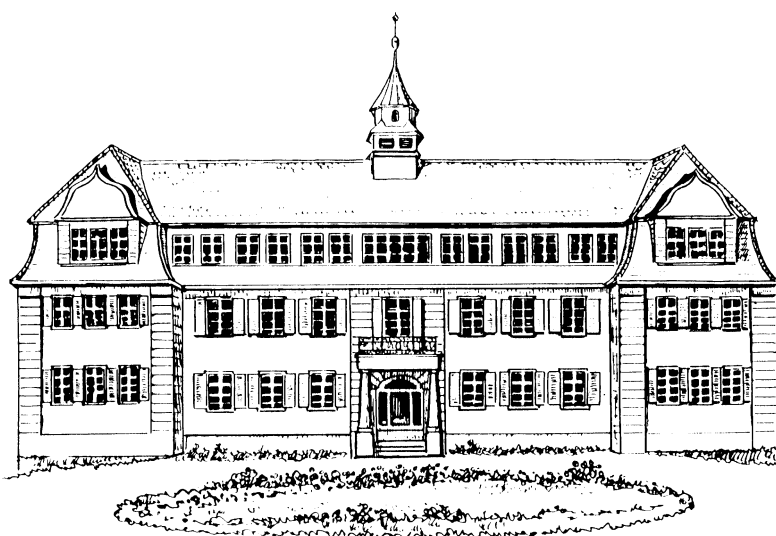


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## **“Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”**

90<sup>th</sup> European Teachers Seminar  
Donaueschingen, Germany, 6-10 November 2000

Report



**Council for Cultural Co-operation  
In-Service Training Programme for Educational Staff**

**Strasbourg, January 2001**

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Only questions related to national defence are excluded from the Council of Europe's work, and 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.

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- the protection, reinforcement and promotion of human rights, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

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

in association with the

In-Service Training Programme for Educational Staff

90<sup>th</sup> European Teachers Seminar

**“Teaching about the Holocaust  
and the history of genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”**

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Report by

Geoffrey Short

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	7
2.	Expert contributions .....	7
(1)	Jean-Michel Lecomte, CRDP, “ <i>Why and how to teach about the Holocaust</i> ” & “ <i>Mechanisms which lead to a genocide</i> ” .....	7
(2)	Gunther Volk, “ <i>German History 1933-1945 as reflected in Anglo-American literature of the present</i> ” .....	12
(3)	Hildegard Vieregg, Member of the German Task Force, “ <i>Visits on memorial sites</i> ” .....	13
(4)	Karen Polak, Anne Frank Foundation “ <i>The use of oral testimonies concerning the Holocaust</i> ” .....	15
(5)	Pierre Chauve, “ <i>The use of modern technology and archives</i> ” .....	17
(6)	Ernest Kolman, “ <i>Kristallnacht</i> ” .....	18
3.	Endnote.....	19
4.	Appendices	
I	Programme.....	21
II	List of participants .....	23
III	Lecture by Jean-Michel Lecomte .....	29
IV	Lecture by Gunther Volk.....	59
V	Lecture by Hildegard Vieregg.....	77



## **TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST AND THE HISTORY OF GENOCIDE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

### **1. Introduction**

The In-Service Training Programme for Educational Staff on “Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21st century” took place in Donaueschingen, Germany, between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of November 2000. It was attended by 28 educationalists, all of whom were teachers, or in occupations allied to teaching. Also present were seven experts, two Council of Europe representatives, the pedagogical adviser from the Donaueschingen Academy and the general rapporteur. The educationalists, who were mainly high school teachers of history, were drawn from eight European countries although the majority came from Germany.

The opening session on Monday evening was an informal affair designed to welcome participants to the Academy and help them get to know one another. A convivial atmosphere prevailed which set the pattern for the week. The main business of the seminar, however, began on Tuesday morning with Ms Carole Reich introducing participants to the work of the Council of Europe. She spoke briefly about the history of the Council, its membership and its most important bodies - the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Parliamentary Assembly and the inter-governmental experts. She then referred to three major projects that the Council has initiated in recent years one of which is concerned with 'Learning and teaching about the history of Europe in the twentieth century'. Among other things, this project (which culminates in a conference in Bonn in March 2001) aims to produce teaching packs on nationalism, women, the cinema and the Holocaust. In connection with the latter, Ms Reich alluded to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust held in January 2000 and attended by many of the world's Prime Ministers and Heads of State. She recalled the Council of Europe's last seminar on teaching the Holocaust which took place in Vilnius in April 2000 and commented on the recent gathering in Krakow of European Ministers of Education who agreed to request their respective governments to select a day to remember the Holocaust and other crimes against humanity.

### **2. Expert contributions:**

#### **(1) Jean-Michel Lecomte**

Jean-Michel Lecomte, commissioned by the Council to produce the teaching pack on the Holocaust restricted himself to reading selected extracts as copies of his paper, “Teaching about the Holocaust and the history of genocide in the 21st century” were distributed to all participants. The paper fulfilled a useful purpose in terms of setting the context for the seminar, for it raised issues of critical importance to teachers. (1) Why focus on the Holocaust and, more particularly, the Shoah? (2) What should be taught? (3) Teaching principles (4) Methods and teaching aids and (5) Obstacles and opposition. The paper also included a glossary.

Although only limited time was made available for discussion, questions were raised challenging aspects of the paper's historical content. For example, the decision to situate the Holocaust between 'the summer of 1941 and the autumn of 1943' was queried as was the claim that the Jehovah's Witnesses were exterminated.

Having had an opportunity to reflect further on the paper, I feel that there is much to commend. Particularly welcome, in the context of teaching about genocide generally, is the stress placed on the need to avoid becoming embroiled in a competition of victims. On a related note I applaud the sentiment that 'All victims of the genocides and crimes against humanity perpetrated during the century are entitled to the same legitimate compassion' (p. 34). Also to be applauded is the attention paid to the Jehovah's Witnesses, (despite the comment above) for, as my own research reveals, the plight and the courage of this religious sect is frequently overlooked by teachers when discussing the nature and scope of Nazi persecution. Another useful section of the paper concerns the different kinds of internment the Nazis employed in occupied Europe, for all too often the term "concentration camp" is used to cover them all.

Interspersed throughout the paper are a number of interesting facts that deserve a wider audience. For example, I suspect that many people are unaware of the Islamic rejection in Algeria of the call from the Vichy government to denounce the Jews. Equally, I doubt if many know of the difficulties confronting Gypsies after the war in attempting to gain recognition as victims of genocide.

Despite its many strengths, I do have some comments on the paper. To begin with, it was not clear to me whether it is possible to skip some of the seven stages that Mr. Lecomte believes are integral to the process of genocide. The discussion on pages 31-33 suggests that it is not, but on page 36 it is argued that the exceptional nature of the invasion of the Soviet Union did make such leapfrogging possible. Also, if it is the case that the seven stages involved in the Holocaust are representative of other genocides it would be useful to have some examples drawn from other genocides to reinforce the point.

As far as totalitarianism is concerned I would take issue with the claim (on page 31) that "(it) was unfailingly a determinant of the other genocides and mass destructions which form a whole with the Holocaust." On the face of it, this statement would not seem to apply to the mass destruction of the native peoples of North America. Mr. Lecomte further maintains that a totalitarian state cannot "put up with those who set themselves apart because of what they believe and think" (p. 31) If religious belief and thought is included this would seem to be rather a sweeping claim belied by the situation of the Jews in Italy for most of Mussolini's time in power. Another contentious assertion, specifically directed at Nazi Germany, is that "the totalitarian nature of the system made it suicidal to show any signs of jibbing" (p. 35). Dissent during the Third Reich may indeed have been risky but it was not always "suicidal". One thinks, for example, of the campaign mounted by bishop von Galen in 1941 against the euthanasia programme and of the non-Jewish women who demonstrated successfully in Berlin in 1943 on behalf of their Jewish husbands. Finally, I have to quibble with the reference on page 33 to the Einsatzgruppen. Jews and political commissars may have been their only "appointed targets", but it should not be forgotten that they murdered Gypsies as well.



The part of the paper asking “what should be taught?” again contains much useful material. The sections dealing with the destruction of the Gypsies and the fate of homosexuals are particularly welcome because, as with the Jehovah's Witnesses, teachers tend to sideline the plight of these groups. However, students should be aware of the differences in Nazi policy towards Jews on the one hand and other victim groups on the other. For example, in contrast to the Jews, not all Gypsies were fated to die. In considering “what should be taught”, it must be noted that the content selected by Mr. Lecomte is aimed at 15 to 18 year olds (the target audience of the teaching pack) and for this reason there has to be a question mark over its suitability for younger students. This uncertainty is acknowledged by Mr. Lecomte who nonetheless believes that children under the age of twelve “will be likely to identify with individual victims like Anne Frank.” My own view is that a proper understanding of Anne Frank's situation is only possible if students possess a reasonably mature concept of a Jew and research that I have carried out in the United Kingdom suggests that for most twelve year olds, this is improbable. The difficulty arises because a Jew is defined as a member of an ethnic group and not, as stated in the glossary, as “a person who practises Judaism”. In so far as ethnic identity is a relatively abstract concept it may prove intellectually challenging for many young children. But even if those of elementary school age are aware of the distinction between ethnic and religious identity and can thus grasp the essence of the Holocaust, it does not follow that the subject should be studied prior to adolescence. The appropriate age for the generality of students to engage with the Holocaust was not referred to in the paper.

Some of the claims Mr. Lecomte makes when discussing relevant content are debatable. For example, I think it is an exaggeration to say (p. 38) that between 1933 and 1939, the fate of German Jews “was of absolutely no concern” to the international community. There was a considerable outcry following the Kristallnacht pogrom (the American ambassador, for example, was withdrawn from Berlin) and, in the wake of the Anschluss, the Americans relaxed their immigration quotas. There was also, of course, the Evian conference, although in terms of practical assistance, very little came of it. On the matter of Jewish resistance, Mr. Lecomte correctly points out that it was limited partly because of the speed with which the Nazis acted but surprisingly he says nothing about the difficulty the Jews faced in obtaining weaponry. Bearing in mind the conditions under which the Jews existed in the ghettos and camps I think that such resistance as did take place deserves more than the one sentence it receives (on p. 43). I also think that the nature and extent of spiritual resistance should be mentioned. Another important issue that appears to have been overlooked concerns the rescuers of Jews. They may have been few in number but students need to know that individuals (including ordinary members of the public) are not necessarily reduced to the role of impotent bystanders in the face of oppressive dictatorship.

When discussing “teaching principles” Mr. Lecomte usefully draws attention to the importance of not treating the Germans as a monolithic entity. This would seem to imply, at the very least, that teachers make their students aware of the difference between Germans and Nazis. He also stresses the need to relate the Holocaust to other genocides and in this context he talks about “learning lessons from history”. But what exactly are the lessons to be learnt from the Holocaust? It would be valuable to spell them out especially as some historians, such as Peter Novick in his recently acclaimed book, deny that there are any such lessons.

In my view, a critical teaching principle not referred to in the paper involves the need to engage with and, if necessary, to deconstruct students' existing beliefs about Jews before they learn about the Holocaust. It does not automatically follow that students will recoil in horror

when they learn about the implementation of Nazi racial ideology. How they react will depend in large part on how they regard Jews and if, for any reason, they see them as in some way “bad people”, their reaction to learning of their fate may be less one of revulsion than of joy at the perceived triumph of good over evil. For this reason I believe it essential that teachers explore their students' “knowledge” of Jews prior to embarking on a study of the Holocaust.

Mr. Lecomte's raises a number of important issues when addressing “Methods and Teaching Aids”. The first concerns ways of finding more time to teach the Holocaust and one of his suggestions is that we think in terms of a multidisciplinary approach. He sees a role for teachers of English, economics, philosophy and life and earth sciences. I would add that in schools where religious education is part of the curriculum, it too should play a significant role. However, while it must be recognised that too little time devoted to the Holocaust is a problem (not least because it might suggest to some students the relative unimportance of the topic) it is also possible to go to the opposite extreme. Should students feel they are overdosing on the Holocaust, they may resent what they regard as “undue pressure” and reject its antiracist message.

Mr. Lecomte goes on to recommend a number of pedagogical activities but warns of their dangers as well as their benefits. He stresses the value of Holocaust survivors in the classroom, visits to remembrance sites, the use of literature and analysis of films. With regard to the latter, he advises teachers to bear in mind the risk of “psychological problems”, by which, I assume, he means trauma. However, my own research in the United Kingdom and Canada suggests that while students are often deeply upset by what they see, teachers do not believe they suffer long term damage. Mr. Lecomte also advocates that students conduct their own research. He contends that when such research is focused on the local community, motivation is enhanced.

Some of the major problems facing teachers of the Holocaust are considered under the rubric of “obstacles and opposition”. The first obstacle is described as “muddled thinking” and refers to the lumping together of all totalitarian regimes under the umbrella of fascism. It is argued that in Eastern Europe this confusion “helped to obscure knowledge and thought about the Holocaust”. Relativism is another obstacle and manifests itself in a reluctance to attach any more importance to the Holocaust than to other crimes against humanity. In Eastern Europe it involves acknowledging the Holocaust while claiming that it was no worse than the gulag. Elsewhere, the bombing of Dresden or Hiroshima have been seen as on a par with the attempted annihilation of European Jewry. Mr. Lecomte offers a cogent refutation of such arguments.

Relativism is not to be confused with revisionism which maintains that “the Holocaust was a sort of preliminary element of a political strategy chiefly directed against Stalinist Bolshevism.” As it is claimed that this debate “seems to be closed today” it might be more profitable to move on to what is undoubtedly a live issue, namely, Holocaust denial. Its proponents “do not deny the reality of large-scale massacres but “only” that of the gas chambers”. Mr. Lecomte goes on to say that deniers put forward their arguments stealthily “so as not to be charged with a criminal offence” but it should be noted that deniers also operate in many countries, such as the United Kingdom, where denial is not a crime. He makes clear the nature of their arguments and asks how teachers should respond. His answer is that pupils should be forbidden “from uttering such lies” and that teachers should “examine

with (their) pupils what constitutes scientific reasoning in history". The problem, however, is that regardless of how well the latter may be done, if students who espouse denial are not allowed to air their view, they (and perhaps others) will retain a suspicion that it contains at least a grain of truth. No less important, teachers will be deprived of an opportunity to expose denial as a manifestation of crude anti-Semitism (cf. the recent Irving libel trial in London).

As far as opposition to Holocaust education is concerned, Mr. Lecomte makes clear that it can come from colleagues, pupils and parents. He offers a suggestion as to how hostility from colleagues might be overcome, but there is no advice in respect of pupils and parents. He stresses, however, and in my view, quite rightly, "that there can be no question of making this education subject to parental consent."

### **Working groups:**

Participants divided themselves into four working groups to discuss two questions: (1) What do you teach? and (2) Why and how do you teach about the Holocaust and other genocides? Each group contained seven members, a number large enough for a variety of contributions without inhibiting an exchange of views. The groups then reported back to the plenary session.

Given the differing backgrounds of the participants it was inevitable that experiences of teaching the Holocaust would vary widely. Nonetheless, a number of important issues emerged during the plenary which I propose to discuss under three headings; namely, content, pedagogy and resources. (Among the issues broached, the only one that lies outside these categories concerns the most appropriate age to study the Holocaust).

In respect of content, a couple of group spokespersons stressed the Holocaust's uniqueness. However, they were insistent that when engaging with the subject, teachers should draw their pupils' attention to its contemporary relevance; in other words, its connection with present-day racism and the situation facing refugees in particular. As far as the Holocaust itself is concerned, it was proposed that students learn not only about the destruction of the Jews but also about countries that protected their Jewish communities, notably Denmark and Bulgaria. It was further suggested that students learn about the destruction of Jewish and Yiddish culture.

Turning to pedagogy it was felt that all students would benefit from visiting sites of destruction and from coming face to face with eyewitness testimony. On the other hand, it was recognised that classroom practice would have to accommodate differences in academic ability and take cognisance of the school's location. (For example, it was pointed out that for historical reasons, teaching the Holocaust in East Germany is, in some respects, a more challenging experience than teaching it in West Germany).

To promote good practice teachers were advised to bear in mind the problem of "Holocaust fatigue" - the resentment that some students feel about having to spend what they deem to be an inordinate amount of time on the Holocaust. They were further advised to investigate their pupils' conception of Jewish identity prior to engaging with the topic. As far as teaching resources are concerned, Art Spiegelman's *Maus* was strongly recommended, although one participant warned of the risks involved in using cartoons to teach about the Holocaust.

Stories including Helga and Rachel and poems such as Maurice Ogden's *The Hangman* were also recommended as were the documentaries *The Wave* and *Eye of the Storm*.

## **(2) Gunther Volk:**

Wednesday morning began with an animated presentation by Gunther Volk entitled *German History 1933 - 1945 and its consequences as reflected in Anglo-Jewish literature of the present*. The talk revolved around three questions: (1) Why teach the Holocaust through Anglo-Jewish literature? (2) What literature is suitable? and (3) How should the texts be approached? In justifying the use of literature in general as a vehicle for teaching the Holocaust, he pointed out that despite German schools having to deal with the subject in grades 10 to 13, a recent survey in *Die Woche* questioned the effectiveness of this teaching. The knowledge of 14 to 18 year olds of events leading up to the Holocaust and of the Holocaust itself was said to be "patchy", a state of affairs that Mr. Volk attributes to the lessons being taught in too abstract a way. "It appears that the sober language of historians and statisticians is inadequate as a means (of conveying) the enormity and cruelty of the event." Literature, he believes, if chosen judiciously, affects pupils emotionally and can make a distant period come alive. However, he is insistent that "fiction cannot and must not replace historical knowledge." His argument is simply that it provides an important addition to historical knowledge. His justification for focusing on literature written by English-speaking Jews is that it enables: our pupils (to look) at their nation's history from a fresh perspective that may be different from what they are accustomed to. In the process, new fields of vision will be opened up to them, ensuring that they arrive at a less complex-ridden attitude towards their nation's seemingly unmasterable past.

Responding to the question about suitable literature Volk recommends three plays, all staged for the first time in the mid 1990s, and a short story. The plays are *The Handyman* and *Taking Sides* by Ronald Harwood and *Broken Glass* by Arthur Miller. They were considered appropriate for German students partly because of their popularity in North America, Israel and Britain and their ability to show students how their country's past is portrayed outside Germany. They were also deemed appropriate because the various themes addressed in the plays are conducive to thought-provoking discussion and debate. The short story selected was *The German Refugee* by Bernard Melamud. It is thematically related to the three plays.

*The Handyman*, based on the actual case of Szymon Serafinowicz, is set in two locations - a country house in Sussex, a county in the south of England and an investigation room at Scotland Yard. The plot centres on an employee at the house - an elderly Ukrainian who came to Britain after the war - who stands accused of participating in the murder of hundreds of Jews. The audience have to consider whether old men should be prosecuted for crimes committed half a century ago. Different characters represent the contrasting views that were heard during the Serafinowicz case.

The setting for *Taking Sides* is an office in the American sector of Berlin. The year is 1946 and, as part of the de-Nazification process, Wilhelm Furtwängler, the renowned orchestra conductor who remained in Germany throughout the war, is being interrogated by a United States army officer. In the course of the play, a fellow officer, David Wills, wonders how he would have behaved had he been in Furtwängler's position and the audience is left to wrestle with this question.

Although the backdrop to *Breaking Glass* is the November 1938 pogrom in Germany the action takes place in a Jewish neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York. Sylvia Gellburg suffers paralysis in her lower limbs after reading about Kristallnacht and seeing a photograph of an elderly Jew humiliated by Nazi thugs. The man reminds her of her grandfather. Her pain intensifies as a result of both her husband and sister failing to share her concern at the fate of the Jews in Germany and Austria. Moreover, her husband has an ambivalent attitude towards his Jewish identity which poses a strain on the marriage. The latter eventually shatters like a pane of glass reflecting the tearing asunder of the German-Jewish symbiosis that was happening at the same time.

In common with *Broken Glass*, the location for Mulamud's fictitious story is New York city and the unfolding events shortly after Kristallnacht. The main character is Oskar Gassner, a Jewish journalist, who left Germany for the United States in 1939 but was unable to settle. While he wishes to dissociate himself from everything German he finds the American way of life alien. The intellectual paralysis that results from his being in a kind of cultural no man's land is reflected in his inability to deliver a speech on the literature of the Weimar Republic.

Mr. Volk concluded by discussing ways in which these texts can be approached in the classroom. His suggestions, however, were concerned not with the texts themselves but with how they linked to Holocaust education more broadly conceived. For example, he proposed that students learn about Judaism which would include visits to synagogues and Jewish museums; that they meet with Holocaust survivors and that they visit "collection sites for the transportation of Jews to concentration and extermination camps". Historical topics related to the four literary works could involve exploring local Jewish connections, the emigration and exile of Jewish artists between 1933 and 1945, "Hitler's 'helpers' outside Germany's borders" and the immigration policies of the United States during the 1930s and 1940s. Mr. Volk further suggested essay titles (such as whether the Holocaust is a suitable subject for fiction) and a couple of motions for debate: that "this house believes there should be a statute of limitations on the prosecution of war criminals" and that "this house takes sides against Wilhem Furtwängler for the role he played in Nazi Germany."

Making use of the texts in the classroom was the main issue discussed in the follow-up plenary. It was pointed out that Mr. Volk's project had been spread over an academic year and that it was undertaken with a volunteer group of students considerably older than those taught by most of his audience. [He acknowledged that *Broken Glass*, for example, was suitable for 17 to 18 year olds.] While appreciating the potential benefits of using literature to teach about the Holocaust some participants were keen to know how his ideas could be made relevant for the students they teach. One suggestion was that they challenge their headteacher to allow them to study the recommended literature instead of Shakespeare.

Mr. Volk's presentation was full of enthusiasm and I have no doubt that he had worked very successfully with his students.

### **(3) Hildegard Vieregg:**

The second session on Wednesday morning was a talk by Hildegard Vieregg, a member of the German Task Force. Her talk, *Visits at memorial sites*, dealt with three topics: the first

was the role of the Centre on Museum Education in Munich. The Centre has been involved with memorial site education for about ten years and for the past seven years has played a prominent part in teacher training. Among other things, it specialises in taking trainee teachers to former camp sites and ghettos in Germany, Austria, Poland and the Czech Republic. The main purpose of these visits is to “discover authentic relics and to (trace the) destinies of the former inmates.” She described the tasks given to trainee teachers at the Terezin ghetto.

One of the Centre's publications Memorial Site Education - a manual for teaching contains short descriptions of the most important memorial sites of the different kinds of camps set up in the four countries concerned. The Centre also operates a travelling exhibition entitled Recall the Holocaust to Mind. It consists of nearly thirty drawings by the eye-witness Szmuel Laitner who, as a sixteen year old boy, was incarcerated in Gross-Rosen concentration camp in the west of Poland.

In the second part of her talk Ms Vieregg spoke about the teaching of genocide in memorial museums and at memorial sites. She began with a reference to the Wansee-Villa museum in Berlin, alluding to its central role in co-ordinating the “Final Solution” and to its main purpose today as a vehicle for introducing school classes and other groups “to the crimes of the Nazis and the causes of genocide”. She then discussed the Way of Human Rights museum in Nuremberg which, in contrast to other memorial museums and sites, seems rather more focused on safeguarding human rights at the present time and into the future.

