
“IS THERE A COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF CRIME? REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST IN GERMANY FROM 1945 UNTIL TODAY.”

By Anke Hilbrenner

In May 2003 Nicolas Berg published his study “Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker“¹. In his study Berg explores the reasons why the Holocaust was marginalized in West German historiography for so long. Berg claims that many West German historians, while working deservedly about the history of National Socialism, they neglected its most central part, the Holocaust, as they were unwilling to accept the guilt of countless Germans, including themselves or their fathers, brothers or teachers. Berg’s book was therefore perceived as an assault on the moral integrity of the West German historians, who devoted their studies to “Zeitgeschichte” (contemporary history) and up to this point had been considered a moral authority, because they were professionally dealing with “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (coming to terms with the past), which became a central factor of German identity.

Starting with Norbert Frei’s review in the “Süddeutsche Zeitung”, there arose a heated discussion about the book from the very same day it was published.² The German feuilletons had a new “historians’ debate”.

¹ Berg, Nicolas. *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung*. Göttingen 2003. The following discussion arose after the round table on the Kladovo transport, October 19th 2002, documented here. It illustrates my remarks well and is therefore included into this paper.

² Frei, Norbert. *Mitläufergeschichten? Heute erscheint Nicolas Bergs Studie über die NS-Deutungen deutscher Zeithistoriker*. In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8.5.2003. See for the discussion also a forum on Germany’s most important historical newlist: <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=415&type=diskussionen>

Historians' discourse on the Holocaust, on National Socialism and on the role of the historians in National Socialism, as well as coming to terms with the past, have been issues of the German public discourse since 1945.³ The "Historikerstreit" or the argument on the involvement of historians in National Socialism, which is closely linked with the "Historikertag" in Frankfurt/Main 1998, are just two examples from the recent past. The fact has already been pointed out that those debates were to a large extent due to a generational conflict, the case of each historian being very much linked to his position in academia and society.⁴ The arguments on the crucial points of German history were thus not merely put forward after a thoroughly scientific process, but were formed by the sociological context of the historians involved.

Berg now stresses the point, that the methodological innovations of the "Zeithistoriker" such as the "structuralist approach" to history was due to the historians' sociological context, their experiences of followers of National Socialism in their early years or their enrootment in a society of delinquents. Their way of exculpating individual perpetrators was to shift historical interest to "processes" and structures. Jewish historians in return, searching not for structures but for the perpetrators as their view was that of the victims, were marginalized by those "Zeithistoriker" out of their position of academic power.

Berg's opponents argue that he does not value the merits of the "Zeithistoriker". Very often with a hint to close cooperation with the "Zeithistoriker" in question, those critics defend their colleagues as distinguished scientists and doubt Berg's integrity: "Beware the moral high ground"⁵.

³ Sabrow, Martin, Jessen, Ralph, Große Kracht, Klaus (Hg.). *Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Große Kontroversen seit 1945*. München 2003.

⁴ See f.e. Leggewie, Claus. *Mitleid mit den Doktorvätern oder Wissenschaftsgeschichte in Biographien*. In: *Merkur* 53, 5 (1999) S. 433-444.

⁵ Kershaw, Ian. *Beware the moral high ground*. In: *Times literary supplement*, 10 October 2003.

Berg's book and probably unintendedly also the following discussion are case studies on the interaction between historiography and collective memory. The still valid positivist image of the historian implies objectivity and a strong opposition between historiography and collective memory. According to this image, the scientific approach to the past is more likely to show the relativity of one historical event or group in relation to another than, like collective memory, their exclusiveness and uniqueness. Historiography therefore deals with reality, while memory produces rather mystical narratives informed by the partisanship of the person or collective who remembers.

But, as Amos Funkenstein holds against that, collective memory is informed by historical consciousness and "thinking about history reflected the moods and sentiments of the community in which this thinking took place."⁶ Derived from Funkenstein's observation, I want to explore the Holocaust in German collective memory, taking the historical discourse into account. In the course of time the attitude towards the Holocaust in German society has changed, but are there continuities as well? How are political and social needs of its contemporaries nitted into the web of collective memory? Is there a collective memory of delinquent?

