

A MONUMENTAL MOCKERY

The Construction of the National

Holocaust Memorial in Berlin

Simone Mangos

Berlin 2007



LONSDALE brandishing youth on top of the memorial stelae. 2007

[Das Denkmal] wird von den Berlinerinnen und Berlinern, [...] und besonders auch von der jüngeren Generation angenommen wie kaum eine zweite Erinnerungsstätte. Vor allem aber: Es trägt dauerhaft zu einer Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust als einem Teil unserer Geschichte bei, dem wir uns stellen. *The memorial is accepted in a way unlike any other commemorative place by the Berliners, [...] and in particular also by the younger generation. But most of all: it contributes to a coming to terms with of the Holocaust as a part of our history to which we admit.*

— Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit. 10 August 2007, congratulatory address on the occasion of Peter Eisenman's 75th birthday

Bilanz nach mehr als sechzig Jahren: Hitler, und was der Name symbolisiert, ist wohl militärisch, aber immer noch nicht geistig geschlagen, die zeitgenössische Variante des Nationalsozialismus dabei, sich parlamentarisch dauerhaft zu etablieren, und die Zahl der rechtsextremen Anschläge höher denn je. Was heftig an den mir von den Nazis injizierten Fluchtinstink appelliert — Deutschland ist mit seiner Hakenkreuzgeschichte nicht im reinen.

— Ralph Giordano, *Erinnerungen eines Davongekommenen*, 2007

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The origins of my research took place already in 1988, when I arrived in Berlin as an artist-in-residence. Living next to the Berlin Wall, and exploring its length, I came across what appeared to be an abandoned yet highly charged vacant lot. The site, with its illegible vandalized information signs, piles of twisted rubble and semi-excavated ruins, inspired my very first exhibition in this strange city. The Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände was situated at the southern end of Wilhelmstrasse. Abruptly cut off by the Berlin Wall, the road's extension continued beyond, renamed in East Berlin as Otto-Grotewohl-Strasse. The terrain slated for the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, some ten years later, lay at the northern end of this extension.

Writing about an artwork within the complex of the Holocaust and contemporary Germany, apart from the irrefutable historical facts, is essentially interpretive. The presumption of 'scientific' precision within this complex would be entirely inappropriate if not dishonest. As I have written this text for an English speaking audience, certain definitions became necessary, which are otherwise self-explanatory in Germany.

Not having trained formally as a historian (but neither did Herodotus or Winston Churchill), I am indebted to the many historians and authors who have inspired my inquiry. These include Christopher Browning, Mary Fulbrook, Timothy Garton Ash and Anna Funder. I am grateful in particular to Ernst Klee, Ulf Schmidt and Henry Friedlander for their extraordinary and courageous examples.

I am thankful to Harald Fricke for the initial discussions about the language which composed the memorial-debates, as well as a collaborative book project, all of which planted the seeds of my research. My inquiry was prompted in part by my skepticism of the success to be derived from the way in which the project was being debated. Something seemed fundamentally wrong with the discussions around the Memorial. For example: Despite the ten-year long debate about the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, a shared fundamental understanding of why the memorial would be built and who — which people — it was being created for, had still not been made clear. It remained a confused issue, obfuscated under a deluge of circuitous argument. As late as 1999, the instigator of the memorial stated: “We only just wanted a memorial for the Jews.” This term became common in Berlin to refer to the project, yet, as tension mounted during the subsequent construction process, the weekly journal *Die Zeit* suddenly reprimanded in alarm “now, yet again, many people in Berlin believe that a memorial ‘for the Jews’ is being built”. It is a memorial “for the non-Jewish Germans”, corrected Jörg Lau. Consequently, this definition was readily adopted by many Berliners. Hence, at a later moment in a conversation with art critic Brigitte Werneburg, I once casually referred to the ‘Jewish Memorial’ in passing, in a bid to abbreviate the official pedantic title of the monument. “No,” she quickly admonished, “it is not for the Jews, it is for the Non-Jewish Germans! And that is where everybody gets it wrong.” The lack of a shared understanding of this fundamental starting point, the dedication and reason for the memorial and more specifically — in whose interests it was being built —, remained unresolved.

Take the example of what is referred to as a war memorial. We understand that a war memorial is not dedicated to war but to those (usually the armed forces) who lost their lives to defend their nation and or concepts of freedom and democracy. Similarly, the term ‘Jewish Memorial’ is not

offensive and can be used to describe a monument in commemoration of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The fact that this basic self-evident understanding simply does not and cannot exist in Germany is part of the underlying trouble enmeshed in the entire fraught enterprise.

The 20,000 square metres concrete outcrop 'Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe', inaugurated in 2005 remains to this day without a sign or plaque indicating its purpose.

I wish to thank the University of New South Wales and the College of Fine Arts for their support in the form of a research grant. Thanks also go to the staff at the University for their patience and cooperation in supporting my project. I especially wish to thank Ian Howard.

I would also like to acknowledge the spontaneously generous and untiring support given by Peter R. Fuchs from the Landesdenkmalamt in Berlin. I offer warm thanks to the helpful staff at the Büro für Geophysik Lorenz, and in particular Bernhard Lorenz. I am especially grateful to Ludger Derenthal at the Museum für Fotografie for his open-mindedness and support.

For his untiring interest, scrupulous observations, intellectual, historical and literary insights and precision, I am indebted to Melchior de Wolff. His monumental support helped to make this book a reality.

INTRODUCTION

Germany's national Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe will necessarily define Germany's own contemporary memory of the Holocaust.

Deutschlands nationales Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas wird notwendigerweise Deutschlands eigene gegenwärtige Erinnerung an den Holocaust definieren.

Information issued to invited competitors for the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, 1997¹

Anti-Semitism and right extremist attacks have reached the level of bluntness and aggression as seen after 1933.

Antisemitische und rechtsradikale Attacken haben eine Offensichtlichkeit und Aggressivität erreicht, die an die Zeit nach 1933 erinnert.

Charlotte Knobloch, President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, 2006²

Löwen-Treff, a typical Munich beer hall, is well visited on this warm July day in 2006. Guests seated at the outdoor Visitors Terrace for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe may choose from a wide range of German sausage and cuts of pork, which are on offer along with the beer. Weisswürste, Bratwurst, Nürnberger, Kasslerbraten, Bayerischer Leberkäse and so on are neatly spelled out on the blackboard. However, if one isn't in the mood for beer, the Visitors Terrace (spanning the length of the Memorial to the

¹ Engeres Auswahlverfahren. Aufgabenbeschreibung und Rahmenbedingungen. Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur. 1997

² Spiegel Online, *Rechtsextreme Gewalt Zentralrat der Juden warnt vor Verhältnissen wie zur Nazi-Zeit*. 24 October 2006, Spiegel Online 24 October 2006
www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,444405,00.html

Murdered Jews of Europe) also offers donuts, fish 'n chips, falafel, Currywurst, pizza, as well as an assortment of Holocaust memorial postcards and souvenirs.

No doubt after a thick sausage washed down by a beer or two, one may be excused for feeling sleepy. No problem. The warm grey stelae of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe provide wonderful relief to those seeking a mid-day snooze or simply an undisturbed opportunity to sun-bake.

German flags flap proudly from cars parked along the perimeter of the memorial — emblems of Germany's new found confidence in the wake of the World Cup — whilst a 'Nostalgia' bus makes its tourist rounds of the grey monument.

One year has passed since the opening of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe — yet the abstract undulating grey volumes amidst the tourist paraphernalia remain without a title, a sign, or even a dedication. Only a pink 'Dunkin' Donuts' sign hovers above the stage of concrete stelae, which in turn are continuously surmounted by tourists and visitors jumping triumphantly to the highest heights.



1. Nostalgia Bus Tour, 2007.

The innocuous blocks — cast dumb — apparently don't even deserve basic respect. These stylised, untitled, passive receptors have become in many ways objects of use and abuse. During the delirium of the World Cup in 2006 the memorial is doused in a massive amount of urine by football fans — numbering up to one million a day — crowded before the television screens at Brandenburger Tor just next door.³

Attempting to photograph the frolic and beer guzzling at this site of Germany's remembrance of the Holocaust however is completely unacceptable. As I quietly go about my work — discretely documenting the official terrace of consuming visitors, I am accosted, insulted, threatened and eventually reported to the police.

A man and his wife begin to follow me. "Sprechen Sie deutsch?" he enquires. I take no notice. "Sprechen Sie deutsch?" he insists, the punctuated words now louder whilst I photograph a postcard stand. He continues in foreigner-modified, over-articulated speech "In Deutschland ist das Fotografieren verboten!" / "In Germany it is forbidden to take photographs!" I advise him, in that case, to call the police. Aghast, he threatens to confiscate my camera. I nervously continue with my observations, determined to maintain my presence, whilst he and his wife now step up the offensive, making loud remarks about my physical appearance. Closing in, he walks adroitly behind me hurling insults. They both demand to know why I am

³ Spiegel online, 29 January 2007, *Berlin Holocaust Memorial used as a Toilet*, Der Spiegel, 29 January 2007 www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,462801,00.html. "Unfortunately, some of those who entered the memorial showed a singular lack of respect. According to a report in Monday's [29 January 2007] Berliner Zeitung a 'massive' amount of urination occurred in the first months after the memorial was inaugurated. The problem was revealed in a side note to a report that Berlin's Culture Minister Bernd Neumann submitted to the federal parliament's budget committee. The foundation that operates the memorial had not made the problem public before, so as to prevent others from following the bad example. The director of the foundation, Uwe Neumärker, told the Berliner Zeitung, 'I would put it down to the memorial's teething problems'."

taking photographs. In his mounting anger he grabs at my arm, whilst his wife almost trips over herself in a flurry to hail down a passing police car.

I jump on my bicycle and ride away before anything else can happen — the *Flakhelfer's*⁴ abusive cries continuing to batter the air at the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. I do not carry the mandatory *Ausweis* (identity papers) on principle. And I also know how little my rights will be respected. In Germany, there are strict laws governing speech and expression, and the average citizen will not hesitate to report anyone to the police whom they consider to be a violator.⁵

2. Visitors at the Memorial 2006. “In Deutschland ist Fotografieren verboten!”



I am shaken from this experience, yet despite my tremors, return to the memorial one month later. Nothing has changed — when one simply

⁴ Flakhelfer (*Fliegerabwehrkanone* / Anti-Aircraft-Artillery Helper) were youths called up after 1943 to assist the Luftwaffe in the war effort. Germans born between 1926 and 1929 are often referred to as the “Flakhelfer-Generation”.

⁵ For instance: If you consider your landlord to be a racist and subsequently call him a racist, you are punishable by law. The consequences may include instant eviction as well as liability for all legal and associated costs. These costs run into thousands of Euros as they include the complete legal expenses of all parties, court costs, moving costs and so on. If my private property is stolen from my rented premises, and I subsequently refer to he who stole, as a thief, I have committed an offence. I have under German law insulted the ‘thief’ and will be subsequently punished. If the honourable thief was working for a real estate agent who in turn works for the landlord, then I have by definition of the law insulted the landlord. The punishment for this will include instant eviction and liability for all legal and associated costs. These examples have been taken from interviews with ten independent Berlin solicitors as well as the direct experience of the author.

photographs those who prance, parade and boast their well being upon the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, one is berated and openly insulted — all just stopping short of a physical attack.

Where does this aggressive self-righteous confidence come from and whatever could be its justification?

What seems to me like the world upside down — is accepted, encouraged and goes unquestioned. It is apparently even forbidden by some definition or regulation to merely take a photograph of it.

The answer can partially be found in the sign pasted up at the fast food bakery along the Visitors' Terrace of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe:

“Hier schmeckt der Job” — “Even the job is tasty here”.

How did a seventeen-year endeavour (sixty years post Holocaust) to build a Holocaust Memorial in Berlin result in this?

While some ten years had been spend in what has been labelled the ‘Debate about the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe’ from 1988 to 1999, seven were spent attempting to construct the static concrete object at the ‘Ministergärten’.

In 1997, the second competition took place in the quest for a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe to be erected in Berlin. The competition outline (distributed to invited artists) included just two sentences on the history of the planned memorial's site:

The present wasteland character of the site (20,000 sq.m. [...]) results from decades within the east side of the wall which separated Berlin and the world. This section of the wall followed the original trading tax wall, which enclosed the residential city during the 18th century.

Der gegenwärtige Brachland-Character des Standortes (Größe 20.000 qm, [. . .]) ist der Folge der jahrzentelangen Lage an der Ostseite der Mauer, die Berlin und die Welt teilte. Die Mauer folgte in diesem Abschnitt dem Verlauf der Zollmauer, die im 18. Jahrhundert die Residenzstadt umschloß.⁶

At the time, there was a general lament in Berlin that the site lacked any authentic content and was not central enough. During the second Memorial colloquium in 1997, guest speaker Bruno Flierl (architect and historical ‘specialist’ for Berlin-Mitte) even went so far as to complain that the site was of no significance at all, as it was generally, ‘historically and politically empty’.⁷

Having lived and worked in Berlin since 1988, I knew that virtually every site bore traces from the past. This phenomenon had inadvertently become the leading principle in my art works.

The history and background of the area and terrain upon which a memorial to the Jews was to be built sixty years after their murder, was for me the fundamental starting point.

I turned to those responsible for the competition text.

Yet the more I endeavored to research the facts, the more hostility I encountered. No one was interested, and all claimed that the site had simply been a garden prior to its enclosure within the Berlin Wall. This was a question one did not ask and I was soon made to feel highly uncomfortable about my curiosity.

⁶ Op. cit. p. 10

⁷ Ute Heimrod, Günther Schlusche und Horst Seferens, *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”* 1999 pp. 664

Something was wrong. And my impression was substantiated as excavations began on site. A covert action to destroy authentic historical evidence was rapidly taking place.

And while this explained the hostility, it certainly did not explain *why* Germany was building a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

With the debate winding to a close and the winning proposal now in the final stages of reduction to a user-friendly object, attention had been diverted if not already completely diminished from the planned site of the memorial itself.

I decided to take a closer look.

What kind of Art work / Memorial would result from a relentless ten-year debate between politicians, historians, journalists, architects, artists and urban planners, all in tow to a chat show hostess who had initiated the enterprise?

What were the ramifications for the art work when it was subsequently edited and modified by the Chancellor of Germany, projected upon by a TV personality with an assumed Jewish identity, violated by sequential scandal, subject to enterprising companies and politicians, manipulated and presided over by a foundation bereft of artistic expertise, and finally, lorded over by the priorities of tourism?

Some ten years of ‘wissenschaftliche’ (the German epitheton hovers somewhere between ‘scholarly’ and ‘scientific’) discussions in conference rooms, government offices, the media and finally the halls of the Bundestag, had delivered virtual mountains of theoretical conjecture about what the Holocaust memorial should and would (if at all) be. Several books have been published about the decade of *Denkmal-Debatte* (Memorial Debate) from 1988 to 1999 — it was not the object of my research.

Theory now aside, it was time to actually deliver the object. What would take place in the actual practice of constructing the Holocaust Memorial in the new capital of reunited Germany? What would the intervention, modification, editing and promotion of the object during the years of construction, reflect about the intentions of the German people and the memorial's function? How would the German people receive the memorial and what would their response indicate?

I became interested in what was essentially initiated by the excavations on the planned memorial site, as the compacted insulating dirt, stamped down some fifty years earlier was removed, and the traces of history laid open anew.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF GERMANY'S HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL

If the elites, who had been active as willing collaborators of the Nazi-crime, the ministerial bureaucrats and economic leaders, the high ranking military officers, the judges e tutti quanti during the Adenauer era with few exceptions, had not all have been returned to office and places of honour; and if the Nazi generals had not have built up the German army, the Gestapo personnel the criminal police, the SD Agents (intelligence service of the SS) the *Bundesnachrichtendienst* (Federal Intelligence Service), the profiteers of war and aryanisation of the economy, then the Federal Republic of Germany would have created in the politics of a correspondingly instructed people a convincing memorial for themselves and for the dead.

Wären die Eliten, die sich als willfährige Kollaborateure der Naziverbrechen betätigten, die Ministerialbürokraten und Wirtschaftsführer, die Militärs, die Juristen, Mediziner e tutti quanti nicht in der Ära Adenauer bis auf Ausnahmen alle wieder zu Amt und Würden gekommen, hätten nicht die Nazigeneräle die Bundeswehr, die Gestapolente die Kriminalpolizei, die SD-Agenten den BND, die Arisierung- und Kriegsgewinnler die Wirtschaft aufgebaut, hätte die Bundesrepublik in der Politik eines belehrten Volkes sich und den Toten ein überzeugendes Denkmal gesetzt.

Gerhard Schoenberner¹

In the summer of 1988 a ‘citizens’ initiative’, *Perspektive Berlin e.V.*, claiming to function in the ‘tradition of social democracy, the European enlightenment

¹ Gerhard Schoenberner, in *Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V.: Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995* (Berlin, 1995) p. 83-85

and the utopia of freedom',² was established. The group was initially concerned with various contemporary subjects until its chairman, Lea Rosh, managed to make its central purpose the erection of a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin.

Ms Rosh, who was born in Berlin in 1936, made a career as a television journalist and talk show moderator. She was co-author of a four part television series on the deportation and annihilation of the Jews by the Nazis: 'Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland', a title quoting a line by Paul Celan, the poet who survived the Holocaust until his suicide in 1970. In 2003 Ms Rosh was elected as the most embarrassing Berliner of the year by the readers of *Tip* magazine Berlin, a not particularly upmarket periodical that is more about tattoos and gossip than high culture.

Following excavations in 1986-87, the former location of the headquarters of the Gestapo, the SS and the Reichssicherheitshauptamt from 1933-1945 at the southern end of Wilhelmstrasse in West Berlin, became a site of public attention. Individuals and various organisations vied to have their interests and ideas realized in a commemorative effort on the 'Gestapo-Gelände' (Gestapo Site) or 'Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände' — named after the Prinz-Albrecht palace built on Wilhelmstrasse 102 in the 18th century.

Rosh and her group would meet at Wittenbergplatz to collect money and campaign for the memorial, whilst enjoying their regular Saturday morning sausage. Rosh reminisced, "It was fun, as we knew what we were fighting for and it held the PERSPEKTIVE together." (*Es machte Spaß, denn wir wußten, wofür wir stritten, es hielt die PERSPEKTIVE zusammen*).³ By 1989 Perspektive e.V.'s appeals to the citizens of Germany for the erection of a central Holocaust memorial had gained the support of influential figures such as the Mayor of Berlin, Walter Momper and the senator of culture, Anke Martiny.

² Editors in op. cit. p. 1

³ Lea Rosh, "Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen." *Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal*. (Berlin, 1999) p. 36

Subsequently in June of the same year, four artists were asked to submit proposals for a Holocaust Memorial to be built on the ‘Gestapo-Gelände’. The proposed memorial was to “name the 17 states occupied by Germany, in which the murder of Jews eventuated, together with the respective number of victims”.⁴

Meanwhile a variety of conferences continued to take place in Berlin in 1989, in the search for an appropriate ‘concept’ for the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände. By September, Perspektive e.V. had organized a discussion at the Akademie der Künste about a Holocaust memorial.

Subsequently a commission comprised of eight members under the direction of the historian Reinhard Rürup met to discuss and examine submissions made by various groups (including Perspektive e.V.) for the Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände. By October 1989, the commission members had clearly decided that they were against the erection of a large memorial on the Gestapo-Site. The initiatives of the Perspektive organisation not only failed but also attracted much criticism. Amongst the criticism was the accusation that the authors of Perspektive were simply interested in promoting themselves.⁵

Historians such as Gerhard Schoenberner claimed that acknowledgement of the persecutors and the system that fostered them, had priority over a memorial — especially since Germany has shied away from any such acknowledgment.⁶ Indeed in 2007 the wasteland like Prinz-Albrecht-Site, still stands as a raw scar in Berlin’s historical conscience.

Rosh maintained that the historian Eberhard Jäckel had suggested the idea for a memorial to her, during their visit to the Israeli memorial Yad Vashem. On this occasion Rosh noted: “WIR werden ein solches Denkmal

⁴ Editors in op. cit. p. 36

⁵ Op. cit. p. 46

⁶ Schoenberner, loc. cit. p. 85

bauen”⁷ (WE will build just such a memorial [in Germany]) By November 1989, a *Förderkreis* (Association) was founded to erect a similar memorial and to “put an end to the shameful condition of unthinking”⁸ (*beschämenden Zustand des Nichtdenkens* [. . .] *beenden*). These wordings are from Rosh, who also became an executive member of the newly born *Kreis*. The purpose of the ‘Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas e.V.’ (henceforth: Förderkreis) was to dedicate itself solely to the erection a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

From this moment on, this slightly pedantic name was used, in an apparent attempt to avoid the term *Holocaust* and to effectively edit all other victims of the Nazis from Holocaust remembrance. One could also ask in this context if it is indeed ethical to further divide the Jewish victims into those who were ‘biologically’ dead and those who had managed to survive. A victim who managed to survive a concentration camp and live on to tell the story is by implication excluded from the commemoration of this memorial, which is dedicated only to the ‘murdered’. If a Jew had managed to remain living despite persecution, deportation and incarceration, but had indeed lost their family, their home, their community, their self esteem and their health — in fact just about everything, which in the end equates a form of murder — are they less entitled to commemoration? Have they suffered less than someone who was gassed on arrival at Auschwitz or shot dead on the streets of Kiev? The subsequent suicide of many Holocaust victims, sometimes years after attempting to live a ‘normal’ life, suffices to put this question into perspective. And this does not even account for the damage incurred by their relatives and offspring. This is the sadistic kind of tautology, necessitated by the reductive title of the Memorial.

⁷ Lea Rosh in *Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V.: Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*. Berlin 1995 p. 3

⁸ Hans-Georg Stavjinski, *Das Holocaust-Denkmal. Der Streit um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas” in Berlin (1988-1999)* (Paderborn, 2002) p. 43

But, as noted by the American journalist Jane Kramer, referencing the observations of Andreas Nachama, “a lot of Germans know more about dead Jews than about Jews living in their midst”.⁹

The aim of the Förderkreis was: to convince the German public of the necessity of the memorial, to finance fifty percent of the memorial and to motivate those politicians responsible at a federal and state level to realize it. “The task [of the Förderkreis] would be fulfilled when the necessary political decisions have been made, the financing secured and the competition completed.”¹⁰

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the project gained additional political significance. By 1992, the Bundesregierung (Federal Government) had allocated a plot of land in the former Ministerial Gardens in Berlin for a Holocaust Memorial. In the same year, the Berlin Senat (State government) approved the building of a Holocaust Memorial on the site of the former Reich’s Chancellery (i.e. Hitler’s chancellery, at the southern end of the Ministerial Gardens). Rosh, pleased with the allocated site boasted: “To place a memorial for the murdered Jews on the ruins of this centre of Nazi power, means that the murdered are raised above their murderers, the victims over their persecutors.”¹¹ At this moment, the memorial, for Rosh, obviously represented a grotesque and reductive reverse power play. The entire costs, estimated at 10 million Deutschmarks, were to be shared by the federal and state governments as well as the Förderkreis.

⁹ Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory. Looking for Germany in the New Germany* (New York, 1995) p. 268

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Op. cit. p. 44



3. North of Potsdamer Platz, situation in 1997.

By 1994, an open international artists competition called for designs for a 'Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe'. The organisers of the competition were the Federal Republic of Germany, the Förderkreis and the State of Berlin. In addition to the open competition, twelve artists were also invited and paid a fee of 50,000 Deutschmarks (DM) for their participation. Amongst the twelve were: Christian Boltanski, Rebecca Horn, Richard Serra, Jannis Kounellis, Gerhard Merz, Günther Uecker and Dani Karavan. The winner would be awarded 900,000 DM and 6-18 finalists would be awarded 50,000 DM. The competition information included a description of the historical background of the site, which had been home to Hitler's Chancellery and the Ministerial Gardens. The defined task of the memorial was described as an artistic combination (*Hinwendung*) where "sadness, shock, and respect should be symbolically connected to a consciousness of shame and guilt. Acknowledgement should also be able grow for a future life in peace,

freedom, equality and tolerance.”¹² (*Trauer, Erschütterung und Achtung symbolisch verbinden mit der Besinnung in Scham und Schuld. Erkenntnis soll erwachsen können, auch für künftiges Leben in Frieden, Freiheit, Gleichheit und Toleranz.*)

528 designs were submitted, some of them remarkably heavy handed, literal and kitschy. These included a giant star of David comprised of yellow flowers, a single continuously burning crematorium oven, a huge concrete swastika, a ferris wheel composed of rotating suspended cattle train compartments, architectonic variations of monoliths and distorted stars of David, ramps, and a giant 40 metre high empty vat for the blood of the murdered. German sensibility towards the murder of the Jews was mostly expressed in the likes of 4,000 ton blocks of iron, raised iron plates covering some 20,000 square metres and variations on thick chunks of concrete. Other entrants such as Horst Hoheisel proposed to blow up Brandenburger Tor, while Rita Stith and Frieder Schnock (with one of the more innovative designs) wanted simply to build a bus stop, from where bus trips to the concentration camps could take place. Most of the designs submitted were from Germany.

Finally in 1995, an appointed jury (comprised of some thirty people plus ten ‘experts’) announced that the winning memorial would be comprised of two teams: one led by Christine Jacob-Marks (Berlin) and the other by Simon Ungers (New York/Cologne). Jacob-Marks’ seven-metre thick massive concrete gravestone was to lie tilted, jutting some eleven metres into the air at the southeastern end of the terrain, smothering the 20,000 square metre memorial area. 18 large boulders from Masada (the historical site of Jewish resistance and suicide) in Israel were to be scattered across the engraved surface of 4.5 million names of murdered Jews. Initially, because of financial reasons, only 100,000 names were to be engraved in the concrete. The

¹² Künstlerisches Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Ausschreibung. Published by the Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen Abteilung Städtebau und Architektur. Berlin April 1994. p. 57

additional names of the millions of murdered, in a form comparable to the medieval catholic practice of *indulgentia*, were to be paid for by donations from the German people, and engraved during subsequent years. Simon Ungers proposed memorial consisted of a raised iron frame measuring 85 x 85 metres. Four concrete blocks would support thick iron girders comprising the square. The names of the ‘places of destruction’ would be perforated into the steel girders. In order to walk into the square, one would ‘have to pass beneath the burden of the 6 metre high steel girders’¹³ noted the jury. From this position one would be able to directly read the perforated names.

Reactions to the competition in the press included the following remark from journalist Henryk Broder:

The time is ripe for a Holocaust memorial that doesn’t hurt anyone and gives everyone the comfortable feeling of having done something good. In compliance with this need, the victims are given a final honour without confronting the persecutors right in ones own home.¹⁴

Broder concluded that the Jews were “being abused for a second time, this time from the good Germans for a good cause. [...] Because ‘the resistance against Hitler is growing stronger from day to day’.”

Interesting in this context of memory building is also the fact that the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on January 26, 1995 was not officially commemorated in Berlin. Instead, Berliners were busy celebrating the ninetieth birthday of the 1930’s actor Bernhard Minetti, who had participated in Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda films such as *Die Rothschilds*, *Jud Süß* and the vicious *Der ewige Jude*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Henryk M. Broder, Tagesspiegel, 17 January 1995

In a second meeting on 25 June 1995, the organisers including Lea Rosh, Senator Wolfgang Nagel, Senator Ulrich Roloff-Momin, President of the central Council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis and Edzard Reuter from Daimler-Benz, finally decided that the 'Gravestone-concept' proposal with some modifications, should be realized. Noteworthy is the fact that none of the invited international artist's submissions, with the exception of Fritz Koenig from Munich, even reached the finals of the competition. A founding stone was to be laid in 1996 and building would be completed within one and a half years.

Just three days after the announcement of the winning Jacob-Marks design, Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared his outright objection to it. Kohl, described the memorial as too monumental and disruptive of the town-planning concept for the area. He withdrew the government's support for the winner. However, the financial commitment at the federal level remained unchanged. Consequently, the project again became the object of bitter public dispute and debate with no visible consequences: "[...] although the memorial debate has generated plenty of shame in Germans, it is largely the shame they feel for an unseemly argument — not for the mass murder once committed in their name,"¹⁵ noted James E. Young.

Following sixteen months of deliberation and debate, the organisers of the memorial decided to hold a colloquium at the beginning of 1997. During three meetings, some hundred experts were invited to help prepare a conclusive decision for the Memorial organisers. One of the nine finalist proposals was to be built with alterations, following recommendations resulting from the colloquium meetings. Participants included historians, art historians, architects, journalists, members of parliament and members of the 1994 competition jury.

¹⁵ James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge. Afterimages of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. (New Haven and London, 2000) p. 194

The colloquium was organised by art historian Christoph Stölzl (on behalf of the federal government), architect Bernhard Schneider (on behalf of the Senat) and lawyer Lothar Poll (on behalf of the Förderkreis).

Cultural Senator Peter Radunski confidently announced in the press that: the memorial construction would begin in 1999, the allotted site would remain, there would be no further competition and the budget would stay at 15 million DM. Furthermore, he claimed that the organisers would reach decisions through consensus and that “with this discussion, the memorial begins to live!”¹⁶

By the end of the three part meeting, two fronts had been clearly defined: The organisers of the memorial (Federal and State governments plus Förderkreis) who stuck by Radunski’s formulations that the competition finalists should rework their proposals, and, the ‘experts’ who claimed that the project could only work if it were started all over again, with a new site and a new competition. Two basic attitudes became apparent: one was an effort to identify almost traumatically with the Jews, while the other, maintained that only a Holocaust memorial that honoured all of the victim groups could be justified.¹⁷ What was clearly agreed upon was that the giant Jacob-Marks gravestone would definitely not be built.

Following the colloquium, the organisers met to decide on how to proceed. The allocated construction costs of 15 million DM would stay in place and a *Findungskommission* (Findings commission) would be appointed. Their task was only vaguely indicated. They were to select the nine finalists, other participants of the competition as well as new participants to submit proposals for a memorial. A decision was to be reached by the end of 1997 in which the German parliament was also to become involved.

¹⁶ Peter Radunski, Press release, 11 December 1996

¹⁷ Stavginski, op. cit. p. 182

Members of the commission were: Christoph Stölzl, director of the German Historical Museum, Dieter Ronte, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Bonn, art historian Werner Hoffmann, architect Josef Paul Kleihues, and professor of English and Judaic studies at the University of Massachusetts James E. Young. Young was informed that he was the only expert on Holocaust memorials on the committee. He was also the only foreigner and a Jew. Artists and women were conspicuously absent from the commission.

Young agreed to be part of the commission only if he could stipulate the conditions. Out of all of the commissioners, he delivered the most detailed guidelines of a conceptual plan for the memorial. This included: “a clear definition of the Holocaust and its significance; Nazi Germany’s role as perpetrator; current reunified Germany’s role as rememberer; the contemporary generation’s relationship to Holocaust memory; and the aesthetic debate swirling around the memorial itself.”¹⁸ His programme also included a text that was to be composed by a separate commission, and to accompany the memorial.¹⁹

As a judge presiding over German memory of the Holocaust, Young wondered if he was: “a mere decoration, this American Jew, a sop to authority and so-called expertise.”²⁰ Was he “invited as an academic authority on memorials or as a token American and foreigner?” He also wondered whether “they are looking for a Jewish blessing on whatever design is finally chosen?”

A decisive moment had been reached in Germany’s search for a solution to its Holocaust Memorial problem. Young having worked out a detailed plan for the concept of the memorial was also appointed spokesman for the commission.

¹⁸ Young, *op. cit.* p. 197

¹⁹ Stavginski, *op. cit.* p. 184

²⁰ Young, *op. cit.* p. 196

Young tried to rationalize Germany's deferral of its Memorial problem to the Jews: "I wondered how is Germany to make momentous decisions like this *without* the Jewish sensibility[...]" Only because "the missing Jewish part of German culture remained a palpable and gaping wound in the German psyche[...]. Without a Jewish eye to save it from egregiously misguided judgements [...] anything was possible."²¹ Yet he ended his rationalizations with: "Let Germany's official memorial reflect its suitably tormented relationship to the genocide of Europe's Jews I said." This would have been the appropriate moment to withdraw — how were the Germans to show their 'tormented relationship' to the Holocaust when he was there to 'save it' with his sensibility, judgement and guidance?

The evasiveness of Young's rationalization — despite his 'good' intentions — is one of the hallmarks of the foundation, realization, reception and life of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin. Following the three-part colloquium and some seven years of debate: exactly who was building the memorial for whom as well and why was still entirely unclear. In fact these fundamental questions had been avoided altogether.²²

This determinative evasiveness was exemplified in the newly printed competition outline distributed in 1997 to the select group of invitees. It identified the sense and task of the memorial as well as its form and allotted space as the main components. The text begins with typical evasiveness: "The memorials of every country embody the experiences, the self-idealization, the political necessity and the aesthetic traditions of that country. For this reason the forms that memorials take in America, Poland, Israel or Holland are different to each other — and are different to German memorials."²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Stavginski, *op. cit.* p. 182

²³ Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Engeres Auswahlverfahren, Aufgabenbeschreibung und Rahmenbedingungen, Published by the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, Juni 1997 p. 9

The text avoids any specific indication that Germany was somehow behind the mass murder of the Jews. As if Germany were building a Holocaust memorial just like Israel or Holland, the competition initiative pronounces: “Germany’s national memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe will necessarily define Germany’s contemporary memory of the Holocaust.” Contradicted some lines later by: “The much used expression ‘Holocaust-Memorial’ is imprecise because the term Holocaust stands for the National Socialists racial genocide of Jews and also Sinti and Roma.” So obviously the *Untermenschen* Sinti and Roma have to be extracted from the definition of the German national memory of the Holocaust. How absurd can you get? The only point that is made clear is that it is a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

The competition text then proceeds with typical minimizing of the Holocaust history and an imposed hierarchy of one category of human being over another, where the reader is informed that: not as a part of the Holocaust but ‘alongside’ it, the Nazis committed other crimes against ‘political, religious and disabled victims, on social outcasts and Soviet prisoners of war, on homosexuals and on many Slavic people’.²⁴

There is a obfuscation of victim and murderer: “Today’s Germany commemorates with the memorial the victims, the actions und the monstrous irreplaceable lost, the remaining emptiness, that they have left behind on the continent.” Exactly what — the victims or the actions — has left behind an ‘emptiness on the continent’²⁵? Why does Germany appear to have no responsibility alongside the victims, the actions, the remaining emptiness and loss? It is as if some kind of natural catastrophe had taken place through no fault of their own.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

But, the explanation continues, the mass murder of the Jews is *sui generis* because it “tore a 1,000 year old culture from the heart of Europe”²⁶. Apart from the fact that the Jewish culture is by no means only 1,000 years old — there is an implicit presumption that all of the other victim’s contribution to culture was non-existent.

A separate memorial will be built for the Sinti and Roma victims and the ‘question’ as to if a number of separate memorials should be built to other victim groups is ‘already open’. The text concludes with: “Unlike any historical site, the memorial will address the contemplative and emotional receptiveness of the visitor.”²⁷ The site and location of the memorial is mostly described in terms of its ‘connectivity’ within the ‘architectural topography’ of the city. As if one were simply projecting a new shopping mall.

The commission invited the nine finalists from 1995 as well as a new list of artists and architects to submit designs in 1997. Designs submitted by Reinhard Matz and Rudolf Herz, Simon Ungers, Arno Dietch and Anna Simon-Dietch as well as that of Gerhardt Merz were all considered too ‘self-certain’²⁸ and rejected almost immediately. By November 1997 eight finalists had been chosen to present their designs in person. The Findungskommission unanimously agreed on the superiority of two designs: That of Gesine Weinmiller (Berlin) and the proposal from Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra (both American).

The organisers of the memorial insisted on adding the designs of Jochen Gerz and Daniel Libeskind to the commission’s final list, despite the fact that the commission had already rejected both. Young notes that “for reasons that were never clear [...] Rosh insisted that Gerz’s *Warum?* proposal be added”²⁹ and Radunski insisted that Libeskind’s design be added. This

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Op. cit. p. 10

²⁸ Young, op. cit. p. 201

²⁹ Op. cit. p. 207

effectively produced an A and B list of finalists, which had no decipherable function. It seems to have been an attempt to undermine the authority of the Findungskommission.

All four designs were shown in Berlin and subject to a planned round of discussions until Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited the exhibition on 21 January 1998. Subsequently and under somewhat obscure circumstances, Kohl's favourite, the Eisenman and Serra design was chosen to be reworked. At this point, it became clear that the winner had been selected although he had not yet been officially announced. Kohl, unflustered by the raging irritation around the establishment of the memorial, declared that its construction was urgently necessary and the Bundesrepublik could not afford further delays because: "What would happen to us if we don't build it, would cause immense damage to the country"³⁰ he warned. (*Was auf uns zukäme, wenn wir es nicht bauen, wäre ein schwerer Schaden für das Land.*) Was there a danger of foreign investors withdrawing from Germany? Or were the profits of Volkswagen and Mercedes in danger?

Wondering why Wienmiller's design had been eliminated, Young³¹ questions if Eisenman and Serra's design had been chosen for the very same reasons he had been asked to serve as the Commission's spokesman: as foreigners and as Jews.

³⁰ Julius H. Schoeps, Niemand kann den Ermordeten ihre Würde zurückgeben. In *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal dokumentation einer Debatte*. Edited by Michael S. Cullen (Zurich, 1999) p. 233

³¹ Young, op. cit. p. 208

CHAPTER TWO

SILENT LIQUIDATION – DELIBERATE DECEIT

The war and post war years, and to an even greater extent the fact that the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, and the ‘death strip’ ran along Ebertstrasse occupying almost all of what is now the memorial site, obliterated any traces of what was there before 1945.¹

In January 1998, whilst the German people toiled over the latest proposals for a memorial, I began to research the allocated site for the ‘Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe’. What had been there before, were any constructions still standing and what historical role had it played? As an artist working with sculpture, site and history, I found these questions elementary, if not essential in the consideration and development of a memorial / artwork on this site. What had been memorized by this place? What did it stand for? What were its hidden messages? What might it conceal?

The competition information² from June 1997 devotes one and a half pages to a description of the planned memorial terrain: the former Ministerial Gardens. Most of it is simply about how the site is to be understood in the future, and the link it should provide between the inner city and Tiergarten.

¹ Visitor information signs mounted on fence surrounding the planned memorial site from 2003 until shortly before opening in 2005.

² Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Engeres Auswahlverfahren, Aufgabenbeschreibung und Rahmenbedingungen, Published by the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, June 1997

The memorial site should become the equivalent of the former Ministerial Gardens:

The location can be [...] understood as a public park — a new part of the Tiergarten. [...] With this a convincing equivalent to the former Ministerial Gardens can be created — a new connection between inner city and park.

Der Standort kann [...] als eine Anlagerung, ein neuer Vorort des Tiergartens verstanden werden [...]. Damit kann [...] ein überzeugendes Äquivalent für die ehemaligen Ministergärten geschaffen werden, eine neue Verbindung zwischen Innenstadt und Park.³

A single opening paragraph attributes the wasteland character of the former Ministerial Gardens, to the decades in which it lay on the east side of the Berlin Wall. As if it were just another waste-like site, a former industrial complex, not lost but gone before.

A tightly abutted, two metre high wooden fence enclosed the Ministerial Gardens, which included the site allocated for the Memorial, effectively blocking visibility of the internal situation. And a barricade of temporary offices and structures, erected by the Senatsverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr (SBWV *Department of Building, Housing and Traffic*), fronted the singular access point at Voßstrasse.

My initial telephone inquiries as to the history and condition of the site at the Senatsverwaltung were continually met with suspicion and rebuffed. After having been passed on by at least nine personnel who claimed no responsibility, I was finally connected to someone who angrily demanded to know where and how I had acquired the contest information. I was

³ Ibid.

speechless. Was this not public information, what had I done wrong? When I asked what had been located on the site, I was firmly instructed: *nichts* (nothing). The conversation was then discontinued in the typical unceremonious Berliner way: without any further sign of decorum.

I became interested in what other kind of answers my ‘unofficial’ enquiry would evoke. I asked the personnel at the container-office at the Topography of Terror’s make shift museum (a temporary museum located at the former Gestapo Headquarters) the same questions. They proceeded to elaborate *nichts* to: “Yes, there was nothing there, that is of course if you can call trees nothing.”

The efficiency of this statement had an all too familiar distasteful sound about it. I was convinced, given the history of the area that there had to be ruins on the site. There must have been constructions prior to 1945 and they must still be obliquely present.

Maps at the Berlin Landesarchiv varied in their representation of the site during the twentieth century. One indicated a narrow lateral construction traversing the centre of the site and resembling a tunnel. There were rumours of an underground tunnel at this site, connecting the former German Democratic Republic (DDR) to West Berlin. The Stasi (East German secret police) believed that a secret underground highway had been built by the Nazis in Hitler’s bunker, which lead west, out of East Germany. In 1973, the Stasi entered and drained the bunker of water to investigate this possible escape route for ‘enemies of the state’. However, it turned out to be no more than a rumour.

Yet another map, dated from 1939, indicated one construction at the northern end of the site, and the suggestion of garden structures, which were used by occupants of the buildings to the east fronting onto Wilhelmstrasse.

These buildings — originally constructed as palaces for the nobility in the eighteenth century — were annexed by the Nazis in the thirties.

Starting at the northern end: number 72 Wilhelmstrasse was the Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft (Reich's Ministry for Nutrition and Agriculture), number 73 the Haus des Reichspräsidenten (House of the Reichpresident) and numbers 74, 75 and 76 the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office).

One indication of the history of the site emerged in a local Berlin newspaper. The Berliner Zeitung in November 1997 published a major article revealing the past of the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture. The author claimed that although the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe does not commemorate the millions of Slavic 'Sub humans' (*'Slawische Untermenschen'*) who were either 'starved to death', hung as 'bandits', 'incinerated together with their villages' or 'destroyed in forced labour camps' — it does reside in part on the very place where their 'decimation' was planned and organized.

According to Heinrich Himmler (chief commander of the SS and Gestapo), the purpose of the invasion of Russia in 1941 had been the 'decimation of 30 million Slavic people'.⁴ Chief organizer of the 1941 plan was secretary of state, Herbert Backe, head of the Ministry of Nutrition. A plan was developed to reduce the Soviet economy to that of 1905, effectively depleting it of raw materials and grain. Backe referred succinctly to this enterprise as 'Raumenge-Volksdezimierung' (*raw materials-genocide*).⁵ The idea was to provide the German people with an abundant supply of food by starving 20 to 30 million Russians to death.

The Wehrmacht's nutrition expert (Backe) noted in his diary:

⁴ Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrußland 1941 bis 1944*. (Hamburger Edition, 1999) p. 54

⁵ Götz Aly, Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 21 November 1997

In the future, we won't bother ourselves by demanding the capitulation of Leningrad. It has to be destroyed scientifically and by method.

*Wir werden uns auch künftig nicht mit der Forderung nach einer Kapitulation Leningrads belasten. Es muß durch eine wissenschaftlich begründete Methode vernichtet werden.*⁶

According to the historian Götz Aly,⁷ from 1941-1943 Germany robbed the Soviet Union of 4,373,339 tons of grain, 495,643 tons of meat, 723,450 tons of cooking oil and lard as well as 1,895,775 tons of potatoes. This equated the nutrition needed for survival by some 21.2 million people.

Joseph Goebbels notes in his diary in July 1941, that the German leadership openly declared in public “that Russia can expect nothing from us, we are going to let it starve to death”. ([...] *in aller Öffentlichkeit, daß Rußland nichts von uns zu erwarten habe und wir es verhungern lassen werden.*)⁸

Recent estimates put the number of Soviet civilian deaths during World War II, at a total of 17 million and the number of Soviet deaths in total at 20 million. While historians such as Gerhard Schoenberner estimate the number of Soviet civilian deaths to be 21 million, and that of murdered Soviet prisoners of war at 3.5 million.⁹ Historian Christian Gerlach¹⁰ claims that the German Hunger Plan (which was effectively part of the Nazis *Vernichtungspolitik*) was responsible for some seven million of these deaths. Until now, this subject has been given very little attention with the exception of Gerlach's research and the subsequent disputing thereof.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt, 2005), pp. 203-205

⁸ Joseph Goebbels *Tagebücher*, edited by Elke Fröhlich (München, 1987) Teil 1 Band 4, p. 734 8 July 1941

⁹ Gerhard Schoenberner, in *Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V.: Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995*. Berlin 1995 p. 84

¹⁰ Gerlach, op. cit.

Two years after Aly's publication, in 1999, those responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of the Memorial competition published a documentation of the Memorial Debate in an impressively thick 1,298 paged book. Despite its dimensions, it failed to reproduce Aly's article on the starvation plan organized at the Ministry that intersected the terrain of the Memorial. Aly's article was based (at the time) on unpublished research.

What is the political aim of the book *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal*¹¹ edited by Ute Heimrod and Günther Schlusche from the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur? While reproducing a variety of articles and papers of minor publications from all corners of the Bundesrepublik, it failed to publish an illuminating article by one of Germany's most important historians. Aly teaches at the Fritz Bauer institute for Holocaust research in Frankfurt.

The memorial site lies just to the east of Albert Speer's planned 'Germania'.¹² While the southern part of the Ministerial Gardens was the location of the Neue Reichskanzlei built by Albert Speer along Voßstrasse, in 1938.

After the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, the site formed part of the *Todesstreifen* (death-strip), the barren scraped sand strip between the

¹¹ Ute Heimrod, Günther Schlusche und Horst Seferens. *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas"* (Berlin, 1999)

¹² In 1937 Hitler commissioned Speer (Architect, member of SS, 1942 Minister for Armaments and War Production, de facto second man after Hitler) to prepare plans for the construction of a new Berlin — his goal being that of shaping a world culture. The Nordsüd Achse (north-south axis) was proposed as a master plan of the city. Not open to traffic, but instead a great ritual passage through the city. Speer stated: "a magnificent avenue lined with impressive buildings could be built, three miles long. To be sure, all the architectural proportions of Berlin would be shattered by two buildings that Hitler envisaged on this avenue. On the northern side near the Reichstag, he wanted a huge meeting hall, a domed structure into which St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome would have fitted several times over [...] To balance this structure Hitler wanted an arch of triumph four hundred feet high. ' At least that will be a worthy monument to our dead of the world war. The names of our dead, all 1,800,000 of them, will be chiselled in the granite', said Hitler. He handed me two sketches drawn on small cards. " Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York, 1970), p. 96. On the subject of engraving: one of the winning entries (artists' group Christine Jacobs-Marks) of the memorial competition in 1995 was a huge concrete gravestone covering 20,000 square metres, onto which all the names of the victims were to be engraved.

walls separating West and East Berlin. The Wall in this section followed the course of the *Zollmaner* (city wall), which had enclosed the Prussian residential city in the eighteenth century. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the site gradually turned into a wasteland. In many parts of Berlin there are still vacant lots, which remained undeveloped following devastation during the Second World War. The Todesstreifen became yet another one of these untitled spaces littered with discarded objects: broken down washing machines, torn stained sofas and uprooted trees through to the abandoned DDR watch towers. By the end of the 1990's almost all evidence of the Todesstreifen had disappeared.



4. The Ministergärten with excavated bunker constructions. Situation of January 1998.

Finally obtaining a view over the two metre high fence, in January 1998, I discovered that the entire area had become yet another building site¹³ — traversed by bulldozers and workmen. The top layer of earth had been removed to a depth of three metres revealing the perimeters of several clusters of concrete ruins, and the sand¹⁴ covering the remaining space had been levelled and scraped regularly flat.

In an endeavour to locate documentation on the ruins I had seen, I searched for the files on the Ministries, which had lined Wilhelmstrasse during the thirties, at the Landesarchiv in Berlin. I was told that they were unavailable for an indefinite period of time.

A ground plan¹⁵ reproduced in *1945, Die Neue Reichskanzlei: Das Ende* by Olaf Groehler indicated the Reichskanzlei (both old and new) as well as underground constructions at the southern end of the site. These included Hitler's bunker, a garage, a bunker for 80 drivers, two cars and two tanks, first-aid station, operation theatre and dental rooms, civilian bunker, bedrooms and duty rooms of adjutant and offices, corridor to the Propaganda Ministry and corridor to the Foreign Ministry.

But, this still did not account for the ruins at the northern end of the terrain — the planned Memorial area.

Returning to the site, I was not able to go any further than the container office of the Senatsverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr (*Department of Building, Housing and Traffic*) located at the entrance. Whilst

¹³ Potsdamer Platz was at this time the world's largest building site for Sony and Daimler-Benz. The main projects were; the Sony Centre comprising office, entertainment and apartment space, including restaurants, cafes, businesses and "space for cultural activities", as well as a large cinema centre. Next to the Sony Centre is the Daimler-Benz Complex: 19 Buildings, 340,000 square metres of offices, apartments, shops, restaurants, Hyatt Hotel, musical and variety theatre, big screen cinema and 19 film theatres. The main architects of the New Mitte are Renzo Piano, Arata Isozaki, Richard Rogers and Hans Kollhoff.

¹⁴ The great sand deposits in Berlin remain from the ice age, when the "Urstrom", flowing underneath the ice, carried soft material from Warsaw to Berlin. The sand base of Berlin is richly laden with fossils and in many places well over 35 metres deep fossils have been found.

¹⁵ Olaf Groehler, *1945, Die Neue Reichskanzlei: Das Ende* (Berlin, 1995) p. 32

speaking to the staff, I noticed a geophysical map pinned to the wall, which included an ‘analysis of the geophysical investigation’ (Auswertung der geophysikalischen Untersuchung).¹⁶ This kind of map is produced by a technique that resembles an X-ray/scan, reading through layers of earth to measure and graphically represent anomalies like concrete constructions and metallic content. The plan indicated: 1. Bunkers assessed to have strong foundations, 2. Foundations, cellars and ruins of the same and 3. Areas which have been significantly filled in and contain metal objects. The bunker entrance in the northeast corner of the Memorial site was identified as Joseph Goebbels’ bunker. An area to the left of the bunker bordering the northern perimeter was identified as the foundations of Goebbels’ residence.

Joseph Goebbels was Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda, as well as his successor. He served as chancellor of Germany for about 24 hours before committing suicide on 1 May 1945 (the very same Labour Day that was his own initiation in 1933). Effectively, one of Angela Merkel’s Nazi predecessors resided on the very terrain of the planned Memorial.