Ms Vieregg spoke about the Sydney Jewish Museum which, predictably, deals with the history of Australian Jewry from the end of the eighteenth century. It then traces Australian involvement in the plight of the Jews following the Nazi take-over in 1933 making specific reference to the Evian conference in July 1938. As expected, the museum contains galleries dealing with ghetto life, transportation to the camps and the Final Solution. It also has a section dedicated to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews. Raoul Wallenberg is included and so, strangely, is Janusz Korczak, the Jewish head of an orphanage in the Warsaw Ghetto.

She also described the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM).

Whatever the benefits of visiting places such as the Sydney or Washington museums, they cannot, according to Ms Vieregg, 'produce an awareness of the same intensity' as a visit to a Nazi camp or ghetto. She went on to detail the political camp at Dachau, the labour camp at Mittelbau Dora where the V2 rockets were produced and the extermination camp at Auschwitz. She pointed out and illustrated how museums and memorial sites in former totalitarian states were 'generally characterised by ideological indoctrination.'

Ms Vieregg concluded her talk by speculating on some 'possible ways of developing the educational programmes at museums and memorial sites in post-totalitarian countries.' She maintains that 'they should be preserved and transformed into places of research, intensive study and multicultural education. She is also keen that they 'inculcate democratic ideas' and involve local inhabitants and witnesses ... in giving guided tours and in running discussion groups.' She claims that all these proposed changes are already operative in Germany.

It would be interesting and useful to develop the following issues. How much time should be devoted to a visit? Does the optimum length of a visit depend on the age of the students, the nature of the sight or both? What is the most suitable age for a visit? Again, does it depend on the nature of the sight? As there are so many camps, as well as different kinds of camp, how do teachers decide which to visit? What is the ideal number of sites to visit on any given field trip? How should teachers prepare their students for a visit? Are there any potential difficulties they should take into account? Should they, for example, be concerned about whether the guides are trained teachers? It would also have been interesting and valuable (for planning purposes) to know how students react to visiting sites of destruction.

#### **(4) Karen Polak:**

Thursday was probably the high point of the seminar. It began with a talk by Karen Polak, Head of the Education Department at the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam. The title of her talk was The importance of personal testimonies in Holocaust education, but she started by providing information about the Foundation. She made clear that it was not a Holocaust museum despite receiving around seven hundred school groups each year. She also provided us with some relevant facts and figures about Dutch Jewry. In 1939 there were around 140,000 Jews in Holland of whom about 30,000 had come, as refugees, from Nazi Germany. Among them, of course, was Anne Frank and her family who had left Frankfurt in 1933. Only about 30,000 of Holland's pre-war Jewish population survived the war (the lowest figure for any European country other than Poland). Of the twenty thousand who had been in hiding, eight thousand, including the Franks, were betrayed.

Personal testimony became very popular in the early 1980s (as survivors, for the first time, felt able to talk about their experiences) and one of the questions asked by Ms Polak was why such testimony is important. Her answer, in part, is that by focusing on the individual, the victims are shown as normal people with ordinary, everyday concerns. In so far as personal testimony has this effect I believe it also helps to deconstruct some of the negative stereotypes associated with Jews. This would seem to be a crucial factor in determining the success of any Holocaust education programme, for as has already been pointed out, the way that students react to the Holocaust will depend in large part on how they perceive Jews. The risk of students perceiving them negatively is manifestly high in societies where in their day-to-day lives they rarely, if ever, meet Jews and are therefore in danger of acquiring their 'knowledge' through misleading cultural stereotypes.

The other reason that Ms Polak gave for making use of eyewitness recollection is that if it is handled properly, it can have an impact unmatched by any other resource employed to teach the Holocaust. Having interviewed high school history staff in the United Kingdom and Canada and having read student evaluations of talks given by Holocaust survivors I can testify to the truth of this claim. By 'handled properly' Ms Polak means, among other things, that the accounts of eyewitnesses must be personal; they should not aim to moralise; nor should they provide a history lesson. Normally, when we think of eyewitnesses, we have in mind the victims, but Ms Polak was insistent that students should also hear from bystanders, perpetrators and collaborators. In addition, she recommended that students hear from members of the resistance but it was not clear to me how this suggestion related to the Holocaust.

Many of those who currently make use of eyewitnesses in schools or in Holocaust centres are concerned that their numbers are rapidly diminishing and that very soon a valuable teaching resource will be lost. Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation project (which, by the end of 1999, had recorded more than 50,000 testimonies) reflects this concern. However, we need not despair, for Ms Polak showed that such videotaped testimonies can be very effective. She proved her point with a four minute clip of Otto Frank and a two minute clip of a woman talking about her friendship with Anne Frank. It was stressed that video recordings, when shown to young adolescents, should be brief and aim to get the students to reflect. To illustrate, we were asked to note down our initial impressions of Mr. Frank and his daughter's friend and the issues we would like to discuss with them.

Ms Polak proceeded to speak about using what she referred to as 'ego documents' (diaries, memoirs and letters) in the classroom. Again, for purposes of illustration, she read three extracts from the diary of Edith Velmans van Hessen, a Jewish girl from The Hague. The diary begins before the first deportations from Holland to Poland (the first entry is August, 1941) and lasts until the end of the war. The extracts included references to her exclusion from school and her having to wear the yellow star.

As a further example of the use of ego documents, we were read a letter, written in 1945, by a woman (Annie N. M.) to her mother in Holland. The woman was a member of the Dutch Nazi party and had fled to Germany after the southern part of Holland had been liberated. The letter powerfully conveys the fear felt by many Germans (and, especially perhaps by German women) during the closing stages of the war as the 'Bolshevik hordes' were sweeping all before them. It also contains evidence of the enduring faith that some committed Nazis invested in the super-human powers of Adolf Hitler, even to the extent of believing that he could revive Germany's fortunes in the face of imminent defeat. Finally, the letter shows the depth of the woman's anti-Semitism convinced that the victory of the Allies was yet one more success for international Jewry in its drive for world domination.

All in all, the two readings were very persuasive and left us in no doubt about the pedagogic value of personal testimonies. The session closed with Ms Polak issuing the group with a worksheet that was to be completed and used as the basis for discussion in the follow-up small groups. The worksheet presented us with the following tasks: (1) To record two personal sources of inspiration related to the Holocaust such as a conversation (with a family member, colleague, friend or neighbour) a book, a film or a moving moment (2) To state whether we would share either of these examples with our pupils and to give reasons for our decision: to state the educational value of the two examples and, on an unrelated note, to consider the educational value of being personal when teaching about the Holocaust.

### **Working groups:**

As before, there were four working groups each having seven members. Plenty of time was allowed for discussion and the groups reported back at a plenary session on Friday morning. Answers to the question of where we get our inspiration from produced no surprises. Books, films and television programmes were mentioned by all the groups as was family conversation although, interestingly, the conversations were often with grandparents rather than with parents. The latter's reluctance to talk about the Holocaust was powerfully illustrated by one participant who told of her mother having had a nervous breakdown when



probed on what she had done during the war. Also of interest, in the light of Hildegard Vieregg's presentation, was that some participants said their inspiration had come from visits to memorial sites as teenagers.

Responses to the other questions were mixed. For example, some thought that teachers should reveal aspects of their own biography when covering the Holocaust in order to make the subject more relevant; others thought that such a course of action might arouse emotions that would interfere with learning.

How to teach the Holocaust is a subject which is necessarily a controversial one and one which has given rise to highly conflicting viewpoints. For example, Ms Polak maintains that when covering the Holocaust, teachers should not strive to reduce prejudice. To do so, she maintained, is too ambitious. None of the teachers disagreed with her.

However, my own view is that prejudice reduction (or, at least, the possibility of prejudice reduction) as a major justification for teaching the Holocaust; indeed, I cannot envisage the subject being taught well without students reflecting on the nature of prejudice and subjecting their own prejudices to critical scrutiny. One means of bringing this about would be for teachers of the Holocaust to focus their students' attention on the processes of stereotyping and scapegoating, pointing out their irrational essence. Teachers might further diminish the appeal of racism by discussing with their students the workings of the prejudiced mind as reflected in the famous study of the authoritarian personality, published shortly after the war, by Theodor Adorno and his colleagues. These researchers claimed to have found that individuals with a pathological need to hate rarely display an antipathy towards a specific group, such as Jews, but are antagonistic towards all outgroups and 'aliens'. The range of victims targeted by the Nazis would seem to confirm the truth of this contention.

The prejudice that the Holocaust is best able to counter is, of course, anti-Semitism. Teachers have the opportunity to discredit the anti-Semitic myths that circulated widely during the Nazi era and they should make every effort to do so not least because some of these myths continue to exercise a malign influence. When covering the Holocaust, teachers are also able to show how groundless prejudices are often deeply embedded in a culture. The charge of deicide levelled against the Jews over the past two millennia, is a case in point. Finally, students might be tempted to think a little more deeply about prejudices of all kinds simply as a result of learning that they have the potential to lead to the cold blooded and systematic murder of millions.

#### **(5) Pierre Chauve:**

Thursday afternoon was devoted to teaching the Holocaust with the aid of information technology. The session was led by Mr. Pierre Chauve, an expert on new technology and especially the world-wide web. After a brief introductory session to the whole group in which he focused on search engines and the storing of information online, the group more or less split in half depending on level of knowledge and experience.

Most of the follow-up plenary involved members of the more advanced group showing, in the form of lesson plans, the use they had made of the web. The topics they had investigated included the different types of camps, the role of young people in the Holocaust, the fate of

gays and lesbians and the part played by Jewish women - as objects of sexual abuse and as members of partisan groups. One other topic that had been researched focused on the impact of the Holocaust in local communities. During the plenary, one or two problems were aired such as the danger of 'live' Internet lessons where students work unsupervised, but remarkably, a problem that has caused much consternation in Holocaust education circles for some time was not broached. I refer to the prevalence of Holocaust denial sites. It would have been helpful had there been some discussion of ways in which teachers could prevent their students from accessing these sites or, failing that, how students could be helped to exploit them for educational purposes.

#### **(6) Ernest Kolman:**

Thursday was the sixty-second anniversary of Kristallnacht and in the evening we were addressed by Mr. Ernest Kolman, now resident in England, but who, as a young boy, had lived through the pogrom. To contextualise his talk he made reference to the origins of Nazi anti-Semitism going back to Napoleon and the emancipation of the Jews. He then focused on the emergence, in the late nineteenth century, of a form of Jew hatred based on 'race', in contrast to its historical link with religion. (He spoke at some length about Luther and the Jews). He went on to provide some factual background about Kristallnacht itself mentioning, for example, the number of Jews in Germany and Austria who were imprisoned or who lost their lives in the course of the violence.

Mr. Kolman spoke about his family (who led a fairly comfortable existence) and about his experiences in the early years of the Third Reich. He had especially fond memories of his uncle, his uncle's non-Jewish wife and their two children who ended up (as did around twenty thousand German Jews) in Shanghai. He recalled his ambivalence towards the Hitler Youth, finding them both exciting and frightening. He recalled too his mixed feelings towards the Jewish school he was forced to attend. He recounted a number of episodes in the build-up to Kristallnacht the most dramatic of which involved Nazi officers visiting his parents' flat in Cologne in search of his father who, fortunately, was away at the time.

Comparatively little was said about Kristallnacht and its immediate aftermath. We were told that the main synagogue in Cologne was set alight and that the fire brigade had been instructed not to extinguish it. Mr. Kolman spent the evening hidden in a neighbour's wardrobe while his father was sheltered by the family chauffeur. I did not record how his mother passed the night. Subsequent to the pogrom his father was able to get a visa for South Africa, but he did not make use of it because he was not allowed to take his children. His parents died in Riga.

Most of the talk was devoted to what happened to Mr. Kolman after Kristallnacht. The British government was prepared to take around ten thousand Jewish children from Germany on the kindertransport and Mr. Kolman was among them. Surprisingly, he felt excitement at the prospect of travelling to England rather than fear at the thought of parting from his parents. The train left Germany on January 17th 1939 and stopped at the Dutch border. There was no problem, but etched on Mr. Kolman's memory is the sense of relief he experienced on leaving the country of his birth. He also recalled the kindness of the people of Eindhoven who handed the children food and drink.

He has far less pleasant memories of his arrival and early life in London and of his subsequent evacuation to the English countryside to escape the bombing. He was depressed by the grime and the poverty of the city and experienced something of a culture shock when finding himself in a home for refugee children run by orthodox Jews. The sense of alienation was deepened by the absence of any affection from the staff. He spoke about going to school in a tough part of London where, ironically, he was disliked because he was a German. He spoke too about his joyless bar mitzvah and the particular difficulties he encountered as a Jewish evacuee.

Some members of the audience suggested that Mr. Kolman answer questions. He did so and then brought us up to date by talking, with understandable pride, about his children and grandchildren. He was thanked and presented with a small gift by Mr. Michael Koutsides from Cyprus. An emotional evening concluded with some Yiddish songs.

The seminar concluded with a round table discussion concerned with 'broadening the debate towards other genocides'

### **3. Endnote:**

The seminar closed at lunchtime on Friday.

As is invariably the case with seminars or conferences, much of the learning took place outside of the official programme. Informal evening gatherings and mealtimes were mentioned in this context although the small group activities that were part of the official programme served the same purpose. These working groups provided a forum in which teachers could hear about what was happening in different countries, learn of the various problems that colleagues were experiencing and the ways they were attempting to resolve them.



## APPENDIX I

### DRAFT PROGRAMME

#### Monday, 6 November 2000

Arrival and registration of participants

19.00	Dinner
20.00	Ice-breaking, Bärbel Bauer

#### Tuesday, 7 November 2000

9.00-10.00	Plenary session Introduction to the seminar, Carole Reich, Council of Europe
	 Introductory seminar " <i>Why and how to teach about the Holocaust</i> ", Jean-Michel Lecomte, CRDP

*Coffee break*

10.30	Introductory seminar (follow-up) " <i>Mechanisms which lead to a genocide</i> ", Jean-Michel Lecomte, CRDP
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*Lunch*

14.00-16.30	Working groups " <i>What do you teach ?</i> " " <i>Why and how do you teach about the Holocaust and other genocides?</i> "
16.30-17.30	Plenary session: group reports
18.30-19.30	Dinner

#### Wednesday, 8 November 2000

9.00-10.30	Plenary session Presentation: " <i>Visits on memorial sites</i> ", Hildegard Viereggs, Member of the German Task Force
	 Presentation: " <i>German History 1933-1945 as reflected in Anglo-American literature of the present</i> ", Gunther Volk

- 11.00-12.00 Working groups on the above themes
- 12.00-15.00 Guided tour of Donaueschingen, Bärbel Bauer
- 15.00-17.00 Working groups (follow-up)
- 17.00-18.00 Plenary session: group reports
- 18.30-19.30 Dinner

Thursday, 9 November

- 9.00-10.00 Plenary session
- 10.30-11.30 *“The use of oral testimonies concerning the Holocaust”*, Ms Karen Polak,  
Anne Frank Foundation

*Lunch*

- 14.00-17.30 Working groups  
*“Use of modern technology and archives”*
- 18.30-19.30 Dinner
- 20.00 *Kristallnacht (Night of the Crystals)*, oral testimony by Mr Ernest Kolman

Friday, 10 November

- 9.00 Plenary session (round table discussion)  
*Broadening the debate towards other genocides*  
*Analysis of the mechanisms which lead to such phenomena*  
*Links with contemporary events*
- 11.00-12.00 Closing session

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## APPENDIX III

## **Teaching in Europe about the Holocaust and the genocides of the twentieth century**

by Jean-Michel Lecomte

The complexity and precision of this title necessitate some explanation and justification. The explanations concern the vocabulary used. By convention I shall use the term “Holocaust” to refer to all the crimes committed by the nazis between 1933 and 1945: the destruction of the Jews, the Roma/Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally ill, Jehovah’s Witnesses and political opponents. The word comes from the Greek holos, whole, and kaiein, to burn, and may be translated by “sacrifice”. Because of this Hebraic, religious connotation, many historians, especially those who are Jewish, prefer the expression “Shoah”, which means “catastrophe”, although here its usage must be restricted to the designation of the concentrated, mass destruction of the Jews over the much shorter period between the summer of 1941 and the autumn of 1943.

Clearly explaining what is meant by “The Holocaust and the genocides of the twentieth century” therefore entails taking into account not only the Shoah, but also all the mass destructions perpetrated in the course of the century by the nazis and others. As we shall see, the Shoah is of central importance, but it should not be regarded as a separate, isolated event of sole concern to the Jews as their distinguishing mark. Of course, the Shoah is an element of Jewish history, but it is much more than that. It is an integral part of German history and offers another insight into it. It is an episode of European history and that is a reason for studying it in Europe, the scene of the disaster. But, above all, it belongs to the history of humanity, for it calls into question the meaning of “human” and the way the concept was abused throughout the century. We should not therefore confine ourselves to teaching the Shoah, since it was the same nazis who committed a whole series of crimes against humanity. The notion of “crime against humanity”, defined at the end of the war by the allies for the Nuremberg Tribunal, makes it possible to qualify as a crime the mass destructions carried out during that century, which wiped out seventy million people in Europe between 1914 and 1945, if the victims of the First World War are included. Nor is it a purely European phenomenon restricted to that period. A study of the Holocaust and the combination of circumstances leading up to it makes one think about the victims of the First World War (500,000 people perished in the vicinity of Verdun), the Armenians, the gulag, Cambodia, Rwanda, the Former Yugoslavia, East Timor and, probably, now Chechnya.

The Holocaust and the genocides of the twentieth century must be taught in the classroom today, for in that century some powers and states actually embarked on the annihilation of a group of human beings who troubled them or who they claimed were troublesome, instead of starting a war between their army and an opposing army in order to settle a situation which the power or state in question perceived as prejudicial.

Teaching this subject obviously raises many issues, which I will list before I give an all too brief outline of the method of dealing with the subject matter. They may be classified under five broad headings:

1. Why might lessons about the Holocaust, and more particularly the Shoah, afford an opportunity to discuss the twentieth century with young people?
2. What should be taught?
3. On what scientific and pedagogical principles should this instruction rest?
4. What methods and teaching aids should be chosen?
5. What are the main obstacles likely to be encountered in this educational process?

It is a sizeable undertaking. These questions will provide us with food for thought and debate throughout this seminar. My aim here is just to suggest one or two strategies and supply some initial material for our deliberations.

### WHY FOCUS ON THE HOLOCAUST AND MORE PARTICULARLY THE SHOAH?

In order to explain this choice, three notions may be called to mind. In abstract terms they might seem to reflect an unfeeling attitude towards the horror which took place. Nevertheless, recourse to abstraction does not in any way negate the sensitive nature of facts; rather it is a means of avoiding fruitless and possibly dangerous mawkishness. These notions, which characterise the Shoah and the Holocaust and make it possible to grasp the barbarity of the century, are representativeness, specificity and modernity.

#### **The representativeness of the Shoah**

The term is offensive at first sight. It indicates that the gradual unfolding, preparatory stages and breakdown into various phases of the destruction of the European Jews are representative of a process of genocide which, in the context of a totalitarian state, bordered on perfection. A knowledge of that process is vital for an understanding of the other examples of mass destruction in that century.

Was this process planned in detail in advance or was it the outcome of political and military circumstances? That question has been asked and debated by many historians. Today the consensus is that, as Saul Friedlander recognised, this question is not truly a matter for debate and that reality was a constant tussle between planning and reaction to developments in the situation, both at a more general and at a detailed level. The transition from one phase to another was fairly rapid in Germany and Austria and in the various occupied countries, but invariably we can distinguish seven stages, even if in some countries several of them occurred simultaneously.

The first stage was that of definition. Defining the other person who was so invincibly different that they had to be destroyed was a decisive preliminary step. The scapegoat is a familiar figure in small human groups. The emergence of this figure is a more complicated process within whole peoples. Admittedly, nazism did not invent anything new in this respect as far as the Jews were concerned. Religious anti-Semitism is a product of Christianity - and not simply of Catholicism, which would seem to be the oversimplified view too readily espoused today. Luther's writings on the Jews heralded the theories of the nineteenth century, when a decisive step was taken in the development of anti-Semitism, that of the shift from

religious to racial hatred, the crucial difference being that the other person was then defined not as a member of a people united by their religion, or more precisely by their Book, but as a member of a “race”. Nineteenth century pseudo-scientists, like Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, basing themselves on Darwinism, crossed the semantic Rubicon. It only remained for nazism to pursue the same course by expanding on and adding detail to the twin definitions of Jews and Aryans.

The definition of the Jews comprised two elements: they were a “race” (the term is employed here in inverted commas, because it has been proved that no such thing as “races” exist, or rather that each separate individual is a “race” of the human species) and, furthermore, this “race” was inferior and harmful, because it had hegemonic aspirations and its blood could contaminate and debase other “races”. Long debates were held to determine whether Jews with three, two or only one Jewish grandparent should be treated as Jews. The verb “to treat” in the vocabulary of the Shoah meant “to destroy”. “Sent to the east to be treated” was synonymous with “deported to the camps in the east to be destroyed.” This “race” was therefore not only inferior, but gradually came to be defined as “sub-human” and then, owing to its “dangerous” character of being neither human nor animal, it was regarded in the same way as vermin.

The concept of the “Aryan race” was worked out on the basis of and in contrast to that definition: a master “race” destined to rule the world, a “race” with no reference to a higher being (ultimately monotheistic religions and communism, which was merely an end product of them, would also have to be eradicated, since they were the results of Jewish contamination), a “race” which defined itself by blood, strength and its absolute, uniform submission to its leader.

This dual, parallel definition was essential in order to effect the transition from individual scapegoat and pogrom to the business of systematic destruction on an industrial scale. It must be noted in this connection that a totalitarian organisation of society was necessary. Similarly, totalitarianism was unfailingly a determinant of the other genocides and mass destructions which form a whole with the Holocaust. The nazi totalitarian state could not bear anything which detracted from the supremacy and uniformity of the master “race”. For example, checks could not be kept on the Roma, who had no fixed abode, nor could the handicapped and mentally ill be regarded as part of a pure “race”. Homosexuals, who were different yet not different, were equally impossible to control. Anyone who could not be controlled was described by the nazis as “asocial”. That was how the machinery of genocide became inevitable, that is to say the destruction of people who were inherently different. But neither can a totalitarian state put up with those who set themselves apart because of what they believe and think (and this is not specific to nazism). For example, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, who refused to pledge their allegiance, give the Hitler salute or join the army, could not be tolerated and, in the long run, could only be exterminated. The same was true of political opponents, first and foremost numerous communists.

Of course, the importance of this first stage has been underestimated, in that the extent to which it adumbrated the outcome has gone undetected. Defining the Jews in this way and turning them into a “problem” meant that one day it became necessary to contemplate “the final solution” to this problem.

