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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

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Education about National Socialism and the Holocaust

Definitions

"*Auschwitz*" was the symbol used after World War II and again in the 1960s and 1970s for Nazi German crimes, especially industrialized mass murder and genocide. Reports about the *Auschwitz* trials in Frankfurt (1963-1965) gave most Germans their first tangible idea about the events associated with *Auschwitz* even today.

The terms *Holocaust* and *Shoah* entered German usage in the 1980s by way of two films with the same titles. These words are foreign terms, understood exclusively in both Israel and Germany as synonyms for the genocide of the Jews. These words have been incorporated as symbols whose meaning is never questioned in historical literature. However, both terms usually exclude non-Jewish groups, essential to a complete understanding of Nazi genocide. These are:

- The murder of the physically and mentally handicapped, commonly known as the *euthanasia* program. This was the first mass murder planned and camouflaged by the Nazi German state, and also became the prototype for killing methods applied later against other racially defined groups
- The genocide of Sinti and Roma
- The murder of millions of Slavs as part of the so-called *General Plan East*, that is, the war of extermination in Eastern Europe.

Especially Germany, the country of the perpetrators, cannot refer to the genocide of the Jews as a "burnt offering" (*Holocaust*) or as a "catastrophe" (*Shoah*), the literal translations of these metaphorical terms. These two words have religious connotations ruling out other perspectives, especially from the land of the perpetrators. The image of the Jews as victims offered up to God is as dangerously false as the idea that industrialized mass murder occurred as a natural disaster.

The use of this terminology not only excludes remembrance of other victims, but also creates a morally problematical hierarchy among the various victim groups. It also impedes fundamental understanding of the common ideological basis for mass murder, despite the different political roles of various victim groups.

Genocide is not a modern discovery. Nevertheless, the genocide known as the "*Holocaust*" is a modern development, since the horrors and inhumanity of this mass murder were committed in the name of humanity and civilization utilizing advanced technology; indeed, such technology actually made these killings possible. The *Holocaust* is the best known, most thoroughly researched, and most intensively discussed genocide because it took place in the heart of Europe, a continent civilized for centuries.

The defining characteristic of Nazi mass murder and genocide was that it was planned and carried out by state authority with unlimited power to define who was acceptable. The Nazi state exercised this power by excluding, depriving of rights, and finally physically exterminating groups that it designated as "unfit", "dangerous", "useless," or "superfluous."

Moreover, the Anglo-Saxon concept of *Holocaust Education* is inappropriate and ambivalent in this context. The history of National Socialism, including the crimes of mass murder and genocide, are taught in German schools as an integral part of German history. The idea of *Education after Auschwitz*, based on a 1966 essay by the Frankfurt philosopher and social scientist Theodor W. Adorno, is still the basis for education today, and involves more than learning facts about *Auschwitz*. It is about preparing for being an adult, and based on Adorno's ideas, developing the "power of thought, self-determination, and non-participation," to prevent *Auschwitz* from ever reoccurring. This CD-ROM documents educational dialogue about this subject in Germany, the land of the perpetrators and their descendants, where inevitably there are numerous points of view and a broader range of topics than in other countries. Above all, this involves coming to terms with the perpetrators, including dealing emotionally with the possible culpability of parents and grandparents.

Educational Policy after 1945

Political education in Germany after 1945 developed as a result of Nazi crimes. Initially, it was heavily influenced by the victorious Allies (Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States) and their expectations for denazification and re-education. Despite their own distinctive cultures, the Allies were basically united, after the capitulation of Nazi Germany, in their belief that the democratization and moral re-education of the German people was just as essential as fundamental political and economic reform. Transforming the educational system was, therefore, of central importance.

From 1945 to 1947, the political and cultural influence of the United States and the Soviet Union focused increasingly on their own occupation zones. The British and French relinquished leadership in the western zones to the United States.

Denazification proceeded differently in the western zones and the Soviet zone of occupation. In the Soviet zone, all former Nazis were dismissed from and prohibited from employment in especially critical ideological areas of government, such as education, justice, and domestic affairs. In contrast,

in the western zones, civil servants who had initially been fired after de-nazification, were reinstated especially after the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949. With the beginning of the *Cold War* and the confrontation between East and West, unity was at an end. Separate political cultures developed in the two postwar German states—the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), founded on May 23, 1949, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), founded on October 7, 1949. In the FRG, the legal successor state to the German Reich, democracy was understood as repudiating totalitarianism, whether national socialism or communism. In contrast, the GDR defined itself as a new state, whose legitimacy derived solely from anti-fascist resistance.

This conflict is still visible even a full decade after the peaceful revolution in the GDR, the fall of the Berlin Wall in the autumn of 1989, and the unification of the two German postwar states on October 3, 1990. The process of cultural, political, and mental unification is still incomplete.

Reorientation and Re-education

From the Allied point of view, the German educational system had failed because it had complied with Nazi ideology. The reform of the unfamiliar three-tier school system—a by-product of the authoritarian class and caste state of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—was considered a massive impediment to democratization, the central element of American re-education policy. Partnerships between students and teachers, small group activities, projects, extracurricular activities, and student and parent participation in administrative decisions were uncommon or nonexistent in German schools. The Americans believed that democratic teaching methods meant that an egalitarian education would provide the possibility of upward social mobility for competent students in contrast to the elitist German system. Democracy required continuing education, encouragement of critical thinking, and basic values shared by all members of society. Thus, in order to train Germans for democratic behavior, the American concept of school reform was based on an American-style comprehensive school system that would emphasize educational methods and social values rather than merely conveying academic information. These plans were vehemently rejected, especially by German academic high school teachers and the educated middle class. Since these reforms were not mandatory, but were to be implemented by the Germans themselves, the conflict ended without educational reform and the old three-tier system was reinstated in West Germany. This occurred in part because of the changed political situation during the *Cold War*. The concept of "re-education" had been perceived by a majority of the population as imposed humiliation by the victors, to whom many felt themselves culturally superior.

The Churches and the Question of Guilt

The *Association for Christian and Jewish Cooperation*, founded by the American occupation forces in 1948-1949 to promote respect for other religions and cultures and to fight anti-Semitism and racism, was initially even seen as an organization imposed, by the American occupation forces. Today it exists throughout Germany, and is well known by its annual "Brotherhood Week" and the bestowing of the Buber-Rosenzweig Medal on individuals and organizations representing these ideals.

There was no reference to the murder of millions of Jews in the German Lutheran Church's [*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*, or EKID] declaration of guilt in Stuttgart on October 18, 1945, which was the prerequisite for the church's reinstatement and had occurred only after severe arguments. Only in 1948, when pressured by foreign church leaders, did the EKID issue an

appropriate statement.

