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# Bulletin of the German Historical Institute

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## Preface

This issue of the *Bulletin* begins with a roundtable conversation about “New Research on Social Movements in Cold War Germany” that the GHI Washington hosted, in a virtual format, in 2022. The last few years have seen a burst of new scholarship on social movements in 1970s and 1980s East and West Germany, including gay and lesbian movements, new visions of conservatism, and antiracist activism. The GHI invited four authors of recent books on postwar social movements – Tiffany Florvil, Craig Griffiths, Samuel Huneke, and Anna von der Goltz – to discuss how recent research has led to a rethinking of the contours of social movements, how different movements were connected to one another, how to think about the relationship between social movements in East and West Germany, and how this research on social movements might change the larger narratives of postwar history.

This issue’s next article addresses a different aspect of postwar Germany history, namely the influence of three German-speaking emigré historians – Adolf Leschnitzer, George Mosse, and Henry Friedlander – on the development of the historiography of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust and, in particular, the reception of their scholarship in West Germany. The author, Anna Corsten (University of Jena), won the 2021 Franz Steiner Prize for Transatlantic History for her book manuscript, published earlier this year in the German Historical Institute’s book series “Transatlantische Historische Studien” series, under the title *Unbequeme Erinnerung: Emigrierte Historiker in der deutschen und US-amerikanischen NS- und Holocaust-Forschung, 1945–1998*. In her feature article Corsten examines the reasons why the research and publications of these emigré historians were sidelined by the West German historical profession for many years before achieving belated recognition beginning in the 1980s. Prominent among these reasons was the opinion of West German

historians that Jewish emigré historians lacked the necessary objectivity that non-Jewish West German historians supposedly brought to the task of writing the history of a regime in which many of their number had been complicit.

The next section of this *Bulletin* is a thematic *Forum* on one of the most horrific – and still relatively neglected – aspects of Nazi Germany, its treatment of Soviet prisoners of war during the Second World War. The forum grew out of a symposium on the same topic that the GHI co-organized with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) last fall. The occasion for this symposium was the publication of the fourth volume of the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, which covers *Camps and Other Detention Facilities under the German Armed Forces*.

The Forum's first article, by Dallas Michelbacher (USHMM), highlights the key findings of the new *Encyclopedia* volume, which provides comprehensive information about the structure and organization of the German prisoner of war (POW) camp system, the experiences of prisoners of war in German captivity, and the role of the Wehrmacht in the persecution of civilian populations. With regard to Soviet POWs, the volume illustrates the mistreatment of Soviet prisoners of war in German captivity at a level of detail that is unprecedented in the English-language literature. The following article, coauthored by Andreas Hilger (Max Weber Foundation's Georgia Branch Office) and Esther Meier (Max Weber Network Eastern Europe & EurAsia), presents new research on the forced labor of Soviet POWs that has come out of the project "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees," which was initiated in 2016 and was, until recently, associated with the German Historical Institute in Moscow. Hilger and Meier reveal the contradictions of a policy that ordered the widespread use of Soviet POWs for labor but, at the same time, followed the logic of a war of extermination. Far from benefiting from this contradiction, Soviet POWs got the worst of both worlds. Their poor treatment

and merciless exploitation resulted in the deaths of 3.3 million Soviet POWs, about 60% of those captured. The Forum's final article, by Edward Westermann (Texas A&M University, San Antonio), places the treatment of Soviet POWs in the larger context of the Wehrmacht's war in the East, arguing that Nazi Germany's previous military campaigns in Poland and Serbia established the murderous "practices and precedents that became part and parcel of the German way of war in the East, especially with regard to POWs and hostages."

