

April 2009

Remember Mémoire
Mémoire Mémoire
Remember Mémoire

Education Newsletter

Special issue on “Remembrance” ... Lest we forget

4th ministerial seminar on teaching remembrance of the Holocaust,
Nuremberg, 5-7 November 2008



In front of the Memorial of Dachau

In front of the Memorial of Dachau and within the most cultivated of nations, in whose footsteps many others were ready to follow.

Listening to the speeches and eye-witness accounts, we have again been able to grasp the extraordinarily complex nature of the regime of exclusion and terror that was set up. A frightening lesson can clearly be seen in the relative ease with which this was possible. So many people were seduced by a policy that relied on the good old solutions of finding a scapegoat, of designating the enemy within, followed by the enemy without. It was a policy that involved enthralling rhetoric, fear of brute force, cowardly opportunism, some people's greed and others' dreams, soon to become a nightmare, the whole range of measures utilised to bring human beings to heel, with an ideological apparatus and a system of repression that went hand in hand.

Editorial

Teaching remembrance: for a Europe of freedom and rule of law

These days spent in Nuremberg have once again given us an opportunity to go over all the big questions that trouble us today concerning past events which took place in the heart of our old

The cruelty of figures

Nuremberg: Second Jewish community in Bavaria

- ▶ 1922: 9 280 Jews counted in the census, 15 000 according to the definition in the 1935 Nuremberg laws
- ▶ 1923: Harassment of the Jews under the influence of Julius Streicher's newspaper "Der Stürmer", which appeared in Nuremberg
- ▶ 1933: 400 Jewish shops attacked – money confiscated – 300 Jews molested
- ▶ 1933-1938: 5 638 Jews leave Nuremberg, half of them for foreign destinations
- ▶ 1938 (August): Destruction of the Grand Synagogue
- ▶ 1938 (November): The Night of Broken Glass (Kristallnacht): 26 Jews killed
- ▶ 1941 (November): Deportation of 538 Jews to Riga
 - 426 Jews to Izbica
 - 533 Jews to Theresienstadt
- ▶ 1946-1949: 65 Jews return to Nuremberg

This is an eloquent summary of the history of Jews in Germany during the Nazi years.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Editorial (continued)

How to resist? How to avoid being taken in? How to prevent a recurrence of the atrocities? How to stay vigilant? How to show courage?

These are the real questions we must raise. We are, of course, unanimous about promoting a Europe of freedom governed by the rule of law, a Europe now rid of all its demons. However, we must aim for more than just words, more than pious aspirations or facile statements of intent. We must all bravely, lucidly and honestly ask ourselves two fundamental questions: What would I have done at the time? And what am I doing today?

The Council of Europe has unceasingly used every possible means to ensure that this awareness and this vigilance become deep-rooted in our behaviour patterns. This is why we hold so many teacher training seminars concerning this black page of history, which can never completely be turned. Nazism and its insanities are as much a part of our history as other happier, more positive events.

Nor can there be any question of we modern-day Europeans forgetting it or yielding to the unhealthy obsession that sometimes seizes certain intellectuals whose revisionist tendencies gradually slide towards outright Holocaust denial. The order most frequently reiterated in the Bible, that common foundation of our moral values, is "do not forget". Yet, how can we prevent history from degenerating into hackneyed ideas? Or, worse, falling into oblivion or becoming a matter of indifference.

In this 21st century of the throwaway society, when the news frenzy of the media ensures that yesterday's tragedies are quickly forgotten, how can this lesson from the past be preserved and retained?

I stress the word "lesson" - solely commemorating these traumatic events not only cannot suffice but is also dangerous, since it cuts us off from the past as something that has been completely overcome and put behind us. Our aim at the Council of Europe is to ensure that these lessons are taught without respite in a way that is of present and future benefit. The scale of the terrible tragedy of the extermination of the Jews and the Gypsies must not become an emblematic yardstick whereby we judge events and, if they do not measure up to it, we fail to be filled with indignation. This is because the slightest disregard for human rights or human dignity is already pregnant with threats of future slaughter.

Vigilance now, vigilance for ever! Let us not forget that the vital educational effort is but a necessary supplement to the overriding imperative that we ensure we live up to our words and our pledges day after day.

Gabriele Mazza

Crematorium



Declaration of St James's Palace London, 13 January, 1942

Whereas Germany since the beginning of the present conflict, which arose out of her policy of aggression, has instituted in occupied countries a regime of terror characterized in particular by imprisonments, mass expulsions, execution of hostages and massacres,

And whereas these acts of violence are being similarly perpetrated by Allies and associates of the Reich and in certain countries by accomplices of the occupying power,

And whereas international solidarity is necessary in order to avoid repression of these acts of violence simply by acts of vengeance on the part of the general public and in order to satisfy the sense of justice of the civilized world.