The employee at the Senat’s on site container flashing snapshot photographs at me, bluntly stated that he had documented the site in photographs solely for purposes of accurate demolition calculations. Everything on the site was to be demolished and removed (*muss weg*) and this had already begun. Furthermore, he said that seven and a half tons of ammunition had been found on site¹⁷, including hand grenades and bombs — this being the most significant deposit to have been found in one place in Berlin. The geophysical map indicated points where geomagnetic and electromagnetic objects had been detected. These were scattered over the entire area. His snapshots featured bunker ruins, broken columns, fragments

¹⁶ Baufeldfreimachung Ministergärten Geophysikalische Messungen, 19 February 1998 Büro für Geophysik Lorenz, Berlin

¹⁷ This was confirmed during a personal interview in 2007 by the Büro für Geophysik Lorenz which had conducted the geophysical investigation of the site in 1998.

of sculpture, bottles and even entire skeletal remains. The skeletons, each found at the northern end of the block belonging to Wilhelmstrasse 72, had been dug up and handed over to the police by a construction company.¹⁸ This prevented accurate assessment of their historical significance as well as the cause of death, which could only have been determined by careful archaeological evaluation of the on-site situation.

I was refused entry to the site as well as permission to photograph the geophysical map. Obtaining access to the container was the closest one could get. Even journalists at this time were denied entry to the area.

Circumstances became even more obscure when I contacted the Büro für Geophysik and a spokesperson reticently agreed to meet me at a café, under condition that our meeting remain secret. I was given an unpublished booklet documenting the archaeological finds on the terrain of the Reichskanzlei which lay to the south of the block together with a book in French on the Kanzlei's architect Albert Speer. Curious as this combination was, it still did not explain the ruins at the northern end of the site.

Armed with my camera, I decided to negotiate the fence again and photograph the ruins protruding from the sandy surface, as well as the bulldozers engaged in demolition. Soon enough, I drew attention and found myself quickly explaining something about an Australian project — which would take place 18,000 kilometres away. I was invited on site.

The on-site archaeologist from the Berlin Landesdenkmalamt (Historical Buildings Council) proceeded to give me access to all the material I had been relentlessly seeking up until that time. All of the newly drawn up floor plans of the bunkers on site were in his possession. He welcomed my questions lamenting the fact that no one in the city of Berlin was interested or cared about this important historical site. (Several years later he elaborated this

¹⁸ Peter R. Fuchs. Die Bunkeranlage auf dem Grundstück Wilhelmstrasse 72 Ministergärten in Berlin-Mitte. (Landesdenkmalamt Berlin März 1998) p. 2

comment to: No one other than Nazis and sensation seekers are interested; there is no serious interest from the side of academics, artists or historians.) Indeed, Gabriele Camphausen the manager of the Topographie des Terrors, demanded that the uncovered bunker of the Nazi propaganda Minister be abruptly ‘zugemacht und weitergebaut’ (*locked closed and built over*) because it was historically not meaningful enough.¹⁹ Similarly, the Senator for building and town planning Peter Strieder, rejected outright the conservation, and or any interest in the bunker, justifying: “Die Innenstadt ist ein Museum par excellence”²⁰ (*The inner city is a museum par excellence*) and further that: a city could not live with the fact that all of these areas remain untouchable.

With direct access to this historically and politically charged site I could finally engage with it first hand, albeit cautiously between demolition and bomb removal experts.

The company, Büro für Geophysik Lorenz (*Lorenz Geophysics Office*) was commissioned already in 1996 by the Deutsche Stadtentwicklungsgesellschaft²¹ to geophysically investigate the former Ministergärten between Ebert-, Voß- and Behrenstrasse. This investigation was in anticipation of the building of new constructions consequent to the re-location of the German capital the Berlin.

Lorenz’s investigations revealed a series of very large underground constructions:

- The *Bunker an der Terrasse*, made from reinforced concrete.
- *Bunkers from the Neue Reichskanzlei*, findings as deep as 8 metres (two stories deep) beneath the topsoil, outer and inner walls intact.

¹⁹ Die Tageszeitung (Taz), 3 February 1998

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Fuchs Op. cit. p. 1

- The *Führerbunker*, outer walls and concrete plate preserved, the bunker ceiling and inner walls broken through from earlier clearing efforts.
- The *Fabrerbunker*, intact, already investigated in 1992 by the Archäologisches Landesamt.
- The *Goebbels Bunker*, intact.
- Cellar foundations of the *Reichspräsidentenpalais*, preserved structures approximately 4 metres beneath topsoil.
- Foundations of the *Mannschaftsquartiere* and the *Tiefgarage*.
- Foundations of the *Orangerie*.
- Foundations of the *Neue Reichskanzlei*.
- Foundations of the *Goebbels Villa*²²

The finds were identified by comparing the geophysical image to an aerial photograph of the site taken in 1945 by the British. However a construction (Ebertstrasse 19) on the block belonging to the Reichspräsidentenpalais (Wilhelmstrasse 73) seen on the 1945 photograph and in the geophysical image could not be identified at first.

In 1997, sections of the underground constructions were removed before they could have been identified and assessed for their significance, function and historical relevance by the Landesdenkmalamt.²³ An ammunitions removal company, and a building company were amongst the first to have a free hand with the site. Their ‘cleaning up’ included the removal of sections of foundations such as the marble lined swimming pool (built by

²² Fuchs Op. cit. p. 1

²³ Fuchs Op. cit p. 2

Hindenburg²⁴), which was situated in the garden of the Reichspräsidentenpalais, and the opening up of the Goebbels bunker (both of which lie on the Memorial plot). The Landesdenkmalamt was not consulted until the end of January 1998, by which time the intact site had been significantly altered.²⁵

In the northeast corner of the Memorial area the massive concrete roof of the Goebbels' bunker just protruded from above the sand, directly before the building site of the DZ Bank. The original independent entrance now lay sealed over beneath the tarmac of Behrenstrasse. Behrenstrasse had just been extended across the area to join Ebertstrasse. The Senat however, refused to allow entrance to the bunker, by the investigators, via its original doorway, which lay beneath the tarmac of the still virtually unused Behrenstrasse. For this reason, the companies involved, were forced to dynamite their way through the massive two metres thick reinforced concrete ceiling of the bunker, located discretely within the fenced off site.²⁶

In 1918, the new German Government had taken over the 18th century palace situated at Wilhelmstrasse 72 for the Ministry of Nutrition. Under the Nazis it continued as the Ministry for Nutrition and Agriculture. In 1937 extensions were built in the rear of its gardens for the Goebbels villa.²⁷ The large building occupied the northwest perimeter of the Ministergärten next to the bunker. The precise date of the construction of the bunker is not known, but estimated to have taken place already in 1940.²⁸

Seen in profile, the bunker, an elongated massive concrete block 16 x 11 x 6 metres, lay dormant seven metres below ground level for 52 years. An

²⁴ Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg (1847-1934) was a German politician. He was the second Reichspräsident (President of Germany) of the Weimar Republic and was obliged, or forced by democratic rules, to appoint Hitler as Chancellor on 30 January 1933 following his election by the German people.

²⁵ Fuchs Op. cit. pp.1-2

²⁶ Büro für Geophysik Lorenz, personal interview 2007

²⁷ Fuchs Op. cit. p. 5

²⁸ Fuchs Op. cit. p. 10

almost two metre thick heavily reinforced concrete encasement, housed a living space of up to 16 areas, including two bathrooms, an air shaft/ventilation chamber and an emergency exit at the eastern end.²⁹

A jagged opening, which had been dynamited through the ceiling of one of the bathrooms in 1997, was kept shut and locked by the temporary instalment of an iron door. Although I had never considered entering the repellent bunker itself, I found myself induced by an archaeological team of two to finally climb down to this gloomy if not evil dead-end.

Descending through the gaping hole and down a ladder, I came into the flooded concrete darkness of the bunker: one of the last points of resistance during the final days of WWII.³⁰ According to F. Kellerhoff, Goebbels used the bunker only up until 1943. In April 1945 the bunker served as the command post of the SS-Division “Nordland”.³¹ Eyewitnesses³² from the time, report that on the 24 April 1945 the Nazis regiment commandment was relocated to the Goebbels Villa.

The command post was set up in the bunker, reached by a staircase just inside the front door. The bunker had been fitted out with wooden panelling, comfortable furnishings, sleeping arrangements, a kitchen and a telephone switchboard.

²⁹ Bunker der “Villa Goebbels” im Bereich der Ministergärten/Behrenstrasse, Grobbestandaufnahme Grundriß und Schnitt, Arnold & Körner GbR, 25.01.1998

³⁰ The systematic bombing of Berlin, which took place from November 1943, by the Royal Air Force is known in Germany as the “Schlacht um Berlin” (Battle of Berlin). “Round-the-clock-bombing” of the city was completed by the American air force during the day. The Government sector was the target of heavy bombing in April and May 1944.³⁰ The peak of the air attacks occurred in April 1945, during which 83 air raids took place. In the battle for the Government sector during the last days of the war, further devastation was wrought by artillery and tank fire. From April 26, Soviet troops commanded by General Chuikov advanced from the Landwehrkanal and Hallesches Tor to the city centre. “After the defensive position on Köthener and Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse had been moved back, heavy fighting flared up once more on Wilhelmstrasse until the city commandant, Lieutenant General Weidling, capitulated on May 2, 1945.” Rürup, Reinhard (Ed.): Topography of Terror Gestapo, SS and Reichssicherheitshauptamt on the ‘Prinz-Albrecht-Terrain“ A Documentation. (Arenhövel, Berlin 1989) p.180 “Wednesday, 2 May 1945: From 00.40 hours, Weidling organised a public Radio transmission which announced the capitulation of the Berlin garrison [...] Weidling capitulated under the Chuikov command at 05.57 hours.” Groehler, Op.cit., pp.70-71

³¹ Kellerhoff, F. Mythos Führerbunker, Berlin 2003, p.40

³² H.Triebel, Bericht – Ordonnanzoffizier in Berlin in den letzten Tagen des Krieges, 1979. In: W.Venghaus (Ed.), Berlin 1945 – Die Zeit vom 16. April bis 2. Mai (Netphen 1996), 352

Eyewitness Helmut Triebel, describes how the Goebbels Villa was handed over to Hauptsturmführer Schwägermann of the SS-Division on the morning of April 24, 1945:

The command centre was from the first day on in the bunker, which was directly next to the house.

Der Gefechtsstand war vom ersten Tag an im Luftschutzbunker, der unmittelbar neben dem Haus lag und vom Eingang nach der Haustür zu begeben war. ³³

He continues to describe the interior of the bunker:

[...] some 12 to 15 steps led down to a wooden panelled room of some 30 square metres, which had a wide built-in corner seating arrangement. Behind was the separated sleeping cabin and on the other side several separated small cabins in which bedding, clothing and various provisions were stored. As garrison for the coming days, the Bunker-command centre apart from the Commander and his Adjutants consisted of the Meldestaffelführer, der Gefechtsscheiber and I, who had set ourselves up in the bunker. Added to this were the messengers, who when not on rounds, came to us to lie down and sleep in the cabins. Advantageous also were the functioning telephone switchboard and the extensive kitchen, which ensured our men and us with provisions. The two colleagues mentioned had already moved in with me: Hauptscharführer Knopf as Meldestaffelführer und Oberscharführer Wackes as Gefechtsschreiber, who sat at the typewriter to the very last, and who completed the messages demanded from the combat/brigade group and reports.

[...] etwa 12 bis 15 Stufen führten hinunter in einen etwa 30 qm großen, holzvertäfelten Raum mit einer breiten Sitzecke. Dahinter war das abgeteilte

³³ Ibid. p. 352

Schlafkabinett und auf der anderen Seite mehrere abgeteilte kleinere Kabinen, in denen Bettzeug, Kleidung und diverse Verpflegung lagerten. Als Besatzung für die nächsten Tage hatten sich im Bunker-Gefechtsstand außer dem Kommandeur und seinem Adjutanten, der Meldestaffelführer, der Gefechtsschreiber und ich mich eingerichtet. Ausserdem kamen die Melder, die nicht unterwegs waren, zu uns und legten sich in den Kabinen zum Schlafen nieder. Günstig waren auch die funktionierende Fernsprechanlage und die umfangreiche Hausküche, die unseren Männern und uns vorläufig die Verpflegung sicherte. Zwei genannte Kameraden waren bereits mit mir eingezogen: Hauptscharführer Knopf als Meldestaffelführer und Oberscharführer Wackes als Gefechtsschreiber, der bis zuletzt an der Schreibmaschine saß und die von der Kampfgruppe geforderten Meldungen und Berichte anfertigte.³⁴

Further information about the bunker and the area directly around it are provided by the same witness:

27.4. [1945] [...] we went back from the Regiments-command centre...where we buried the [fallen] Standartenführer Anhalt in the garden of Goebbels villa.

27.4 [1945] [...]sind wir zum Regiments-Gefechtsstand zurückgegangen...dort haben wir den [gefallenen] Standartenführer Anhalt im Garten der Villa Goebbels begraben. ³⁵

(See description of unidentified skeletons found in the terrain of Wilhelmstrasse 72 on 26.11.1997 und 18.01.1998 above). Triebel describes the night of May 1:

At 22 hours it was time...bit by bit the Goebbels villa became empty, so that after approx. 20 minutes the house was empty. Hauptscharführer Knopf,

³⁴ Triebel Op. cit 352

³⁵ Ibid.

Oberscharführer Wackes and I were amongst the last to leave...in the direction of Brandenburger Tor – Unter den Linden – Friedrichstrasse to the train station there.

*Um 22 Uhr war es soweit...nach und nach leerte sich die Villa Goebbels, so daß nach etwa 20 Minuten das Haus leer war. Hauptscharführer Knopf, Oberscharführer Wackes und ich waren bei den letzten, die den Bunker verließen...in Richtung Brandenburger Tor – Unter den Linden – Friedrichstraße zum dortigen Bahnhof.*³⁶

Wading through the cold, murky water, I was shown through rooms in which Goebbels had lived with his wife and six children and kept his private collection of *entartete Kunst* or degenerate art.

The ravages of water were to be seen on every surface: the encrusted, ceased electrical fuses, cables and switches; the iron doors which had grown layer after layer of incised rust in response to the rising water level; the corroded central heating system, produced by the Dräger company who are existent to this day in Germany; and, the multi-toned alternate levels, reading up the walls where the ground water had once reached a height of at least 1.7 metres (and which seemed to find its correspondent in the soil profile/stratigraphy above ground in the Ministerial Gardens).

³⁶ Ibid. 359 Helmut Triebel was Untersturmführer and Ordonnanzoffizier of the SS Division "Nordland". He witnessed and lived through the last days of the war in the German capital. He describes these events in "Der Freiwillige" (Ausgabe 1/79, 15 ff.). My photographs of the interior of the bunker show a corroded communications system in room 12 (see p.59). A melted corroded telephone was also part of the finds in the Goebbels Bunker in 1998. see Allgemeine Fundliste Grabung 1766 Berlin-Mitte Behrenstrasse, Kiste 3, Landesdenkmalamt Berlin 2/1. *Hauptscharführer* was a Nazi paramilitary rank, which was used by the Schutzstaffel (SS) between 1934 and 1945. The rank was the highest enlisted rank of the SS, with the exception of the special Waffen-SS rank of *Sturmscharführer*. *Oberscharführer* was a Nazi Party paramilitary rank that existed between 1932 and 1945. Translated as "Senior Squad Leader." The SA rank of *Oberscharführer* was senior to *Scharführer* and junior to the rank of *Truppführer*. *Standartenführer* was a Nazi Party paramilitary rank that was used in both the SA and the SS First founded as a title in 1925, in 1928 the rank became one of the first commissioned Nazi ranks and was bestowed upon those SA and SS officers who commanded units known as *Standarten* which were regiment-sized formations of between three hundred and five hundred men. *Meldestaffelführer*: Liaison officer. *Gefechtschreiber*: roughly he who is concerned with communications of combat.

Strong traces of gunshot residue were to be seen on the ceilings and a safe, which had crashed to the floor as the bunker was dynamited open, lay in the main room.³⁷

A shambles of rubble, earth and building materials hastily propelled together, blocked the original staircase, which led up to the cellar of the villa; a silent dank rise, crowned by stalactites at the uppermost seam to the outside.

The original internal walls of the bunker had been dressed with wooden panelling and the concrete ceilings had a thin reinforced plaster covering. Bathrooms and kitchen were tiled. The rooms were scorched by fire and looted during the final days of combat. It is assumed that the bunker was used as a hide out from 1945-1946. And more looting took place after 1945 as evidenced by the carefully removed stacked tiles and missing electric ventilation motor.³⁸

At the southern end of the memorial terrain several groups of ruins protruded from the surface of the sand giving an adumbration of constructions in heavily reinforced concrete. These were the ruins of the unidentified building shown on the 1945 aerial photograph of Ebertstrasse 19, which lay on the block of the Reichpräsidentenpalais. The geophysical plan from February 1998 identifies these as foundations of possible bunkers. However, the drawing of the Ministergärten dated 4 June 1998 by the Senatsverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr, is more accurate. It identifies one of these structures as a swimming pool, and the other cluster of concrete on site as a bunker. The bunker, which is at least as large as that of Goebbels, has two distinctively long corridors: one connecting it to the street (Ebertstrasse), the other at the opposite end leads to another construction further east. The files on the Ministergärten at the Birthler-Behörde³⁹, revealed

³⁷ Fuchs, op. cit. p. 11,14,16

³⁸ Ibid. p. 11

³⁹ The archives of the "MfS", Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (Ministry for State Security) are kept at the office of the Federal Commissioner (BstU: Die Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des

that two bunkers were in fact located at this site. Above ground they were both disguised as greenhouses. They occupied the south-west corner of the memorial site.

In 1939, the Reichpräsidentenpalais, built in 1837 on Wilhelmstrasse 73 and occupying the above-mentioned block of land, had become the official residence of the Nazi Minister of Foreign Affairs, SS Obergruppenführer Joachim von Ribbentrop. The uncovered large marble swimming pool, situated almost centre of the planned memorial site, was part of Ribbentrop's palatial gardens. The luxurious extensions and renovations of Ribbentrop's residence were so expensive, that they blew out the annual Government budget in 1938, creating a scandal at the time.⁴⁰



5. View of bunker ruins located at Wilhelmstrasse 73, in the gardens of Ribbentrop's residence directly on the memorial site.

Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR). Archival information kindly supplied by Büro für Geophysik Lorenz.

⁴⁰ Laurenz Demps, Berlin-Wilhelmstrasse *Berlin-Wilhelmstraße Eine Topographie preußisch-deutscher Macht* (Berlin, 1994) pp. 233-234

Ribbentrop, an ardent anti-Semite, was involved in the deportation of the European Jews to concentration camps. On 24 September 1942 he ordered that the deportation of Jews from all over Europe proceed as quickly as possible. At this time Jews in Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary and Denmark were still untouched. Negotiations were to be initiated with the governments of Bulgaria, Hungary and Denmark for expedient transports. The Italian authorities in Croatia refused to hand over Jews in their zone to the Germans. Furthermore, Mussolini continued to completely reject all calls for their deportation. And on 22 February 1943 in Lyon, the Italian military authorities forced the French chief of police to annul an order for the arrest of hundreds of Jews who were to be sent to Auschwitz.

Ribbentrop three days later complained to Mussolini: “Italian military circles, and sometimes the German army itself, lacked a proper understanding of the Jewish question”.⁴¹ One month earlier, on 13 January, he had sent a telegram to the German Embassy at Rome:

While we have acknowledged Judaism as a disease [...] the Italian government thinks that it can deal with the Jews individually.

*Während wir das Judentum als eine Krankheit erkannt haben [...] glaubt die italienische Regierung, die Juden individuell behandeln zu können.*⁴²

Jews were not deported from Italy until after the fall of Mussolini and the German occupation of northern Italy in 1943. Already in October 1943, an extermination camp equipped with a gas chamber was set up at Trieste. Following the arrival of the *Einsatzkommando Reinhard* in Trieste, the Risiera, a rice factory in the suburb of San Sabba was converted into a *Polizeihaftlager*. It was one of four police detention camps set up in Italy to house political prisoners, undesirables, ethnic groups and Jews. It was the only camp in

⁴¹ Martin Gilbert, *The Holocaust. The Jewish Tragedy*, (London, 1986) p. 543

⁴² Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945*. (Frankfurt am Main, 2003) p. 494

Western Europe equipped with a gas chamber.⁴³ The camp was used for detention and interrogation of prisoners, as a transit place for those marked for deportation, a base camp for round-ups and other such special ‘actions’, and, as an extermination centre. The crematorium occupied the central space at the camp.

These findings — from Propaganda Minister Goebbels through to Minister for Foreign Affairs Ribbentrop — along with the historical weight they signified, all accounted for the official ‘nothing’ (*nichts*) that had purportedly existed on the terrain allocated for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe so far.

The area to the southwest of the site (now beneath the Landesvertretung of Lower Saxony and that of Schleswig-Holstein) revealed ruins of what was termed the *Tiefgarage*. Small tiled rooms, with the outer wall blackened by fire, comprised this construction and whilst I was on the site, a metal door was broken open, revealing the remains of a cell complete with mattresses. This was built as part of the complex of the apartment blocks, which were situated along Hermann-Göring-Strasse (now Ebert) and were intended for Hitler’s staff and in particular, his drivers. The drivers, who were members of the SS, belonged to the *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitlers*, an elite group of Waffen-SS appointed as the ‘special’ bodyguards of Hitler.⁴⁴

⁴³ Elio Apih, *Risiera di San Sabba, Guida alla mostra storica* (Trieste, 2000) p. 36-37. Cf. also Jan Morris, *Triest. De melancholie van een plek* (Amsterdam/Antwerpen 2002) p. 114

⁴⁴ Alfred Kerndl, *Zeugnisse der Historischen Topographie auf dem Gelände der Ehemaligen Reichskanzlei Berlin-Mitte*, (Archäologisches Landesamt Berlin, September 1993) p. 10

6. Entrance to
Goebbels bunker.
Situation 1998.



These drivers had in turn their own bunker, the *Fabrerbunker* situated to the south of the *Tiefgarage* — and still existent. In May 1992 it was officially opened and investigated by the Archäologisches Landesamt Berlin. A nine metre long tunnel ran six metres deep, down into the bunker. Above its entrance can still be read the inscription: “Mannsbilder gibt es genug / Richtige Kerle wenig”. With its 2-3.5 metre thick concrete casing, the bunker contained some 150 square metres of living space. This included eight rooms and was decorated throughout with frescos. Three open rooms included a *Sanitätsstube* containing six bunk beds and medical supplies (painkillers and antiseptics). Another room served as a storage place for *Panzerfaust* (anti-tank) shells and *Gewehrmunition* (ammunition), while a further room contained more ammunition as well as dishes, wine bottles and wooden furniture. This bunker, now sealed, lies beneath valuable real estate next to the Landesvertretung Hessen. Indeed, two of the State government representatives, gave up all attempts to construct anything on the site to the South, when the Jewish Claims Conference (JCC), acting in the name of the original Jewish owners, lodged a claim for the real estate. The subject of the debate then centred on the value of the property. That is, if the actual value of the real estate, to be

paid back to the Jewish owners, would be calculated as having significantly decreased because of the existence of the Nazi bunkers.⁴⁵

A cross section of the earth on the memorial site, some two metres deep, had been exposed by the archaeological investigation in 1998, revealing the soil profile / stratigraphy. The distinctive layers enabled a reading of the site's history—jagged iron which once reinforced concrete now stretched outward clawing the air; a dense darkened streak indicated the decomposed rubbish remains of the palaces which once lined Wilhelmstrasse; an embedded fragment of amber glazed porcelain testified to the culture of the eighteenth century and in the distance crowning all of this stood the stolid DDR Plattenbauten built at the end of the 1980's.



7. and 8. Corroded communications installation and metal door inside of the Goebbels bunker.

⁴⁵ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 3 February 1998

The richly historical site lay preserved and dormant for some fifty years beneath the Todesstreifen. The ruins were then exposed and partially removed by demolition companies prior to notification of the archaeological and Historical Buildings Council authorities. Following subsequent excavations, everything on site was immediately demolished before public or scholarly attention could interfere. The only exception is the Goebbels bunker, which was subsequently concealed beneath sand. The remaining bunkers on site (belonging to Ribbentrop's garden) were removed. They have so far never been identified or acknowledged in public.⁴⁶

At this time the building of the Holocaust Memorial was scheduled to commence in summer 2001, and reach completion within three years.

Richard Serra and Peter Eisenman's proposed design was to be a field of 4,200 pillars erected over an area of approximately 19,000 square metres, with a budget of DM 15 million.

During a visit to Chancellor Kohl in January 1998, Eisenman and Serra were asked to make a number of changes to their design that would make it 'acceptable to the organizers.'⁴⁷ Kohl wanted the memorial to include pathways, hedges and park benches. This resulted in Richard Serra's withdrawal from the project. Now all visual artists had been effectively removed from the project for good. Architect Peter Eisenman agreed to modify the memorial and meet the demands of the organisers. These included: the suggestion to make it seem less dangerous — some of the pillars were to be five metres high and thought to have possibly concealed visitors from view, thus introducing an unwanted labyrinthine effect. There were 'too many

⁴⁶ See plan of underground historical constructions on and surrounding the memorial site in: Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas (Ed.), *Material zum Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Nicolai 2005) p. 18. Despite my requests, the Landesdenkmalamt never conceded to supply their reports on the findings at the Ribbentrop section of the memorial plot (Wilhelmstrasse 73). When I tried in 2006 and 2007 to question the origins of the ruins, I was told that there had simply been a 'Heizungsanlage' or a heating installation.

⁴⁷ James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge. Afterimages of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. (New Haven and London, 2000) p. 208

pillars' which created an undesirable 'visceral experience' rather than a more contemplative one. Thus the number of pillars was reduced to three thousand and their height now ranged from 1.5 to 3 metres. Trees were also introduced into the design including evergreens and linden to surround the memorial. This design came to be known as Eisenman II.

The commissioners also demanded modifications, and Young tells us of his visit to Eisenman's New York studio in June 1998, where he was able to check on the changes that had been made and report them safely back to the other commissioners.⁴⁸

Twelve hundred pillars were removed from the work — thus making room for 'tourist buses to discharge visitors'.⁴⁹

The height of the lowest pillars were raised so that 'visitors will not step or walk out over the tops of pillars' because 'in Jewish tradition it is important to avoid the appearance of desecration' even if the pillars are not consecrated as tombstones. Trees were also added to the design in concurrence with Rosh's wishes according to Young.

Once Eisenman had made all of the changes and modifications requested, his design (Eisenman II) was approved by the Findungskommission to Chancellor Kohl and the memorial organizers. Young concluded: "This is finally all we could ask of Germany's national attempt to commemorate the Nazi's murder of European Jewry".⁵⁰

Coined in terms of a request by Young to Germany to commemorate the German mass murder of Jews — Young has effectively taken over the responsibility for the commemoration of the murder of the Jews by Germany — as intended.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 210

⁴⁹ Young, op. cit. p. 211

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 216

One wonders more and more if he was simply a decoy for Germany. As the most authoritative member of the commission (on Holocaust memorials and Judaism), yet as a corresponding non-German speaking⁵¹ member, he was invariably spared knowledge of much of the critical debate and intrigue around the project for which he was appointed spokesman. A charismatic, communicative and affable statesman, alongside the stiff, acrimonious commemoration fighters in Germany, Young no doubt provided an attractive world-class personage to promote the Germans' Memorial project.

In the meantime, opposition to the design was growing in Berlin, and the official decision was continuously put off by such factors as Senator Peter Radunski taking a three-week holiday in March 1998. Chancellor Kohl signaled his continued support, but wanted Eisenman to personally present the now modified version of the memorial to him. The presentation date was pushed back until May 1998, and by summer with Federal elections looming the project was destined to become an election issue. The opposition, Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands SPD) indicated that it would not support the Memorial. The designated SPD Minister of Culture, Michael Naumann claimed that he was skeptical of the memorial's adequacy. Finally, the Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen and Chancellor Kohl agreed to postpone the Memorial decision until after the federal elections.

After defeating Helmut Kohl and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the SPD formed a coalition with the Greens. The Greens, in support of the Memorial, stipulated in the coalition agreement that the Bundestag vote on the issue in the coming year (1999).

⁵¹ During a lecture Young gave in Berlin to a German audience in 2004, he only spoke in English and didn't appear to understand any German.

The new minister of culture, Naumann, wanted the memorial to have a more pedagogical function and include a centre for learning and research. He proposed a complex that would include a Holocaust museum, a Leo Baeck Institute and a Comparative Study of Genocide Institute. Therefore the Findungskommission, the memorial organisers, Eisenman and Naumann began discussions to work out how to achieve such a complex. The director of the Jewish Museum, Michael Blumenthal, moderated the discussions.

Subsequently Eisenman presented a completely new proposal (Eisenman III), which included a huge glass wall holding one million books, connected by pedestrian ramps to a series of buildings. Underground, a lecture theatre, research facilities and offices would be completed by a permanent installation on the Holocaust. These buildings were to line the northern perimeter of the site, directly covering the area above Goebbels' bunker and villa. However, the bunker was not to be included in the installation or plans.

This seems to be a German predilection: destroy the historical evidence and remnants of authenticity, and fabricate a new construction on the same site to explain to viewers/tourists what the original site had been like.

Take the example of the Topographie des Terrors: The site of the main headquarters of the Gestapo-Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände, has long been a gaping wound in the 'Weltstadt's' attempt to present itself with a spruced up, politically correct and cosmopolitan face. The most recent debacle in a long series of painful events is the destruction of the beginnings of Peter Zumthor's museum on the site. Claimed at 38 million Euros as being too expensive, the three towers of stairwells have been torn down, and Zumthor's design has gone from being the sought after star architectural design to "too in love with itself, too complicated, too self-centred, too expensive and as a useless relic of the 90's".⁵²

⁵² Hanno Rauterberg, Die Zeit, 25 November 2004 Nr. 49

Insulted, abused and abandoned. A structure, which so far had cost 13 million Euros to erect, it is difficult to see how a 'cheaper' solution will be found. Another competition, more rounds of organisation, discussion, derision and decision-making, another museum, another architect, another building site and so on. Apparently 39 million Euros had already been allocated by parliament to the museum's construction, thus making the financial argument redundant.⁵³ It therefore seems to have been an excuse to stop the building works, and as the official study reporting on this situation remains under lock and key, one can only speculate on the real reasons.

However, what is even less easy to understand, is the fact that the Stiftung Topographie des Terrors, who wish to build a museum on this 'Gestapo-Gelände' documenting the historical events that took place here, insisted that every last trace of authentic Nazi constructions on site, be completely erased. This included a bunker as well as the wall of the Gestapo jail both of which were excavated in 1996/1997 by the Landesdenkmalamt. No reason has been given for this order.⁵⁴ Both of these elements could have been intelligently incorporated into an architectural design, offering not only important authentic evidence but also a powerful artistic experience.

Ironically, the Topographie des Terrors has announced that after razing the Zumthor building, they plan to mount a temporary exhibition on site documenting the Gestapo prison.⁵⁵

Other examples include Sachsenhausen, Dauchau and Ravensbrück concentration camps. At Dachau, by 1964, the last barracks had been torn down, "the entire site scrubbed from end to end" and "two model barracks were reconstructed, symbolic concrete foundations laid to recall those destroyed, and the grounds covered over in white gravel". James Young points

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Peter R. Fuchs, Geschützte Bodendenkmäler auf dem Gelände der Topographie des Terrors, Berliner Archäologentag, Kunstgewerbemuseum, Landesdenkmalamt Berlin 4 November 2004.

⁵⁵ BZ, 27 November 2004

out that less critically minded visitors (Dachau is in the meantime a very successful tourist attraction) may indeed fail to distinguish between the memorial and “what it was like”. At Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück, original structures are interspersed with prop-like post 1945 constructions with no indication given as to what is authentic, what is staged and why. Large sections of the camp at Ravenbrück stretch in the distance with dilapidated barracks falling into disrepair. Yet other sections, identified by private initiatives with makeshift signs, are still awaiting excavation.

At Bernauerstrasse in Berlin-Wedding a remaining segment of the Berlin Wall was demolished and a fake Berlin Wall built in its place. Unsuspecting tourists excitedly exclaim that they have come across the last authentic section of the Berlin Wall.

During construction of the new German parliament in Berlin, nearby to the Reichstag, when the foundations of Albert Speers ‘Grosse Halle’ (which was to be the centre of the Hitler’s Welthauptstadt ‘Germania’) were discovered, the Berlin Senat simply removed them, whilst planting a sign announcing: ‘Rückbau von Altlasten im Bereich Spreebogen’⁵⁶ (*Deconstruction/removal of anomalies in the area of the Spree river.*)

Perhaps the plan is simply a continuum of destruction, construction and destruction ad infinitum.

The estimated building costs of Eisenman III were 180 million DM with an extra annual 18 million for the running costs. Unveiling his new model, Eisenman’s work appeared to the press and even supporters of the memorial as a major departure. He was accused of opportunism and betrayal of the memorial making process.

More confusion reigned: Members of parliament in January 1999 were presented Eisenman III by Naumann; factions organized a series of open

⁵⁶ FAZ, 3 February 1998

pronouncements, while some members of parliament claimed that all victims of the Third Reich are the same: a mother and child who died in the bombing of Dresden being no different from a Jew gassed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz.⁵⁷

Simultaneously the SPD Bundestagpräsident (President of the German parliament) Wolfgang Thierse, in a meeting with factions decided that the planned memorial site be removed from the discussion, and that all further questions be decided by consensus. Thierse requested that the Bunderegierung together with the Berlin Senat and the Förderkreis come to a ‘saubere und rechtlich einwandfreie Beendigung des Wettbewerbs’⁵⁸ (*clean and legally perfect completion of the competition*) by the end of February.

After more deliberations, attacks and counter attacks between the political parties, the mayor of Berlin, organizers of the memorial, Jewish leaders and the remaining three artists/architects, a hearing was convened in the Bundestag by SPD member of Parliament, Elke Leonhard.

Young was asked to open the six-hour hearing and present the answers to four questions: “1. Why a monument should be erected; 2. Where a monument should be erected; 3. How a monument to the murdered Jews of Europe should be designed; and 4. What conclusion can be drawn from the current state of deliberations for the further discussions and decision-making process of the German Bundestag?”⁵⁹ His presentation was followed by two other Findungscommission members: Josef Paul Kleihues and Dieter Ronte, and then Rosh and Radunski. Rosh spoke for the creation of only a memorial, but indicated that she would be prepared to meet a compromise in accepting the addition of a small information building about the murder of the European Jews. Naumann made a case for Eisenman III stating that his

⁵⁷ Hans-Georg Stavginski, *Das Holocaust-Denkmal. Der Streit um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas” in Berlin (1988-1999)* (Paderborn, 2002), p. 269

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 270

⁵⁹ Young, op. cit. p. 220

government would also be releasing a maintenance concept for the memorial concentration camps. (Strong opposition to Eisenman III had come from the directors of existing memorials at the concentration camps in Germany, who claimed that they would be made redundant by a new Holocaust Museum complex.)

Two of the memorial's main opponents also spoke: the Hungarian author György Konrad (at the time president of the Akademie der Künste) pointed out that: the fact that everyone at each stage was prepared to reduce or enlarge Eisenman's design proved that it lacked integrity. It had no qualities of its own. While Salomon Korn (Jewish Community Frankfurt) pleaded for a preservation (*Bewahrung*) of the totality of the Nazi mass murder in public memory, and, that this should be located at a site that makes the confrontation of crime and persecutor possible.⁶⁰



9. and 10. Goebbels bunker: light switches and corroded electrical installations.

⁶⁰ Stavginski, op. cit. p. 280

Elke Leonhard asked Young to conclude the hearing. Young requested the Bundestag to vote on Eisenman II so that the project could at least be rescued. He stated that all other decisions concerning the proposed museum complex could be discussed and decided on by the organizers of the memorial afterwards. He cautioned his audience with: You have invited the ‘guest of Holocaust memory’⁶¹ into the new millennium, to turn back now ‘would seem to give grave offence to the memory of all whom this guest represents’. Checkmate.

One more hearing took place on April 20, to answer the question as to how the memorial could fit into the existing structure of memorial museums in Germany. Naumann’s Eisenman III was the subject of this hearing at the end of which it was rejected. His ‘Anti-fascist water boiler’⁶² (*Antifaschistischer Durchlauferhitzer*) was condemned as too expensive and as something which effectively would weaken the memorial.

In the subsequent two months the memorial again became ensnared in parliamentary politics, while various politicians vied to have their preferred version of a memorial passed. Naumann continued to pressure for a museum-like entity on the site, while theologian Richard Schröder attempted to convince parliamentarians to erect his stone tablet with ‘Thou shalt not kill’ written on it in the middle of the planned memorial site.

On 25 June 1999 by a vote of 314 to 209 the Bundestag approved the erection of a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Three separate parts were approved: that the memorial would be erected in the former Ministerial Gardens in Berlin; that Eisenman’s field of pillars would be realized as well as a small place of information detailing the fate of the victims and the authentic

⁶¹ Young, op. cit. p. 221

⁶² BZ, 21 April 1999

sites of destruction; and a public foundation would be established by the Bundestag to oversee completion of the memorial.



11. Soil profile, 1998.

The Goebbels bunker at this time had been covered with a mound of sand, ostensibly removing it from consciousness. It now served merely as a dumb ramp upon which heavy trucks could enter and leave the site with their monument cargo. The *Ort der Information* was now being built underground on the southeast side of the site. Although Eisenman now knew of the existence of the bunker, it was not to be included in the museum and was designated to become another point of amnesia in the collective German memory. Forever sealed.

The Southern part of the site has been reallocated for government buildings, and now houses the State representatives of: Landesvertretung Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpomerania, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein (built on the site of the *Tiefgarage*), Rhein-Pfalz, Saarland and Hessen — all

sharing a new underground garage which intercepts the original *Tiefgarage* and situated just north of the buried bunkers beneath the *Reichskanzlei*.

This unique terrain, overlaid in the space of just 100 years by an imperial regime, World War II, two dictatorships, pop concerts and now a Holocaust Monument — systematically ignored by academics, artists and historians, was about to disappear yet again beneath 40,000 cubic metres and tons of concrete.

I found myself perplexed: How can one erect a memorial — to remember — when one simultaneously represses knowledge and authentic historical evidence?

How can one honour and pay respect (albeit 60 years too late) to the six million murdered Jews, and not finally be open about where their memory (literally) stands?

How can one practice sincerity along with deliberate deceit?

CHAPTER THREE

DIE MINISTERGÄRTEN A BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Die Gärten sind nicht isoliert von den Gebäuden zu betrachten, in deren Kontext sie entstanden sind. Deren Adresse aber waren die Wilhelmstrasse und der Wilhelmplatz. Sie stehen symbolisch für die Geschichte der deutschen Politik.¹

Anyone who saw Berlin just after the wall came down also witnessed the scarred, desolate, vacant expanse of land stretching between Brandenburger Tor and what is today Potsdamer Platz. Resembling a great wound, the ruinous site appeared lost and out of place at the intersection of the divided city spheres.

The plot of land allocated for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe lay at the centre of this painfully bleak expanse.

Following the 1990 reunification of Germany, Ebertstrasse was rebuilt along the western perimeter of the Memorial site. Ebertstrasse was originally named Brandenburger Kommunikation, then Königgrätzer Strasse (in honour of the Prussian victory over Austria at the Battle of Königgrätz in 1866) and finally under the Nazis, Hermann-Göring-Strasse. Herman Göring was the

¹ Wolfgang Schäche, Zur Geschichte und stadträumlichen Bedeutung der 'Ministergärten'. Vortrag auf der 21. Sitzung des Stadtforums Berlin, 20 June 1992, Stadtforum Berlin 20 June 1992, reproduced in Ute Heimrod, Günther Schlusche und Horst Seferens (Eds.) *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas"* Eine Dokumentation (Berlin, 1999)

second in command of the Third Reich as well as commander of the Luftwaffe. During the Cold War and after the city's division, the Berlin Wall (1961 to 1989) was erected along the trace of Hermann-Göring-Strasse / Ebertstrasse.

Voßstrasse formed the southern perimeter of the Minister Gardens while Pariser Platz lay to the north, and Otto-Grotewohl-Strasse (initially called Wilhelmstrasse) to the east. Otto Grotewohl, a former Social Democrat and member of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED)² had been prime minister of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) from 1949 until 1964.

Up until the middle of the 17th century Berlin maintained its dual-city plan: Berlin-Cölln, which still had an essentially late middle-age character including city walls. Fortifications of the city beginning in 1658 included a ring of bastions complete with a moat. These were extended in 1681, following the foundation of Dorotheenstadt along the Unter den Linden Street and in 1692, of the area bordering to the south (Cölln).

During the 18th century expansion continued under King Friedrich I with the establishment of Friedrichstadt. Consisting of three large squares laid out to the west, before the Tiergarten: the Rondell, the Achteck and the Karree, Friedrichstadt was divided and linked by three main roads still visible on the plan of Berlin today.

The outer western border was formed by the Akzisenring or Akzisemauer (today Ebertstrasse) and Wilhelmstrasse formed the main road in the southwest extension of Friedrichstadt, from 1732 on. It stretched from the Rondell past the Achteck (via Leipziger Strasse) to the area of the Karree.

² SED *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* / Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Governing party of East Germany from its formation in 1949 until 1990.

Under King Friedrich Wilhelm I (1713-1740) the planned construction of Friedrichstadt began to take shape. According to his will the northern section of Wilhelmstrasse between Rondell and Karree (numbers 72-79) was to be divided up for the construction of seven luxury palaces. Located just before the Tiergarten, each palace included a distinctive garden stretching right up to the Akzisemauer. These gardens were destined to become some 100 years later the so-called 'Ministergärten'.

As residencies for the nobility and royalty, the buildings character and form remained intact up until the beginning of the 19th century.

With the establishment in 1799 of the Prussian Ministry of Justice at number 74, the foundations of the political centre of power in Germany had been laid. The function and character of Wilhelmstrasse now took a dramatic turn. Alterations, resulting from a subsequent building spree, engulfed the baroque buildings initially in contemporary classical elements.

Further development and industrialization during the second half of the nineteenth century, effectively converted Wilhelmstrasse into the Prussian centre of Government and after 1871 that of the German Reich. Ministries and offices now occupied every building along Wilhelmstrasse with the exception of the palace at number 72.

The Ministerium des Königlichen Hauses (Ministry of the Royal House) was established at number 73. Number 74 became the Prussian Staatsministerium and number 76 the Dienstbesitz of Otto von Bismarck. The Reichskanzlei, following the foundation of the German Reich was established at number 77. The Auswärtiges Amt (the Foreign Office) took over numbers 75 and 76, with the Reichsamt des Innern (the Home office) at number 74.

The original palace gardens now became the official Ministergärten (Ministerial Gardens). Closed to the public, the area represented a Forbidden City.

In 1872, Voßstrasse was constructed and routed directly through the area occupied by the Marschall Palace at number 78. It joined the newly built Königgrätzer Strasse, which in turn ran directly along the original route of the Akzisemauer (city wall). Removed in 1867 the Akzisemauer had formed the membrane between internal and external communications. This axis was to feature significantly in subsequent stages of German history. To the west of the axis (which connected Brandenburger Tor and Leipziger Platz) was the Tiergarten (a large forested park), whilst to the east lay the enclosed Ministergärten.

Defeat coupled with the political and social breakdown in 1918 brought more changes to Wilhelmstrasse. The increase in ministries included: the establishment of the Reichsernährungsministerium (Ministry of Nutrition) at number 72; the official residency and office of the Reichspräsident at number 73; and from 1928 to 1939 the extension of the Reichskanzlei to number 78.

Adolf Hitler lost no time in moving directly into the Reichskanzlei on the evening of January 31, 1933, following his election by the German people. The Nazi State now occupied the entire area and significant building changes rapidly took place.

A large block-like building complex extending from Wilhelmstrasse through to Mauer Strasse was built onto an existing palace along Wilhelmplatz to form the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda). This dramatically altered the environment of Wilhelmstrasse, together with the Reichsluftfahrtministerium (Air Force Ministry) built further south between Leipziger- and Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse.

The monumental Neue Reichskanzlei built by Hitler's architect Albert Speer, was erected along Voßstrasse effectively backing onto the southern end of the Ministergärten and overtaking the garden area of blocks 77, 76 and 75.

Having torn down the existing buildings along the northern side of the street, the Nazi Reichskanzlei extended some 400 metres along the length of Voßstrasse. Built in just ten months in anticipation of the 'Anschluss' of Austria — the building was erected in order to truly manifest the 'Großdeutsches Reich':

He who enters the Reich Chancellery, must have the feeling of standing before the Lords of the world. And already the road leading there through the Triumphal Arch along the wide streets passing the Soldier's Hall, to the Peoples Square should take his breath away. Alone with this we are in a position to put our one and only competitor, Rome, in the shadows. The great hall will be such that St Peters and its plaza could disappear inside of it. As building 'material' we will use granite. Even these oldest erratics (*Findlinge*) from the 'Urgestein' in the North German plain barely show any signs of weathering. These buildings will (when in the meantime the oceans don't rise up and again flood the northern German plain) still stand unchanged in 10,000 years!³

While the façade deceptively gave the impression of office rooms, the interior of the new Reichskanzlei was in fact mainly comprised of hall-like spaces built for purposes of appearance only. (For example the 250 square metres large Kabinettsitzungsraum where no cabinet meetings were ever held, as they were discontinued after 1938.) Hitler's office located in the centre of the building

³ Adolf Hitler, *Monologe im Führerbauptquartier 1941-1944*. Recorded by Heinrich Heims (Munich 1980), p. 101.

had a complete marble interior and a ten metres high ceiling hovering above a ground area of 400 square metres.

The historical layout and structure of the gardens was completely reversed by Speer's intervention and re-orientated along a north-south axis. A staircase led from Hitler's *Arbeitszimmer* to a greenhouse. A large wall enclosed the entire area, beneath which a complex bunker system was built, complete with passageways to the Ministry of Propaganda as well as the Foreign Office (Außenministerium).

Above ground a bunker emergency exit and watchtower took their place alongside the greenhouse and pond.

The last days of World War II were fought out on this very terrain. Following defeat the burnt out shells and façades of buildings for the most part remained standing. Nevertheless in 1947, the *Ministergärten* was completely cleared and demolished. The remains of the *Reichskanzlei* were dismantled and recycled for the building of the Soviet Monument at Treptow and the *Thälmannplatz* underground station nearby.

By 1950 the entire area above ground had been cleared, with the exception of: the burnt out *Reichspräsidentpalais* at Wilhelmstrasse 73, the *Reichsministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* at number 72, the *Akademie der Künste* (which had served as Speer's offices) and the ruins of the *Adlon Hotel*. The garden structure and remaining trees at the *Ministergärten* were also demolished. The bare scorched terrain once occupied by gardens of the nobility, now only bore the scars cut into its surface by demolition vehicles. And so it remained up until the 1961 erection of the Berlin Wall on August 13.

The concrete outer edge of the DDR was now incised along the original line of the *Akzisemauer*. Parallel and cutting down the centre of the *Ministergärten* block, ran the second wall — built against the *innerer Feind*

(inner enemy), that is, those who would attempt escape from the DDR. The Ministergärten, now split between ‘no-mans-land’ and inner city, was at the periphery of the ‘Hauptstadt der DDR’. And the infamous Wilhelm Strasse was renamed Otto-Grotewohl-Strasse in the newly founded East German state.

Twenty-six years later, in 1987, plans to build an inner city residential area along the Otto-Grotewohl-Strasse were put into motion. In order to prepare the terrain for the ‘Sonderplatten’ (cheap housing assembled from prefabricated modules), the underground bunkers with the exception of those beneath no-mans-land (within the walls) were apparently removed. In his lecture at the Stadtforum⁴ (forum organized by the Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung Berlin) in 1992, Wolfgang Schäche claimed that the ‘Führer’ Bunker (Hitler’s bunker) had been removed during this initiative in 1987. Yet, in July 2006, a discrete sign was erected above a site southeast of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, identifying the location of the still existent underground ‘Führer Bunker’.

Construction of the 1300 flats comprising the ‘Sonderplatten’ was still not complete in November 1989 when the Berlin Wall fell. But this did not deter its builders, and in the following year tenants took up residency in the exceptionally ugly blocks. The pre-fabricated, serial, socialist housing was completed by a sparse fringe of trees dotted along the line of the no longer existent Inner-Berlin Wall.

In 1992 at the Stadtforum Berlin, Schäche in reference to the Ministergärten summed up:

⁴ Schäche, op. cit. p. 785

With obsessive German thoroughness, the physical war damage was followed by the complete liquidation of the still evident constructions and their structural elements.

Mit der Obsessivität deutscher Gründlichkeit folgte der physischen Kriegszerstörung des Aufzisses nun die Liquidierung des bis dahin noch greifbaren Grundrisses mit seinen strukturbildenden Elementen.⁵

Indeed, the consistency of ‘obsessive German thoroughness’ in matters of liquidation was yet to truly reveal itself in the years of memorial construction to come.

⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR

ON RUINOUS FOUNDATIONS – THE CASTING OF THE FOUNDATION FOR THE MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

Symbol of reconciliation by decree / Zeichen der dekretierten Versöhnung

*Konrad Sculler*¹

The third part of the parliamentary decision to approve the building of the Holocaust Memorial on 25 June 1999 was the establishment of a public foundation by the Bundestag (German Parliament) to oversee its completion. The ruling stated that the foundation should be composed of representatives of: the Bundestag, the state of Berlin, the Association of citizens for a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (henceforth: *Förderkreis*), directors of commemorative museums at the sites of former concentration camps in Germany, members of the Central Council for the Jews of Germany (ZJD), representatives of the other victim groups and other experts. The foundation should begin its work in 2000.