While primarily the liberal Protestant churches influenced the tone of postwar political discourse beyond denominational boundaries by examining German guilt and the religious implications of the singularity of *Auschwitz*, the Catholic Church continued to preserve the myth until 1960 that it had maintained the strongest organized resistance to National Socialism. Only on January 31, 1979, after the impact of the film *Holocaust*, did the German Conference of Bishops take a position on the persecution of the Jews. The Vatican, with even greater procrastination, only began in the late 1990s to publicly discuss its role and its relationship to the Jews between 1933 and 1945.

Socialist Style School Reform

Soviet occupation goals for school reform were initially indistinguishable from those of the Americans. They also aimed for as long a phase of unified education as possible, so that class distinctions could be leveled. This led to the creation of the ten-year polytechnical high school in the GDR—a comprehensive school that revived the common school concept of reform pedagogy. Nevertheless, in the one-party GDR state, education in the family, the schools, and state-organized youth work remained primarily authoritarian. Equality was to be accomplished through education for conformity, and individual needs were to be subordinated to the imposed norms of the "true socialist society."

Institutional Guidelines

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and States' Rights

Even before the end of the Nazi regime on May 8, 1945, the four Allied powers were united in the belief that a future German political system would not have a centralized concentration of power. Thus, it was only logical for the victors, with the exception of France, to agree on a decentralized political structure and the development of local and regional autonomy in the Potsdam Agreement of August 1945. For the building of West Germany, this meant the creation of a federation of German states as established by the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz*], the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. This was decided on May 8 and proclaimed officially on May 23, 1949.

Similar to the United States of America, the Federal Republic of Germany is a federal state. Article 70 of the Basic Law grants the sixteen states jurisdiction over education. This differs from France or England and Wales, which have *national curricula*, and also from the *democratic centralism* of the former GDR. Thus, there are sixteen different education laws and also sixteen different curricula for historical-political education (among others, in the subjects of history, social studies, civics, and political science).

Nevertheless, the federal states cooperate, for instance, to guarantee equivalent standards for graduation (e.g., junior high school certificates or high school diplomas). This is done by the "Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany" [*Ständige Konferenz der Kultusminister der Länder in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, or KMK] created in 1948. In addition to setting cultural policies, including education, the states have the right to organize municipal self-government. This includes the regulation of police and public order, to name two areas most visible to citizens.

Paragraph 1 of the Berlin school law, whose mandate dates back to the immediate postwar period and the goal of re-education, expresses the consensus of all the federal states then and now:

"The goal must be the education of individuals, capable of standing resolutely against Nazi ideology and all other violent political belief systems. They must also be able to build a state and society based on democracy, peace, freedom, and human dignity. Individuals must be aware of their responsibilities toward society, and their behavior must recognize the basic equality of rights for all human beings, respect every honest conviction, and understand the necessity for progressive social conditions as well as peaceful understanding among nations."

The KMK and the Curricula of the States

Since 1950, the Standing Conference of State Cultural Ministers [KMK] influences state educational policies by deciding on common recommendations for political education and training. The KMK felt that schools must focus intensively on National Socialism and its crimes, especially in history and political science classes. For example, after public anti-Semitic incidents in 1959-60, the KMK passed a forceful recommendation in February 1960 about "dealing with the recent past in history and civics instruction in schools." This was repeated and expanded in the April 1978 recommendation for "dealing with National Socialism in the classroom," and further extended in December 1980 with directives about the "classroom treatment of resistance during the Nazi era."

The KMK has always explained the necessity of dealing thoroughly with this segment of German history as closely bound to basic constitutional values and "the credibility of the Federal Republic as a free and democratic constitutional state." "All states have a responsibility to keep the memory of the *Holocaust* alive (1991). " The survey "On the Treatment of the *Holocaust* at School. A Contribution from the States," documented in an appendix to the CD-ROM, exemplifies the role of the KMK in the states of Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia and in the new state of Saxony.

During a meeting on September 28-29, 1995, in Halle on the Saale, the KMK stated:

"National Socialism misused national and social ideas and radically and deliberately broke with democratic traditions. Its criminal policies led to the catastrophes of World War II and the Holocaust. This resulted in the partition of Germany for more than 40 years [...]. It is the duty of the schools to familiarize students with decisive periods in Germany's history, thereby especially encouraging them to consider the continuities and breaks in modern German history [...]."

The KMK expects the younger generation to discuss and identify with the principles and values of the Basic Law via the topic "The Basic Law as a standard for inner unification." It aims especially to make students aware that no matter how negative an experience with democracy may be, it never justifies totalitarian ideas or behavior, nor does it excuse violence as a way of dealing with different views.

The deliberations of the KMK are communicated in general guidelines and curricula for historical-political classroom instruction in individual states. These guidelines also appear in circulars from state cultural ministries. This is illustrated in the North Rhine-Westphalian circular on the fortieth anniversary of May 8, 1945, in which "Nazi exploitation, genocide, and the *Holocaust* are [seen as]

central reasons for the sense of intimidation and the security needs of western and eastern European nations."

In early 1996, the KMK decided to leave the content and form of the memorial day for Nazi victims (27 January—the date of the liberation of *Auschwitz*) up to the states and individual schools. Furthermore, there have also been very few central regulations on the state level.

Confronting the recent historical past in political education and the teaching of history has usually also meant visits to memorials for Nazi victims. For example, the Hamburg comprehensive school curriculum of 1991 used specific aspects of local history in teaching "Politics," which also included history; this is also found in many projects on the CD-ROM. Specific site visits were proposed in conjunction with this subject to facilitate authentic confrontations:

- *"Visit Neuengamme concentration camp memorial (memorials, buildings, documentation house)*
- *Hamburg memorial for victims of Nazi persecution and the Ohlsdorf cemetery tomb for victims of the bombing of Hamburg*
- *Memorial for the children at Bullenhusen Damm*
- *Discuss the monument for Infantry Regiment 76 (1936) and Alfred Hrdlicka's counter-monument at Dammtor train station."*

The Hamburg curriculum thereby came up with an idea originating in the history workshop movement, with the motto: "Dig where you are." The lesson unit, "German Fascism and World War II" provides the framework for the methodology described above for the ninth and tenth grades. In addition to dealing with the development of fascism in Germany, the persecution of Jews, and Nazi genocide, including the killing of Slavs, "Gypsies," the physically and mentally handicapped, and homosexuals, the unit also emphasizes World War II, resistance, and the Hitler Youth as typical of life under Nazi dictatorship.

Goals and Content of Teaching History and Civics

The Standing Conference of State Cultural Ministers (KMK) had frequently expressed its views about "How to Deal with National Socialism in the Classroom." In 1978, the KMK stated that schools had an important duty "to show students how to develop political judgment based on solid knowledge of our recent history." (KMK Decision of April 20, 1978)

The state cultural ministers work in a similar manner, and actual events often result in specific directives for classroom instruction. For example, in 1989, as part of a Bremen Parliament debate, Bremen's Senator for Education and Science requested that "all teachers prepare and make trips to concentration camp memorials within the curriculum unit 'fascism, neofascism, xenophobia,' at least once during their time in school. Similar recommendations have been passed by many other states. All states supplement their recommendations with continuing teacher education. Continuing education programs for teachers are provided in all states (an address list can be found in the index of this CD-ROM).