Being a contribution to a round table discussion, this paper cannot cover all sources and phenomena of collective memory, neither in- nor excluding historiography. It is argumentative rather than complete. But it is supposed to point out problems of dealing with one's past, especially with the memory of the Holocaust. It is fairly striking, I think, that the techniques of avoiding the memory of the Holocaust, while undergoing certain changes in the course of time or within different political or social circumstances, still remain basically constant regarding important questions. The setting we find directly after the defeat of Germany and thus after the end of the Holocaust will reappear under different circumstances in different times from 1945 until today.

⁶ Funkenstein, Amos: *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993. p. 8.

Victims and perpetrators after “Zero Hour”

“Zero hour” is a common myth concerning Germany after the end of World War II. It is commonplace among historians and intellectuals that there was no “zero hour”, but in collective memory it still refers to a German restart in 1945. For the Germans, the date of May 8, 1945 was not a day of liberation, but one of defeat, of unconditional surrender. “Zero hour” implies the promise of looking ahead and not dealing with the past even though the past and its effects were undeniable. Confronted with their past in everyday life, Germans perceived themselves as victims. More than 5 million Germans died in the war, 500 000 of those were civilians. Others were soldiers and left their families without fathers, brothers or sons. Another 1,5-2 million POWs⁷ were held especially in the Soviet Union and only a part of them returned. The emotional loss of the remaining families was accompanied by lacking a bread-winner in economically difficult times. The fate of the remained and mostly female society was left to the members of the occupying forces with varying results. Mass rape and abuse were frequent especially for the women in the Eastern part of Germany, where the Red Army held power. The borders between violation and prostitution because of economic and security reasons were streaming.⁸

In most cities simple shelter was not available and the destruction by the allied air raids would be visible for a long time. Very soon the fate of the “Volksdeutschen” added to their self-perception as victims. Almost 12 million of ethnic Germans were banished from Eastern Europe, many of them died. The others were refugees in a destroyed, ruined and needy country.

⁷ Prisoners of war

⁸ See f.e. Anonyma. Eine Frau in Berlin. Tagebuchaufzeichnungen vom 20. April bis zum 22. Juni 1945. Frankfurt/Main 12003.

Under these circumstances the Germans regarded themselves as victims. The Jewish suffering was, if mentioned at all, considered to be no greater than their own. The question of guilt was avoided and this remained as such for a long time.⁹

The self-perception of the Germans as victims was not only common in the broader public but also in the intellectual discourse. Very telling for the case of the historians is Friedrich Meinecke's book "Die deutsche Katastrophe", published in 1946.¹⁰ According to Meinecke, Nazism was something that happened to the Germans. He politically wrote against the identification of Nazism and Germany by the Allies, proving the "un-German" character of Nazism. Hitler and the Nazi elite had brought "catastrophe" over the Germans, who were now suffering from the consequences. As those consequences there were identified: military defeat resulting in the loss of independent statehood of Germany, partitions of Germany and the loss of the East European territories. The Holocaust was not considered. The perpetrators were a small and vicious Nazi elite. Their very first victims were the Germans themselves.

Victims and perpetrators in East and West Germany

The German partition and the double and hostile statehood of the two post-war Germanies added complexity to the question of the memory of the Holocaust in Germany, but was there really a "divided memory"?¹¹ Of course both Germanies

⁹ Margalit, Gilad. *Divided Memory? Expressions of a United German Memory*. In: Michman, Dan (Hg.) *Remembering the Holocaust in Germany, 1945-2000: German Strategies and Jewish responses*. New York u.a. 2002. P. 31-42. P. 32-33.

¹⁰ Meinecke, Friedrich. *Die deutsche Katastrophe. Betrachtungen und Erinnerungen*. Wiesbaden 1946.

¹¹ Herf, Jeffrey. *Divided memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanies*. Cambridge, Mass. 1997.

remembered the Nazi past differently, but on the other hand we can trace down certain similarities concerning the question of guilt, of victims, and perpetrators.