The Conference Reports section looks back on GHI conferences that took place in the first half of this year covering a wide variety of topics ranging from the everyday history of airports to material culture in German-Jewish history to the production of knowledge by refugees. Please turn to our news section for recent GHI news. For up-to-date information on upcoming events, publications, fellowships, and calls for papers, please consult the GHI website at <http://www.ghi-dc.org>, check our twitter account at <https://twitter.com/GHIWashington>, or sign up for our digital newsletter on our website. We look forward to welcoming you at upcoming events in both Washington and Berkeley.

**Simone Lässig (Director) and  
Richard F. Wetzell (Editor)**





The background features abstract geometric shapes. A dark blue triangle points downwards from the top left. A light blue triangle points upwards from the bottom left. A grey triangle points upwards from the bottom right. The word "Features" is centered in the white space.

# Features



# New Research on Social Movements in Cold War Germany: A Roundtable

Tiffany N. Florvil, Craig Griffiths, Samuel Clowes Huneke, and Anna von der Goltz in conversation with Kerstin Brückweh and Richard F. Wetzell

The last few years have seen a burst of new scholarship on social movements in 1970s and 1980s Germany, including gay and lesbian movements, new visions of conservatism, and antiracist activism that arose in East and West Germany. Drawing on a diversity of archives, oral histories, and printed sources, these new studies make a forceful case for the centrality of these social movements to understanding the social, political, and cultural histories of East and West Germany. At the same time, they help us rethink the contours of social movements, by integrating previously overlooked actors and perspectives and by questioning the totems of traditional political and activist historiography.

On May 19, 2022, the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) hosted a roundtable discussion with four scholars who focus on the 1970s and 1980s in East and West Germany

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and whose recent work both constitutes and engages with this new historiography on social movements in this period: Tiffany N. Florvil, Associate Professor of History at the University of New Mexico and author of *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro German Women and the Making of a Transitional Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020); Craig Griffiths, Senior Lecturer in Modern History at Manchester Metropolitan University and author of *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation: Male Homosexual Politics in 1970s West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Samuel Clowes Huneke, Assistant Professor, George Mason University, and author of *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022); and Anna von der Goltz, Professor of History at Georgetown University, and author of *The Other '68ers: Student Protest and Christian Democracy in West Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

The roundtable was moderated by Richard F. Wetzell, Research Fellow at the GHI, and Kerstin Brückweh, Professor of History at the Berliner Hochschule für Technik at the time of the roundtable, and now Professor at Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) and head of the research area "Contemporary History and Archive" at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space. Heike Friedman (GHI Pacific Office) served as tech host for this virtual event. The conversation is published here, with only minor edits for style, on the basis of a transcription prepared by Franz Lukas Bolz (GHI). A video recording of the roundtable is available on the GHI website.

**Richard F. Wetzell:** Today, we are excited to host this roundtable on an important aspect of postwar German history. Our panelists are the authors of four recent books: on the mobilization of Afro-German women in a transnational movement, on center-right student activists within the West German student movement, and on gay liberation movements in West and East Germany. These are four really amazing books. But our purpose today is not a book presentation. After the authors

will initially have a chance to sketch out their main arguments, our discussion will address larger questions. It will offer the panelists a forum to engage with the ways in which questions of race, class, sexuality, gender, and ideology shape our understanding of social and political movements and to think through how this new scholarship has recast or might recast the historiography of Cold War Germany.

### **I. Four Topics**

**Kerstin Brückweh:** It is a great pleasure for me to co-host this and it was a great pleasure to read all your books. Starting with Tiffany, could each of you briefly sketch out the main thesis of your book?

**Tiffany N. Florvil:** Thank you for the lovely invitation, I am excited to be in conversation with everyone. I will keep it brief: my book, *Mobilizing Black Germany*, is about the intellectual, institutional, and cultural contours of the Black German movement of the 1980s and 90s. I really focus on how activism is a site for knowledge production and how activist-intellectuals, whom I refer to as “quotidian intellectuals,” use activism in a variety of ways to disseminate knowledge, to inform German publics, and also to reclaim their place in the national polity. Black German quotidian intellectuals employed vernacular aesthetic cultural forms and styles such as spoken word poetry, hip-hop music, and abstract artwork to create new vocabularies, literature, and practices that in turn led to the formation of a vibrant Black public sphere. They also did not privilege one creative or expressive form over the other. And so, all of this is about their political and cultural work, and about Black Germans showing us why notions of race still matter, processes of racialization still matter, and how all of that was coded in different forms of aesthetic and vernacular forms in and beyond the German nation.