¹ Konrad Sculler, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 28 October 1999

Just two weeks after this ruling, a local Berlin newspaper declared that the original organisers of the Memorial had been ‘kicked out’² of the planned foundation. Member of parliament Elke Leonhard (Social Democratic Party of Germany SPD) was developing a bill in which parliamentarians occupied most of the governing seats of the foundation. The State (Senat) and Federal governments as well as the Förderkreis were to be merely a minority in the decision-making foundation. The German parliament in ostensibly taking over its responsibility for the construction of the memorial simultaneously attempted to remove difficult voices from the foundation structure. Representation of the ‘other victim groups’ posed one of the most serious threats to the sovereignty of the Bundestag created foundation.

The tone was now set for continuing conflict within the planned control committee of the Memorial.

By the end of July, the Council of German Sinti and Roma (Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma ZDSR) had planted a sign in front of the Berlin Reichstag building reading:

This is the site of the national Holocaust Memorial for the Sinti and Roma who were murdered in Nazi occupied Europe, because of the agreement of the Berlin State Government, the Federal Government and the German Parliament.

Hier entsteht das nationale Holocaust-Mahnmal für die im NS-besetzten Europa ermordeten Sinti und Roma aufgrund der Zusagen des Berliner Senats, der Bundesregierung und des Deutschen Bundestags.³

² Die Tageszeitung (Taz), 8 July 1999

³ Frankfurter Rundschau, 31 July 1999

A rather unfortunate formulation, it is nevertheless alarmingly revealing of the atmosphere in contemporary Germany. The President of the ZDSR, Romani Rose defended: “We will not allow our victims to be treated disrespectfully.”⁴ The Senat however at the time, declared that there was no official promise of a Memorial for the Sinti and Roma, reported the *Tageszeitung*.⁵

The precise extent of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe with the planned Ort der Information was still an unknown variable. Its design would become the playground of those who obtained a seat in the Memorial’s foundation. Added to this, the financing and complete costs of the project were still unclear.

Just three days before the Sinti and Roma bluntly planted their claim on the lawn of the Reichstag, a dispute over financing of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews began to brew. The minister of Culture, Michael Naumann, announced that the original sum of 15 million Deutschmarks (DM) allotted for the Memorial did not take into account the costs of building the proposed information centre. (Naumann had instigated the Eisenman III design of the memorial, which was to include an extensive museum complex. The proposed Ort der Information was the sole remnant of the original design.) He confirmed that the Bundestag had not discussed the financing aspect, and that the entire costs were not known. Lea Rosh bitterly accused Naumann of surreptitiously attempting to realize his plans for an extensive documentation centre at the Memorial by increasing the building costs. She now threatened to withdraw the Förderkreis’ financial contribution to the erection of the memorial, if the budget goes beyond 20 Million DM.⁶ Rosh no doubt fears that an extensive documentation centre would allow the ‘other’ victim groups, who she fought so hard to exclude, to find their way into the memorial.⁷

⁴ *Taz*, 31 July 1999

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)*, 28 July 1999, *Die Tageszeitung*, 28 July 1999

⁷ See also Lea Rosh “*Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen.*” *Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal*. (Berlin, 1999) pp. 129-131

Naumann rejected Rosh's claims as false, justifying that a fixed estimation of 20 million DM had clearly not been part of the Bundestag ruling. He also stated that the Förderkreis have committed themselves to financing one third of the project and that Rosh is no longer 'lord' of the enterprise.⁸

Plans to lay a founding stone to mark the commencement of the Memorial's construction on 27 January 2000 had put pressure on the parliamentarians to accelerate proceedings. By the beginning of October the vice-chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) Germany Ludwig Stiegler proposes that in order to meet this deadline, a foundation could be formed by Government decree from the executive board of the cultural minister, which later could be developed into the decreed Bundestag foundation. This proposal immediately arouses suspicion from the opposition because it could increase the minister of Culture Michael Naumann's control and influence on the form and realization of the Ort der Information. Furthermore, the proposed occupancy of the board of the foundation was controversial. Of the twenty seats, ten were for members of the Bundestag, two for the federal government, two for the state government, five for the commemorative museums and Jewish organizations and one for the Förderkreis. Lea Rosh and her Förderkreis in this constellation consider themselves to be underrepresented.⁹

On the same day as the press releases the report on the planned foundation, 27 October, Rosh ceremoniously delivers a copy of her book *Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen* ("The Jews, that is the others") into the hands of the President of the German parliament, Wolfgang Thierse. She warns Thierse that the 27 January 2000 is near and they would have to hurry, so that a founding stone for the erection of the Memorial could be laid on this day, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by the

⁸ SZ, 28 July 1999

⁹ Taz, 27 October 1999

Soviets. With the press and politicians all around, Rosh doesn't miss an opportunity to propagate her adopted nazi ideological ranking of human beings. She recommends a solution for the Ort der Information: It should only remember the Holocaust, she says, "Roma and Sinti, the disabled and homosexuals [...should not] be packed into this place".¹⁰ In her book Rosh relentlessly regurgitates: the Memorial "should be exclusively dedicated to the Jews".¹¹

Indeed, Rosh is apparently also so uninterested in the plight of the initial victims of the Nazis, who she so passionately campaigns to keep out of the nation's definition and memory of the Holocaust, that she has not bothered to inform herself about their history (even though the literature is recent and limited, by 1999 the publications of Ernst Klee and Henry Friedlander had been available for some years). Rosh makes a brief erroneous excursion in her book to the murder of the disabled. She states that the 'first killing centre' for the disabled was established at Grafeneck¹² in 1940, where victims were gassed with Zyklon B, dropped through a secret chute in the ceiling of gas chambers.¹³ This is incorrect. The first killing centre was at the old prison in Brandenburg on the Havel, just outside of Berlin, which provided the prototype for all of the other killing centres that were subsequently set-up. Established in October 1939, the first systematic murder of handicapped children took place barely one month after WWII had begun.¹⁴ The patients were gassed with carbon monoxide,¹⁵ not Zyklon B as claimed by Rosh.¹⁶ Zyklon B was not used to gas people until much later, in the summer of 1941, when Lagerführer Karl Fritsch experimenting with

¹⁰ SZ, 27 October 1999

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Lea Rosh "Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen." *Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal*. (Berlin, 1999) p. 114

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Michael S. Bryant, *Confronting the 'Good Death', Nazi Euthanasia on Trial. 1945-1953*. (Boulder, 2005) p. 33. Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*. (Chapel Hill, 1995) p. 87

¹⁵ Friedlander, op. cit. p. 89

¹⁶ Rosh, op. cit. p. 114

Soviet prisoners of war locked in a basement cell at Auschwitz, threw Zyklon B crystals into the room.¹⁷ Grafeneck killing centre was closed in December 1940,¹⁸ therefore excluding the possibility of Zyklon B usage at that centre for purposes of systematic murder.

It is not surprising that Rosh is also misinformed about the basic facts surrounding the Holocaust. Her priority is an emotionally driven ‘fight’ for a memorial ‘only’ for the Jews come what may. As the correspondent for *The New Yorker* magazine, Jane Kramer, succinctly remarked, Rosh wanted to build a monument that was “‘big like the crime’. She wanted a big public. A big budget. Big discussions. Big Ideas.”¹⁹ This takes precedence for her, over historical explanation or scholarship as exemplified in the following. Rosh, the Förderkries and the States of Berlin’s initial choice as Jury for the memorial, had been the gigantic gravestone of Christine Jakob-Marks’ group, because, Rosh avidly states:

The design has a particularly strong relationship to the subject. The victims would be brought out of anonymity; the problem of selection wouldn’t present itself. The work communicates anxiety in a fascinating way, and stirs up the most emotions.

*Der Entwurf habe einen besonders starken Bezug zum Thema. Die Opfer würden aus der Anonymität geholt, das Problem der Auswahl stelle sich nicht. Die Arbeit vermittele auf faszinierende Weise Beklommenheit und rühre am meisten Emotionen an.*²⁰

¹⁷ Robert Jan van Pelt and Debórah Dwork, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present* (New Haven and London, 1996) pp. 279-83, 292-93

¹⁸ Friedlander, *op. cit.* p. 88

¹⁹ Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory. Looking for Germany in the New Germany* (New York, 1995) p. 283

²⁰ Rosh, *op. cit.* p. 65

It is difficult to translate the full impact of these words given the fact that the word *Opfer* in German means both victim and sacrifice. A ‘fascination’ with ‘anxiety’ is apparently of central importance to Rosh and the jury. In contrast, Rosh describes the Minister of culture’s proposal for a museum instead of a memorial as a ‘declaration of war for us, the Förderkreis’ (*Kriegserklärung für uns, den Förderkreis*).²¹ She describes in a tone of outrage, Michael Naumann’s ‘*gigantomanische Bauwerk*’ (gigantic-maniacal building), which should include a ‘documentation department also for the history of the other victim groups’, and, which would ‘degrade’ the memorial down to merely a ‘pendant’ (*Anhängsel*) of a ‘giant museum’.²²

In her book, Rosh attempts through the example of a film she made in Buttenhausen, to show that the disabled victims were regarded as ‘family’, but the Jews as ‘the others’. This comparison, based on one private interview, recounted in the context of a book, which seeks to justify the selective memory of the National Holocaust Memorial, implies that the disabled victims must therefore in some way be less deserving of attention or sympathy than the Jews. Do those in whose name all of these innocent people were systematically murdered, have a right to make such comparisons and decisions? Do they not have any sense of respect or contrition? The arbitrary way in which this is posited, cannot be considered serious in the light of what historical research has shown us about the arbitrary way in which decisions over life and death were dealt out and exercised over millions of people by the Germans. It is scandalous that persons propagating such tactics and crude ideas have been given so much authority in the nation’s definition and remembrance of the Holocaust in the symbolic form of a memorial.

The erroneous and crude character of Rosh’s manifesto is offensive. As testified by the ex-priest and Chief of Information for the SD Albert Hartl²³ in

²¹ Ibid. p. 102

²² Op. cit. p 103

²³ Bryant, op. cit. p. 29

1970, the Nazi state initiated the murder of the disabled already in 1938. At this time a certain Mr and Mrs Knauer appealed to Hitler to have their disabled child exterminated. Hitler authorized the murder of the Knauer's child and all similar requests from families to the Kanzlei des Führers (KdF). The KdF subsequently received a 'multitude'²⁴ of similar demands from families to have their children murdered. Already in 1920, Ewald Meltzer, director of the Katharinenhof psychiatric hospital in Saxony, conducted a survey which revealed that 73% of parents of disabled children in Germany at the time would have agreed to have their child killed.²⁵ The parents, who sought 'relief' from their burden, however, wished for it to take place without their knowledge or even to be 'deceived' by the physicians.²⁶

Wolfgang Thierse, in his introductory speech to the Bundestag on July 25 1999, which convened to decide the fate of the memorial, stated that:

When I vehemently plea for an exclusive dedication to the murdered Jews, then it is given the background of the centrality of the mass murder of the Jewish people for the National Socialist racist mania. [...] this does not mean that our decision today represents a low estimation of the other victim groups — the Sinti and Roma, the politically persecuted, the homosexuals, and the mentally retarded.

Wenn ich dennoch vehement für die Eingrenzung der Widmung auf die ermordeten europäischen Juden plädiere, dann geschieht das vor dem Hintergrund der Zentralität des organisierten Massenmordes an der jüdischen Bevölkerung, für den nationalsozialistischen Rassenwahn. [...] unsere heutige Entscheidung [stellt] keinerlei Geringschätzung der

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Op. cit. p. 24

²⁶ Ibid.

*anderen Opfergruppen — der Sinti und Roma, der politisch Verfolgten, der Homosexuellen und der geistig Behinderten [dar].*²⁷

Central to the Nazi's ideology was the removal of 'inferior' elements from the national gene pool. This should be first and foremost: the disabled followed by the Sinti and Roma and the Jews. These three groups of human beings were systematically targeted and murdered according to their distinguishing biological characteristics and regardless of age (including infants and the elderly). The victims were thus identified in ways they were unable to alter, in order to escape death. The Nazis exercised their rigorous systematic murder only on these distinguished groups.²⁸ Thierse, and others like Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel, assume that because they simply make a statement to the effect of: because we only want to acknowledge the murder of the Jews, it does not mean that we are discriminating against or have a low estimation of the 'other' (a suitably imprecise term) victim groups. This nonsense rhetoric is tantamount to justifying apartheid with something like: *Just because this park is only reserved for whites, does not mean that we hold the blacks in low estimation.* Why do these leaders assume that the public is so stupid?

Thierse apparently equates a physical disability with mental retardation. His ignorance is not unusual. Those comprising the Nazis disabled victims included a broad spectrum of people. The physically disabled, such as persons with amputated limbs, blindness or a physical deformity, through to persons with epilepsy, post traumatic stress disorder (such as seen in WWI veterans) and through to the mentally retarded. As all of these people comprised one group of *lebensunwertes Leben* for the Nazis, they were indiscriminately and inappropriately institutionalised mostly in mental hospitals, before being

²⁷ Rosh, op. cit. p. 134

²⁸ Friedlander, op. cit. p. XIII

experimented upon and then murdered. They also in 1999 comprise one group ‘the mentally retarded’ for the president of the German parliament.

How offensive and harmful, these blatant instances of ignorance, disrespect and discrimination are. Yet, they are applauded by the German parliament in 1999.²⁹

Similarly, Romani Rose, the chairman of the Central Council of the Sinti and Roma, lobbied for the representation of the Sinti and Roma in the nation’s memory of the Holocaust, to no avail. Rosh, who celebrated that “Ein Denkmal für die Juden. Nicht ein Denkmal für alle Opfergruppen”³⁰ (*A memorial for the Jews. Not a memorial for all of the victim groups*) was finally ruled by the German parliament on June 25, 1999, unable to comprehend or respect Rose’s indignation, condescendingly remarked: “After years of fighting, he still hadn’t learnt anything.”³¹

The procedure to form the foundation of organisers and arbiters for the memorial, out of a group of persons with questionable understanding of the subject and alarmingly limited discretion, however, continued regardless as follows.

Despite criticism, the governing coalition (SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) aim to get their plans for the initial Foundation through so that the founding stone ceremony would be on time. Members of the opposition criticize the decision as ‘legally unclean’³² and claim that the proceedings have little to do with the ‘spirit’ or ‘content’ of the original Bundestag ruling. In defence, the vice-president of the parliament Antje Vollmer of the Green party warns that one should ‘not begin to flog a dead horse yet again’.³³ The final foundation would be comprised of: 15 seats to be allocated to the Bundestag

²⁹ Rosh, op. cit. p. 134

³⁰ Op. cit. p. 129

³¹ Op. cit. p. 132

³² Taz, 30 October 1999

³³ Ibid.

and Senat and federal government, and 8 seats altogether for the Förderkreis, Jewish institutions and representatives of commemorative concentration camp museums.

The position of the Jewish representatives now raised renewed conflict. The recently deceased president of the central council of Jews in Germany, Ignatz Bubis, had maintained that the memorial was a project of the German people as descendants of the persecutors. For this reason Jews had no place in the organisation and construction of it. Rosh was particularly angry about the Jewish participation and even claimed that it was quasi illegal and not part of the original Bundestag decision. However, the vice-president of the Solomon Korn signalled his support of the plans and the inclusion of two members of the ZJD. Korn stated that he was particularly happy about the fact that the foundation would concern itself with the memory of all Nazi victims.³⁴

The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung however described the proceedings and Ludwig Stiegler's version of the foundation as the transformation of what had been "the persecutors symbol of historical self-reflection to a reconciliation by governmental decree of persecutors and victims".³⁵ (*In der Summe der neuen Ausleuchtungen, für die der Satzungsentwurf Stieglers steht, ist das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden damit in seinem Subtext von einem Symbol gesellschaftlich historischer Selbstreflexion des Tätervolkes zu einem Zeichen einer per Regierungserlass dekretierten Versöhnung zwischen Tätern und Opfern geworden.*)

In reaction to the governing coalition's foundation plan, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) formulate their own proposal for the founding of a 'Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas', Foundation for the Murdered Jews of Europe (henceforth: Stiftung). Their Stiftung would consist of three equal parts to be comprised of: representatives of the Bundestag, the Senat and the Förderkreis. A Board of Trustees of the Stiftung would follow

³⁴ Konrad Sculler, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 28 October 1999

³⁵ FAZ, 30 October 1999

the same three-part plan and consist of one representative respectively of the same three groups. Other representatives such as experts would become part of an associated Advisory Board (Beirat).

Unperturbed, the SPD and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Greens) nevertheless submit their version of the Stiftung on 8 November. They divide the Stiftung into ‘organs’: a Kuratorium (Board of Trustees), a Vorstand (Board of Directors), a Beirat (Advisory board) as well as an Executive Office and an Executive Director.

The advisory Board (a non decision-making body) is to be comprised of representatives from the following organisations: Central German Sinti and Roma, former Forced Labour Victims, the Lesbian and Homosexual organization in Germany, the Union of Antifascist/Those persecuted under the Nazi Regime, the Union of Victims of Nazi Military Justice, the Organization for ‘Euthanasia Afflicted’ and forced sterilization victims, the central organizations of resistance fighters and the organization of the persecuted as well as the union ‘Against Forgetting-For Democracy’. (*Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma; Interessengemeinschaft ehemaliger Zwangsarbeiter unter dem NS-Regime; Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland e.V.; Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes/Bund der Antifaschisten; Bundesvereinigung Opfer der NS-Militärjustiz; Bund der ‘Euthanasie’-Geschädigten und Zwangssterilisierten; Zentralverband demokratischer Widerstandskämpfer und Verfolgtenorganisationen; Gegen Vergessen—Für Demokratie e.V.*)³⁶

What one begins to notice during the parliamentary discussions on the formation of a foundation, is again the selection and hierarchization of persons according to notions of race, sexual preference or distinguishable disability. Already the so-called ‘other victim groups’ who were to be part of the Stiftung, according to the Bundestag ruling, have been allotted to a separate Board (Beirat) which has no decision making power at all.

³⁶ Deutsche Bundestag Gesetzentwurf Wahlperiode 14. Drucksache 2013, 8 November 1999 p. 5

On 11 November 1999, a complicated debate begins in the Bundestag with representatives of the political factions vying for their version of a Stiftung and the opportunity to exercise maximum control over the final form of the memorial. A situation has to be set up which does not allow ‘too much Naumann’³⁷ to be realized while Monika Griefahn (cultural-political speaker SPD) emphasizes the need to accelerate the memorial building process in view of Germany’s image abroad:

We should not forget the image we create of ourselves abroad. [...] As a politician concentrating on culture and foreign affairs, I am telling you, that we must not underestimate the effects resulting from our internal handling of this subject.

*Wir sollten auch nicht vergessen, welches Bild wir im Ausland abgeben [...] Als Kultur- und Außenpolitikerin sage ich Ihnen, daß wir es nicht unterschätzen sollten, welche Wirkungen es hat, wie wir mit diesem Thema im Inneren umgehen.*³⁸

Rita Süßmuth (former President of the Bundestag 1988-1998, Christian Democratic Union, CDU) points out:

When one looks at the division of the groups, then one is forced to ask, what the Beirat is supposed to do in the coming period. Because it is exclusively comprised of non-Jewish organisations.

*Wenn man sich die Aufteilung der Gruppen anschaut, dann fragt man sich, was der Beirat in der nächsten Zeit tun soll. Denn in ihm sind ausschließlich nichtjüdische Organisationen vertreten.*³⁹

³⁷ Deutsche Bundestag Plenarprotokoll 14. Wahlperiode, 69. Sitzung. 11 November 1999 p. 6212

³⁸ Bundestag 14/69 p. 6212

³⁹ Bundestag 14/69 p. 6222

A debate ensues about whether Jewish representatives may be included in the decision-making body of the Stiftung, the Kuratorium, or not. Naumann rationalises the Jewish participation as a ‘breakthrough for German Jewish dialogue’⁴⁰ and finally it is agreed that there was no alternative because it would otherwise represent ‘[...] a political — not just in the sense of political parties — step backwards for us all.’⁴¹

During the next Bundestag meeting on 15 December 1999, Rita Süßmuth makes another bid to include representatives of the ‘other’ victim groups in the decision making body: the Kuratorium. Arguments against her proposal include the complaint that the Stiftung would then be too large. In contrast to the Bundestag ruling on June 25, the ‘other’ victims are left out completely from any decisive role in the foundation. By creating sub-categories and allotting places to people accordingly, the ‘other victim groups’ had been rendered powerless. The Nazi categories of sub-humans (*Untermenschen*) are relegated in turn to a sub-category in the Stiftung by the German parliamentarians.

There are renewed accusations from the opposition that the governing coalition (SPD and Greens) is merely attempting to secure as many seats for itself as possible in the decision-making Kuratorium. However, when the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) acknowledge that the accusations are true but nevertheless give their vote to the SPD model, nothing more can be done. (The PDS was formed out of the east German ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) following the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) in 1989.)

After a total of three parliamentary sittings, the SPD and Bündnis 90/Greens together with the votes of the PDS and coalition factions defeat

⁴⁰ Op. cit. p. 6226

⁴¹ Ibid.

the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union of Bavaria (CDU/CSU) and the FDP.

The Structure of the Stiftung is as follows.

The *Kuratorium* (Board of Trustees) is comprised of 23 members from:

1. The German Bundestag: the President of the German Bundestag and one member per 100 members or part thereof of each party represented in the German Bundestag.
2. The Federal Government: two members.
3. The Senat of the Land of Berlin (State Government): two members.
4. The Association to promote the establishment of a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: three members.
5. The Central Council of Jews in Germany (ZJG): two members.
6. The Jewish Community of Berlin: one member.
7. The Jewish Museum of Berlin: one member.
8. The Topography of Terror Foundation: one member.
9. The Working Group of Concentration Camp Memorials in Germany: one member.

The Board of Directors is comprised of:

A chairperson and two vice-chairs.

One day later the first meeting of the Kuratorium takes place. The decisive construction of the Stiftung⁴² consists of: representatives from all parties in the German Bundestag — Barthel, Griefahn and Roth (SPD); Widman-Mauz, Nooke and Koschyk (CDU/CSU); Beck (Greens), Otto (FDP) and Fink (PDS). Bundestag president Wolfgang Thierse is given the chair and the casting vote. The Federal Government is represented by the Minister of Culture, Michael Naumann and the Minister of Internal Affairs Otto Schily (SPD). The Senat of Berlin is represented by the Cultural Senator Christa Thoben (CDU), and the Senator for Building, Peter Strieder (SPD). The Förderkreis is represented by Eberhard Jäckel, Lothar Poll and Lea Rosh. The ZJD is initially represented by Salomon Korn and later also their new president (Paul Spiegel). Other members include: Andreas Nachama from the Jewish Community of Berlin (JGB) and the director of the Jewish museum, Michael Blumenthal. The Topographie des Terrors foundation is represented by director Reinhard Rürup and the Working group of the Concentration camp memorials in Germany are represented by Günther Morsch.

The President of the German Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse, takes over the position of Chairman in the Board of Directors with his two vice-chairs: Michael Naumann and Christa Thoben.

One wonders whatever happened to the art in this politically manoeuvred selection of people to oversee and modify the building of a memorial? Why wasn't the choice of members based primarily on expertise, experience and artistic professionalism — rather than which political party one happens to belong to? Was the architect/artist ever asked whom he would like to or indeed need to work with in the coming years of realization of his work? How could members of political parties be impartial enough or have sufficient knowledge about making a work of art which attempts to evoke the

⁴² Claus Leggewie, Erik Meyer *“Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht” Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989.* (München, 2005) p. 244

‘contemplative and emotional receptiveness of the visitor’⁴³ to the murder of six million people, to presume to preside on a board that modifies, designs and builds the memorial? Yet the politicians constitute well over sixty percent of the decision-making body of the Stiftung with Bundestag President Thierse, in the event of an equal distribution of votes, having the decisive casting vote.

No representatives from the contemporary art world — neither artists, art historians, curators or directors of contemporary art museums were included. There were also no independent impartial historians on the Stiftung. Eberhard Jäckel was Lea Rosh’s co-instigator and collaborator, and Reinhard Rürup, as the director of the Topographie des Terrors Foundation, was inevitably at odds with an initiative potentially competing with his own as yet frustrated exhibition-without-a-building at the Prinz-Albrecht-Site or ‘Gestapo-Site’. The Stiftung was a purely political construction, with politicians competing for power and the interests of their own party.

The twelve member Beirat, constituted by the ‘other’ victim groups (situated at the lowest end of the hierarchy), was also a political manoeuvre — a gesture designed to placate and diffuse those very groups should they become a problem.

During this very first meeting in December 1999, ironically, notice was given that the laying of a founding memorial stone would not take place as planned on 27 January 2000, due to a lack of building plans and legal requirements. Instead a ceremony and unveiling of a signboard announcing the commencement of the building of the Memorial was to take place.

⁴³ Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Engeres Auswahlverfahren, Aufgabenbeschreibung und Rahmenbedingungen, Published by the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, Juni 1997 p. 10

CHAPTER FIVE

FAULTY TOWERS

THE COMMENCEMENT OF BUILDING THE MEMORIAL TO THE MURDERED JEWS OF EUROPE

As the date for the memorial's founding ceremony draws near in early 2000, new problems appear on the commemorative horizon.

A Förderkreis tower had been erected by Lea Rosh on the exact site, the corner of Ebert- and Behrenstrasse, allocated for the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe's (henceforth: Stiftung) sign, due to be unveiled on 27 January. Rosh's fundraising tower is subsequently likened to the watchtowers¹ that once stood on this very terrain during the German Democratic Republic (DDR). The towers provided the DDR guards with the means to spot and shoot those 'guilty' of trying to escape over the wall to West Berlin up until November 1989.

However, this tower's aim is levelled at an entirely different sort of guilt. A large poster proclaims: "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

¹ Der Spiegel, Nr.3, 2000. A tower had been located in the south-eastern corner of the memorial site, indicated to me in a personal interview by the Büro für Geophysik Lorenz and according to its archives on and geophysical map of the area.

10 years talking is enough. 'THIS IS THE PLACE!'" Below the text, an enlarged well-known photograph of a woman being driven to a gas chamber is reproduced together with the bank account number for donations to the campaign. Reminiscent of a concentration camp watch tower (for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*²), the object nevertheless doesn't stand on a former concentration camp site, but rather on that of the second Nazi Chancellor of Germany: Joseph Goebbels.

Rosh insists that the tower be left standing, despite Wolfgang Thierse's condemnation of it as an absurd doublet to the planned official sign³. After all, the memorial is now the project of the Bundestag created *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*. However, Rosh dismisses Thierse's intention (to install a *Stiftung* sign in place of her tower) as an 'immoral offer'.⁴ Attempts had already been made by vandals on New Years Eve to depose the tower, when it was toppled, and some newly inserted memorial site peeholes in the surrounding fence, smashed.⁵

Further unrest threatened the 'symbolic'⁶ commencement of memorial building, when rumours spread that neither Chancellor Gerhard Schröder nor the Mayor of Berlin, Eberhard Diepgen, would attend the ceremonial act on January 27.⁷

² *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), 26 January 2000

³ *Der Spiegel*, nr. 3, 2000

⁴ *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ), 7 January 2000

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*



12. Fundraising watch tower designed by Lea Rosh, Winter 2001-2002:
 “Ten years talking is enough. THIS IS THE PLACE.”

January 27 is the anniversary of the 1945 arrival of Soviet troops at Auschwitz Concentration Camp. News of Diepgen’s planned absence from the ‘symbolic act’⁸, as the organisers now termed the affair, reaches the international press, with the International Herald Tribune publishing “Berlin Mayor Snubs Holocaust Rite” on 18 January.

The day of the ceremony is described in the German press as having a distinctively negative character: There will definitely be no commencement of building, there will not be any laying of a founding stone, nor the usual ceremonies associated with the start of important public building projects. Even the ownership of the site itself stands in question. Part of the land belongs to a building society that is not in a hurry to give it away for a

⁸ FAZ, 27 January 2000

symbolic sum — and the Americans, who are planning to build their new Embassy just next to the memorial (separated by Behrenstrasse), are demanding a security zone, which would intercept the memorial terrain.⁹

The Mayor of Berlin, Diepgen, through his absence, demonstrates his protest against the project he has long been an enemy of. Diepgen complained that there is still no clear idea of what exactly is to be built or how much it will cost. He claimed to be unavailable for the symbolic act due to his busy appointment schedule. The Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* interprets Diepgen's absence as scandalous reporting: "55 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, Berlin has again become a place of pain. [...] A spectacular disgrace has taken place: The Mayor of Berlin Eberhard Diepgen, did not attend the opening of the building site for the Holocaust Memorial."¹⁰

In attendance at the ceremony are the Bundespräsident (Federal President) Johannes Rau, the President of the Bundestag, Thierse, Chancellor Schröder and Paul Spiegel from the ZJD and speeches are held by Thierse, the architect Peter Eisenman and the chairperson of the Förderkreis, Rosh.

Despite the establishment of a Stiftung, the Kuratorium had at this stage still not held any meetings with the memorial's architect Eisenman. Nor did he have a contract for the building of the memorial. The form, extent, site, content and cost of the small place of information (*Ort der Information*) stipulated in the Bundestag's ruling for a memorial in June 1999, was still entirely unclear and unknown. Nevertheless, Rosh oblivious to these circumstances wrote with deliberation in an open letter to Diepgen published by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, that the commencement of building is

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Quoted in *Die Tageszeitung (Taz)*, 29 January 2000

‘immediate’¹¹ and the costs are fixed at 15 million Deutschmarks (DM). She confidently sums up: “Anything else unclear Mr Diepgen?”¹²

Finally the wooden fence, which had long concealed the site, has been demounted and replaced by a robust wire grill. Behind this can be seen the competing signs of Rosh and the Stiftung — crudely built from scaffolding in a manner, that despite everything, invariably resembles a construction from a concentration camp.

¹¹ Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), 27 January 2000

¹² Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

THIERSE'S TACTICS, THIERSE'S TRICKS

The Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (henceforth: Stiftung), following the symbolic commencement of building back behind closed doors, now gets down to the memorial business. By March 2000 an executive director, Sybille Quack, has been appointed. Quack, a political scientist, had been a public relations manager for Michael Naumann, the Minister of Culture.

Plans for the small underground structure of the *Ort der Information* (Place of Information) begin to take shape, and the Board of Trustees (Kuratorium) is able to reach agreement on most decisive points.

Meanwhile, speculation and fears about the precise cost of the construction continue to rage in the press as the building sum gradually rises from an initial 15 million Deutschmarks, to 20 million by 27 January 2000, and to somewhere between 50 and 100 million by July 2000.¹

The Stiftung's chairman, Wolfgang Thierse, reluctantly informs the press that the Ort der Information alone will cost 20 million DM, and that the

¹ Die Tageszeitung (Taz), 5 July 2000

total costs of the 20,000 square metre field of stelae is as yet unclear.² He confirms that the Federal Government will be financing the entire project.

By September the complete costs had still not been revealed by chairman Thierse, when Kuratorium member Günther Nooke (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) following a Kuratorium meeting, accuses Thierse of surreptitiously and deliberately withholding the truth about the costs of the project from the German people. Nooke is quoted by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung as saying that: he cannot ask his party to continue to support something that is based on the sum of 50 million and which is financially ‘mendacious’.³ He maintains that Thierse’s ‘tactic’ is endangering the project, and states that a public debate about the ‘true costs’ in which the Kuratorium openly state what the ‘thing’ is worth to them, is urgently needed. The CDU members of the Kuratorium had indirectly threatened to walk out of the meeting, in protest against Thierse’s attempt to fix merely a vague idea of costs, in a decisive ruling.

Now the public gets a glimpse of who the East German champion of tolerance towards ‘Andersdenkende’ (those who think differently) Wolfgang Thierse really is, when he unleashes a direct public attack on Nooke. Thierse not only denies and rejects Nooke’s accusations as ‘malicious suspicions’⁴ but also threatens with ‘consequences’.⁵ On the very same day in a letter to Nooke, he writes: “If you had one grain of decency, you would immediately step down from your post as Kuratorium member”.⁶ Thierse simultaneously in another letter to the chairman of the CDU, Friedrich Merz,⁷ demands that Nooke be thrown out of the Kuratorium.

² Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 8 July 2000

³ FAZ, 21 September 2000

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Günther Nooke, Brief, 21 September 2000, Thierse Nooke. 20 September 2002 www.nooke.de/Brief_Thierse_Nooke.pdf and Tagesspiegel, 27 September 2000

⁷ Ibid.

Yet, all reports confirm Nooke's claim. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*⁸ publishes statements from another Kuratorium member (who for obvious reasons does not want to be named) who complains that the Kuratorium members are somewhat kept in the dark about the true costs. Members had been shocked when they discovered that for the lighting alone, architect Peter Eisenman had estimated costs of five million DM — the very sum that had been initially quoted for the entire construction of the Ort der Information itself. The anonymous member continues: "Obviously [...] money seems to play no role in this project".

"It is all very vague,"⁹ confirms another Kuratorium member, parliamentarian Hans-Joachim Otto (Free Democratic Party, FDP). Thierse had apparently committed himself to forcing the Kuratorium to vote on a vague estimation of costs. "The stick is pointed at us and then we are told to jump," Otto laments. He admonishes Thierse's means of exerting pressure, through claims about the necessity of speeding up the signing of Eisenman's contract.

The *Tagesspiegel* also confirms Nooke's prognosis: The current figure of 50 Million DM is merely an approximation. A detailed quote of the costs as well as the architect's fee could bring additional surprises. Added to this the annual running costs, security measures and personnel, material costs of the Ort der Information, still have to be calculated and could come to some 70 or 80 million DM according to Nooke.

Even Lea Rosh confirms Nooke's statements as correct. She blames Eisenman for introducing expensive elements, *Schnuckedönschen*¹⁰ or 'tid-bits' into the project. Rosh doesn't hesitate to shift the blame onto Eisenman in the public sphere, although Eisenman was in effect only following the demands of his commissioners, who for almost two years now had continued to modify

⁸ *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, (SZ) 22 September 2000

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Die Welt*, 27 September 2000

and edit his Memorial proposal in tandem to the fluctuating political climate. It was Helmut Kohl after all who had requested individual lights for each of the 2700 stelae.

However, Kuratorium member Andreas Nachama clarifies that the irritation is not due to the costs of the project, but entirely to the way in which Thierse is managing it. Thierse without the necessary formal requirements was demanding ‘ad hoc decisions’.¹¹ Finally, yet another anonymous Kuratorium member tells the press that: “Some members of the Kuratorium give the impression that money plays no role. Their prime interests are their own prestige — not a memorial to the Jews.”¹²



13. The Ministerial Gardens, early 2002. On the left: Fundraising watch tower.

¹¹ Tagesspiegel, 22 September 2000

¹² Ibid.

The chairman of the Stiftung, Wolfgang Thierse, merits a closer look. Born in 1943, Thierse studied at the Humboldt University in East Berlin. From 1975 to 1976 he worked at the German Democratic Republic's (DDR) Ministry of Culture. Subsequently from 1977 to 1990 he became a scientific assistant at the DDR Akademie der Wissenschaft (Academy of Science). In October 1989 he signed the proclamation of the Neues Forum along with some 200,000 other citizens of the DDR. Neues Forum, a political movement in East Germany was formed in the months leading up to the collapse of the East German state. It was the first non-Marxist political movement to be recognised by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) on 8 November 1989. Neues Forum demanded democratic reforms and the reshaping of East German society with the participation of the population. Some three months later, in January 1990, Thierse joins the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany, SPD). Thierse became vice-chairman in 1990 and finally chairman of the SPD in the DDR. On 3 October 1990, the day of German reunification he became a member of the German parliament. In 1998 under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, parliamentarians elected Thierse to the prestigious post of President of the Bundestag.

Described as one of the only successful politicians coming out of the DDR he has been praised for using his political standing to challenge the 'great scandal that we live with in Germany'¹³, violence against outsiders, foreigners, 'Andersfarbige' (*otherwise coloured*), 'Auffällige' (*those who stand out*) or 'Andersdenkende' (*otherwise thinking*).

Thierse's plump appearance, complete with round spectacles and full beard, has been affectionately described as a conscious (albeit pretentious) quote of pre World War I Reichstag parliamentarians of the 'old school', such

¹³ Ulrich Wickert, *Wolfgang Thierse im Gespräch mit Ulrich Wickert. Das richtige Leben im falschen System* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 2001) p. 12

as William Liebknecht (father of Karl Liebknecht) or Rudolf Virchow¹⁴. His bushy beard is apparently a deliberate reference to Karl Marx, an object of his study during his term as ‘Kulturwissenschaftler’ in the DDR, and himself, according to some critics, a racist and anti-Semite: “Iemand voor vuile Jood uitmaken beschouwde hij als een sterke polemische zet”, wrote the Dutch slavacist Karel van het Reve. (Calling someone a dirty Jew, Marx saw as a clever polemical trick.)

Thierse, a devout catholic, following his political success edited a book in 2000 entitled *Religion ist keine Privatsache* (Religion is not a private matter). In the introduction he proclaims: “Christians should show public engagement and take over political responsibility in order to establish their belief worldwide.”¹⁵ He continues, the prophet ‘Micha’ demands the commitment of the believer to listen to the will of God and to follow God’s instructions. Maybe here lies the peculiarity of a person, who deals politically out of a sense of Christian responsibility. That he, in a free bond, knows as answer to a call, that which does not come from his own expertise.¹⁶

Thierse obviously sees himself as God’s missionary and emissary. One can only conclude that he understands his decisions and actions when not logical to be of divine inspiration, and therefore above reproach. Does he seek here to justify an almighty and ultimate authority? Can this be appropriate in the mouth of a German politician (second in rank only to the German Chancellor) presiding over the German parliament and its politically constructed national Holocaust memorial committee? Thierse, in his theological exposition, follows this claim with a weak attempt to differentiate between religiously driven absolutism in politics, and that which seeks ‘a new and better order, committed to the value of human beings.’¹⁷ Proudly written

¹⁴ Ibid. p.11

¹⁵ Wolfgang Thierse (Ed.), *Religion ist keine Privatsache* (Düsseldorf, 2000) p. 10

¹⁶ Wolfgang Thierse, op. cit. p. 11

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 11

as if he has just revealed a great magnanimous store beneath his religiously justified political ambition, he apparently sees himself as belonging to the latter devotees in search of a New Order. His predecessors under Adolf Hitler were also committed to creating a new order with the value of human beings as one of its central concerns. One often finds these sorry and deeply revealing semantics in contemporary Germany. What strikes like a pitchfork in the ears of a foreigner, passes for harmless or meaningless reverb for most Germans. Aloof to the reverberations of prejudice that inform such statements, they bluntly scoff at any attentiveness to this historically loaded syntax.

In the same year as his book came out, 2000, Thierse as President of the Bundestag, took up his allotted role as chairman of the Foundation Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe (Henceforth: Stiftung). There is a notable absence of Thierse's involvement or interest in the decade long debate about the Holocaust Memorial. But expertise was not a decisive factor in the formation of the politically constructed Stiftung to edit and construct the Memorial, and the same could be said for most of the fourteen politicians who dominate the Stiftung's decision-making body, the Board of Trustees.

In 2001, the Stiftung under Thierse's direction, organised a symposium to 'examine the Stiftung's concept'¹⁸ for an underground place of information (Ort der Information). Historians, art historians and scholars were invited to make constructive criticism and suggestions. Lectures were held and *Arbeitsgruppen* (work groups) were formed with scholars such as Wolfgang Benz (Technical University Berlin-Institute for Research of anti-Semitism), Norbert Frei (History Professor Friedrich-Schiller University in Jena) and Ruth Wodak (University of Lancaster).

The papers delivered at the symposium were published some time later in 2002, with a foreword by Thierse. A politician, skilled in the art of rhetoric, his texts resound with a hollow sense of mission and barely hidden agenda:

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 9

We [the German society] are so much in agreement that it is necessary to remember the crimes of the National Socialists, that we [with the same measure of conviction] search for appropriate, worthy and encouraging forms in which this can happen.¹⁹

Certainly, a new ‘thriving industry’ had grown in Germany since the nineties, in books, public art, and commemorations to the Holocaust. And ten years had been spent fighting over who should be remembered and why in the nation’s commemorative symbol in Berlin. Yet, many Germans were against the erection of a memorial, and over 1000 of them demonstrated their disapproval just two days after the symbolic commencement of building in Berlin on 29 January 2000 as described by Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer in: *Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht*²⁰. What Leggewie and Meyer fail to mention however, is that some 500 Nazis²¹ were amongst the demonstrators, and that it was the first time since 1945 that Nazis had marched through the Brandenburger Tor (a symbolic landmark in Berlin celebrating Prussian might) triumphantly waving flags and carrying anti-Semitic slogans. With only a handful of police sent to guard the site of the planned memorial, the *Tageszeitung* reported that spokespersons of ‘antifascist’ organisations described the event, as well as the Mayor of Berlin’s absence from the Memorial’s initiation ceremony earlier, as simply a sign of ‘the normal condition of anti-Semitism’ in Germany.

¹⁹ *So einig wir uns sind, dass es notwendig bleibt, an die Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus zu erinnern, so sehr suchen wir nach angemessenen, würdigen und ermutigenden Formen, in denen dies geschehen kann, auch und gerade in diesem Generationenwechsel.* Wolfgang Thierse, Vorwort in Sibylle Quack (Ed.) *Auf den Weg zur Realisierung. Das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas und der Ort der Information. Architektur und historisches Konzept* (Stuttgart, 2002) p. 10

²⁰ Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer, *Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht. Das Holocaust-Mahnmal und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik nach 1989* (München and Wien, 2005) p. 248

²¹ *Taz*, 31 January 2000

Oblivious to any of this, Thierse's foreword continues: Critical questions must be made in relation to the realization of the historical concept for the underground Ort der Information: "How should the history of the murder of the Jews be represented in an inevitably highly concentrated form away from the real places where it happened"²² Not only does this sound like a recipe for concentrated cordial — but it is strongly reminiscent of the language of a Nazi functionary's scientific, and highly economic decimation plan. The monument is to be built directly on top of the site of the second Nazi Chancellor of Germany. Did he truly have nothing to do with what happened to the millions of people murdered in Germany's name? Does Thierse think that the Holocaust was instigated in some sort of independent fashion, far away in Poland? Is this the way to address a worldwide discussion by historians, scholars, artists and writers? Thierse systematically chooses to negate the historical significance and authentic evidence of the stained terrain slanted for the memorial. "Then we do know that: Knowledge must not necessarily and automatically bring about commemoration and obligatory memories."²³ Ironically he himself, in his systematic denial of the sites authentic historical role, becomes the living evidence of this statement.

Is he really so carried away by his own rhetoric that he no longer hears the cynicism blighting his text?

The extent of his hypocrisy becomes evident by his Stiftung's management of the findings of the publicised symposium. Some six months after the event, the Kuratorium of the Stiftung simply confirmed²⁴ the original design by Dagmar von Wilcken, completely ignoring the essential findings of the conference. As it turned out the conference was only another 'symbolic act' — purely farcical. Yet Thierse still has the audacity to write after the fact: "Honest commemoration appears to me to be inseparable from critical

²² Quack, op. cit. p. 11

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Tätigkeitsbericht 2000-2002 p. 23

clarification.”²⁵ This definition is nevertheless true of the Stiftung: there is no critical clarification and by implication no real interest in honest commemoration.

By the end of October 2000, Eisenman presents a precise quote of less than 50 million DM for the building of the memorial. On November 16, the German parliament grants 49.5 million DM for the entire project as well as an additional 4.5 million DM for the installation costs of the underground Ort der Information.²⁶ Thierse in a Kuratorium meeting the same day refuses to disclose the stipulated architect’s fee to the Kuratorium members.²⁷

By December, the situation still has not changed, when Sybille Quack, the Stiftung manager, announces that Eisenman has committed himself to building the entire project for 54 million DM and that his fee (still undisclosed) would not rise proportionally with the costs in the event of increasing building costs.²⁸ Kuratorium members are obviously not all considered to be worthy of the honesty that Thierse feels himself to be such a champion of.

By the end of March 2001 all decisions had been reached and agreed upon concerning the content and form of the underground Ort der Information.²⁹ And by May 2001 several test blocks of concrete for the memorial had been completed and accepted. Building was to start in autumn and reach completion by a date nominated³⁰ by Lea Rosh: 27 January 2004, the anniversary of the Soviets arrival at the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

²⁵ Quack op. cit. p. 11

²⁶ Stiftung, op. cit. p.14

²⁷ Berliner Morgenpost, 18 November 2000

²⁸ Taz, 6 December 2000

²⁹ FAZ, 31 March 2001

³⁰ SZ, 19 May 2001

CHAPTER SEVEN

LICHT GEGEN DAS VERGESSEN

LIGHT AGAINST FORGETTING

The more people who want to remember and make donations for the erection of the memorial, the brighter the site and thus with the illumination of memory.

Je mehr menschen sich errinen wollen und für die Errichtung des Denkmals spenden, desto heller wird der Platz und damit die Erinnerung leuchten.

Sign erected on fence of memorial site, 27 June 2001¹

By March 2001, all decisions had been clarified for the Memorial and its underground information place (Ort der Information). The Association for the erection of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Förderkreis) led by Lea Rosh had completed their mission. The German state had taken over the ambitions of the Förderkreis for itself. The Förderkreis had in effect become redundant and could disband.

The scathed memorial site in the intervening period had become transformed by weeds and rising water, when in June several rows of neon lights were strewn across its undulating surface. Prostrate and extinguished, I

¹ Sign erected on fence of memorial site, 27 June 2001 Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas e.V. and the BEWAG.

wondered which artist had been responsible for this uninspired use of a most extraordinary space.

Searching amongst the placards which lined the surrounding metal grid fence, I read: 'Snow removal and landscape gardening', then 'Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe' and finally 'Licht gegen das Vergessen'.

'Light against forgetting' which appeared on June 27 2001, failed to name any artist responsible for the neon installation and the idea was attributed simply to: 'TBWA'. Initiated by the Förderkreis and sponsored by BEWAG (the Berlin electricity company), the poster maintained:

With hundreds of lamps, the light installation visualizes the participation of the people in the donation action for the memorial. The more people donate the greater the number of illuminated lamps. The increasing light-field with its growing brightness will create constant attention for the area and the future memorial, right up until the start of constructions.

Die Lichtinstallation visualisiert mit Hunderten von Leuchten die Beteiligung der Bevölkerung an der Spendenaktion für das Denkmal. Je mehr Menschen spenden desto mehr Lichter werden leuchten. Das bis zum Baubeginn immer größer werdende Leuchtfeld und die damit zunehmende Lichtstärke schaffen so beständige Aufmerksamkeit für das Areal und das zukünftige Denkmal.

According to the poster's photograph, the neons had been illuminated at some moment. Although I never did see one single glaring tube, I followed the life of the placard itself as well as the *Spendenaktion*.

14. “I am not a Nazi but against the memorial” — ordinary Germans articulate their point of view.



Within a month it gained the company of old stained bed sheets with slogans by the Bevölkerung. One claimed: Ich bin kein Nazi aber gegen das Mahnmal, ‘I am not a Nazi but against the memorial’, while next to it hung: Laßt das Volk entscheiden, ‘Let das Volk decide’.

15. “Light against forgetting” — the German people decided to spend zero Deutschmarks for the Monument to the Murdered.



Six months later the poster had fallen to the ground and lay slumped behind the galvanized grid fence. No lights or neon tubes were to be seen — all traces of them had long since vanished. The neglected weed covered terrain of the memorial site had nevertheless gained a prospering swamp at its southern end.

One year later in 2002, *Licht gegen das Vergessen* lay smashed and abandoned amongst the dead leaves. Not one single Deutschmark was donated by the Bevölkerung in response to this action.²

Nevertheless, as we shall see, it was an illuminating prologue: *The Light* against forgetting the fierce missionaries of the Förderkreis.

² Holocaust-Plakat: Die nächste Kampagne wird viel zurückgenommener, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 2 August 2001

CHAPTER EIGHT

DEN HOLOCAUST HAT ES NIE GEGEBEN

THE HOLOCAUST NEVER HAPPENED

Just 21 days after the installation of ‘Light against Forgetting’, the ‘citizens initiative’ under Lea Rosh (henceforth: Förderkreis), apparently dissatisfied with the participation of the *Volk* in the *Spendenaktion*, decides to take stronger action.

“the holocaust never happened” blazed across a monumental poster adjacent to the memorial site. The vacant lot backed onto a massive grey wall (the wall of the new DZ Bank), which provided the backdrop for the drama on an otherwise sparse terrain.



16. A pristine Berchtesgaden-style landscape provides the setting for the advertising initiative. This poster was distributed all over Germany, post cards were freely available in bars, and a giant version was to oversee the future memorial site in Berlin.

This had been the location of the American Embassy up until December 1941. Following Germany's declaration of war on America, the Embassy was reduced to just a Consulate General. The consulate was situated next to the villa of Joseph Goebbels on Hermann-Göring Strasse and after the war was absorbed into the DDR Todesstreifen. At the time of writing, the site was being excavated for the construction of a new American Embassy.

A pristine Berchtesgaden-style landscape provided the setting for Lea Rosh's *Aktion: den holocaust hat es nie gegeben*. Written in some two to three metres high characters spanning the centre field, this officially illegal statement was clearly visible to passing motorists. However, the small text in the lower

right-hand corner of the poster, remained just a blur in the distance, illegible to the commuters:

There are still many who claim this, and in 20 years there will be more.
Therefore donate to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

*Es gibt immer noch viele, die das behaupten, in 20 Jahren werden es noch mehr sein.
Spenden Sie deshalb für das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas.¹*

Three blows were delivered in this one action:

It displayed a statement which is illegal in Germany and which constitutes an offence punishable by up to five years imprisonment.

It implied that the purpose of the memorial was to correct those who question the fact that the Holocaust ever took place.

It implied that there was not enough money yet for the construction of a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe.

Simultaneously, one thousand copies of the poster were pasted onto billboards throughout Germany, while half a million free postcards were distributed at the toilet facilities of bars in Berlin. The postcards carried the same motif minus the small print (which appeared on the reverse side). Added to this double-paged advertisements were published in newspapers and magazines.² But the enthusiasm didn't stop here. Plans were underway to insert the advertisement in evening TV programmes.³

¹ See photographs by the author.

² Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 8 August 2001

³ Das Letzt, Die Zeit Nr. 31, 26 July 2001

Unveiled on Thursday 19 July 2001 next to the memorial site, the poster was presented by Lea Rosh (initiator of the memorial and chairman of the Förderkreis Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas⁴), the mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit, and the chairman of the Jewish Community in Berlin (JGB), Alexander Brenner.