GDR

The GDR continued the German policy of perceiving themselves as the “first victims” of National Socialism. In the focus of the official collective memory there were the communist fighters against fascism. The memorial sites in the GDR were stili- zed to become memorial sites of anti-fascism rather than the Holocaust. Those anti-fascist fighters were considered the found- ing fathers of the GDR and the most of the members of the po- litical elite had themselves been victims of Nazi concentration camps or had fled from Nazi Germany. The “normal” Germans living in the GDR were considered to be victims as well, at least most of them: All Germans injured by the war, including Ger- man soldiers, were considered victims of fascism and war and thus belonged to the same category as the Jewish victims. This category counted for second rate victims in terms of preferen- tial pensions and social benefits, while the first place was awarded to the anti-fascist fighters. This policy of official com- memoration was due to the attempt of shaping an anti-fascist collective memory in order to legitimatize the new socialist Germany that had risen out of the ruins of destructed Hitler- Germany. It was also necessary to include the “normal” Ger- mans, to regard them as victims in order to build the bridges between the anti-fascist party oligarchy and the “normal”, most- ly non-communist Germans.

With their official identity of “anti-fascist” Germany, the elites of the GDR felt no need to consider themselves or any- body in their new state former perpetrators. The perpetrators were the “other” Germans in the FRG.

As, according to Marxist theory, National Socialism was merely an extreme form of capitalism and imperialism, i.e. everything that was resembled by the West, the FRG together

with its new western partners was the legitimate heir of Nazi Germany. The GDR pointed out to the continuities in the elites transforming from nazis to democrats in new West Germany to prove its eligibility and thus showed that the FRG was really the country of delinquent, of the perpetrators of National Socialism, of the repressions against the Germans, of the war and not at last of the Holocaust. Together with the FRG nazis, their new western partners became the target of GDR propaganda. Thus the GDR renewed the German belief, inherited from the time of the Third Reich, that they were victimized by the Western Allies.¹²

FRG

In West Germany the myth of "Zero Hour" remained alive for a long time. The official GDR policy was right with pointing out to former nazis in influential positions of the new democratic Germany, but politicians and society in the FRG wanted to look ahead. For the process of rebuilding the country they figured they were in need of the old elites and dealing too long with questions of guilt would not help.

The establishment of the FRG continued with the emphasis on German suffering during and after the war. The Germans remained victims and this perception was due to the anti-communist course of the FRG integration into the West. The Cold War helped and led the Western Allies to weaken their policy of "Ent-Nazifizierung" (de-nazification), since they were in need of a loyal ally in West Germany. The communists were identified as the new culprits. The Soviet Union and the new communist regimes in Eastern Europe were held responsible for the German suffering especially after the war. They were involved in the unsolved problem of the POWs, in the expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe, the soldiers of the Red army had raped German women and had plundered German cities and

¹² Margalit, *Divided Memory?* p. 33-36.

last but not least, the communists were responsible for the consolidation of the German separation. As well as the official collective memory of the GDR, the establishment of the FRG renewed an old Nazi stereotype that had been very valid during the time of the Third Reich: Anti-Bolshevism.

The political elite of the FRG strongly rejected any idea of “collective German guilt” for the murder of the Jews. It is interesting to note that the Germans were always eager to deny the idea of “collective guilt”, while as Helmut Dubiel showed, nobody ever formulated this accusation. Dubiel concludes that this kind of “projection” is a form of unconscious acknowledgement of guilt, while denying it.¹³

The Holocaust was regarded as not committed by the Germans, but it was “crimes committed in the name of the German people” as Konrad Adenauer had put it.¹⁴ The question of who had committed those crimes in the name of the German people was never answered. Guilty were the elites of Nazi Germany, but in a very limited understanding of the term elite, the SS and Hitler himself. It was only a narrow circle around Hitler and those convicted by the trials, who in a very abstract sense were guilty of a mass murder that involved thousands of perpetrators. This Nazi elite was seen as separated from the German nation as a whole.

In the collective memories of the GDR and the FRG, as superficial as they are sketched above, there stand out striking similarities. In both German states the official memory politics regarding the questions of historical guilt were somehow a continuation of the situation right after “Zero hour”. Both German states perceived their German inhabitants as victims of war and National Socialism. The Jews or the Holocaust were hardly ever

¹³ Dubiel, Helmut: *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte. Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestages*, München 1999. p. 71.

¹⁴ Quoted after: Margalit, *Divided Memory?* p. 37.

mentioned. If those “unspeakable crimes” were referred to at all, they remained somehow abstract and unconcrete.