The second stage was that of taking a census. That was all the more necessary because the different person was no different. Physically, despite the caricatures circulated, a Jew might not look like a Jew. Jews therefore had to be identified, listed and their addresses recorded, so that they could be found when the time came. This was an almost immediate concern in the various countries under nazi domination. It should be noted that in France, the government anticipated demands of the occupying forces in carrying out this and the following stages. Similarly, the Strasbourg police's files on homosexuals were passed on to the occupying army, which made their deportation easier. As far as the Roma were concerned, a census had to be taken of them and they had to be settled, because their nomadic lifestyle could not be tolerated.

The following three stages were not strictly chronological and could be carried out in a different order, or concomitantly, depending on the country concerned.

The third stage was that of designation. The population had to be shown who was Jewish, so that the stigmatising reference to the "inferior race" and the need to protect oneself from it literally became flesh. It was obligatory to wear a distinctive sign; in some places an armband, in others the star of David. It is noteworthy that, again, this practice and the colour yellow were not dreamed up by the nazis, but had been introduced in a variety of forms in Europe several centuries earlier. In Germany, this obligation came into existence at a relatively late date, on 19 September 1941, that is to say after the decision had been taken to exterminate the Jews. Nevertheless, previously it had been applied to places by "marking" shops and workshops as Jewish.

The fourth stage was that of restrictions and despoilment. It concerned assets and property and their acquisition. The "aryanisation" of firms considered to be "Jewish" was conducted in Germany on a grand scale over a long period of time, since it was impossible purely and simply to decree the transfer of the ownership of large businesses, owing to the potential repercussions on international markets which Germany needed for its own industry. On the other hand, it was much easier to expropriate firms of a more modest size. After the war started, the seizure of goods of all kinds turned into pillaging. In addition to works of art, which were nonetheless very valuable, it very quickly included goods like furs, when the army was confronted with the cold in the east, and all kinds of other goods which had become scarce because of the war. Property and money were also taken away and the Jews were gradually deprived of their pensions and all their social entitlements.

The fifth stage was that of exclusion. It ran parallel with the fourth stage. Jews were expelled from the civil service and forbidden to engage in numerous professions where traditionally they had been well represented (as doctors, lawyers, etc). At the same time, they were banned from certain places (public buildings, means of transport, etc). In the end, even access to everyday supplies was severely limited (access to shops for one hour in the afternoon). In the occupied areas, geographical exclusion was accentuated by long curfews and a complete prohibition on entering certain areas.

The sixth stage was that of thorough isolation and was merely the systematisation of the previous phase. The Jews and other victims were removed from the population through internment in camps of various sorts (labour or concentration camps). But the camps were not large enough and the number of Jews living in territories under German control grew as more and more countries were conquered. Isolation was achieved through the setting up of ghettos.



A considerable number of people were crammed into a confined area in less salubrious districts which had suffered bomb damage. The amounts of food allocated to the ghettos and administered within them by Jewish Councils appointed by the nazi occupying army were so small in terms of individual food rations that the entrapped population could not survive. Epidemics, especially typhus, whose spread was facilitated by overcrowding and the lack of any hygiene, might well have completed a process which could have been presented as “natural” death.

But trade and smuggling on a sizeable scale and all the tricks, legal or otherwise, which a human group can deploy in order to survive ensured that the death rate, which varied from ghetto to ghetto, did not empty them.

The seventh and final stage was that of mass destruction. It was launched in various forms. During the offensive against the USSR, task forces (Einsatzgruppen) operating just behind the front and in close coordination with the army carried out “mobile killing operations” which made it possible to destroy hundreds of thousands of people. Jews and “political commissars” were the appointed targets. These task forces were composed of reservists and back-up soldiers recruited from the population of the occupied countries. They were not necessarily nazis or perverted, sadistic monsters, but quite ordinary men driven to behave in that manner by totalitarianism.

The second form of destruction was the wearing down of individuals in concentration camps through work, hunger, cold and ill-treatment, until they died. Numerous survivors’ accounts have revealed the methods employed to bring about this programmed decline. But the death rate, however horrifying it was in the ghettos and camps, proved insufficient, especially when defeat on the Russian front made an offensive to reconquer territory by the Soviet army a real likelihood. Destruction therefore had to become methodical. It was at that point that camps were purpose-built for extermination: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Lublin-Maidanek, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, where the vast majority of the 450,000 survivors of the Warsaw ghetto were gassed and burnt. As the Soviet troops continued their advance, the final destruction engulfed localities and their occupants. The method used in response to the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto was to raze it to the ground by artillery fire and bombing. The various camps of destruction were likewise razed and the few survivors were taken away on death marches first in one direction then in another, depending on military operations in a constantly shrinking territory.

It should be noted that this last stage was also the final phase of the dehumanisation of the Jews and other categories of victims. The practice of tattooing a number on the arms of prisoners as they arrived in concentration camps, unless they were immediately gassed and killed, is the most well-known symbol of this.

These different stages, which are clearly perceptible in speeches, administrative measures, texts and military operations, illustrate the organised, systematic nature of genocide and, as such, are representative and an aid to the interpretation of other mass destructions which occurred during the century.

## **The specificity of the Shoah**

Specificity, or uniqueness, is a term which applies to the Shoah. The other resulting genocides and nazi crimes, which must be unreservedly condemned, do not unambiguously have that characteristic. The question of comparison, which must not be dismissed or rejected, arises in this connection. Different events can indeed be compared in the light of various criteria, but we must not become embroiled in a “competition of victims”, to quote the term used by Jean-Michel Chaumont, or try to classify totalitarian regimes on a scale of horror. Any such move would be tainted with ideology, and hence suspect, and the debate would lead nowhere. A prisoner in the gulag experienced a situation of dehumanisation debarring anyone from relativising that prisoner’s distress and suffering. All victims of the genocides and crimes against humanity perpetrated during the century are entitled to the same legitimate compassion.

Specificity should not therefore be sought in a gradation of horror or in the number of victims, but rather in the nature and conception of the particular genocide and it is from them that conclusions should be drawn. Raul Hilberg very clearly describes the qualitative leaps made by anti-Semitism, starting with early Christianity and ending with nazism. At first, in the anti-Semitic world of the church, the Jews were told, “You cannot stay here and remain Jews.” They therefore had to choose between conversion or exile. The measures taken by a Roman Empire which had adopted Christianity as an official religion illustrate this situation. Thereafter, secular leaders no longer offered an alternative. Measures in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries forbade the Jews, even after they had converted, to live among Christians. Exile or confinement within certain districts were the only ways of escaping death (the term “ghetto” was invented in Venice in 1515). The nazis took a decisive qualitative leap immediately after the war began by deciding that the Jews should no longer survive. A plan was hatched to utterly destroy the Jewish people and obliterate “its” language, “its” culture and even the memory of it. That is why, although a comparison can be drawn between gulag and concentration camp, there is no equivalent to Treblinka, a camp covering a small area, which was designed solely as an immediately final destination. The only able-bodied men to escape selection as soon as they left the train were those required to replenish the special unit responsible for stoking the crematorium furnaces and sorting out the belongings of the prisoners who had been gassed. The atrocious corollary of this was that when the situation and length of survival of the members of these special units improved somewhat, new arrivals no longer had even the slightest chance of escaping immediate gassing.

## **Modernity of the Holocaust**

This again is a term which shocks because it can have a positive connotation. Yet it is a fundamental aspect. Such a large-scale undertaking - to kill millions of people within a very short period of time, not by chance through military operations and air raids, but by plucking them from their surroundings - necessitated a gigantic amount of organisation. The modernity of this phenomenon can be gauged in the light of several indicators, or conditions, which had never existed previously.

No specific organisation was set up to carry out the “final solution”; the whole state and party apparatus was mobilised for this task, which was given top priority at all times, at no matter what price. The army (and not only the SS) and all branches of the civil service accepted the

destruction of the Jews as their first duty. Even when it was obvious that the army was being routed (and doubtless because of that fact), the convoys of prisoners being sent to the camps of destruction were always given priority on the railways over trains carrying troops.

The government and the party set to on sweeping action. But society as a whole was also required to play a role. The totalitarian nature of the system made it suicidal to show any signs of jibbing. A merciful attitude to the Jews could entail rebukes, harassment or even imprisonment in a concentration camp.

But above all industry was mobilised and it rallied to the cause. Labour camps and concentration camps were industrial sites and the prisoners were slaves. Work helped to weaken them still further and hasten their death. Destruction was also the subject of industrial policy and technological research. The gassing technique was tested on the disabled and the first large-scale trials of mass destruction methods were carried out on Soviet prisoners. The manufacturer made rapid technical improvements to the first gas lorries on the instructions of the nazi users. The technique of underground gas chambers into which Zyklon B was piped through flues protruding above the ground was soon developed. This installation made it possible to murder up to 3,000 persons in one operation in three to fifteen minutes, depending on atmospheric conditions. The ventilation methods were improved by technological research, with a view to reducing the waiting time and allowing the special units to enter the chamber almost immediately, remove the corpses and take them away to the crematorium furnaces. The whole operation from the selection ramp to smoke leaving the furnace chimney was organised with genuine scientific precision. Two examples may be used to illustrate the meticulous, calculating coldness. The gas pellets were carried to the flues in an ambulance marked with a red cross, so as not to terrify those who, perhaps already naked, were awaiting their turn. That helped to avoid a panic and save cartridges. All the survivors' accounts attest to the fact that the prisoners received no water during transportation. That led to the death of some of them, but it was not the prime aim, nor was it prompted by particular sadism. During the gassing process, bodies emptied themselves through the quite natural effect of terror heightened by the lights going out. After each operation, the bodies had to be removed and the premises completely cleaned. The less faecal matter and liquid there was to dispose of, the more time was saved.

The representativeness, specificity and modernity of the destruction of the Jews are therefore an instructive example of how one of the most developed societies and one of the most cultivated peoples, once in possession of totalitarian power resting on crudely simplistic, pseudo-scientific principles, could dare to do the unthinkable. In that context, the other crimes of nazism seem quite natural. But this process was complex and young people are not capable of making an immediate, minute analysis of it, especially as the time set aside by curricula for this education varies greatly from country to country. The difficult question of choosing what has to be taught therefore arises.

#### WHAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT?

A large number of factors influence the reply to this question: the age of the child, the country in question, its situation during the Second World War and the events experienced by its population, the way the population reacted to and took part in them, the discipline being taught, the syllabus, the time available, the resources at the teacher's disposal, etc.

This mere reference to the topic indicates quite clearly that no attempt will be made here to say exactly what the content of lessons should be, but rather the aim will be to supply some leads enabling each teacher (or each group of teachers in the case of a multidisciplinary project or a project in which the whole school participates) to make their choice.

As the context is the preparation of a pack chiefly designed for a teacher of the fifteen to eighteen age group, most of the following ideas will be geared to that level. Younger children, particularly the under twelves, cannot be confronted with all inherent aspects of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, they will be likely to identify with individual victims, like Anne Frank, or with witnesses of the unexpected, dramatic disappearance of playmates who had done nothing to deserve such a fate.

We should therefore examine the nature of the knowledge and notions which it might appear necessary or useful to impart to young people in a fairly detailed, thorough manner in keeping with the above-mentioned criteria. The eight approaches outlined here are obviously not meant to be exhaustive, but might be thought-provoking or provide the teacher with a conceptual basis.

## **1. The most significant facts**

It is impossible to discuss the nature of nazism and the Holocaust without a knowledge of a wide variety of events or facts: ideology, the seizure of power, the Crystal Night/Night of the Broken Glass, the Anschluss, the building of the camps, the main military phases of the war, the creation of ghettos, mass deportations, the gas chambers and crematorium furnaces, the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto and the death marches are some examples of them. One of the aims of the teaching pack put together for the Council of Europe is to supply a body of knowledge of these facts and events and of the notions they conjure up or which can be pieced together from them. Acquaintance with them can be more general for the youngest adolescents and more detailed and subtle for the oldest.

## **2. The seven stages of destruction**

These are the stages we mentioned at the beginning, which make the Shoah and the Holocaust particularly representative. An explanation of the nature and meaning of each of these stages might enable young people to perceive that they formed a whole and how the first step, which ostensibly had no direct consequences for individuals, triggered an inexorable process culminating in destruction. At this point, attention should be drawn to the fact that this process did not necessarily mean that the nazi government had to act illegally, but that the law was altered to allow the course of action to continue. Similarly, the linkage between the various stages and political and military events illustrates the manner in which this process continually relied on these events in order to evolve. For example, the offensive against the USSR placed the nazis in a military situation permitting mobile killing operations as they advanced more deeply into the country. The exceptional nature of the invasion, a period in which the law did not apply, made it possible to skip some stages and move directly to that of destruction. Raul Hilberg estimates that 1,300,000 Jews fell victim to these operations. It can also be pointed out that while nazi military victories provided an opportunity for stepping up destruction, defeats accelerated the particular stages reached and the transition to the next ones, a pertinent example being the liquidation of survivors in the

ghettos during setbacks in the east and the death marches in 1944 and 1945 even though the Reich was moribund.

### **3. Destruction becomes a policy**

Here care must be taken to avoid a sterile, fruitless debate about whether destruction was the result of detailed planning, or whether it came about as a more or less improvised, haphazard reaction. If events had taken another course, could the final outcome have been prevented? The last question is pointless and instead attention should be drawn to the fact that putting the business of destruction into effect was unbelievably difficult and that it almost succeeded only because it was one of the principal aims of Hitler and nazism. In choosing between planning and improvisation, we should therefore opt for its being a policy. When the nazi party programme was drawn up in 1920, it stated that the German nation was composed of people of "German blood, irrespective of confession". That was not a personal fad of Hitler's, but a policy objective which nazism was not the first to voice. For example, George Steiner tells us that the expression "Judenrein" was invented in 1906 by a cycling club in the Austrian town of Linz. In France, after the Dreyfus affair, Edouard Drumont proposed in his miry writings that all Jews be shipped to Madagascar, a suggestion which was passed on to Ribbentropp at the end of the thirties by the French minister Georges Bonnet. The first politician to envisage a policy of liquidating European Jews was Karl Lueger, a mayor of Vienna, at a time when Hitler was still a loser in that city. The important point to note is that this item of policy was not really a novelty introduced by nazism, but that the difference, the sole difference, was the determination to carry out the policy.

### **4. Implementation tailored to local circumstances**

The actual implementation of this policy was adapted to suit the local characteristics of each occupied country or territory: size and level of integration of the Jewish population, scale and form of anti-Semitism in the non-Jewish population, awareness and varying degrees of participation of local political authorities, stance and changing attitudes of the religious authorities, etc.

The close integration of Jews in German society made the carrying out of their destruction such a sensitive matter that it was necessary to pass through the seven stages already mentioned and to break them down into a process which was much longer in Germany than elsewhere. Substantial anti-Semitism in Poland - even though communities were well integrated there too - made it possible to expedite the implementation of the first five stages and to move on to the sixth after only one year of occupation. French anti-Semitism had so pervaded the minds of large sections of the population and the political class that the authorities rapidly covered the first four stages (definition, census, designation, restrictions and despoilment) without waiting for the orders of the occupying force. Conversely, the absence of widespread anti-Semitism combined with great collective lucidity enabled Denmark to protect its little Jewish community efficaciously.

When assessing local variations in the process, we must of course guard against any oversimplification or excessive generalisation. Although the occupying forces generally behaved in a brutal fashion, they heeded any signs of reaction by the general public. For example, in France, after a not inconsiderable number of bishops and Catholic priests had echoed the population's concern about certain operations (especially the roundup of Jews in

the Paris Vélodrome d'Hiver), the pace of deportations from the transit camp of Drancy slowed substantially and they were even suspended for a while. This would be a good opportunity to point out that in Algeria, when the Vichy government called for the denunciation of the Jews, the mosques instructed the Muslim population to ignore the call. For that reason, neither Islam nor the Catholic church should be subject to a blanket judgment.

## **5. The attitude of other countries**

It would not be an overstatement to conclude that, from 1933 to 1939, the fate of the German Jews was of absolutely no concern to what today is very improperly termed the "international community". No policy for receiving German Jews was formulated at the international conference in Evian in 1938. The United States upheld their quotas. The United Kingdom would not contemplate any amendment of its White Paper on Palestine, which severely restricted Jewish immigration possibilities. Switzerland achieved notoriety by demanding that the Nazi authorities add the word "Jewish" to passports, so that German citizens who might prove to be refugees could be turned back at its borders.

Thus the nations of the world effectively abandoned the German Jews to their fate, despite the fact that the initial stages of Nazi expansionism were legitimate grounds for fearing a spread of the danger to other communities in Central Europe. Must this indifference be ascribed to long-standing, all-pervading anti-Semitism? While that probably held good for a number of European countries, it was not true of all of them. For example, the situation in the United Kingdom was so paradoxical that although anti-Semitism there was marginal, Jewish refugees were interned after the outbreak of war. They were regarded first and foremost as German nationals from a belligerent state and not as Jews exposed to persecution by that state.

Can this indifference be explained by the hackneyed phrase "We didn't know"? While some individuals can arguably make such a claim, no official irrespective of rank or branch of activity can hide behind that argument. There is sufficient proof to the contrary, the Riegner telegramme of 1942 being the most well-known. Exiled German intellectuals and artists had spoken out even earlier. George Steiner reports that in 1940, even before the invasion of France, a German-American industrialist "wearing Nazi insignia" had persuaded his father to flee from Paris to the United States, since there was no hope for the Jews in Europe. People therefore knew what was going on, but the general public, including many Jews themselves, did not wish to believe it, because the Jews were so well integrated.

## **6. The camps and destruction**

Most survivors' accounts centre on life in and the organisation of concentration camps, because the majority of those who survived came from those camps. It is important to explain very clearly to pupils the nature of the two sorts of camps: concentration camps and camps of destruction.

### **Concentration camps**

The first concentration camp was set up in Dachau in 1933 and was intended for opponents. Very soon internment in the camp came to be regarded as an administrative and not a judicial

measure. That meant that any German could be arbitrarily interned there, at any time, if the police, party or SS so decided. After the Crystal Night/Night of the Broken Glass, thousands of Jews were interned and the practice became widespread after the beginning of the war.

There were relatively few camp guards. Order in each block was kept by an “elder”, and overseers, or kapos, who were appointed by the military and were often ordinary prisoners, in other words criminals, were put in charge of the work gangs. The various categories of prisoners (ordinary criminals, political prisoners, Jews, asocial individuals (ie Roma), homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses and prisoners of war) could be distinguished from the colour of the badges they had to wear. The treatment inflicted on the various categories by Germans and kapos was based on a scale where Jews, homosexuals and Soviet citizens came bottom. That hierarchy also applied among the internees themselves, but not everywhere. The phrase “Arbeit macht frei” was hung over the gates to some camps. The word “Arbeit” can be translated into other languages by words which mean different things (for instance, “work” or “labour”). In these camps, forced labour had two apparently contradictory aims: productivity, which was often very low, and physical exhaustion. The rituals of camp life (long outdoor roll calls morning and evening) and conditions in them (a few dozen calories a day at best, virtually no clothing or heating, a total absence of hygiene, overcrowding (“shelving”) on bedsteads, various forms of abuse, etc) served the second aim. For the vast majority, survival in these camps was a question of weeks. Survivors like Primo Levi say that very often the only way to stay alive was to forget the minimum human qualities required for life in society, above all consideration of others. Interned doctors studied the gradual effects of hunger on bodies and behaviour. Other German doctors conducted experiments which were scientific in name only. The death rate was therefore high. Moreover it was boosted and manipulated by the regular practice of “selection”. Each internee had to strip naked and walk past a doctor or officer who decided from his or her appearance or gait whether that person was still “fit”. Those who were not faced execution either in camps equipped with gas chambers or in a camp of destruction. Once a certain level of hunger had been reached, the internees became “musselmänner”; dull eyed, they seemed to be unconscious and find the strength to move only if they had the immediate prospect of something to eat.

Totalitarian regimes today still maintain the practice of concentration camps, but, as far as we know, their purpose is not always to kill. While the European population, including young people, tend to know about the existence of these nazi camps, it is that feature which must be stressed in lessons.

### Camps of destruction

Death was one of the products of concentration camps, but it was the sole product of camps of destruction - hence the journalistic expression “death camps” should be avoided, as it blurs that fundamental distinction. The frequently used term “extermination camp” is more explicit, but many historians, including Raul Hilberg, are loath to use the word “extermination” which is a translation of “Vernichtung”, the term employed by Hitler and the nazis, and similarly the expression “final solution” can be used only between inverted commas. Raul Hilberg proposes “killing centres”. The expression “camps of destruction” is equally clear. Those camps were designed for the explicit purpose of mass destruction, when it became obvious, after the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, that a combination of all the other means was not rapid or efficacious enough. Once again we are reminded of the notion of modernity.

Six such camps existed: two in the part of Poland annexed to the Reich (Chelmno, where the first trials using gas lorries were carried out, and Auschwitz II-Birkenau) and four in the General Government (Treblinka, Sobibor, Lublin-Maidanek and Belzec), which “specialised” in the destruction of Jews who had been rounded up and put in the various ghettos of that territory. Auschwitz is probably the best known in Europe today. Most of the convoys from the various occupied countries were sent to this camp, where the largest number of Jews (one million) and other deportees perished. In the collective memory of the Jews of Poland and Central Europe, the name of Treblinka awakes very painful associations, as it was there that 750,000 of their people were swallowed up, some 350,000 of them came from the Warsaw ghetto.

The first feature of the camps of destruction was selection on arrival at the “ramp”. As soon as the lorry doors opened, the deportees were pushed onto this ramp under a rain of blows from shouting soldiers and against a background of barking from their dogs. Those who could not walk, old people and babies without their mothers were dispatched on these lorries to the “lazaret”, which proved to be a ditch into which the victims were thrown after they had been shot in the back of the neck.

The other prisoners, separated according to sex, were divided into two groups: on the one hand, those who seemed fittest; on the other, a much larger group, because of the conditions during transport, those who appeared to be less able-bodied and all those, especially women, who carried a small child in their arms. The first group was destined to reinforce the special units (Sonderkommando) required for the destruction operations or, when there were one or more concentration camps next door to the camp of destruction, like for example Auschwitz I and III, to replenish the contingents of slaves. The second category was in the majority in each convoy and constituted virtually the total number of arrivals in camps devoted solely to destruction (Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor). They were led to a place or a yard, where they had to leave their luggage and clothing. From there they were pushed straight towards the gas chambers. Procedure varied from camp to camp. In some, the women’s hair was roughly shorn and salvaged in the room before the gas chamber. Gassing proper took a quarter of an hour. Thus, one hour after a convoy of two thousand people had arrived, almost all of them had been killed. The members of the special units were split up into teams responsible for specific duties: those who removed and sorted the personal belongings of new arrivals, then possibly hairdressers, those who removed the bodies from the gas chambers and cleaned the latter as fast as possible and, lastly, those who loaded the bodies into the furnaces. The special units were regularly “renewed”, ie killed, in order to dispose of any witnesses and prevent rising horror and despair culminating in revolt. Only a very few survived.

Modernity stood for speed and the ability to make a huge number of people completely disappear. During the big roundups of the Warsaw ghetto which began on 22 July 1942, six thousand people were sent to Treblinka every day and the pace subsequently increased to ten thousand.