"States rights" in culture means that each of the sixteen states must establish its own school regulations with corresponding guidelines for history and civics instruction, based on the

respective postwar political development in each state. These include educational objectives, number of hours allocated to a subject, and content. The curriculum mandated by the ministry establishes the parameters, but still allows teachers pedagogical latitude.

Teaching about National Socialism is always linked to imparting basic democratic values as described in the first articles of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic. This is related to the seventeenth-century English declarations of human rights, the Constitution of the United States, and the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, dating to 1789.

Expectations about what students learn about National Socialism and the *Holocaust* in history and civics are similar throughout Germany. All sixteen states describe "National Socialism and World War II" as mandatory for ninth and tenth grade students, using the key words "concentration camp," "killing center," or "*Holocaust*." On average, about 20 hours are available for this subject in the first levels of secondary school (fifth or seventh grade to tenth grade).

In the upper divisions of second secondary school, i.e. in vocational schools and college preparatory high schools, the subject of National Socialism is again studied in depth, sometimes in comparison with other totalitarian systems. In the curricula, interdisciplinary approaches are often recommended, connecting German language, ethics, biology, religion, and even music. The CD-ROM includes examples of these interdisciplinary approaches. In several states, for example, in Lower Saxony and Berlin, primary schools as early as the fifth and sixth grades include materials about individuals during the *Holocaust*. The Lower Saxony Culture Ministry suggests that the subject *World Studies* include the topic "children and youth in the Nazi era." For this reason, the Ministry recommends that "first insights" be awakened by using sensitivity and age-appropriate materials in a local history context to let grow the willingness in students to deal with this subject [see CD-ROM: Project: "Friedrich"]. In Berlin, curriculum guidelines for social studies in the fifth and sixth grades recommend the following themes: "Hitler builds a dictatorship and persecutes opponents;" "the persecution of the Jews, the SS, and the concentration camps;" and "May 1945, Germany destroyed."

The Role of the Federal and State Offices for Political Education

The necessity for re-orientation after World War II was also recognized by Germans, and particularly by politicians in the newly created political parties. The successful development of a democratic society depended upon the acceptance of its institutions. After 1945, most Germans did not have a positive attitude toward democracy. Even in 1955, an expert's report for the German Education Committee documented lack of identification with politics and political participation in substantial sections of the population.

In order to "secure and broaden democratic and European ideas in the German people," the Federal Office for Homeland Matters [*Bundeszentrale für Heimatdienst*] was founded on November 25, 1952, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior, as a national educational agency. It was the successor to the post-World War I *Reich Office for Homeland Matters*, and both the federal agency and similarly organized agencies in the West German states were responsible for publically communicating democratic rules and how new government institutions were to operate. The special position of these agencies is demonstrated in that they are directly subordinate to state and senate chancelleries. The theoretical and practical work of the Federal Office and, similarly, the state offices for political education, is supported by an academic advisory board. A board of parliamentary

representatives from those parties represented in the *Bundestag* and in state parliaments is supposed to guarantee political balance.

On May 18, 1963, the federal agency was renamed the "Federal Office for Political Education" [*Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*] because of heightened sensitivity about the term "homeland" [*Heimat*]. During the Nazi era, this word had acquired negative connotations that were no longer appropriate for political education in the 1960s.

The economic crisis of 1966-1967, and the student movement of 1967-1968, resulted in growing political involvement in West Germany and required new educational concepts in both school and non-school settings. "Reform from above," the system of political education linked to government and political parties, was vulnerable to criticism, because it was at variance with changing academic ideas about political education at the university-level political and social science departments.

In the 1970s and 1980s, increasing accommodation to the demands of politically mature, self-confident citizens ready for political participation led the federal and state offices to transfer political education and continuing education to independent state-based educational bodies. The programs were mainly directed toward adult disseminators of political education, such as teachers, lecturers, journalists, and representatives of social organizations. They were offered media, seminars, and educational travel programs. The duties of both federal and state offices continue to include the history of the Nazi period, the history, culture, and politics of the state of Israel, and, since 1980, the documentation of memorials to victims of National Socialism in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Federal Republic of Germany: Dealing with National Socialism in School and in Public

The teaching of history and political education are invariably dependant on the questions and results of academic research. The interpretations that are, after some delay, accepted as a consensus, enter textbooks and curricula as political guidelines. Nothing more can be expected from classroom instruction and textbooks which are under state control—certainly not the role of

the vanguard of knowledge and social development. An exception to this generalization occurred only during the brief period between 1945 and 1949, before two separate German states had been established. Aware that a moral catastrophe had occurred and motivated by ideas of democratization and anti-fascism, history teachers in both the eastern and western zones initially worked with enthusiasm on new teaching methods and textbooks. There was a consensus at that time between the western and Soviet occupation zones that it was essential to deal critically with the Nazi past and the nationalist traditions of Prussian and German history. This shared belief clearly separated these teachers from the leading postwar West German historians at universities, who, while distancing themselves from the Nazi system, did not really want to question old historical traditions and political values.

These first democratic endeavors were in part unintentionally hindered (or at least not promoted) by the re-education and denazification policies of the occupation forces. In the western zones, history classes were at times prohibited or limited to the period prior to 1933. However, one success of re-education policies in the schools was the introduction of the new subject of political education and

social studies as supplements to history instruction. This had already been done in Berlin, Hesse, and Schleswig-Holstein in 1946, and later in all other federal states, as was done in North Rhine-Westphalia 1956.

The 1950s and Restoration

These initial positive signs were not continued during the 1950s in history teaching and textbooks in the Federal Republic of Germany. The years 1951 to 1960, commonly characterized as a period of "restoration," were actually a time of setbacks, resulting in problematic, inaccurate textbooks. Instead of revealing the roots of National Socialism and the role of the elites in its rise, presentations were characterized by defensive exculpation. Political education focused on the collapse of the Weimar Republic, the "seizure of power," and the question of collective guilt and responsibility under the general concept of "totalitarianism."

Moreover, the 1950s were characterized by collective silence that obscured the dimensions of Nazi crimes, despite the background of considerable knowledge, since eyewitnesses – perpetrators, accomplices, and bystanders – existed both in public life and in every family. Therefore, discussions about Nazi history either personalized or demonized the major figures of "Hitler's dictatorship," or, in conservative circles imputed guilt for Nazi crimes to anonymous powers such as "forsaking God," or on the left, denounced the causes of "militarism" and "capitalism." These empty formulas allowed perpetrators and accomplices to conceal their actual responsibility while continuing their careers in politics and government. Although National Socialism was certainly covered in history classes during the 1950s and 1960s, it was marginalized compared to the attention given to earlier historical epochs.