Recalling that international law and, in particular, the convention signed at The Hague in 1907 regarding laws and customs of land warfare do not permit belligerents in occupied countries to perpetrate acts of violence against



Creation of the Council of Europe on 5 May 1949, Saint James's Palace

civilians, to bring into disrepute laws in force or to overthrow national institutions,

The undersigned representatives of the government of Belgium, the government of Czecho-Slovakia, the

Free French National Committee, the government of Greece, the government of Luxembourg, the government of The Netherlands, the government of Norway, the government of Poland and the government of Yugoslavia

1. Affirm that acts of violence thus perpetrated against civilian populations are at variance with accepted ideas concerning acts of war and political offenses as these are understood by civilized nations;

2. Take note of the declaration made in this respect on October 25, 1941, by the President of the United States of America and the British Prime Minister;

3. Place amongst their principal war aims punishment through the channel of organized justice of those guilty and responsible for these crimes, whether they have ordered them, perpetrated them or in any way participated in them;

4. Determine in the spirit of international solidarity to see to it that (A) those guilty and responsible, whatever their nationality, are sought for, handed over to justice and judged; (B) that sentences pronounced are carried out.

In faith whereof the signatories duly authorized have signed the present declaration.'



Saint James's Palace, London, 1942

The Council of Europe's role

**Recommendation Rec(2001)15
of the Committee of Ministers to member states
on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe**

Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2001)...

(Extract)

Ó. Teaching and remembrance

While emphasising the positive achievements of the twentieth century, such as the peaceful use of science towards better living conditions and the expansion of democracy and human rights, everything possible should be done in the educational sphere to prevent recurrence or denial of the devastating events that have marked this century, namely the Holocaust, geno-

cides and other crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and the massive violations of human rights and of the fundamental values to which the Council of Europe is particularly committed. This should include:

– helping pupils to develop knowledge and awareness of the events – and their causes – which have cast the darkest shadows on European and world history; [...]

– implementing and monitoring implementation of the education ministers' decision (Cracow, 2000) to designate a day in schools, chosen in the light of each country's history, for Holocaust remembrance and for the prevention of crimes against humanity; [...]

Nuremberg, city of the Nazi Party Congress

Between 1933 and 1945, Nuremberg - where in accordance with the Golden Bull of 1356, each new Holy Roman emperor had held his first diet, or Reichstag - became the home of the party Congress.

Hitler chose this prestigious mediaeval city to host the annual congress of his party, the NSDAP. (party congress: Reichsparteitag). The NSDAP had previously held two congresses in the city - in 1927 and 1929 - but the city had then banned them. When he became Chancellor in 1933, Hitler made the city the venue for all future party congresses.

Why Nuremberg?

The city was situated in the centre of Germany and had a good infrastructure, particularly its rail network. Admittedly, as an industrial city Nuremberg was a social-democratic bastion but Hitler could rely on the support of the NSDAP regional

leader, Julius Streicher, a very active Nazi and editor of the anti-Semitic newspaper "Der Stürmer" (The Fighter), and on a sympathetic police force. Moreover, with its Gothic churches, its mediaeval houses and its fortress, Nuremberg - he called it "the most German of German cities" - offered Hitler an ideal setting and a symbolic link between the Holy Roman Empire and the Third Reich.

The Nazi Party Congress

The Nazi Party Congress, which attracted up to a million people to the city, lasted a week, with each day being devoted to a particular Nazi organisation, including SS day, Reich labour service day, and Hitler Youth day and culminating in Wehrmacht day. The aim was to demonstrate, on a massive scale, the solidarity between people and Führer. It was in fact a form of cult, with its own special rites, which exalted a racial community in



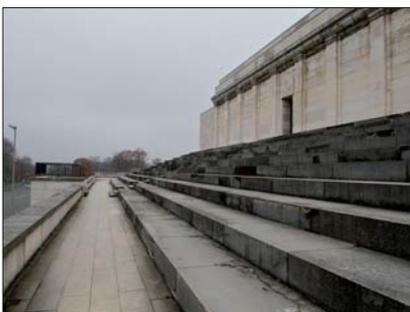
Reichsparteigebäude (1933-36): the Colosseum

which the individual took a back seat and formed part of a mass that paid obeisance to the Führer. It is here that what Benjamin denounced as the "aestheticisation of politics" takes on all its force. The final aim of these congresses was to prepare the country for war. Each was given a name, so that 1933 was the congress of victory, 1935 the congress of liberty (where the anti-Semitic, or so-called Nuremberg laws were proclaimed) and 1938, following the Anschluss with Austria, the congress of Greater Germany. The 1939 congress, which was cancelled because of the invasion of Poland and the outbreak of war, would have been the congress of peace!