A description of the organisation and methods of destruction is required in order to gain an understanding of its nature. The precise division of duties among the special units explains why a small number of Germans and Polish, Baltic or Ukrainian back-up soldiers could carry out these operations, as the most inhuman and unbearable tasks fell to Jews, who were frequently eliminated and replaced. The soldiers’ role was to oversee, supervise and ensure



that killing was carried out without delay. The nature and organisation of these camps inevitably becomes plain for all these reasons.

## **7. Importance of chronology**

For the sake of teaching efficacy, we are apt to deliberately arrange classwork around themes which are likely to capture and hold the attention of young people. For that reason, the chronological order of events tends to be of interest to historians and university lecturers only. This is not the place to discuss the pertinence of this choice with regard to the teaching of history in general.

Attention to the order of various events is the only way to highlight one essential feature of the Holocaust and especially of the Shoah, namely the extreme rapidity with which the first two stages of destruction were carried out. Historians still debate whether the decision on mass destruction was reached at the end of the summer or in the autumn of 1941. The ghettos had already been set up and closed. The sixth stage had taken one year. The Wannsee Conference, which had been instructed to make arrangements for the “final solution”, was held at the end of January 1942 and the death industry went into operation in the spring. Treblinka was built in a few weeks by slaves. Half of the five million Jewish victims had already perished in the course of 1942 alone. By mid-1943 that was true of the vast majority.

After 1945, people (including Jews like Hannah Arendt) denounced the extreme passivity of the Jews, who, they said, had allowed themselves to be led away to be slaughtered without demur. It is important that pupils realise the high speed at which the process took place. A lot of time and precautions were needed when organising resistance among a population containing collaborators who shared the anti-Semitism of an occupying army that displayed a rare brutality, especially as at that juncture no outside support could be expected. It must also be stressed that communities comprised at best only a fraction of the Jewish population, that within them opinions diverged widely and that some non-religious or converted Jews did not imagine that they could even be concerned. Lastly, Sir Martin Gilbert has produced an atlas containing maps recording fairly numerous acts of resistance and revolt. In France, many Jews, including children, were hidden throughout the duration of the war. For example, three Jewish children were among the few survivors of the massacre of Oradour-sur-Glane, for the repeated warnings of their parents had inculcated in them the reflex to flee from the classroom and to hide at the first sight of a uniform.

## **8. Other crimes and genocides**

The destruction of the disabled and mentally ill was specifically organised on the fallacious “quasi-humanitarian” pretext of “ending lives that were not worth living” (*Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens*). Two thousand infants and seventy thousand adults from German hospitals, as well as several hundred thousand in the occupied countries, were “freed” from this life. This provided an opportunity for testing death by gassing, at first with carbon monoxide. It was not until Auschwitz-Birkenau was built in 1942 that its commandant, Rudolf Hoess, took it into his head to look for a more efficient industrial product and found Zyklon B, which had been used until then to kill vermin.

The Roma, who were regarded as “asocial” on account of their nomadic lifestyle and the trades in which they engaged, were first herded together in camps resembling reservations.

They were then interned in concentration camps where, unlike the Jews, they were imprisoned in “family blocks”, since it was feared that they might resist violently if they were separated. So whole families went to the gas chambers together. The Centre de Recherches Tsiganes (Gypsy Research Centre) in Toulouse estimates that at least 200,000 fell victim to the massacres in the camps, not counting deaths directly attributable to the war. In many countries, especially in Germany, the survivors have had the greatest of difficulty in obtaining recognition as victims of genocide and the Roma are still subject to considerable ostracism today.

Male and female homosexuals were considered by some people to be sexual criminals, mentally defective or asocial. They all suffered the same fate, to which virtually the whole world was indifferent. A number of boys or youngsters served in some camps as male prostitutes for officers, guards or kapos in order to obtain food and survive, but that did not mean that they were homosexuals. Their behaviour should be seen more as an illustration of the comment by Primo Levi. The tiny number of survivors have experienced tremendous difficulty in making their voice heard. France, the only example I will mention, has nothing to be proud of. Homosexuals were denied papers certifying that they were former prisoners of concentration camps and legislation criminalising homosexuality remained in place. While General de Gaulle was President, homosexuality was qualified in legislation as a “social scourge” and it was not decriminalised until 1982. During a televised debate in the mid-seventies, when a viewer telephoned in to request that mention be made of deported homosexuals, Mme Simone Veil, a former concentration camp prisoner, laconically replied “Now it has”. More recently in France, the CD-ROM on deportation made by the Fondation Nationale pour la Mémoire de la Déportation et de la Résistance, which is supposed to cover all categories of victims, omits any reference to homosexuals. The number of victims is therefore unknown, but probably runs into tens of thousands.

Homosexuals, Roma, the disabled and the insane were massacred for what they were. The notion of genocide applies to them in the wide sense and these genocides are closely linked with that of the Jews. They were just not planned. They were, however, an immediate product of the racist theories fabricated in order to justify the Shoah.

The destruction of opponents was less systematic, but this does not mean that their suffering should be played down at all, or that they should not be regarded as victims. We cannot not speak of genocide when referring to people who were oppressed, deported and killed for what they thought or believed, but these are certainly crimes against humanity. That is why it is extremely important in our teaching not to leave out a single category who, like homosexuals, would be quite right to feel that this oversight was a second destruction. Members of the churches, social democrats, communists and a very large proportion of Jehovah’s Witnesses were interned in concentration camps and turned into slaves. The worst treated were unquestionably communists and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Soviet citizens who had been taken prisoner of war were particularly badly treated. They were often transferred to concentration camps, cooped up in their blocks and even worse fed. They may be deemed victims not only of war crimes but of crimes against humanity.

## SOME TEACHING PRINCIPLES

Is the raising of this topic not an insult to the ethics, conscientiousness and competence of teachers? Here we are dealing with a very special subject. Admittedly it has a scientific aspect (in this case it is history), but it cannot be compared with the demonstration of a theorem, the learning of a language or a chemistry experiment. It entailed millions of deaths. It took place in Europe. The officials and citizens of various countries were confronted with it in diverse ways and did or did not react to it. Our parents or forebears were victims, torturers, opponents or witnesses, in other words they were there when it happened. Young people are fond of sweeping judgments leaving no place for subtle differentiation. The way in which a teacher presents the facts of the Holocaust, its ideology and the course it took can lead to oversimplification or to far-fetched conclusions and judgments.

We should remember that oversimplification, systematic generalisation and a mixture of ideology and pseudo-science were tools of nazi rhetoric and we should therefore banish them from our methods, even if we have little time available to teach this subject. The subject matter is highly complex and knowledge of it could only be warped by a simplistic presentation. We could work out some principles regarding the precautions to be taken in the classroom from an analysis of the main potential distortions of reality. The dangers of such distortions are manifold and I make no claim here to listing them all. I shall limit myself to three aspects in order to illustrate the way in which simplification can bias the understanding and awareness of young people.

The first danger lies in the temptation, in order to go faster and indeed to simplify, to lump together, in a single appraisal or merely in one description, a state, a people, its leaders and the individuals who constitute it. It is a fairly universal tendency, which normally is of no consequence. For instance, and here I deliberately quote only French examples, we are in the habit of regarding natives of the Auvergne as misers, the Bretons as obstinate, the Parisians as haughty and condescending, the Corsicans as lazy, etc. We cannot gain a knowledge and understanding of that period if we are content to refer to entities like Germany, the Germans, Poland, the Polish, France and the French. Need I point out that the singling out process began before nazism? Over the centuries, it took the form of talking about "the Jews", a reference which, for propaganda purposes, was abbreviated still further to "the Jew". We have a moral duty not to repeat the process. But how can it be avoided? I would suggest that the teacher concerned should constantly bear in mind two closely connected ideas, principles or questions (depending on usage and circumstances). The first is that today we know what happened, what the full extent of the disaster was and, quite naturally, we tend to judge with a hindsight that the people of the time could not have, no matter what their position was. This has definite pedagogical consequences. By way of illustration, one tragic anecdotal example. With some pupils we are looking at a snapshot taken in a street of the Warsaw ghetto in the winter of 1941-1942. A man is selling some books from a shabby pram to the passers-by - men, women and children. What comment should we make about this photograph? I propose two possible alternatives. "Those who are going to die are still interested in books!" or "After one year of privation, ill-treatment and confinement in the ghetto, this inquiring spirit shows that they were still human beings, still living beings". Today we know that those people were doomed, but if we regard them as such, we ourselves take part in the dehumanisation process of the nazis. Respect bids us draw attention to the fact that the ghetto with all its ill-treatment and harsh measures had failed to make the Jews inhuman or subhuman. On the one hand, we could choose a formula designed to hold the attention and strike the imagination of

youngsters, but they might well do no more than feel pity or conclude that the Jews were passive and preferred books to fighting back. On the other, we have an analysis which takes account of the reality of the time. These people have not lost their human dignity although they are immured. The principle to be upheld is that of empathy with the time, empathy with history.

The second, quite closely related principle is that we must ask the question, “who would I have been in that place and at that time and what would I have done”? Putting this principle into practice calls for sensitivity. It should be linked with the previous one, for today we readily pass final judgment *ex post facto* on behaviour and classify people as good or bad. Primo Levi’s passages on the “grey zone” and Hermann Langbein’s measured descriptions of the “Menschen in Auschwitz” (Men and women in Auschwitz) likewise remind us that it was not like that. Can I put myself in the shoes of a German citizen sixty-two years ago, on 7 November 1938? Am I about to take part in the Crystal Night/Night of the Broken Glass? How? This probing must not be a pedagogical process. In other words, there can be no question of asking a young person to give a reply or of marking his or her answer. The idea is simply that young people should wonder about the way in which people in those days experienced current events, understood what was happening, were influenced by events and reacted or failed to react to them. This means, among other things, that in teaching this subject we cannot avoid a historical analysis of our own country and its diversity, characteristics, subtle differences and contradictions. This also leads us to observe events in and the reactions of the various countries concerned in the light of their diversity and particularities. Some of the occupied countries had a quite large, fully or fairly well integrated Jewish community and/or a fairly virulent anti-Semitic movement whose views were more or less shared by the general public. Situations also varied in the belligerent countries which were not occupied. “Neutral” countries can indeed be assessed according to degrees of indifference or goodwill towards one or other camp. It rapidly becomes apparent how very difficult it was to be a responsible citizen, to be a human being (to echo Primo Levi) in some of those countries at that time. Is it any easier today? What is going on around us? What do we see? Above all, what do we not see? What do we not want to see? What are we doing about it? What could we do? What do we want to do? This is the core of what in France we term “civic education”.

These questions bring us to a second danger, that of historicisation. Historians are scientists equipped with a method which they apply to material to find out exactly what happened in the past. There is a great temptation for a teacher who respects the integrity of thought of the pupils to keep strictly within the limits of history, in brief to do no more than impart proved, confirmed, unquestionable facts. This temptation is legitimate and ethically respectable. Nevertheless, it holds a sizeable danger: that of trivialisation, of consigning the Holocaust to history and oblivion. The title of this paper is accurate. The danger of confining oneself to historical exactitude is that the link between the Holocaust and other genocides might be forgotten. Nazism and the Holocaust would then be a mere episode of history, restricted in time and space. But while historical research must bow to the rules of exactness, teaching young people who will not all go on to being historians themselves must not stop short of learning lessons from history - and in this the teaching of history concerns the future. The inherent danger of “historicisation” is trivialisation. The Holocaust cannot be regarded as a closed, trifling episode of history, for then any past, present or future genocide would be unimportant.

The third danger is quite the opposite. It is that of sanctification and, paradoxically, is as real as the aforementioned one. It is symbolised by a vocabulary of impotence and turns the Holocaust into a subject about which nothing can be said, because words fail us. We teachers must banish adjectives like “unspeakable”, “inconceivable” and “unimaginable” when speaking to a class, for these words are inappropriate, since the Holocaust did take place. Why should they be banished? Because they prompt only aporia, dread and paralysis, a sort of new religion which would not leave the human being any freedom, which would not allow any room for reason and would condemn all of us to shoulder the full responsibility and blame for all the suffering. Yet there is art, thought and a world after Auschwitz. This art, thought and world are necessarily permeated with the fact that Auschwitz existed, but they exist as well. Our teacher must live in the present, because he or she is addressing new generations and must steer a course between trivialisation (it is over and done with) and sanctification (there is no longer anything else).

I admit that these principles for teaching the Holocaust are difficult, complex and apparently barely operative. They are neither an easy nor a safe educational option. But I refuse to admit that any other approach is possible and I would be a charlatan to suggest the contrary. For all that, we must not dodge the issue of the operational mode of teaching the Holocaust, that is to say methods and teaching aids.

## METHODS AND TEACHING AIDS

Clearly it would be pointless to expect us to come up here with one or more all-purpose syllabuses, or an authoritative method. It will be necessary not only to bear in mind the huge variety of situations and educational systems in our countries, but also to ask ourselves about the type of lessons which can be put together with a particular teaching aid, the best way of using aids and the precautions which will have to be taken. This will supply a kind of framework for our discussions at this seminar and for your own thoughts as teachers, a framework which should then be expanded, improved and enriched.

But before that, we must ask how much time should be devoted to teaching the Holocaust. We could hold a lengthy discussion about an absolute minimum number of hours. We might possibly agree to the formulation of a recommendation to that end. That might be useful. But in more practical terms that does not exempt any of us from thinking creatively about the following question. How to find, how to make the requisite time? The reply varies according to the organisation of the educational system specific to each country, that is to say according to the curriculum, the definition and limits of each discipline, the way syllabuses are divided up and delimited, and the types of exercises and methods employed to evaluate and validate knowledge. In that connection, although I can base myself only on the organisation of schooling in France, I will mention, by way of an example, two possible avenues for exploration whose principles could, however, be adapted to the particular features of other educational systems.

In France, the Holocaust is tackled as part of the history syllabus for the last year of secondary schooling, at the beginning of the year. The pupils concerned are aged between seventeen and nineteen. According to the school inspectors I have consulted, its place in the syllabus makes it possible to devote between forty-five minutes and two hours to the subject. That is unquestionably too short a time to deal with it properly. I do not think that it serves any purpose to wonder about what can be done in an hour or two, because obviously no

answer is satisfactory. My query would be rather, "What can be done to overcome this constricting, restrictive framework?" There is no question of giving up other parts of the syllabus. Pupils might suffer in the final examination, where I have no influence over the questions set or the marking of papers. So how is the time to be found? There are two possible solutions in the French educational system and there are probably many others.

The first is that of a multidisciplinary approach. The Holocaust involves more than history and some facets of it could be taught by teachers of other subjects. The nature of the Nazi programme and the first stages could be studied with a German teacher, especially as there is much to say about the language of the Third Reich. An economics teacher could analyse the organisation and system of concentration camps and the participation of industry in the process of destruction. Constitutional and legislative aspects, measures of exclusion, the totalitarian organisation of the state and the party, etc could be scrutinised in political science. The literature teacher could study some excellent writings of witnesses like Primo Levi. The philosophy teacher could use the same texts to broach concepts, analyse ideology, study how Heidegger justified his views, how Levinas replied to him as far back as 1934, examine the analyses of Hannah Arendt, the works of Jaspers, etc. As we have seen, the civic education teacher has a wide choice. The English teacher could offer meaningful excerpts from the works of English-speaking authors (Hilberg of course, but also Friedlander, Christopher R. Browning and others). The life and earth sciences teacher could compare the writings of Gobineau with the latest biological knowledge about the pseudo-notion of "race" (in this connection, an exhibition mounted by the Musée de l'Homme in Paris and entitled "Tous semblables, tous différents" (All similar, all different), of remarkable educational value, may have been translated into other languages; a simplified version could be borrowed). All disciplines (including art, sport and pure sciences) could take part in this education and still cover their appointed syllabuses, provided that themes and subjects were coordinated and divided out. The input of the history teacher is vital. The latter could concentrate in class on chronology and show how everything fits together, while making sure within the educational team that the whole subject was taught coherently.

The second approach is to employ devices and learning techniques not specific to any one discipline, which could very usefully reinforce the first approach. No matter how the educational system is organised, becoming acquainted with new methods can provide an opportunity for good work on a subject. Is it not possible to learn how to extract information from the frames of a film by analysing different kinds of documentaries on the Shoah, extracts from which are available in some countries for educational purposes, and comparing them with Schindler's Ark, for example, or with other works of fiction? The method of critically appraising a document and its source, irrespective of medium (documentary archives, newspaper article, eyewitness account, essay, CD-ROM or website) can produce a wealth of examples illustrating the theme of the Holocaust. Could one not turn the suggestion on its head? What better theme is there for making pupils aware of the need to develop a method for critically evaluating internet sites?

The two avenues I have suggested do not of course exhaust the list of pedagogical activities which could be brought into play to transmit a thorough grasp of the Holocaust. We will mention just a few examples to demonstrate the ample range of possibilities.

## **Eyewitnesses**

Eyewitnesses, survivors of camps and former members of the resistance live in some of our countries. A meeting between them and young people is always a special experience and, as time passes, they become readier to visit schools, if they are strong enough to do so. Some survivors effect dozens of visits or attend dozens of meetings every year. As far as methods are concerned, these meetings call for great vigilance from the teacher and intervention at various levels. Care must be taken not to arrive at the above-mentioned sanctification. Before and/or after the actual meeting, the specific viewpoint of the witness must be identified in order to assess correctly the nature and import of their account and their words. This means that pupils must be able (and therefore learn how) to see a witness in context. I will take just one French example to illustrate the many potential benefits and the methodological difficulty of the exercise. Lucie Aubrac and her husband were active members of the resistance, who experienced a number of particularly dramatic events which formed the subject of a recent film. She is also a former history teacher and, as a former member of the resistance, she shows spirited, personal commitment. Her discussions with pupils are spontaneous, lively, warm and moving. Above all, for teachers who take the trouble to record them, they offer an opportunity to sort out and analyse with pupils what she said. What phrases or elements can be classified as testimony (what she personally saw and did), a scientific contribution (what she knows as a historian and facts based on reliable sources) or commitment (stressing of values, condemnations, moral injunctions, etc).

## **Remembrance sites**

The past still lives in the words of witnesses, but soon the time will come when this opportunity will vanish, at least as far as real meetings are concerned. Sites and places of remembrance will then become the only direct bridges with the time of the Holocaust. They are very important. This subject ought to be studied in a specific workshop and I will do no more than touch on two particular aspects requiring some consideration. The first concerns the organisation of a visit to a site. It might be tempting, especially when the distance travelled is substantial, to enrich or diversify the trip by adding visits with an architectural, natural or historic interest other than the Holocaust. This concern for “cost effectiveness” is of course commendable in the general context of school excursions, but on an educational-cum-tourist tour, a visit to Auschwitz as one stage among many will give pupils the idea that it is a more or less ordinary stop, where conversations can be continued and thoughts and attention can wander from time to time. In short where they can behave like consumers. On the contrary, the whole journey should be planned around and focus on the subject of the Holocaust, not with the quasi-religious deference of a pilgrimage, which would lead to the other extreme, sanctification, but with a concern for perceiving the true significance of finding oneself at that precise spot, where what is to be seen is not necessarily spectacular, but is highly evocative.

The second comment concerns the nature of the site visited, but could apply equally well to any teaching aid. A site, witness, film or document cannot be expected to say everything there is to be said. Especially when there is very little time in the curriculum, there could be a strong temptation to consider a visit to a site to be a way of dealing with the Holocaust - I am exaggerating of course. But no one site makes it possible to visualise everything. For example, a concentration camp does not offer as many opportunities for elaborating on the

subject as a camp of destruction. This must naturally be taken into account at the preparatory stage and when drawing up reports and taking stock with pupils.

### **Works of art**

Films are a very interesting medium, but there must be substantial teacher mediation when analysing images, dialogues, commentaries, the soundtrack, music and the film-maker's objectives and interpretation. Quite apart from the fact that the film chosen must obviously be suited to the age of pupils, it must be stressed that even when a film serves a clearly defined purpose, educationally speaking it is not sufficient by itself. Before it is viewed, its context must be explained and afterwards the teacher and pupils must dissect it together to see what lessons they can all draw and what questions it might prompt. Moreover, since the screen will show an incarnation of people who lived during the Holocaust (either actors or real witnesses), some of the youngsters' responses might be very emotional (identification, aversion, distress), and the teacher must take this into account by trying at least to help the youngsters to put their reactions and feelings into words. The most powerful films, for example Shoah directed by Claude Lanzmann, are likely to be a real shock to young people (and adults as well). If this type of film were merely viewed, there could be a risk that young people at such a delicate formative stage might suffer from psychological problems or their attitude might become one of permanent sanctification.

Literature is an important source of knowledge about the reality of the Holocaust. Young children readily react by identification and many books intended for them are available. The pupils' idiosyncrasies (more or less keen on reading) and the tastes of the teacher will determine the choice of books and in this field, once again, an explanation of the content is vital, in addition to a literary or stylistic analysis. I remember one school librarian who used to lament that Art Spiegelmann's comic book Maus was never borrowed by pupils. Is it surprising that when faced with a whole shelf of cartoon books, young people select those where a positive hero has adventures in colour rather than a story in black and white, where mice are persecuted by cats? The exceptional quality of Maus holds an immediate attraction only for youngsters who are already well-informed or educated about the Holocaust. The various stages of the Shoah are very clearly explained without oversimplification or dangerous sentimentality. It can therefore be a magnificent teaching aid for a first introduction to the subject, provided that it is read as part of an activity planned and led by the teacher and that it is not just put on a library shelf where the children can help themselves.

### **Active acquisition of knowledge**

Surveys or research conducted by pupils have many advantages. They go beyond the field of the discipline and are often extramural. They lead the children to look critically at sources and force them to stand back from precise facts in order to see how they form part of more general patterns. Lastly they make it possible to combine a huge variety of media. Pupil motivation can be increased by basing the survey on local events or the local population. The possibilities here are so many and various that they cannot be listed. In addition to being anchored in the school's environment, these types of measures are of immense educational value in that the pupil is trained in research methods and a discerning approach to sources. To that end, the French educational system is in the process of introducing an innovation, supervised personal projects, which are multidisciplinary studies carried out in groups on



subjects chosen from a national list of overall themes. In all these themes, it is possible to find subjects related to the Holocaust. It will be interesting to see if teachers seize this opportunity.

## OBSTACLES AND OPPOSITION

Even once it may be considered that the need for information and conceptual debate has been satisfied as far as teachers are concerned and that they are aware of the psychological risks faced by pupils and of the challenge of avoiding the traps of trivialisation and sanctification, many obstacles can still loom when teaching the Holocaust and genocides of the twentieth century. Opposition can come from colleagues, pupils, parents and many other sources.

Specific pitfalls which can be encountered in dealings with colleagues are indifference, polite non-committal answers or silent disinterest in response to proposals to work together, or a variety of excuses like lack of time, curricular constraints, etc. It is impossible to check on the sincerity of this type of response, which might be attributable to one of the obstacles we are going to consider, that is to say a certain embarrassment about one's relative ignorance or fears about the difficult nature of the subject. One must suppose that this is the case and in France, at least, teachers do not easily admit to gaps in their knowledge or skills. It is then advisable to supply teachers who have the same pupils with an example of the documents which have been distributed during the lesson, on the pretext of putting them in the picture so that they are not surprised if the pupils talk to them about the material. This softly-softly method might, who knows, open the door to other developments. At all events, it is preferable to sparking off a dispute, which would probably make teaching the Holocaust less dispassionate and even more delicate.