I see all of this as a way of thinking about social movements more broadly as sites for knowledge production, as sites for everyday intellectualism, everyday activism, and why these

themes matter, especially in a larger context. When we think about Germany as a *Land of Dichter and Denker*, people do not necessarily see activism as a site for intellectual labor or intellectualism, but these grassroots activists were intellectuals. So, that is my larger claim, along with emphasizing the persistence of everyday racism, thinking about the erasure of Black Germans in the national historical context(s), as well as a variety of other themes. Indeed, one of the main themes is (re)considering intellectualism in a new way in Germany.

**Craig Griffiths:** My book *The Ambivalence of Gay Liberation* is about the gay movement in 1970s West Germany, which was a movement made possible by homosexual law reform in 1969. But legal reform did not change everything; it did not give rise to a linear shift from cautious to radical, from closeted to visible, or from shame to pride. And that ambivalent situation is something I have sought to capture in the book. Ambivalence is the analytic prism through which I tried to make sense of the complexities of gay liberation, and to think about how we can see some continuities in a longer history of homosexual emancipation as well. I am interested in discussing to what extent that ambivalence might be useful for other social movements too. Another intervention that I am trying to make with the book is to reveal, or to help reveal, the clear limits of liberalization in postwar West Germany. My focus on ambivalence is a means of moving beyond the so-called “gay success story” (Benno Gammerl’s phrase). I also want to problematize success stories of the Federal Republic itself, and in this I think my book has a lot in common with the wonderful work of Tiffany, Anna, and Sam.

**Anna von der Goltz:** As the title of my book *The Other '68ers: Student Protests and Christian Democracy in West Germany* suggests, it is a book about Christian Democratic student activism in the years around 1968. I wrote the book because I was really intrigued by the fact that a central chapter in Germany’s postwar history seemed to deal almost exclusively with the Left, even though Christian Democrats had been and

they continued to be the most important political force in German history after 1945. The book makes three core arguments, which I will only sketch here. The first one is quite basic, namely that center-right students were present in 1968, not just as staunch opponents of protest, but actually often as central characters and participants. The book's cover shows a famous photograph of a debate that took place in early 1968 that is very often referenced in the literature. It involved Rudi Dutschke, and I show, for instance, that this debate was organized and shaped in significant ways by center-right activists. And so, the idea is about expanding the frame, as it were, writing center-right activists back into a history they were always a part of but that they are not usually included in. This shows that it was a broader, more complex, and, ultimately, a more consequential moment than the traditionally narrow focus on left-wing activism has allowed.

Secondly, the book makes an argument about generation. It is a call to rethink how we conceive of generations in German history and the "68er"-generation, in particular. Generational histories often universalize the experiences of a particular subset of an age cohort, and my approach of focusing on the "other '68ers" offers a corrective here and directs our attention towards thinking about diversity and division within generational cohorts. Finally, the book revisits the extraordinary role that Christian Democracy has played in the history of postwar Europe and postwar Germany, in particular. Some of its protagonists would go on to shape West German political culture in important ways, particularly during the Kohl era of the 1980s. They were an important factor in explaining the success of the Kohl government, I argue. So, in a way, the book helps us to understand why the age of Christian Democracy was interrupted but never really ended in the Federal Republic, at least until now.