Rosh explained: “We want to startle the indifferent and activate the irresolute”, while Brenner stated that he wanted to support ‘any action’ *jede Aktion* for the benefit of the memorial. The city mayor was reported as simply having no reservations or concerns about a potential misunderstanding.⁵

Let’s first take a look a point one, the illegal nature of the poster’s statement.

The title of this chapter is illegal, and as its author, I may be prosecuted under German law for having written it. Therefore, I feel it necessary to describe in part the series of events that led to laws prohibiting particular forms of speech in Germany.

Germany’s political, judicial and moralistic treatment of its Nazi past is an established historical subject. Political scholar Peter Reichel has specifically explored what constitutes Germany’s ‘public’ memory of the crimes of the Third Reich as well as how this memory unfolds in German society. I am indebted to him for the following analysis of the events that led to the 1994 amendment to the law prohibiting *Volksverhetzung* (Public agitation).

During the 1950’s, in West Germany there were increasing incidents of corruption in the prosecution trials of Nazis and Nazi related activities.

For example, in 1957 Friedrich Nieland, who had been charged with the distribution of anti-Semitic pamphlets, was acquitted by the Hamburger

⁴ Association for the erection of a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

⁵ BZ, 20 July 2001

Land- und Oberlandesgericht.⁶ In the same year, Ludwig Zind, a teacher and former member of the *Sicherheitsdienst*⁷ (SD), offended a Jewish citizen by boasting of his exploits during the war when he and ‘his people’ murdered hundreds of Jews.⁸ One year later, Zind was tried and charged with *Beleidigung* (offence or insult) as well as slander of the memory of the deceased. He was sentenced to one-year imprisonment. Zind maintained his views during the trial, proclaiming his loyalty to National Socialism, and the ‘historical necessity’ of putting Jews into concentration camps due to the threat posed by the *Weltjudentum* ‘World-Judaism’.⁹

Zind received open sympathy from many parts of the German population, as well as the audience in the courtroom. He was able to flee Germany with the (suspected) help of Government officials just days before the Supreme Court (*Bundesgerichtshof* BGH) confirmed his sentence.

Anti-Semitism was also on the increase in West Germany in the fifties, with seven hundred incidents alone being recorded in the month from December 1959 to January 1960. One of the most scandalous of these was the desecration with swastikas of the newly inaugurated (in the presence of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer) Cologne Synagogue on Christmas Eve.¹⁰

These incidents (amongst others) led to the passing of a law prohibiting public agitation (*Gesetz gegen Volksverhetzung*), following pressure from the *Zentralrat der Juden* (ZJD Central Jewish Council of Germany). In May 1960, Paragraph 130 StGB was passed:

⁶ Peter Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*. (München, 2001) p. 146

⁷ *Sicherheitsdienst* or SD was the security service of the Schutzstaffel (black-shirt storm troopers).

⁸ Reichel, op. cit. p. 144

⁹ Ibid. p. 145

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 147

Who so ever, in a way that disturbs public peace, attacks the dignity of another person, who: 1. Urges hatred towards parts of the population, 2. Demands violence or arbitrary measures towards them or 3. Insults, maliciously disrespects or defames, will be punished by three months to five years imprisonment.

Wer in einer Weise, die geeignet ist, den öffentlichen Frieden zu stören, die Menschenwürde anderer dadurch angreift, dass er 1. zum Hass gegen Teile der Bevölkerung aufstachelt, 2. zu Gewalt- oder Willkürmaßnahmen gegen sie auffordert oder 3. sie beschimpft, böswillig verächtlich macht oder verleumdet, wird mit Freiheitsstrafe von drei Monaten bis zu fünf Jahren bestraft.¹¹

Apparently in order to avoid favouritism towards Jews, lawmakers chose the oblique term: *Teile der Bevölkerung* (parts of the population).¹²

Further escalation took place at the end of the 1970's and during the 80's with a sharp increase in pro-nazi activities at schools, youth centres and football clubs. Subsequently, in 1982 the Helmut Schmidt government made a proposal for a law effectively making the *Auschwitz-Lüge* ('Auschwitz-Lie') a penal offence.

However, the newly elected government under Helmut Kohl, put the draft aside, revising it only in 1985 (with a modification and supplement), before passing it through parliament: The public prosecutor was to become active when the 'offended person' belonged to "a group persecuted under the National Socialists or another violent and tyrannical ruler".¹³ The Christlich-Soziale Union (CSU) considered the law prohibiting the *Auschwitz-Lüge* as historically too one-sided, because it did not include the Germans who were

¹¹ Reichel, op. cit. p. 154.

¹² Ibid. p. 154

¹³ "Angehöriger einer Gruppe unter der nationalsozialistischen oder einer anderen Gewalt- und Willkürherrschaft verfolgt wurde" Paragraph 194 of German Law.

driven out of East Prussia and the occupied territories at the end of WWII. The German's sense of victimization apparently needed to be brought in line with that of the Jewish persecution and systematic mass murder. Peter Reichel describes this as the construction of the *Vertreibungslüge* ('Expulsion Lie').¹⁴ Many of the ethnic Germans expelled at the end of WWII, had worked directly with the Nazis or were even in the SS.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and dissolution of the DDR, there was a dramatic increase in crimes against foreigners, refugees, the disabled and other minority groups. It was the time of Rostock, Hoyerswerda and Solingen, where refugee homes were set alight in the middle of the night, people in wheel chairs were forced out of moving trains, while pedestrians on the prestigious Kurfürstendamm applauded suicidal asylum seekers, poised high up on the roofs of department stores, encouraging them to jump.

The response of the police as well as the justice system towards such xenophobic murders and incidents of arson proved to be highly irregular.

Thus in 1991 during a non-public neo-Nazi meeting between the chairman of the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) Günther Deckert and American Fred Leuchter, all present were requested to spread the 'truth' about the *Gaskammermythos* (gas chamber myth) and the *Gaskammerlüge* (gas chamber lie). This 'private' meeting became public through the broadcasts of the Südwestfunk Baden-Baden, a radio station in south Germany.

Günther Deckert was subsequently condemned by the *Landgericht Mannheim* (State Court) in Mannheim to one-year imprisonment for *Volksverhetzung*, racism and slander (of the memory of the deceased). His acquittal by the BGH on the grounds of differentiation between a 'simple' as

¹⁴ Reichel, op. cit. p. 154. The *Vertreibungslüge* has taken on enormous dimensions in the meantime. By 2006 12.5 million Germans (non-Jewish) claim to have victim status. See: The Guardian, 4 September 2006. One of the victims, Bundespräsident Hörst Köhler, was invited as guest speaker by the Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV) at the "Tag der Heimat 2006". Köhler's family was one of many who were settled by Hitler in the occupied territories of Poland (Bessarabien). At the end of the war his family were forced to return to their original *Heimat* in Swabia. Die Tageszeitung, 4 September 2006

opposed to a ‘qualified Auschwitzlüge’ with the explanation that a bare lie is not an assault on *Menschenwürde* (human dignity), led to public outcry. The Green political party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) were particularly demanding: the denial of the Holocaust should not be protected by the fundamental right to freedom of speech.¹⁵

In fact, several laws already existed at this time for the protection of Holocaust victims: Under paragraph 185, denial of the Holocaust constitutes an offence that will be prosecuted. And paragraph 189 protects the memory of the dead from defamation.¹⁶ (There are 15 paragraphs (laws) alone covering *Beleidigung* (to insult) and the prosecution thereof under German law.)

Nevertheless on 1 December 1994 an amendment to paragraph 130 *Volksverhetzung* was passed through parliament:

Who so ever disturbs the peace, in public or in a meeting by approving, denying or describing as harmless, the actions as described in paragraph 220a 1 (genocide) of the Nazis, will be punished by up to five years imprisonment or fined.

Mit Freiheitsstrafe bis zu fünf Jahren oder mit Geldstrafe wird bestraft, wer eine unter der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus begangene Handlung der in § 220a, 1 (Völkermord) bezeichneten Art in einer Weise, die geeignet ist, den öffentlichen Frieden zu stören, öffentlich oder in einer Versammlung billigt, leugnet oder verharmlost. § 130,3¹⁷

¹⁵ Reichel, op. cit. p. 155

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Bundesgesetzblatt 4 November 1994, Nr. 76, Z 5702 A, S. 3187

The state attempts to prevent growing Nazism by empowering the intellectual authority of the police. Authoritarianism is thus used to defend the German people against authoritarianism.

One wonders what kind of democracy this can be, where police and courts of justice are empowered to protect a defined historical truth against doubt. A definition of history enforced by the police surely makes a mockery of that very history's veracity.

In March 2005, an amendment to the *Volksverhetzung* law 130 was made yet again. In order to prohibit the NPD demonstrations in the vicinity of the Holocaust memorial, the Bundestag (specifically mentioning the Holocaust memorial) voted to extend the law to include: "those who publicly approve, glorify or justify the violent and tyrannical National Socialists"¹⁸ (*Wer die nationalsozialistische Gewalt- und Willkürherrschaft öffentlich billigt, verherrlicht oder rechtfertigt*) may be sentenced for up to three years imprisonment or fined.

The Minister of the Interior, Otto Schily, justified: something just had to be done about the pictures broadcast worldwide of Neonazis demonstrating before Brandenburger Tor.¹⁹

Germany's image in the eyes of the rest of the world is often used as the prevailing argument to justify measures against Nazi elements and anti-Semitism. Already during the Zind case in 1958, the prosecuting council expressed concern about the extreme damage Zind had caused for the *Ansehen des deutschen Volkes in der Welt* ('Image of the German people abroad').²⁰ And in reaction to the neo-Nazi Nieland, the mayor of Hamburg, Max Baue, expressed horror at the *Dynamit für das deutsche Ansehen im Ausland* ('Dynamite for Germany's image abroad') it had provided.²¹ Again, later in September

¹⁸ Bundestag erleichtert Verbot von Neonazi-Aufmärschen, Financial Times Deutschland, 11 March 2005

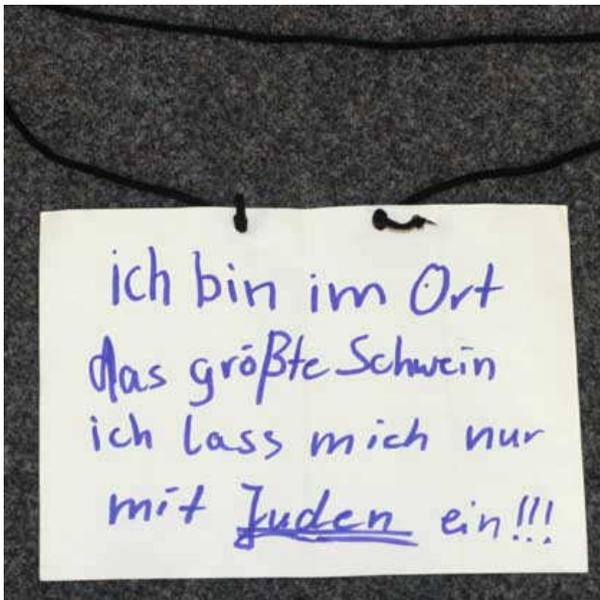
¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Reichel, op. cit. p. 145

²¹ Reichel, op. cit. p. 152

2000, Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder, at the 50th anniversary of the police union in Hamburg, complained that pictures of neo-Nazi demonstrations held at Brandenburger Tor and broadcast around the world were damaging the image of the nation.²²

Thus, by 2005 quite a few laws protecting Germany's image abroad had been seriously put into place. While in fact the number of extreme right (Nazi) devotees as well as politically motivated pro Nazi crimes, had sharply increased by the end of 2005.²³ And in 2006, the political alarm was raised when a school pupil was forced by his fellow pupils to wear a sign reading: "*Ich bin im Ort das größte Schwein, ich lass mich nur mit Juden ein.*" (I am the biggest pig in the district I only mix with Jews.)²⁴ The *Bundeskriminalamt* (Department of Crime) as I write have reported a 50% increase from 2004 of neo-Nazi criminal activities and brutality, as well as 8000 incidents (Nazi crimes and brutality) within the first eight months of 2006.²⁵



17. October 2006: at a secondary school in the village of Elbe-Parey, Sachsen-Anhalt, pupils force a classmate to wear a sign reading: I am the biggest pig in the district I only mix with Jews.

²² Vorbehalte gegen schärferes Versammlungsrecht, Die Welt 16 February 2005

²³ Der Spiegel, Schulkandal um Nazi-Parole schockiert Sachsen-Anhalt. 13 October 2006, Spiegel Online, 13 October 2006, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,442376,00.html

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tagesspiegel, 17 October 2006

Given that the atmosphere surrounding the law prohibiting the text ‘the holocaust never happened’ was so charged, and, came as a result of grave incidents of re-nazification and anti-Semitism following the Third Reich and accelerating right through to post-wall reunified Germany — the motives prompting its use as a advertising quip become highly questionable.

Reports to the police of *Volksverhetzung* (paragraph 130), were lodged against Rosh almost immediately by survivors of Nazi concentration camps and reported in the media within the second week of the campaign.²⁶ An investigation by the *Berliner Staatsanwaltschaft* (Berlin public prosecutor) was initiated.

The chairman of the Jewish Community in Frankfurt, Salomon Korn, publicly criticises the action as only being an attempt by Rosh ‘[...] to promote herself in public.’²⁷

A debate in the media ensues over the legality of the charges with legal experts aggressively defending or opposing them. Scholar and former professor of Civil Law at the Freie Universität in Berlin Uwe Wesel, claims that the charges are ridiculous, that Rosh had no intention of denying the Holocaust, and that therefore without any punishable act, the investigation will be dropped. He asserts that ‘stupidity is not punishable’ (*Dummheit ist nicht strafbar*).²⁸ Similarly, Klaus Geppert, Professor of criminal law at the Freie Universität in Berlin, describes the charges as *grotesque*.²⁹

However in Hamburg, where a separate enquiry has been initiated, public prosecutor Robert Wenzel, assumes that the statement on the poster does indeed violate the law. He claims that it is not about an opinion, but

²⁶ Lächerlich, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 2 August 2001

²⁷ Korn kritisiert Holocaust-Plakat, FAZ, 2 August 2001

²⁸ Susanne Lenz, Geschmacklosigkeit ist nicht strafbar, Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 2 August 2001 p. 22

²⁹ Ibid.

rather a disturbance of the peace. And, that the ‘sword of criminal law’ (*das Schwert des Strafrechtes*)³⁰ is there to combat stupidity and enforce a responsible handling of history.

Meanwhile in Frankfurt-am-Main, public prosecutor Hildegard Becker-Toussaint, points out that the purpose of Law §130 StGB is to punish any form of denial or *verharmlosen* (to make harmless) of the destruction of the Jews under National Socialism. And furthermore, that the German legal system has managed, following years of consistent execution of the law to: largely prevent a *Negierung und Bagatellisierung* (denial and trifling representation) of the historical events of the Jewish destruction in public; increase the public awareness of the *Strafwürdigkeit* (value of punishment); and, to construct a barrier deterring potential offenders.³¹

Becker-Toussaint elaborates the implicit danger of future offenders having the ease of justifying themselves in the light of the posters statement. And that ‘problematic’ parts of the society will no longer feel deterred to infringe the law.³²

One hundred and fifty historians and scholars from Germany, Israel, Austria, the USA and France protest against the poster, demanding the immediate cancellation of the campaign. The scholars, including Christopher Browning, Saul Friedländer, Carlo Ginzburg and Marlene Streeruwitz, condemn the campaign on the grounds that: it inadvertently spreads in a massive way an infamous lie while supporting a small circle of ‘Auschwitz Liars’ who will only be delighted by the publicity.³³

Indeed, an election campaign poster produced by the NPD in October 2001, reproduced in large bold characters ‘Den Holocaust hat es nie gegeben’ beneath which was printed ‘NPD Die Nationalen’ (NPD The Nationals). The

³⁰ Umstrittenes Plakat bleibt hängen, BZ, 3 August 2001

³¹ Gefahren, die von einem Plakat ausgehen, FAZ, 10 August 2001

³² Ibid.

³³ Plakat sofort abhangen!, FAZ, 6 August 2001

statement was referenced in a footnote to: Förderkreis für die Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas.³⁴ The NPD distributed the poster in Berlin and showed it during public demonstrations. So, Rosh did in fact facilitate Nazi propagation of an anti-Semitic slogan. The Berlin State court prohibited the poster on 11 October 2001, as it was considered hurtful of the personal rights of the Förderkreis members (Rosh). Thus, the state had to intervene to protect Rosh from herself.

Reactions to the poster begin to gain momentum across the country: on 5 August, the chairman of the ZJD, Paul Spiegel, pleads for an immediate end to the campaign in the light of the protest from Holocaust victims.³⁵

Simultaneously, theologian Richard Schröder publicly states that the Förderkreis supports primarily its own self-righteousness and is literally a ‘disabling’ rather than ‘supporting’ body.³⁶ Schröder in 1999 proposed as an alternative memorial, the erection of a stone tablet on the Ministerial Gardens reading: *Nicht morden* (Don’t murder). This god forbidden masterpiece was to appear in Hebrew as well as several other languages.

Eventually, the officially recognized Nazis themselves become active when Manfred Roeder (a probationer, sentenced to one-years imprisonment for Holocaust denial under Law 130 one month previous) hangs his own text in front of the huge poster next to the memorial site. The statement *den holocaust hat es nie gegeben* is completed by Roeder’s text: “And neither did crimes of the Wehrmacht” (*Wehrmachtsverbrechen auch nicht*).³⁷

The other problem with criminalizing an opinion is that it tends to give its offenders the status of martyr or hero. Hence, photos of Roeder standing at the historical Brandenburger Tor, close to the poster are broadcast on national

³⁴ Der Plakatierer vom Dienst, Die Zeit, week 11 2002

³⁵ Spiegel fühlt sich von Lea Rosh getäuscht, Welt am Sonntag, 5 August 2001

³⁶ “Für die Besinnung, die uns Not täte, ist er insoweit eher ein Behinderungskreis”. Das Mahnmal - wer tut wichtig?, Berliner Zeitung, 2 August 2001

³⁷ Zentralrat der Juden verärgert über Lea Rosh, BZ, 7 August 2001

television. In response, Rosh announces an intention to lodge charges with the police.³⁸

During this period the Jewish Council and community continuously receive abusive mail with the complementary text: *Das haben wir schon immer gewusst* (“We knew all along [that the Holocaust never happened].”)³⁹

As a final gesture, German shepherd dogs are put on patrol to guard the mammoth poster *den holocaust hat es nie gegeben* hanging next to the Memorial site.⁴⁰

Now to point two: A statement that indicates that the purpose of the memorial is to correct those who question the fact that the Holocaust took place at all.

There are still many who claim this, and in 20 years there will be more.
Therefore donate to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

*Es gibt immer noch viele, die das behaupten, in 20 Jahren werden es noch mehr sein.
Spenden Sie deshalb für das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas.*⁴¹

This claim implies that the memorial’s purpose is to correct those who deny the Holocaust. And that donating money for the construction of the memorial will decrease the number of such. Therefore a threatening, didactic and punitive approach: if one does not donate money, there will be an increase in the number of Holocaust deniers.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Staatsanwalt ermittelt gegen Neonazi Roeder, BZ, 8 August 2001

⁴⁰ Scharfe Bewachung, BZ, 9 August 2001

⁴¹ See reproduced photographs of the poster.

Is it really that simple? And does a threatening strategy evoke the compassion and empathy appropriate to such a sensitive issue as the Holocaust, and in contemporary Germany? Can the projection of guilt — 60 years post Holocaust — promote and sustain a responsible and appropriate response from the German people?

And furthermore, how exactly should the poised rectification take place, when the promoters themselves (assuming to be of superior moral calibre) distribute *en masse* the highly taboo statement: 'the holocaust never happened' in the light of Germany's fraught struggle to rid itself of such conceptions of the Holocaust?

How could an abstract field of concrete erected in 2004 on an ostensibly historically inauthentic site, in the centre of Berlin, teach that the Holocaust of WWII did in fact happen — and demonstrate without doubt how and why?

The memorial here becomes a battlefield for the morally superior against the morally corrupt or inferior.

What has happened to the concept of a memorial's function to commemorate and by definition respect the victims it claims to stand for — the murdered Jews?



18. German shepherd dogs in defence of the fundraising initiative.

In the subsequent conflict Rosh dismisses the reactions of the Holocaust survivor (who lodged a report to the police) as: ‘ridiculous’ and ‘self-important’ (*Lächerlich* and *Wichtigtuerei*).⁴² Yet how are we to judge or even know the feelings of someone who experienced and survived the Holocaust, and, attempted to rebuild a ‘normal’ existence in post-Holocaust Germany?

The ZJD was not consulted in advance of the publicity campaign. And their president Paul Spiegel was informed only the day before its release. Furthermore, the campaign was launched without the accord of the *Stiftung für das Denkmal der ermordeten Juden Europas* (Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). The *Stiftung* was established by the Bundestag in 1999 to oversee the completion of the memorial — its members are comprised of representatives from the Bundestag, the Senat of Berlin, the *Förderkreis* (Citizens initiative for the establishment of a

⁴² Das Mahnmal - wer tut wichtig? BZ, 2 August 2001

memorial), directors of memorial museums, members of the ZJD, and other victim groups. Its work officially began in 2000.⁴³



19. The Führer's view from Berchtesgaden in a contemporary postcard.

A raging argument escalates in the press as opponents strike blows at one another: On 2 August, Rosh states that she knows what it is like to have terrible memories stirred up, that she feels sorry for the survivor who has lodged the charges, but that she feels even more sorry for him in that he ‘misunderstands’ the poster.⁴⁴

When asked if she would remove the poster out of consideration for the feelings of former Nazi concentration camp inmates, Rosh insists “there are other victims [...] and besides to remove the poster because of a charge of *Volksverhetzung* would now be going too far.”⁴⁵ She further justifies the poster by elaborating on the fact that the Förderkreis doesn’t consist of people who can simply whip up such a campaign, but that they spent weeks *talking* to the

⁴³ Spiegel fühlt sich von Lea Rosh getäuscht, Welt am Sonntag, 5 August 2001

⁴⁴Holocaust-Plakat: “Die nächste Kampagne wird viel zurückgenommener” Tagesspiegel, 2 August 2001

⁴⁵ Ibid.

advertising agency.⁴⁶ That seems fair enough for someone who made her career as a chat-show hostess.

Two days later Rosh, following telephone discussions with Paul Spiegel, announces that the poster will be removed earlier than planned. But, because a sponsor financed the campaign, Rosh maintains her obligation to keep it hung. (Obviously the sponsor's feelings have priority for Rosh over those of the victim groups.) This effectively meant a hanging time (from July 19) of approximately one month in all.

Rosh justifies that the campaign was necessary in order to raise an extra 5 million Deutschmarks, which the Förderkreis in 1999 agreed to contribute to the Federal Government's support of DM 50 million — bringing the total building costs to DM 55 million. She apparently doesn't want to see the memorial as 'purely' an 'action of the State' (*reine Staatsaktion*)⁴⁷, but wants it to be an initiative of the people, *das Volk*.

Yet, the memorial at this time had already become a state project (pure or not) and the discussion about this was over. Rosh blindly attempted to impose her will — after all only she knows what is good for the *Volk* not to mention the Jews.

Paul Spiegel promptly declares his disillusionment, claiming that there had been a clear agreement with Rosh to end the advertising campaign in the first week of August, which was subsequently not honoured. (*“Es hat zwischen uns eine klare Vereinbarung gegeben, die umstrittene Plakataktion diese Woche zu beenden. Jetzt wird dies in Frage gestellt.”*)⁴⁸

Rosh counters: “There is obviously a misunderstanding” (*Es gibt offenbar Missverständnisse*)⁴⁹ and now claims that technical reasons prevent the removal

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ BZ, 4 August 2001

⁴⁸ Spiegel fühlt sich von Lea Rosh getäuscht, Welt am Sonntag, 5 August 2001

⁴⁹ BZ, 7 August 2001

of the poster before mid August. Apparently, almost everyone except Rosh *misunderstood* just about everything there was to misunderstand about the campaign.

A renewed demand from Paul Spiegel and his vice-president Michael Friedmann finally bring about the declaration that the poster will be removed on 9 August.⁵⁰

Which brings us to point 3: That money is needed for the construction of a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe.

The 5 million Deutschmarks that were to be raised by the poster, was in fact to pay for the construction of the *Ort der Information* (The Place of Information) — the underground document centre on the memorial site.

After all of the turmoil created by this publicity, it turned out that there was absolutely no need for any donations. The entire budget for the memorial had been secured at a federal level, as confirmed by the Department of Finance.⁵¹

Salomon Korn, chairman of the Jewish community in Frankfurt and member of the Stiftung, accuses Rosh of arguing with falsified figures, and as herself having direct knowledge of the full financial commitment at federal level. According to Korn, Rosh distorted the truth in order to legitimise her own actions. In answer Rosh claimed that she has no idea where Korn got the remaining 4.5 million Deutschmarks.⁵²

However, Sibylle Quack, the then business director of the Stiftung, also confirmed the complete financing of the memorial by the federal government. Thereby making the entire publicity campaign unnecessary and redundant.⁵³

⁵⁰ BZ, 9 August 2001

⁵¹ Korn kritisiert Holocaust-Plakat, FAZ, 2 August 2001

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Staatsanwalt ermittelt gegen Neonazi Roeder, BZ, 8 August 2001

The blighted campaign appears to have been designed merely to advertise Rosh's part in the building of the memorial. One wonders if it were designed to immortalize her very person?

Rosh cited donations of 3,000 Deutschmarks per day in response to the advertising, which already totalled 40,000 by the third week.⁵⁴ Well at least that may have covered the court costs she incurred.

However, clearly counterproductive was the way in which it roused hostility toward the memorial, and lost the respect of potential supporters. Dissenters such as the former mayor of Berlin Eberhard Diepgen damned the incentive yet again and *Die Zeit* journalist Christoph Dieckmann writes of his horror at discovering that the poster actually turned him against the memorial.⁵⁵

20. "There was obviously a misunderstanding." A fragment of Lea Rosh's initiative after the giant poster had been removed.



On the day of the poster's removal, successive strips of it were demounted by manly abseilers who scaled the backdrop of snow peaked Alps, before the press cameras.

⁵⁴ Zentralrat der Juden verärgert über Lea Rosh, BZ, 7 August 2001

⁵⁵ Gedenkälärm, hauptstadtstark Berliner Bühne, Die Zeit, 2 August 2001

The flaccid strips were folded into neat little packages in the brilliant sunlight. Lying deposed on the grass one carried the label *holocaust*, the other *denk*, while the third simply supplied a pedestal for the abseiler's red helmet. Perhaps the idea had been to reduce the whole problematic of the Holocaust, its representation and memory to a clean neat package: Easily sold, consumed and finished — with no insufferable grating of unanswered questions.

In an interview Rosh had spoken of the insipid *Lichtinstallation*, reported on by a total of one newspaper and raising exactly zero Deutschmarks. She suggested that its failure had motivated the Förderkreis to initiate the poster campaign. Yet, as the Förderkreis spent *weeks* talking with the advertising agency about the campaign, it becomes clear that the poster action had nothing to do with the success or failure of *Licht gegen das Vergessen*. They were born only 21 days apart and produced by the same advertising agency: TBWA. The masterminds at TBWA claim to have a mission: “We create big ideas inspired through disruption delivering powerful connections with people.”⁵⁶ Big ideas for small minds.

The degree of sensibility towards the representation of the Holocaust was completed by Rosh's statement to the Tagesspiegel: “Times now are [untranslatable word] rougher/ruder/coarser, that's what we have to react to.” (*Die heutige Zeit ist eben grobschlächtiger, darauf müssen wir reagieren.*)⁵⁷ Times are coarser than when, the Third Reich?

Wandering away from the DZ bank and along the fence surrounding the memorial, I saw that the modest Light against forgetting (*Licht gegen das Vergessen*), was still clinging to its place alongside *Ich bin kein Nazi aber gegen dass Mahnmal* and *Laßt das Volk entscheiden*. I wondered what it was now that one wasn't supposed to forget — the quasi-denial of the fact that Joseph Goebbels

⁵⁶ TBWA Disruption, 3 January 2005, TBWA, 3 January 2005
www.tbwa.de/220.php

⁵⁷ Der Tagesspiegel, 2 August 2001

bunker lies dormant like a time bomb beneath the growing memorial or ‘the holocaust never happened’?

The most disturbing aspect of the poster scandal was the way in which it demonstrated to what extent the German people defer to the police even in matters of visual representation and speech, and, the aggression with which it is done. In a country where the last dictatorship ended just some 18 years ago, one wonders how police enforced, official historical truths can possibly help to create a more open democratic mentality.

Does this create a better world or does it simply reinforce unthinking obedience to rules above and over an individual’s sense of responsibility and morality within a democratic society? Does it not demand the very same mechanical obedience that once allowed the unspeakable to occur?

Censoring speech propagates cowards who don’t dare to speak up or oppose unjust and immoral acts for fear of their own well-being. How deeply this lack of courage and individual commitment is instilled in the German people, is demonstrated by the flourishing pro Nazi mentality and increase in racially motivated crimes well into 2006.⁵⁸

It is not surprising that the memorial starts to look like an obtuse concrete punishment for the German Volk (moderated by Rosh), in a world, which teaches through obedience to authority, intimidation, projection of guilt and punishment.

⁵⁸ See: Ralph Giordano, An dieser Untat ist ganz Deutschland beteiligt, 13 October 2006, Spiegel Online 13 October 2006, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,442429,00.html Der Spiegel
Schulskandal um Nazi-Parole schockiert Sachsen-Anhalt. 13 October 2006 Spiegel Online 13 October 2006 www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,442376,00.html



21. Spenden Sie deshalb für das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas!

CHAPTER NINE

THIERSE'S TREASON

First of all, unnatural components and remains of earlier constructions will be removed from the earth and the site will be searched and cleared of ammunition.

Zunächst werden die Altlasten und Reste früherer Bebauung beseitigt und das Gelände nach Munition durchsucht und davon befreit.

Bundestagspräsident Wolfgang Thierse, 30 October 2001¹

A good three years pass following the excavation and removal of the Nazi underground ruins, in which the site for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe simply lays to waste. A mound of sand in the far northeast corner conceals all evidence of the still intact bunker of Joseph Goebbels hidden below. The abandoned area is otherwise barren and neglected. The gray approaching winter already stultifying all colour.

The Foundation² for the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe (henceforth: Stiftung) organizes a major press conference on site on 30 October 2001. The main actor is the Bundestagspräsident (president of the German parliament) Wolfgang Thierse, who is also chairman of the Stiftung.

¹ Bundestagspräsident Thierse, Einzelmitteilung, »Realisierung des Denkmals beginnt wie vorgesehen«. Start der Bauarbeiten auf dem Gelände. 30 October 2001 Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, 30 October 2001 www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/aktuelles/presse/20011030

² Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, established by the Bundestag in 1999.

Thierse, donning a hard-helmet and smiling behind his beard into the TV cameras, begins to theatrically manoeuvre a bulldozer. The press is told that he is in the process of initiating the building preparations for the memorial. These are defined as: the removal of any *Altlasten* (unnatural components such as industrial waste products), previous constructions as well as a thorough search of the site for ammunitions from WWII. Excavations for the implantation of the stelae and the *Ort der Information* (underground place of information) are scheduled to take place some five or so months later.³ Lea Rosh is reported on this occasion as being a silent but obviously pleased witness.

I was completely astonished to see this show broadcast during the 10 minutes of regular national TV evening news in Germany. A shameless lie told and acted out by no one other than the President of the German parliament on nationwide television. Where had Thierse been in 1998, when the *Senatsverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr* set about excavating and removing all traces of Nazi underground constructions, as well as seven tons of ammunitions? As documented in the official government reports:

Bunker der 'Villa Goebbels' im Bereich der Ministergärten/Behrenstraße, Berlin-Mitte
 Grobbestandsaufnahme, Grundriß und Schnitt. 25.01.1998, Arnold &
 Körner GbR, Planungsbüro für Städtebau for the DSK, Archäologisches
 Landesamt.

Baufeldfreimachung Ministergärten Geophysikalische Messungen, Ausschnitt Goebbels-
Bunker Gegenüberstellung Geophysik — Ausgrabungsbefund (Arnold Körner)
 06.02.1998 Büro für Geophysik Lorenz, Berlin.

³ Ibid.

Baufeldfreimachung Ministergärten Geophysikalische Messungen, 19.02.1998, Büro für Geophysik Lorenz, Berlin. Here red/blue shading indicates geomagnetic abnormalities (building ruins)

Lageplan, Ministergärten Bezirk Berlin-Mitte, Senatsverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr 04.06.1998, Original Nr.15580

This *coup de théâtre* indicated without a doubt, that the German state was going to a great deal of trouble to obscure the history of the site, and specifically their role in eliminating all evidence of what had taken place there during the war.

Needless to say, there were no reports resulting in the press of uncovered ruins, deactivated bombs or ammunitions discovered on this site. It was purely a farce. Another publicity stunt. After all, Thierse had been on holidays during Rosh's poster fiasco and had missed out on all of the attention.

As construction of the memorial really began — some one and a half years later — in April 2003, information signs erected by the Stiftung, appeared on the fence surrounding the terrain claiming that:

The site for the Memorial is a 19,000 m² stretch of unoccupied land on the edge of the Grosser Tiergarten park between Ebertstrasse, Wilhelmstrasse and Behrenstrasse. Until 1945, the land was part of the 'Ministry Gardens', a private park that was attached to the ministries along Wilhelmstrasse.

The war and post-war years, and to an even greater extent the fact that the Berlin Wall, built in 1961, and the 'death strip' ran along Ebertstrasse

occupying almost all of what is now the memorial site, obliterated any traces of what was there before 1945.⁴

Obliteration here is attributed mainly to the German Democratic Republic and the Berlin Wall. Yet in 1997-1998 (when excavation and elimination of almost all ruins took place), the German Democratic Republic had ceased to exist, the Berlin Wall was long gone, and Germany had been unified for a good seven years.

This Orwellian version of history does not appear in any way appropriate to the thematic of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

You wonder if one can ever trust a German politician again, when in 2001, they bluntly lie and behave in a fraudulent manner.

As noble as their intentions may appear in announcing the building of a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, there is absolutely no excuse for deceit.

Deceit is still employed as a strategy, even in the endeavour to erect something that is meant to honour, remember and pay respect to the Jewish victims of the Nazis, sixty years after the Holocaust.

Since 1998, I have shown material on the findings at the Ministerial Gardens as uncovered in January of the same year. I included the material in exhibitions, publications, and discussions in France, Italy, Australia, Germany, the Ukraine and the UK. I also published some of the images and information I had collected on my web site for a number of years.

In April 2005, just before the official opening of the completed memorial (May 10), I discover that the Stiftung have re-built their web site.

⁴ Photographs of the information signs by the author

There is a vague confirmation that the bunker of Joseph Goebbels had been built on the site, next to his villa.

I obtain a press accreditation in order to attend the press conference, the day before the official opening of the memorial. Safely inside the press conference, I ask Peter Eisenman to indicate when he had become aware of the bunkers that had been located on the site — and, if he had considered integrating the ‘Goebbels Bunker’ into the underground museum. Before I can finish my question, my microphone is silenced.

Eisenman states that he knew about the bunkers, and had lots of ideas for the integration of Goebbels Bunker in the memorial, but explains that “the people down at the Reichstag told me what they could mean or symbolize, and they know better than I do, so that was that.”⁵ I insist on knowing the exact date (although my microphone remains without amplification — I am sitting in the front row) and Eisenman replies that he knew from 1982. When I inquire: but how can that be — the bunker was officially ‘discovered’ in 1997, he claims that, he has ‘always known’ because he has a map of Berlin from 1939. (This incidentally could never be the case, as the bunker was not built until 1941.) Thierse, at this point looking somewhat alarmed, interrupts, declaring something vague about the bunkers of the Reichskanzlei. When I counter: it’s not about that, it is about authentic historical evidence on the site — the Bundespräsident looks completely lost.

Gathering himself, he firmly recites in practiced monologue: “The authentic places are Dachau, Sachsenhausen... that is where it took place, not in Berlin.”

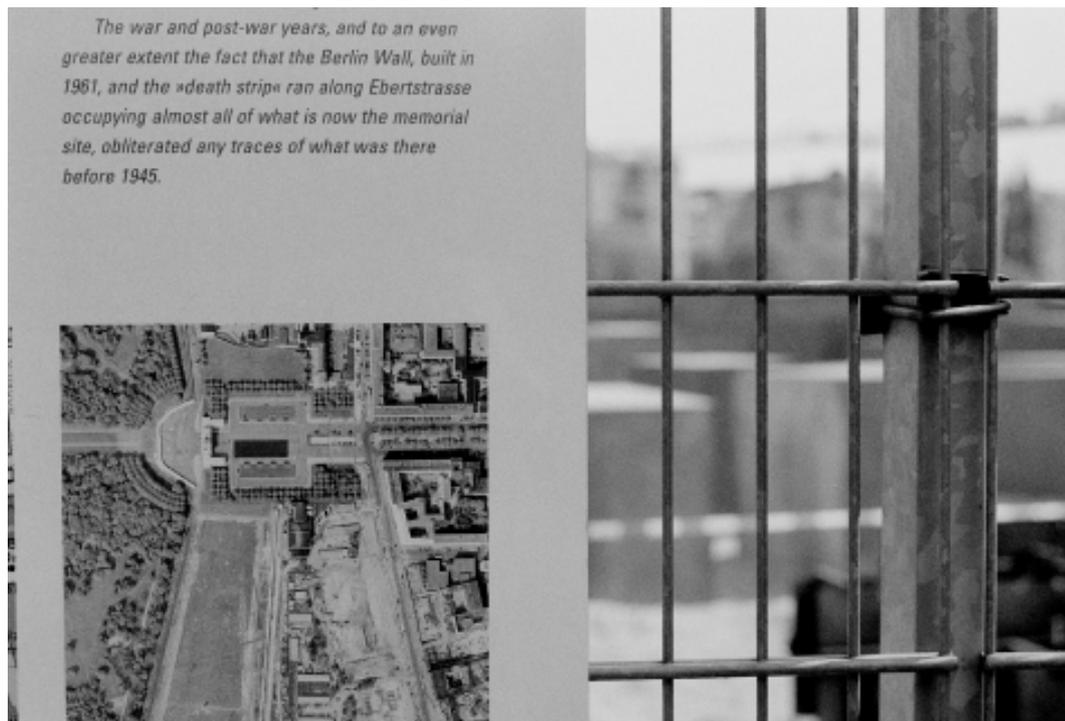
As I try to speak again (still without amplification), Thierse bluntly ignores me.

⁵Peter Eisenman, Press Conference Prior to the Official Opening Ceremony of the Memorial, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung May 9 2005

Eisenman looks at me empathetically with lips pressed shut, and raised eyebrows in a gesture of helplessness.



22. In charge of German history: in sensible shoes behind the control levers. Wolfgang Thierse ostensibly initiating the removal of ruins and ammunition from the memorial site, some three years after they had all been officially excavated and removed, with the exception of the Goebbels bunker.



23. Sign posted at memorial site in 2003

CHAPTER TEN

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL, BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS

A picture of humans in the globalised world: each one differently coloured, but all the same.

Horst Köhler, Federal President of Germany¹

The evening news in the summer of 2003 proudly reports that the very first ‘test stelae’ have been erected on the memorial site.

I, like many other Berliners, make an immediate visit to see the group of lonely, gray tilted casts set amid the stripped sandy expanse.

Approaching the site from the busy Pariser Platz, however, one was obliged to pass the adjacent terrain, which two years earlier had boasted, ‘The Holocaust never happened’. Following the demise of the dismal poster campaign, the great advertising wall (of the DZ Bank) complete with the poster’s frame and an army of floodlights had remained unused. The Nazi alpine image and text still lurked however, imprinted in memory, albeit unwanted.

¹ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 8 April 2005

Well, it was about time someone had another go at kitschy representation. After all this was the Hauptstadt Berlin — and tourists were bounding out of shiny buses all around the showy Pariser Platz.

The wall of the DZ Bank now formed a magnificent backdrop to a perfect circle of 123 hollow plastic Buddy Bears. The two metres tall grisly, garish monstrosities with raised paws challenged the matt, flat, austere stelae erected directly opposite.

Consequently, visitors drew comparisons between the new competing outcrops on the city's surface. Most visitors after glancing briefly, in the direction of the stelae, retired to the Buddies, lamenting the ugliness of the 'idiocy'.

Oh, it's so ugly.

-Yeah, mentally retarded, let's look at the bears instead.

So was von Hässlich.

-Ja, Schwachsinn, lass uns lieber die Bären anschauen.

This was the second appearance of our chubby chums in Berlin. Just one year earlier they had assembled on the very same site, when they were officially inaugurated by Klaus Wowereit, the Mayor of Berlin. Sixty-six foreign ambassadors as well as 700 invited guests from politics, culture, and business came to welcome the beasts.

Wowereit, who seems to have a penchant for kitsch, had just one year earlier inaugurated 'The Holocaust never happened' publicity campaign on this very same site. At the time he had casually mentioned that he had no

reservations or fears of a misunderstanding of the action.² This time, clearly in his element, he was sure to be understood.

But, Klaus's enthusiasm does not stop with the buddies at the site of the former American Embassy. He proudly participated in the commemoration (just one month earlier) of John F. Kennedy's famous speech held before Schöneberg Town Hall in 1963, when JFK desperately proclaimed:

2000 years ago the proudest boast was 'Civis Romanus sum', today in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is 'Ich bin ein Berliner!'³

Wowereit, mindlessly stroking a plastic silver Berliner Bear branded with JFK's image, joined in the fun for a second time.

The Mayor of Berlin, a real swinger, is so fond of the Buddies that he included some of them later in his party at the Rotes Rathaus (Red Town hall) in 2004.

And for the opening ceremony in Sydney of the offensive creatures disgracefully gathered before the Opera House, Wowereit swooned:

I consider this to be a sign of the great solidarity between Germany and Australia.

*Ich werte dies auch als Zeichen der großen Verbundenheit zwischen Deutschland und Australien.*⁴

² See Chapter Four.

³ Buddy Bears Berlin. Events. Date of posting unknown.

Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH. 2 February 2006 www.buddy-bear.com/en/events/index.html

Yes, especially when the ‘Australian’ bear in Berlin was made in Germany by a German artist, parodying aboriginal symbolism.⁵

Whilst Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the Bundesminister acclaimed:

The Buddy-Bears are simultaneously ambassadors of Berlin and a Germany that is open to the world.

*Gleichzeitig sind die Buddy-Bären Botschafter Berlins und eines weltoffenen Deutschlands.*⁶

So, our bearers of history and *Volksverständigung* have come again to add some cheer to the grayness of Berlin and its Holocaust memorial site. Brandishing mottos such as ‘treat others as you would like to be treated yourself’ they were created by the stationary merchants Klaus and Eva Herlitz. The former producer of school exercise books, Eva, sees the project as the harbinger of values otherwise missing in schools. As one is unable to ‘politically achieve anything’⁷, the bears simply through their presence alone, transmit tolerance and understanding in the whole world.

To illustrate just how tolerant and understanding these creatures are of political underachievers, the Senator of Building and Kuratorium member of the memorial’s Foundation Peter Strieder, during the election campaign in

⁴ Klaus Wowerit, United Buddy Bears News, 9.1.2006 Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH 2 February 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/news/showsingle.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006&newsid=141

⁵ The “Australian” artist Ute Faber’s biographical information on the Buddy Bears web site, in contrast to the other artists involved, omits any biographical information on nationality or place of birth. Indeed there is no biographical reference to Australia at all, and I have been unable to locate the existence of an artist from Australia by the name Ute Faber.

United Buddy Bears, Ute Faber, 2003, United Buddy Bears, 22 May 2007 <http://www.united-buddy-bears.de/de/bears/showartist.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2003&bearid=300>

⁶ Frank-Walter Steinmeier United Buddy Bars News, 19 January 2006 Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH. 2 February 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/news/showsingle.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006&newsid=143

⁷ Tageszeitung (Taz), 30 July 2003

2001, straddled the rear of a crouching bear in public, for an exclusive photo session.⁸

The clumsy and primitive conception of difference between peoples, held by some German politicians, is exemplified in the revealing remark made by the Bundespräsident Horst Köhler in Tokyo.

Köhler, president of the Federal Republic of Germany, praised the bears on tour in Japan as:

A picture of humans in the globalize world: each one differently coloured, but all the same.

*Ein Abbild des Menschen in der globalisierten Welt: ein jeder anders bemalt, aber alle gleich.*⁹

Artists in Berlin were invited from ‘all over the world’ to create a bear—or rather fill in the blanks of a bear. Supplied with a two metres high white plastic cast, they were instructed to paint a representation of their *Heimatland* or Homeland.

The different styles of artists from the whole world are connected through the placement of the bears in a circle, which becomes a unique Gesamtkunstwerk.¹⁰

Oberkünstler or mega artist Dr Herlitz, formulates the ‘message’ of his masterpiece as:

⁸ FAZ, 21 June 2001

⁹ FAZ, 8 April 2005

¹⁰ Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH, United Buddy Bears Idee 2006 Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH, 2 February 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/idea/index.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006

Lots of information about the particular countries will be communicated through the individual decoration of each bear as a basis for more understanding. With the symbolism of the circle, love, peace, friendship, tolerance and agreement between peoples will be advertised.

*Als Grundlage für mehr Verständnis werden durch die individuelle Gestaltung jedes Bären viele Informationen über die einzelnen Länder vermittelt. Mit der Symbolik des Kreises wird für Liebe, Frieden, Freundschaft, Toleranz und Völkerverständigung geworben.*¹¹

Well, one wonders why no-one thought of using the bears to advertise the memorial — with all that love, peace, tolerance and *Völkerverständigung*.

The deep thinker Köhler philosophised at the Buddies opening in Tokyo: “Every bear is different but they all have the same form. This shows that all people and peoples belong together; this shows that we live in one world. But the bears are also very individual. This stands for the variety and peculiarity of peoples and nations.”¹²

Ah, could he mean: All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others?

While the minister for foreign affairs, Joschka Fischer continued the happy analogy of peoples and bears with:

Every country has its own culture, history and peculiarities—every bear has its own artist, its own style, its own expression.¹³

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Jeder Bär ist anders und doch haben sie die gleiche Form. Sie zeigt, dass alle Menschen und Völker zusammen gehören; sie zeigt, dass wir in einer Welt leben. Doch die Bären sind auch sehr individuell. Das steht für die Vielfältigkeit und Einzigartigkeit der Völker und Nationen. Diese Unterschiede bereiten uns manchmal Probleme Hörst Köhler United Buddy Bears News 2006 Buddy Bear Berlin GmbH 30 January 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/news/showsingle.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006&newsid=122

¹³ Jedes Land hat seine eigene Kultur, Geschichte und Eigenarten –jeder Bär hat seinen Künstler, seinen Stil, seinen eigenen Ausdruck. Joschka Fischer, United Buddy Bears News, 3 April 2005 Buddy

But, expert Herlitz summarises, “everyone can identify with a bear [...] they are quasi neutral [...] and that is probably why they are so human.”¹⁴

Most likely in the world of Herlitz, Köhler, Fischer and Walter Momper (President of Berlin State Parliament), foreigners on this basis may also be considered as somewhat human, what with their peculiarities, variety and *‘fabenfrohe Botschaft’* (coloured happy message).¹⁵ Hence the equation of coloured multicultural bears with foreigners affords them (the foreigners) a somewhat human status. What remarkable tolerance, understanding and acceptance this shows.

The project manager, Norbert Hujer wanted to bring ‘fun’ into the capital. And, needless to say, the area is overrun with camera clicking, garishly apparelled, drooping backpack-bearing tourists — squinting at the sunlit ugliness.

The Berliners, inquisitive about these exotic foreign places, are presented with very instructive and deeply trivializing representations. The original ‘French Bear’ carries the Eiffel Tower, while that unknown continent at the end of the earth, Australia, pouts a contorted Germanic-aboriginalized kangaroo. But, most Berliner’s, find fun, not to mention *Volksverständigung*, by imitating the cigar smoking Cuban. The Cuban’s raised paws, flanking the background sign ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ provide a cuddly niche into which countless Berliners, snuggle with an imaginary poised cigar.

And just in case someone was still unsure of the meaning of the gaudy circle, a silver Einstein bear instructed them at the entrance:

Bears Berlin GnbH. 30 January 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/news/showsingle.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006&newsid=114

¹⁴ Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH, United Buddy Bears Idee 2006 Buddy Bär Berlin GmbH, 2 February 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/idea/index.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006

¹⁵ Welcome speech of the President of the state parliament of Berlin, Walter Momper 28 July 2003 Buddy Bears Berlin GmbH. 2 Jan 2006 www.united-buddy-bears.com/de/news/showsingle.php?lang=de&bbbyear=2006&newsid=26

“Peace cannot be kept by force. It can only be achieved through understanding. Albert Einstein”.¹⁶

And understanding was subsequently defined on the gold Bear, who propagated mottos about duty and such things under the heading ‘Golden rule in the world religions’.

About a year or so earlier a certain Herr Herlitz or one of his representatives called me up in Berlin. In sugary patronizing tones, the caller asked me if I would like to have the privilege of participating in his Gesamtkunstwerk, by painting one of his bears.

They would supply the plastic creature and the paint. And, my ‘Australian’ bear would be exhibited in a circle with bears from all over the world close to the Brandenburger Tor—and may eventually be sent all around the globe. He proudly listed the numerous sponsors of the project, which included the BVG, Berlin public transport company and Lufthansa. (Meanwhile Herlitz has about 100 sponsors.) There was also a part about the bears being auctioned to raise money for charity, just to whet my sense of worthlessness and humility before this great cause.

I asked him what the fee would be. “What?” he exclaimed incomprehensively. I repeated: How much are you going to pay me for my work? He was aghast and speechless. I continued: Well, you are paid to sit in your office and call me, as well as all of the other Berlin artists, to create your project. Your offices are located on the most expensive street in Berlin, the Kurfürstendamm. Why do you expect me to give my time, expertise and attention for free? Mr Herlitz stuttered in horror: “But...” I waited, but he had no text. So, I continued: In Berlin no one does anything for nothing. Even the

¹⁶ Einstein, of course, was not revered for his pacifism.

very last cleaning lady is paid. Lawyers, bus drivers and prostitutes are all paid for their work, so why does everyone expect artists to work for free? Are we supposed to live off the honour of serving Dr Herlitz? I also have to pay my rent and eat.