The other multifarious obstacles and types of opposition take diverse forms and are encountered with varying frequency from country to country. I will mention only the largest and most serious kinds met in France and invite each of you to draw contrasts, comparisons and conclusions with regard to your own country and educational system.

At the risk of simplification, it is hard not put obstacles into categories and groups according to an estimate of their seriousness. The three first stumbling blocks are relatively small and although they are often encountered, it is fairly easy to deal with them. I have called them muddled thinking, relativism and revisionism. A coherent set of conceptual weapons is needed however to counter the other two which are far larger: denial and fellow-travelling.

### **Muddled thinking**

This term covers the lumping together under the term "Fascism" of everything from nazism to other western European totalitarian regimes and movements, principally Italian Fascism and that of the Iberian peninsula. This confusion, which was deliberately practised by the USSR and its satellites after 1945, had some specific political and ideological implications and was often taken over by communist and extreme left-wing parties in the west. In eastern Europe, it helped to obscure knowledge and thought about the Holocaust and sometimes concealed the existence of a sizeable surviving anti-Semitic movement. Within the USSR, the conqueror of Fascism, the Cold War was justified by the "fascist" danger represented by the United States and Western Europe. Today, it lives on only in the habitual vocabulary of some individuals and necessitates no more than possible clarification from time to time. I know

history teachers who eschew such muddled thinking in the classroom, but who as trade unionists still talk about Fascism.

### **Relativism**

This is practised by the general public in the same countries, but the ideological arguments are dissimilar. It consists in saying that the Holocaust certainly affected the country, but the population suffered more as victims of the gulag and Soviet oppression. It is prevalent in countries from which the Jewish population has more or less disappeared. We noted last in April in Vilnius that a significant number of people in Lithuania were of that opinion. It may be encountered in a less aggressive form among population groups who were not directly concerned by nazism and it manifests itself in a reluctance to attach any great importance to the Holocaust. Lastly, it may be a corollary of anti-Americanism or anti-colonialism, in which case reference is made to the barbaric bombing of Dresden or Hiroshima, the destruction of the American Indians or the slave trade in sub-Saharan blacks. These various arguments rest on realities which must not be scorned or ignored. In reply to the first group, we will stress the need not to confuse military operations designed to hasten the end of the World War with those of a totalitarian state or genocide, although at the same time there can be no denying that wars in the twentieth century were indiscriminate carnage. While the fate of the Indians may be described as genocide which does not come within the purview of our discussion, the reservation must be made that the aim of the conquerors of America was not so much to completely wipe out the indigenous peoples as to secure control over the territory. As far as the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa are concerned, we must stress the fact that the attitude of the slave traders generally did amount to the dehumanisation of these people according to "racial" criteria but, in this case, death was an inconvenience and not an aim, since slaves had a market value for their work. Western societies, including the Arabic-Muslim world, which was also pro-slavery until quite recent times, not only cannot glory in this past, but must shoulder some of the responsibility for it and analyse who is to blame. This does not, however, alter the specific nature of the Shoah and the other genocides and crimes against humanity perpetrated by nazism, or the need to know about them and teach them today in Europe and elsewhere in the world.

### **Revisionism**

This tendency is to be found most often, but not exclusively, in Germany and Austria. It consists in maintaining that the Holocaust was a sort of preliminary element of a political strategy chiefly directed against Stalinist Bolshevism. This is of course a very simplistic summary of the stance adopted amidst heated controversy by some intellectuals, whose avowed legitimate objective for Germany was, admittedly, the requisite rebuilding of a national identity and awareness. This was a historical and philosophical debate which seems to be closed today, save that those who deny the existence of the gas chambers and fellow-travellers adopt this argument and those of the two above-mentioned movements as a cloak of respectability. Teachers should therefore always be alert and prepared to expose this dangerous masquerade. A point which must certainly be noted and deplored is that some theories, which ascribe the murderous anti-Semitic violence exclusively or mainly to the "German soul", can be used to echo, illustrate or pass on the message of some of these movements.

These last two movements, which are indubitably the most serious, deserve unflagging attention. Their arguments and their sociological and cultural roots must be explained and some thought must be given to ways of handling and combating them.

## **Denial**

This movement makes its presence felt to very varying degrees in different countries. For example there is no public manifestation of it in Germany, but it gets its works printed in Belgium and Switzerland. It is very strong and insistent in France. One week after the publication of my book *Savoir le Shoah*, an anonymous packet was delivered to my work address. It had been posted in Paris and contained a book by someone who denied the existence of the gas chambers. I will not divulge the title and author here. The book gave two addresses where it could be ordered, one in Basle for the German version, and one in Belgium for the French edition. Furthermore, one of the most outstanding French historians, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, has had to devote a large proportion of his writings and much of his professional life to combating denial of the realities of the Holocaust.

Supporters of this movement do not deny the reality of large-scale massacres but “only” that of the gas chambers and crematorium furnaces and, consequently, of camps exclusively given over to the death industry and hence, perniciously, to one of the main, specific characteristics of the Holocaust. The insinuation is therefore that nazism was just an “ordinary” form of dictatorship and that the gas chambers are a fabrication of the Jews, who are, as is to be expected, dubbed “exterminationists”.

This movement is pernicious because it claims to put across a “point of view” based on supposedly scientific arguments, whereas it is merely a pack of lies and as such cannot be tolerated in schools.

Deniers put forward their arguments and justifications stealthily so as not to be charged with a criminal offence. These therefore usually take the form of three kinds of questions. The first is to point out that no gas chambers or crematorium furnaces exist. Did they ever really exist? We mainly rely on eyewitness accounts but, so the second argument goes, as the witnesses were human beings, meaning Jews, their accounts are doubtful and flimsy. Shameless attacks are made on illustrious writers. For example, in *Night*, Elie Wiesel evokes the memory of gigantic flames escaping from the oven stacks and leaping up into the night sky. Of course this is impossible, so Wiesel is inventing the flames and the furnaces.

The third type of argument is doubtless the most destructive. It consists of pinpointing what are often tiny factual errors in historians’ publications, or mistakes relating to marginal aspects. This makes it possible to call the authors incompetent or even, not to be outdone by the outrageous language of the nazis, liars or riggers of history. Hence any statement of these historians becomes unfounded and fallacious. One of the aspects mentioned in support of this allegation is rumour. Of course rumour was part and parcel of life in some camps and ghettos, but that the flesh of Jews was turned into soap was a groundless rumour. If historians allude to it, all their past and future works become suspect and necessarily untruthful. How should we react to these types of argument? In addition to forbidding any pupil from uttering such lies, a teacher could seize the opportunity to examine with the pupils what constitutes scientific reasoning in history. A few simple examples will be enough.

Take eyewitness reports for example. Historians do not content themselves with only one account and know how to make allowances by analysing the viewpoints of the authors in order to determine their credibility. For example, when he was an adult, Wiesel wrote down his childhood impressions in a literary form. The fact that his memory of his intense terror is expressed by the vision of huge flames is not ground for concluding that he intended to deceive. Furthermore, it is interesting to ponder the point of view and words of witnesses in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. What conclusion should be drawn from the words of the Polish farmer who lived next to the camp, or those of the driver of the train carrying the Jews to Treblinka, or from Mr. Bomba's difficulties in talking about his work as a hairdresser in the room preceding the gas chamber? Witnesses' accounts, despite the small number of survivors, are so numerous and tally so exactly that we must wonder about the total absence of evidence to the contrary.

There are other elements of proof over and above concordant witnesses' reports. Given the size of the camp at Treblinka, the number of convoys which arrived there and the small quantities of supplies delivered to the camp (all this can be proven and traced from various sources), the conclusion reached is that prisoners must have been rapidly destroyed on arrival, and yet the number of guards and stocks of munition make individual executions inconceivable. As for mortal remains, there is not enough room for pits able to contain 750,000 bodies and, given the pace of arrivals, it would have been impossible to burn these bodies in pits in the open air. No other technique for reducing the volume of these remains, other than that of the furnaces, is credible. The demonstration is macabre but unanswerable and it is borne out by the confessions of the executioners themselves. Those who deny the existence of the gas chambers claim that these confessions were extorted or were stories concocted for the victors. These accounts are probably highly suspect, but this does not deprive them of historic value. In the preface to the memoirs of Rudolf Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, Primo Levi gives a lesson in historic methodology by brilliantly describing how to distinguish words considered appropriate for the circumstances from the most significant confessions, when a nazi did not see and did not have anything to cover up, or even imagined that he was clearing his name, or derived sinister vainglory from boasting about his devotion and efficiency. SS officer Suchomel, who was interviewed and, unbeknown to him, recorded by Claude Lanzmann, was assured of confidentiality. He indulged in obscene bragging with a host of details he could not have invented. The text of Eichmann's memoirs, which are now available is highly significant. While everything he says in the hope of defending himself might be suspect, there is no reason to doubt whole sections of his account, which are therefore the best and most definitive proof.

### **Fellow travellers**

Denying the existence of the gas chambers is often one of the forms of propaganda used by movements which in fact subscribe ideologically in whole or in part to the values or theories of nazism. These movements ought be dealt with politically or under criminal law, but this is not the subject of this paper. On the other hand, such sympathies might one day surface in school, except in Germany, where the voicing of such sentiments is banned. It is therefore necessary to be prepared for this eventuality and to investigate not the arguments and justifications used by this movement (they are those of nazism and racism) but the socio-cultural conditions which nurture it, even if it constitutes only a small fringe group. As far as these aspects are concerned, when the types of groups can be broadly identified, it is up to each of us to work out what might trigger their formation in our countries. That is why I will,

in some cases, only be able to give indications which are specific to France. The four forms listed here are therefore by no means the only ones.

The first, probably most widespread and obviously most dangerous form is what is now fairly generally described as hooliganism. It may be characterised as something that is virtually pathological, as an inability to build or unskilfulness in building a personal identity. The symptom of this may be a statement of omnipotence in the guise of gratuitous violence due to the lack of any spiritual points of reference and categorical rejection of the law. Groups of hooligans may comprise a few individuals or may number several hundred, as can be seen in some stadiums. But they may be even larger; violence can be boundless and even carried out by children, as is the case in Sierra Leone.

The second form is that of a “historic” anti-Semitism, often linked to religious fundamentalism and social ultraconservatism. It is rarely expressed explicitly, but sympathisers are wont to say that there is “too much” talk about the Jews and the Shoah and denounce the “moral depravity” of society. This form is relatively frequent in France among a large proportion of extreme right-wing voters. It does not take issue with the Jews, but with “international, cosmopolitan finance” and exalts in the myth of an eternal France. It is anti-European and is fostering an anti-Arab racism which, along the lines of nazism, confuses the Muslim religion and the Arab “race”.

A special form to be found in France is that of an anti-Semitism which may be termed “primary” and is to be encountered among young second-generation immigrants who are prompted by their family background (they are often the children of illiterate former peasants) and fundamentalist reasoning to muddle up their own problematical identity, the defence of the Palestinians, opposition to Israeli policy, opposition to the very existence of Israel and anti-Semitism in general. The best means of countering this drift is doubtless a knowledge of the Holocaust and genocides, which must therefore be provided in school.

For the record, mention may be made of a “secondary” form of anti-Semitism, which is the product of anti-Zionist left-wing circles which are against the idea of a state of Israel defined by its religion, but which forget their objections when it comes to the idea of Islamic States. The best known example in France is the senile nonsense of Garaudy.

There is no lack of obstacles and opposition to teaching the Holocaust. A thorough knowledge of history and events, reference to undisputed authors, together with the various precautions mentioned here, will, however, make it possible to carry it through to a successful conclusion. It will obviously be trickier if some of this opposition comes from parents, pupils or colleagues. But there can be no question of making this education subject to parental consent. Are they asked whether they accept Pythagoras’s theorem before it is taught in the maths lesson? The temptation to obtain parents’ prior assent, visible in some quarters and at the previous seminar in Vilnius, should be most firmly withstood.

## IN CONCLUSION, WHY TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST?

This is the nub of this Council of Europe project and the seminar which has brought us together. The reply to it is political in the noblest sense of the term and, in the final analysis, is not up to us, except insofar as we as citizens of democracies have to form and refine our critical faculties and above all exchange ideas. It is up to us to ask ourselves what we can

contribute that might determine the constituent features of Europe in the wider sense in which it is understood by the Council of Europe.

While this choice lies with higher authorities, it comprises some pedagogic and axiological aspects. After the Holocaust, the allies set up an international military tribunal which had its seat in Berlin and which passed judgment in Nuremberg. They established the UN and defined the notion of a crime against humanity. Recent history has proved that these measures were not enough to prevent the re-appearance of such crimes. This leads to, and will doubtless lead us, as teachers, to reflect on two questions. What mechanisms, what concatenation of political, ideological and social causes could again bring such a situation into being in Europe and elsewhere in the world? Are the international criminal tribunals set up for Rwanda, the Former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone a beginning, a first step towards a determined effort by the international community to preclude this re-appearance?

These deliberations will not of course dispose of the essential question facing humanity as a result of the twentieth century. Has humanity a future, can it survive, if culture, thought and reason are incapable of fighting barbarity?

George Steiner recalls the habit of Talmudists who tell an anecdote after a long, serious discussion. I shall tell his anecdote by way of a conclusion.

During the Brezhnev era, there was a young Russian woman at a university who specialised in English romantic literature. She was thrown into prison, in solitary confinement, without light or writing materials, on the grounds of an idiotic denouncement which had been trumped up, needless to say. She knew the whole of Byron's Don Juan by heart (thirty thousand lines or more). In the dark she mentally translated it into Russian. On leaving prison, by which time she was blind, she dictated the translation to a friend. It is now the most authoritative Russian translation of Byron. In view of this he said to himself, first that the human spirit was totally indestructible. Secondly that poetry could save a human being, even in an impossible situation. Thirdly that a translation, even allowing for human imperfection, translated what it translated, which was another way of saying that language and reality were connected. And fourthly, that we must be very joyful.

## DEFINITIONS

**Race, racial.** A race is a sub-division of a species. In literary language, and especially in the major classical texts, a race is a family lineage (not to be confused with a tribe, which embraces several families, whether of the same stock or not). For a long time, skin colour served to distinguish various human "races". No scientific factor other than appearance has ever made it possible to define their character. Since the 1970s, genetics has enabled us to state on the contrary that the human species is made up of one single race, or indeed that each human being constitutes a race. To speak of race and racial characteristics in relation to a group of human beings is therefore in itself the first sign of racism and is anti-scientific in nature. Besides being an attitude which can be subjected to moral censure, racism is first and foremost a lie, a falsification.

**Ethnic group.** An ethnic group is a group of human beings that shares a language, a culture, and an economic, social and family structure, and possesses a group awareness. It may or may not be found within a defined territory. Its common culture does not necessarily extend to religion.

**Jew, Jewish.** A Jew is a person who practises Judaism. But for reasons of religion (the “chosen” people) and history (the Diaspora), the Jews share those factors which determine an ethnic group, if Hebrew is regarded as their common language. When anti-Semitism ceased to be strictly religious (Christian), there occurred a shift from ethnic group to “race”, under the influence of the pseudo-scientific notions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This notion was taken up by Nazism, which held that any descendant of a Jew was necessarily also a Jew, even if he or she converted to a different religion or had no religion.

**Aryan.** This term designates a linguistic group that came from Persia and settled in Northern India eighteen centuries before Christ. The migrations and linguistic diversification of this group eventually gave rise to a family of languages catalogued at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and known as the Indo-European languages. Nazism made a shift similar to that which had occurred with the Jews, turning Aryans into a supposedly superior “race” (the Sanskrit word *arya* means “nobles”), although this obviously had no scientific basis.

**War crimes.** “Violations of the laws or customs of war. Such violations shall include, but not be limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labour, or for any other purpose, of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, and devastation not justified by military necessity” (Article 6b of the statutes of the International Military Tribunal established by the London Quadripartite Agreement of 8 August 1945, which subsequently sat in Nuremberg).

**Crimes against humanity.** This refers to “murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated” (Article 6c, *ibid.*).

**Genocide.** This means the systematic killing of a group of human beings. The word was coined in 1944 by Raphael Lemkin, who succeeded in having a convention adopted in 1948 by the United Nations that made it a crime in international law. The systematic nature of such killing should be stressed, and the term should not be used on every occasion, particularly in relation to non-human groups.

**Ethnocide.** This is the cultural elimination of an ethnic group.

**Shoah.** This Hebrew word, meaning “catastrophe”, is applied to the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis and their allies against the Jews. It was accompanied by ethnocide. It is unique in its stated intention of making a people and its entire culture disappear, so that no trace of them should remain: not a body, not a place, not a word of their language, not a memory – the negation of the very humanity of that people. It is the nature of this ethnocidal genocide which justifies the use of a unique word to describe it.

**Holocaust.** This Hebrew word of Greek origin is used by the Anglo-Saxons to refer to the Shoah. We shall use it, by convention, to describe the whole range of genocides and crimes against humanity committed by the Nazis and their allies: the victims were Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, the mentally ill and the handicapped, and political and religious opponents (including Jehovah’s Witnesses), together with the Polish élite, Russian and Serbian civilian populations that were massacred, and the inhabitants of certain villages in various countries in Europe. Large numbers of prisoners of war were the victims of war crimes, among which the fate meted out to Soviet prisoners amounted to a crime against humanity of a genocidal nature. According to the most reliable sources, the number of direct victims of the various crimes can be estimated at roughly eight million – including two thirds of European Jewry.

**Gypsies.** Gypsies are descendants of Banjara nomad tribes from north-west India who spoke an Indo-European language similar to Sanskrit and migrated in family groups to Iran and Europe between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is evidence of their presence in Crete in 1322, then in Bulgaria, then throughout Europe from the 15th century onwards. It is by no means certain that they chose to be nomads since the land was occupied when they arrived. They travelled in small groups and, unlike various migratory movements of preceding centuries, they did not come to conquer. Instead they earned a living from various forms of metal work and trading. Their way of life was peaceful and family-based, and they attached great importance to children, considering their freedom sacred.

The Greeks called them *atsigani*, which is the origin of the German *Zigeuner*, the Hungarian *Czigany* and the French *Tsigane*. In some countries, in the middle ages, they were referred to as Egyptians (some groups had passed through Egypt). This is the origin of the English word *Gypsy* and the French *Gitan*. These terms are generic names which are often tinged with negative or somewhat outlandish connotations. They include sub-groups with quasi-ethnic status (apart from a common homeland). Thus, the principal victims of the Holocaust were Roma (from *rôm* which means son or man). The second group of victims was made up of the Sinti or Manus (*Manouches* in French). The third group, made up of the Kalé or Gitans, more or less escaped the Holocaust because of their geographical distribution.

Because they had dark skin, were nomads, came from “nowhere” but had passed through lands occupied by the Turks and predicted the future, the attitude of Europeans towards them ranged from curiosity to assimilation with the devil. They arrived too late to be accused of propagating the Black Death – it was the Jews who were tarred with that particular brush – but they were held up for blame wherever a scapegoat might come in useful, for instance whenever there was a bad harvest, an epidemic, a drought or any other disaster. The Church and the State introduced increasingly restrictive measures against them, systematically discriminating against them and harassing them. Various trades corporations saw them as a potential threat to their professional monopoly. Only a part of the nobility readily welcomed



them as “modern” troubadours, though for the most part because of their music. They were even accused of cannibalism. In Hungary, in 1782, more than two hundred supposed cannibals were dragged before the courts and forty-one had already been tortured and executed before it was “realised” that the people they were supposed to have eaten were alive and well.

This ostracism and persecution took place at every period and in every European country. In England, being a Gypsy or frequenting Gypsies was a capital offence. In most cases, Gypsies were simply expelled. They had no nationality and there no laws or regulations to protect them. States either attempted to force them to settle, as in Hungary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or to isolate them by deporting them, by prohibiting them from certain areas, particularly towns, or by fencing them in.

The emergence of strictly administered, centralised states exposed them to new forms of persecution. The state would not tolerate what it could not control. This marked them out as obvious victims of all the forms of totalitarianism and the Nazi genocide.

After the Holocaust they were denied victim status by many bodies including numerous West German courts. Many of the Federal Republic’s officials considered that they had not been persecuted for racial reasons but because they were asocial, which was exactly what the Nazis had argued. It was not until 1963 that a Supreme Court decision acknowledged that they had been persecuted as from 1938.



## APPENDIX IV

## German History (1933 – 45) and its Consequences as Reflected in Anglo-Jewish Literature of the Present<sup>2</sup>

©Gunther Volk (2000)

„Geschichte wird gemacht  
und wir müssen uns der Verantwortung  
stellen, die daraus folgt.“<sup>3</sup>

Willy Brandt  
(Bet Berl College, Israel)

“Those who fail to remember the past  
are doomed to relive it.”

George Santayana

### Choice of texts

Around the middle of the 1990s there was a sudden spate of plays both in Britain and America that had been inspired by the historical events of the period 1933 to 45. According to the theatre critic Sheridan Morley<sup>4</sup>, it was Ronald Harwood who started this trend with his play *Taking Sides* in 1995<sup>5</sup>. When Harwood's *The Handyman* opened at the Minerva Theatre in Chichester in September 1996<sup>6</sup>, another four plays, all dealing with aspects of the Holocaust theme, were being shown simultaneously on different stages in London.<sup>7</sup> On the other side of the Atlantic, Arthur Miller set his latest play *Broken Glass*<sup>8</sup> against the background of the events of 9 November 1938, the night of 'broken glass' when synagogues and other Jewish properties were ransacked in a state sanctioned pogrom in Germany.

This period of German history attracted the attention Anglo-Jewish playwrights in Britain and America in the middle of the 1990s for a number of reasons: The Nazi terror, which Germany had unleashed on most of Europe, had come to an end fifty years earlier. Thus, in their preoccupation with the Holocaust, these dramatists were to a certain extent following a general trend. “The number of books, theatrical and film productions, artistic and musical creations related to the event, the attention given to the Holocaust in the

<sup>2</sup> This article is dedicated to my dear friend RONALD HARWOOD.

<sup>3</sup> “History is made by humans and we have to live up to the responsibility this entails.” (My translation)

<sup>4</sup> SHERIDAN MORLEY, ‘Appalling Manners’, *The Handyman* (Chichester), in: *The Spectator*, 5 October 1996, p. 64.

<sup>5</sup> RONALD HARWOOD, *Taking Sides*, London: Faber and Faber 1995.

<sup>6</sup> RONALD HARWOOD, *The Handyman*, London: Faber and Faber 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. the bibliography for titles of these plays.