Nevertheless, students did learn the victim's perspective by reading the "Diary of Anne Frank," although this book did not deal with suffering in the concentration camps and killing centers. Classroom descriptions of Jewish victims invariably focused on assimilated, middle-class German Jews, and lamented over their "loss for German culture" through the emigration of writers, artists, and Nobel Prize winners. Students learned almost nothing about the destruction of Jewish culture in eastern Europe, nor did they learn the reasons for the discrimination, persecution, and mass murder of other groups, such as political opponents, the physically and mentally handicapped, the Sinti and Roma, and Russian or Polish civilian populations.

Anti-Semitic and Neo-Nazi Incidents in West Germany, 1960

Only after a wave of anti-Semitic incidents in 1959-1960 did the German educational system react with a series of reforms, including the mandatory inclusion of National Socialism into history and political science curricula. There were 500 incidents in February 1960, including the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and swastika graffiti, which also caused foreign uneasiness.

The speech of former Interior Minister Gerhard Schröder from the Christian Democratic Party in the Bundestag debate of February 8, 1960, is a classic example of how history was understood within the framework of restoration and traditional national structures, including anti-Communism. Schröder regretted that West Germany lacked "a general pedagogical model" and "a common understanding of German history," resulting in "significant uncertainty in (west) German schools." In the Weimar Republic, "German democracy was unfortunately unable to secure a positive image."

Therefore, it was "unfortunately very difficult to make the concept of freedom or even the concept of citizen's liberty viable in the classroom." Schröder linked this problem to the fact that teachers "neglected their duty because of expediency, lack of courage or insight, or secret sympathy with National Socialism," but added that "many teachers also were under pressure from parents who did not wish their children to learn the truth about National Socialism." Parental resistance resulted in "the repudiation at home of what was learned about contemporary history." To remedy these deficiencies, he recommended moral and religious education both in and outside of school in order to "protect young people against temptations of intolerance, political excesses, and inhumanity of Nazi and communist totalitarianism."

Around 1960, the realistic presentation of the full extent of persecution and killing began in West Germany, because of the previously mentioned incidents and growing criticism of insufficient political confrontation with Nazi criminality. However, during the 1960s and 1970s the description of the fate of the Jews continued to over-emphasize the ideology and organizational structure of National Socialism within the context of the *Final Solution*, "that is the perpetrator-victim perspective. As these examples show, the study of Nazi crimes concentrated almost exclusively on the persecution and murder of the Jews. The perpetrators were not specifically identified. The fate of the Jews was often explained as a catastrophe, thereby removing any specific link to the framework of German history.

Careless use of terminology and language derived from the "Third Reich" for describing Nazi German crimes continued in textbooks well into the late 1970s. This linguistic ineptitude also reflected emotional detachment from the victims.

The 1960s: Protest Movements and Awakening Democracy

In July 1962, the Standing Conference of State Cultural Ministers (KMK) recommended in the *Guidelines for Dealing with Totalitarianism* that school textbooks about recent and contemporary history deal with "communism and National Socialism as similar phenomena." Analyses of textbooks in the 1960s confirmed that despite substantial improvements in information and differentiation with the inclusion of recent research, particularly from the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, considerable inadequacies nevertheless still existed in the chapters on National Socialism. There were very few changes in the way classes were taught, since teachers who had themselves been directly involved in National Socialism were still in charge and avoided the subject. The pedagogical discussions of the 1960s were primarily concerned with methodological questions, such as how to deal with the sheer quantity of material and whether to personalize the history presentation. Factual knowledge did not result in changed opinions or attitudes and was consistently overlooked. Only toward the end of the 1960s did the influence of the social sciences and, belatedly, the "critical theory" of Adorno and Horkheimer's "Frankfurt School," become important components of the way history and politics were taught.

Political education became politicized and polarized in the wake of the student movement of 1968 and the change to a socially liberal coalition government. Whereas "leftist" (Social Democratic) teachers and legislators advocated "emancipation and democratization" and the readiness to act for social change, conservatives (Christian Democrats) opposed socially liberal educational policies by making political education an opposition theme, and utilized it to regain political power. The effects of this encroachment of party politics into political education are still evident on the state level,

including the selection of textbooks and different classroom objectives.

The general guidelines of the state of Hesse resulted in the most radical reform of history teaching, replacing it with interdisciplinary "social sciences" [*Gesellschaftskunde*]. Instead of a chronological approach to history organized by nation-states, these guidelines began with topical questions and thematic units. There was strong opposition to this model, and it remained limited to Hesse.

Almost all well-known West German specialists in methods for teaching history participated in the debate about a new direction for teaching history as being separate from canons of academic history. Despite many positive aspects of an emancipatory approach to teaching history, many teachers found the abstract nature of empirical social history frustrating and flawed. This resulted in a "pragmatic change" of direction in 1977 and ultimately in a consensus that cut across political divisions.

Student-oriented Schooling and Practical Political Education

Teaching based only on educators' ideas and subject matter was repudiated as "alienating and technocratic" and was replaced by "student-oriented political education," accommodating student-specific interests based on their needs. The search for materials that accommodated student interests resulted in the use of local history and the history of "everyday life" [*Alltagsgeschichte*] in the 1980s. In turn, this led to the development of learning through projects such as local archeological digs, interviewing eyewitnesses, and trips to memorials. The importance of textbooks declined. In the early 1980s, 18,000 students participated in the "German History Contest for the President's Prize" with the topic "Daily Life under National Socialism." Students in and outside schools submitted independent local historical research about the history of Jewish communities, forgotten concentration and labor camps, and the experiences of forgotten victims. [see CD-ROM: Reference: Other Reference Material]

Teachers and youths also participated in history workshops, which have developed in many localities since the late 1970s. These workshops tried to discover and preserve local evidence of the Nazi past which resulted in numerous initiatives to establish memorials and monuments. Many of these could only be accomplished after overcoming prolonged and substantial political resistance. What young people learned from these debates was presumably more decisive with regard to the development of their historical consciousness than the facts they had learned in formal classroom instruction.

The German Democratic Republic: How it saw itself and Education

Immediately after World War II, the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Germany, not yet united as the Socialist Unity Party (SED), had already appealed to the German people for basic democratic school reform:

"The rising generation of the German people determined to successfully guarantee and achieve that democratic renewal must be free of Nazi and militaristic ideas, and must be educated in a new spirit of militant democracy and friendship among peace-loving nations as self-reliant, trustworthy, with free and progressive thoughts and behavior."

From its creation on October 7, 1949, about four months after the Federal Republic was founded on May 23, 1949, the German Democratic Republic considered itself the "peak of the revolutionary

German worker's movement battle" and a "bastion of anti-fascism". In "the first state of workers and peasants on German soil," leadership positions in the immediate postwar period were given to those who had participated in communist resistance against National Socialism or to those who had been placed in leading positions by the Soviets. The party and state leadership of the GDR declared themselves and the GDR as the "victors of history," because the military, "big business," and the "Junker" (aristocratic landowners) were assigned most of the blame for Nazi crimes. With the expropriation of large landowners and "big industry" one year after the war ended, East German politicians believed they had attained their goal of "winnowing out" the spirit of *Nazism* and *jingoism*. The working class was absolved of guilt and moral responsibility for Nazi crimes since they were supposed to have overwhelmingly anti-fascist attitudes and behavior.