**Samuel Clowes Huneke:** *States of Liberation: Gay Men between Dictatorship and Democracy in Cold War Germany* is my new book, just out a couple of months ago. Basically, it

started with a big question about how Germany evolved from the Nazi period, when it was one of the most homophobic states in modern history, up to the present, where Germany is often considered one of the most LGBTQ-friendly states in existence today. In order to answer the question of how Germany evolved on LGBTQ rights, the book looks at both East and West Germany and how the two states treated gay men in particular across the postwar period, starting at the end of World War II and going all the way up through the end of the Cold War. It also looks at liberation movements, how gay and lesbian activists portrayed themselves vis-à-vis these two governments, and how they developed new notions of sexual citizenship in order to ground new claims to rights and privileges under two very different state forms.

In making this argument, or charting this history, the book is diachronic – it moves across time and bounces back and forth between the two states. But it also compares and contrasts gay experiences in East and West Germany. In so doing, it comes to the startling revelation that, in many ways, East Germany was actually better than West Germany in terms of how it treated queer people. Particularly in the 1980s, the gay and lesbian liberation movement in East Germany was wildly successful in terms of pushing specific policies within the socialist government. Ultimately, that is where the title *States of Liberation* comes from: the book makes the argument that there is not really one single project we can refer to as gay or queer liberation, but rather that it is a set of shifting projects, processes, and priorities that arise in different ways in different times and places.

## II. Connections

**Wetzell:** We will now move to questions that try to draw these themes together and enable us to have a discussion about the state of the field, about social movements, and how they are connected. We wanted to start with this question: What kinds



of connections do all of you see between the different social movements that you have analyzed? For instance, what is the relationship of the gay liberation movement, or I should probably say movements, to the student movement or the different parts of the student movement? More generally, in what ways were feminism and antiracism, gay rights and the critique of capitalism, to just name a few issues, connected or related in these different movements? Another way to ask this question is: what did each of you learn from reading the books of the others?

**Griffiths:** To approach this question, we can think about intellectual or ideological links, emotional links, also inspiration, inspiration in action forms for example. To start with the student movement: despite the heteronormativity of the student movement, it *was* important for gay liberation, most especially for the gay left. So, I see the gay left taking from the student movement a really foundational skepticism of capitalism and a skepticism about what was actually possible or realizable within the framework of a liberal democracy. In terms of the types of action, one of the most famous public actions of the gay movement in the 1970s was the front cover story of *Stern* magazine in October 1978, when 682 men collectively outed themselves in that publication. We cannot possibly imagine the action having taken place without the prior action of feminists, in 1971, when 374 women declared on the front cover of the same magazine that they had had an abortion.

I see the connections between the gay movement and anti-racist movements as being less clear as compared to feminism. So certainly, there are examples of inspiration, there are empathetic kinds of identification, but, at least for the 1970s, I do not think we see that many examples, let us say, of tangible solidarity on the part of the gay movement. Christopher Ewing's work – see his *The Color of Desire: Untangling Race and Sex in German Queer Politics since 1970* [forthcoming, Cornell University Press] – here is really good in helping us think about or in showing the real lack of reflection on the

part of some white gay men, for example, regarding racist depictions in the gay press.

I learned a lot from Tiffany's work, Anna's work, and Sam's work regarding these entanglements between different movements and different political traditions. Above and beyond that, Tiffany's work has really made me think more about the link between activism and intellectualism, and I found the concept of "quotidian intellectuals" really fascinating. I hesitate perhaps to apply it to the gay movement, in the case of white gay men at least, but it is certainly a really important concept and it simply forced me to think afresh about the role of social movements in actually producing knowledge and that is something I did not foreground enough in my book. More generally, I think myself and Tiffany and the other panelists share a focus on the role of emotions in solidifying and helping a movement cohere. Anna's work, over many years, has been so important for myself and many others in asking us to think in a more nuanced way about generation, which Anna has already mentioned, but also in terms of links between different movements, the contingency of activists' lives. Someone Anna mentions, Jürgen-Bernd Runge, who was a Christian Democratic student activist, becomes a Communist and then a Stasi informant, which, of course, makes me think of Sam's book, his comparative analysis of gay men and sexual citizenship, which has really forced me to revisit some of my assumptions about the two Germanies and to think about gay activism, gay liberation – I know gay liberation is a term that Sam, I think, is not so keen on in certain instances — but how that can operate outside of the framework of a liberal democracy; that has been really compelling for me.