1935 Nuremberg laws

In 1935, two laws were published in Nuremberg that were to serve as the basis for the exclusion of Jews from the body of the German nation, a prelude to their exclusion from the whole of humanity, which culminated in the 1942 Wannsee Conference decision that they should be totally eliminated.

Reichsparteigebäude (1933-36): Zeppelin Tribune



Henceforth only Germans or persons of the same blood could be German citizens. Jews were now deemed to be "Staatsangehörige" (nationals of the state) as opposed to "Reichsbürger", who had to be Aryans. No fewer than 13 successive laws between November 1935 and July 1943 gradually and systematically excluded Jews from all forms of existence.

The law on the protection of German blood and German unions prohibited marriages and extramarital relations between Jews and Germans and Christian servants aged under 45 were banned from working in Jewish households.

It appears that it was at the very last minute that Hitler decided to address the "Jewish question" on Party Day.

Lawyers and specialists on the subject were ordered to draft the laws described above. Their minute sense of detail suggests that the draft legislation in question had been prepared long in advance.

These laws provided post hoc legal justification for the growing number of anti-Semitic outrages since the start of the year and were a response to the demands of numerous activists. In particular, they established a form of biological racism that excluded the previous option offered by religious anti-Semitism of conversion to Christianity.

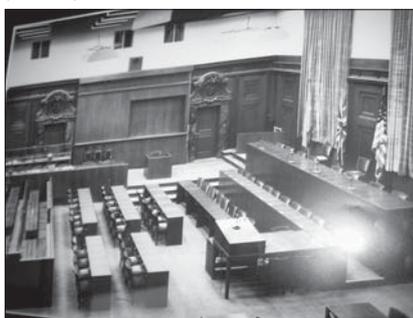
Between 1935 and 1940, 2 090 persons were found guilty of breaching these laws.

The Nuremberg International Military Tribunal

Initially, the trial of the Nazi criminals was to have been held in Berlin, where it opened on 18 October 1945, but it was transferred to Nuremberg, citadel of the NSDAP, for both technical and symbolic reasons. Apart from anything else, new laws at the same place were necessary to remove the stain of the infamous laws of 1935.

Several wartime declarations, including St James's Palace (13 January 1942) and Moscow (1 November 1943),

The International Military Tribunal of Nuremberg (Archives)



The room in the Nuremberg Palace of Justice where the International Military Tribunal met (1945-46)

led to the establishment of a United Nations War Crimes Commission, and then the international military tribunal (London, 8 August 1945).

In the most important trial, which was followed by nine others, the accused were 22 political leaders of the first rank, including Goering, Hess, von Ribbentrop, Streicher and Baldur von Schirach.

There were three main types of charge:

- crimes against peace
- war crimes
- crimes against humanity, including murder, deportation, enslavement, extermination and other inhuman acts done against any civilian population.

The judgments of 30 September 1946 and 1 October 1946 con-

demned most of the accused to death, and a few to terms of imprisonment of up to life.

The trial was the first of its sort in history, namely an international court with representatives from various countries but also with NGOs like the World Jewish Congress involved in the preparatory work.

Twelve other trials with 177 defendants took place between December 1946 and April 1949, the best known being that of the Nazi criminal doctors. It should be noted that the “final solution of the Jewish people” as such did not appear as a charge.

History and memory – the witness and the historian

After the War and once the trials were over, there followed a long period of silence. A traumatised public tried to re-establish their lives with a lack of concern that for some represented ignorance and for others resilience. Lives that had so often flirted with death now had to be lived to the full.

Silence for the victims, indulgence for the executioners, for whom reduced sentences and amnesties became almost the rule. For the survivors, facing old age and a return to the traumatic core of their lives, there was the need to rebuild. Victims who hitherto had only given evidence in court or in a few rare written works, now became just witnesses.

For them, as they approached their end, it was – as it still is – a question of recounting a time when the life of humanity coincided with their own lives. To transmit what they had seen to their children, to future generations, to all humankind, and with an emotional and affective charge that experience alone can give.

The eyewitness is irreplaceable, and yet time gradually removes his or her traces, since even audio or video

recordings represent a fundamental loss.

