



Heidemarie Uhl. *Zivilisationsbruch und Gedächtniskultur: Das 20. Jahrhundert in der Erinnerung des beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts.* Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003. 226 S. EUR 24.00 (broschiert), ISBN 978-3-7065-1923-6.

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Memory and the Holocaust

The eleven essays gathered in this volume are the fruits of an ongoing discussion on memory sponsored by the *Kommission fuer Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte der Oesterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. They come from the fourth in a series of conferences dedicated to the topic "Orte des Gedaechtnisses" held in November 2002. Of consistently high quality, the essays delve into changes in public perceptions and the evolution of scholarly studies concerning National Socialism from a variety of disciplinary and national perspectives within a European context. Contributors include historians, an anthropologist, a psychoanalyst, sociologists, a mediologist, and a Germanist.

The disciplinary diversity is reflected in the variety of topics covered and methodologies employed. These include consideration of the ways in which the events under National Socialism are labeled, an overview of the German Federal Republic's *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung*, a discussion of benchmark events in the reception of crimes committed under National Socialism in Germany and Austria, and an analysis of the possibility of the transmission of trauma over generations. The volume closes with a look at shifts in Eastern Europe, including collective memory of the Holocaust and contested places of memory among ethnic groups there. The strength and variety of the contributions make this volume indispensable for scholars investigating individual, collective, and cultural memory in Europe in the last half-century.

Shifts in generations, post-Shoah historical events in

Europe and the world, the distance between the events and the present, and recent work on collective and cultural memory have shaped and reshaped attempts to understand National Socialism. As the editor, Heidemarie Uhl, highlights in her introductory remarks, such shifts are coupled with an epistemological challenge for scholars of this period. The challenges lead to questions, including why has the Holocaust become such a central part of contemporary memory in the western hemisphere; and why does the collective memory of this genocide remain "hot" to use Charles Maier's terminology (p. 9)? Dan Diner's coinage of the concept "civilization rupture" (*Zivilisationsbruch*) elaborated in the first essay in the volume goes hand in hand with the reassessment of the historical events in the years 1933-1945. Within the context of a changing Europe and, indeed, globalization, changes in the commemoration of the Holocaust stimulate a variety of questions. For example, which narrative and images have determined the ways in which we have thought about this period (p. 11); and is Auschwitz destined to become a transitory memory figure (p. 12)? These questions are echoed throughout the contributions.

Two fascinating essays of particular interest to scholars of Austria are the study of the reception of the controversial 2002 exhibition on the *Wehrmacht* in Austria among high school students and the examination of the reception of the television series "Holocaust," aired in Austria in 1979. In the article on the reception of the *Wehrmacht* exhibition ("Verbrechen der Wehrmacht.

Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944" [Vienna, April 9-May 26 2002]), the team of Garnitschnig, Kiessling and Pollack pose the often asked questions: what will remain of the history of National Socialism after the last witnesses have died; which aspects of this history, which myths and symbols will become part of the culture of memory; and what will be lost (p. 115)?

The generation of high-school students, aged 13-19 year—the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who experienced National Socialism—is a logical cohort for such a study. This part of the team's work-in-progress is based on focus groups and questionnaires with school groups who attended the *Wehrmacht* exhibition. The questions are not directed to the exhibition itself, but rather to the ways in which the youths spoke about National Socialism and the crimes associated with it (p. 118). The team is particularly concerned with the familial, educational, and medial contexts, in which these topics were treated. In addition to a lack of empirical studies focusing on this generation, the team notes that, to date, studies have not taken into consideration the changing ethnic composition of this generation in Austria (a notable number of this generation come from households that immigrated to Austria after 1945).

The team discovered that the students had associations with the concept "National Socialism" that were related to suffering and the atrocities of the era, and were emotionally charged. Significantly, the students often did not tie a particular group to these emotions, nor did they consider causal relationships (p. 132). In their concluding remarks the team warned that these results suggested the potential for relativizing the crimes committed between 1933-1945.

The editor's own article on the reception of the U.S. television series "Holocaust in Austria" is a long-overdue complement to the extensive work done on the reception of the series in the Federal Republic. Uhl examines the airing of the TV-series as an external intervention in Austrian collective and cultural memory, and is concerned with the ways in which it framed and was framed by the discussion of the Holocaust up to that point (p. 154). The author notes that the Austrian case is particularly noteworthy as the airing was preceded by public debates concerning this period of Austrian history (p. 155). In 1978, which marked the fortieth anniversary of the "Anschluss," the events of the years 1938-1945 were remembered in numerous publications and multiple media events.

Uhl seeks to analyze what is specifically Austrian

about the reception. She frames her analysis by looking at tone of public *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* up to the late seventies. She points to the fact that the series was aired in a period when the first national narratives concerning Austria's past were crumbling. In the late 1970s, the "*Mythos der Lagerstrasse*" (which had dominated public discourse and dovetailed with the emphasis on the study of the demise of the First Republic) was reevaluated by a younger generation of critical intellectuals (p. 157). The shaky peace between the OVP and SPO was broken; most scholarship at the time pointed to the fact that the conservative camp had done more to hurry the end of the First Republic than the Socialists. Despite the changes, the fact remained that the persecution and murder of Jews were absent from these discussions.

The airing of the "Holocaust" between March 1-4, 1979 in ORF opened up questions of individual and general complicity in the Austrian population. Uhl delves into discussion in the Austria print and TV media after the event and attempts to interpret both short-term and long-term affects. Immediately after the airing of the series a significant percentage of the Austrian population agreed that Austrians were complicitous in the National Socialist crimes (from 44% before the telecast to 50% directly after). While the sentiment was not necessarily sustained, Uhl notes that the series did open up a more lasting emotional sympathy to the victims of Nazi oppression (p. 172).

For scholars of Central Europe and particularly of those countries, which once belonged to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Rudolf Jaworki's article will be of particular interest. He argues that "places of memory" and the erection of monuments in East Central Europe, where there are multiple ethnic groups, have been much more conflict-ridden than in western parts of Europe. His examples include the statue of Matthias Corvinus in Cluj, Rumania, and the area around the concentration camp Auschwitz. As an attempt at reconciliation between conflicting groups, he sites the "Versöhnungskreuz" in Teplice nad Metuji which, as he sadly notes, has been defaced.

Two other articles I would like to mention briefly are Oliver Marchart's nuanced examination of multiple meanings of singularity, particularity, and universality vis-a-vis the National Socialist genocide over time, and Cornelia Brink's illuminating investigation of how photos of the National Socialist period have shaped memory of it over the past fifty years. Drawing on philosophy and discourse analysis, Marchart considers the ideologies be-

hind claims of singularity, particularity, and universality. Brink demonstrates how selected photos of the National Socialist years have been used at different times, reflecting various stages and types of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. She also convincingly argues that the reception of identical photos has varied from country to country (p. 76).

To frame the collection of eleven essays, the editor points out in the introduction that the “Final Solution” has increasingly become the pivotal event in research and in public memory concerning National Socialism. To illustrate her point she includes an anecdote Raul Hilberg

related after being awarded the *Geschwister-Scholl-Preis* in December 2002. In 1959 Hannah Arendt, among others, found that the theme of Jewish persecution under National Socialism lacked actuality. She noted this in her assessment and rejection of Hilberg’s manuscript for *The Destruction of European Jews*. Arendt’s opinion seems particularly shortsighted in the light of the fact that this book has become a standard work in Holocaust studies both here and abroad. The topic was certainly not passe. Indeed, events following the Holocaust and changing national contexts continue to shape its reception and analysis, as this volume most convincingly illustrates.

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