In both states, stereotypes of the enemy of the Third Reich were transformed into the new historical consciousness: Anti-Bolshevism in the FRG and anti-western attitude in the GDR. Always “the others” were guilty. The shifting of guilt towards the “others” was used to stabilize and legitimize one’s own state in contrast to the other German state.

New impact on the collective memory: from the 1960s to 1989

In the 1960ies the public discourse in West Germany was changing due to a generation shift. The academic elite who was reaching their historical chairs by the 1960s had been born in the 1930s and thus were not contemporaries but had lived in the Third Reich as children. In historical science and from there also in the public sphere it became possible to make the Nazi past as well as the Holocaust a subject after a long time of silence. With a new generation appearing, the attitude towards the German past changed. More and more Germans came to accepting a general German responsibility for the nazi crimes. But this feeling of responsibility remained abstract. Here Nicolas Berg’s observations fit into the picture. Historiography dealt with the history of the Third Reich, but the Holocaust itself somehow remained in the background.

Starting with the early 1960s, West German historiography dealt with National Socialism in a scientific, non-moralistic manner. They tried to explain why the unspeakable crimes had happened but they did not describe how they had happened. The Holocaust was always present in the works of the distinguished “Zeithistoriker”, such as Martin Broszat or Hans Mommsen, but it was present by absence. It was treated as a point of reference, but

did not become the main subject of research. Therefore the “unspeakable crimes” remained abstract, in sciences as well as in the broader public.¹⁵ The 1960s were the time when the Germans, especially the young people, turned against the personal continuities from the time of the Third Reich. They protested against the policy of “looking ahead” and demanded a reworking of the past. But most of those who rebelled against the older generation left out their own parents and turned to an abstract “German guilt”. More than that, the Holocaust was not in the main focus in the public discussions about the nazi past in the 1960s.

It was in this social context, that the “Zeithistoriker” devoted themselves to questions about the structures of the nazi state. While the intentionalists still concentrated on the intentions of a small nazi elite, the functionalists researched the structures of the Third Reich resulting in the “unspeakable crimes”. The structures leading to the Holocaust exculpated the individual, since the crimes had happened due to “cumulative radicalization” of the double structure (state and party) of the NS state. Under this circumstances, individual guilt became “negligible portions of guilt”, as Martin Broszat later claimed: “The need for a historical presentation of the magnitude and singularity of the horrifying events of the destruction of the Jews that is comparable to its diabolical causation has come into conflict with historical treatments which demonstrate that the full magnitude of this crime was made up of a multitude of often very small contributing elements, and of frequently negligible portions of guilt.”¹⁶

This quotation is taken from the correspondence between Martin Broszat and Saul Friedlander, published in the “Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte” in 1988. Broszat’s thoughts abo-

¹⁵ See the brilliant analysis: Lorenz, Chris. *Border-crossings: Some Reflections on the Role of German Historians in Recent Public Debates on Nazi History*. In: Michman, Rembering. p. 59-94. p. 71-76.

¹⁶ Broszat, Martin an Saul Friedlander, München, 26.10.1987. In: *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 36 (1988) p. 348-353. p. 352.

ut a historical method fit for a historiography of National Socialism have been notoriously quoted especially in the Berg debate. It is a very telling source though, even if written some 20 years later, about the self-perception of the innovating “Zeithistoriker”, who renewed the discipline in the 1960ies and from then on dominated the discourse on the German past.

It was in the very same context that Broszat claimed that historiography about National Socialism should not center around a perspective given by Holocaust, symbolized by the code “Auschwitz”: “The German historian, too, will certainly accept that Auschwitz – due to its singular significance – functions in retrospection as the central event of the Nazi period. Yet qua scientist and scholar, he cannot readily accept that Auschwitz also be made, after the fact, into the cardinal point, the hinge on which the entire factual complex of historical events of the Nazi period turns. He cannot simply accept without further ado that this entire complex of history be moved into the shadow of Auschwitz – yes, that Auschwitz even be made into the decisive measuring rod for the historical perception of this period. Such a perspective would not only serve after the fact, to force totally under its usurped domination those non-National Socialist German traditions which extended on into the Nazi period and, due to their being ‘appropriated’ by the regime, to a certain extent themselves fell prey to National Socialism.”¹⁷

Looking back into the traditions of “remembering the Holocaust in Germany” it is striking, that Broszat, who turned over the way Germans thought about their nazi history and among others started off with a critical historical consciousness, holds Auschwitz against the “non-National Socialist German traditions” that “fell prey to National Socialism”. He thus continues to a certain degree the relativization between Jewish and German victims, which was constantly present in any attempt not to “remember the Holocaust in Germany”.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 353.