Of course, witnesses are steeped in subjectivity, but it is precisely this that gives intensity and value to their testimony. The historian's objectivity become the only reality on behalf of truth.

The real challenge then is to determine how we can fill the gap left by the absence of witnesses.



The Reichsparteitagsgelände Museum opened in 1950



Mémorial de la Shoah/CDJC

Kristallnacht in Berlin, 10 November 1938

The Righteous

To date more than 22 500 individuals from 44 countries have been awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations on behalf of the Jewish people by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial center in Jerusalem. They are men and women, Christians from all denominations as well as Muslims, religious people and total agnostics, people from all walks of life, political movements, of all ages, educated professionals and illiterate peasants, public figures and people from the margins of society, rich and poor, city dwellers and farmers from the remotest corners of Europe, university professors, teachers, physicians, clergy, nuns, diplomats, blue-collar workers, servants, resistance fighters, policemen, peasants, fishermen, a zoo director, a circus owner, a thief, and many more occupations and professions. The only common denominator is their humanity and the courage they displayed by standing up for their moral principles.



Esther Maria Seidel next to the tree planted in her honour at Yad Vashem, 1983



A memorial plaque at Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, France, where many Jews found refuge during the Holocaust

In order to meaningfully grapple with the events it is necessary to view the entire spectrum of human behavior – ranging from perpetrators through collaborators, to those who acquiesced, to people who may have disapproved of the persecution measures but who chose to keep silent for various reasons, and finally the helpers and, at the other extreme of the range, the rescuers who were willing to pay a price for their stand. This range is well described by Alice Loewenthal-Nickel who survived in hiding in Berlin. “For days I asked different Christian friends alternatively for accommodation, at least for one night. I found it with people whose readiness to help I had never considered before. But I also experienced denial of the smallest act of help from people whom I would have considered my best friends in earlier days. Denial in such an offensive way that I thought it was going to break me.” Alice Nickel survived, but her two daughters, aged 5 and 7, who had been hidden in a different place, were denounced and caught in summer 1944. They were deported to Auschwitz, where they were immediately murdered.

The question we often ask is what made certain people refuse to go along with the majority. This is where the educational significance of teaching about the Righteous is derived from – making students aware of the choices they make. While it is not viable to expect that every person can muster the necessary courage to act as the Righteous did, a more realistic goal should be to sensitise future citizens to the impact and significance of the choices one makes, even when one chooses not to act, when one turns a blind eye or feigns ignorance.

“It is a duty of international citizenship always to draw governments’ attention to human misfortunes for which it is not true to say they are not responsible. Human misfortune must never remain an unspoken secret of politics. It relies on an absolute right to stand up and address those who hold power.”

Michel Foucault, 1981 (unofficial translation)

The witnesses



Franz Rosenbach and Max Mannheimer

Witnesses are the link between “right” and “history”. Over the years they have become central figures in sharing their experience of the ordeal. Although modern technical resources allow us to collect testimonies and save them for all time and are a precious source for today’s and tomorrow’s historians, the same does not apply to teaching.

As any teacher can testify, real, physical contact has a quite special value. With witnesses, the pupil listeners can go much further in their questioning and their attempts to understand the unspeakable and the otherwise incomprehensible.

It would be wrong though to focus purely on this aspect of the witness as a tool of learning. For both witness and pupils, there is also something of critical and psychological importance. For the witness also acts as the mourner for all those half-glimpsed and now disappeared faces in the gas chamber, including possibly those of his or her own decimated family and friends.

For witnesses it is also a means of escaping the agonising question that tortures more than one survivor, who ask themselves whether they are not guilty of remaining alive when all the others have succumbed. It is perhaps

this question that underlies the suicide of an Amery or a Primo Levi.

Witnesses represent in the profoundest fashion the paradox of the being and the non-being. They speak of death with the intimacy of those for whom it was a daily reality but who are still there alive. The listeners must be aware of this, and the accounts they so often give of their sufferings is as distressing for them as it is for the children who learn of the depths to which humans can descend in their treatment of their fellows.

For the living, death is too often no more than a statistic and each day gives us examples of the evil that we have to imagine behind these statistics: the shattered lives and the suffering. The windows through which we see the world become mirrors and we see nothing more than ourselves. But these men and women who speak directly of a happy childhood that was suddenly snatched away help us to conceive of the horror of their fate.

With the forthcoming disappearance of this generation of witnesses, we now have to ask how we can prevent history from degenerating into myth, thus leaving the way open for revisionists and negationists.