<sup>8</sup> ARTHUR MILLER, *Broken Glass*, Frankfurt: Diesterweg 1997.

periodical, even the daily press, is snow-balling, fifty years after the end of World War II.”<sup>9</sup> Arthur Miller and Ronald Harwood, however, had motives for writing these plays that go beyond this trend. What prompted Miller was the realisation that crimes, the likes of which nobody expected to witness again after the liberation of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, were being perpetrated again – albeit on a smaller scale – in the heart of Europe in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Miller admits that he wrote *Broken Glass* against the background of the war in Bosnia: “Suddenly we were witness to the unimaginable. Daily the media were broadcasting the killings and executions right into our homes.”<sup>10</sup> Ronald Harwood’s interest in this matter dates back to his childhood in South Africa. In 1945 the Jewish children of Cape Town were shown newsreel footage of the liberation of the concentration camps, and this experience was to have a lasting effect on him. He admits openly that it may have been his lifelong obsession with Nazism and the Holocaust that made him write *Taking Sides* and *The Handyman*. This obsession does not, however, make him pass easy judgement on the perpetrators, as an author of a lesser stature might have been prone to. On the contrary, even though his two plays raise questions of guilt and punishment, responsibility and evil, they are sombre reminders that we too might have behaved similarly had we been faced with the same dilemmas as his protagonists.<sup>11</sup>

One reason for choosing the three plays for classroom study lies in the popularity of *Broken Glass*, *Taking Sides* and *The Handyman* amongst theatre-going audiences in Britain, Europe, Israel and North America. For German pupils, they therefore take on a topicality that goes far beyond the inherent relevance of each of the three dramas. It is, after all, their country’s history that provides the impetus for the plays and the pupils may want to see how their country’s past is being dealt with outside Germany. This, together with the many different themes addressed in the plays, would make for thought-provoking discussions and debates in class. The choice of plays is rounded off by Bernard Malamud’s “The German Refugee”, a short story that is thematically related to the three plays.

## Short interpretations of the four literary works

### 2.1. Bernard Malamud, “The German Refugee”

Malamud’s short story describes the tragic fate of a fictitious German-Jewish journalist, Oskar Gassner, who manages to escape from Nazi Germany six months after the November pogrom of 1938. Oskar settles in New York City but he has difficulty feeling at home in the New World. Oskar is Jewish but – as indicated in the title of the story – Oskar is also German. He thinks in German, writes German, and even dresses like a German. English, which he has to come to grips with after his arrival in New York, is as alien to him as the harsh climate of the city.

Oskar is in a dilemma. He is to give a speech on “The Literature of the Weimar Republic” (20)<sup>12</sup>, but somehow he cannot bring himself to propagate German culture after all the

<sup>9</sup> Speech by Professor YEHUDA BAUER, *Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust*, 26 January 2000.

<sup>10</sup> HELMUT POLIXA: “Die plötzliche Lähmung.” (“Sudden Paralysis”) In: *Kultur-Scheinwerfer*, published by the town of Villingen-Schwenningen, March 1998, p. 30 (My translation).

<sup>11</sup> See “Introduction” in: RONALD HARWOOD, *The Handyman*, Stuttgart: Klett 2000, pp. 4 – 6.

<sup>12</sup> BERNARD MALAMUD: “The German Refugee”. In: *Great Immigrant Stories*. pp. 18 – 33. Edited by

terrible things Germany has done to him. To make matters worse, he feels intellectually paralysed since he looks upon his native language as a “filthy tongue.” (24) “He hated the German language. He hated the damned country and the damned people.” (24) Oskar is certain that “humanity ... does not grow long on German earth” (29). His hatred of all things German does not spare his wife either. She is not Jewish and after twenty-seven years of marriage he left her behind in Germany convinced that she “in her heart, was a Jew hater.” (25)

In the end, Oskar commits suicide. The reader gets a first inkling of this tragic turn of events when the fictitious narrator of the story, Martin Goldstein, asks

Could there be something more than a refugee’s displacement, alienation, financial insecurity, being in a strange land without friends or a speakable tongue? My speculation was the old one: not all drown in this ocean, why does he? (27)

Whereas other exiles became successful, Oskar failed. There is a flaw in his character and this flaw is to prove fatal. Because of the atrocities committed by the Nazis, he is so full of hatred of all things German that his perception of the world around him becomes distorted. He becomes aware of his flawed perception at the end of the story but it is too late for him to make amends. In a letter from Germany he learns that his wife converted to Judaism out of a sense of solidarity with the persecuted Jews. Tragically, she, like many other Jews in Nazi Europe, was shot in Poland.

The tragic end of the German Jew Oskar Gassner illustrates two things that are of equal importance both to Germans and Jews: Firstly, as a result of the Holocaust, a German-Jewish identity has become virtually impossible after 1938.<sup>13</sup> Gassner suffers his fate because his Jewish identity has fallen victim to his self-hatred of the assimilated German part of his identity. Secondly, the ‘German’ in the title of the short story underlines how Germany – by persecuting, expelling or killing its Jewish population – also killed off, so to speak, a vital part of itself.

Arthur Miller, *Broken Glass*

The play *Broken Glass* is set in a Jewish neighbourhood in Brooklyn in November 1939. The action centres around Sylvia Gellburg, an attractive woman in her mid-forties, who discovers one day that she cannot move her legs anymore. The cause of the mysterious paralysis seems to be the November 9<sup>th</sup> pogrom in Germany. Sylvia reads about the events in the *New York Time*. She is mesmerised by a picture published in the paper that shows an elderly Jew who is being humiliated by the Nazis. The man reminds her of her grandfather. “One of the old men in the paper was his spitting image, he had the same exact glasses with the wire frames. I can’t get it out of my mind.” (32) Neither her sister Harriet nor her husband, Phillip, share her concern and fears for the Jews in Germany and

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Rudolf F. Rau, Stuttgart: Klett 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. RICARD HARWICH-REICK, “Umfrage unter jungen Juden: Antisemitismus gehört für jeden Dritten zum

Alltag”. In: *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 18.4.1996. In response to the questions about their own identity 28% of 130 Jewish youngsters living in Germany replied that “even though they considered themselves part of Jewish culture they were firstly and foremost German. More than a third denied this claim. A further third was undecided.” (My translation)

Austria. Sylvia, for her part, is shocked by their callousness. “The streets are covered with broken glass!” (37), but the only reaction this draws from Harriet’s is one of disbelief: “I don’t understand it, they’re in Germany, how can she be so frightened, it’s across the ocean, isn’t it?” (42) Phillip is equally unmoved. He looks upon the German Jews as arrogant and comes to the conclusion that the American labour market with its “twelve million unemployed” (17) cannot absorb an influx of refugees.

When Sylvia’s symptoms persist, Phillip turns to their family doctor Harry Hyman. The doctor is fascinated by Sylvia’s mysterious illness and immediately sets about looking for possible causes of her paralysis. After his first meeting with Phillip, Dr Hyman is certain that, besides the events in Nazi Germany, there must be other causes a lot closer to home:

I have this unconventional approach to illness, Phillip.  
Especially where the mental element is involved. I believe  
we get sick in twos and threes and fours, not alone as  
individuals. (26)

Harry Hyman rules out any organic cause of Sylvia’s paralysis. Instead, he focuses his attention on Phillip himself and his relationship with Sylvia. Soon we learn that Phillip feels ambivalent about his Jewishness. On the one hand, he brags about his son Jerome “being the only Jewish captain” (43) at West Point and about himself being the only Jew who works for the firm Brooklyn Guarantee. On the other hand, he does not want to be Jewish and reacts aggressively when people accidentally refer to him as Goldberg instead of Gellburg. Dr Hyman tells Phillip that he has adopted the behaviour of non-Jews in order to overcome his lack of Jewish identity. “You are very unusual – you almost sound like a Republican” (17) ... “I think you tried to disappear into the goyim.” (102)

Not surprisingly, the Gellburgs’ relationship has suffered as a result of Phillip’s ambivalent attitude to being a Jew. As news of the persecution of Jews in Europe fill the American papers, Sylvia’s fears about her husband come to the surface of her consciousness in the form of a recurring nightmare:

Well, I begin to run away. And the whole crowd is chasing  
after me. They have heavy shoes that pound on the pavement.  
Then just as I’m escaping around a corner a man catches me  
and pushes me down ... He gets on top of me, and begins kissing  
me ... And then he starts to cut off my breasts. And he raises  
himself up, and for a second I see the side of his face. I think it’s  
Phillip. But how could Phillip be like ... he was almost like one  
of the others? (79)

Sylvia suddenly sees Phillip as an oppressive Nazi who is trying to deprive her of her femininity. Her conversations with Dr Hyman reveal that the Gellburgs’ sex-life has been virtually non-existent for almost twenty years and that they had never even discussed this problem. Thus an unhappy marriage in a Jewish neighbourhood in Brooklyn breaks apart like a pane of glass just as the German – Jewish relationship is being torn asunder during the night of broken glass 6000 miles away.

At the end Sylvia is faced with a shocking realisation: “What I did with my life! ... A whole life. Gave it away like a couple of pennies – I took better care of my shoes.” (89) Thanks to Dr Hyman’s caring attention, Sylvia regains her self-confidence as “a Jewish woman.” (88) Miraculously, she regains the strength of her legs when Phillip suffers a massive heart attack and she tries to rush to his aid. Phillip’s belated realisation – “if I live I have to try to change myself” (107) is a timely reminder to the audience but it comes too late for him because he does not survive the attack. For Sylvia, however, Phillip’s death frees her of the physical and existential paralysis that he had caused.

## 2.2. Ronald Harwood, *Taking Sides*

*Taking Sides* is set in an office “surrounded by the rubble of a city flattened by Allied bombs”<sup>14</sup> in the American Sector of occupied Berlin in 1946. It is against this sombre backdrop that the vanquished come face to face with the victors: Wilhelm Furtwängler, “one of the most famous conductors in the world” (18), is subjected to a gruelling interrogation by a U.S. Army officer, Major Arnold as part of the denazification process. Arnold was chosen for the job for two reasons: He detests classical music, and he had never heard of Furtwängler. This, in the eyes of Arnold’s superiors, would ensure his impartiality. And it is with unrestrained zeal that he sets about preparing for the interrogation of the star conductor: “Jesus Christ! Are we going to nail him! We’re going to nail him good and proper – “ (18)

As far as Major Arnold is concerned, all Germans are “pieces of shit” (5) or “degenerates” (19). He knows because he saw Bergen-Belsen two days after it had been liberated and he is still haunted by the stench of burning flesh. Hence he conducts the case like a “criminal investigation” (5) in which he seems to be motivated less by a sense of justice than by a desire for retribution. Only few Germans are exempted from Arnold’s harsh verdict. One of them is his secretary Emmi Straube, whose father was involved in the 20 July conspiracy against Hitler.

Before the war Arnold had been a claims assessor for an insurance company and at times it seems as if he is treating Furtwängler like a client who has committed insurance fraud. He hopes to force the conductor into a confession by subjecting him to a barrage of abuse and humiliations. The gruff American major shows little patience with Furtwängler’s naive view – or excuse – that “art and politics should have nothing to do with each other.” (22) Emmi is deeply offended by the harsh treatment Arnold metes out to the star conductor. Arnold, however, is so narrow-minded and insensitive that he fails to understand what Emmi means when she accuses him of behaving like a Nazi.

Three other characters appear on stage and serve as foils to Major Arnold and Wilhelm Furtwängler: Tamara Sachs as the widow of a Jewish musician whom Furtwängler was supposed to have helped escape from Nazi Germany; an American lieutenant David Wills, who is of German-Jewish origin and who was taken to a Furtwängler concert by his parents; and Helmut Rode, a second violinist in the Berlin Philharmonics and party spy in the orchestra. Rode is an opportunist, quick to turn any situation to his advantage. Weakness of character rather than ambition may have prompted him to be the party spy. Now, during the interrogation of Furtwängler, his former boss, he seizes the opportunity to

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. stage directions to *Taking Sides*, p. iii

save his own neck. In this instance, Helmut Rode offers his services to the major in a vain attempt at covering up his own membership of the Nazi party.

Unlike other famous German artists, Wilhlem Furtwängler did not go into exile after the Nazis came to power. He stayed in Germany because he had a mission: "My only concern was preserving the highest musical standards. That I believe to be my mission." (23) Inevitably, he was looked upon as a prime representative of Nazi Germany both at home and abroad. A case of guilt by association, as it were. But what is the extent of his guilt? Contrary to the title *Taking Sides*, Ronald Harwood refrains consciously from taking sides for or against Furtwängler. "I want members of an audience, after experiencing the play, to make up their own minds, to decide on guilt or innocence each according to his or her conscience, like a jury."<sup>15</sup> There are no easy answers and Furtwängler's dilemma is expressed by no other person than David Wills, the German-Jewish U.S. army officer, whose parents perished in the Holocaust. It is he who confronts the self-righteous major with the gnawing question "I wonder how I would have behaved in his position?" (59) And it is this very question that Harwood would like us to ask ourselves.

### 2.3. Ronald Harwood, *The Handyman*

The Handyman is a two-act play that first appeared on stage in 1996. It is set in two locations: a country house in the county of Sussex and an investigation room at Scotland Yard in London. The plot is straightforward: a 78-year-old loyal handyman Roman Kozachenko, who has lived with a British family for more than fifty years, stands accused of participating as a member of the Ukrainian *miliz* in a massacre of 817 Jews. During the course of the play, the evidence against him hardens to such an extent that by the end his guilt is irrefutable.

However, this play is not so much about the guilt or innocence of a Ukrainian immigrant, but about the application of a new law, the *War Crimes Act* of 1991<sup>16</sup>. This Act makes it possible for British courts to bring charges against war criminals even if they had not been British subjects when the crimes were committed.

The law has been changed. When these men from Eastern Europe entered Britain just after the war, they could not be prosecuted for war crimes because they were not British citizens when the alleged crimes were committed. ... There is an element of what we lawyers call retrospective legislation of which I don't approve. (25)

This change in the law<sup>17</sup> creates a dilemma from which the central issue in the play arises: Are old men to be prosecuted and sentenced for war crimes almost half a century after these crimes were committed?

In order to answer this question Ronald Harwood makes use of a number of male and female characters who represent different points of view in this debate. On the one hand

<sup>15</sup> See Introduction to RONALD HARWOOD, *The Handyman*, Stuttgart: Klett 2000, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> See DAVID CESARANI, *Justice Delayed. How Britain became a refuge for Nazi war criminals*, p. 8 – 9.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pp. 225 – 46, Chapter 10: "The Struggle for the War Crimes Act" describes how this change in British law was debated in the House of Commons and House of Lords.



there are Julian and Cressida Field, a well-to do yuppie couple, who employ the accused Roman ('Romka') Kozachenko in their household. Julian is a banker in the city and he believes that with the help of a good lawyer the charges against Romka can be easily be cleared. Cressida, a devout Catholic like their Ukrainian handyman, is convinced of Romka's innocence. She feels that it is unacceptable to subject a poor old man to the stress of a court case. "Guilty of not, poor old men should not be brought to trail for crimes they're alleged to have committed more than fifty years ago. ... I think we should forgive and forget, we're Christians, aren't we?" (77)

On the other side of the debate is Marian Stone, the lawyer defending Romka, whose personal sense of justice makes her emphasise the ethical aspects of the case:

If old men commit murder shouldn't they pay the penalty the same as anyone else? After all, murder is murder.<sup>18</sup> And I don't think time has anything to do with it ... . The morality of justice requires that wrongdoing is not condoned no matter how long ago it took place. (25/26)

It is in the confrontation between these two women that the play reaches its dramatic climax. Marian argues in favour of giving Roman Kozachenka a fair trial in a British court. "This trial, if we get that far, may demonstrate our society's revulsion to the crimes of which Mr Kozachenko and others may be accused." (26) She is opposed to forgiving and forgetting on the grounds that we are duty-bound to those who perished in the Holocaust:

we are not the ones to forgive. Only the victims can forgive . ... And how dare we forget this most terrible event in human history? We forget it at our peril. Because if we forget it, it'll happen again. And if we forget it we allow those who now deny it to triumph. (77)

Thus cornered, all Cressida can do is accuse Marian of being revengeful – after all this woman is married to a Jew – and to deny that the Holocaust ever happened. "How do we know it really happened. ... How do we know that all these millions were murdered at all. ... We deny it. That's our defence." (80)

This thought provoking play is based on the true case of Szymon Serafinowicz<sup>19</sup>, which was covered extensively in the British press. As in *Taking Sides*, the play does not give any answers but leaves it to the audience to answer the many questions for themselves.

### **Why study German history with the help of Anglo-American plays?**

<sup>18</sup> Recent court cases against a 79-year-old German, Alfons Göttsfrid, or the 86-year-old French man, Maurice Papon, demonstrate that Germany and France are prosecuting crimes against humanity in the same way as Britain. Cf. "Bei der Erinnerung kommt mir das Kotzen." In: *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 28. April 1999; "A Nation Goes on Trial. Maurice Papon didn't hat Jews. He just did his job." In: *Newsweek*, 20 October 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. articles that appeared in the British press, for example, "84-year-old is first Briton charged with war crimes." In: *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 July 1995; "Suspect's death 'must not stop war crime hunt.'" In: *Jewish Chronicle*, 15 August 1997.

At first sight, it may seem odd for teachers to want to confront pupils with the darkest chapter of their country's history in their English lessons. After all, they have to deal with the period 1933 – 45 in their history classes anyway<sup>20</sup>. In grades 10 to 13 at German schools the topic is obligatory, but as a recent survey<sup>21</sup> in the German weekly *Die Woche* shows, this educational measure has not had the desired effect. The knowledge of 14 to 18-year-olds of the events leading up to the Holocaust and the Holocaust itself is said to be patchy. The writer Walter Kempowski notes with regard to pupils at German *Gymnasien* "that even graduates have little knowledge of basic events and facts of the Nazi period."<sup>22</sup> This ignorance can be attributed to two facts: firstly, the events of the Third Reich are far removed in terms of time from the experience of the pupils; secondly, the lessons are taught in too abstract a way. It appears that the sober language of historians and statisticians is inadequate as a means to convey the enormity and cruelty of the event.

How, then, is it possible for teachers to make the unfathomable fathomable? How can they help their pupils learn the necessary lesson from history that traditional teaching methods have failed to achieve? How can we, as Moshe Zimmermann demands, "put history and the learning from history at the service of a humane education?"<sup>23</sup> An attempt to get a step closer to realising this goal was made by studying the four texts with pupils in Germany. All four literary works have one thing in common: they all of them deal with fictional or semi-fictional characters who find themselves in dilemmas that will affect the pupils emotionally and thus trigger off feelings of empathy or dismay, compassion or anger, doubt or certainty. The literary texts, by adding a human dimension to history, make a distant period come alive. This need not be at the expense of historical accuracy. Since the past was on the authors' minds when writing the plays and short story, an obvious step to take is to bring additional background materials into the classroom in the form of history books, newspapers, the Internet<sup>24</sup> or authentic historical sources<sup>25</sup>. Excursions to synagogues, Jewish museums or Nazi war crimes documentation centres, meetings with Jewish survivors, films and documentaries, visits to the theatre, they all of them can help to make the unfathomable become a bit more comprehensible.

There are a number of reasons why the three plays and the short story lend themselves to approaching history via the medium of literature. Firstly, they are all outstandingly well written and they raise issues that pupils can relate to. Their value also lies in the fact that the pupils will be studying works that are being read or watched by native speakers in Anglo-Saxon countries. By analysing them and talking about them they will – as a matter of course – be improving their *communicative competence*. Even more important, though, is the *intercultural competence* they will be acquiring: the four works do not tell the German pupils about their country's history from the point of view of the Germans, which,

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 'Curriculum for Grammar Schools' in: *Kultus und Unterricht*. Official Newsletter published by the Ministry of Education in Baden-Württemberg. Lehrplanheft 4 /1994. Grade 10: National socialism: seduction and terror, p. 430 – 31; Grundkurs 13: The national socialist dictatorship, p. 641; Leistungskurs 13: How national socialism destroyed democracy, p. 659 – 60. (My translation)

<sup>21</sup> HELMUT HOLZAPFEL, "Lernen im Land der Täter. Warum wissen Jugendliche so wenig über die NS-Zeit?" In: *Die Woche*, 10.7.1998, p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> In: ULI FRICKER, "Haus des Erinnerns", in: *Südkurier*, 15.12.1998, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> MOSHE ZIMMERMANN, "Jenseits der Schuldzuweisungen". In: *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 6.8.1998, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. suggestions made by the late IGNAZ BUBIS, "Den Holocaust erfahrbar machen: Zeitzeugen in Unterricht und Internet", in: *Forum Bildung. Kontroversen und Neuansätze zu Fragen der deutschen Bildungspolitik*. Frankfurt: Institut für Bildungsmedien 1999, pp. 122 – 125.

<sup>25</sup> See the bibliography for a selection of additional materials to go with the four literary works.

as Andrew Gimson argues, may have become bogged down in educationally counter-productive concepts of collective guilt:

There is endless discussion of the Holocaust, but so much of it is abstract and so little has anything to do with what individual Germans did or saw. Personal guilt is evaded in the vain attempt to reach a more comprehensive view. It is a debate about the phrasing of the guilty verdict the Germans feel compelled to pass on themselves as a whole. The notion of collective guilt is recognised to be unjust, but is replaced with a sense of collective shame that is almost as oppressive.<sup>26</sup>

Germany and its history between 1933 – 45 is depicted in the four works of fiction through the eyes of three internationally known authors. We are invited to eavesdrop on the characters and their dilemmas, which are painstakingly orchestrated with great theatrical ingenuity for readers or theatre audiences in the Anglo-Saxon world. For our pupils this means looking at their nation's history from a fresh perspective that may be different from what they are accustomed to. In the process, new fields of vision will be opened up to them, ensuring that they arrive at a less complex-ridden attitude towards their nations seemingly "unmasterable past"<sup>27</sup>

Teaching young Germans new perspectives seems all the more important in the light of acrimonious disputes that have recently been taking place between prominent non-Jews and Jews in Germany. It was inevitable that during the controversy over how adequately to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust in contemporary Germany, old wounds were torn open again. While there are some who would like to see an end to the "everlasting presentation"<sup>28</sup> of Nazi crimes, and who have had their fill of Germany's Nazi past, there are others who warn against "escaping into normalcy." It is this group which demands that "the world the victims were torn from be reconstructed with the help of historical research so as to preserve it in our collective memory."<sup>29</sup>

Non-Jews are often unaware that commemorating past events has a long tradition in Judaism. Jewish feasts and festivals such as *Passover*, *Sukkah*, *Chanukah* and *Purim* illustrate this very clearly. It is thus only natural that thoughts in the Jewish world should turn to the victims of the Holocaust on *Yom Hashoa*. Literature, too, has a role to play in this process of remembering. For young non-Jewish readers, it may be particularly interesting to explore the varied and highly sensitive manner in which a tragedy brought

<sup>26</sup> ANDREW GIMSON, "They Still Won't Mention the War." In: *The Spectator*, 21. 11. 1998, S. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. CHARLES S. MAIER, *The Unmasterable Past. History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Phrase used by the German writer MARTIN WALSER during a controversial speech he gave on the occasion

of being awarded the 'Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels' in Frankfurt on 11 October 1998. (My translation)

<sup>29</sup> A remarkable speech was given by FRITZ STERN, the winner of the 'Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 1999'. His views contrast sharply with those expressed by Martin Walser the year before. Cf. FRITZ STERN, "Erinnerung aufheben" ("Preserving memories"). In: *Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung*, 28 Oktober 1999. (My translation)

about by their own nation is being dealt with in this Anglo-Jewish literature of the present. If we are lucky, our pupils will be left deeply moved but infinitely wiser after studying the texts.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, by studying their country's past they will not fall victim to the danger George Santayana expresses so aptly in his credo: "Those who fail to remember the past are doomed to relive it." We cannot revive the dead but by making our pupils delve into the most tragic chapter of their country's history, we can ensure that discrimination on the grounds of belief or race will never be tolerated again in Germany.