The concept of anti-fascism became the most important basis of social and political legitimacy for the GDR. Not only was it a unifying concept in political speeches and party rallies, but also the maxim for daily life. It became the decisive element in school legislation and curricula for East German schools. The working class was given "immunity" from National Socialism because of this self-image. In contrast with the discussion between generations in West Germany in the late 1960s, there were no confrontations in the GDR about an individual's Nazi past. As legal heir to the German Reich, historical responsibility was assigned to "capitalist" West Germany.

The Ideal of the "Well-rounded Educated Socialist Personality"

The concept of anti-fascism pervaded classroom instruction at all levels in East Germany; it was also the basic principle for training and education in the schools and in extracurricular recreational activities of the Thälmann Pioneers, the Free German Youth (FDJ), and the Society for Sport and Technology (GST). It also left its mark on the "youth pledge" taken by youngsters at about age 14, which had almost completely replaced traditional Christian confirmation. The "heroic fight of German workers led by the communists against oppression, war, and fascism," equating communism with the general anti-fascist resistance, accompanied students from elementary school to graduation.

The ideal of the "well-rounded, educated socialist personality" [*"allseitig gebildete sozialistische Persönlichkeit"*], encouraged conformity with existing institutions rather than a critical relationship to authority. Criticism was permitted only if the norms of the system were not questioned. The authentic meaning of the term "anti-fascism" as a combatant against dictatorship, nationalist racial delusions, and state brutality against political opponents was perverted in the GDR, although it was appropriately castigated as "abuse of office."

Many schools set up rooms as small museums, called "display cabinets of anti-fascist traditions." Like the "National Memorials for Warning and Remembrance" located at the sites of former concentration camps, they were intended to solidify identification with the state by youth and adults.

The focus of the exhibitions in concentration camp memorials was the "heroism of the anti-fascist resistance," i.e., communist party members in concentration camps. The designation, "victims of fascism" was conferred almost exclusively on communist victims. Other victim groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, or Sinti and Roma, were excluded. The terms *Holocaust* and *Shoah* did not exist in East German textbooks and historical publications. They were first used only occasionally in the late 1980s. East German historians believed that the genocide of the Jews was

one of the most serious crimes of fascism. They nevertheless avoided clarifying the uniqueness of anti-Semitism as well as its national and cultural origins.

There were three distinct phases in East Germany's discourse about the persecution of the Jews:

In the 1950s, under the influence of Stalinist anti-Semitism, Jews were not explicitly mentioned as victims of fascism, although care was taken to portray East Germany as being immune from anti-Semitism since many Jewish intellectuals had returned to East Germany after World War II. In 1953, the first synagogue reopened in East Berlin, and in 1955 the victims of the *Crystal Night* were commemorated in public.

During the 1960s, the Federal Republic was officially branded as the sanctuary for Nazi murderers, whereas East Germany flaunted its anti-fascism. The East German government also supported the Jewish community in perpetuating the remembrance of Nazi genocide. A memorial plaque to the 55,000 Berlin Jews who had been deported and murdered was dedicated in 1960 at Große Hamburger Street in East Berlin. After 1962, the Jewish community held annual commemorations to the victims of the November 9, 1938 pogrom, attended by party and state representatives. Additional synagogues were dedicated: Leipzig (1962), Halle (1966), and Magdeburg (1968).

In the 1970s and early 1980s, scholars in other countries recognized independent contributions to *Holocaust* scholarship by East German historians. As a result of the process of political change in the GDR, Jewish communities as well as Christian churches were able to discuss Judaism and the persecution and murder of the Jews in a more open fashion, although they lived in a social niche. Church congregations contributed donations and youngsters provided volunteer workers to care for Jewish cemeteries through Action Reconciliation, created in 1958.

There was more to this process than the GDR's interest in gaining international recognition. The commemorations of the 200th anniversary of the death of Moses Mendelssohn in 1986 showed that the GDR leadership was prepared to belatedly assume responsibility for the German past, even though many East Germans no longer found this believable.

The GDR used a standard textbook as well as a uniform curriculum for teaching the history of National Socialism in the 9th and 10th grades. In 1979, the 9th grade textbook read: "*More than eight million people from various nations and classes, primarily workers, communists, Soviet citizens, progressive intellectuals, and Jews were killed in horrifying ways in the concentration camps.*"

Even a revised text written ten years later still did not distinguish between political and racist persecution:

"The fascists incarcerated millions of prisoners – communists, social democrats, trade unionists, anti-fascists from all social classes, those persecuted because of their race, primarily Jews, prisoners of war, forced laborers, and other prisoners – in countless concentration camps [...]. In these largest killing centers, more than seven million people were murdered with ghastly tortures."

The Importance of Nazi History and the *Holocaust* in Youngsters' Awareness of History

Institutional programs in historical and political education have given a prominent place to the subject of National Socialism. The main emphasis is on the genocide of the Jews, and belatedly since the late 1970s also on the racially motivated mass murder of Sinti and Roma, the physically and mentally handicapped, Poles, Russians, and countless citizens of other countries, with differing emphases on various groups in the East and in the West. This is substantiated on the one hand by analyses of textbooks and curricula used in the Federal Republic, but also by studies of films, television, and print media. The large numbers of visitors to memorial sites and historical exhibitions about this era also confirm the data.

The accusations of silence and suppression about the Nazi past, which were legitimate charges in both German states until the mid-1960s, are no longer justified for either educational theory and practice or the political culture of the Federal Republic today. The fears of victims and their families that contemporaneous discussions about communist dictatorship and the East German past would lessen discussion of Nazi crimes have been proven unfounded.

Today, despite of and perhaps even because of the increasing chronological distance and less direct personal involvement, dealing with Nazi crimes has become more intense and more differentiated. This is not, however, cause for complacency, nor does it mean that the transfer of knowledge about German history has become easier. This is revealed by an analysis of West German public commemorations about the Nazi past during the past twenty years, which have involved participation by diverse social groups and were reported in on increasing detail by the media.

1978: 40th anniversary of the so-called *Crystal Night*, November 9, 1938;

1983: 50th anniversary of the start of Nazi dictatorship (January 30, 1933);

1984: 40th anniversary of the failed attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944;

1985: 40th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation by the Allies on May 8, 1945, with the internationally well-known speech by President Richard von Weizsäcker;

1988: 50th anniversary of the "Crystal Night," with the inept and misunderstood speech by German Bundestag President Philipp Jenninger, resulting in his resignation;

1989: 50th anniversary of the invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War II on September 1, 1939;

1989: November 9: Fall of the Berlin Wall and the debate about the multiple, historic events on November 9 in 1918, 1923, 1938, and 1989, resulting in the choice of October 3, 1990, the date when the unification accords were signed, as the public holiday for reunification;

1994: 50th anniversary for the victims of the July 20, 1944 resistance, associated with a controversial debate concerning the evaluation of all aspects of the German resistance;

1995: Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration

camps;

1996: The decision to make January 27, the day *Auschwitz* was liberated, as a national memorial day for victims of Nazi persecution and genocide.