Broszat also interestingly distinguishes the matter of the centrality of Auschwitz between himself “qua scientist and scholar” and the collective memory: “Auschwitz has in retrospect rightfully been felt again and again indeed to be the central event of the Nazi period – and this not only by Jews. Consequently, Auschwitz also plays a central role in the West German historical treatment of the Nazi period – in school books, for example – as can be readily shown.”¹⁸

It is true that in the 1980s the Holocaust was already a topic in public discourse. But not for too long. Starting with the political change in the late 1960s, when the Social Democrats came into power, the political culture as well as the official collective memory underwent changes. Willy Brandt, who was known to have been an active Nazi opponent and who had lived in exile during the war, became the first Social Democrat chancellor of the FRG. In 1970 he begged the victims of the Warsaw Ghetto pardon by his famous prostration in Warsaw. In 1977, his successor Helmut Schmidt visited Auschwitz as the first chancellor of the FRG. The greatest impact however had the mass media.

With broadcasting the TV series “Holocaust” in 1979, not only the notion of Holocaust but also the topic became a part of popular culture.

In January 1979 the American TV series was broadcast in Germany after a heated discussion in the media about value and problems of a “commercialized” and fictional representation of the genocide of the European Jews by mass media. The discussion started in the USA and continued in West Germany but the instant success of the series changed the reception. While, for example, the magazine “Der Spiegel” was critical in the beginning, two weeks after the broadcast it claimed on its front page: “Holocaust – The murder of the Jews is moving the Germans”.¹⁹ The TV series seemed to have really affected the

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 352.

¹⁹ Der Spiegel, 29.1.1979.

German memory of the Holocaust. Between 43% and 48% of the German households watched the "Holocaust", two thirds of them were "deeply moved" by it. Those who watched it claimed that their knowledge of the Holocaust had now greatly increased. Especially younger and less educated viewers stated that they had not known very much about the Holocaust before the broadcast.²⁰ From that time on, public awareness of the Holocaust was increasing.

Remembering the Holocaust after the re-unification of Germany

From the 1980s on, the public taboo on discussing the Holocaust was decreasing. But after 1990, remembering the Holocaust reached a new quality. The re-unification of Germany raised suspicion among some of the former Allies that a new Germany would emerge without any consciousness of Germany's dreadful history in the twentieth century. There were some indicators fostering this suspicion, as for example the scandal attached to the name of Martin Walser. The speech by the famous German author Martin Walser at the ceremony for the Peace Award of the German bookselling trade in 1998 was only the peak of an ongoing discourse of unwillingness to remember the German guilt. Walser demanded an end of "the permanent representation of our blemish". Even though there had never been such a "permanent representation", some prominent Germans took his side. Ignaz Bubis, head of the "Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland" at that time, was shocked and started with his public answer what was later called the "Walser-Bubis-Debate".²¹

²⁰ Wilke, Jürgen: Die Fernsehserie "Holocaust" als Medienereignis <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/md=FSHolocaust-Wilke> 1. 04. 2004.

²¹ See Schirmmacher, Frank. Die Walser-Bubis Debatte. Eine Dokumentation. Frankfurt/Main 2000.

If we look at the history of remembering the Holocaust in Germany we will see that Martin Walser's refusal to actively remember the German guilt was not a singular scandal, reaching a new quality of historical oblivion, but rather proves the continuities of German "Vergangenheitsbewältigung".

Probably the scandalizing power of Walser's speech was that heavy as in the 1990s, public awareness of "German guilt" and the Holocaust was bigger than it had ever been in German post-war history. The re-unification ended the "German catastrophe" and thus effected the German public debate on the consequences of National Socialism. Germans had no need to feel as victims of their own history any longer and were able to concentrate on the other victims. After the "German catastrophe" had vanished there was only the "Jewish catastrophe" left. The German confrontation with the nazi legacy was steadily increasing, as can be shown by the numerous debates of the 1990s, such as the "Goldhagen" and the "Wehrmacht" debate, to name but two of them.²²

The book by Daniel Noah Goldhagen, "Hitler's willing executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust"²³ effectively raised, notwithstanding its scientific quality, a new question in German society: Who committed those "unspeakable crimes"?