**von der Goltz:** I also learned a lot from these books. In Sam's case and in Craig's case I saw them develop over time and it was particularly gratifying to see how everything came together, and I have been extremely impressed and learned a lot just in terms of factual details and protagonists I had not been aware of. In Tiffany's work, there was so much that was new to me,

even though I had been working on the years around 1968 for a long time. And I am now working on a related article about a Christian Democratic campaign, where Christian Democrats in the 1970s adapted the slogan “Black is beautiful” from the American Civil Rights Movement and linked it to their own identity as a party that was associated with the color black. Black was the color of the Christian Democrats. I found so much in Tiffany’s work that is going to help me think critically about this and to put it into a new context.

In addition, I have to say that when reading the books, I was also really struck by how much we share, even though we all work on very different subjects. In some ways, I think we are engaged in a joint project of writing more nuanced histories of social movements, of moving away from left-wing intellectual male protagonists, heterosexual male protagonists, as natural agents of progressive change.

I think that all of our studies betray a certain unease with linear liberalization narratives, something Craig alluded to in his own introduction. He talks explicitly about the ambivalence of Gay Liberation. Sam blurs the boundaries between dictatorship and democracy, which leads to very productive insights, and I think Tiffany’s focus on the subjectivities of Black German women and the persistence of racism is really crucial here and obviously sheds new light on the history of the Federal Republic. I think that in one way or the other, we all move past lionizing our protagonists and portraying them as heroic agents of progressive change, whereas that was the dominant framing of an older social movements literature. I was really struck in reading your works that, in one way or the other, you are all far more nuanced and critical of the experiences, but also the legacies of these activists. In short, I definitely noticed the similarities between some of our conclusions and methods, and it has been fascinating.

**Florvil:** Much like Anna, I was struck by some of the similarities that were quite stark in our books in terms of reimagining the Cold War as a site for complex interactions with activists.

Regarding scholarship on the Cold War – like when we think about the militarization of the United States, the policy of containment, and how those policies were mapped out by a variety of allies and how Germany took part – each of these books offers a richer legacy of what the Cold War actually meant on the ground, the grassroots responses that eventually led to, in Anna’s case, affected politics in interesting ways. But then also the cultural implications of those activists and strategies and that they are not disentangled from one another. We oftentimes also observe this separation of the ideas of politics and culture. But it is in this Cold War period where we see them so enmeshed and driving one another.

With Craig’s book in particular, I see the similarities with analyzing and thinking about affective communities, exploring the implications of how communities cohere and why they cohere. You can also observe this in the other books, but the fresh methodological approach of using ambivalence as an analytic to chart out the complexities of gay men’s activism was quite significant for me. I have taught his 2016 *German History* article “Sex, Shame and West German Gay Liberation” in some courses, and so now I can teach his book. With Sam’s book, I was struck by the fact that East Germany became a site for an entrenched gay culture that I had no idea existed. I mean, I knew that it existed, but I did not know that it was such a freeing and powerful space in so many ways. It also helped to shape legislative change in ways that we as scholars do not necessarily think about.

Anna’s book was striking because, much like teaching parts of Craig’s work, I also teach Anna’s co-edited volume on the conservative right [*Inventing the Silent Majority in Western Europe and the United States: Conservatism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Cambridge UP, 2017)], and so it was just interesting to see center-right or conservative activists and how they negotiated. In many ways, they adapted similar ideals from the more radical elements of leftist politics. I found that dynamic quite interestingly unpacked in her book. And her book helps

me complicate the idea of generation as well, in terms of my own work thinking about the intra/multigenerational issues that emerge in social movements like this, in which you see a contrast in terms of approaches and practices, and a collective identity that evolves and becomes more complicated. So, all of these books were really wonderful, and I am excited to be teaching again to incorporate these works in my classes.