Media events such as the screening of the film *Holocaust* in 1979, Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour 1986 documentary *Shoah*, available to schools in video format, and Steven Spielberg's 1994 film *Schindler's List* were among the most effective forces motivating Germans to deal with Nazi crimes. The unexpectedly enormous response to the Hollywood film *Holocaust*, including thousands of requests for supplementary literature from the federal and state offices for political education, and the even greater resonance of the film *Schindler's List* are proof of growing interest, even by those only peripherally involved, about the history of National Socialism. The use of the borrowed term *Holocaust* (burnt offering), whose etymological meaning is probably known only by very few who use it, arose from the need to understand what had happened from the perspective of the victims, and also to emphasize the specific character of this event in comparison to other Nazi crimes.

Even political fiascoes, such as the Bitburg affair shortly before May 8, 1985, have proven to be instructive. The visit by Chancellor Kohl and U.S. President Reagan to a military cemetery instead of a concentration camp memorial site, as well as the speech by President von Weizsäcker on May 8 to fight this relapse into a problematic understanding of German history, have been educational. So too was the so-called historians debate touched off in 1986 by the conservative political scientist Ernst Nolte which occurred mostly in the media. The redesign of the "Neue Wache" in Berlin into the central German memorial site to remember the "victims of war and violence" in 1993, and the controversial public debate about building a "*Holocaust* memorial" in Berlin have also contributed to political sensitization. Finally, the fierce media and public debate about Daniel Goldhagen's bestseller "*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*," and the controversial exhibition about the crimes of the military [*Wehrmacht*] are further indications of the unabated explosiveness of this subject matter. However, it is difficult to ascertain what has had or is currently having more of an effect on the political consciousness of German youth in the period since 1978: the teaching of history and politics in schools, or extracurricular experiences such as media coverage, viewing exhibitions, visiting memorials, or discussions with youth groups and families. Right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism have repeatedly surfaced with young people, intensifying pressure on schools and classroom instruction, but increasingly also on memorials to modify the attitudes and behavior of those hostile to democracy by communicating knowledge about Nazi horrors more or less in an act of moral "catharsis" through confrontation with the horror. Inadequate confrontation with the Nazi past is, of course, usually blamed first and foremost on the schools.

There are still few empirical investigations of the effects of dealing with National Socialism on the historical and political consciousness of young people. We have little reliable information about the formation and changes in historical-political attitudes among youth. Historical-political instruction in school is only one factor among many in the process of political socialization. Its relevance in comparison to other factors has still for the most part gone un-researched.

Empirical Investigations about the Awareness of History

From 1990 to 1992, Bodo von Borries of Hamburg University's department of education, conducted an empirical analysis of awareness of history and political beliefs among young people in former West Germany and the new states. This investigation was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research, and was based on a representative survey of 6,479 students in the 6th, 9th, and 11th grades and second-year apprentices. Two hundred eighty-three (283) teachers from North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, and the new federal states were also consulted. The study showed that the great majority of students were aware of Nazi crimes and had a negative opinion about them. There were only insignificant differences in knowledge between students in the east and west, so the post-1990 assumption that students from the new federal states were more susceptible to neo-Nazism than those from former West Germany, was not proven. Despite exploitation under the official anti-fascism of former East Germany, the concept has not lost its legitimacy among East German youth. In fact, these youngsters are clearly convinced that the GDR accomplished more toward breaking with fascism than did former West Germany, and some are even somewhat proud of this. Differences in knowledge and attitudes among students can be attributed to diverse types of schools and gender distinctions. Girls are substantially more critical of National Socialism, while boys are more susceptible. Moreover, no after-effects could be found from the presumably "Marxist" indoctrination of East German youth. Knowledge of historical facts played almost no role in determining youth political orientation. However, customary awareness of history and sociocultural impressions acquired from the immediate environment of those questioned, such as having been raised to be conformist and submissive, did play a role.

In contrast, the supplementary teachers survey revealed considerable differences between east and west regarding the methodology of teaching the subject and historical beliefs. East German teachers favored traditional methods, nationalism, and primacy of teacher authority. A majority used textbooks for classroom instruction, whereas their colleagues in North Rhine-Westphalia, preferred problem-solving approaches. The teachers from the two south German states (Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg) held an intermediate position. Students and teachers viewed classroom teaching very differently. Although teachers considered their style to be problem-oriented, students experienced it as dictated by teacher orientation and materials.

The results of this survey were mostly positive and were further supported by the 1994 FORSA study, which showed that an overwhelming majority of Germans today have a realistic image of the Nazi era, and that most are not susceptible to neo-Nazi propaganda or denial of the crimes that had been committed. Eighty-seven percent of those questioned had an astonishingly high degree of knowledge about concentration camps and the *Holocaust*. However, it cannot be overlooked that 25 percent of all Germans are vulnerable to right-wing extremist, racist, and anti-Semitic sentiments, or that 45 percent of youth in former West Germany have well-defined, sometimes racist feelings of superiority to eastern European nations – a finding that is disturbing because of growing connections between eastern and western Europe.

Another survey completed in 1994 as part of a dissertation about the influence of historical knowledge of concentration camps and Nazi crimes and visits to memorials on the political attitudes of youngsters had similar results, despite its relatively limited data base. This study, made by Renata Barlog-Scholz between 1985 and 1990, determined that schools were the most important source of information, as indicated by 92 percent of those questioned in 1985 and 94 percent in 1990. Media was the second most important source (84 percent in 1985, 88 percent in 1990), followed by books, and family discussions (60 percent). Only 34 percent of young people stated that visiting a memorial

was an important source of information in 1985, compared to 44 percent in 1990. In 1990, 56 percent of those questioned had visited a memorial site. Eighty-three percent thought that memorials were still important today, but only 7 percent felt that memorials provided the impetus for subsequent reflection. Young people criticized receiving too little information, and also too much information. They also demanded greater variety and objectivity in presentations, and overwhelmingly rejected having feelings of guilt forced upon them.

The Role of Memorials for Victims of National Socialism in Public Commemorative Culture

The memorial sites redesigned during the 1980s are very different from those that opened during the 1950s and 1960s, which primarily served for the commemoration of the dead. Today, the most important concerns are accurate, historical documentation and teaching programs for youngsters, who form the largest visitor group. Memorial sites are increasingly expected to support political education both in and outside of schools.