The expert on *understanding, love, tolerance and agreement between peoples*, abruptly ended the conversation. I never heard from him again. But in case he calls you, his name is Herlitz. Klaus Herlitz.



24. Love, peace, tolerance and *Völkerverständigung*. The frame on the building shows the area from where the Holocaust denying poster had recently been removed.

Herlitz exploited 122 foreign artists for his *Gesamtkunstwerk*.¹⁷ His company Buddy-Bär-Berlin GmbH was founded in 2001. The prospering company in 2003 was already able to employ five full time staff. The range of souvenir bears as well as postcards, books and catalogues means that the project provides even more fun in the form of monetary profits. Because, as manager Hujer emphasized: the *action* should make money.¹⁸

As some of the money raised from the auctioning of the artists bears, is donated to charity—the project attempts to propagate a benevolent character. Pretentiously diverting attention away from its otherwise completely despicable parasitic nature.

The tasteless vulgarization of values raised over one million Euros, and continues to vandalize cities across the planet.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, by now battered from so many conflicts and humiliations, was already in financial trouble in 2005. There was talk of charging an entrance fee, and the Ort der Information is at times closed due to a lack of funds.

When politicians, ambassadors, industrialist and cultural managers in Berlin cannot tell the difference between crass, motto flaunting propaganda and a Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe — then it may be better they don't build one.

Moreover, they shouldn't be surprised when the population shows virtually no interest in financially supporting the memorial or respecting it in view of their own example. The Memorial publicity campaign, which took

¹⁷ It was clear in my conversation with Herlitz that it was simply not part of his concept that artists are paid. However, it is conceivable to me that some of the embassies supplied financial support for their individual artists. I have not been able to verify this.

¹⁸ Taz, 30 July 2003

place on the very same United-Buddy-Bears occupied terrain in 2001, raised a mere 20,000 Euros.¹⁹

¹⁹ Zentralrat der Juden verärgert über Lea Rosh, Berliner Zeitung (BZ) 7 August 2001

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DEGUSSA'S LONG-TERM REFERENCE-OBJECT

The strengths of Degussa are made to measure system solutions with highly effective results for its customers.

Die Stärke der Degussa sind maßgeschneiderte Systemlösungen mit hoher Wirkung für ihre Kunden.

Degussa AG Press Release¹

Protectosil had been impregnated into several hundred concrete stelae by October 2003. This initial preparation was Degussa AG's chemical solution, intended to protect the concrete from weathering and potential graffiti. With just ten stelae erected on site in August and approved by Eisenman, the serial production of the 2711 concrete casts was underway.

Eisenman had been unworried by the ramifications of graffiti, seeing it as a reflection of the German people's response to the memorial. However, the Kuratorium (the board of trustees of the Stiftung²) had insisted on the impregnation of the 56,000 square metres monument with 40 tons of anti-stick coating.

¹ Degussa press release quoted in Maßgeschneiderte Systemlösungen, Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 31 October 2003

² Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas/Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

An immediate halt to construction of the stelae is imposed on October 23 during a Kuratorium meeting. Several members, upon learning at the meeting of Degussa's history and participation in the construction of the memorial, are outraged. A vehement dispute erupts resulting in a vote for a suspension of work on the stelae. Zyklon B, which was used to gas millions of Jews, Sinti and Roma and other victims at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek concentration camps, was produced by a subsidiary company of Degussa, Degesch or Deutsche Gesellschaft für Schädlingsbekämpfung (German Society for the Combating of Vermin), during the Third Reich.

The Kuratorium under Wolfgang Thierse decide to inform Degussa of the reasons for the dispute and officially expel them from the construction of the memorial. A decision is passed to find a replacement product from another suitable company to combat the graffitiists.

If we don't do it, then someone else will

– Degussa, a brief historical background

The German Gold and Silver Separation Institute *Deutsche Gold- und Silber-Scheideanstalt AG*, Degussa was founded in 1873 and was joint owner of Degesch along with the IG Farben.

Degesch was established in 1917 by the German war Ministry³ to deal with the infestation of vermin in clothes, buildings, mattresses, sofas, and chairs.⁴ Zyklon, one of its most powerful disinfecting products, was an extremely toxic hydro cyanic or prussic acid. The trade name Zyklon B stands for cyclone, and B refers to *Blausäure*, because of the deep blue stains it produces. The poison gas suppresses the uptake of oxygen into an organism eventually causing suffocation.

Zyklon B was introduced to the concentration camps initially as a disinfectant and fumigant. Poor hygienic conditions had resulted in a proliferation of lice and rats spreading typhus amongst all peoples in the camp. Zyklon B was introduced to Auschwitz in 1940 where it was used (initially) to fumigate barracks.

Degesch also produced specially constructed gas chambers in which to disinfect clothes and delouse human beings (wearing gas masks).⁵

In 1941, the T4 euthanasia programme had been extended at Himmler's request to the concentration camps. In the course of this

³ Jean-Claude Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* (New York 1989) p.16

⁴ The following information is based on Robert Jan van Pelt and Debórah Dwork, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present* (New Haven and London, 1996) pp.279-83, 292-93

⁵ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York and London 1985) p. 886 and BZ, 27 October 2003

programme (now named 14f13), 575 chronically sick, mentally ill and invalid prisoners had been transported from Auschwitz to be exterminated at the T4 euthanasia gas chamber, hundreds of miles away at Sonnenstein. At the time (July 1941), it was not possible to kill large numbers of prisoners at Auschwitz without creating bedlam.

With the subsequent closing of the euthanasia killing centres, Auschwitz authorities 'needed' to find more efficient means of on the spot killing. Large numbers of Soviet prisoners of war were also expected, and Hitler had made clear that Himmler was to 'liquidate' everything in the concentration camps if necessary.

Camp authorities experimented with different methods of killing. Bottled gas was too expensive and piping too complex. However, the staff was familiar with and knowledgeable about Zyklon and its deadly effects. Added to this, during the summer of 1941, special importance had been given to the building of delousing installations.

In late summer 1941, Lagerführer Karl Fritsch decided to test the effectiveness of Zyklon B in killing humans. As part of Aktion 14f13, Soviet prisoners of war were locked in a basement cell of block 11 whilst Fritsch threw Zyklon B crystals into the room. All of the prisoners died in this initial experiment.

Fritsch now experimented with mass execution using Zyklon B. On 3 September Russian prisoners as well as ill prisoners were murdered in the underground cells of block 11.⁶ An inmate Wojciech Barcz, who worked as a nurse recalled:

The image we saw when we opened the cell doors was that of an overpacked suitcase. The corpses fell toward us. I estimate that some sixty corpses were

⁶ Van Pelt and Dwork, *op. cit.* pp. 279-83, 292-93

pushed together in a small cell. It was so packed that they could not fall over when they died, but remained standing. . . One could still see many signs of a terrible death struggle.⁷

These initial experiments demonstrated that any space could easily be converted to a Zyklon B gas chamber. All that was needed was a small hole in the ceiling through which to drop the crystals of odourless Zyklon. The way was now clear towards the development of mass extermination facilities.

Bruno Tesch, director of the Hamburg branch of Degesch, founded the Testa Company, which delivered the Zyklon B to the SS at Auschwitz, Majdanek, Sachsenhausen and Dachau. In 1942-43, 19.5 tons of Zyklon B was delivered just to Auschwitz alone. Another company that belonged to Degussa, the Auergesellschaft AG supplied the SS with the necessary gas masks.⁸



25. Canisters containing Zyklon B found at Majdanek concentration camp in 1944.

The system of stealing gold teeth and bridges from corpses, initially carried out at the killing centres of disabled victims, was continued at the extermination

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ BZ, 27 October 2003

camps.⁹ Degussa were able to boost their original business in gold and silver refining, by robbing the corpses of gassed victims.

Their profits in 1942 for the gold and silver separation company, following the Wannsee-Conference where the Final Solution had been decided, were on average 200,000 Reichsmark.¹⁰

Degussa accumulated additional profits, as they were the prime contractor (*Generalunternehmer*), appointed by order of Reichs Minister Hermann Göring. According to the Berliner Zeitung, Degussa smelted over one ton of gold stolen from corpses as well as confiscated from Jews in ghettos and concentration camps.¹¹ However this figure has to have been significantly higher: historian Götz Aly has pointed out that in Saloniki (Greece) alone, twelve tons of fine gold were stolen from the Jews in 1943 during the ghettoization.¹²

As the precious metal smelters of the Reich, Degussa's contract from 1940 on (following the Nazi invasion of Europe) became an even more attractive one. It now included hundreds of tons of gold from ten countries. This was the combination of gold from looted central banks as well as Jewish and other victims of Nazi persecution. The exact figures (at the time of writing) are still not known.¹³

The gold was mostly smelted down and sold to neutral countries including Switzerland, Portugal and Sweden. Often after being smelted down, the gold was given a Reichsbank stamp with a fake pre-war date.¹⁴

⁹ Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill, 1995) p.300

¹⁰ BZ, 27 October 2003

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Götz Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005) p.287

¹³ Degussa AG degussa in der NS-Zeit, 2005 Degussa AG, 28 November 2005 www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/vorgaenger/degussa_in_der_ns_zeit.as.5.html

¹⁴ BBC News, 1 December 1997, BBC 21 November 2005 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1997/nazi_gold/35981.stm

After the war, having distributed some of the gold to camp survivors, a commission comprised of the USA, France and England, had a total of 337 tons available for redistribution. But this only formed 64% of the validated claims.¹⁵

In 1946, Bruno Tesch was sent to the gallows by a British military court along with his company manager, Karl Weinbacher. The Testa Company was officially dissolved in 1949, but was re-founded and run by employees up until 1979.¹⁶ Tesch had purportedly advised visiting officers of the Wehrmacht to use his product — Zyklon B — following their complaints about the ‘difficulties’ of mass murdering Jews by shooting.¹⁷

The managing director of Degesch, Gerhard Peters (whose Zyklon B killed millions of Jews) was declared not guilty. Peters, a member of the Nazi party, knew that Zyklon B was being used to murder concentration camp inmates. Informed by Obersturmführer Kurt Gerstein in 1943, Peters nevertheless continued direct deliveries to Auschwitz.¹⁸ Degesch exists up until this day in Germany¹⁹ and still proudly carries the original logo once stamped onto the cylinders of the deadly Zyklon B used in the camps.

The Degussa Company management was never convicted of any crime and Zyklon B is still produced today.²⁰

In November 2005, Degussa publish on their web site:

Degussa did not participate in the exploitation of Jews just because they wanted to make quick profits. They were far more concerned with

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ BZ, 27 October 2003

¹⁷ Pressac, op. cit. p.17

¹⁸ Degussa, Geschichte der Degussa, 2005 Degussa AG, 28 November 2005 www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/vorgaenger/degussa_in_der_ns_zeit.as.8.html

¹⁹ www.detia-degesch.de, 28 November 2005

²⁰ Degussa, Geschichte der Degussa, 2005 Degussa AG, 28 November 2005 www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/vorgaenger/degussa_in_der_ns_zeit.as.8.html

continuous commissions and probably were afraid of sanctions that a refusal may have caused. Therefore their motto was “If we don’t do it, then someone else will”.

Die Degussa nahm an der Ausplünderung von Juden nicht allein deshalb teil, um schnelle Gewinne zu machen. Sie erwartete vielmehr Folgeaufträge und hatte vermutlich Furcht vor Sanktionen, die eine Verweigerung vielleicht nach sich gezogen hätte. So handelten sie nach dem Motto: “Wenn wir es nicht tun, tut es ein anderer.”²¹

I am thankful to Degussa for providing this insight into the company’s previous and apparently current philosophy. It successfully illuminates the question as to why they still pay homage to a Nazi criminal on their web site and indeed maintain a foundation in his name.

Hermann Schlosser, President of Degussa 1939-59

– From freemasonry to nuclear bombs and Iraqi WMD

Degussa created the Hermann-Schlosser-Stiftung in 1954. Apart from ‘setting a sign of Degussa’s demonstrative social engagement’, it shows that Degussa “takes responsibility in many areas of scientific support as a ‘Corporate Citizen’ — continuing the tradition of its predecessors’.²² A closer look at the honoured predecessor Herman Schlosser indicates traditions of a rather distasteful nature.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Degussa, Degussa-Stiftung 2005, Degussa, 29 November 2005 www.degussa-stiftung.de/de/stiftung/gruendung.html

Hermann Schlosser, born in 1889, tried to become a member of the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) in 1933 without success — his application was rejected because he was a Freemason. However in 1939 as president of Degussa, and thanks to the ‘*Gnadenlass Hitlers*’²³ (grace of Hitler) he was accepted into the Nazi Party.

Webrwirtschaftsführer Schlosser was president of the Degussa Company from 1939 until 1959.²⁴ *Webrwirtschaftsführer* during the Third Reich were initially directors of armaments manufacturers. They were appointed by the *Webrwirtschaft- und Rüstungsamt* of the *Oberkommando der Webrmacht*. They enjoyed a quasi-military status and were inextricably bound to the Webrmacht. Webrwirtschaftsführer after 1940 were often directors of companies that produced no ‘apparent’ armaments, such as chemicals.

Schlosser was also a member of the board of directors (*Verwaltungsausschuss*) of Degesch²⁵, which Degussa have conveniently omitted from their web page in honour of him. In 1943 he was appointed director of the German Chemical Industrial Group (*Wirtschaftsgruppe Chemische Industrie*).

In 1945, Schlosser was removed from office because of his involvement with Degesch. However after his release from prison in 1948, he again took up his role as president of Degussa.²⁶ Finally he dies in 1979.

Degussa writes in 2005 on their web site under ‘Personages’:

[Hermann Schlosser] was awarded the German Federal Merit Cross for his services in the Federal Republic of Germany. His hometown Giessen named

²³ Degussa AG Businessman, Chairman of the Management Board of Degussa 1939–1959, 28 November 2003, Degussa AG, 3 December, 2005

www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/persoentlichkeiten/hermann_schlosser.html

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ n-tv. Degussa Unrühmliche Vergangenheit, 13 November 2003, Television chanel n-tv, 05 December 2005 66.249.93.104/search?q=cache:Hcy6xZVBVU4J:www.n-

tv.com/5194256.html+wehrwirtschaftsf%C3%BChrer+%22hermann+schlosser%22&hl=den-tv.de

²⁶ Ibid.

him honorary citizen in 1965. He remained a part of Degussa AG as Supervisory Board President from 1959 to 1965, and as from 1965 Honourable President, up until his death.

Für seine Verdienst um die Bundesrepublik Deutschland wurde er mit dem Großen Verdienstkreuz mit Stern ausgezeichnet. Seine Vaterstadt Gießen ernannte ihn 1965 zum Ehrenbürger. Als Aufsichtsratsvorsitzender von 1959 bis 1965 und seit 1965 als Ehrenvorsitzender blieb er der Degussa AG bis zu seinem Tod verbunden.²⁷

Another honorary citizen of Giessen is Adolf Hitler.

Degussa is proud of Hermann Schlosser and in March 2003 during the founding of the new Degussa Stiftung, integrated and maintained the Hermann Schlosser Grant stating that the aims of the foundation are: ‘*Forschen-Bilden-Erhalten*’ (to research-to form-to preserve):

With our innovative products and system solutions we create something valuable and irreplaceable for our customer’s success. This is expressed in our claim to be ‘creating essentials’.

Mit unseren innovativen Produkten und Systemlösungen schaffen wir Wertvolles und Unverzichtbares für den Erfolg unserer Kunden. Dies fassen wir in dem Anspruch „creating essentials“ zusammen.²⁸

Degussa’s propensity to support *research-forming-and learning* could already be seen during WWII when they played an essential role in Germany’s

²⁷ Degussa Geschichte, Persönlichkeiten 2005, Degussa AG, 28 November 2005 www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/persoenlichkeiten/hermann_schlosser.html

²⁸ Degussa, Degussa-Stiftung 2005, Degussa Stiftung, 29 November 2005 www.degussa-stiftung.de/de/stiftung/gruendung.html

development of a nuclear bomb, which was only halted by the bombardment of the plant at Oranienburg in 1945.²⁹ During the same year, Schlosser donated 45,000 Reichmarks to the SS.³⁰

After the war, as chairman of Degussa, Schlosser provided nuclear materials to nearly every nation known to have a clandestine bomb programme including India and Pakistan.³¹ Saddam Hussein, impressed by this cooperation, realised that he had a good business partner in Hermann Schlosser. Schlosser succeeded in opening up the market for German companies with Iraq.³²

On March 30, 1984 the New York Times revealed that a German company called Karl Kolb GmbH (which serves as an agent for various manufacturers) had built a 'pesticides' plant in Iraq. Intelligence had alleged that it was a chemical weapons plant. The plant was converted to produce poison gas and was one of five established at that time.

Degussa's significant involvement in trade with Iraq deserves closer and serious scrutiny. Examinations of Iranian victims of poison gas attacks in the mid 1980's have shown that the hydrogen cyanide compound used by Iraq is almost identical to Zyklon B. This was pointed out by professor Aubin Heyndrickx, of the Toxicology Laboratory of the State University of Gent, who was appointed by the United Nations secretary general, to conduct the examination of victims. Iraq bombarded some 2,000 villages in Iran with poison gas.³³

Murder and violation of human rights does not deter Degussa from a lucrative deal more than 40 years after the Holocaust. Nor does it appear to interest the German state that provided German companies with all the

²⁹ Kenneth R. Timmerman, *The Death Lobby. How the West armed Iraq.* (London, 1992) p.70

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid p.145

³³ Ibid.

required export licences they needed.³⁴ It is astonishing that it could be so easy to export a Zyklon B like product in large quantities out of Germany. (In contrast, as a resident in Germany, just importing one faded 19th century photograph or a musical score, results in hours lost in waiting around petty customs offices with officious staff and numerous obscure tax charges to boot.)

The then chancellor Helmut Kohl was only angry at the fact that ‘sensitive intelligence information’ had been exposed by the New York Times, revealing the double-dealings of the West German state.³⁵

The Degussa owned consortium NUKEM provided Saddam Hussein with 6 tons of depleted uranium, initially via an Italian firm. The Italians fearing a refusal from NUKEM had claimed that the material was for domestic use only. However, NUKEM not wanting to lose profits to a third party, sought to provide an even larger quantity of the nuclear material directly to Saddam themselves. This depleted uranium was just what Saddam would need to make a bomb. Useless as fuel, the material when irradiated produces plutonium. The transaction was only stopped by the intervention of US and Canadian officials who had become suspicious of the intended end client in the deal. NUKEM had sought the extra large quantities of material from a Canadian and an American firm to meet its order of 11,364 kilos. As one of the officials noted: “This came from the same people who brought us Zyklon B.”³⁶

On the home front in 2003, Degussa is described as the exemplary company that has repented for its crimes during the Nazi era — while thousands of kilometres away in the Middle East troops participate in the

³⁴ New York Times, 30 March 1984

³⁵ Timmerman, *The Death Lobby*, p. 149

³⁶ Ibid. p.71

invasion of Iraq to ostensibly disarm it of the weapons produced with the assistance of Degussa amongst others.³⁷

Kuratorium consternation

– Man kann hier nichts wieder gutmachen

So, we return to the Kuratorium meeting of October 23, 2003. The most intense opponent of Degussa is Alexander Brenner, the chairman of the Berlin Jewish Community (JGB). However, Paul Spiegel, president of the Central Council for the Jews of Germany Deutschland (ZJD), has no apparent problem with their involvement. While Lea Rosh, states, “Where does one today want to draw the line? We came to the conclusion that the limit is completely clear: Zyklon B.”³⁸ On the other hand, if Degussa were prepared to supply Protectocil for free, according to Rosh, then they may reconsider.³⁹

Within days, some of the above Kuratorium members shift position. Paul Spiegel begs for understanding of the feelings of the Holocaust survivors who could not stand the thought that the Degussa company, which had delivered Zyklon B to the extermination camps, should also participate in the memorial.⁴⁰ The ZJD takes up one clear position.

Rosh now claims in an interview that: even if Degussa were to supply the Protectocil cost free she would not accept it. “Man kann hier nichts wieder gutmachen” (Here, there is no compensation).⁴¹ *Wiedergutmachen* — literally: to make something good again. The Kuratorium has made its decision, there will

³⁷ The Wall Street Journal, 24 March 2003

³⁸ Die Zeit Nr. 47, 13 November 2003

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 28 October 2003

⁴¹ Die Tageszeitung (Taz), 27 October 2003

be one more meeting, but Rosh cannot imagine that the decision will be reversed.

Thierse writes to Degussa to officially cancel their contract. Degussa answer that there is no contract between them and the Stiftung in existence. True, their contract is with the prime contractor: Geithner Bau.⁴² But surely the president of the German parliament must have known that — was his action then another case of political theatre?

In Thierse's next move, a meeting with the building administration, a decision is reached to examine all technical, legal and financial consequences involved in the Kuratorium's decision to abandon Degussa. A decision must be made about the stelae that have already been 'treated' and tests for a comparable product will be made.⁴³ During Thierse's meeting with the chairman of Degussa some days later on October 29, he explains:

[. . .] in view of the particular history of Degussa AG, use of the anti-graffiti product made by this company for the stelae [is] unacceptable given the specific nature of the Memorial project. [. . .] The feelings of Holocaust survivors and descendants of murdered Jews formed the basis for the Foundation's decision.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, an argument has ensued over the initial engagement of the company at all, and attempts are made to find the guilty party. Rosh tires to shift the responsibility to the building company: "The company contracted to produce the Stelae independently hired a subcontractor."⁴⁵ (*Die mit der*

⁴² FAZ, 29 October 2003

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Press Release, Constructive Discussion between Wolfgang Thierse and Professor Felcht on 29 October 2003, last change 29 July 2004. Stiftung 22 Nov. 2005 www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/en/news/press/20031030/?highlight=degussa

⁴⁵ Die Welt, 27 October 2003

Produktion der Stelen beauftragte Baufirma hat selbständig ein Subunternehmen beauftragt). While Thierse justifies that “the architect Eisenman who himself is an American Jew” expressly described the Degussa anti-graffiti protection as the “best, cheapest and most attractive product.”⁴⁶ Simultaneously the ‘subcontractor’ Efinger und Albani GmbH emphasise that: all involved parties had been given the appropriate written notice of the possible inclusion of Degussa products.⁴⁷ Stiftungs manager Sibylle Quack confirms this statement: “It was already known earlier that Degussa is in the game” and that the technical and aesthetic enthusiasm for the product left the ‘politically communicative’ aspect in the background.⁴⁸ The Berlin Senatskanzlei für Stadtentwicklung (Town Planning) also knew of Degussa’s involvement.

The senator for Town Planning *Bausenator* Peter Strieder, whose administration is responsible for the construction of the memorial, claims not to have been informed of the historical background of Degussa.⁴⁹ He did not know. How should he, a senator in the Berlin State government, have known that their Zyklon B killed one million Jews at Auschwitz anyway?

Yet, Strieder’s administration engaged Degussa at the beginning of 2003 when a discussion regarding the appropriateness of Degussa for the memorial, considering their background during the Third Reich had taken place.⁵⁰ Apparently Strieder has a very short memory.

Degussa pressured the administration, offering to lower the price of the Protectocil, given their historical background, to match that of the Swiss company who were originally meant to supply anti-graffiti cover.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Süddeutsche Zeitung, 27 October 2003

⁴⁸ Der Spiegel online, Streit um Holocaust Mahnmal, 27 October 2003, Spiegel Online, 28. January 2007, www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,271554,00.html

⁴⁹ Taz, 28 October 2003

⁵⁰ Taz, 11 November 2003

⁵¹ Ibid.

So, the claim is: the senator in charge of construction did not know and the 22 head Kuratorium (apart from business manager Quack) also did not know. It is rather peculiar that building administrators saw it necessary to discuss a matter related to content and intention (which would have political, historical, aesthetic and symbolic ramifications), yet the Kuratorium remain uninvolved, uninformed and or uninterested. Sheer incompetence.

It is also odd that 13-14 years down the memorial track, the memorial makers balk at the idea of a company with a Nazi/criminal background being involved in the creation of a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. After all, the memorial is in Germany and is being built by the German state. And, as we have seen, Degesch was originally founded by none other than the German state.

Perhaps the memorial builders had hoped that if they just keep quiet about the whole thing, then no one would notice. Indeed this would most likely have been the case if the Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger had not published the fact on October 14, exposing Degussa (and thus with the Kuratorium) in an article entitled: *Zweimal am Holocaust verdient* (Profits earned twice over on the Holocaust).⁵²

The Tages-Anzeiger, prior to the publication of their article, requested from Stiftungs manager Sibylle Quack a clarification of the Kuratoriums position and attitude in relation to Degussa's participation. They were not given this clarification.⁵³

Quack, in anticipation of a scandal, sought support from Paul Spiegel (ZJD) and Eisenman.⁵⁴ She also, during a telephone conversation with Rosh on October 13 (following instructions from Thierse), informed her about

⁵² Tages-Anzeiger, 14 October 2003

⁵³ Taz, 27 October 2003

⁵⁴ Taz, 11 November 2003

Degussa's participation and their involvement with Zyklon B. Apparently at the time, Rosh accepted Degussa's role in the memorial project.⁵⁵

The Kuratorium meeting just ten days later served as a stage where the pretence prevails that Degussa's participation and history have just become news, and, where Rosh is able to extravagantly exploit the opportunity to her egocentric advantage.

Rosh was able to make a great gesture of moralistic outrage, utterly disrupt and threaten the building and completion of the memorial, as well as gain worldwide publicity. And all this, of course was to demonstrate her unique expertise in the experience and feelings of the Holocaust victim.

Rosh insists that she did not know about Degussa's involvement with Zyklon B prior to the meeting on October 23. She argues that Quack did not say one word about this to her in their telephone conversation of the 13.⁵⁶ Thus we have another claim of innocence through ignorance.

It is strange that the vice-president of the Kuratorium should be so ignorant about the murder of the six million Jews, which she has been fighting to memorialise. In 13 years of memorial campaigning and chat show hostessing, Rosh apparently did not have a moment to read her own recommended literature on the subject.

In a book that she wrote in 1990, about the murder of the Jews, Rosh recommends Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*.⁵⁷ Hilberg's book clearly indicates Degussa's involvement in the production of Zyklon B as well as their joint ownership of Degesch. Rosh also claims that her co-author, the historian Eberhard Jäckel did not know about Degussa's history.⁵⁸ Jäckel, who happens to also be a Kuratorium member, is co-author of the *Enzyklopädie des*

⁵⁵ Süddeutsche Zeitung Nr.290, 17 December 2003

⁵⁶ Taz, 10 November 2003

⁵⁷ Lea Rosh and Eberhard Jäckel, *Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland. Deportation und Ermordung der Juden Kollaboration und Verweigerung in Europa* (Hamburg 1990) p. 309

⁵⁸ Die Welt, 11 November 2003

Holocaust: Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden, published in 1998. It is difficult to comprehend how Jäckel could have completed this three-volume publication, without coming across the basic facts about Zyklon B.

Rosh's claim to ignorance, and the demonstration of outrage during the Kuratorium meeting and subsequent press interviews, is disgraceful. And raises the question as to her acquisition of this important role in the first place.

Why does the German state place an unqualified and inappropriate person in this powerful and important position — in charge of the building of the national Memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust? Not only does it resemble a farce, it betrays complacency and a lack of integrity and respect for the history it claims to represent.

Rosh has been called a 'Neigungsjüdin'⁵⁹ (something like a would be if she could be Jew) by some journalists, because although not Jewish, she tends to promote an image of herself as Jewish. In fact, many Germans in the meantime think that she is Jewish. She changed her name from Edith Ursula Renate Rohs to Lea Rosh, she plays up her appearance to fit the stereotyped idea many people have of how 'a Jew' is supposed to look, and she consistently speaks in the place of the Holocaust victim. This constitutes a type of plundering of identity. And gives an image of more German plundering of the Jews — only this time round it is a plundering of identity and entitlement. (After the war in order to escape justice, many Nazis such as Adolf Eichmann tried to pass themselves off as Jewish.)⁶⁰

The adoption of a Jewish identity during the thirties would have been radical and heroic — if all Germans had insisted on this the course of history would have been much different. In the context of contemporary Germany it is pathetic and scandalous.

⁵⁹ Eike Geisel, *Die Fähigkeit zu mauern*, in Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (Eds.) *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas"*. Eine Streitschrift. (Berlin, 1995)

⁶⁰ Simon Wiesenthal, *The Murderers Among Us*, (London, 1967) p.103

There are calls for Rosh's dismissal, but to no avail.⁶¹

*Exactly they who protest the loudest and demand a stop to construction, themselves drive a Mercedes*⁶² – Eisenman in reference to Rosh

Peter Eisenman publishes an article in which he pleads for the inclusion of Degussa. Participation in the creation of a public memorial should not be regarded as a privilege he writes. He points out that: Degussa were only a joint owner of Degesch, they have been particularly engaged in researching their role in the Nazi era, and, are involved in compensation activity to forced labour victims.

We must not allow ourselves to be held hostage to political correctness sixty years after the Holocaust. If the project had begun in this spirit, then I never would have participated.

*Es geht darum, dass wir uns 60 Jahre nach dem Holocaust nicht mehr zu Geiseln der Political Correctness machen lassen dürfen. Wäre das Projekt schon in dem Geist begonnen worden, in dem es nun fortgeführt zu werden droht, hätte ich nie mitgewirkt.*⁶³

Rosh counters: “What would Eisenman have said, had his parents been murdered at Auschwitz?”⁶⁴ (*Wären Eisenman's Eltern in Auschwitz ermordet worden, was hätte er dann gesagt?*) Eisenman bitterly retorts: “If the Nazis had murdered

⁶¹ Die Zeit, 6 November 2003

⁶² Berliner Morgenpost, Das grundsätzliche Dilemma ist die Errichtung des Mahnmals an sich, 9 March 04

⁶³ Peter Eisenman Die Zeit Nr.45, 30 October 2003

⁶⁴ Taz, 1 November 2003

my parents with Zyklon B, then there is no way I would have argued any differently.”⁶⁵ (*Hätten die Nazis meine Eltern mit Zyklon B ermordet, würde ich heute keineswegs anders argumentieren.*)

Some see this riff as a new opportunity to arrest the construction of the memorial altogether. Writer Ralph Seligmann argues that this is the chance to finally put a stop to the project, which no one wants anyway apart from “a heap of penance addicts under the direction of the Holocaust Cassandra⁶⁶ Lea Rosh.” *Von einem "Häufchen Bußsüchtiger unter Führung der Holocaust-Kassandra Lea Rosh abgesehen.* He describes the memorial ‘with its gigantic dimensions’ as being more like the ‘Nuremberg Nazi Party Rally grounds’ than a place of reflection (*mit seinen gigomanischen Ausmaßen eher dem Nürnberger Reichsparteitagsgelände gleicht als einem Ort der Besinnung*).⁶⁷

Seligmann makes an argument for sites of mourning and thoughtfulness, citing the Wannsee Villa and Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He predicts that the ‘coerced concrete forest’ instead of honouring the dead, will throw the living into incomprehension or lack of acceptance. He fears that the memorial will destroy sixty years of German-Jewish efforts at reconciliation.⁶⁸

At this moment, 307 stelae had been impregnated and sixty employees were involved in the production thereof, which due to the veto was unable to proceed. Geithner Bau had no storage capacity for the massive concrete blocks. The prime contractor as well as the Stiftung, was threatened with financial ruin by the hold on construction. Senator Strieder now maintained that: Degussa may not participate in the construction if it constitutes a burden

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Cassandra, who accepted the gift of prophesy from Apollo but then refused to keep to her side of the agreement.

⁶⁷ Stern, Interview with Ralph Seligmann, Stern, 29 October 2003, Stern, 24 November 2005 www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/514932.html?q=seligmann

⁶⁸ Ibid.

to survivors and families of Holocaust victims.⁶⁹ Some days later, Strieder announces that Geithner Bau will be compensated for any financial ruin, as the Kuratorium's decision is not their fault. He predicts a three to five month suspension of construction work.⁷⁰

Journalist Uwe Rara proposes to: now take the opportunity to reverse the anti-graffiti decision. Just as Degussa is a part of the German history so would swastikas and defamatory graffiti be part of contemporary Germany. "At least that would be honest",⁷¹ he writes. But it has long since been clear that honesty is not a priority in the memorial project.

A clear conflict between 'non Jewish Germans' and 'Jewish-Germans' on the Degussa issue takes shape. As much as I deplore argumentation assessed in terms of a person's racial, physical or sexual characteristics — the pedigree of each speaker has already been defined in the media and used to qualify or disqualify their views.

'Jewish figureheads' such as Eisenman and Avi Primor, are quoted in the light of pro Degussa argumentation. Whilst most of the 'non-Jewish' contingent defends an anti-Degussa stance based on their perception of (Jewish) victims feelings e.g. Rosh, Strieder and Thierse.

The debate, more and more reductive, is narrowed down to the 'rational' verses the 'emotional'. As if these qualities contained complete and separate worlds of fixed meaning, comprehensible to people from Newark through to Lichtenberg and Lodz:

Avi Primor (a former Israeli ambassador to Germany) claims that the arguments against Degussa are just 'emotional' and that he is unable to agree with them for 'rational' reasons.⁷²

⁶⁹ FAZ, 1 November 2003

⁷⁰ FAZ, 5 November 2005

⁷¹ Taz, 6 November 2003

⁷² Tagesspiegel, 29 October 2003

Thierse: The conflict with Degussa will probably not be solved in a completely rational way.⁷³

Rosh: “But Degussa delivered Zyklon B. That is too heavily burdened emotionally.”⁷⁴

Eisenman: “Some members of the Jewish community, especially the Germans, react sensitively to the name Degussa, this emotional reaction must not inhibit the course of history.”⁷⁵

But are the reactions of the ‘Jewish Germans’ simply ‘emotional’? Is it just about ‘feelings’?

What emerges in this conflict is a contest of interests. There appears to be much confusion about the purpose and meaning of the memorial. Those who are representative of the survivors, in this instance, seek an object created by those Germans who have had no connection to the Holocaust machinery of the Nazis.

Yet it is built directly upon the terrain that was essentially part of the Nazi ministries including the Ministry of Nutrition and Agriculture, responsible for the extermination through starvation of 7 million Russians; which housed the Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels and adjoined the quarters of the elite SS bodyguards of Hitler; and which above ground provided a garden disguising a subterranean world of Nazi constructions and bunkers for the Nazi state. As discussed in chapter one, most of these constructions were torn out of the ground before anyone could even query their status in the context of the memorial and contemporary Germany.

Which can only lead to the conclusion, that these token survivors and their representatives are not informed about the origins of one of the most

⁷³ FAZ, 29 October 2003

⁷⁴ Taz, 27 October 2003

⁷⁵ Die Zeit Nr.45, 30 October 2003

fundamental aspects of the memorial — its foundations. What kind of hypocrisy is this, that goes to such extravagant measures of deceit? That would carry on a charade of moralistic indignation at the participation of a chemical company of Nazi origins. Ostensibly only those free of such a background have a right to participate in the construction of the memorial.

If anyone knew about the origins of the site then it has to be chairman Thierse and his vice-chairman Rosh who cannot in this instance claim innocence due to ignorance.

If I knew about these facts, as an independent interested party, then they with their privileged access definitely knew.

But, did Kuratorium members Alexander Brenner JGB and Paul Spiegel ZJD also know? As deceit is an accepted endemic of the project, one can only assume: it was business as usual.

Those who must know about the origins of the site as well as the fact that the Joseph Goebbels bunker still lies there hidden beneath the sand (in 2003), make a pretence of feeling and acting on behalf of the survivors in claiming an abhorrence of the fact that Degussa would provide protection to the memorial from neo-Nazis' swastikas. Whatever could be the purpose of all this theatrical posturing and contest of moral superiority? Who is the imagined audience?

What remains a puzzle is the purpose of the memorial for these various parties. As risky as these questions may be I wish to try and examine them briefly.

*Denkmal für die Juden*⁷⁶

The 'Jewish Germans' plead for a Degussa free monument — but who then would qualify to build it?

⁷⁶ Jörg Lau, Die Zeit, 13 November 2003

As several historians have made clear: the Holocaust was not the work of a small band of thugs under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. It was mass murder and mass robbery thoroughly planned, organised and executed down to the last detail. Executed by and in the name of the German people (with willing participants from the occupied territories) who were glad to benefit from the opportunity to gain wealth and power at virtually no expense to themselves.

This extends from Jewish owned businesses, homes, banks, art collections and valuables: jewellery, carpets, vases and clothing right down to tooth fillings. And this action began already in March 1933.⁷⁷ The German people had never had it better according to Götz Aly, who tells us that the dinner table of 95% of every German household was comprised of goods acquired through the plundering of Jewish gold across Europe.⁷⁸

It would almost be impossible to find a company in Germany that was not involved with the Nazis during the Third Reich and or its employees together with their forefathers.

The example of Degussa, one of the wealthiest companies in the world, which was able to profit enormously from the plundering and murder of the Jews, is just one of many.

So, if the memorial is not to be built by these incriminated people within their own country, by whom and where is it to be built?⁷⁹ Or is it a mistake?

Perhaps some try to believe that there were ‘bad Germans’ and ‘good Germans’, and that the monument is to be built and organised by the ‘good

⁷⁷ Richard Z. Chesnoff, *Pack of Thieves How Hitler and Europe Plundered the Jews and Committed the Greatest Theft in History*, (New York 1999) p .9

⁷⁸ Götz Aly, op. cit. p. 318

⁷⁹ One journalist suggests importing Israeli companies to build the memorial. That would complete the picture: designed and conceived by an American Jew, chosen predominantly by another American Jew and built by the Israelis—all under the supervision of the Germans.

Germans'. This child-like delusion may well be the source of an irritation that remains unarticulated amongst the anti Degussaites.

Do the Germans have a right at all to build a memorial of such dimensions to the Jews they murdered? Does it not imply exoneration? Surely memorials are to be built by those left behind who commemorate their own in kind (be it family, country or whatever) with a measured degree of discretion, humility and reserve implicit of the gravity and or unspeakable tragedy they seek to commemorate.

In such a scenario it would be the Germans commemorating their own fellow murdered Germans. But the ambitions of this memorial are far greater than this. It is a national memorial for all of the European Jews to be built ostensibly by those (descendent thereof) who murdered them. Plus they created clear distinctions between themselves in the 1930's and evidently continue the same practice throughout the memorial project. So this can never be the claim.

Building a memorial should not be a privileged right, but when the '*Volk der Täter*'⁸⁰ (as Rosh has christened the German people) assume this magnanimous prospect, then their position must be absolutely clear. Otherwise there will only be confusion. The Degussa conflict illustrates this and prophesies more confusion yet to come.

As long as most Germans still remain ignorant about the crimes of their country — examples ranging from Senator Strieder, to vice-chairman Rosh and historian Jäckel — the memorial remains a dubious concrete mass. Added to this the mass murder of the disabled under the Nazis has still to be completely researched, documented and acknowledged.

Perhaps they have to earn the status that would make a memorial appropriate. That is asking a great deal. That status may only be achieved when

⁸⁰ Die Zeit, 30 October 2003

an analysis of what led to the Holocaust, who took part in the persecution and how, has been clearly documented and given a place in a Holocaust museum in Berlin. And even then, a huge dominant national memorial would be inappropriate.

However, building a memorial allows the side stepping of all of this — in case of any doubt or unwanted questions they can always point to the huge mass and justify: But, look what we did — we admit our guilt. No one can overlook the huge conglomerate in the central tourist area of Berlin.

A major German journal, *Die Zeit*, during the tumultuous weeks of the scandal boldly state, in a bid to ratify Degussa's inclusion, that:

The memorial is being built by German non-Jews (mostly) for German non-Jews, in commemoration of the crimes against the European Jews executed by and in the name of Germans.⁸¹

Das Denkmal wird von deutschen Nichtjuden (vor allem) für deutsche Nichtjuden gebaut, zum Gedenken an die im deutschen Namen und von Deutschen begangenen Verbrechen an den europäischen Juden.

Die Zeit further condemns the fact that many people in Berlin now refer to: the memorial which is being built 'for the Jews'⁸² (*für die Juden*).

This could have been a simple answer and clear guiding principal. Yet if the memorial were a *purely* 'non-Jewish German' project, how could one explain the presence in the Kuratorium of the chairman of the ZJD Paul

⁸¹ *Die Zeit*, 13 November 2003

⁸² *Ibid.*

Spiegel and JGB Alexander Brenner as well as several ('Jewish-German') Kuratorium members who become references in the anti-Degussa argument.

Added to this the facts that: There was a secret, unofficial decision during the final competition for the memorial in 1997 in which: no German architect or artist would be allowed to win.⁸³ This effectively left the choice open between just two competitors: Daniel Libeskind and Peter Eisenman. Thus the project was destined since early on to be an object conscientiously designed by a Jewish architect and chosen predominately by a Jewish judge (James Young). In fact, James Young in his appraisal of memorial finalists remarks that the proposed memorial by Markus Lüpertz (German) was unacceptable, because the naked female figure would have been forbidden viewing to Hassidic Jews who were murdered.⁸⁴ Clearly indicating, in this instance, that it is a memorial for Hassidic Jews amongst others.

In this light it can never be considered as a memorial by and for 'non-Jewish Germans'. There is a powerful and significant Jewish participation albeit under the supervision of the 'non-Jewish Germans'.

Basically, I want to see Degussa bankrupt

– Degussa's Model Role: Gold and Forced Labour Victims

Degussa's exemplary role in revealing and owning up to its notorious past, during the Third Reich, is lauded many times over, up and down the country by both journalists as well as Thierse, Eisenman and others.

⁸³ Jochen Gerz in private meeting with the author, Paris 2005

⁸⁴ James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge. Afterimages of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. (New Haven and London, 2000) p. 201

Thierse declares that Degussa has ‘admitted its Nazi-past more than any other company’⁸⁵ and states:

I greatly respect Degussa’s efforts to deal with its history and am grateful for the company’s involvement in finding a constructive solution to the problems which have arisen.⁸⁶

Degussa have ordered a book to be written and published about their history during the Third Reich. They proudly announce that they have hired an ‘independent’ historian, for this purpose. However, Michael Wolffsohn, professor of Neuere Geschichte at the Universität der Bundeswehr in Munich, strongly criticizes this move. He implies that paying a historian to research and account for the history of the company during the Third Reich is tantamount to having a so-called ‘court historian’. He claims that the process of correctly researching and accounting for history can only be scholastically credible when there are several access possibilities and numerous researchers. Wolffsohn attempted to access documents from Degussa, only to be told that the files he requested to see did not exist, and later, that the very same files would not be released.⁸⁷

Indeed other historians have also been denied access to their files. Take the example of historian/sociologist Hersch Fischler. Fischler like others across Europe became engaged in the search for the Nazi gold in 1996. At this time new evidence and previously secret official documentation became available on the Nazi gold. This prompted an intense campaign to finally force

⁸⁵ FAZ, 3 November 2003

⁸⁶ Wolfgang Thierse. Stiftung Denkmal Press release, 30 October 2003 Stiftung denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. 22 November 2005 www.holocaust-mahnmal.de/en/news/press/20031030/?highlight=degussa

⁸⁷ Taz, 15 November 2003, BZ 14 November 2003

out the truth about dealings with the Nazi's during the Third Reich, especially on the part of the Swiss.

Fischler in his research stumbled across documents exposing Degussa's (till then undisclosed) involvement with the Nazi gold. However, when he attempted to broach Degussa they refused to tell him anything and were deliberately misleading. "*Die wollten mir nichts erzählen und versuchten, mich in die Irre zu führen.*"⁸⁸ Fischler's subsequent research in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz revealed that Degussa smelted all of the stolen Nazi gold, that they eagerly sought these gold-smelting orders from the Nazis,⁸⁹ and further more, that a major part of the files of the Deutsche Reichsbank documenting the gold dealings have been destroyed well after the war. These missing files contained important information, which also implicated the Deutsche and Dresdner banks.⁹⁰

In reaction to this revelation, Degussa in 1997 blocked their files to historians and hired a young PhD student Ralf Banken to research their involvement with the stolen Nazi Gold. The results of the research had at the time of writing, eight years on, still not been published.⁹¹

Degussa's role in the formation of the Foundation for Forced Labour Victims is highly praised in the press, as well as by the aforementioned candidates.

Degussa along with other German enterprises found the *Stiftungsinitiative der Deutschen Wirtschaft – Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft* (German Economy's Foundation Initiative – Remembrance, Responsibility, Future) in 1999. The foundation seeks to provide compensation for former victims of forced labour under National Socialism.

⁸⁸ BZ, 29 November 1997

⁸⁹ Tagesspiegel, 29 October 2003

⁹⁰ BZ, 24.7.1998

⁹¹ Degussa Ag, Geschichte Degussa in der NS Zeit, 2005 Degussa AG, 28 November 2005 www.degussa-geschichte.de/geschichte/de/vorgaenger/degussa_in_der_ns_zeit.as.6.html

On their web site one may read:

Today, it cannot be a matter to give payments alone for the fact of forced labor. No legal basis exists for claims against German enterprises with regard to forced labor or to injuries consequential upon persecution during the Nazi era. The consequences of the fact that German enterprises were involved in Nazi wrongs cannot be settled by legal means. However, German enterprises recognize their moral [sic] responsibility, in particular where forced labor had to be performed under particularly harsh conditions and in cases where enterprises cooperated in discriminating against people who were persecuted on racial grounds during the Nazi regime.⁹²

In other words forced labour camp survivors have no legal rights in relation to their persecutors. There is a solid reason for this. In August 1998 a group of Holocaust survivors and their heirs in America, filed a major lawsuit against Degussa.

The survivors accused Degussa AG of: helping the Nazis to produce Zyklon B used in the extermination camps, of extracting gold dental fixtures and processing them into marketable gold, and of having shown the Nazis how to convert eyeglasses, gold rings, watches and gold teeth into marketable gold. The case also alleged that Degussa was co-owner of Degesch.

The case sought all of Degussa AG's assets, with the plaintiffs' lawyer, Edward Fagan stating: "Basically I want to see Degussa bankrupt."⁹³

The lawsuit stated that:

⁹² Stiftungsinitiative der Deutschen Wirtschaft- Erinnerung, Verantwortung, Zukunft, 2005 Stiftungsinitiative, 2 December 2005 www.stiftungsinitiative.de/eindex.html

⁹³ BBC World, America Holocaust legal action welcomed, 22 August 1998 BBC News, 2 December 2005 news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/156338.stm

Evidence of Degussa's wrongdoing has only recently come to light through the recent declassification and disclosure of archived documents and the subsequent reports of historical commissions in the United States, Germany and elsewhere. The report commissioned by Deutsche Bank, reconstructing its World War II transactions, specifically recognizes Degussa's independent role as an active accomplice in perpetrating the financial crimes and human rights violations of the Nazi Regime.⁹⁴

Indeed, this was one of many lawsuits lodged at the time from all around the world against German companies operating in the Third Reich.

In a bid to 'pull out the rug'⁹⁵ from beneath defamatory 'campaigns'⁹⁶ against the German economy, Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder set about creating a foundation to compensate former victims of forced labour.

In February 1999 following negotiations with 12 companies, an agreement is reached to form a foundation.

A declaration from the enterprises and federal government stated that The *Initiative der Wirtschaft* (Economic Initiative) sets out to:

Find satisfactory legal security for the participating enterprises within the framework of a corresponding Government agreement.⁹⁷

An agreement had yet to be reached with the Government of the USA.

⁹⁴ Lori Silberman Brauner, Survivors sue German company over stolen jewellery, gold teeth. 11 September 1998, New Jersey Jewish News, 2 December 2005 www.jewishsf.com/content/2-0-/module/displaystory/story_id/9496/edition_id/181/format/html/displaystory.html

⁹⁵ BZ, 17 February 99

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Bundeskanzler Schröder emphasised that the ‘Stiftung deutscher Unternehmen: Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft’ would subsidise individual compensation claims as well as projects, but that its aim was also to meet lawsuits against German enterprises.⁹⁸ Schröder stated many times over that, protection of German enterprises was of foremost importance to him in the creation of the foundation for forced labour victims.

Of course all money paid by the member German enterprises into the foundation is tax deductible. Inadvertently the average taxpayer in Germany subsidises the foundation.

By June 1999 the Initiative had finally outlined its concept for the foundation formed from now sixteen German enterprises:

- Only those who had endured forced labour for a minimum of 6 months were eligible for compensation.
- The sum of money they were to be paid was estimated as an equivalent to that of the pension offered in their country of residence. Hence huge differences would be evident between payments for a resident of for example Lviv compared to New York.
- The total amount of money available for the compensation was estimated to be at 1.5 billion Deutsch Mark.

For many enterprises it was a choice between paying money into the foundation or else facing American law courts as well as risking exposure and a gravely damaged reputation abroad. Nevertheless, the proposed concept was still not entirely acceptable to the Clinton administration led by Stuart

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Eizenstat as Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State on Holocaust-Era Issues.⁹⁹

Finally fourteen months later the foundation became a legal institution:

Die Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft wurde mit Gesetz vom 2. August 2000, das am 12. August 2000 in Kraft trat (Bundesgesetzblatt 2000 I 1263), als rechtsfähige Stiftung des öffentlichen Rechts mit Sitz in Berlin errichtet.¹⁰⁰

The web site of the Initiative in December 2005 states:

This joint effort is aimed at guaranteeing that all German companies, including foreign affiliates and parent companies, will be protected against lawsuits relating to the Nazi era and that they will be able to work on international markets under conditions of comprehensive and lasting legal security.¹⁰¹

Degussa's exemplary participation in the foundation saved it from significant economic damage it would have suffered in the event of multiple lawsuits. Its moral responsibility was clearly towards itself.