The same question was discussed in the "Wehrmacht" debate. It started with an exhibition of the "Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung" documenting the crimes committed by the German Wehrmacht soldiers against civilians in Eastern Europe, Jews among them. This exhibition, "Vernichtungskrieg. Die Verbrechen der Wehrmacht in Osteuropa 1941-1944", put an end to a common myth of German postwar society; the myth of the „saubere (clean) Wehrmacht“. Up to this point it had been a common belief that the war crimes as mass murder of civilians

²² See Lorenz, *Border-crossings*, p. 76-81.

²³ Goldhagen, Daniel Noah. *Hitler's willing executioners. Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York 1996.

had been committed mostly by the SD or SS, while the German Wehrmacht had been engaged in „normal“ warfare in Eastern Europe. The exhibition, by displaying photographs and letters from soldiers, that the perpetrators had foremost been “ordinary” German soldiers who had been at the scene of the crime at the time of the crime.²⁴

It is interesting to note that those debates were initiated outside the German historical profession and that there were several attempts from within the profession to discredit them. Using disciplinary arguments, finding wrong sources and proving that e. g. some of the photographs displayed by the “Wehrmacht” exhibition had been interpreted incorrectly, German senior historians tried to convince the public that the given answer to the new question “who committed the ‘unspeakable crimes?’” was entirely wrong.

But still those debates fostered an historical consciousness about the Holocaust and the German guilt in a broader public, and within the historical profession in Germany there emerged a couple of scholars of a younger generation dealing with those questions on a high level of quality.²⁵

Albeit the seemingly success story of public memory of the Holocaust in Germany after the re-unification it should be kept in mind that in spite of democratization and liberalization of the German society after the war it took almost 50 years (two generations) before the society was able to stand the confrontation with German guilt. A “Vergangenheitsbewältigung” in other traumatized and “guilty” societies such as the post-soviet or the former Yugoslavian society should not be judged without that consideration.

Regarding the continuities of “remembering the Holocaust in Germany” there is an interesting phenomena to note which

²⁴ See Heer, Hannes (Hg.) Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmach 1941-1944, Hamburg 1995.

²⁵ See f.e. Pohl, Dieter. Verfolgung und Massenmord in der NS-Zeit, Darmstadt 2003.

should be kept in mind. Among school children and especially among those with higher education, the knowledge of the Holocaust and about the history of Nazi Germany has become very high in Germany in recent years. But this historical consciousness of guilt remains abstract. A quantitative public opinion poll from June 2002 found out that while Germans know a lot about the Holocaust and National Socialism, almost nobody relates this knowledge to a personal guilt of his/her own parents and grandparents. In the group with the highest education, 56% of the respondents were convinced that their parents or grandparents had been opponents to National Socialism and only 1% believed that their own family members had been involved in the “unspeakable crimes”. To the contrary, 26% of the interviewed were certain that their parents and grandparents had “helped Jews”. Today’s grandchildren again perceive their grandparents as victims. 71% think that “they suffered a lot during the war”.²⁶

According to this poll, almost 60 years after the Holocaust there is still no feeling of any “personal” form of guilt. While German society is ready to accept a general liability for the “Holocaust” there is still a tendency to avoid feeling guilty in a more immediate sense. Instead, close relatives who lived during the war and the Holocaust are still perceived as victims of war and thus of National Socialism.

The paradigms of “remembering the Holocaust in Germany” thus are irritatingly constant. The self-perception as victims, while blaming “the others”, emerged in “Zero Hour” and remained intact until today.

This observation leads to the conclusion that it might be impossible for a group to deal with its own guilt. There seems to be no collective memory of crime. On the other hand the German example shows how closely linked modernization of soci-

²⁶ See Welzer, Harald; Moller, Sabine und Tschuggnall, Karoline: „Opa war kein Nazi“, Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis. Frankfurt/Main 2002, p. 246-248.

ety and the establishment of modern values are to outright and fair-minded historical consciousness without the avoidance of the dark chapters of history. Therefore, even if it seems to be impossible, we need a collective memory of crime.