## How to approach the texts in class

### 4.1. Thematic similarities

The four texts can, of course, be read and studied individually. Because of their thematic similarities, however, they lend themselves to being done in pairs, threes or even fours. "The German Refugee" and *Broken Glass*, for example, are based on the dramatic events that occurred in central Europe in the years 1938 and 1939<sup>31</sup>. Both works use different parts of New York for their settings: in "The German Refugee" it is Manhattan, in *Broken Glass* it is Brooklyn. There are other similarities: the two protagonists, Oskar Gassner and Phillip Gellburg respectively, both fall victim to events that are being played out thousands of miles away but are so powerful that they can still traumatise people with devastating consequences in places that are seemingly safe. In both cases the events in Germany serve as catalysts that plunge the two characters into an identity crisis. Equally interesting is the commentary the short story and the play make on attitudes towards accepting refugees. What we learn does not seem to tally with the image of a nation that – on the Statue of Liberty – promises to be a safe haven to the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." America's immigration policy during the 1930s and 40s was particularly restrictive, caused partly by a latent anti-Semitism amongst Americans, and partly by worries that the influx of highly educated, well-trained refugees would have a negative impact the American labour market<sup>32</sup>.

The theme of emigration and exile addressed in "The German Refugee" is also at the centre of Ronald Harwood's *Taking Sides*. Unlike the fictitious journalist Oskar Gassner, Wilhelm Furtwängler decided not to emigrate. By staying in Germany, however, he laid himself open to the accusation of collaborating with the Nazis. Consequently, during the denazification of Germans after WWII he was classified as a "Mitläufer" or hanger-on. The theme of collaboration of a much more serious nature is also at the centre of *The Handyman*. The interesting twist, however, is that the play dramatises the issue of the prosecution of war crimes more than 50 years after the event, a late legacy of the Holocaust that caught up with Britain in the late 1980s. The question of whether or not to prosecute old man under the *War Crimes Act* can be seen as a belated form of British *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*<sup>33</sup>, not unlike the *Verjährungsdebatten*<sup>34</sup> that Germany kept

<sup>30</sup> An essay by the 19-year-old pupil LEONIE PAWLITA is included in the appendix as proof of the impact this

approach to 'doing history through literature' can have on young minds.

<sup>31</sup> WALTER BINGHAM, "The horrendous night that shattered lives like glass," in: *London Jewish News*, 10 November 2000. Also see the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's web site for an excellent teaching pack on the 9 November 1938 pogrom.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. ALAN M. KRAUT, "From Foreign Shores", (Diagram), In: *American Studies Newsletter*, Number 25, September 1991, pp. 4 – 5.

<sup>33</sup> German term for 'coming to terms with one's past'

experiencing from time to time, both during the 1960s and 1990s. Britain's willingness to bring old men to justice for war crimes forces the audience to subject their own conception of a humane society to a kind of litmus test.

#### 4.2. Suggestions for teaching the texts

If two or more of the above texts are to be covered in a class, it is recommended that teachers follow the order as suggested in the diagram below. The progression of the inner squares follow the chronology of the events dramatised in the short story and the three plays. For ease of reference, the information in the three outer sections lists thematic key areas that are closely connected with one or more of the texts. On the basis of these themes, it should not prove too difficult to plan interdisciplinary research projects, topics for debate, destinations for excursions, or any other activities that lend themselves to being done in conjunction with the themes dealt with in the texts.

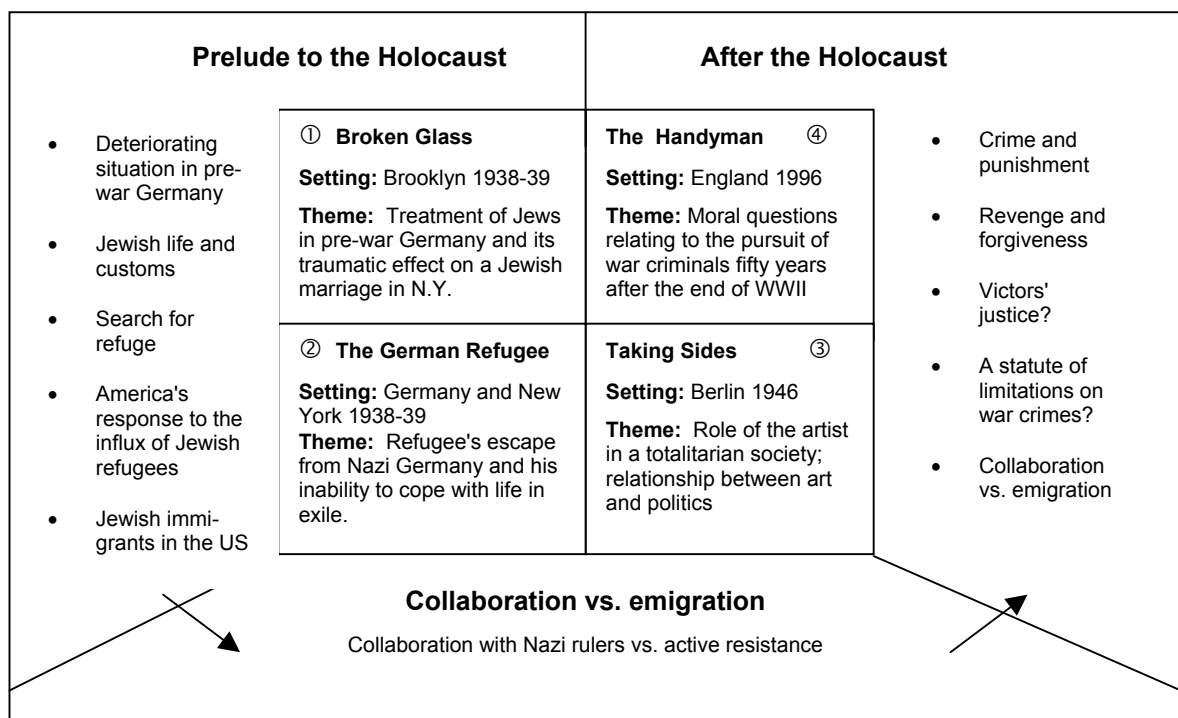


Table 1: Chronology of the texts and key themes ©Gunther Volk

### 4.3. Suggestions for interdisciplinary teaching units <sup>35</sup>

#### a) Interdisciplinary teaching projects

Texts	Topics
BG, GR, TS, TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The historical background and its treatment in works of (semi-)fiction</li> <li>• Judaism (beliefs, customs, festivals)</li> <li>• U.S. immigration policies in the 1930s and 40s.</li> <li>• Relations between Jews and non-Jews in our town / village before 1945</li> </ul>
GR, TS TS BG TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination, incarceration, expulsion and killing of Jews in central Europe</li> <li>• Emigration and exile of Jewish artists 1933-45</li> <li>• Music and art during the Third Reich</li> <li>• Yiddish words in German and English</li> <li>• Hitler's 'helpers' outside Germany's borders</li> <li>• Comparison of <i>The Handyman</i> with the film <i>Music Box</i></li> </ul>

#### b) Activities / Excursions

Texts	Activities
BG, GR, TS, TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with Jewish survivors of the Holocaust</li> <li>• Former concentration camps in our vicinity</li> <li>• Collection sites for the transportation of Jews to concentration and extermination camps</li> <li>• Documentation centres for Nazi war crimes</li> <li>• Jewish museums</li> <li>• Synagogues / former synagogues</li> </ul>

#### c) Topics for essays

Texts	Topics
BG, GR, TS, TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing the unwritable? Is the Holocaust a suitable subject for fiction?</li> <li>• Can pupils in Germany benefit from British and American plays dealing with Germany's history between 1933 - 45?</li> </ul>
GR, TS, TH BG, TS, TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a review of the plays.</li> <li>• Imagine you could correspond with the playwright about his play. What questions would you want to put to him?</li> </ul>

<sup>35</sup> The abbreviations refer to the four texts: GR – “The German Refugee”; BG – *Broken Glass*; TS – *Taking Sides*; TH – *The Handyman*.

### c) Topics for discussions / debates / role plays

Texts	Topics
TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This house believes that there should be a statute of limitations on the prosecution of war criminals.</li> </ul>
TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This house takes sides against Wilhelm Furtwängler for the role he played in Nazi Germany.</li> </ul>
TS/TH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mock trials of Wilhelm Furtwängler and Roman Kozachenko</li> </ul>

Table 2: Suggestions for teaching the texts ©Gunther Volk

## 5. Appendix:

### *The fictional attempt to come to terms with the Holocaust — Why read British and American plays that deal with Germany's history between 1933-45?*

Today, at the end of the twentieth century, the Holocaust is still a topical issue: reparation payments by German industrial concerns and Swiss banks are being discussed in Washington; the planned Holocaust monument in Berlin is arousing heated debate about how to deal with the memory of the Holocaust today and in years to come; on television several documentaries are being shown which deal with the Third Reich, and in an extra curricular activity offered at our school, pupils are given the opportunity to approach Germany's past through British and American literature. Consequently, some people may think that the fictional working up of the Holocaust might just be too much. Also, fiction, so the argument goes, cannot provide an objective picture of history.

Plays can, however, approach an issue from different points of view as there are different characters who think, talk and feel in different ways. Moreover, a play can reveal a person's feelings, their motives for certain forms of behaviour, their fears and doubts and finally their actions, which one would not be able to get from a history book full of facts and figures. To put it simply, plays create characters of flesh and blood which one is able to understand, to like, to hate or even to identify with. Of course, history books with all their facts and figures, and documentaries – written as books or shown on television – which can undoubtedly convey feelings too, are very important. Fiction cannot and must not replace historical knowledge. However, fiction, especially plays which are written by Jewish authors and deal with the Holocaust, provide an important addition to historical knowledge and help us to come to terms with this horrible and irrevocable part of our history.

In Ronald Harwood's *The Handyman*, for instance, a young couple is suddenly confronted with the Holocaust. Romka, a Ukrainian immigrant, who lives with them, cares for their garden and is even a kind of second father for them, is put on trial for having perpetrated atrocities during the Third Reich. Julian and Cressida cannot understand why their kind and peaceful Romka should be put on trial for things which he might or might not have done fifty years ago. Cressida in particular wants to let bygones be bygones, regardless of whether Romka might have perpetrated those crimes, because he is now an old man. Julian, who wants Romka to be defended by a Jewish lawyer, displays a latent form of anti-Semitism and probably says what a lot of his fellow countryman may think, too. In this play Harwood

probes into the issue of how to deal with perpetrators of atrocities and also with the question of the statute of limitation on war crimes.

The issue of passing judgement on someone is also addressed in the second Harwood play, *Taking Side*. There are many different characters, which allows the playwright to introduce a number of interesting aspects and opinions concerning the case of Wilhelm Furtwängler, representative of many German artists of the time. Consequently, at the end of the play the audience has to "take sides" either with Furtwängler — the artist who stayed in Hitler-Germany and "tried to help other people with the help of his position" — or with Major Arnold, an ordinary, uncultured but very conscientious American, who "wants to get this bastard [Furtwängler]", or perhaps with David Wills ("I wonder how I would have behaved in his[Furtwängler's] position").

These two plays by Ronald Harwood do not deal with the subject of guilt in black and white — they show "the grey areas" as Harwood put it himself. And in my opinion, it is these "grey areas" that may help us to come to terms with Germany's past. Plays like his, as well as Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass* — a perceptive play which describes a guilt that can be transferred and that is timeless — are good examples that ensure a more intensive analysis of this sad part of our history and its influences on life today. Most importantly, as these authors are Jewish, writing plays is probably one of their ways to come to terms with this difficult and often unbearable past. Therefore their attempt to come to terms with the Holocaust must be important to us Germans as well and it would be wrong to let bygones be bygones.

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*Wilhelm Furtwängler: Romantiker aus Passion*. SFB 1985 Documentation about Furtwängler's

role during the Third Reich)

*Music Box* (Gripping 1989 film starring Jessica Lange and Armin Müller-Stahl as a Hungarian

immigrant to America who finds himself accused of crimes against humanity that he is said to have committed in his home country at the time of the Holocaust.)

- **Internet-Links**

Simon Wiesenthal Center	<a href="http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/pages/http://www.wiesenthal.com/">http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/pages/http://www.wiesenthal.com/</a>
Yad Vashem	<a href="http://www.yadvashem.org.il/">http://www.yadvashem.org.il/</a>
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Washington DC	<a href="http://www.ushmm.org">http://www.ushmm.org</a>
Facing History and Ourselves	<a href="http://www.facinghistory.org">http://www.facinghistory.org</a>
The Mechelen Museum of Deportation and the Resistance	<a href="http://www.cicb.be/shoah/welcome.html">http://www.cicb.be/shoah/welcome.html</a>
The Topography of Terror Foundation, Berlin	<a href="http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/ns_gedenk">http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/ns_gedenk</a>
KZ Mauthausen-GUSEN	<a href="http://linz.orf.at/orf/gusen/index.htm">http://linz.orf.at/orf/gusen/index.htm</a> <a href="http://www.mauthausen-memorial.gv.at">http://www.mauthausen-memorial.gv.at</a>
The Ghetto Fighter's House	<a href="http://www.gfh.org.il/">http://www.gfh.org.il/</a>
The Anne Frank House	<a href="http://www.annefrank.nl/">http://www.annefrank.nl/</a>
Jerusalem Post	<a href="http://www.jpost.com/">http://www.jpost.com/</a>
Jewish Chronicle	<a href="http://www.jchron.co.uk/">http://www.jchron.co.uk/</a>
Interviews mit Ronald Harwood	<a href="http://www.hsverlag.com/">http://www.hsverlag.com/</a>
Bausteine der Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung BW	<a href="http://www.lpb.bwue.de/publikat/baustein.htm">http://www.lpb.bwue.de/publikat/baustein.htm</a> <a href="http://www.lpb.bwue.de/publikat/27jan/27januar.pdf">http://www.lpb.bwue.de/publikat/27jan/27januar.pdf</a>

- **Other addresses for excursions:**

<b>Former Synagogue in Freudental:</b>  Pädagogisch-Kulturelles Centrum Strombergstr. 19 74392 Freudental <a href="http://www-surf.to/pkc">http://www-surf.to/pkc</a>	<i>Zentrale Stelle zur Aufklärung von NS-Verbrechen:</i> Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltung Schorndorferstr. 58 71638 Ludwigsburg
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## APPENDIX V

Lecture by  
**Hildegard Vieregg**

### Visits at Memorial Sites

In his horrific novel „The Gulag Archipelago“, the distinguished Nobel prize winner, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, describes the life of the inmates of the Gulag labour camps under the totalitarian regime of the former Soviet Union. He deals with the worst period of the reign of terror under Stalin from 1934 to c. 1938 and up to 1954 when acts of intimidation, appalling violence and the terrorisation of political prisoners were the norm. The question has now arisen as to whether the former Gulag camps should be obliterated from the face of the earth and their history forgotten, or whether they should be preserved as memorial sites.

Several middle European countries had similar problems at the nineteen sixties concerning former NS-concentration camps. Most of them decided to preserve them.

The subject of my talk is visits in memorial museums and at memorial sites. This decision triggered off a successful memorial site-education. I shall be dealing with three aspects:

1. The Role of Centre on Museum Education in Munich and its efforts on memorial-site-education since about ten years
2. Teaching about Genocide in Memorial Museums and at Memorial Sites
3. The Educational Responsibilities of Museums and Memorial Sites in the Future

### **1.The Role of Centre on Museum Education in Munich**

I would like to begin by looking at the role of our institute in memorial-site-education and to emphasise on various facets of teaching about the Genocide.

#### ***Teacher training at memorial sites***

The Centre on Museum Education in Munich is since about ten years involved in education at memorial sites. Since 1993 teacher training and courses at memorial sites were realised in co-operation with the governmental Institute for Teacher Training in Dillingen/ Bavaria. In this concern the set-up of our institute aimed not first of all at instruction and visualisation as an ‘*indoor part*’ of teacher training, rather at realisation of excursions to memorial sites at former concentration camps and Ghettos - particularly in Germany, Austria, Poland and Czech Republic. Each excursion took about eight to ten days.

The main goal was and is to discover authentic relics and to follow the traces and destinies of the former inmates.

Turning to Terezín/Theresienstadt (Czech Republic) should particularly be considered that it was one of the characteristic Jewish Ghettos under Nazi-dictatorship. Therefore teacher

training at that site was particularly directed to discover both original buildings of the Ghetto - an fortress-like isolated area - and authentic relics of Gestapo prison in the so-called small fortress, situated closely to the ghetto. Jewish people who lived there had been forced to pull up stakes. In the Ghetto most of their numbers were up.

Visiting the memorial site Terezín/Theresienstadt the teachers had on the one hand to grapple with typical buildings of the former ghetto and the Gestapo prison - e.g. the ghetto command, houses for children, workshops, the crematorium -, and on the other hand to experience the various memorials built after the War as political testimonies and reflection of an unhappy history.

There testify relics of train trucks of Jewish individuals deported in wagons to Treblinka, Sobibor, Auschwitz or to other extermination camps.

There are also buildings which testify to children who were separated from their parents and secretly taught, and where the famous children's opera 'Brundibar' was performed - others to places of residence where the youngsters designed articles and edited the teenagers' journal 'Vedem' inside the Terezín Ghetto.

Firstly the trainees had to collect information at the area of the former ghetto, at the surroundings and in the museums. Beyond, they had to study original sources in archives. They also had to tackle the task to research individual destinies of Jewish people, children, adults and families by sources. Finally, it took a bit of doing to develop drafts for giving lessons and to publish them in that volume.

Teacher training in this case had the aim to instruct teachers in order to take on responsibility for memorial site education. The training should achieve in both to promote individual competence and to learn the ropes of a trainer. In respect to memorial site education this kind of procedure could probably serve as a prototype for other European countries.

Obviously, those contacts between well educated trainers and less-experienced teachers could be very helpful. They could support and promote activities of different target groups and kinds of school at memorial sites.

After regular training in a period of about five years at most significant memorial sites at the moment 25 teachers spare no effort as trainers concerning memorial site education. They are honorary trainers and go ahead with teacher training and other advisory service. Above that, they are officially accepted by the Ministry of Culture and Education in Bavaria.

Let's move on to another basics developed by our institute in regard to memorial site education. We are talking about a manual for teachers.

### ***Manual for teachers***

The publication entitled „Memorial Site Education - a Manual for Teaching“ - is the result of a number of excursions to important memorial sites situated in Germany, Austria, Poland and Czech Republic. It is an issue edited in co-operation with the trainers of different kinds of

school. There are short descriptions of the most important memorial sites on former NS-concentration camps in the countries assigned.

The content is on the one hand dealing with the typology of those former concentration camps - political camps, labour camps, extermination camps - and on the other hand with destinies of individuals, different groups of victims, resistance-movement and the aggressors. Each chapter is introduced by an actual coloured view of a memorial in contrast to black and white historical photos. Beyond, it is structured according to a certain frame which provides memorial site education and was planned that way:

- Each chapter is designed to have a description of particular events from the past.
- Places are described in their original state and according to their characteristics as memorial sites.
- Didactic considerations and reflections
- Drafts for lessons on both various themes and levels
- Individual biographical remarks
- Original historical sources and other material closely related to each memorial site
- Reports of eye-witnesses and other testimonies
- documents at different levels according to the age of pupils. They are recommended to the teachers according to the criteria of curriculum.
- References, literature, remarks to media.

### ***Travelling exhibition: Szmuel Laitner: „Das Gedächtnis öffnen“***

Now, I would like to look at a travelling exhibition 'Recall the Holocaust to Mind'. That exhibition consists of a sequence of 29 drawings artistically created by the eye-witness Szmuel Laitner. It describes the inmates' life in NS-concentration camps, particularly to Groß-Rosen/Rogoznica situated in the West of Poland and about 60 kilometres remote from Breslau. Those drawings were used as the basis of the exhibition.

Above that, Szmuel Laitner analysed the way of life in the camps and reported about in Hebraic language. When he was staying in the camp Groß-Rosen he was a sixteen years old boy. In his report he makes no bones about the state of affairs in NS-concentration camps. By that young people in present times is given chance to identify with.

Laitner's report was firstly translated into English by native speakers in Kibbuz Gazit/Israel and then with the help of linguists of the Wroclaw/Poland University rendered again into Polish and German languages. That bilingual issue enables both preparing and realising a visit in the exhibition (of the same name) and a going there to the memorial site of Groß Rosen. It also may contribute to consciousness raising of visitors.

By looking at the role of our institute concerning memorial sites, I would now like to mention further activities: teacher training, guided tours for pupils, specific publications related to the memorial sites of Dachau, Flossenbürg, Groß-Rosen, particularly the printing 'Resistance Movement and Art', co-operation with various institutions and participation in international meetings and projects, as for example in the 'Task Force for International Co-operation on Education about the Holocaust'. All those kinds of project relate immediately to the former NS-concentration camps and the Genocide.

## 2. Teaching about Genocide in Memorial Museums and at Memorial Sites

### Memorial Museums

Turning to my second point I would like to start by considering Memorial Museums as a specific type of a museum of history. Those museums dedicated to instruct the visitors about Genocide were founded in several countries. Some of the most important are the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Simon Wiesenthal Centre with the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles/Unites States, Sydney Jewish Museum in Sydney/Australia. They are designated museums of Jewish History and excellent didactic prototypes.

Now I am going to be talking about those museum institutions in Germany: Wannsee-Villa in Berlin and the Way of Human Rights situated in Nuremberg.

### *Wannsee-Villa*

Firstly, Wannsee-Villa. Under Nazi-dictatorship Wannsee-Villa was a bureaucratic institution where the horrific crimes of national-socialists were got to know. At present times it is a memorial museum particularly dedicated to the victims and martyrs of Genocide under Nazi-dictatorship.

According to the Nuremberg Laws of racism introduced 1935, the so-called „Final Solution“ was a result of Wannsee-Conference in January 1942. This conference was guided by Reinhard Heydrich and attended by many officials of bureaucracy. In the course of this conference reported Heydrich about Adolf Hitler's decision to „Final Solution“ and the purpose of annihilation of Jewish people.<sup>36</sup> This was a crime without any example in any period of history before.

By the staff of Wannsee-Villa was developed both a credible permanent exhibition and a persuasive education programme. There is regular programme for school-classes and seminars for other groups. The main purpose is to introduce the audience to the crimes of Nazis and the causes of Genocide. At the same time is given great effort to instruct the visitors about the consequences of an ideology.