More than half a century after the Second World War, the compensation for the estimated 12 million forced labour victims came too late — especially for those living in former communist countries who had never received any compensation. In 1999 less than 600,000 forced-labour victims

⁹⁹ BZ, 11 June 1999

¹⁰⁰ Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, Über uns, August 2000 Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, 2 December 2005 www.stiftung-evz.de/content/view/12/34/

¹⁰¹ Foundation Remembrance, responsibility and future, Preamble, 2000 Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, 2 December 2005 www.stiftungsinitiative.de/eindex.html

were still alive. And who so ever was unable to lodge their evidence (if say it had been held up on a long waiting list at the closed Holocaust archives (International Tracing service) at Bad Arolsen) before September 30, 2006 would be no longer recognised.

Noteworthy is the fact that the formation of the foundation in June 1999 correlates to the 25 June 1999 decision by the Federal Government to erect the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Which incidentally is not dedicated to the millions of forced labour victims of non-Jewish origin.

The tense climate within which the foundation was formed, no doubt fuelled enthusiasm to erect a massive, central, yet abstract concrete memorial to guilt.

Final Kuratorium Meeting: *A bit of Degussa won't do.*

Suddenly there are more 'non-Jewish German' experts in Jewishness as possible solutions to the Degussa problem abound. Bishop Wolfgang Huber from the Protestant Church, in defence of Degussa, presumptuously quotes a Jewish saying "The gates of reversal are always open"¹⁰² (*Die Tore der Umkehr stehen ständig offen*) to effectively promote the forgiveness of the deeds of the Germans.

As the final decisive Kuratorium meeting draws closer, it is revealed that another subsidiary company of Degussa, Woermann Bauchemie, produced a concrete preparation which forms part of the foundations for the stelae already installed on the site. Woermann Bauchemie established in 1949, was purchased by Degussa shortly before the memorial project.¹⁰³

¹⁰² FAZ, 13 November 2003

¹⁰³ Die Zeit, 13 November 2003

The Rheinische Post having dug up the Woermann *pièce de résistance*, enthusiastically point out that: if Degussa because of their Zyklon B history, are prohibited from participating in the memorial, then there is no alternative other than tearing up the entire construction as it stands till now.¹⁰⁴ Consequently, in preparation for the decisive Kuratorium meeting, Rosh quickly submits a proposal demanding the exclusion of the incriminating foundation parts containing the Woermann product.¹⁰⁵ However Thierse, who has become quite a skilled actor by now, is forced to admit on nationwide TV that Degussa had given him adequate notice about the Woermann product, well before the scandalous press coverage.¹⁰⁶

During the ‘Sondersitzung’ of the Kuratorium on November 14, Rosh prevents members from exercising their option to vote on the decisive Degussa question.¹⁰⁷ Thierse reports that participants, following his summary of the discussion, came to a majority decision. Degussa shall not be excluded from the memorial for ‘practical’ reasons.

“A bit of Degussa won’t do”,¹⁰⁸ (*Ein bisschen Degussa geht nicht*) rules Thierse. Without Degussa, production costs of the construction would increase by 2.3 million Euros and the inauguration deadline may not have been met. Thierse pronounces:

This memorial is a memorial which is being built by the whole German society [...] We have not heard an argument either in the German parliament resolution, in the public sphere or the Kuratorium, that part of this society should be excluded.

¹⁰⁴ FAZ, 6 November 2003

¹⁰⁵ Die Zeit, 13 November 2003

¹⁰⁶ FAZ, 6 November 2003 Politik

¹⁰⁷ Spiegel Online, 13 November 2003, Holocaust Mahnmahl, 28 January 2006
www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,2738,00.html

¹⁰⁸ TAZ, 14 November 2003

*Diese Denkmal ist ein Denkmal das die ganze Deutsche Gesellschaft baut [...] Wir haben weder bei dem Bundestagsbeschluss noch bisher in der Vergangenheit in der Öffentlichkeit noch im Kuratorium irgendein Argument dafür gehört, daß Teile dieser Gesellschaft ausgeschlossen werden sollen.*¹⁰⁹

The Memorial, a state project, is being built by the Federal Republic of Germany, which Thierse in one slash equates with the German society. He is apparently numb to the ferocious debate that had divided the German people during the preceding weeks, and which clearly demonstrated that the German state and German society are not one.

Only seventeen days earlier, Thierse himself had told an interviewer from the Tagesspiegel that:

The chairman of the Jewish community, Mr Brenner declared that the thought that a company that had produced Zyklon B should participate in the memorial was for him unbearable. One cannot argue against the vote of a representative of the murdered.

*Der Vorsitzende der Jüdischen Gemeinde, Herr Brenner, erklärte, dass ihm der Gedanke schlechthin unerträglich sei, dass die Firma, die das Zyklon B hergestellt hat, am Bau des Holocaust-Mahnmals beteiligt sei. Gegen ein solches Votum eines Vertreters der Ermordeten kann man schlecht argumentieren.*¹¹⁰

It's astounding how quickly money took precedence over the vote of the 'murdered', and proves that you can argue against the vote of the representative of the murdered, simply by not giving them a vote at all.

¹⁰⁹ FAZ, 15 November 2003

¹¹⁰ Tagesspiegel, 28 October 2003

In reaction to this judgement, members of the Jewish community express disappointment as well as declarations that they will never be able to visit the memorial. Kuratorium member, Alexander Brenner, states that the majority of the Jewish Community (in Germany and aboard) see the decision as a very negative one. They are disturbed by the symbolism of Degussa.¹¹¹

In an open letter to Brenner, journalist Henryk M. Broder declares that the memorial cannot be built without Degussa who “already in those days” provided “competitively cheap deliveries and guaranteed a smooth punctual transaction.”¹¹² Broder summarizes:

The Jews don't need the Memorial, and they are not prepared to declare a pigsty as kosher.

*Die Juden brauchen das Mahnmal nicht, und sie sind nicht bereit, eine Schweinerei für kosher zu erklären.*¹¹³

Thierse's percussive reflex drumming through his will, can still be heard in Brenner's mild response published in the Tagesspiegel:

Dear Henryk [...] the most oppressive thing of all for me during the Memorial Kuratorium meeting, was to experience how very small the minority group opposed to Degussa was; there was an all but 'unholy alliance' of supporters [for Degussa].

¹¹¹ Taz, 15 November 2003

¹¹² “Ohne Degussa geht eben nix, schon damals waren ihre Zulieferungen konkurrenzlos günstig und garantierten einen reibungslosen, pünktlichen Ablauf.” Tagesspiegel, 15 November 2003

¹¹³ Ibid.

*Lieber Henryk [...] am bedrückendsten war für mich, während der Sitzung des Mahnmal - Kuratoriums zu erleben, in welcher kleiner Minderheit die Gegner der Degussa - Beteiligung waren; es bildete sich eine fast 'unheilige Allianz' der Befürworter!*¹¹⁴

The president of the ZJD, Paul Spiegel, describes the resulting decision as unsatisfactory and 'extraordinarily difficult to accept'.¹¹⁵

Rosh, disappointed, hopes that the whole thing will become 'grown over'¹¹⁶. So far, a lot has been 'grown over', from the entire Nazi site history to the weeds sprouting from the sand concealed Goebbels bunker, and her alpine Berchtesgaden ideal: *The Holocaust never happened*. Rosh justifies her application to prevent Kuratorium members from exercising their right to vote with: Otherwise the Central Council for the Jews of Germany, the Jewish community and the Memorial organizations would stand alone and isolated. "That would have been the wrong signal. The decision should be taken in consensus."¹¹⁷ A diffuse majority decision where dissenters are all but silenced by an overpowering Thierse is not consensus. Rosh's concept of consensus should be grounds enough for her instant dismissal from the Stiftung.

The Swiss chemical company PSS, in reaction to the decision announce their intention to sue the Senate for illegal pricing agreements.¹¹⁸ PSS were the original suppliers of anti-graffiti cover for the stelae. The prime contractor, Geitner Bau, obtained the order to build the monument based on a budget that included the PSS product for 467,000 Euros. Degussa's quote with Protectocil had been almost double the price at 812,000 Euros. When Degussa

¹¹⁴ Tagesspiegel, 19 November 2003. Henryk Broder, Offener Brief an Alexander Brenner 17 November 2003, Die Offizielle Homepage von Henryk M. Broder, 28 January 2006 www.henryk-broder.de/html/tb_brenner.html

¹¹⁵ FAZ, 15 November 2003

¹¹⁶ BZ, 14 November 2003

¹¹⁷ Spiegel Online, 13 November 2003, Holocaust Mahnmal, 28 Jan 2006 www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/0,1518,2738,00.html

¹¹⁸ BZ, 18 November 2003

found out from the Senate, that the cost of PSS was significantly cheaper, they renewed their quote matching that of PSS.¹¹⁹

Degussa (true to form) then pressured Geithner Bau for the contract, in this instance conveniently exploiting their Nazi past by proclaiming: it would be a case of sponsorship given their ‘burdened’ history.¹²⁰ Funny how they seemed to have forgotten their burdened history when preparing the original quote. One would think that after all of the billions they earned on the Holocaust, the very least they could have done is provide the graffiti protection cost free.

PSS subsequently, in the hope of regaining the order, *leaked* the information about the Nazi stained company Degussa, to the Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger, and thus also exposed the Stiftung’s deceit or double standards — where some members feigned outrage at a fact which they had long since known and accepted.¹²¹

The product PSS intended to protect the stelae with (PSS 20) is produced in Sweden. And in the hope of regaining the contract and knocking out Degussa’s chances of participating in the memorial, PSS ordered an experts certificate of anti-Nazi *purity*.¹²²

It has since been revealed that PSS 20 is ‘contaminated’ by a BASF product.¹²³ The former company name of BASF was no other than: IG Farben — the joint owners of Degesh along with Degussa during the Third Reich.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ BZ, 18 January 2003

¹²¹ BZ, 19 November 2003

¹²² Die Zeit, 13 November 2003

¹²³ Ibid.

History sticks despite anti-stick chemical preparations. Thus with the Stiftung's Business manager, the historian Sybille Quack, does not renew her contract and leaves the enterprise following the decisive Degussa meeting.¹²⁴

PSS 20, impregnated in the Reichstag around the corner from the memorial in Berlin — had from the start demonstrated its effectiveness both in price and anti-graffiti protection. It was in fact Degussa, anxious for a 'long-term reference object' ¹²⁵ (*Langzeitreferenzprojekt*) that sought to oust their competitor. The publication in the *Tages-Anzeiger* of Degussa's 'contamination' initiated the scandal and contest of moral superiority. However, in the end, everything came back down to money. The cheapest solution was the determining factor.

The ensuing scandal confirmed once again the fallacious character of the project: the layers of deceit, vanity, mixed interests, and the ignorance of the committee as well as the obscure motives propelling the whole endeavour. And the fact that the Stiftung knew all along about Degussa's participation turns the entire episode into a major and shameful farce.¹²⁶ The sheer confusion of information in the press with contradictory reports of who said what and when, testifies to the degree of obfuscation around all aspects of the memorial.

However it also became an opportunity to advertise Germany's great admission of guilt, regret and change of face. In a bid to congratulate themselves on their openness and honesty, the committee decide to include an account of the Degussa trouble in the underground museum. (During the inauguration two years later, I didn't find the appropriate account, but it is possibly part of a computer terminal.)

¹²⁴ Taz, 17 December 2003

¹²⁵ BZ, 13 November 2003

¹²⁶ Taz, 8 November 2003

The Degussa affair rekindled hostility towards the memorial, yet not enough towards those responsible for the deceit and misguided use of the project. Chairman Thierse was not taken to task, but continued to enjoy his honourable and respected position. There was also no attempt to organise a more qualified and serious committee (with the exception of Quacks stepping down and replacement) to oversee the completion of the project.

Therefore, as we shall see, more disgrace lay ahead for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

CHAPTER TWELVE

TOOTHACHE

The memorial is of no advantage to Jews — neither the living nor the dead.
*Albert Meyer*¹

Eisenman himself a Jew...
Eisenman der selbst Jude ist...
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland, 8 March 2004

Six months after the Degussa discussion has been closed, the growing field of Degussa anti-stick coated stelae bear down upon most of the terrain, when Peter Eisenman attempts to lighten up one of the six-weekly Board of Trustees (henceforth: Kuratorium²) meetings.

Eisenman had flown in from New York, only to hear the same Degussa lament all over again. Two hours into tedium he decides that he has had enough, and so tests the Kuratorium's sense of irony. Eisenman tells the members about a visit to his dentist, during which he discovered that all of his fillings had been supplied by Degussa.

¹ “Die Gedenkstätte sei für Juden nicht von Vorteil – weder für die Lebenden noch für die Toten.” Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 8 March 2004

² Board of Trustees of the Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas.

This unremarkable attempt to illuminate the futility of the discussion strikes members of the Kuratorium as “cynical slander of the memory of the murdered, gassed, shot and incinerated Jews”.³

Alexander Brenner (former chairman, Jewish Community in Berlin JGB), Lea Rosh (vice-chair of the Foundation) and Peter Strieder (Senator for city planning) on queue, stand up, promptly disrupt, and leave the meeting in outrage.

Hark! The first memorial scandal for 2004 is born.

Brenner appeals to Chairman Wolfgang Thierse in writing, demanding that he refrain from holding the scheduled meeting agenda in view of the ‘scandalous incident’.⁴ Eisenman’s ‘joke’ is the height of tastelessness and it is unbearable that this architect is responsible for the memorial, according to Brenner. He demands that Thierse take a stance on the issue. Brenner requests that Eisenman be removed from his position as architect for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.⁵

The chairman of the JGB, Albert Meyer, supports Brenner in a separate written address to Thierse about the ‘incredible incident’. “Dirtying the memory of the dead is unacceptable,” writes Meyer.⁶ On the Sunday, just before the incident becomes sensational press material, Meyer tells the *Berliner Zeitung* about Eisenman’s ‘joke’.⁷ He elaborates: “The memorial is of no advantage to Jews — neither the living or the dead.”⁸ Meyer fears that the memorial will lead to a chronic conflict between Jews and non-Jews in Germany. And that “The so-called Joke is a horror, just like the discussion about Degussa’s participation in the building of the stelae, and just like the horror of the entire memorial itself.” He warns that he only refrains from

³ Die Tageszeitung (Taz), 8 March 2004

⁴ BZ, 8 March 2004

⁵ BZ, 9 March 2004

⁶ BZ, 8 March 2004

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

attacking the state, because he would not question the highest committee of the Federal Republic of Germany. It is difficult to know if Meyer is being ironical or not — why should he not challenge the highest authority in Germany? The press does not take up this implication.

Mounting exclamations of anger ignite the Jewish community. Vice-president of the JGB, Julius Schoeps, who is also the director of the Mendelssohn-Zentrum, demands that the memorial be dedicated to all those who were murdered by the Nazis for racial or political reasons. “It is still not too late”, claims the vice-president.

“We Jews have our memorial in our hearts and don’t need it,”⁹ says Andreas Nachama, manager of the Topographie-des-Terrors. But one cannot do anything about it now. He claims that anyone other than Eisenman would have been thrown out, and that such a joke would also be unacceptable in the United States. “This proves that Eisenman didn’t learn anything from the Degussa-Debate,” he says.¹⁰ Eisenman should finally realize that he is not building just some small ice-skating rink, but a memorial, laments Nachama.

The President of the Central Jewish Council in Germany (*Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland ZJD*), Paul Spiegel now takes action. Spiegel demands an immediate and ‘unmistakable’ written apology from Eisenman and cannot understand why this has not happened up until now.¹¹

The Foundation Memorial for the Murdered Jews (henceforth: *Stiftung*) under chairman Wolfgang Thierse, president of the German Parliament, call upon Eisenman to hold an ‘explanatory interview’¹² (*klärendes Gespräch*) with the Jewish community.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Die Welt, 8 March 2004

¹¹ BZ, 9 March 2004

¹² Taz, 9 March 2004

No scandal would be complete without the staged entry of Rosh. Eisenman is supercilious and unable to feel empathy for the children and grand children of Holocaust victims, she accuses. His apology is not enough. Rosh threatens that Eisenman may not complete the memorial, unless he understands the arguments of the victims. Obviously he does not take them seriously according to her. Yet Rosh herself wasn't particularly understanding of the arguments of the victims against her megalomaniac poster action.

Rosh orders Eisenman to meet Paul Spiegel, Salomon Korn and representatives of the Gedenkstätten (Administrators of the former Concentration camps, now memorials) during the planned interview.¹³ She is referred to as a 'Moral-Sibylle' in a Frankfurt newspaper. Sibylle was the queen of the crusader state of Jerusalem (1186-90), who conspired to seize the throne following the death of Baldwin IV, and embroiled the kingdom in a disastrous war with Saladin.

Rosh, incidentally, has never apologized for her own infamous 'joke': 'The Holocaust never happened', which was blasted across Germany in all media, as loud and large as possible for several weeks. (See chapter 8.) For all of the hurt and trouble her *Aktion* caused, including legal charges and outrage in the Jewish community, she was never made to apologize in public or private. The poster campaign caused far greater harm in the public sphere and for the memorial project than Eisenman's one off line told in the confines of a private meeting. (In fact his remark would never have caused any harm at all publicly, if someone in the Kuratorium had not ominously leaked it to the press one month later.) Yet, the penalties served out to Eisenman are distinctively out of proportion to those aimed at Rosh — namely none. Everyone was relieved when she finally relinquished her stubborn stance, and condescended to remove the posters from the public sphere. Stiftung Chairman Thierse remained obliquely silent on the issue at all times. He did

¹³ Die Welt, 9 March 2004

not demand that Rosh apologize to the Jewish Community, survivors or anyone else. Neither was her position threatened from within the Kuratorium.

Rosh apparently does not feel any grievances about her actions — the poster still hangs proudly over her office desk in Berlin.¹⁴ However, the morally superior ‘Neigungsjüdin’¹⁵ may of course preside over the anti-Semitic Jew, Eisenman, publicly humiliating him and refuting his apology.

Subsequently, a dispute erupts between Meyer and Thierse. The Chairman of the Stiftung claims to be shocked at Meyer’s ‘dissociation’¹⁶ and states that it is now too late to start new debates. The president of the German parliament accuses Meyer of inciting animosity in other members of German society. Thierse here can only be alluding to so called neo-Nazis — ‘ganz andere Personen in der Gesellschaft’.¹⁷ Meyer is in effect encouraging Nazism according to Thierse.

With Eisenman accused of anti-Semitism and Meyer of stirring-up Nazism, the memorial for the murdered Jews thought police have really got themselves into a tangle. In Germany, one can’t express an opinion or be ironical, even in private, without being accused of committing a crime known as *Beleidigung* (insult). On whose terms the ‘insult’ is understood and defined is of course arbitrary, and I have been told by no less than nine solicitors and ten thousand Euros later, apparently dependent on the judge’s mood the day of the hearing, influenced by factors such as whether or not he had enjoyed his breakfast that morning. One is led to conclude that freedom of speech — more and more under threat in the Europe of 2005 — is an unknown and unwelcome concept in Germany. For instance, it is an offence when a Turkish person would call his landlord a racist, and a ground for instant eviction. A well known example is the case of a German sportsman, who was fined a mere

¹⁴ Odile Benyahia-Kouider, *Libération*, 10 May 2005

¹⁵ Eike Geisel, Die Fähigkeit zu mauern, in *Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst* (Eds.) *Der Wettbewerb für das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas”*. Eine Streitschrift. (Berlin, 1995)

¹⁶ BZ, 9 March 2004

¹⁷ BZ, 9 March 2004

90,000 Euros for having wished a policeman ‘good evening’, but who according to the officer, allegedly uttered the word *Arschloch*.¹⁸

As I write, France is attempting to pass a law forbidding the denial of the 1915 genocide of the Armenians by the Turks. Deniers — who are apparently the thousands of Turkish living in France — will be sentenced to a one-year jail term and fined 45,000 Euros. Practically impossible to impose, the law looks more like empty political posturing than anything just.¹⁹

The accusations — slander and insult — in this context can be very harmful, and have devastating consequences when they fall into the hands of wilful petty judges with their watertight law apparatus.

(During my negotiations with the Berlinische Galerie to exhibit artworks made explicitly out of this research, the archive manager Ralf Burmeister was ostensibly sent to my studio to learn more about the ‘sensorial’ aspects of the work. I had found it odd that a small, bespectacled nervous man, working amongst dusty archives, be sent to judge an exhibition of contemporary art. Therefore it was no surprise, when it became evident that his visit was covertly designed to assess my motives and political persuasions. Burmeister and his colleague Frau Müllhaupt were not so much concerned with seeing any art, but only intent on ‘exposing’ my ‘Überzeugungen’ (convictions). Once this had been done, Frau Müllhaupt abruptly got up to go, announcing that she had to attend to her tradesmen.

Later on, Burmeister, nearing the door of my studio to leave, gingerly concluded in a tense hushed tone: in Germany you are not allowed to say what you think. Yes, there are thought controllers in Germany I answered in agreement. He cringingly nodded in silence. (As if even uttering an audible word of agreement may implicate him.) I then offered: and that’s why you

¹⁸ Spiegel Online, Polizistenbeleidigung, Effenberg muss 90.000 Euro zahlen, 13 April 2005, Der Spiegel, 13 April 2005 <http://service.spiegel.de/digas/find?DID=40046608>

¹⁹ The Economist, Denial and Bad Law, 12 October 2006, The Economist, 16 October 2006 www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=8035859

need people like Eisenman. Needless to say, the Berlinische Galerie within days cancelled the exhibition.)

Meyer states that he deliberately gave up his right to be a member of the Kuratorium in order to demonstrate his (critical) opinion of it. In a letter exchange with Thierse, he insisted that the re-opening of the College of Jewish studies (Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums) would be a welcome outcome (of the rift) rather than the memorial. A college would be a contribution to the living Jewry in Germany, says Meyer. He hates the thought that the memorial may become the object of tourists and organised city tour guides. Already now, claims Meyer, there are plans to limit visits to the underground Ort der Information to 20 minutes.²⁰

Little does Meyer know how close his predictions are to the reality of the Holocaust-made-easy Ort der Information, and subsequent amusement park-like tourists, who play in the memorial by jumping from one stele to another, whilst gulping down a sausage in the summer of 2005.

Eisenman himself a Jew...²¹

Eisenman's ironical remark, having taken place in February 2004, only becomes public one good month later. In one movement, newspapers all over Germany report about what is termed: 'an anti-Semitic joke' on 8 March, a 'Holocaust joke'²² or a 'Jewish joke'²³. And one newspaper isn't even able to spell anti-Semitic but regales the 'anti-Semite / antisemitsch'²⁴ joke.

²⁰ BZ, 9 March 2004

²¹ Welt am Sonntag 9 March 2004

²² Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 12 March 2004

²³ FAZ, 8 March 2004

²⁴ Die Welt, 9 March 2004

The variations of the ‘joke’ in turn, grow more and more grotesque by the hour. Initially Eisenman’s ‘joke’ consists of him quoting his dentist who asks him: “If his gold tooth fillings came from Degussa.” This question in another newspaper, *Die Tageszeitung*, is quoted as: “I have just filled your teeth with Degussa products — should I now remove them?”²⁵ The same newspaper, one day later, reports the quip as to whether or not “he knew that his tooth-gold came from the Degussa Company (which supplies the anti-graffiti protection to the 2,700 stelae and whose subsidiary company Degesch delivered Zyklon B to the gas chambers) also.”²⁶

The most perverse version of the ‘joke’ however, appears in the very same paper on day three as: Eisenman is asked by his dentist: “if his — Eisenman’s — Degussa gold fillings came from the teeth of murdered Jews.”²⁷

There is no trace of irony in this initial faulty reporting of the ‘joke’ in *Die Tageszeitung*, which happens not to be a tabloid paper.

The racial characteristics of the dentist are also analysed in subsequent references to either a New York dentist and or: the dentist, ‘himself a Jew’ (selbst Jude).²⁸ Just as one repeatedly has to read ‘Eisenman, himself a Jew...’ (der selbst Jude ist...) as the decisive lead-in line in almost all newspapers.

There is also a rush to analyse ‘Jewish’ humour — with multiple attempts to contextualize Eisenman’s comment with the likes of Woody Allen, Philip Roth and Heinrich Heine. And of course in this rigorous analytic order, there is a debate about the difference between American Jews and German Jews traversed by American Jews who have a German background. And last but not least, the difference between Jews whose families did not or did perish in the Holocaust. Trivialization ad absurdum.

²⁵ *Taz*, 8 March 2004

²⁶ *Taz*, 9 March 2004

²⁷ *Taz*, 10 March 2004

²⁸ *Taz*, 8 March 2004

Little wonder that Eisenman only feels like a Jew when he is in Germany.²⁹

Eisenman's tale was told in English during a Kuratorium meeting held in German. As the Kulturwissenschaftler (cultural scholar) and President of the German Parliament Thierse and others do not speak English, an interpreter is required at all times to translate. Similarly, Eisenman does not speak German. It is conceivable that the interpretation was not precise.

In a city, which boasts a school where the art of laughter is taught, German humour leaves a lot to be desired. It is also conceivable that the irony simply went right over the heads of the Kuratorium. This is already exemplified by the fact that his ironical remark is understood as a joke. The remark in itself is hardly even ironical — Eisenman exemplifies a basic fact of reality: namely that he has Degussa products in his teeth. Most likely, members of the Kuratorium also have Degussa products in their teeth, which they paid for from their accounts at the Deutsche Bank after having left the dentist's practice in their Mercedes Benz or Volkswagen. (All complicit in the crimes of the Nazis or even Nazi initiatives.)

Who knows, following the disappearance of tons of Nazi gold stolen from the corpses of Holocaust victims, where and for what purpose the gold now exists. Perhaps it is on your wedding finger or hanging from your neighbour's ear. That is the horrendous reality.

However, it was also not Eisenman's intention to speak of that reality. He apparently did not know that Degussa stole gold from the teeth of corpses in concentration camps.³⁰ (Which incidentally shows a lack of interest, not uncommon in many artists and architects. However, Eisenman did presume the authority to write an article in *Die Zeit* in defence of Degussa. He partially based his argument on Degussa's diminished role in the history of Zyklon B

²⁹ *Die Welt*, 8 March 2004, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* N.56, 8 March 2004

³⁰ *BZ*, 8 May 2004

usage. His ignorance of Degussa's role in the gold stolen from Holocaust victims, in this light is somewhat embarrassing.)

But, it is also not his role to know. Eisenman is neither a historian, nor a philosopher, a politician or a chat show hostess. In the memorial project he is the commissioned architect and/or artist. His design was chosen by the German state to represent its will — whatever that is. And this is exactly the contentious issue — what do they want, for whom and why?

A pedantic reiteration of the 'non-Jewish' purpose of the memorial for the 'non-Jewish Germans' is beat out again to the 'Jewish-Germans'. Maybe this time they will finally get it. Die Welt writes: "We [the 'non-Jewish' Germans] want the Memorial for our own interests."³¹

One is reminded of the incidents surrounding the Auschwitz trials in 1964, when guest speaker Dr Robert Waitz, who had been invited to open the accompanying exhibition 'Auschwitz-Bilder und Dokumente', was subsequently uninvited. The official reasons given were:

"It would be better for the effectiveness of the exhibition, to only let Germans speak. The sense of the ceremony should be, that we Germans confess, and as Germans honour the former Auschwitz victims."

"Your reasons", answered Professor Waitz, "are most certainly based on incomplete and wrong information. I assume that they have been formulated in a secret intrigue with the opposition [...]. You have thus with condemned, the only invited Jew [who had also been] deported to Auschwitz, to silence."

In fact, Waitz had been uninvited following intense opposition, based on the premise that the exhibition could thus be brought vaguely into relation

³¹ Die Welt, 9 March 2004

with communists, and that the whole project could fail. The President of the International Auschwitz Committee Waitz, who lived in Strassburg, was not a communist.³²

So who are they (the Jews) to interfere in this non-Jewish affair? Is their purpose in the Kuratorium then simply to be obedient to what they are told they may, and may not say or feel? Why does Eisenman have to fly from New York just to listen to two hours of the Degussa debate all over again or even at all? Why should he have to participate in such meetings, especially when his presence is not appreciated and or, as in this instance, tolerated? Similarly, Brenner and Meyer's intense reaction to Eisenman's remark is also considered to be unacceptable. Thierse is shocked and hopes that the Jewish community regain 'level-headedness'.³³

The answer is: in order to lend it credibility. And nothing else. If no token Jews are included in the Kuratorium, then Germany may have an image problem. This way it is far easier to market the memorial overseas in for example America or Israel. And that is the purpose of the memorial: marketing in and for Germany's own interest.

Hence Thierse, aghast, confirms: Eisenman's joke could "bury the credibility of the entire Memorial project".³⁴ And in a second attack on Meyer he writes:

Your statements discredit the Kuratorium and its work in a way and through means, which I will not put up with, and, which finally bury the credibility of the whole memorial project.

³² Cornelia Brink, *Auschwitz in der Paulskirche*, pp. 20-21

³³ *Taz*, 9 March 2004

³⁴ *FAZ*, 12 March 2004

*Ihre Äußerungen diskreditieren deshalb das Kuratorium und seine Arbeit in einer Art und Weise, die ich nicht hinnehmen kann, und untergraben letztlich die Glaubwürdigkeit des gesamten Denkmalprojekts.*³⁵

The entire episode is portrayed as nasty bickering between the Jews themselves — somewhat like petty schoolgirls. It was and probably still is surely humiliating to all concerned. Eisenman is made to publicly apologise several times over, both in writing and in person to Thierse, to Brenner and the Jewish community. Brenner is portrayed as a neurotic fanatic: *Die Zeit* (weekly) refers to his ‘Meta-Meta-Meta-Antifaschismus,’³⁶ while Uwe Neumärker of the Stiftung describes Meyer’s criticism of the memorial as an over-reaction.³⁷

Conversely, Brenner’s reaction is because he ostensibly heard Eisenman refer to: his Degussa fillings, which originated from the teeth of murdered Jews.

In the highly-strung atmosphere of the Kuratorium meeting, less than six months after the Degussa debate, which ended unsatisfactorily for Brenner, it is easy to imagine his distress upon hearing this comment. Perhaps Eisenman is lying, perhaps the translation was faulty or the translator herself attempted to be funny. It is also conceivable that Brenner, feeling badly done by, fallibly heard the remark and jumped to conclusions. What was actually said, we will never know. Out of the 22 head Kuratorium (some of whom apparently did laugh) only Eisenman publicly reiterated his version of the comment and his subsequent grievances many times over.

Eisenman, Meyer and Brenner resolve their conflict in a telephone conversation where they agree that the entire episode has been misrepresented

³⁵ BZ, 11 March 2004

³⁶ *Die Zeit*, 11 March 2004

³⁷ *Taz*, 9 March 04

and badly handled by the Stiftung. Paul Spiegel writes to Thierse demanding an apology, whilst Brenner is described as being deeply hurt.³⁸

What is painfully clear is the seething wound of anguish that the memorial has come to represent to members of the Jewish community. Eisenman becomes the target in this incident, only because it is easier to attack a foreign artist than the President of the German Parliament/Chairman of the Stiftung. What is surprising is Thierse's dull lack of perceptiveness. He is astonished by the bitterness of the representatives of the Jewish community. As if nothing had happened six months earlier at the close of the Degussa debate, when overwhelming all contenders he did not hold a vote and claimed not to have heard any contra-Degussa arguments.

He is so convinced of his authority (and equation of people and state), that he has lost touch with real life and real people. As if his manoeuvred majority-decision on the Degussa debate would simultaneously annul all discord and everyone would live happily repressed ever after. His unacceptable use of both Eisenman and Meyer as scapegoats — threatening the credibility of the memorial — is even more proof of his ineptness.

No, the wound has simply become even more infectious. There has been a growing transparency of the farcical and deceitful nature of the memorial project. The cumulative duplicity is what undermines any credibility the project may have had, not Eisenman. The Eisenman remark is merely a symbol, which detonates deepening discontent at a time when 'it is too late'.

Six months following the Degussa affair, the rift between the Jewish community and the memorial builders has widened. Again the basic question as to the appropriateness of this memorial, which triggers this bitter incident, remains unattended to, or annulled by accusations of overreaction.

³⁸ BZ, 12 March 2004

The perpetrators are afforded insular protection as the monument bulldozes its way to completion.

The abstract conglomeration, smack in the centre of Berlin, with no signs or plaques (other than the discrete set of rules, set into the ground) attests to the fact that something happened. Who exactly was responsible, how and why remains unknown.

(The scant general overview — about the victims — displayed in the Ort der Information, is not even seen by most visitors. Situated discretely at the quiet rear of the memorial, underground, it was closed last time I tried to visit in winter 2006.)

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

UN MONUMENT À ELLE TOUTE SEULE¹

What do the Jews in Germany care if non-Jews build a memorial. They should just put the thing there.

Was interessiert die Juden in Deutschland, wenn Nichtjuden ein Denkmal bauen. Sollen sie sich das Ding doch hinsetzen.

Alexander Brenner²

It is 10 May 2005 in Berlin when I cycle to the opening ceremony of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Halted by police at the memorial, I am ordered to turn back — *unless* of course I have an invitation (added with a patronizing grin). After flashing my accreditation at the surprised policeman, I am instructed to continue, but warned that I may be stopped again.

At the southern end of the security zone, I am instructed to pass back out through the crowd of police and invitees and re-enter showing my authorization and identity all over again.

Along a barricaded causeway, dotted by surveillance personnel, I finally find myself inside of a plastic security control tent. After stepping through the metal detector threshold beep-free, one's limbs and back are nevertheless given a feel-over.

A red prohibitive police strip forbids entry to the static concrete memorial field. We are herded instead into a tent, where various reproductions

¹ "A Monument all to Herself" Odile Benyahia-Kouider, *Libération*, 10 May 2005

² Alexander Brenner, *Die Welt*, 8 March 2004

of the sculptural object and its meaning are to be fixed in the minds of the audience, prior to any uncontrolled first hand experience. The undulating mass is initially presented behind the stage's glass backdrop. In front of this, a large photograph of the memorial is projected onto the stage's screen, and finally at front stage, a podium bears a Holocaust logo-like memorial image.

Stiff and strained looking guests begin to fill the hall. They appear anxious and braced for the worst, returning my glances invariably with suspicion. Occasionally, I spot a small black yarmulke, a rare sight in Berlin.

Arvo Pärt's *Fratres* for violin, string orchestra and percussion, performed by the Lower Silesian German-Polish Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, initiates the ceremony. The delicate strains of Pärt's music are accompanied by a faint quivering, as the ceiling of the tent gently beats in the wind against its metal framework. It is as if life is breathed into the structure through the solemn music in regular rhythm, above the audiences' deadly silence.

Wolfgang Thierse opens his speech by referring to Germany's liberation from the 'Hitler Barbarism' commemorated only two days earlier on May 8. Incredible as it may sound on an occasion like this, the president of the Bundestag finds it necessary to repeat the preposterous lie, which he must have retrieved from the German Democratic Republic (DDR) propaganda he grew up with. It makes it sound as if the German people themselves had been victims of this sole perpetrator, Adolf Hitler, just holding out until their liberators arrived. One wonders why they have never inaugurated a memorial to commemorate their 'liberators'? Where is the memorial to the hundreds of English servicemen who lost their lives during the bombing of Dresden? Thierse announces the opening of the memorial which commemorates "the worst and most terrible crime committed by Nazi Germany: the attempt to

destroy an entire people. This memorial is dedicated to the murdered Jews of Europe.”³

Even sixty years post Holocaust the death of a gipsy, a disabled person or a Jew is still ranked by a German politician.

Thierse explains that the memorial shows that a united Germany confesses to its history by commemorating its greatest crime right in the centre of the capital. That: this gesture is unprecedented in the entire world; such a task stretches the utmost limits of a social community, and, this explains why the debate around the memorial as well as its rejection, has been so intense.

Thierse claims that the memorial does not impose a monopoly on memory. The memorial is ‘an open artwork’.

The second speaker, Paul Spiegel, sharply brings Thierse’s attempt at diplomacy into a harder light: while the memorial honours the victims of the Holocaust, it fails to address the persecutors, their accomplices as well as their like-minded contemporaries, he explains. As president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany (ZJD) he emphasises: “As the motives of the persecutors are not in any way addressed, these characters do not have to feel spoken to by the memorial.” Spiegel warns of the fact that many Germans have become impatient with, and tired of the Holocaust — making it imperative to supply this information to the dwindling attentiveness of the masses. He considers the memorial to be incomplete for this very reason, and demands that further memorials be built for the other victims, as the “pain in every family who suffered was great”.

Spiegel emphasises the importance of the Nazi concentration camps as sites of commemoration. These memorial sites must not be neglected in order to financially support the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. He cites

³ See also: Rede von Bundestagspräsident Wolfgang Thierse zur Eröffnung des “Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas” am 10. Mai 2005 in Berlin. Deutscher Bundestag. Pressemitteilung. 10 May 2005

the recent discovery in 2005 at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp of a 1.5 metres deep layer of ash from human corpses (estimated to encompass some 10,000 incinerated bodies). Spiegel reminds us that the camps only serve as a sign against forgetting: “We remember Jews, Sinti and Roma, homosexuals and resistance fighters.” Again, in this automatic classification of Nazi victims, not a syllable is uttered about the first and most helpless victims of Nazi systematic mass murder: the mentally and physically disabled.

Two Polish survivors of the Treblinka concentration camp (at the ceremony) tell me that they don’t understand why there is no historical information incorporated in the memorial. “Why does it not speak about our persecutors?” they ask me in broken English. “Who is going to speak about that? Where is the history?” They fear that younger people will remain ignorant of the historical facts, and specifically of those who carried out the persecution. They want to know why the German Jews have a ‘large tower’ (the Jewish museum) dedicated to their history, but all of the European Jews only have this blank concrete sealed stretch. They keep asking me this over and over again — as if I can deliver the relinquishing answer.

Peter Eisenman, who had been told what he would be saying (as he ironically mentioned after the press conference a day earlier), now brings a calculated *détente* to the ceremony by declaring that it has been a humbling experience for him. He has been admonished, and is proud to be there on this day and to have worked together with his colleagues. A true businessman, he states that the result is due to the confidence of the ‘Kuratorium’ and that the purpose of the memorial is to “establish a permanent memory, to begin a debate, and for future generations”. It is there “not to direct what to think, but to allow to think”. He elaborates: its simplicity makes it provocative, and continues: we have all taken risks. Sounding more and more like his weekly confession to his therapist, Eisenman admits that he has learned to fight when he’s right and to ‘back down’ when he is wrong. He emphasises that he had

been wrong in not supporting the initial decision for the *Ort der Information*, the underground Information centre, which he now describes as an essential and important part of the memorial.

Eisenman declares that he has come closer to his 'Jewishness', and now has to remain silent, in order to "let the memorial speak to and for the German people".

Captive in our seats, with the barred off memorial visible beyond the glass rear stage wall, we are shown an advertisement-like film on the monument's development. The film smoothly cuts and zooms in and out the stela. Various stages of the memorial's construction are included, but the messy parts, such as images of the original excavated site covered with Nazi ruins, are not to be seen. This high gloss neatly edited commercial film primes us for our very first experience of the memorial.

Holocaust survivor Sabina Van der Linden has arrived from Sydney with her family to speak on behalf of the six million murdered Jews, as well as the surviving Jews. She asks us to imagine an 11-year-old girl in Borislov, Poland, instead of the old woman she is today. Three days after the Nazi occupation of her town on 1 July 1941, there is a pogrom in which ordinary people (including Ukrainians and Poles) help the Nazis in carrying out cruelty, murder, rape and torture. She is forced to wear the yellow Jewish star armband, she is forbidden to go to school, keep pets or play with her friends. They nevertheless try to cling onto the 'last shreds of dignity'. She describes how on 6 August 1941 a three-day 'Aktion' begins in which she and her mother are discovered and held. She is separated from her mother and never sees her again. She describes daily life as being an attempt to survive 'von Aktion zu Aktion', as she tries to escape and is constantly paralysed by fear. Van der Linden, speaking in English, uses the original German term *Aktion* to describe the German organised and systematically planned campaigns of cruelty.

She is hidden by friends and then by her brother who takes her to a bunker, which he had made in the forest. Her brother and father are killed. She is the sole survivor of her family. Van der Linden warns us: “One must not remain silent... Each of us must fight racism, prejudice and inhumanity.” She looks directly into the audience stating that she does not believe in collective guilt. “The children of killers are not killers and are not guilty.” She pauses. “We can hold them responsible for the memory of the crime.”

Van der Linden was instructed that she had exactly 7.5 minutes in which to deliver her speech and no more. Her family told me that they were impressed by the memorial and delighted that a ‘whole room’, in the Ort der Information, had been dedicated to the family from Borislov. Fifteen families from Europe have been represented on individual panels in the subterranean space.

Finally Lea Rosh, who had not been invited to the press conference a day earlier, has the audience to herself and the last say in the opening ceremony. Sighing gravely, she reminds us that the memorial is to commemorate the *Einzigartigkeit* — the uniqueness of the crime. She pauses. Continuing in a measured deep tone, she pulls out the much cited Adorno dictum: despite Auschwitz, poetry was still written and the sun still shines. The idea for a memorial was suggested to her by Eberhard Jäckel in 1988, whilst on location in Israel for the filming of their documentary on the murdered Jews of Europe. Rosh emphasises that she has precisely seven people to thank. These include: her husband who encouraged her not to give up, Daimler Benz and Bosch representatives, Helmut Kohl, Jochen Vogel who fought against a museum and for a memorial as well as Elke Leonhard (the SPD chairman of the cultural committee, the *Kulturausschussvorsitzende*) who also ‘fought’.

(Yes, unforgettable remains Jochen Vogel’s almost violent interception in the acceptance of Eisenman III, the collaborative proposal of Eisenman and Michael Naumann.

In 1999 Naumann, as Minister of Culture and Media under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, proposed a slightly different memorial: A research centre and library on the history of the Shoah was to be built on the terrain of the memorial, as well as a Genocide Watch Institute, which should act as a warning station in the political contemporary world, for genocide and instances of ‘ethnic cleansing’. German files and documents on the Holocaust, many of which are still not available to research, were to be housed in the complex. The stelae were to be reduced in number to 600.⁴

Rosh and Leonhard organised immediate resistance to the proposal under the direction of the then SPD chairman Jochen Vogel who: “With a bright red head screamed for Eisenman II and against Eisenman III”.⁵ Naumann shocked, writes that he had never before heard anyone talk in such a manner ‘about art, architecture and especially not the Holocaust’. He adds ironically that the fact that the power of historical and political meaning could be measurable in decibels was also for him, new.⁶)

Rosh tells of her journey to the concentration camps in Poland, where a molar tooth, which she found lying in a trench at Belzec, fortified her intention to build a memorial. Rosh, wearing chunks of milky green rocks strung around her neck, raises the aged tooth in her right hand while announcing: “This tooth should find a place in the memorial.” An original Nazi yellow Star of David badge worn by a Dutch woman before her deportation to an ‘Arbeitsanstalt im Osten’, will also find a place inset within the concrete stelae. Rosh was given the badge in Amsterdam by the daughter of the victim. She has made an arrangement with Peter Eisenman who has promised to make a place in one of the stelae for these items.

As moving as this story may be, why does Rosh announce it in public, and in the very final speech before the much fought over memorial (seventeen

⁴ Michael Naumann, Ohne Antwort, ohne Trost, Die Zeit Nr.4, 4 May 2005.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Michael Naumann, Die Zeit, 4 May 2005

years in the making) will be opened? It appears to be an attempt to bring a personal element into the memorial, or more likely a last-ditch effort to impress her signature, when not her name into the imperishable concrete, as well as the nations memory forever. It can only be a final assertion of her imagined supreme right based obviously on a presumption of proprietary.

Surely, if it was important for her to place the items in the memorial, and Eisenman had agreed, then the quiet (albeit clandestine) gesture amongst the 2,711 stelae would be fulfilment enough. After all, it is nothing other than a purely personal matter. However, announcing it in this way affords it the status of a magnanimous great symbolic act.

Rosh has been praised for her achievement in initiating and struggling for the memorial. Her tenacity has even been likened to that of a bulldog. At this final moment, when all of the disputes could have been buried along with the implanted stelae, she has to initiate a new scandal. Unable to relinquish her power, she deliberately and with zest re-opens the wound just as it is starting to heal. Her action can only be described as perverse.

Especially in the light of: the aggressive disputes around the involvement of the Degussa company — who tore teeth from corpses of Nazi victims and recycled the gold fillings; and, the accusation of anti-Semitism levelled at Eisenman because of his tooth ‘joke’. The tooth, in the manner of a relic such as one finds rotting inside of a catholic church, should be immortalized in the concrete memorial for the non-Jewish Germans. This gesture makes a travesty of the entire undertaking.



26. Der Berliner Kurier, the local tabloid, illustrates Lea Rosh's tooth implantation intention, as announced at the inauguration of the Memorial.

In the euphoria of the press following the opening of the memorial, there is a failure to recognize the inappropriateness of Rosh's action. In fact the major newspapers omit it all together.

Only after the Central Council for the Jews of Germany have publicly condemned her action in an internet publication on 11 May, does the press react. Paul Spiegel describes her whole intention as ‘purely a PR *Aktion*’. He condemns Rosh’s lack of ‘piety’.⁷ The Spiegel journal website announces two days post opening: “Monument cheerleader Lea Rosh has decided she wants to embed the tooth of a Holocaust victim — and a yellow Jewish star — in one of the concrete stelae.”⁸ While Albert Meyer, chairman of the Berlin Jewish Community, angrily exclaims that under Jewish law, bodies and body parts may only be buried in Jewish cemeteries.⁹ Rosh continues to defend her intentions claiming that she has the accord of Rabbi Yitzhak Ehrenberg who claims that the Jewish law only applies to large body parts, and that a single tooth, if not used for any purpose, could be exempt. Rosh, still tenacious, is forced to abandon her action when the Belzec Memorial administration inform the German press that it is forbidden to take souvenirs from the former concentration camp.

One of the criticisms levelled at Eisenman’s memorial proposal was the fact that it is void of all personal traces — no names and nothing representational. This position had to be defended constantly and even right up to the last moment, when the playwright Rolf Hochhuth in a highly charged outburst at the press conference on 9 May, made the accusation that the absence of names, places and dates simply reinstated the censorship, secrecy and silencing enforced by the Nazis.

Clearly every survivor and family would desire a memorial addressed to their very own history and in their honour.

It is as if Rosh feels herself to be the supreme victim. She clearly understands the memorial as her property or in honour of herself alone as

⁷ Ronald Heinemann, Spiegel Online Politik. 11 May 2005, Spiegel Online, 11 May 2005 www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,druck-355578,00.html

⁸ Der Spiegel, Spiegels Daily Take, May 12 2005 Der Spiegel. May 12 2005 www.spiegel.de/international/0,1518,355715,00.html

⁹ Tagesspiegel, 11 May 2005

announced by the headline in the French newspaper *Libération*¹⁰, and assumes the right to do with it as she pleases. Her incomparable insensitivity and need for power is not only astonishing but very worrying.

She defensively sums up: “The murdered don’t have a grave, but this memorial gives them one... It is a memorial for the victims, the persecutors do not have a place here.”

With all the doors and windows tightly shut; a phalanx of security guards around us, the droning of helicopters unseen above, and barking German shepherd dogs in the distance, the tent becomes unbearably hot and stuffy.

Some people begin to make their way to the outside whilst Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy’s aria *So ihr mich von ganzen Herzen suchet* takes up the stage. The ceremony gains a laden religious atmosphere, such as I have never experienced in a public gathering in Berlin before. An all-Jewish programme performed, it appears, by Jewish musicians proceeds.

I wonder still at the confusion around this memorial built by the Germans for the Germans. Were there no German musicians capable of developing and dedicating a musical programme for this opening ceremony of ‘their’ memorial? The Jews have to also provide the means and culture through which Germany inaugurates its memorial. But let’s not forget: it is a memorial by the ‘non-Jewish Germans’ for the ‘non-Jewish Germans’, so they may stage Judaism in whatever way they please.

A programme of choral music mostly interpreted by Joseph Malovany, cantor at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue in New York, follows. This includes *Ve, ye-e-e-so-yu* composed by Louis Lewandowsky, the musical director of the Berlin synagogue at the time of Mendelssohn. The compositions are performed by Malovany, the Choir of the White Stork Synagogue, Wrocław, the Lower

¹⁰ Odile Benyahia-Kouider, *Libération*, 10 May 2005

Silesian German-Polish Philharmonic Youth Orchestra, and conducted by Stanisław Michał Rybarczyk.

Rabbi Yitzhak Ehrenburg from Berlin concludes the opening with a prayer, the Kaddish, after asking all guests to rise.

Already in 1998, an Israeli journalist complained that he was tired of “being repeatedly asked by the Germans how they should handle their past”:

I cannot say how the Germans should deal with the Holocaust. After all, they shouldn't remember the history [of the Holocaust] just to do us a favour. Probably it would be nice for them if we Israelis told them how and what they have to do. But, how they handle their history—*that* has to be done by them alone.¹¹

Finding myself enclosed within a dense crowd of guests inching their way out of the tent's corridor, I feel a slight sense of panic. A Jewish Berliner, who grew up in a Zionist family, describes Rosh's tooth implantation as fetishist and having something to do with ‘some sort of perverse Christian rite’. His wife bemoans Rosh's speech as embarrassing, ‘especially the part about the seven’.

Emerging into the daylight and fresh air, the monument awaits us, along with police and floodlights stationed all around: on top of the DZ Bank to the north, the Plattenbauten to the east, and the Landesvertretung (State Representatives) buildings to the south. And a barricade of police vehicles and policemen line the western perimeter to the Tiergarten.

At last we are allowed to walk among *some* of the stelae. Sections are still cordoned off, and it feels much like the experience of being channelled

¹¹ Tom Segev, *Die Zeit* Nr.11 5 March 1998

through a tricky course at Luna Park. Trying not to collide with one another, it is impossible to see who is coming from where in the labyrinth of concrete, politicians, Holocaust survivors and the press.

After having been told and shown what we would see, how we would feel and what we would understand, there is no room for anything else. It simply feels empty and absurd.

I decide to leave it for another time.

Descending the concrete stairs to the *Ort der Information*, I find myself for a second time in the subterranean level of this historical site on the former Ministerial Gardens.

Highly praised by Thierse, Eisenman, Rosh and all others, the first thing I notice in the Ort der Information, is hearty laughter erupting from an inner room.