In contrast to Poland and other countries victimized by Nazi occupation, there was little public interest in the western zones and in former West Germany for memorials to the victims of National Socialism, since these places were linked to painful memories of national shame and moral failure. In the GDR, however, which derived its legitimacy from anti-fascist resistance, "National Memorials for Warning and Remembrance" for the victims of fascism were important for creating an identity. For this reason, an ideologically appropriate architectural form for memorial sites was already supported generously during the 1950s; whereas, educational and scholarly programs at memorial sites were very restricted. In West Germany and West Berlin, even the placement of memorial plaques often could only be completed after difficult battles with survivors' organizations – and frequently only after memorials to "war victims" or the victims of communism and Stalinism had been completed.

Concentration camp memorials did not enter public awareness as places of historical-political education until the mid-1960s, after the *Auschwitz* trials and the student protest movement. However, both German postwar states treated the remains of the former concentration camps similarly. The camps were first used for other purposes; for example, as internment camps by the Allies. Under German administration they later served as camps for displaced persons. Still later, the remains of the camps, often still in good condition, were removed as the sites were redesigned as memorials.

In 1965, the Dachau memorial was opened, a memorial stele in Neuengamme was revealed, and a documentation center with a permanent exhibit was built at Bergen-Belsen in 1966. In contrast to Poland, German concentration camps were not killing centers and thus German memorials primarily document the detention and labor aspects of the camps as places of torture and human suffering. The states are partly responsible for the maintenance of memorials, but municipalities, counties, and independent organizations are also involved. Thus, the nature of an individual memorial is often influenced by local political conditions.

Dachau, the first concentration camp for political victims which opened already in March 1933, is a typical example of a memorial designed according to primarily Catholic Christian interpretation. Already in 1945 a wooden Catholic church had been built. The Catholic *Death Agony of Christ*

Chapel was built in 1960; in 1964 the *Sacred Blood* convent built in atonement; in 1967 the Protestant Church of Reconciliation; and in 1994, a Russian Orthodox chapel built by troops from the former Soviet Union on the site of the former SS encampment. All link the history of Nazi crimes against humanity to the Christian tradition of salvation. An Israeli memorial dedicated to mourning Jewish prisoners was erected in 1965. The denominational memorial sites at Dachau are very stylized and emphasize the distance between past and present.

Visitors see the almost sterile cleanliness and order of the Dachau camp museum area as an anesthetization of the past. In contrast, other memorials typically include an insensitive juxtaposition with secular uses. The Bergen-Belsen memorial, consisting primarily of anonymous mass graves, stands on what was once a military site in the Nazi era, but has also been used for military exercises since the early 1950s. Not only was the cemetery for Soviet prisoners of war, who died in Stalag camp XI.C/311, inaccessible until 1990, but a gunnery range borders the memorial, the use of which disturbs the gravesites and memorial. In Neuengamme, the former brick factory of the camp was rented to a firm that built yachts. Furthermore, the city of Hamburg built a prison on a section of the former camp in 1948, which was subsequently expanded in 1970 with the construction of a juvenile prison. Although the Hamburg Senate promised the organization of former Neuengamme prisoners in 1989 that the prison would be relocated, this was indefinitely postponed for budgetary reasons in the summer of 1994. Only in 1998 did the Hamburg Senate definitely decide to relocate the prison.

On the Ettersberg near Weimar, the GDR government built a monument adjacent to the Buchenwald camp site in a *socialist realism to heroic anti-fascism* style in the 1950s, so as to justify its legitimacy. The terrain of the former women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück was a restricted Soviet military area (until their withdrawal in 1994), and the former SS guard houses had been used by the Soviet army. Only the commandant's headquarters, the camp prison, and the adjoining open areas had been accessible to the memorial until the mid-1990s.

Different political concepts for memorials to the memory of Nazi victims were again reflected in public debates during the 1980s. These debates revolved around the planned national memorial in Bonn and the design for the former Gestapo headquarters in Berlin. After unification and the decision to move the German capital back to Berlin, the federal government officially designated the former Prussian *Neue Wache* (in the city center near Brandenburg Gate previously a war memorial and later a GDR monument to the "victims of fascism and militarism"), as a memorial site to the "victims of war and tyranny." This memorial relapsed to the typical style of the 1950s and used a Käthe Kollwitz Pieta statue of a mother grieving for her fallen son enlarged to twenty times the original size. It is most important that the distinction between perpetrators and victims was again blurred and criticized publicly, thus enabling arbitrary choices for historical events to be commemorated there.

At the eve of the Millennium Germany is deeply involved in a public debate on remembrance. Interpretative models, such as at the *Neue Wache*, impede necessary and appropriate commemoration. This is also true of the memorial for the European Jews in the center of Berlin for which the German *Bundestag* recently decided after a long and never ending debate not to include other victims. This concept creates a hierarchy of victims of Nazi genocide into more important victim groups and respectively less deserving groups.

Current Methods of Historical-Political Education

Schools, as well as non-school institutions such as memorials, confront the problem that only very few eyewitnesses from the generation of victims and perpetrators, rescuers and accomplices, are available to youngsters. However, there is a growing interest on the part of younger teachers in combining traditional teaching methods for history, political education and education at memorials, with approaches that refer to the students' own experiences in their free time. There is no ideal solution for how best to communicate content based on student projects. The question of what methods to use recurs repeatedly because for the majority of younger teachers, the subject of National Socialism is a strictly historical issue.

The various pedagogical methods found on the CD-ROM have something in common and are summarized by the following recommendations: Just as every generation must find its own access to the past, this also applies to educational methods about National Socialism and the *Holocaust* both in and outside of schools. This is true even if lectures are still the most common teaching form. In other words, the more independently a student group works with its teacher to understand the Nazi past, and the more creatively and individually the students approach their assignments, the greater the success for the individual student. However such results are not necessarily measurable in tangible ways.

Learning from History as a Dialogue

The experiences of teachers of history and political education, whose projects are found on the CD-ROM, support Martin Buber's principle of dialogue as an exchange between teachers and students as partners. There are no winners or losers, since as a partner in a dialogue the teacher is also a student and does not dominate the discussion with his/her knowledge or by virtue of age. This change in the role of the teacher is described by the English term "facilitator," rather than the concept of "instructor." Independent educational institutions, such as memorials which provide seminars for school classes, sometimes make a point of asking teachers not to direct the session, thereby allowing the moderators to facilitate open and more effective communication.

Using the method of dialogue in schools and youth work also means not losing patience in critical situations, such as in discussions with young people who deny that the *Holocaust* occurred. Adults, however, must always know their facts securely and have good arguments at hand. Teachers usually agree that the only way to rebut right-wing extremist provocations is to ignore them or to pass them off as anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi propaganda. Although "true believers" usually cannot be converted by hard facts and objective arguments, it is still important not to force them into the position of victims in their "fight for truth," or to let the authority by virtue of position as a teacher substitute for factual information. These extremist students are happy enough to attract attention by their public "Sieg Heil" slogans or in schools by creating disturbances and breaking off dialogue.