“Get undressed here. Put your clothes in order, shoes in pairs, leave your belongings. You’ll need your clothes, shoes and other personal effects. You’ll soon be back! You just arrived? From Warsaw? Paris? Prague? Saloniki? Take a bath!”

A thousand enter the hall ... A thousand wait naked until the first thousand are gassed.’

Itzhak Katzenelson

“Song of the Murdered Jewish People”

translated from Yiddish by Noah H. Rosenbloom

What they said :

Anne Brasseur

Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

“Our generation, with its sons and daughters, have an overwhelming responsibility to provide for the post-witness years, to ensure that the horror does not become forgotten.”

Joseph Britz

Ministry of National Education, Luxembourg

“Man is capable of the worst evil but also of revolting against evil. It is for us to act, to secure understanding and to create a democratic and responsible form of citizenship.”

Spartak Seyranyan

Minister of Education, Armenia

“The essence of teaching memory is to promote better understanding between nations and individuals. We therefore invite delegations from Council of Europe member states and experts to visit Armenia.”

Stefania Wilkiel on behalf of Krzysztof Stanowski

Under Secretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Education

“Quote from the Auschwitz visitor’s book: Only continuous teaching can prevent the return of such horrors. All peoples and governments must cleave to this objective, the unanimous priority of the Council of Europe.”

Maureen Watt

Minister for Schools and Skills, United Kingdom

“Throughout Great Britain, children have the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust atrocities and the government takes its responsibilities in this area with the utmost seriousness.”

Ibrahim Özdemir

Ministry of National Education, Turkey

“We wish to recall here the example set by Turkish diplomats such as Selahattin Ülkümen, Namık Yolga, Necdet Kent and Behiç Erkin, who saved very many Jews during the global conflict, at risk to their lives and those of their families.”

Azad Akhundov

Ministry of Education, Azerbaijan

“We invite the next ministerial seminar to meet in our country.”

H.E. Mgr Jean-Louis Brugues

Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, Holy See

“The duty of memory must continue to drive our spirit and our hearts. It requires reason to uncover evil in all its forms and reject it.”

The promises of Nuremberg

Extract from a speech by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, President of KMK, Germany

Immediately after the war, the Nuremberg Main Trial did not only trigger a plethora of criminal proceedings in various countries – well over 10 000 trials throughout the world if Asia is included – and set in motion a process aimed at punishing people who commit the most serious of major crimes, irrespective of place and time – one need only think of the spectacular trials that took place in the aftermath of Nuremberg, for instance, the Ulm Einsatzgruppen Trial, the so-called Auschwitz Trial in Germany, the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem, the proceedings against Papon and Touvier in France and many others. In Europe, these trials are part of the collective memory, reminding us of the worst assaults, the worst crimes which human beings can commit against



Plenary session of the seminar

one another, but also allowing us to come to terms with these crimes and to find an appropriate response to them in a properly conducted and fair trial, thereby making it possible for people to live together in peace in the future. Nuremberg was the starting point for the worldwide acceptance of the idea that international criminal law might mark a new beginning, which would make it unnecessary to resort to archaic forms of response such as revenge and further wars.

Message from Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe Nuremberg, 6 November 2008

Nuremberg is a city of all symbols, a city of light and a city of shadow ... A city which reminds us about one of the cruellest passage in the history of Germany, of Europe, of the Jewish people, indeed of all mankind....[...]

And what should one say to commemorate the anniversary of “Crystal Night” on 9 and 10 November? It was especially violent in this city: 26 Jews died and 160 were imprisoned at Dachau. [...]

Terror never comes in one fell swoop. Its most violent manifestation is never more than the tip of a horrific iceberg. Behind the terror of brutal violence by storm troopers in the street was a still greater terror, the one that paralysed the capacity for action, prevented the neighbour from reacting, the friend from feeling, let alone expressing, the slightest concern. The terror that passes a sentence of solitude. First is isolation. Then comes discrimination – followed by violence. [...]

The past must be spoken of because it opens our eyes to the present and the future. To disregard it condemns us to live through it again. [...] All our work, all the sustained ongoing efforts of the Council of Europe with remembrance, with teacher training, with intercultural dialogue keep us on our toes – ever watchful – ever mindful of the tragedies of today as well as the tragedies of yesterday.

Special issue of the Education Newsletter
under the direction of Carole Reich
Anti-discrimination Campaign Co-ordinator
Project Manager “Teaching Remembrance”
Council of Europe - Strasbourg
carole.reich@coe.int / Bulletin.Education@coe.int