The architectural atmosphere is sparse, subdued and polished to perfection. All items appear simplified, reduced and minimal. They do not impose themselves into the space but are highly designed and controlled. Six cropped portraits mounted in strict replicated format, represent, according to the press release, the six million murdered Jews of Europe. These are approached via a wall displaying in one single line (about 10 metres in length) the persecution policies of the Nazis from 1933 to 1945. I pass through a room in which glass panels set in the floor and lit from beneath, show enlarged excerpts of private letters from Holocaust victims to their loved ones. All one has to do is wander amongst the ten or so floor panels.

I am anxious to find the 'whole room' of Van der Linden, and proceed in the direction of the laughter. Here in room 2, stand 15 wall panels, dedicated to 15 Jewish families. Each panel (about 2 metres wide) acts as a backdrop on this occasion to the small family groups, amongst them Dutch, Polish, Australians and Americans, gathered before individual histories. The

source of the hearty laughter is a BBC reporter, who had just completed an interview with relatives (who were not laughing) of a Holocaust survivor. Perhaps he had finally succumbed to hysteria in the German capital's ceremonious admission of its greatest crime.

In a third room, with only two visitors sitting on centrally placed couches, the name of an individual victim is projected simultaneously on all four walls, whilst a woman's voice recites brief details such as: birth date and date of deportation in German and English.

In the next room, also fairly devoid of visitors, I find stainless steel telephone receivers set in chipboard look-alike stelae. Not being one for do-it-yourself artworks, I nevertheless put the receiver to my ear and press the button: Belzec.

A computer terminal in the remaining space becomes free. Made for tall people, I have to strain my neck between keyboard and screen to operate it at all. Under observation and thus awkwardly conspicuous, I nevertheless attempt to search for a name, whilst a guard consistently tries to interrupt and set me on the right path by being 'helpful'. I know he's 'only doing his job', but I want to be left alone, unobserved in my private search. I enter the name that I found impressed upon a faded, rusted enamel plaque from the 1930s, at a Berlin flea market in 2004. Artur Blumenthal has two entries. Born in 1905, he is on a list of the deported as well as a list of victims. He dies in Lodz.

The most convincing and effective use of technology in the exhibition is no doubt the database of names from the Israeli Yad Vashem memorial. The Kuratorium had proudly elaborated on the special co-operation that had been established with Yad Vashem to enable use of the database.

In an ‘entirely extraordinary gesture’ (Wolfgang Thierse), Yad Vashem agreed to place this database at the disposal of the Foundation for the Room of Names in the Information Centre.¹²

But, anyone can use this database at any time. It is free on the Internet. Just go to: www.yadvashem.org/lwp/workplace/IY_HON_Welcome

The Ort der Information is user friendly and what the Germans call *idiotensicher*. It caters for the lazy, uninformed viewer who enjoys gadgets and novelty. Devices often used by artists in their works, are adapted or coerced here to fit the designer’s neat and perfected plan. Compare for a moment Christian Boltanski’s disturbing installations of hundreds of unidentified black and white photographs with the ‘six large faces’¹³. The presentation in the Ort der Information is aimed at an audience with a very short attention span and no interest.

It is a rather small step into the direction of history.

Perhaps this is what Thierse finds to be an entirely extraordinary gesture?

27. Peter Eisenman and Wolfgang Thierse at the press conference prior to the inauguration, May 2005.



¹² Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Dr. Hans-Erhard Haverkamp, Information on the Memorial. Press material 9 May 2005. p.14.

¹³ Press release, Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, May 9 2005. p. 9

Yes, this is not an authentic place, as Thierse exclaimed to me at the press conference, and since removal of all authentic evidence in 1998, it retains not a shred of its acrid authentic atmosphere.

This designed footnote to the Holocaust from a curator attempting to play at artist misfires. Anyone who has experienced abuse or injustice knows the pressing need to have ones perpetrator or perpetrators revealed and prosecuted — for those who carried out evil acts to be identified, and for their names and faces to be made public. The almost unanimous praise for the construction of the small ‘information place’ coupled with the expressions of relief (it is poised almost as the consolation prize of the muddled memorial) indicates the strong need for a gadget-free, sober Holocaust museum.

Victims and survivors want their history to be known, with no omissions and no compromises. A thorough analysis of the events and developments that brought about the Holocaust (in complete form — not in an edited selection and ranking of victims) with research archives and documents exhibited in a lucid and unequivocal way, and directed by the highest level of scholarship is needed. Perhaps this could put an end to Rosh’s open-wound grating, and help to prevent further mystification, fascination and sympathy with Nazism.

Emerging back into the daylight, I try again to negotiate the stelae. Still I can’t feel anything other than the necessity to speak directly with a few Holocaust survivors who are still here. A German man describes the field of stelae as replicating the ‘dull and stony feeling’, which he had at the time of his incarceration by the Nazis. A woman from Holland, forcing a smile and with moist eyes, tells TV reporters how happy she is and how happy her father would have been to see this.

With all the press and guests almost gone, the security people are packing up and evening is descending as a Jewish man outside, clutching the prohibitive fence, calls out to a fellow Polish survivor of Treblinka stranded amongst the concrete stela. Both become animated and light up in lively recognition of each other. This chance meeting was one of the most moving things I witnessed on the day of the opening of the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe.

Almost the last to leave, I cycle home in the drizzle. In subsequent days I notice a brittle sadness, anger and sense of desolation in myself. I recognise the feeling: you can't right a wrong. Seventeen years of 'struggle' to erect a monument is fuelled by the need and hope for justice — to correct the injustice. As long as one is in this struggle one has the illusion that it will be achieved.

Yet when all is finally said and done, the raw fact remains: nothing can alter what happened — the Holocaust can never be reversed. And inadequate abstract gestures do not make it any better.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SO MACHT DIE SHOAH RICHTIG SPASS

The arrogant guiltless [Jews] shut themselves out from a humble guilty *Volk* [The German people]. Arrogance is provocation.

Professor Dr Med Harald Förster, 2004¹

The newly opened memorial experiences its very first weekend in May 2005 with the general public.

Many Berliners have made the effort to come and visit the much-debated object. The place is alive with camera clicking families complete with dogs, bikes, backpacks and picnics. But it also seems that many have come here as if they were to test-drive the monument.

¹ Harald Förster Arrogant Schuldlose grenzen sich selbst aus in einem Volk der demütig Schuldigen, Arroganz ist Provokation, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ), 30 December 2004

28. Misuse of the Monument starts immediately after its inauguration. Situation of May 2005.



Surprisingly, most visitors upon arrival immediately begin to mount the undulating stelae and proceed to jump from one to the other, laughing and gesticulating in glee. Others prefer to plonk themselves down and use the stelae not only as a convenient seat, but also as a prop for their soft drink cans and laden backpacks. And many parents finding themselves relieved of their child-minding duties amid the 2751 blocks simply pay no attention as their children embroil themselves in noisy games of hide and seek.

Walking amongst the stelae, days after the inauguration ceremony, it is still difficult to find any residue of gravity. With children screaming, cyclists driving around, and the necessity of being on guard for collisions whilst meandering amongst the concrete outcrops — I again don't really experience anything memorable.

The sombre matt grey underlines the fresh spring-green band of the Tiergarten park trees opposite. Whilst the sharp geometric surfaces offer striking alternating nuances of anthracite in the thin sunlight.

It is a perfectly safe place: constructed along traditional robust German standards. One can walk around knowing that the ground is firm and regular.

One can jump from one sturdy five-metre high stele to another in complete security. The precisely calculated, regular, wide, straight rows of balanced equal forms, not at all perturbing, reinforce a sense of a world in order. Everything is clean, tidy, consistent, well-lit, definitive — and above all very safe. It provides a place for tourists to take stock of their plans. Hence they are to be seen clad in sunglasses, studying their city maps, spread across the convenient tabletop-like metre high pillars.

Youths sit cross-legged on the grey platforms, nodding rhythmically to their MP3's, whilst their buddies stretch out their bare, white winter legs.

In the days to come, as summer approaches, bikinis liven up the anonymous grey repetitive rows, and the first discarded condoms begin to rot in the shadows.

A free for all — where one is finally left alone to do as one pleases. Unlike a shop, a church or a memorial for the murdered.

While *Ordnungsamt* (Department of Order) officers patrol the streets and parks of Berlin, prosecuting offenders who dare to cross the road one second before the lights turn green, or allow their dog to run off the lead — the freedom available at the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe comes as a real treat. So much is obvious.

Doused in a 'massive'² amount of urine following its opening, the memorial also serves as a convenient toilet right in the centre of Berlin. This fact, observed only in a marginal note in a report by Kulturstaatsminister Bernd Neumann (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) addressing the permanent establishment of the tasteless Visitors Terrace, is leaked to the press some two years after the inauguration of the Memorial. The *Berliner Zeitung* confirms that the Stiftung deliberately kept quiet about these facts the entire time. Why has this information been withheld for so long? Why didn't

² *Berliner Zeitung* (BZ), 29 January 2007

the then Chancellor of Germany, Gerhard Schröder, make an immediate appeal to the nation when it was discovered that the German people urinate all over the Memory of the six million Jews, murdered in their name by the German state? Chancellors have addressed the nation in sillier cases, haven't they? As late as 2007, Chancellor Angela Merkel also doesn't bother to take up issue with the German defecators on Jewish memory.

Or do they for some reason or other find this also demonstrative of a perverse 'acceptance' of the memorial? A barbaric initiation ritual perhaps?

The Memorial site also offers pretzel sellers, there is even a sausage stall, as one finds at any major event in Germany, from Christmas markets to motor cross rallies. Visitors, contemplating the six million murdered Jews, will enjoy juicy 'Bratwurst'. Who was it again who changed the first line of the German national hymn into: *Einigkeit und Recht auf Bratwurst?*



29. Brezel seller,
2005.

A security guard stationed at one corner of the rhomboid memorial engaged in conversation with visitors, does not seem to notice any adverse behaviour.

And curiously, there are no signs or indications as to the title or reason for the 20,000 square metre abstract concrete outcrop.

The only text I manage to find is a discrete grey plaque, set into the ground at the perimeter. The plaque, only in German is entitled: *Besucherordnung für das Stelenfeld*, and lists five points which include: information for people in wheelchairs as well as general rules. These rules forbid the jumping from one stele to another, as well as sunbathing, riding a bike, roller-skating, or using loudspeakers. Dogs are also prohibited. However most conspicuously, there are no rules forbidding urinating or defecating on the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

At the end of the year, in the frosty excitement of the Berliner Sylvester, where hundreds of people invest what little money they have saved in an array of fire works — the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe offers a perfect launching pad for hundreds of rockets and crackers to partying families and drunken gangs of people ushering in the New Year.

It had never occurred to me that one would even sit on a stele, let alone climb and jump on them. This is the kind of behaviour I only recognize from the beach in Sydney (with one obvious difference: people behave far more respectfully towards the environment of the beach in Sydney than visitors do towards the Memorial in Berlin). Little would the sun-tanned family of Sabina Van der Linden, who flew all the way from Sydney to help open the memorial, have expected to find locals treating their memory like a day down at Bondi Beach. Van der Linden's children and grandchildren's eyes had been awash with hard fought back tears, as they told me of their experience at the opening of the Memorial and desire to quickly return to their home at Bondi.

But, this memorial is for the 'non-Jewish Germans'. And they maintain the right to do with it as they please. In fact, I can't understand why a sign has

not been erected proclaiming: ‘Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe for the non-Jewish Germans only’.

Has the memorial failed or have the German people failed to understand the seriousness of their past and its continuing effects on the lives of people scattered all around the world?

It may very well be a case of both. What is one supposed to remember with this memorial? According to the Stiftung³ chairman Wolfgang Thierse:

This should be a place of commemoration, therefore it should over-reach the limits between cognitive information, historical knowledge on the one side, and empathy for the victims and mourning for the dead on the other [...] This memorial can allow us [...] to face with head and heart the inconceivable events, which have taken place.

Dies soll ein Ort des Gedenkens sein, soll also die Grenze überschreiten, die zwischen kognitiver Information, historischem Wissen einerseits und Empathie mit den Opfern, Trauer um die Toten andererseits liegt. Dieses Denkmal [...] kann uns ermöglichen [...] mit Kopf and mit Herzen sich dem unbegreiflichen Geschehenen zu stellen.⁴

Only three percent of Jews (or 165,000) killed by the Nazis were from Germany. That does not leave a very large proportion of German survivors when one considers that 97% were from elsewhere. However, most Germans living in Germany do have a direct relationship to those who perpetrated the crimes.

³ Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

⁴ Wolfgang Thierse, Pressemitteilung: Rede von Bundespräsident Wolfgang Thierse zur Eröffnung des “Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas” am 10. Mai 2005 in Berlin. 10 May 2005

And although Thierse may claim that Germany remembers its greatest crime with this memorial — absolutely all information about those perpetrators, from whom almost every living German has descended, is completely omitted. The ‘historical knowledge’ and ‘cognitive recognition’ available, is not only hidden underground, but scant, theatrical, exclusively victim-based and designed principally to arouse a clichéd emotional response.

Why should one not expose the names and crimes of the perpetrators in a relevant way? Would this not arouse a keener sense of attention, prudence and responsibility in their direct descendants? “Everyone in Germany is Degussa. My father was also involved,” said artist Jochen Gerz⁵ when I interviewed him in Paris.

The reactions of most visitors to the memorial are not those emanating from empathy or respect. They are more those of people seeking entertainment, amusement and in some instances: triumph. Indeed if they ever bother to try and view the underground Ort der Information, they would most likely succeed in satisfying their need to ‘play’ with the Holocaust exhibit. Press buttons; pick up telephone receivers and the like.

Yet, unlike Eisenman’s ‘anti-Semitic Joke’, the visitor’s behaviour doesn’t rouse a scandal, protest, decisive criticism or even a debate. No one is admonished.

No increase in security measures or the like is seen as appropriate. And Thierse and the Stiftung interpret visitor’s amusement park antics as a reflection of their acceptance of the Memorial. The Stiftung’s executive manager, Hans-Erhard Haverkamp, describes their principal in relation to

⁵ Jochen Gerz, private interview in Paris, August 2005

visitor's behaviour as: 'positive laissez-faire'.⁶ "The basic concept is that we are liberal,"⁷ clarified Haverkampf.

And similarly, most journalists in the German press write colourful reports, describing the frolic and fun as a sign of openness and acceptance. Any attempt to question or judge the behaviour is ridiculed by the press, who quickly insinuate police state-like regulations and obedience as the alternative. The freedom from '*geschmackspolizeiliche Regeln*'⁸ (Taste-police rules) and '*falscher pädagogischer Ton*'⁹ (the wrong pedagogical tone) is praised in the light of the large gangs of youths chasing each other and bands of giggling girls populating the memorial.

This in some ways isn't surprising, when commentators, such as the *Westfälische Nachrichten*, described the memorial as the proof "that [...] we have emancipated ourselves."¹⁰ Emancipation from what, one wonders. Guilt? Responsibility? History? The Jews?

They appear to have lost all orientation and basic values, and even question if it is 'right' to judge the behaviour at the memorial. "Is etiquette of correct behaviour whilst visiting the memorial necessary?" asks one journalist.¹¹

Whatever happened to a fundamental sense of empathy or respect? I wonder if the press would have interpreted youths jumping amongst the pews (or later graves) at Johannes Rau's funeral service in Winter 2006, as a sign of their acceptance of the Federal President's commemoration or as their liberation?

⁶ Ariane Neumann, Stelenspringer am Holocaust-Mahnmal, FAZ, 18 May 2005

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Jan Feddersen, Triumph auf Trümmern, die tageszeitung (Taz), 11 June 2005

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *Akzeptierte Verantwortung*, FAZ, 12 May 2005

¹¹ Jan Feddersen, loc. cit.

By February 2006, the security guards — all two of them — tended to look the other way whilst visitors leaped across the stelae. Do we only feel empathy for that with which we can identify, or that to which we are in some way connected? Do the Berliners walk all over the memory of the dead Jews, out of a sense of revenge, superiority, triumph, indifference or is it just pure ignorance?

During the intense years leading to the completion of the memorial, there were alternative perverse suggestions proposed for the concrete construction by some German politicians.

Udo Voigt, the federal chairman of the National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (NDP), for example, claimed that the concrete pillars provided the ideal foundations for a new German Reichskanzlei.¹²

(The popularity of the NDP, an extreme right wing or neo-Nazi party, has increased significantly since 1990. In 2004 they gained twelve seats in the state of Saxony and by 2006 have seats in three states of the Federal Republic.)

While Martin Hohmann of the Christian Democratic Union pronounced that: “Many experience the planned Memorial as a ‘Kainsmal’, an expression of self inflicted expulsion.”¹³ A masochistic enterprise? The ‘Kainsmal’ is a reference to the Old Testament story of Cain, who was of course expelled from the settled country by the Lord, for killing his brother Abel. Cain was then given a sign or ‘Kainsmal’ in German, to protect him from potential murderers.

The catholic member of the German parliament in a speech commemorating the reunification of Germany (3 October 2003) also announced that the Jews are persecutors or ‘Tätervolk’ in just the same way as

¹² NPD-Voigt: Holocaust-Mahnmal als Fundament der neuen deutschen Reichskanzlei, Stern, 4 October 2004

¹³ Hans Peter Schütz, Lupenreiner Goebbels, Stern 11 November 2003

the Germans. Hohmann, like Joseph Goebbels¹⁴ before him, uses arguments pertaining to Jewish involvement with the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution to defend his claim.¹⁵

Indeed, anti-Semitic attitudes are to be found often where they are least expected. Hence a certain Professor Dr Harald Förster in a letter to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland*, after having likened the Jews to the Nazis, proceeds to tell us that:

[...] the bare traces of anti-Semitism in Germany, will finally lose all ground, as soon as the Jews in Germany finally want to be German [...] and as Germans in Germany bear the blame for the Holocaust.

*[...] sobald Juden in Deutschland letztendlich auch Deutsche sein wollen [...] und als Deutsche in Deutschland gemeinsam mit an der Schuld für den Holocaust tragen, ist dem in Deutschland kaum vorhandenen Antisemitismus der Boden endgültig entzogen.*¹⁶

This medical professor from Frankfurt obviously believes that the Jews themselves are to blame for the Holocaust. This idea isn't new of course, but was common in West Germany during the 1960's, as revealed in the opinions of Gymnasium school pupils in the upper forms at the time. "If the Jews had not existed, then it would not have come to the extermination and to Germany's bad name" and "The NS-regime's hatred of the Jews developed because of their existence — and this in turn led to the total collapse of

¹⁴ Ibid. "Juden waren es, die den Marxismus erfanden, Juden sind es, die mit ihm die Welt zu revolutionieren versuchen" Reichspropagandaminister Joseph Goebbels, September 1941

¹⁵ Ibid. (Stern 11.11.2003)

¹⁶ FAZ, 30 December 2004

Germany”¹⁷ are typical examples of opinions held by pupils (and their parents) in the more selective schools.

And in May 2005, just days before the opening of the memorial, another good doctor from the south, vented his views on Jews in Germany with:

Is Marcel Reich-Ranicki in danger? Marcel Reich-Ranicki is known for his acerbic criticism. In the series entitled ‘One Hundred Years Germany’ (FAZ 2 April) he recounts that the Jews in Warsaw shaved twice a day in order to avoid being transported to the gas chambers. He continues: “I shaved twice a day, and I still do today in the Federal Republic of Germany, although I know that today I will not be transported to a gas chamber, all sorts of other things can be done to me.” This is a tasteless assumption of collective guilt towards the Germans from whom he earns his money since years. The positive thing about it is the confirmation out of a professional mouth, that the Federal Republic in 2005 does not have any gas chambers.

Ist Marcel Reich-Ranicki gefährdet? Marcel Reich-Ranicki ist für ätzende Kritiken bekannt. In der Serie "Hundert Jahre Deutschland" (FAZ vom 2. April) erzählt er, dass die Warschauer Juden sich täglich rasierten, um nicht zur Gaskammer abtransportiert zu werden. Er fährt fort: "Ich habe mich zweimal täglich rasiert, und ich tue das noch heute, in der Bundesrepublik, obwohl ich weiss, dass man mir heute allerlei antun kann, aber dass man mich in eine Gaskammer transportiert, das nun doch nicht." Dies ist eine geschmacklose kollektive Schuldvermutung gegenüber den Deutschen, an denen er doch seit Jahrzehnten sein Geld verdient. Positiv daran ist die Bestätigung aus berufenem Munde, dass die Bundesrepublik im Jahre 2005 keine Gaskammer betreibt.

¹⁷ Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, 1999) p.170

*Dr. Hans-Werner von Thaden, Karlsruhe*¹⁸

A survey by the American Jewish Committee in 2002 revealed that most Germans think that: Jews are exploiting the memory of the Holocaust for their own purposes. Only ten percent strongly disagreed while 18 percent had no opinion or didn't know.¹⁹

The Helmut Newton Foundation established in 2004 is the only museum in central Berlin dedicated to a Jewish photographer or artist. Newton fled Berlin in 1938 at Bahnhof Zoo situated just in front of the museum. In 2006 a guard from the museum confided his experiences with visitors to the Newton exhibition to me: "Because of my appearance" he said, "people assume that I am not Jewish and that it is safe to vent their hatred of the Jews. They say that the Jews started the war; they take all of our money, and are angry that a museum should be dedicated to a Jew."

It is also still possible in Berlin to arrest, search and force a voluntary witness to stay locked up in a Moabit prison cell with "Ich ficke alle Juden auf der Welt" (I fuck all Jews in the world) written on the wall. This was the treatment a Dutch national (whose grandfather, incidentally, had been deported and murdered by the Nazis in 1944) had to endure in Berlin in 2006 for simply having voluntarily co-operated with the German police as witness in a petty investigation.²⁰

Such attitudes may account in part for the unsympathetic responses to the memorial. Also evidenced by the swastikas, which appeared on cue the

¹⁸ Briefe an die Herausgeber, Immerhin, FAZ, 2 May 2005, Dr. Hans-Werner von Thaden, Karlsruhe

¹⁹ American Jewish Committee: Infratest, Publication – surveys, 16 December 2002 American Jewish Committee 15 February 2006

www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijITI2PHKoG&b=846741&ct=1032

²⁰ Direct interview with the witness conducted by the author.

morning of June 2, just as the first foreign head of state, Israeli President Mosche Katsav, arrived to visit the site.²¹

Yet, even if one is more knowledgeable about Holocaust history, and approaches the monument with a deeper understanding and empathy — something feels fake and hollow. Nothing resonates. Everything is complete — there is no horrible vacuum, sense of loss, unfilled surface or fissure that one must negotiate. The artificially undulating roller coaster like course ways dividing the stelae, are invariably understood by children and their parents as an invitation to invent chasing and hide and seek games.

Art of course has a power all of its own which allows it to strike with unmistakable precision raising the attention and respect of even an ignorant viewer. However, the memorial radiates ‘indifference’, criticises Olaf Zimmermann, manager of the Deutsche Kulturrat (organisation which liaises between culture and cultural-political events in Germany and the European union). And the underground *Ort der Information* is “an attempt to limit the damage which in its half-heartedness must certainly fail”.²²

So why does the memorial miss? Why are those thousands of tons of concrete so weightless? Seen from a distance, the grey alternating forms, when completely unpopulated, are sublime. Their beauty commands the respect of something not to be touched or entered — but observed only. This is powerful. Anything else has the effect of a violation. As soon as one enters it — it becomes flat. As if this had been foreseen, the promotional photographs of the memorial invariably placed the viewer outside and elevated from a birds-eye view. All photographs were also unpopulated. Indeed such photographs of the memorial are very impressive. And these were the only images people in New Zealand had seen of the monument when I arrived there in September 2005. They were so shocked by my photographs of

²¹ Staatspräsident im Stelenfeld, BZ, 2 June 2005

²² Tagesspiegel, 22 May 2005

visitors' antics amongst the stelae — that they were in disbelief, and, resentfully demanded an immediate explanation from me for such behaviour.

Yet, Thierse promoted the memorial as a 'begehbare Skulptur'²³ (a walk in sculpture). And as much as this may be an appealing idea — as Thierse naively equates this with open-mindedness²⁴ — it gives the object all of the unattractive and vulgar characteristics of a 'Gebrauchsgegenstand'.²⁵ That is: an article to be used or consumed as Lothar C. Poll of the Memorial's Förderkreis²⁶ proclaimed it to be. Hence viewers feel themselves no doubt entitled to use, consume and effectively violate it, as they inadvertently have been instructed to do.

Converted into this *Gebrauchsgegenstand*, the object takes on the vacuous atmosphere of the recently constructed Potsdamer Platz arcades just three minutes away.

In contrast, another memorial, which was constructed just around the corner, in Unter den Linden, to commemorate the Nazis Book Burning at Bebel Platz, cannot be entered, touched or tarnished. It is reserved in character and keeps the viewer at a distance. Underground, a removed space with empty bookshelves can be seen through a glass plate level with the cobblestones. Surrounded by the very buildings that silently bore witness to the violation on 10 May 1933, it is not something to be used, played with or entertained by. We may only observe it — and through this are given a world of associations. It is not something that can be experienced, summarily known and dismissed like a new toy. One can never go inside of that space, never probe its limits or estimate its extent. The singular memorial, by not attempting to stand as the summary gesture for one huge multifaceted crime, emanates a reserve before that which can never be a closed or completed story.

²³ Wolfgang Thierse, loc. cit.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tagesspiegel, Denkmalstiftung gegen mehr Kontrolle, 18 May 2005

²⁶ Society for the promotion of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Discrete bronze plaques set in the ground at Bebel Platz clarify the dedication of the memorial:

In der Mitte dieses Platzes verbrannten am 10. Mai 1933
Nationalsozialistische Studenten die Werke hunderter freier Schriftsteller,
Publizisten, Philosophen und Wissenschaftler.

*In the centre of this square on 10 May 1933, National Socialist students burnt the works
of hundreds of writers, journalists, philosophers and scientists.*

And the much quoted lines by Heinrich Heine from 1820 enhance the ensemble:

Das war ein Vorspiel nur, dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am
Ende auch Menschen.

*That was just a prelude, there where one burns
books, one burns in the end also people.*

The other decisive factor contributing to the success of Micha Ullman's artwork is that it commemorates that which actually took place at Bebel Platz. One stands on the very square where the Nazis committed their crime.

Yet despite its remarkable qualities this memorial has faded in strength over the years. One knows that the clean newly built white bookshelves never held any books and that they compose a mere running length of approximately twelve metres — a small shaft set within a surrounding underground car park. Enthusiasm may have grown quickly for the memorial simply because it doesn't confront and is almost invisible. With the whole square (probably

measuring some 1000 square metres) to walk across, many pedestrians nevertheless choose to walk directly across the small delicate glass surface of the memorial, scoring and scratching its transparent face.

Perhaps every memorial is doomed to inadequacy, and especially so in the absence of historical knowledge.

By way of comparison, the Verdun War Memorial is built on an ‘authentic site’ of vast dimensions. It creates a memorable experience of unequivocal gravity and sorrow. The ten square kilometres of memorial terrain with its intact original war trenches is at once desolate, sparse, unforgiving and unrelenting in its evocation of pain, loss, and futility. Not a summary gesture — but a permanent scar in the landscape of France, and memory. There is nothing at Verdun that closes the inexorable gap of loss. It is not a comfortable place. There are no neat solutions, hollow designer gadgets, sausage or souvenir stands, or gimmicky devices to entertain the indifferent.

One is not shielded from the essential facts commemorated: Names, places, dates, sites and authentic evidence. The cold central vault of the monumental Art déco *Ossuaire* is built upon the bones of the thousands of dead — all of them unidentified.

It makes no ingratiating gesture and also no mistaken, vague or insipid references. Facts are communicated in lucid unpretentious language in an appropriately sober and reverent atmosphere. There are probably almost no survivors left anymore from Verdun — but it still retains its power and respect.

Time and again, the site of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe has been declared an ‘inauthentic’ one. Even at the inauguration ceremony Thierse again emphasises that the ‘authentic places’ are elsewhere. Paul Spiegel, in reaction to the frolic and fun at the memorial following the opening, deplores the disrespectful behaviour of visitors, which he sees as a

confirmation of his longstanding fears. The chairman of the Central Jewish Council in Germany (ZJD) concludes: it is ‘not an authentic site’.²⁷ Spiegel also fears that visitors only see the memorial as an ‘event’²⁸.

Perhaps this accounts for the hollowness and lack of gravity of the grid structure. But, it is not this alone. Part of the trouble, is the constant lament that it is not an ‘authentic’ place — implying that it is in some serious way lacking, or fake. This does not exactly prepare the way for serious acceptance of the memorial.

It was indeed a deeply loaded, painfully resonant, authentic site. An open wound with all traces intact was revealed during excavations in 1997/1998. Despite the fact that the memorial builders under Thierse and Lea Rosh effectively misrepresented the historical facts of the site as outlined in previous chapters — one cannot rewrite the past. The past and its traces invariably form part of the present.

What is clear is that Germany spent a lot of money and time to construct and advertise a monumental concrete national symbol smack in the centre of the tourist area of its reunited capital that cannot be overlooked. It is a showcase for visiting heads of state and an attempt to market an improved image of Germany abroad.

Thierse, in his opening speech at the inauguration broadcast world-wide, tells us that:

The decision for the memorial in Berlin [...] was a decision for a joint memory project of reunited Germany, as well as the admission, that this

²⁷ NZ Netzeitung, dpa, Juden in Deutschland, 17 May 2005, NZ Netzeitung, 13 September 2005 www.netzeitung.de/spezial/judenindeutschland/339109.html

²⁸ Tagesspiegel, Denkmalstiftung gegen mehr Kontrolle, 18 May 2005

united Germany admits its history, in the capital, in its centre, and that it remembers its greatest crime.²⁹

The intention was not to promote knowledge about the Nazi regime and its crimes, but to arouse an emotional response. “The foremost interest was obviously the arousal of stirring feelings and apprehensiveness” (*Im Vordergrund des Interesses stand offenbar das Erzeugen von Gefühlen des Aufgewühltseins und der Beklommenheit*) sums up Hans-Georg Stavginski already in 1999, in his exhaustive analysis of the ten-year debate and decision to build a memorial.³⁰

We have seen for the most part what kind of response the completed memorial ‘stirs up’. Furthermore, the approval in 2006 to build a row of souvenir shops and cafés bordering the memorial along the newly built Cora Berliner Strasse indicates that trivialization and business take priority over respect and empathy.

The government advisor (*Regierungsrätin*) and professor of Economics, Cora Berliner was born in Hannover in 1890, and deported presumably to Theresienstadt on June 22 in 1942, where she was murdered. The street built along the quiet east border of the memorial is dedicated to her memory.

But of course one can sell sausages at the memorial, exclaims Tobias Millar of the *Berliner Zeitung*, because “the memorial is not a historical place where murder and torture took place, that would be something else”³¹ and tourists are ‘hungry and thirsty’ justifies Millar.

Conversely, the director of the Moses Mendelssohn Centre for European-Jewish Studies at Potsdam University, Julius Schoeps, sees the planned 115 metres long shopping stretch as confirmation that the memorial

²⁹ Wolfgang Thierse, loc. cit.

³⁰ Hans-Georg Stavginski, *Das Holocaust-Denkmal, der Streit um das “Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas” in Berlin, (1988-1999)*. (Paderborn, 2002) p.299

³¹ BZ, 11 August 2005

is just about marketing. The historian confirms: “The memorial will simply become a playground” and “in the end it’s business as usual”.³²

According to a survey conducted by the American Jewish Committee in 2005, Germans know less about the Holocaust than their European neighbours in Sweden, France, Poland, England and Austria. Fewer Germans know what Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka were in comparison to Swedish, French, Polish and Austrian citizens. Germans also scored less than the Swedes, British, French, Poles and Austrians when asked about the approximate number of Jews in all of Europe killed by the Nazis.³³

What becomes more and more clear is the attempt to minimize recognition of the extent of the Holocaust and deflect attention away from it ironically in the very act of building a concrete landmark in the centre of Berlin to finally silence all demands.

“A commemoration without knowledge is unfounded,”³⁴ remarked Volkhard Knigge, director of the Buchenwald concentration camp memorial, in reference to the newly opened Memorial in Berlin.

Germany, the country where the Holocaust was thought out, planned, instrumented and executed on millions of people, surely as its first priority, out of respect for those they persecuted, and in consideration for its future generations, needs first and foremost to deal with its own role as persecutor and perpetuator of the Holocaust. This task is its responsibility. Not that of attempting to speak on behalf of those they already censored, robbed and murdered. This can only ever be hollow and fake. “This memorial,” says Thierse, “allows the sensory-emotional imagination of loneliness, harassment,

³² Marlies Emmerich, Mahnmal mit einem Hauch von Disneyland, BZ, 7 January 2006 p.22

³³ American Jewish Committee, Thinking about the Holocaust 60 Years Later, 5 February 2005, American Jewish Committee, 4 February 2006
www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijITII2PHKoG&b=846741&ct=1025513

³⁴ Frank-Uwe Betz, Das andere Mahnmal, Die Zeit Nr.21, 19 May 2005

threat.”³⁵ (*Dieses Denkmal ermöglicht eine sinnlich-emotionale Vorstellung von Vereinsamung, Bedrängnis, Bedrohung.*) The attempt of the memorial builders to reproduce the experience of the victims, clearly enunciated in this passage at the inauguration, is presumptuous, inappropriate and highly insensitive. It also fails.

The intact site of the memorial in 1997 — located at the ruined centre of Nazi power — offered a unique opportunity to create an educational complex, together with the authentic evidence, that could have addressed Germany’s role as the unique instigator of the Holocaust. This could have provided the foundations for a sober appraisal of the history — the murderers and the system that fostered them — by German historians, architects, scholars, and artists. The harrowing sense of loss emanating from the area as it was uncovered and excavated (first when the Wall was removed and a great gap appeared at the centre of the city, and later during excavations in 1997) was an unequivocally authentic reminder of the utter tragedy and crime unleashed from this centre of power. This was not something invented or cast in a mould, but absolutely real and direct. The intact authentic ruins could have been incorporated within a museum complex, undertaking the historical duty of explanation.

The final defeat of the Germans in WWII took place directly at and around this site. Accounts from eyewitnesses indicate that the central military command post of the SS Division Nordland, from April 25 to May 1, 1945 was operating directly out of the Goebbels’ bunker.³⁶ This alone should have been reason enough to realize its historical importance in world history. It could have provided the basis for a commemoration of the defeat and its significance.

³⁵ Wolfgang Thierse, loc. cit. 10 May 2005

³⁶ H.Triebel, Bericht – Ordonnanzoffizier in Berlin in den letzten Tagen des Kreiges, 1979. In: W.Venghaus (Ed.), Berlin 1945 – Die Zeit von 16. April –2. Mai (Netphen 1996), pp. 350-361

But it seems as if this is exactly what was not wanted in Berlin. Every trace of the past should be erased, every shred of authenticity destroyed and uprooted — any reminder of that inconsolable sense of loss and tragedy should be quashed and replaced by artifice or simulacra. Like some sort of hysterical reflex. Even the underground Ort der Information had to be cast and set far apart from the buried bunker to its north.

There is still no Holocaust museum in Berlin or any museum which adequately documents the development of Nazi power in the course of German history — exposing the perpetrators and their deeds or acknowledging and documenting the complete and unabridged spectrum of the Holocaust as known till now. The ‘updated’ Museum for German History, which proudly reopened its doors in 2006, completely omits all and any reference to the mass murder of the disabled victims in its scant overview of the Holocaust to name just one example.

The combination of historical ignorance with the pressure to feel sympathy for a group of victims, *reselected* all over again, is likely to result in resentment and blatant anti-Semitism. Especially given the aggression with which the monument has been established, and in the light of its status as Germany’s nation memorial — huge and dominant in the reunited capital.

By 2006 a marked increase in Nazi inspired assaults has taken place in Germany. By the end of August already 8,000 Nazi motivated crimes had been reported to the authorities,³⁷ when Charlotte Knobloch, president of the ZJD described the level of blatant neo-Nazi aggression as comparable to that which took place following Adolf Hitler’s election in 1933.³⁸

³⁷ Frank Jansen Rechte Gewalt steigt dramatisch, Tagesspiegel, 17 October 2006

³⁸ "Antisemitische und rechtsradikale Attacken haben eine Offensichtlichkeit und Aggressivität erreicht, die an die Zeit nach 1933 erinnert." Spiegel Online, Rechtsextreme Gewalt Zentralrat der Juden warnt vor Verhältnissen wie zur Nazi-Zeit. 24 October 2006, Spiegel Online, 24 October 2006 www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,444405,00.html

The memorial can never alleviate the responsibility for historical explanation. It is only a memorial. It does not instruct, it cannot teach the history that brought us the Holocaust and it cannot prevent rising neo-Nazism and acts of anti-Semitism. The memorial barely even functions as a jolt to memory. How could it after all, with no signs, no inscriptions and no outward information? As a huge abstract sculpture coming out of American minimalism — which was inherently devoid of meaning and content, and essentially about nothing — it can't really remind one of much either. Hence Eisenman repeatedly stated that the stelae mean 'nothing'.³⁹

As a piece of landscape architecture it works with the surrounding environment. It is easy to trace its origins in the architect's office as a model set within a miniature model of the city landscape. But one could never blame Eisenman for this, after all the 1997 competition to which he was invited stipulated: "The place can be understood [...] as a suburb of Tiergarten [...] a convincing equivalent of the former Minister Gardens, a new connection between inner city and park."⁴⁰

The 'new connection between inner city and park' at best reflects the insincerity of its builders who did not have the courage to conceive, design and create a place which would contribute to the discussion of Holocaust history and contemporary Germany in a uniquely meaningful way: through the hard won sincere efforts of German architects, German sculptors, German musicians, German writers, German scholars and German politicians to work through and reveal their history as the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

The cowardice behind the deferral of the Memorial project, to Jewish representatives, whether James Young, Peter Eisenman, Salomon Korn, Paul

³⁹ Michael Naumann, Ohne antwort, ohne trost, Die Zeit, 4 May 2005

⁴⁰ "Der Standort kann [...] als eine Anlagerung, ein neuer Vorort des Tiergartens verstanden werden [...]. Damit kann... ein überzeugendes Äquivalent für die ehemaligen Ministergärten geschaffen werden, eine neue Verbindung zwischen Innenstadt und park." Enges Auswahlverfahren. Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur. Berlin 1997

Spiegel, Alexander Brenner and others, and the chat-show hostess Lea Rosh, has left their troubles brewing beneath the pre-fabricated concrete historical stopper.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

EARS, EYES AND MOUTHS WELL SHUT

This is the proof that this country faces its history. *Wolfgang Thierse*¹

Knowledge and commemoration of the crimes perpetrated on victims only exists because of survivors. What happens when there are no survivors can be seen in the example of Germany's attitude towards the disabled victims of the Nazis.

During the entire 17-year debate about the Holocaust memorial, I have come across virtually no serious reference or adequate acknowledgement of these initial victims of Nazi systematic murder. A brief excursion into their history strikes me as appropriate prior to concluding this thesis on Germany's National Holocaust Memorial.

One wonders how many Germans (or Europeans for that matter) know that already in 1935 Hitler had disclosed his intention to implement the murder of the disabled in the event of war. Termed 'euthanasia' the systematic murder, initiated in 1939 and continuing until after the war, was of course not the permission to terminate ones life if so chosen, but a euphemism for the state authorized murder of *lebensunwertes Leben* (life unworthy of life); people

¹ Wolfgang Thierse, Press conference for opening of memorial, 9 May 2005

considered to be a *Ballastexistenz* (burdensome existence) and *unnütze Esser* (useless eaters). That is: the handicapped. Those maimed either at birth, by war, by illness, abusive parents, doctors or a combination thereof. Having lived in Berlin for almost 20 years, I have yet to meet one German citizen who knows one accurate fact about this history — if he has heard about it at all.

The victims, regarded as criminals, were not terminally ill nor did they suffer from disabilities, which were necessarily incurable.² Although hospitalised or placed in nursing homes, only some suffered from mental illness. Many were held simply because they were deaf, blind, mentally retarded, epileptic or had a physical deformity. By the same token, artists like John Milton, Ludwig van Beethoven, Frida Kahlo or Vincent van Gogh would have been among the victims of this hideous German initiative. The systematic killing of the disabled preceded and provided the model for the systematic murder of the Jews and Gypsies.

The compulsory sterilization law issued on 14 July 1933 initiated the violence against those deemed handicapped. Just six years later, on 18 August 1939, the Reich's Ministry of the Interior (*Reichministerium des Innern*) circulated a *Meldepflicht für mißgestaltete usw. Neugeborene*, that is: an ordinance, which required the reporting of 'deformed etc. newborn' by doctors and midwives to the authorities.³ Children up to age three also had to be reported. Two functionaries, who had absolutely no medical training, sorted the registration forms used to report on the children. They then forwarded a selection of the forms to be assessed by three experts, who never saw the children or consulted case histories. Subsequently, the *Reichsausschußkinder* (Reich Committee Children) were sent to specially created children's wards (*Kinderfachabteilungen*), where they were used in medical experiments before being killed by starvation or through the administration of common

² Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide. From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*. (Chapel Hill, 1995) p. XXI

³ *Ibid.* p. 45

barbiturates such as morphine-scopolamine, luminal and veronal. There were more than thirty such wards involved in what became a routine procedure in German medicine even up until after the war.⁴ The first was established outside Berlin at Brandenburg-Görden and headed by Hans Heinz.

Parents were made to pay for the procedure of transporting, hospitalising and killing their own children. The Nazis extorted money from parents unless they were too poor to pay, in which case welfare organisations were to cover the costs. Camouflaging the true intentions of the programme, public health officials for example near Berlin, were informed: “Under expert medical supervision, the psychiatric children’s ward at Görden near Brandenburg on the Havel will provide all available therapeutic interventions made possible by recent scientific discoveries.”⁵

The establishment of a murder enterprise was set up by Viktor Brack, the Chief of Office II at the Chancellory of the Führer (Kanzlei des Führers) in a villa at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin. Brack and a group of collaborators set up Aktion T4, which implemented the systematic murder of disabled adults.

In the autumn of 1939, data were compiled on institutions housing disabled patients. These were then assessed by a team of forty physicians who reached a decision on the fate of the patients within a few minutes. Patients were not examined nor were their medical files consulted. The assessors comprised mostly of psychiatrists, used questionnaires that had been completed by the institutions to determine a patient’s ‘worthiness’ of life.

Operation T4 concealed its true dealings behind a front of ostensible organisations with names such as: *Gemeinnütziger Krankentransport* (Charitable Foundation for the Transport of patients). Killing centres were invented by the T4 engineers in order to process the murder of the large number of adults.

⁴ Christian Pross and Götz Aly, *The Value of the Human being Medicine in Germany 1918-1945*, Ärztkammer Berlin 1991, 26. Friedlander 51

⁵ Friedlander, op. cit. p. 47

Initial experiments in December 1939 were conducted at Brandenburg prison using lethal injections and gas in a newly built gas chamber. These were attended by Karl Brandt (Hitler's personal physician), Brack, Leonardo Conti (Reich physicians' leader), Herbert Linden (representing the Ministry of the Interior), senior T4 physicians as well as Christian Wirth, a police detective.

The T4 killing centres were subsequently set up at Brandenburg, Grafeneck, Hartheim and Sonnenstein followed by Bernburg and Hadamar. Each centre had a gas chamber, a crematorium and facilities for staff. There were no facilities for patients as they were murdered upon arrival. The centres were each operated by a doctor assisted mostly by members of the police. The gas chambers at Brandenburg and Bernburg were headed by Irmfried Eberl, who later went on to the Treblinka concentration camp. Horst Schumann, who later worked at Auschwitz, operated Grafeneck and Sonnenstein, and at the Hartheim institution — Rudolf Lonauer.

Patients were locked into gas chambers where they were killed by carbon monoxide emissions. Staff then removed the bodies from the chamber and looted them for gold teeth and dental work. Organs were removed by a doctor following which the bodies were cremated.

Fraudulent death certificates were mailed to relatives, insurance companies and welfare agencies from a non-existent hospital in Chelm (in fact from Berlin). This enabled the financing of the enterprise during the ostensible period between a patient's murder and the date on their fake death certificate.

The outbreak of war and victory in Poland extended the killing of the disabled to Germany's new eastern borders. Large transport vans with 'Kaisers Kaffee-Geschäft' painted on them were used to collect patients from hospitals in the Warteland and gas them while driving away with bottled carbon monoxide. The vans would drive directly to nearby forests for convenient

body disposal.⁶ Forty people at a time were crushed into the vehicles. I often wonder how many Berliners know of the sinister past of the ‘Kaisers’ vans, when they shop for their sausage and potatoes at their local Kaisers — formerly Kaisers Kaffee-Geschäft — supermarket.

In the Piasnitzer Forest, northwest of Gdynia in Poland, 10,000 people designated as handicapped were murdered and buried in 1939.⁷ But the killings in Poland were only a prelude to the massive system of murder that began with the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. Following the launch of the ‘Final Solution’ in the summer of 1941, three groups of people were targeted by the Nazis for systematic murder on the basis of their biological characteristics. These consisted of the Jews, the Gypsies, and as already instrumented in 1939, the handicapped.

In the autumn of 1941, at Heinrich Himmler’s request, experiments in killing rapidly, cheaply and expeditiously were performed on disabled Russian civilians. Henry Friedlander describes it as follows:

The first experiment took place in Minsk, where handicapped patients were locked into a pillbox that was then dynamited. The results were macabre. The pillbox and the victims were totally destroyed; parts of bodies were strewn over a relatively large area, and the killers had to collect limbs from the surrounding trees.

The second experiment took place the next day at Mogilev. There handicapped patients were locked into a sealed room, and exhaust gas first from a car and then from a truck was fed into the room through hoses. This

⁶ Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution. The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln and Jerusalem, 2004) 186. Friedlander op. cit. pp. 139-140

⁷ Browning, op. cit. p. 187

method did prove efficient and later served as the model for the method used in the killing centres of the final solution.⁸

A third experiment took place in what is today the Ukraine. After the fall of Kiev in 1941, the Reich physician Wilhelm Gustav Schüppe at the Kiev Pathological Institution headed a commando of twenty persons, comprised of about ten physicians and ten members of the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the security service of the SS) who were disguised as medical practitioners. The *Sonderaktion* ('special operation') called 'destruction of life unworthy of life' included the handicapped as well as Jews, Gypsies and Turkmen. In this experiment 100,000 victims were killed with injections.⁹

Life unworthy of Life unworthy of memory

The silence around the Euthanasia killings makes one suspect that these people and their like-contemporaries are still considered to be *Untermenschen* (subhumans).

The system of wearing a yellow badge attached to one's clothes must have proved so effective, that it was retained. Somewhat modified in the form of a circular yellow badge with three black dots, it is used these days to label many of the disabled citizens of Germany. Here, where pragmatic solutions are the deciding factor, bad taste and barbaric insensitivity to contemptuous historical symbolism go unnoticed.

There are no survivors of the victims of 'euthanasia' to tell us of their ordeal, and, only a hand full of historians in recent years have addressed their fate.

⁸ Friedlander, op. cit. pp. 141-142

⁹ Ibid. p. 142

The victims of the Nazi euthanasia programme are amongst the most invisible of the 6 million. Many survivors were held in institutions even after the surrender of Nazi Germany.¹⁰ They lived through years of abuse and stigmatisation and did not publicly discuss their horrendous experiences. There are no surviving memoirs of these victims.

The lack of interest and the sheer indifference shown by ordinary Germans — indeed by Germany — towards this chapter of their history, should strike anyone as alarming. Indifference towards unethical attitudes and actions, as we know, simply allows them to remain intact, influential and operative. As Fritz Bauer, the legal reformer and initiator of the 1963 Auschwitz Trial in Frankfurt noted: “It appears certain to me that nothing belongs to the past, everything is still present and can become future.” Ironically Bauer died in 1968 during preparations for a trial of those responsible for the Euthanasia killings. The trial never took place.¹¹

400,000 people, from small children through to the elderly, were sterilized between 1933 and 1945 in Germany. Hundreds of thousands of disabled persons were systematically murdered in Germany at the killing centres, which included Brandenburg-Görden, Hadamar, Bernburg, Sonnenstein, Grafeneck, Hartheim, and in the occupied territories from 1939 up until even after the war. Obviously, this subject is not the focus of this thesis and I am unable to do it justice here — however I have yet to find definitive information on the sheer number and geographical distribution of victims. It appears to be unknown and under-represented.

As I write, a mass grave of euthanasia victims has been discovered at Menden-Barge. Reported on 5 October 2006 by the BBC, the article occupies a key position: next to the main headline of the day on the BBC News

¹⁰ Friedlander, *op. cit.* p. 164

¹¹ Fritz Bauer Institut *Fritz Bauer* 2006 Fritz Bauer Institut 31 October 2006 <http://www.fritz-bauer-institut.de/english.htm> Bauer

website.¹² The BBC reports that a witness had seen corpses brought to the gravesite by a horse-drawn cart. And that the state prosecutor Ulrich Maass claimed that it would be difficult to bring charges against any individual 61 years after the war. The report continues to elucidate that the gravesite is close to a hospital “once run by Hitler's personal doctor Karl Brandt, who headed the ‘euthanasia’ programme, called Action T4.” One day later, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* publishes a vague report (neither Brandt or Action T4 are mentioned) on the same discovery in a tiny column at the bottom of page 12.¹³

The *Mémorial des Martyrs de la déportation* (Memorial for the Martyrs of the Deportation), inaugurated on April 12 1962 by President Charles de Gaulle in Paris, is dedicated to all those who were deported from France by the Nazis in cooperation with the Vichy Government from 1941. The memorial does not selectively commemorate victims on the basis of their skin colour, ‘race’, sexual preference or disability. It indicates the system used by the Nazis to identify victims according to their ideological definitions of criminals, by various badges. The memorial does not qualify victims suffering according to racial, physical or sexual definitions. It concludes that the victims were essentially those who did not conform to the Nazi ideal of the Aryan race. The memorial identifies disabled persons as having been deported from France by the Nazis after 1941. The memorial plaque states further that, of the 160,000 persons deported, 1,000 were killed at concentration camps and euthanasia centres. The plaque indicates that the research, which has informed the dedication and information, was only revealed in 2002.