### *Way of Human Rights*

Secondly, the „Way of Human Rights“. While Memorial Museums particularly are recording the past, Way of Human Rights in Nuremberg is a kind of positive and futuristic approach to remembrance. The Way is situated between the new and the old parts of German National Museum in Nuremberg/Germany. It was designed as a true response to the violation of human rights under Nazi-dictatorship and as an appeal to be aware of Human Rights at present times.

This environment is both a total of art and a political work of art created by the Israeli artist Dani Karavan; it addresses people from all over the world. It quotes the thirty articles from 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' represented at columns. With this enterprise

<sup>36</sup> Jäckel, Eberhard/ Longerich, Peter/ Schoeps, Julius (Eds.): Enzyklopädie des Holocaust. Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden. Bd. III. München/ Zürich. 1995 (?). p.1516.



Karavan doesn't accuse, rather the Way of Human Rights is quite built as a contrast to the former „Reichsparteitagsgelände“ where under Nazi dictatorship the „Reichsparteitage“ annually took place. Way of Human Rights is of a similar logic as the Declaration of Human Rights, which includes 30 meaningful articles. Beyond, it is a complex and aesthetic arrangement, and in interrelationship to the surroundings.

The description according to that way fits perfectly:

„The driving force behind the work, even part of the work itself, is his (Karavan's) global communication with many people, artists, art historians, patrons, human rights activists, friends, foes and especially, again and again, with the widely dispersed members of his family. .... Karavan's main challenge and creative source is not an empty canvas or an untouched stone, but space. An awareness for space can be truly observed with Dani Karavan, when he is measuring streets and places with his eyes and body, when feeling, sensing for the right proportions during trial erections of his architectural elements. Understanding rural or urban spaces does not stop the three dimensional, however, it includes omnipresent nature as well, when trees are planted or wind pipes lined up. It includes the location's history contained in the existing buildings or lost signs, such as railroad tracks which had disappeared. None of Dani Karavan's creations, no matter how large-scale might be, are meant to be without people. Therefore one will not become lost on the monumental 'Axe Major', one finds stations along the way.“<sup>37</sup>

Turning to the didactic aim a visit to Way of Human Rights enables both reflection to laws of racism and the challenge and great exertion to provide for human rights in present and future times.

### ***Sydney Jewish Museum***

Thirdly: Sydney Jewish Museum. After we have got a little bit side tracked let's go back to my main topic. Concerning my own observation Sydney Jewish Museum is an excellent example to teach and learn about Genocide, particularly as far as Australia doesn't own any additional memorial sites or museums related to NS-dictatorship and to concentration camps.

On the one hand it is a museum of Contemporary History opened some years ago and on the other hand a museum that may be characterised as a memorial museum. Although it is not as well known as Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles or Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington it is also a very important example on this type of museum. In an exceptional way visitors are helped to comprehend Nazi-dictatorship and the destinies of Jewish people and, beyond to be promoted to consciousness-raising.

Sydney Jewish Museum shows the Genocide in the context of both Jewish History and the National History of Australia. Therefore starts with the localities of Jewish people in former Sydney.

Jewish History in Australia began between 1788 and 1852 when almost 1000 Jewish arrived. Most were skilled workers, such as tailors, watchmakers, shoemakers, manufacturers and

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<sup>37</sup> Schneider, Ulrich: Über Dani Karavan. In: Laub, Peter/Scheurmann, Konrad (Eds.): Dani Karavan. Way of Human Rights. Bonn 1995, pp. 40-42.

even orange-sellers. They brought with them their old traditions and history which included poverty and exile. This helped them to adapt to their new land and circumstances.

Closely situated to the entrance area of the museum Jewish Life in the city is performed according to the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when most Jews were emancipated and established in their businesses in George Street, with their dwellings upstairs. This location was not only the centre of the business, but also of the religious world.<sup>38</sup>

The completely new situation of Jewish life is treated in a further sequence. Museum presentation shows the circumstances when Hitler came to power in 1933, and a refugee problem was given by the persecution of Jews in Germany. In this concern is particularly emphasised on that the Australian government had decreed a strict quota system for alien immigration. However, as the situation of Jewish life in Germany deteriorated, the demand for entry permits increased. There is also explained that nations all over the world tightened their immigration laws and procedures at the same time.

Evian Conference in July 1938 where about thirty nations had failed to find a solution to the German and Austrian refugees, was followed by violence and the pogrom against the Jewish people in Germany in November 1938. Australia at that time was initially not interested in supporting immigration, but finally forced to increase the quota. The number of Jews who arrived 1939 was 5080.

The sequence of Hitler's rise to power and predicament against Jews after November pogrom is followed by the theme of ghetto-life, titled „Walking into the Ghetto“ and symbolised by a high relief. It was 1992 designed by Thomas Greguss. In combination with an archive-like documentation it shows the arrival to and the circumstances in Ghettos: Crowded Ghetto-scenes, delivery of bread for distribution, queuing for water rations, children begging for food, hunger and illness in the Ghettos, Jewish children caught by the Nazis smuggling food into the Ghetto, clandestine Thora studies and, the famous teacher Janusz Korczak with children. Other documents exhibited are giving detailed account of Jewish Ghetto inhabitants determined to extermination and of those Jews forced by SS to supervise deportations to extermination camps.

A further museum department is dedicated to „Transport to the Camps“ and „Final Solution“ got to know by Wannsee-Conference. The presentation stresses on that finally, Jews from all over occupied European countries were deported to extermination camps, particularly to camps in Poland. Particularly is emphasised on the railways essential for murder on the scale proposed by the Nazis. Jews were concentrated in towns and transit camps on railway lines and were sent by rail to death camps built at specially constructed railway sidings.<sup>39</sup>

To support imagination and give an impression about the approximately to 5000 estimated camps, various transit camps, labour camps, sub-camps, branch camps and extermination camps are recalled to memory. Sydney Jewish Museum in this concern emphasises on about 150 former concentration camps and describes the conditions in Majdanek, Chelmno, Sobibor, Belzek, Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Finally, the „Gallery of Courage“ is dedicated to non-Jewish people who risked their lives to

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<sup>38</sup> Sydney Jewish Museum (Ed.): The Sydney Jewish Museum. A Museum of Australian Jewish History and the Holocaust. Sydney 1992, p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> Ibidem; p. 33.

save Jews. On behalf of those Righteous Among the Nations it serves as a memorial to Janusz Korczak the famous teacher and to Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who was sent to Budapest in July 1944 to help about 200 000 Jews who had remained there after the deportation of more than 400 000 Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz.

### *The Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, USA*

Thirdly: Holocaust Memorial Museum. The aim of this museum is particularly to remind the audience of the terrible Genocide and the acts of inhumanity under Nazi-dictatorship. Already at its inception it was politically contentious, since it is based on testimonies reported by Jewish eye-witnesses and therefore represents a specific perspective. The museum was explicitly intended for American visitors, to educate an American audience.<sup>40</sup> It is a national museum, built on governmental land, partly funded by the government. It was founded as both a national memorial and a political challenge.

A main focus is the critical review of the „American Reaction“ to Genocide when only 40,000 Jewish emigrants from Europe were given the opportunity to enter and settle in the USA. Another important aim is to promote the audience to be aware of their individual human and political responsibility at present times. According to the motto „Knowledge is the prime requirement“<sup>41</sup> first of all information and comprehension are obligatory.

Concerning „didactic architectural language“<sup>42</sup> of that memorial museum, the architect, James Freed, studied structures of former concentration camps originally drafted by National socialists. Then he transposed the iron construction of cremation pits to the architecture of that museum. The architecture of the Hall of Remembrance is also striking, as it is a meditation room intended to symbolise the „vacuum“ after Holocaust. The audience should both become aware of and reflect on these terrible events and be sensitised to do one's utmost for human rights in present times.

(Above that, should be mentioned that similar „rooms of silence“ were established at several memorial sites, a very new one in Bergen Belsen.)

The museum requests active participation by the audience. As an effective result may the „Wall of Remembrance“ considered to be. That wall was created in co-operation between about 3,000 American children and youngsters and the museum. It is dedicated to the 1,5 million children and teenagers exterminated from Genocide. Initially, every participant created a memorial tile by her- or himself. The young audience found individual artistic motifs related to the extermination of Jewish children under Nazi-dictatorship, designed and decorated the tiles. The single tiles were integrated to a remembrance-wall. This is on my view a real didactic approach.

<sup>40</sup> Wieland, Leo: „Weizsäcker willkommen. Holocaust-Museum: Gespräch mit Direktor Jeshajahu Weinberg“. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), Nr. 69, 23.03.1993. Wieland, Leo: „Die Amerikanisierung des Holocaust“. Innere und äußere Adressaten des Washingtoner Museums“. FAZ, 23.04. 1993. Giovannini, Joseph: Konstruktion des Grauens. Gebaute Kritik an der Zweckmäßigkeit der Moderne: Das Holocaust-Museum in Washington. FAZ, 1994.

<sup>41</sup> This motto was discovered on a recent memorial in the City of Los Angeles.

<sup>42</sup> Schleichner, Bernhard: Geschichtsunterricht und historische Lernausstellung. In: Museumskunde (Ed. Deutscher Museumsbund). Vol. 49 (1) 1984, p. 47./ Koch, Rainer: Geschichte im Museum. In: ibid. Vol 54 (3) 1989, p. 127.

## Memorial Sites

Another focus is on prototypes and authentic areas as well as memorials designed in the five decades running after Second World War. The institutions responsible to memorial site education are also obliged to provide publications which agree to general didactic structures, particularly both brochures for individuals and teachers' manuals.

Nevertheless, a visit to a museum of Contemporary History cannot, however, produce an awareness of the same intensity as a visit to a former NS-concentration camp, for example Auschwitz-Birkenau (extermination camp), Theresienstadt (ghetto) or Dachau (political camp).

Memorial sites are much closer to the recent past than museums are ever able to be. Yet in memorial sites, the way documentation is conceived museologically plays an important role, and the typology of such documentation centres is similar to that of classical museums. Beyond, such documentation is usually integrated in the memorial site.

Memorial sites also develop across time, right up to the present time. Their didactic aim involves, beyond remembrance and reflection, a call to the individual's responsibility in the present and the future.

After having considered Memorial Museum let's now move on to specific memorial sites. Memorial sites differ from Memorial Museums more by their arrangement than by their didactic aim.

The memorial sites of Auschwitz, Bergen Belsen, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Buchenwald, Groß-Rosen, Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, Mittelbau Dora, Neuengamme, Sobibor, Treblinka count as prototypes of Nazi-terrorism and its increase to the industrial extermination of individuals. In contrast to museums, memorial sites as authentic places and environments are particularly characterised by their relics the history of former concentration camps: e.g. by remains of concentration camp command, huts and barracks, work detachments which were headed by so-called „Kapos“ responsible to SS, places of experiments subjecting human conditions of high pressure and freezing, installations for so-called 'special treatment', places of furnaces and cremating pits.

To inform you about various kinds of memorial site I would now like to show some examples.

### ***Dachau***

Dachau, well known all over the place, was the first concentration camp established by the Nazis in March 1933. It was the real type of a *political* camp. The first inmates were officials of socialistic and communist parties and were imprisoned because of their philosophy of life. However, the audience at present times can be instructed about several characteristics of such a camp.

Teachers should do their level best to get through to the pupils that those camps were

established according the ideology of Nazi party and are to be considered in this political context.

Camps were usually established on the backwoods and in a certain distance of a capital - like Dachau/Munich, Mauthausen/Linz, Groß-Rosen/Breslau, Sachsenhausen/Berlin, Buchenwald/Weimar, Bergen Belsen/Hannover etc.

In its appearance the concentration camp of Dachau became the prototype of later established camps. A map may disclose this fact.

- There was a camp-street situated between the shelters.
- There was the court of appeals.
- There was a building of the concentration camp command. It was the only entrance-gate to the camp. At the door was announced what inmates expected: „Arbeit macht frei“. In reality was meant exploitation as expendable manpower and, according to Heinrich Himmlers document, inmates should be worked to death.
- There were many blocks/barracks where inmates lived on top of one another each of them headed by a „Lagerältester“ („camp elder“) and assisted by „Stubendienste“ („room orderlies“). Those were prepared for certain groups of inmates, e.g. the block for priests or the block for Jews.
- The work detachments were headed by Kapos, work supervisors responsible to SS-Kommandoführer and assisted by a „Vorarbeiter“ („foreman“).
- There was an economics complex. Behind it and completely segregated to the inmates was the camp's clink where inmates had to serve sentences arbitrarily.
- There were security measures as fences with life wires and watchtowers.
- There were specific barracks for pseudo-medical experiments and pseudo-biological „race research“: In the case of Dachau experiments subjecting humans of high freezing and pressure were realised.
- The crematorium was often situated outside the camp area at a site prevented from being seen.

The prisoners, who reached the camps in a state of hunger and exhaustion, were forced to hand over the remainder of their personal property. They received a set of clothing which included a navy-and-white-striped shirt, a spoon, a bowl, and a cup. On the clothing they had to wear triangular badges with code numbers.

Their daily life resembled the outside world only in the names given to everyday objects. Horrific realities were often hidden under words as „food“, „work“, „medicine“ or „Sonderbehandlung“ („special treatment“). The extremely poor conditions of health and hygiene and the lack of water helped to spread disease and epidemics, for instance typhus.

In contrast to Dachau, several memorial sites are situated at former *labour camps*. There is particularly to refer to Flossenbürg, Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Mittelbau Dora and Groß-

Rosen. I would like to look at Mauthausen because it was between 1938 and 1945 a synonym to fright and terror. Mauthausen was also a sign to exploitation and the purpose to be worked to death in the quarries. Firstly the concentration camp had been founded as a profitable company „Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke“ similar Flossenbürg, Buchenwald and Groß Rosen.

Up to now Mauthausen is one of the best examples where the quarry is included in the memorial site, and the audience is able to understand what kind of concentration camp this was.

The memorial site is well preserved and very impressive because it looks like a fortress in a similar way as the former concentration camp. The visitors are confronted with four main areas: the camp command and the complex of SS, the former camp for inmates, the quarry and memorials dedicated to the victims by about twenty nations.

In contrast to Dachau, Sachsenhausen and other concentration camps several barracks, buildings and places of suffer, a district for sick persons, the court for appeals and the scene of execution are preserved.

Considering the more than twenty memorials at that site particularly those should be mentioned:

- the memorial of Federal Republic of Germany and
- the Czech memorial.

The first one was created by the Bavarian sculptor Fritz König and shows the helplessness of an individual in the face of a terror-regime. It symbolises also the fact of imprisonment.

The second one was designed by a sculptor of Czech Republic. The audience can interpret the written words at the footing: Lidé Bďte; that means „Human beings be aware of“ („Menschen seid wachsam“). This motto is the same as at a central site of a cemetery closely situated to the former Gestapo-prison of Terézín.

The sculpture shows an inmate of the former camp who wears the typical dress. He raises up against the tyranny and advises the audience to be aware of dictatorship in present and future times.

To mention Groß-Rosen the quarry cut also a tragic figure. Situated in Poland that memorial site is up to now scarcely known. However, Groß Rosen was one of the most extended concentration camps with definitely about 120 000 inmates.

### ***Mittelbau Dora***

Mittelbau Dora is a memorial site situated at a former *branch camp* of Buchenwald.

That camp didn't own a quarry. However, the camp had similarly to Hersbruck to fulfil armaments contracts. In this concern the Nazis took particularly care of absolute secrecy. Therefore the concentration camp was planned in a remote region.

What's there to teach about to an adult audience or to school classes?

Firstly, the inmates had to erode the mountain of Kohnstein and to tunnel through it under extreme conditions. Finally, the system of tunnels was about 20 to 80 metres high and several

kilometres extended. Up to January 1944 about 10 000 inmates had to sleep and to slave in this tunnel system without any daylight and sanitary facilities. The Nazis forced them to work there and to produce „V 2“-missiles. Up to January 1944 about 50 of those rockets were fabricated.

The catastrophic circumstances were the causes of an utmost mortality: Initially, 60 000 people were deported to Mittelbau Dora, finally there were only 20 000 survivors.

### *Auschwitz*

Let's move on to Auschwitz, an *extermination* camp. While the inmates in many concentration camps consisted of several groups of a number of nations, Auschwitz Birkenau was the camp for individuals who were designated by the Nazis to industrial extermination. The groups worst affected by Genocide were Jews and Gypsies. They became the victims of the claimed racial principle, and their extermination was increasing to apocalyptic dimensions. After Jews were deprived of elementary human rights including freedom of movement they had extremely to suffer from the Nazi extermination policy. This policy perverted the Darwinian principle of natural selection in justification of the killing off of human beings.

After the liberation of concentration camps 6 million Jewish people were murdered. It was really a Genocide unprecedented in the history.

Another type of museum on Contemporary History is memorial sites on former concentration camps.

Here the focus will be on museums, relics and memorial sites of former totalitarian states in Eastern European countries, which were generally characterised by ideological indoctrination. The former political dictators used them as a 'tool' to disseminate their ideas by means of exhibitions reflecting the communist ideology. Museums were ideal locations for this because they were accessible to the public and could exert a great influence. This means, for example, that the presentation of history was unilateral. Museum staff had to submit to the dictates of the political system to avoid losing their jobs, imprisonment and persecution. Museums were therefore extremely effective instruments for propagating a totalitarian ideology. Western European museums and cultural institutions have always had greater freedom, as they have been philosophically and ideologically independent of the government. Museology is also an academic subject generally uninfluenced by ideological interests.

Memorials at the sites, their architecture, design and language, are reflections of the time or epoch in which they came into existence. In the most cases they do not treat a particular issue such as imprisonment, persecution, terror tactics or SS-murder - rather they have the more general aim of keeping alive the memory of victims and persecuted groups.

Another issue which arises is the wish of survivors, political and religious groups to address their remembrance to specific groups of victims. Several well-intentioned plans to promote and develop memorial sites have foundered on this.

Those plans to promote specific memorial sites - dedicated to specific groups - fail in my mind the aim to accept that every Nazi-victim who was persecuted had individually his own destiny.

However, each memorial is to be considered as a political sign and as a symbol of behavioural trait of society nowadays, and in that concern is an attempt of positive approach.

It would be a mistaken approach to exploit and destroy all exhibits, relics and environments from the totalitarian past. Such material heritage - like the infamous Gulag camps in the former Soviet Union - should be preserved and transformed into educational memorial sites. They should become places for intensive study and research. They should also be used for learning about the difference between totalitarian and democratic systems, as is now the case at the memorial sites of former concentration camps in Germany, which in recent years have been increasingly used for educational purposes and consciousness-raising. Accessibility to the public of all ages and nationalities is particularly important.

Another aspect of the process of democratisation could be the promoting of exchanges and co-operation between museum staff in former Eastern European countries and those in Western Europe and elsewhere. This could facilitate sharing personal and professional experience of living and working in a democratic political system. It could also promote participating in the democratic process and improve understanding of the issues involved. In addition, education in the democratic process should involve learning about and analysing the methods of indoctrination used by totalitarian regimes.

If we consider the memorial sites in Germany, Austria, Poland and the former USSR as well as those in other countries world-wide, the similarity of their structure is striking. In my view this highlights the importance of promoting effective teacher-training to educate the population, teach them about recent history and inculcate democratic ideas.

The educational and ethical aspects of memorial sites never before included in the school curriculum and in the literature produced for the general public, should be developed. This includes developing a style of presentation both in documentation centres and in the open air, preparing information for unaccompanied visitors, selecting exhibits and key documents and writing explanatory captions, providing accommodation for educational lectures, seminars and workshops, and establishing links with international centres for youth meetings. An attempt should also be made to involve local inhabitants and witnesses in the work on memorial sites, in giving guided tours and in running discussion groups.

### **3. The Educational Responsibilities of Museums Memorial Sites in the Future**

The Declaration of Quebec of 1984<sup>43</sup> appealed to museums worldwide to broaden the scope of their function beyond their traditionally accepted role. It recommended interdisciplinary research, museum development and the introduction of modern methods of communication. Technology could thus also be used to relate objects from the past to those of the present and even to those of the future. The relationship between the public and the object was also to be reconsidered.

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<sup>43</sup> 'Declaration of Quebec'. Quebec, 13. Oct. 1984. In: museum. UNESCO. No. 148. Paris 1985, p.201.



By the beginning of 21st century, museums and memorial sites everywhere are at a turning point in their history. Cultural education has become their most important social function and responsibility in relation to the public of both the present and the future. The primary purpose of museums and memorial sites should be to become centres of cultural and political exchange. They should also assume the role of leadership in an effort to reflect the world's history as well as its archaeological, ethnological, artistic, technological and political history. They should also be places of interdisciplinary research. Education in political awareness is not only the concern of an academic subject like modern history. Museums and memorial sites should also provide objective accounts and presentations of historical and political events, such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the disappearance of a divided Europe. Displays in museums should address different aspects of a theme, whether it is a particular society's living conditions, its culture, its history or even its future. These are the museum's main responsibilities in line with ICOM's definition of „Museology“ which should concern itself with the history of museums, their role in society, their relation to cultural, social and political developments as well as to visitor education.

Finally, I would like to speculate about a few of the possible ways of developing the educational programmes at museums and memorial sites in post-totalitarian countries. It is clear that if they disappeared it would be very difficult to inform and educate people adequately.

In my view memorial sites in the former camps should be treated not only as places of contemplation and mourning but also as reminders of past human atrocities. They should be preserved and transformed into places of research, intensive study and multicultural education. They should also be places of consciousness-raising where visitors can be encouraged to study the twentieth century, to trace its history and to learn to deal with political issues.

If we consider the memorial sites in Germany, Austria, Poland and the former USSR as well as those in other countries worldwide, the similarity of their structure is striking. In my view this highlights the importance of promoting effective teacher-training to educate the population, teach them about recent history and inculcate democratic ideas.

It would be a mistaken approach to destroy all exhibits, relics and environments surviving from the totalitarian past. They should be exploited for educational purposes to promote learning about the differences between totalitarian and democratic systems, as is now the case at the memorial sites of former concentration camps in Germany. There, since about 1980, they have been increasingly used to foster and develop political awareness in the public of all ages and nationalities.

To promote the process of democratisation in a united Europe an effective communication system will have to be established between museum staff in European countries and those in democratic countries worldwide. This will encourage greater co-operation and will facilitate sharing personal and professional experience of living and working in a democratic political system. In addition, education in the democratic process must involve analysing and studying the methods of indoctrination used by totalitarian regimes.

The educational and ethical aspects of memorial sites should be developed. This includes

developing a style of presentation both in documentation centres and in the open air, preparing information for unaccompanied visitors, selecting exhibits and key documents and writing explanatory captions, providing accommodation for educational lectures, seminars and workshops, and establishing links with international centres for youth meetings, e.g. in Kreisau and Auschwitz (Poland) as well as Dachau and Mittelbau Dora (Germany). An attempt should also be made to involve local inhabitants and witnesses in the work on memorial sites, in giving guided tours and in running discussion groups. All this has already been successfully achieved at memorial sites in Germany.

Let me conclude: In my view ethical, social and political education and consciousness-raising of the kind I have described is one way in which people can learn to relate the past to the present and even to the future. It could also promote world peace and foster international understanding. In my opinion no effort should be spared to achieve these goals at museums and memorial sites of former totalitarian political systems not only in Europe but also all over the world.