**Huneke:** I echo all of these thoughts. In many ways, I feel lucky that my book was the last of these four to come out, which meant that, while I was writing it, I benefited from these other three works, all of which I read and engaged with. They were quite important for how I thought about my own project. Craig obviously has the closest subject to mine. The focus of Craig's book is the topic of one of the chapters in my book, and I think both the book and Craig's earlier writings really helped me to think critically about this sort of activism, gay activism in the 1970s in the Federal Republic. The idea of ambivalence, as Tiffany and Anna have both touched on, is incredibly productive and rich. I do think that I wind up coming away slightly less skeptical than Craig of these movements, but I would not have been able to write that chapter without the really profound insights of Craig's work.

When it comes to Tiffany's work, it certainly has, as Anna said, just opened up a whole new vista of actors and issues and concerns – especially in the late Cold War period in the Federal Republic – that had not been on my radar before I read *Mobilizing Black Germany*. I, too, found the idea of “quotidian intellectuals” really fascinating, and it helped me think about the kind of cultural and intellectual production of the activists I was writing about. And Anna: I mean Anna was really involved in the production of my book, she read an early draft of it, and shared chapters of her own book with me before it was published. She helped me think critically about the place of the center-right in the Federal Republic, and the place of conservatism, and to think in a nuanced way about how the CDU, in particular, changed, but also about how other parties,

such as the Free Democrats, evolved over the course of the Cold War.

I will add one more thing about all of our works, as an addendum to what Anna said about how we are all critical of the Federal Republic. We are all critical of the activists we're writing about: these are not just hagiographies that we've written. I also think, and maybe this is just my own predilection coming out of queer theory and queer history, but I do not think we are merely critical. I think there is a critical edge to what we are doing, but there is also an element of recuperative joy that we bring. What I mean is that there is an effort not only to be critical but also to understand the progress or the good or beneficial elements of these movements. That is certainly something I see in my own work. For instance, I think that Anna actually tells quite a happy story about the evolution of the CDU. Similarly, Tiffany's story is, I find, a joyful one of Black Germans creating consciousness and cultural space for themselves. And similarly, I think, Craig, even though you do focus on ambivalence, there is an element of appreciation and a reluctance to get dragged into a singularly critical position vis-à-vis your activists.

### **III. East and West Germany**

**Wetzell:** "Joy" is not a word one hears a great deal as a German historian, but I think in this context it is perfectly appropriate. So, we will move on to our next round, which is a two-part question: I will start and Kerstin will continue with the second part. We would like to ask you about the relationship between social movements in East and West Germany. Sam's book, of course, is the book that takes that on directly, but I know all of you have thought about this. So, another way of phrasing this is to ask you: What does comparison between East and West Germany, or an examination of their entanglements, contribute to our understanding of both societies and

of their social movements from the 1960s to the 1980s? And I hand it over to Kerstin for the second part of this question.

**Brückweh:** I would like to go even one step further in time: what was the impact of 1989 and 1990 – when the East German Revolution and then the unification of the two unequal German states took place – on the social movements? From my own research, I would attribute a great influence precisely to this time period because, on the one hand, there was euphoria but then disillusionment followed right after. And so I am pleading for connecting the time periods before, during, and after 1989 to understand the 1990s. Put differently: I was quite amused when Sam just said it was a “joyful” story because in my understanding the “joyful” upheaval of 1989 and the *Wende* was followed instantly by ambivalence – and thus a concept we’ve already talked about in our roundtable, but let us see what you say about it, Anna!