A second reference is in the script of Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah*. A Jewish survivor from Corfu describes the morning of June 9, 1944 when Jews,

¹² BBC News *Germans uncover 'Nazi mass grave'* 5 October 2006, BBC News, 5 October 2006

¹³ Skelette von Menden sind wohl Nazi-Opfer, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 230 6 October 2006

as well as the ‘insane’, the sick, and hospital patients were rounded up by the Gestapo with machine guns to be deported to Poland.¹⁴

Germany does not recognize the victims of Nazi medicine-‘euthanasia’, or the surviving relatives of the victims of Nazi-euthanasia (*‘Euthanasie’-Geschädigte*). There were between 250,000 and 300,000 euthanasia victims killed in Germany alone.¹⁵ The number of victims in the occupied territories is still unknown.¹⁶ All attempts to gain recognition have failed. In 1992, the Bundestag reached the final decision that: Persons who had endured forced sterilization and ‘Krankenmord’ or ‘euthanasia’, would not be recognized as victims of Nazi persecution in the decisive Federal Compensation act: ‘Bundesentschädigungsgesetz’.¹⁷

In 2006, the Federal Ministry of Finance publishes under its guidelines for those not recognized as victims persecuted by the Nazis:

The so-called Euthanasia Institutions are seen under the guidelines as prisons, because in them, the *Menschenwürde* (value of a person) was regularly disregarded and the inmates lived under constant physical and psychological threat. This covers the institutions: Grafeneck/Württ., Hartheim bei Linz, Sonnenschein bei Pirna, Bernburg/Saale, Hadamar bei Limburg and Brandenburg/Havel.

Die so genannten Euthanasie-Anstalten werden als Haftstätten im Sinne der Richtlinien angesehen, weil in ihnen die Menschenwürde regelmäßig missachtet wurde und die Insassen

¹⁴ Claude Lanzmann, *Sobibor. An oral history of the Holocaust* (New York, 1985) p. 129

¹⁵ Ernst Klee, *Irrsinn Ost – Irrsinn West. Psychiatrie in Deutschland*. (Frankfurt am Main, 1993) 168, Bryant op. cit., Deutscher Bundestag. Bundesstiftung “Entschädigung für NS-Unrecht” gründen und Entschädigung von NS-Opfern der Zwangssterilisation und der “Euthanasie” in die Wege leiten. 2 December 1999. Deutscher Bundestag. 15 February 2006 http://209.85.129.104/search?q=cache:guh1bvustkJ:dip.bundestag.de/btd/14/022/1402298.pdf+Bundesentsch%C3%A4digungsgesetzes+euthanasie&hl=de&gl=de&ct=clnk&cd=7&lr=lang_de&client=firefox-a

¹⁶ Ibid. P.4

¹⁷ Klee, op. cit. p. 168

*in ständiger physischer und psychischer Bedrohung leben mussten. Hierzu rechnen die Anstalten Grafeneck/Württ., Hartheim bei Linz, Sonnenschein bei Pirna, Bernburg/Saale, Hadamar bei Limburg und Brandenburg/Havel.*¹⁸

As late as 2006, Nazi systematic mass murder in specially created killing centres as experienced, witnessed, documented and proven beyond doubt since 1945, is euphemistically referred to by the German Federal Ministry of Finance as merely: ‘to disregard’ or ‘disrespect’ a person’s ‘value’.

Located at Wilhelmstrasse number 97, the Federal Ministry of Finance now occupies the former offices of the Nazi Reichsluftfahrtministerium.

The victims and their surviving families have only remained objects of contempt and recipients of repetitive humiliations and rebuke since 1945. And the history of the victims of child ‘euthanasia’ remains almost completely obscure. The historian Ulf Schmidt tells us in 2002 that there is still no comprehensive study on the beginning and complex character of the Nazi’s first systematic murder programme: the killing of infants.¹⁹

Obviously, it is not considered necessary to recognize these initial victims (or their perpetrators) of Nazi systematic murder, in order to improve Germany’s image abroad. All but absent from the 17-year debate about the national Holocaust Memorial, this conveniently deleted group has no lobby and no place in Germany’s selective remembrance and ‘admittance’ of its crime and history. Included in the placebo advisory board (which had no decisive function) of the Foundation for the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe — they were essentially dismissed in a long assorted list of ‘other victim groups’. This was a cynical token gesture for the parliamentary protocol

¹⁸ Bundesministerium der Finanzen *Entschädigung von NS-Unrecht Regelungen zur Wiedergutmachen* Abteilung V, Referat VB4 Berlin Ausgabe 2006 August 2006. p.27

¹⁹ Schmidt, op. cit. p. 237

— designed to effectively diffuse, disarm and finally humiliate yet again that ‘unworthy’ group.

When I asked about the status of the disabled victims of Nazi terror in 1998 as the Memorial competition was winding to a close, Dr Ekkehard Klaus from the Senatsverwaltung barked back at me: “We can’t build memorials for everyone, otherwise there would be nowhere to park.”²⁰

A group of victims with no survivors to commemorate alone their mere existence²¹; this makes it even easier to obliterate their memory as well as the responsibility for the barbaric crimes carried out against them by Germany.

And as long as no one notices, why bring it up? This way one can be sure to let the millennial old course of contempt towards those who are condemned to disability, remain intact for future generations everywhere.

Primo Levi, who survived Auschwitz, wrote in 1986:

No one will ever be able to establish with precision how many, in the Nazi apparatus, could *not not know* about the frightful atrocities being committed, how many knew something but were in a position to pretend that they did not know, and, further, how many had the possibility of knowing everything but chose the more prudent path of keeping their eyes and ears (and above all their mouths) well shut. [...] it is certain that the failure to divulge the truth [...] represents one of the major collective crimes of the German people and the most obvious demonstration of the cowardice to which Hitlerian terror had reduced them: a cowardice which became an integral part of mores and so profound as to prevent husbands from telling their wives, parents their children. Without this cowardice the greatest excesses would not have been carried out, and Europe and the world would be different today.

²⁰ Telephone call to Dr Ekkehard Klaus March 1998, Dr Ekkehard Klaus: Bearbeitung, Engeres Auswalverfahren, Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung and Kultur.1998.

²¹ *Sie sprechen für die Ermordete*, die tageszeitung 15 April 1998

Nessuno riuscirà mai a stabilire con precisione quanti, nell' apparato nazista, non potessero non sapere delle spaventose atrocità che venivano commesse; quanti sapessero qualcosa, ma fossero in grado di fingere d'ignorare; quanti ancora avessero avuto la possibilità di sapere tutto, ma abbiano scelto la via più prudente di tenere occhi ed orecchi (e soprattutto la bocca) ben chiusi. [...] è certo che la mancata diffusione della verità [...] costituisce una delle maggiori colpe collettive del popolo tedesco, e la più aperta dimostrazione della viltà a cui il terrore hitleriano lo aveva ridotto: una viltà entrata nel costume, e così profonda da trattenere i mariti dal raccontare alle mogli, i genitori ai figli; senza la quale, ai maggiori eccessi non si sarebbe giunti, e l'Europa ed il mondo oggi sarebbero diversi.²²

Friedlander tells us that “the practitioners of race hygiene — anthropologists, geneticists, psychiatrists, and physicians” accepted and applauded Nazi policies, enthusiastically embracing “all aspects of Nazi ideology”.²³ Doctors were over-represented in the Nazi party and the SS. By 1937, almost 50 percent of physicians were members of the NSDAP.²⁴

Indeed, the role of doctors during the Third Reich has remained one of the largest taboos in the historical analysis of the period. This, according to historian and medical practitioner Till Bastian, accounts for a ‘destructive drive’²⁵ and tendency to regard patients as mere things in contemporary German medicine.

Bastian, who is also director of the *Umwelt, Kultur und Frieden* research institute at Isny, claims that the study of German medical practice between

²² Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*. 1986. Quoted from: *Opere*. Vol. I. Turin 1987, p. 656. English translation by Raymond Rosenthal *The Drowned and the Saved*. (New York 1988) p. 14-15

²³ Friedlander op. cit. p. 19

²⁴ Michael S. Bryant, *Confronting the ‘Good Death’, Nazi Euthanasia on Trial. 1945-1953*. (Boulder, 2005) p. 4

²⁵ Till Bastian, *Furchtbare Ärzte. Medizinische Verbrechen im Dritten Reich*, (München, 1996) p. 10

1933 and 1945 is not simply a question of looking back to a rare moment of madness — but a direct reflection of the appalling contemporary situation.²⁶

This cannot be surprising when almost all of the mass murderers in the Euthanasia killing centres tried by German courts (if they were tried at all), walked away as free citizens.²⁷

Friedlander's attempt to explain how Nazi genocide developed, forced him to redefine what is termed the Holocaust — when he discovered that the Euthanasia killings were in fact the first chapter of Nazi genocide.²⁸

The method of selection, murder by gas (a unique German invention) in specially designed killing centres where people were processed as in a factory, was initially practiced on the handicapped in 1939 (preceding the systematic murder of the Jews and the Gypsies). The assembly line murder at the killing centres Brandenburg-Görden, Hadamar, Bernburg, Sonnenstein, Grafeneck and Hartheim demonstrated that ordinary men and women were willing to become professional murderers.²⁹

The official killing only stopped on 24 August 1941, according to historian Götz Aly, when the murderers had reached and even exceeded their initial target of 70,000, and/or decided to allow more time for the Nazi propaganda film *Ich klage an*, to influence the public.³⁰ From this period on the Nazi contempt towards the disabled gained unprecedented levels of virulence. And the killing simply expanded to other groups of persons deemed 'worthless'.

Any attempt to understand what led to the Holocaust has to begin with the study of the systematic murder of the forgotten initial victims: those who

²⁶ Ibid..

²⁷ Bryant loc. cit.

²⁸ Friedlander, op. cit. p. XII

²⁹ Ibid. XIII, pp. 300-301

³⁰ Götz Aly, *Medicine Against the Useless*, pp. 39, 46 in Michael S. Bryant op. cit. p. 49

had already the unthankful task of surviving the violence of a disability from the outset of life.

It is hideous and literally sickening to split hairs over who does or does not ‘qualify’ amongst the Holocaust victims. However, when Germany insists on maintaining its methods of selection and ranking of victims deaths even in memory, sixty years on — one is coerced into the same ugly argument in any attempt to broach the discussion thereof.

In 1938 the murder of disabled children began upon parents request to the Hitlers Kanzlei *Kanzlei des Führers der NSDAP* (KdF).³¹ By 1939 systematic mass murder in specially build gas chambers was set into motion. If this had been prevented from happening, if those thousands of ordinary men and women involved had refused to work as professional murderers, then the subsequent systematic murder of the Sinti and Roma, the Jews and Soviet PoW’s may never have happened.

A memorial to the disabled victims — without any adequate research, knowledge, or presentation thereof — would however constitute a grave affront. The discussion here is not their inclusion in the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. It is not about comparing or re-selecting victims, measuring them up against each other and qualifying their value, worthiness, pain and suffering according to notions of race, statistics or some other German ‘wissenschaftliche’ (scientific) definition or qualification.

It is about how one treats, represents and remembers events in history, and the effects of that representation or deliberate misrepresentation on contemporary and future lives, culture, politics, institutions and societies.

With the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe used as Germany’s world wide advertisement of its recognition of its crimes during the

³¹ Bryant, op. cit. p. 29

Nazi era, and as the official ‘national memory of the Holocaust’, a grave injustice has been cemented in place for all of the victims.

Knowledge and adequate memory of the disabled victims is destined to the same fate as the hundreds of wooden crosses erected on the graves of murdered disabled children at Brandenburg-Görden an der Havel hospital outside of Berlin: Torn out and destroyed during ‘*Sanierungsmaßnahmen*’ (sanitising measures or rebuilding) at the hospital following German reunification. Systematically murdered, systematically removed, systematically forgotten — every trace erased.

The site of the villa at Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin, which provided offices for the T4 administrators has long since been eradicated and cemented over by the buildings comprising the ‘Land of poets and thinkers’ (*Land der Dichter und Denker*) cultural centre.

A small plaque commemorating the T4 murder programme was set in the footpath at the rear of the Philharmonie Concert Hall at the end of the 1980’s following pressure from the Aktives Museum (a private organisation which attempts to “keep the memory of National Socialism in everyday life alive”³²). The only plaque in Berlin of its kind, it lies almost invisible in the shadow of two large curves of an iron Richard Serra sculpture nearby. A mere note in a gargantuan archive of crime, the plaque, despite its modesty, is the object of regular desecration by Berliners, who either spray-paint it with swastikas, park their car on it or crouch down on their haunches and force out piles of their stinking excrement on its vulnerable surface.³³ A small private initiative called Das Blaue Kamel (The Blue Camel), having no ‘false expectations of the state’, have taken it upon themselves to wash off the

³² www.aktives-museum.de

³³ Berliner Zeitung (BZ), 16 November 2000, 5 June 2001,

regular deposits of excrement and take care of the practically unnoticeable plaque on a weekly basis.³⁴

Helmut Forner (member and administrator of the initiative) writes in 2004 that he had some five years earlier made an appeal to the local Mayor of Mitte, for suggestions as to how one could improve the maintenance and overall visibility of the plaque. He never got even so much as a reply.³⁵

In a survey conducted by Das Blaue Kamel, people on the streets in Germany were asked about their knowledge of the murder of the disabled by the Nazis. The results were alarming. No one was prepared to even answer the question. All those asked preferred to remain silent, with the exception of one person: an Englishman.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Helmut Forner, Mahnmal, 2004, Das Blaue Kamel, 3 May 2007 www.das-blaue-kamel.de/05_stolpersteine.php

³⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BAGATELLES POUR UN MASSACRE

You can do really cool things here, play and stuff.
Adult visitor at the Memorial, Sunday 20 May 2007

Contrary to their intention, commemorations of historical events are more often reminders of the power of forgetting.
Chaobua Wang¹

One of the central failings of the Eisenman memorial is the fact that it is too representational. Visitors constantly describe what it looks like: ranks of prisoners or most commonly a graveyard without names. The systematically ordered grid of repetitive grey blocks though, above all, becomes symbolic of anonymity. And this atmosphere of anonymity brings its accomplice: namely a loss of responsibility. Just as one can observe in any large complex such as an underground car park, or a large modern city offering itself in seclusion in the middle of the night. The individual is not addressed, and thus takes the liberty of trying out whatever fancy may come to mind. Two years on, in 2007, these antics rang from: urinating, mock sex with the phallic stelae, macho competitions in scaling the highest blocks from the seclusion of the labyrinthine centre, through to parents who take it as an opportunity to coach their toddlers to walk on the ascending sequence of blocks, instruct them in the art of hauling themselves up the sides of a stele, through to those who

¹ "Diary", in: London Review of Books, 5 July 2007, Vol. 29, No. 13

cheer their children on as they jump triumphantly from one pillar to the next. It is as if they interpret it as a giant Lego set or experimental playground.

Strengthening the anonymity is the sheer size of the memorial. Not in terms of square metres, but the way it occupies space. Any sense of loss is stamped out by the over-kill, over-fill of concrete.

Was this necessary? If a memorial had to be built, why could one not have taken that which is unequivocally a memorial — the thing itself, and not an attempt at representation?

After all, the history of memorials (and the adherent code of behaviour) is as old as civilization itself. A gravestone commemorating the life, and marking the burial place of Igor Stravinsky in Venice, is not all that different from that of local green grocer, Mario Lopez lying 18,000 kilometres away in a costal cemetery at the edge of Australia. A simple stone, with the facts and information communicated in sober, succinct language is a form which can be identified by most people and which has a long established place in the world.

Such a stone would also have ruled out the possibility of a faltering, crude representation of the victims' plight by those in whose name they were murdered. Because this is the primary sense emanating from the monument. It is an attempt to represent the victims and their suffering or the 'Terror der Einsamkeit' (*Terror of loneliness*) as Wolfgang Thierse recounts². Six million murdered, countless rows of grave like blocks and Eisenman's reference to the Jewish cemetery at Prague as a source of his inspiration, all lock the symbol into place.

Of course, there are people who desecrate stones or anything that is unprotected in a public place. However, many visitors at the Memorial aggressively fend off even passive observation of their antics and inappropriate

² Lea Rosh, "*Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen.*" *Der Streit um ein deutsches Denkmal.* (Berlin, 1999) p.135

behaviour with hostile interrogations, threats or direct assault. There is a misplaced sense of self-righteousness that pervades many of the fun-seeking at the memorial, with the implication that any judgment of their antics would represent a severe infringement of their rights.

Despite all of this, the organizers of the memorial represented by the Stiftung für das Denkmal der ermordeten Juden Europas (henceforth: Stiftung) release a statement to the press in May 2007, celebrating the success of the object, as indicated, according to Lea Rosh,³ by the ‘respectful’ behaviour of visitors, and the fact that, according to Uwe Neumärker⁴ (the Stiftung’s manager), there are virtually no disturbances. This can only be described as pure propaganda and is effectively an outrageous insult to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The very same person, Uwe Neumärker, just three months earlier, on January 29, admitted that the Stiftung had withheld imperative information from the public sphere two years long: the fact that the Memorial is constantly doused in massive quantities of urine.⁵

The endeavour to build the Memorial as it now stands has been described as a fight. At the inauguration on 10 May 2005, Lea Rosh proudly praised the efforts of the ‘seven’ people who also ‘fought’. Which makes one pause in retrospect to wonder, if this was the appropriate way to go about committing to memory a tragedy of such proportions as the Holocaust. Where was the humility, sensitivity and tenor appropriate even to such simple endeavours as erecting a stone to commemorate *one* lost life? Indeed if the memorial had to be fought for, then it can most likely expect attempts at retaliation by those who were, dare I say it, defeated. Which is why (no doubt) it is not unusual to hear the remark that the memorial: “Is getting exactly what it deserves” (in reference to the abuse) from Berliners who are neither anti-Semitic nor Holocaust deniers. It has become a symbol in many ways of

³ Berlin Zeitung (BZ), 11 May 2007

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ BZ, 29 January 2007

something forced, perhaps this is why the organisers and German Chancellor Angela Merkel now fail in their duty to reprimand those who treat it with disrespect — unable to decipher when to assert authority and when to refrain.

They lack the courage to defend what elsewhere would be an unequivocal principle. At the Holocaust Memorial in Paris, where adequate signs inform even a stray visitor where they are and why, guards do not hesitate to correct anyone who so much as places one foot on the immaculate lawn before the memorial, or who leans against the protruding roof of the subterranean structure below. Visitors who descend the narrow stone staircase to the simple tomb-like memorial find themselves alone (without guards) and in a silence that allows them to contemplate the vault-like spaces, texts and verse of French poets incised in red in the stone walls. In the centre of the city, this subterranean space, suddenly removed from the bustle and brightness of Parisian flair, is a chilling, sobering and unforgettable experience.



30. Deutschland – Weltmeister. Situation 2006.

Further east, in Hong Kong on June 4, an annual commemoration has been taking place since 1989, to remember the events at Tiananmen Square in Beijing and those who died in what began as a student demonstration. The mass commemoration is comprised of tens of thousands, who gather with their candles to remember the dead regardless of weather conditions. This is an unusual example of an enduring, genuine commemoration, by a people motivated of their own volition to remember and honour the dead. Despite the fact that this commemoration is still forbidden just across the border in the People's Republic of China (where authorities crack down instantly on any attempt to even mention the events commemorated) there are still 'clandestine' attempts by mourners to remember the dead.



31. Situation Spring 2007.

In contrast, the Berlin memorial has become a playground for youths, families and tourists, complete with cheap souvenir shops, fast food establishments and a Munich Beer Hall. The establishment of the 100 metre long Visitors Terrace in 2006, and its prolongation in 2007, confirmed that the organisers of the memorial and by implication the German people, are unable to establish a respectful and serious commemoration of the murdered Jews of Europe. It makes it appear more like a celebration of the murder, complete with the regular 'Nostalgia' bus rides along rear perimeter and 'Lonsdale' clad neo-Nazi youths jumping on the stelae. Lonsdale, the English clothing manufacturer, is a favourite of contemporary Nazi loyalist youths. Worn 'correctly' the company logo, brandished on t-shirts and the like, re-invents the NSDAP (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) in NSDA. As all symbols of the Nazis are now forbidden in Germany, the youths misuse Lonsdale to identify themselves as belonging to the 'neo' nazi movement. The English company has tried to improve their image, but have obviously little control over their customer's predilections.

"Let us rejoice with games, sausage and plenty of beer" is the overall message emanating from the area at the memorial. And is inadvertently perceived by visiting foreign tourists who join in the merriment.

There is not one serious bookshop at the Visitors terrace, but only cheap paperbacks advertising the Best Berlin Bars, tourist sites and restaurants, all huddled amongst the display of traditional German Beer mugs, German flags, stuffed toys, Buddy-Bears and mock DDR souvenirs such as SED⁶ cigarette lighters.

⁶ Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)



32. Situation 3rd week of July 2007.

Instead of evoking visitor's respect (as is apparently needed) the Visitors Terrace encourages drinking, partying — such as on New Years Eve 2006, when a party took place in full swing at the Terrace — and eating at the Memorial for the Murdered.

The regular festive events at Brandenburger Tor mean that when not doused in urine from a million football fans, that the memorial is inundated with pop music and families seeking Sunday afternoon entertainment. It becomes an extension of the *Volkfest* activities complete with its lurid cheap atmosphere.

The serious public has been repelled from the memorial. Very occasionally I have observed someone attempting to gauge its sense and significance, only to be constantly disrupted and offended by people jumping

above their heads from one stele to another, running and colliding at high speed through the concrete corridors, screeching in wild games of hide and seek, spilling their beer over the memorial or munching on their sausage whilst marching through the labyrinth. Most visitors do not even attempt to find the hidden underground Ort der Information at the rear of the memorial. The large number of visitors herded into the stelae and Ort der Information from tourist buses, has no doubt increased the visitor's statistics for the Stiftung's press releases. However, it obviously has had little effect in altering their understanding of the Memorial as anything other than a user-friendly theme park, where one goes to entertain and amuse oneself.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CONCLUSIONS

A memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallized, perfected, adorned, installing itself in the place of a raw memory and growing at its expense.

Ma è anche vero che un ricordo troppo spesso evocato, ed espresso in forma di racconto, tende a fissarsi in uno stereotipo, in una forma collaudata dall'esperienza, cristallizzata, perfezionata, adorna, che si installa al posto del ricordo greggio e cresce a sua spese.

*Primo Levi*¹

Germans want their past to have happened to them. They want to have suffered from themselves, the way everybody else suffered from them.

*Jane Kramer*²

This longing to be normal is comprehensible, but cannot be fulfilled. The Jews are simply not like the rest.

Diese Sehnsucht nach Normalität ist nachzuvollziehen, aber nicht erfüllbar. Die Juden sind eben nicht wie alle anderen.

*Lea Rosh*³

When I first heard about the proposed Holocaust Memorial, I naively expected and indeed hoped for something instigated by 'noble' intentions.

¹ Primo Levi, *I sommersi e i salvati*. 1986. Quoted from: *Opere*. Vol. I. (Turin 1987) p. 664. English translation by Raymond Rosenthal *The Drowned and the Saved*. (New York, 1988) p. 24

² Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory. Looking for Germany in the New Germany* (New York, 1995) p. 260

³ Lea Rosh, "Die Juden, das sind doch die anderen." *Der streit um ein deutsches Denkmal* (Berlin, 1999) p. 25

However, something sounded wrong with the initial discussions and debates about the endeavour.

I began to research the procedure, without pre-conceived ideas of how the actual memorial would eventually turn out. I had a vestige of hope that the artwork might, despite all odds, somehow succeed.

Contrary to most residents of Berlin, I did not align myself with one of the two categories of 'for' or 'against'. I simply wanted to observe, document, and in the final analysis judge the results.

It is not without a measure of dismay that I reached the conclusions presented in this text. What follows may sound very severe in relation to the subject represented. But it is important to separate the subject from those who took it upon themselves to bluntly transgress, re-invent, and adapt it to their particular needs.

The endeavour to build a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe was marked by hypocrisy and latent attempts at self-aggrandizement by those who initiated, organised and participated in its construction.

There was a failure to establish, or even recognize the necessity of, a fundamental distance (constituted by respect) to be maintained at all times to the subject of the Holocaust and its victims.

The presumptuousness of the organisers and initiators, in assuming to be entitled to preside over the representation of the experience of the 'victim' is abhorrent. During the decisive parliamentary session on 25 June 1999 where politicians voted to build the Eisenman memorial, the chairman of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), Wolfgang Gerhardt, proclaimed:

What is required is not an institution, exhibition hall or some kind of pedagogical supplement. The core of what is required is the art of bringing

out this drama in the German history in an artistic form — not something else, not more, but also not less.⁴

The fact that German politicians assume to have the authority to do this, indeed, to turn the experience of the victims into a ‘drama’ as if they were staging a theatrical production, is completely unacceptable. It indicates a sheer absence of adequate understanding in every possible respect.

It is not the task of the ‘persecutor’ to talk in the place of those they persecuted. There is a given distance in this relationship that should never be breached, and is constituted by basic respect. Bluntly breaching the divide between persecutor and victim represents a type of violation.

An underlying bid to take the place of the victim and subsequently blur the distinction between victim and persecutor was apparent throughout the construction procedure.

There was a failure to clearly define in whose interests the memorial was being built and why, which led to constant conflicts and a confusion about its very purpose. For example, there is no clear statement or indication that the crime was instigated by Germany. It is as if the Jews had been murdered through no fault of the Germans. The pedantic title ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe’ gives no indication as to why or how or by whom these people were killed. ‘Memorial to the Jews Systematically Persecuted and Murdered by Germany’ would have been more definitive. By building a memorial ostensibly like one the Jews would build themselves (as in the model example of Yad Vashem), Germany appears to be attempting to abdicate its historical responsibility in relation to the crime, despite possible ‘good’ intentions held by some individuals.

⁴ Wolfgang Gerhardt, in Rosh op. cit. p. 139 and Deutscher Bundestag: Plenarprotokoll 14/48 25 June 1999

The absence of sincerity created a fundamental malaise, which tainted all stages of the building procedure. It blatantly emerged in the inappropriate behaviour of visitors at the completed memorial.

In 1988 Lea Rosh, the instigator of the Memorial, wrote after seeing the Israeli Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial that “there has to be a similar memorial in the country of the persecutors, just like here in the country of victims. [...] WE will build just such a memorial.”⁵



33. *FREAK*, So macht die Shoah richtig Spaß, 2007.

This initial intention to create a memorial in Germany analogous to that of Israel, led to the realization seventeen years later of the Eisenman monument. It expressed an unconcealed identification with the victims persecuted in the name of the German people by the German state under the Nazis.

⁵ Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation 1988-1995 Der Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V. Berlin 1995 p. 3

The vague competition information distributed to artists in 1997, successfully blurred the difference between perpetrator and victim, in a text that failed to identify Germany as the unique instigator of the Holocaust, and to clearly distinguish between Holocaust memorials built in Israel from those built in Germany. The emphasis was simply on an object, which should arouse emotions by addressing the ‘contemplative and emotional receptiveness of the visitor’.⁶ Wolfgang Thierse giving the opening address at the decisive Bundestag session on 25 June 1999, praised the memorial, certain that it would ‘unfold’ the desired ‘terror of loneliness’⁷ and that this would most likely create an ‘understanding of the unimaginable’⁸ for the visitor. Clearly it is the imagined experience of the victim, which should be aroused and identified with by the visitor.

Yet how could such a memorial be appropriate? Germany was the instigator of the Holocaust. What right does it have to talk in the place of the victims? Germany’s role as the legal inheritor of the Nazi state was surely not to adopt the position of victim, which this attempt whether conscious or not ends up being, but to openly address its role as persecutor. Despite much opposition by members of the intellectual community, clearly enunciated already in 1995 and earlier,⁹ the German state took it upon itself to realize a morally faulty idea.

Seventeen years of debate, construction and promotion have delivered an abstract hollow object with no outward signs defining its dedication and reason for being. The failure to establish a clearly defined and shared goal, in a society where a common understanding of the necessity for such a memorial did not exist, contributed to the failure of the monument.

⁶ Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Engeres Auswahlverfahren, Aufgabenbeschreibung und Rahmenbedingungen, Published by the Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur, Juni 1997 p. 9

⁷ Rosh op. cit. 1999 p. 135, Deutscher Bundestag: Plenarprotokoll 14/48, 25 June 1999

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, *Der Wettbewerb für das ‘Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas’*. Eine Streitschrift (Berlin, 1995)

The selective ranking of victims still sixty years after their murder, by those in whose name they were murdered was inappropriate, inexcusable and highly alarming. It is symptomatic of the dishonesty and absence of sincere intention, particularly in relation to Holocaust scholarship.

It is ironical that the memorial should have been established upon such avid discrimination. By virtue of the re-selection and isolation of a people for a second time round in German history, it inadvertently condones exactly that which it should admonish.

Instead of teaching that discrimination is what brings about injustice and violation of human rights and that its targets (defined by notions of race, biological characteristics or sexual preference) are arbitrary and dependent on the ideologies of those exercising the abuse, and, that it can happen anywhere and anytime when we fail to recognise, intervene and stop it — the ideology behind the memorial propagates it. After all discrimination is what brought us the Holocaust.

By teaching selective remembrance and selective respect, one is also teaching selective vigilance.

By deeming when the death of an innocent person is ‘important’ and when it is ‘negligible’ according to the victim’s predetermined rank, one simply perpetuates the thinking of Nazism. And that is the intolerable attitude that underlined the obscene argument to make a selective memorial and or memorials, which Rosh and her supporters refused to recognize. The discrimination they chose to immortalize runs the danger of selectively targeting the same victims all over again. It is therefore not surprising that youths, brandishing their clandestine neo-Nazi logos (in the form of Lonsdale clothing) walk on top of the memory of the murdered Jews.

The faulty and wishful sense of identification with the victim, distorted beneath a deluge of rhetoric, debate, memorial modifications, promotion

campaigns as well as building and opening ceremonies, steered in part the enterprise. It was clearly evident in the failure to adequately acknowledge and address the inappropriate behaviour of German citizens at the completed Memorial.



34. Spring 2007.

I suspect that it is the reason why the intentions of the memorial builders as well as the intended function the object should have, could never be stated in lucid and unequivocal terms. It is the reason why the German people deferred the memorial enterprise to Jewish representatives. And it appears to represent an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for their own history as the unique instigators of the Holocaust.

The attempt to take the place of the victim: “This memorial allows the sensory-emotional imagination of loneliness, harassment, threat” (*Dieses Denkmal ermöglicht eine sinnlich-emotionale Vorstellung von Vereinsamung, Bedrängnis, Bedrohung*)¹⁰ as defined by Wolfgang Thierse at the inauguration, betrays an unconcealed bid at vindication.

And this is what the behaviour of visitors at the memorial seems to indicate: finally released from the burden of history and responsibility, they are free to celebrate and party upon the numb cast concrete.

The resulting obfuscation has created a travesty, an object in which the boundary between victim and persecutor is consequently blurred and the extent and ramifications of the Holocaust foreshortened and silenced.

By not establishing a platform of acceptance, but almost enforcing the memorial on the German people, the state inadvertently gave the object the character of a dumb battering ram, annihilating any trace of sensitivity or humility before the historical tragedy it should represent. The primary interest was not in creating a valued, accepted object relevant to contemporary Germans, but forcing it through at all costs.

The condemnation of the memorial site as ‘inauthentic’, applied with repetitive monotony, undermined any sense of something ‘genuine’ the memorial may have acquired or gleaned. It inevitably conjured up the image of something fake. How were the public to negotiate something that they had been told is fake?

Too many modifications to the original Richard Serra proposal reduced what could have been a potent and warning memorial (in the sense of a *Mahnmal*, that is a monument with a message) to an innocuous object bereft of any aura of the untouchable.

¹⁰ Wolfgang Thierse, Pressemitteilung: Rede von Bundespräsident Wolfgang Thierse zur Eröffnung des “Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas” am 10. Mai 2005 in Berlin. 10 May 2005

An almost systematic erosion of respect, integrity and acceptance for the memorial was repeatedly instigated by the memorial organisers themselves in the public sphere.

Initially deflecting attention away from the memorial site, then removing it from the discussion, and still later, outrightly misrepresenting it, constituted a lack of openness and finally outright deceit. The failure to acknowledge the significant historical situation uncovered in 1998, and the subsequent quasi-secrecy that shrouded the uncovering and removal of historical ruins, established a line of deceit, which was to become a permanent feature in the memorial construction procedure. In July 2007, I was informed by someone employed in the initial uncovering of the ruins that “*Die Senat hätte das am liebsten unter Verschluss gehalten*”¹¹ (The Senat would have preferred to keep the uncovering of the ruins entirely secret). This only confirmed my experience, and leads me to believe that just like with the ‘unofficial’ decision that no German design for a memorial should be chosen, likewise, an unofficial decision to keep the findings on site out of the public sphere, was most likely also a directive given to those necessarily involved.

The Foundation, established to modify and oversee the building of the Memorial and the Ort der Information, comprised primarily of politicians competing for the interests of their political parties, demonstrated that the intentions of the memorial builders were not first and foremost in the interests of Holocaust remembrance, scholarship or art expertise.

The hierarchization of victim groups, repeated in the very structure of the Stiftung itself, reinforced the impression of a prejudiced organisation, which failed to demonstrate the appropriate respect and acknowledgement of those victims.

¹¹ Private interview with Berlin geophysicist who prefers to remain anonymous, 18 July 2007.

The political manoeuvring involved in determining the inclusion of Jewish representation in the decision making body of the Stiftung, revealed opportunistic interests as the main driving factor, and maintained the state of confusion around the purpose of the memorial: In whose interest it was being built and why. This set up a permanent conflict (between the representatives of the ‘victims’ and their interests, and, the representatives of the ‘persecutors’ and their interests), which deepened during the construction procedure and undermined the integrity of the project in the public sphere.



35. Visitors terrace, Spring 2007.

Friction within the Stiftung was established almost immediately, with the conflict between Rosh and Thierse. Rosh, vying for the interests of her private ‘citizens initiative’ rather than those of the newly established Stiftung, set a

farcical tone, up-staging the Memorial founding ceremony. The fact that Rosh was unwilling to relinquish the project to the state, showed with increasing incidence a barely concealed understanding of the monument as her own project. This effectively usurped any sense of integrity or appropriate measure of respect before the subject the Memorial should address.

The construction of a tower, on which a photo of victims being driven to the gas chamber was juxtaposed with the bank account details of Rosh's Förderkreis, inadvertently made the project appear as a money making incentive, ridiculously evoking images of Nazi account books detailing profits to be made from the Final Solution. Furthermore, the fact that it was erected on the very site where some ten years earlier watch towers from the DDR dictatorship had stood, and were used amongst other things for purposes of murder, was gross. This no doubt severed support from sections of the German society.

The problems surrounding the 'symbolic' founding ceremony, such as the absence of important political figures, served to trivialize the significant historical dimensions and the project's initiation.

The Stiftung's direction and most powerful position was in the hands of a politician who had not contributed to the ten years long debate, but who happened to be the President of the Bundestag. Thierse's reactions and threats towards Stiftung member Günther Nooke, in the early months of the Stiftung's life, as well as the reported levels of a loss of confidence in the true purpose of his interests in presiding over the memorial, helped to create an image of the Stiftung as an untrustworthy enterprise comprised of individuals merely vying for power.

The 'Light Against Forgetting' publicity campaign in which the placard posted at the site was allowed to rot, fall to the ground, and lie smashed

amongst the leaves for one or two years within the fenced site, became an advertisement for negligence and subsequently loss of faith and credibility.

Mounting the 'Light against forgetting', at a site where the existence of Nazi ruins (particularly the Goebbels bunker and other bunkers) had remained virtually unacknowledged and ostensibly 'forgotten' in the competition information and subsequent debate and building procedure, made the memorial organisers, with their selective memory, appear as hypocrites.

This was the second attempt by the Förderkreis to use the memorial to promote itself in the public sphere, although it was no longer their own project but that of the state.

Various placards attached to the fence surrounding the memorial site for long periods of time, such as 'Snow removal and Landscape gardening' created an unsolicited cynicism — the murder of Jews becomes equated with snow removal — furthering the damage to the image of the project within the public sphere.

The third attempt of the Förderkreis to promote itself with The Holocaust Never Happened campaign discredited the project in several ways: It promoted a lie (still defended by various groups in Germany) repeating the iconographic means of Adolf Hitler's personal photographer Heinrich Hoffmann.

The imagery lacked a direct relevance to the lives of contemporary Germans, and instead, reinforced the value of Nazi 'aesthetic taste', by poisoning the alpine Berchtesgaden imagery as 'evidence' that the Holocaust had never happened.

The implied message of the combined imagery and text was something like: When one sees the pristine alpine landscape, one could never imagine that the Holocaust had happened, therefore we need to build a memorial...and so

on. When in fact Berchtesgaden and the life around it was indeed intrinsic to the Nazi ideology and the functionaries who instrumented it.



36. Summer 2007.

The lie about the Holocaust was underlined by further levels of deceit: That money had to be raised to build the memorial, as well as the implication that building the memorial would prevent rising Nazism. Furthermore, the campaign initiated an open war between members of the Stiftung, in which the deceit of particular memorial organisers became public knowledge. The poster also caused offence to many Holocaust survivors — painfully demonstrating yet again the problem of conflicting interests in the absence of a defined shared goal in the construction of the memorial.

The tendency of Germans (non-Jewish ‘persecutor’ groups) to assume to have the authority of the victims themselves, effectively speaking in the

place of the victim, to the point of claiming to know better than the victims themselves (exemplified in the conflict between Rosh and a Holocaust survivor) demonstrated yet again the attempt to assume the place of the victim. This showed a lack of appropriate distance and respect to the subject and endeavour.

The campaign made the memorial appear to be merely a vehicle for personal gain and promotion. It rendered the object, and by implication the Holocaust, as a product or commodity of the self-indulgent, anti-intellectual and profiteering.

These events tried the limits of an already unsympathetic public, helped to exhaust any serious interest, respect and possible care for the Memorial.

Just two months later, the President of the German Parliament openly announced and staged an irrefutable lie: the removal of ruins and ammunition some three years after they had all been removed from the site, with the exception of the Goebbels bunker, which remained hidden under a mound of sand in the background. Furthermore, in this farcical action, Thierse still failed to address the existence of the Bunker. And two years later, the Stiftung under his direction, posted signs on the surrounding fence instructing that no trace of any ruins dating before 1945 had been found on the site.

A politician, the President of the German Parliament, in this action sealed the fate of the memorial. A direct lie, delivered in a theatrical fun-like gesture surrounded by the cameras of the press. Any sense of the memorial as an object representing one of the worst crimes in recorded history; is blown apart in this condescending parody by the most prominent and powerful person in charge of the building of the memorial himself. This example, broadcast on nation-wide television, cast a shameful indelible shadow over the monument. The action no doubt helped to set the tone for a mindless theme-

park and fun-for-all. It intensified and strengthened the line of deceit slicing through the project.

The Buddy-Bears enterprise was installed next to the memorial site, parallel to the appearance of the first stelae and commencement of building, and directly at the location, which had hosted the gargantuan *The Holocaust never happened* poster in Berlin. The cheap and colourful bears, preaching various reductive quasi-religious mottos, established an atmosphere of theme-park entertainment. With their multiculturalism-made-easy solutions and *idiotensicher* formulas for world peace, the bears successfully promoted anti-intellectualism, and fun for the masses.

This in itself should not have been a problem, if they had been located elsewhere, and not supported by politicians such as Berlin Mayor, Klaus Wowereit and Senator Peter Strieder (the director of construction of the memorial and member of the Stiftung). The bears, which have infested all corners of Berlin's souvenir market, are now for some inexplicable reason sold as souvenirs to visitors at the memorial.

Visitors to the bears however, whilst obviously entertained and amused, showed respect and admiration for the garish plastic extrusions. Unlike the Memorial, which appeared two years later, the Bears were not climbed on, jumped on, or urinated upon. The only physical intervention I witnessed was the invariable attempt by visitors to gently place an arm around the plastic forms in a gesture of obvious affection.

The proximity of the Bears helped to dispel any atmosphere of veneration or serious meditation on the tragedy of the Holocaust at the location of the memorial. They set an atmosphere of art-as-entertainment for the masses, without the intellectual context or frame found in an art museum or gallery, at the expense of the growing memorial.

In the Degussa episode, chemical companies attempted to surreptitiously undermine each other whilst competing for the contract to apply anti-graffiti coating to the stelae.

This exemplified inappropriate opportunism by companies (who had already profited from the Holocaust) seeking to profit from the building of a Holocaust memorial.

Members of the Stiftung, in the Degussa question, appeared to use the Memorial yet again as an opportunity to publicise their own moral superiority. Once again, German (non-Jewish) members presumed to speak in the place of the victim. Their demonstrative outrage showed an unconcealed identification, if not appropriation of the place of victim. Furthermore, the ignorance of these very members in the Stiftung about fundamental facts about the Holocaust made them appear as hypocrites, unqualified and insincere.

Further deceit within the Stiftung itself was exemplified by conflicting reports that essential information had either been withheld, or discussed but not understood, or later denied. In any case, the alarm about Degussa's involvement did not go off until the Stiftung's decision to use Degussa products was exposed in public long after the fact. This made the Stiftung appear to have no integrity.

The Degussa scandal was humiliating for some Jewish decedents and survivors. In the absence of clearly defined intentions in the construction of the memorial, which would have guided such decisions as the Degussa one, the sharply conflicting interests of victim (and their descendants) as opposed to persecutor (representative descendants) was exacerbated and remained unresolved.

The subsequent Peter Eisenman 'joke' episode (issuing from unresolved grievances in the Degussa trouble) only became a public scandal because someone (presumably from the Stiftung) reported Eisenman's

comment, made behind the closed doors of the Stiftung meeting, to the press. This again exposed the Stiftung as an un-cohesive organisation, and brought its integrity into question.

Certain members of the Stiftung (representatives of the ‘persecutor’ group) used the scandal to promote an image of their moral superiority, and expertise in the place of the victim, again demonstrating an unconcealed wish to take the place of the victim. Ironically, Peter Eisenman ‘himself a Jew’ became the scapegoat of persons (Rosh in particular), who themselves had instrumented deceitful campaigns in the public sphere.

The episode exemplified the deep-seated unresolved issues between ‘victim’ representatives and ‘persecutor’ representatives and the control of the building of the memorial. It highlighted the severe damage caused in the absence of defined purpose and intention, fundamental to the erection of a memorial.

The scandal set up a conflict amongst the Jewish community, which was subsequently (and shamefully) presided over by Germans (non-Jewish) and the German state, who proceeded to instruct ‘the Jews’ on how they should behave.

The episode exposed deep-seated prejudiced concepts within the German society, which remained largely unquestioned and therefore apparently accepted. It scandalized the Memorial, making petty squabbles the object of public attention, rather than preparing a space into which an honourable object could be respectfully received.

By disqualifying the integrity of the memorial’s architect Peter Eisenman in public, the Stiftung dealt out another defeating blow to the memorial, just months before its completion.

The quasi-Jewish ceremony used to inaugurate the Memorial, ostensibly built by and for the representatives of the ‘persecutors’ (non-Jewish Germans)

again demonstrated the confusion caused in the absence of defined common understanding—in whose interest it was being built and why. At this stage it seemed as if there was an obscure attempt to smear over the difference (between victim and persecutor) and promote a ‘reconciled’ group along the lines of: “Let us as one undifferentiated liberated group happily build the Memorial together”. And whilst there were plenty of actual Holocaust survivors who took part in the Memorial debate and procedure, there was a conspicuous absence of any persecutors other than the diffuse idea of their ‘descendants’.

The attempt to posit the German people themselves as victims, was evident in Thierse’s opening speech at the inauguration, in which he referred to the sixtieth anniversary of the defeat, just one day previous, as Germany’s ‘liberation’ from the ‘Hitler barbarism’. If the German people had been victims of Hitler (whom they elected in 1933), just waiting for their liberation, the commemoration of those targeted and murdered by the Nazis would have taken place unquestionably and immediately following the ostensible ‘liberation’. Furthermore, they would not have shot at their ‘liberators’. However, we know that this was not the case, and it is highly offensive, sixty years post WWII, at the opening of the Holocaust memorial to reinvent the past in such a deceitful way.

Rosh’s tooth implantation gesture, reminiscent of the Catholic church’s preservation of rotting relics, succeeded in transforming the inauguration ceremony into a travesty. As the last gesture preceding the opening of the memorial to the public, this internationally televised action launched the memorial into the world of parody.

The perverse attempt to mark the memorial as her very own, sealed with her words: “It is a memorial for the victims, the persecutors do not have

a place here,”¹² again demonstrated an unconcealed desire to take the place of the victim or martyr.

Rosh’s bid for propriety has the effect of excluding others, namely the German people, from feeling the memorial to be their shared and valued monument. It invited fertile hostility and contempt towards the object by an audience, which had grown tired of the shallow promotional stunts, projection of guilt, and which had also a limited if not exhausted capacity to engage with the Holocaust history in a meaningful way.

The abstract memorial object was released to the public with no signs or plaques above ground elucidating the reason for its existence. The fact that visitors’ antics are mostly regarded as a form of acceptance of the memorial, gives disrespect for the Monument and by inference what it represents, the Holocaust, free licence.

Two years into the life of the memorial this behaviour has not improved. Two Chancellors of Germany have looked away, and failed to use their authority to address the German people and protect the memory of the murdered Jews.

The press announcement in May 2007, which included a candid misrepresentation of the truth about visitors’ behaviour at the memorial, two years following its opening, shows that the Stiftung still perpetuates deceit.

Why the German state not only adopted the misguided idea of a talk-show hostess, but gave that same person exceptional powers by making her vice-chairman in charge of the memorial’s construction is unclear. It did however indicate a preference for publicity rather than scholarship, most likely guided by the desire to create a tourist attraction in the centre of the newly reunited German capital (the influx of tourism at the memorial was planned and catered for), propagate a diffuse idea of empathy and of the Germans as

¹² Lea Rosh, Inauguration speech, 10 May 2005

victims, and avoid facing the very questions that sixty years later still remained unanswered. The extent of the crimes committed by Germany, much of which (particularly in relation to the other victim groups) is as yet un-researched and unexposed, could remain unknown and unquestioned. Germany could improve its image in the world and secure subsequent political advantage.

Hence, at the parliamentary session in 1999, Annette Fugmann-Hessing (SPD) delivered the following:

The decisive point is not the acceptance of the construction, but the political will [...] a memorial that expresses our sadness, shame and despair, which we consciously erect in the form of a memorial and symbol at the centre of government and parliament, as a sign of peaceful intention. No other moment in time is more favourable than when Berlin fully acquires its function as the capital. Therefore, it is right to make the decision now, and put it into place without delay.

Nicht die Akzeptanz des Bauwerks ist das Entscheidende, sondern der politische Wille [...] ein Denkmal das unsere Trauer, Scham und Verzweiflung ausdrückt, das wir bewusst am Ort von Regierung und Parlament als Mahnmal und Zeichen der friedlichen Absicht errichten. Kein Zeitpunkt ist dafür günstiger als der der vollen Aufnahme der Hauptstadtfunction durch Berlin. Deshalb ist es richtig, die Entscheidung jetzt zu treffen und sie ohne Verzögerung umzusetzen.¹³

The decision would also threaten if not exhaust the finances as well as tolerance for Holocaust scholarship and research: hence the fear expressed many times over about the status of the concentration camp memorials, their up-keep and dwindling budgets amongst other things.

¹³ Express thanks to Lea Rosh for providing this quote in Rosh op. cit. 1999.

What only need sound like a 'good' idea suffices to resound instantly in the superficial world of in-flight magazines, tourist brochures, diplomats' agendas and politicians' rhetoric around the world for promotional purposes.

Yet, memorials and their cryptic messages exist in many forms and states, in traces of the past, and, of their own volition, regardless of memorial organising committees.

And when all is said and done, the Degesch company logo, printed on the deadly cylinders of Zyklon B insecticide used to gas over one million people at Auschwitz, still stands proudly as the Degesch company logo in 2007. Degesch who must also bluntly believe that memory only comes in prefabricated concrete blocks, mindlessly write on their website:

Degesch is a worldwide leader in the specialized field of stored product pest control. Degesch employees continue to make important contributions in fumigant research, development and application techniques.¹⁴

The Memorial instigator Rosh and some members of the Stiftung were ignorant about Degussa's Degesch Zyklon B past. Their ignorance is symptomatic of the broader ignorance of many Germans about their own history: what brought us the Holocaust, how it was sustained, who was involved, what was lost and why.

It may have been more prudent and wise to educate, rather than expose the national symbolic memory of the murdered Jews to deceit, mockery and abuse.

¹⁴ Degesch America, Homepage, 29 March 2007, Degesch, 29 March 2007
www.degeschamerica.com/index.shtml

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The photograph on page 4 of this thesis was taken in early 2007

* Unless otherwise stated, photographs are by the author

ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

BGH	Bundesgerichtshof (German Supreme Court)
Bundestag	The Lower House of the German Parliament
Bündnis 90/Die Grünen	The Greens
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CSU	Christian Social Union of Bavaria
DDR	Deutsche Demokratische Republik (German Democratic Republic)
FDP	Free Democratic Party
Förderkreis	Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas e.V. (Association for the erection of a Memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe)
Gestapo	Geheime Staatspolizei (Nazi secret state police)
JCC	Jewish Claims Conference
JGB	Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin (Jewish Community of Berlin)
KdF	Kanzlei des Führers der NSDAP (Chancellery of the Führer)
Landesdenkmalamt	Historical Buildings Council
MfS	Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (DDR Ministry for State Security)
NPD	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party Germany)
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers Party)
PDS	Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
SD	Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service of the NSDAP)
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party Germany)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	Schutzstaffel (NSDAP black shirt storm troopers)
Stasi	Slang for the abbreviation MfS Ministerium für Staatssicherheit MfS (East German secret

Stiftung	police) Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas (Foundation for the Murdered Jews of Europe)
ZDSR	Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma (Central Council of German Sinti and Roma)
ZJD	Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland (Central Jewish Council of Germany)

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