"The challenge to never let *Auschwitz* recur is fundamental to education. It is more important than anything else, and I see no necessity or reason to justify it." Theodor W. Adorno's 1966 radio speech, which began with this quotation, was called *Education after Auschwitz*. His theses, presented twenty years after liberation from Hitler's fascism, are still valid today. In working with young people born long after the war, education in the spirit of Adorno must settle for "remembrance of fascism" rather than actually personally "remembering fascism." It is thus an ongoing process, achieved through such projects as the memorial book project in the Old Synagogue of Essen, where those who were killed are given back their names [see CD-ROM: Project: Everybody has a name]. Memorial work is

also evident in the achievements of a Majdanek project group from a Berlin school, comparing name lists of the deceased in the concentration camp with names published in the German Federal Archives Memorial Book. The students discovered that many German Jews killed at Majdanek were not known to the Federal Archive [*Bundesarchiv*]. When students researched in German archives for biographies of German concentration camp guards, they discovered that arguments for protection of personal data were used to deny access to historical material, thereby revealing a specific way of dealing with history. Their questions and research enabled them to discover that history is not limited to the past, but affects the present, and thus becomes part of their own history [see CD-ROM: Project: "That Everything Has Been So Authentic ..."].

Learning Political History outside Schools

In about half of the projects described here, participants decided to visit a concentration camp memorial in order to combine what they had learned in school with the reality they perceived. Although the wish to see for oneself and to bring historical events into the present is understandable, it must be pointed out that the reality presented in a memorial can lead to sightless incomprehension. This idea was already described by the East Prussian philosopher Immanuel Kant: Understanding without seeing is empty, and seeing without understanding is blind.

Moreover, when visiting former concentration camps, there is the risk of confusing historical facts with displays, so that the recollection evoked by an exhibition can be mistaken for reality. Teachers must explain and interpret the various layers and levels accumulated over time at a concentration camp, synagogue, or any other historic site. We emphatically believe that memorial sites, especially those for concentration camps, require interpretation.

Youngsters are usually positive about visiting memorials. They emphasize that history is made visible there, and that it provides them with the chance to form opinions independently of adults. The most vivid impressions are made by artifacts, buildings, film documentation, and conversations with survivors. Guided tours and remarks by memorial educational personnel are considered helpful only when students learned something new. They reject standardized lectures that attempt to influence their views and are not directly linked to their visual impressions.

The effectiveness of memorials to counter right-wing extremist views is doubtful. Because some students had previously been required to attend compulsory events in East Germany which blunted their impact, visits to memorials should be voluntary. Students should be included in planning visits to memorials, since visiting an exhibition or discovering a site can also be carried out independently by small groups of youngsters. In independently planned visits, youngsters become more involved as individuals and as a group with visual and documentary materials, and they are likely to come up with their own questions. The risk of their being intellectually and emotionally overwhelmed is controllable.

Emancipation, self-reliance, critical thinking, self-directed learning, and empathy are indispensable categories for historical and political learning at memorials. Educational programs offered at memorials must therefore be methodologically different than those offered by museums, schools, and universities if they wish to reach more than a minority of intellectuals. Projects at memorials included on the CD-ROM provide actual examples, including the student project groups which

removed trash and weeds from the former Buchenwald concentration camp train station, thereby "keeping grass from growing over history." Heads, hearts, and hands, to quote Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi [see CD-ROM: Project: Preservation of the Train Station at Buchenwald, and Project: Discovering Barrack 9 at Bergen-Belsen].

Projects and Learning

Historical-political education about *Auschwitz* should not aim at emotional impact. Upsetting students and manipulating their emotions is undesirable as exploitation and indoctrination. Although there is some risk that over-identification with the suffering of the victims can render students speechless and unable to function, speaking with them about their feelings when confronting painful experiences is indispensable. The ability to challenge students to understand their own feelings and to discuss them with others is a basic educational task that is not limited to the subject of *Auschwitz*. This can be seen in an interdisciplinary project by a comprehensive school in Saarland. After visiting Natzweiler concentration camp, students recorded their impressions and feelings in a creative writing workshop and later published their works. Like almost all projects on this CD-ROM, the Saarland project has the following characteristics:

- Interdisciplinary approaches to the subject
- Cooperative work, emphasizing small-group activities
- User-friendly orientation, including the youngsters' questions and specific requests
- Product oriented, aiming to present project results in public
- Participatory realization, involving students in all phases of preparation, implementation, and evaluation of a project.

Students and teachers direct activities to specific questions, employ the participants' diverse skills, and utilize the possibilities of school or non-school study sites. This includes archival research, speaking with survivors, performing archeological digs, and writing texts as ways of working through historical experiences. As one of the founders of project work, the American William Heard Kilpatrick stipulated more than 60 years ago, the result almost always will be an "acting straight from the heart, of their own free will, in a social environment."

When students participating in a local contest look for the remains of a concentration subcamp as they did in Malchow [see CD-ROM: Project "Dig Where You Are Standing"], or teachers and students name their school after a rescuer of children in Buchenwald [see CD-ROM: Project: Investigating a School's Name], the results of this work are not easily compared to those in math or biology classes. It is rapidly apparent that standardized comparisons with learning goals in other classes have no place here, and are indeed counterproductive.

Changes in attitude and behavior among young people who participate in such projects can often barely be noticed after the project's completion. As a teacher, one cannot avoid rejecting tests whose outcomes are often used to deduce value judgements about democratic behavior. While no one opposes solid knowledge and facts, their overemphasis can lead to school fatigue and the rejection of precisely those values the teacher wished to communicate. Textbooks alone usually cannot change the understanding of contemporary events. Empathy and knowledge from classroom learning must

be linked to "genuine encounters" as called for in reform pedagogy. Our project shows that sensibility created by hands-on projects guarantees more durable changes in attitude.

International student exchanges are often arranged both through schools and youth organizations. These encounters, which have developed in Germany on the basis of bilateral national agreements, especially between German and Israeli, Polish, and French youngsters, are an incentive for intercultural dialogue between young people from different backgrounds. An agreement like the German-French Youth Work does not yet exist between Germany and the United States, although youth groups and school classes often meet on both sides of the Atlantic.

When such encounters serve as preparation for a visit to a concentration camp memorial, the trust among the participants can facilitate approaching places of horror with their attendant psychological difficulties. This is especially important for those visiting such a place for the first time. Many reports of international exchanges reflect what a Berlin student wrote in her journal after visiting *Auschwitz*:

"Auschwitz gives me the opportunity to understand the meaning of responsibility for history, for what has happened. Walking through the memorial brought me closer to the victims, to their individual fates, but most of all their collective suffering. It is hard for me to deal with the unthinkable, but it is important that I understand that there were places and events where humanity was lost. I wouldn't want to go through Auschwitz alone...."

Bibliography

[see CD-ROM: Reference: Other Reference Materials]