**von der Goltz:** “Recuperative joy” is certainly an interesting idea when writing about Christian Democrats! Well, so on the East-West comparison and the entanglements between the two German states, obviously my book is mostly a history of West Germany, even though I previously worked on the East German “’68ers” as part of a smaller project. In the classic formulation of Christoph Kleßmann on German-German history, there was this asymmetric entanglement between the two: this assumption that the presence of West Germany had a much larger impact on East Germany than vice versa. However, I think that when writing histories of the Federal Republic, we need to keep in mind that the existence of East Germany did actually shape the political culture of the Federal Republic in really important ways. That is what I try and incorporate in my own work by highlighting the importance of anti-Communism, for instance, for the center-right and the centrality of German division to their thinking. I also have a chapter on “mental maps” which highlights European and German division, the role of West Berlin as an “island city,” and how important that was to the center-right’s view of

the world. So, the East does feature, and I think in the end it throws the political culture of West Germany into much sharper relief by being mindful of the ways in which this was a divided country and this shaped what was going on.

In terms of 1989, the bulk of the book is about the 1960s and 1970s. Five out of six chapters deal with the 1960s and 1970s, but the sixth and final chapter does trace the afterlives of this activism. I do that by looking at trajectories, the careers of former student activists who ended up in government, in policy work, and so forth. But I also look at commemorations of “1968,” and there you really see a big difference between pre- and post-1989. In the late 1980s, center-right activists wanted to be the other “‘68ers” or alternative “‘68ers,” as they called themselves, and they connected their own biographies to this narrative of “1968” as a cultural revolution, which was really taking shape at this time. This was the moment when the “success narrative” of the Federal Republic really took hold in public commemorations and in historiography. And so, they were writing their own lives into this larger narrative. After 1989, and especially in the far more challenging post-unification era – with anti-foreigner violence and so forth and a moral panic about hedonistic youth – “1968” suddenly appeared in a far more negative light. The cultural revolution was suddenly seen as something negative, the destruction of values. And at this point, center-right activists preferred to be anti-“‘68ers,” and this is when the focus shifted to political violence, the terror of the 1970s and so forth. So, part of what the book does is to peel away the different layers of interpretation and commemoration to show how the story changed over time. Therefore what Kerstin said about writing across the caesura of 1989 may not be at the center of what I do, but it is something I try to accomplish, at least in that one chapter.

**Huneke:** Comparing East and West Germany is one of the explicit aims of my book. And so, as I think I have already hinted, one of the real goals is to question the success story of the Federal Republic, as I think we all are doing, while also



questioning the totalitarian model, or the various other names that it has taken, of East Germany. In that way, my book is very much in line with the revisionist historiography of East Germany. In so doing, I do try to blur some of the distinctions between dictatorship and democracy. The book also tries to show, in various ways, how, as Anna alluded to, it was not necessarily an asymmetrical entanglement between the two countries, that there are ways in which the East German gay activists and their thinking on homosexuality also influenced what was going on in West Germany. This was definitely clear in the 1950s and 1960s, when Paragraph 175 was in force, which criminalized male homosexuality in both countries, but much less so in East Germany. Conservatives and other right-wing groups in West Germany took this leniency as evidence that communism and homosexuality somehow go hand in hand, which, in turn, shaped anti-gay animus in the Federal Republic. Later on, when we get to the very successful East German gay and lesbian movements of the 1980s, West Germans start paying attention to their successes and many West German gay men start looking over to the East with a certain degree of envy at the political movement they built. They start comparing it to their own perceived failures in West Germany.

I wrote an epilogue that explicitly deals with the post-*Wende* period. I got to interview Lothar de Maizière, who was the only freely elected prime minister of East Germany. He was one of the first people I interviewed, and he was involved, as a lawyer, with the East German gay and lesbian movement. And he told me, quite strikingly – remember, this is someone who is a Christian Democrat; he was an enemy of the socialist regime – but he told me that he thought East Germany had been more progressive or more tolerant on gay issues than West Germany and that this tolerance seeped over into the West after reunification. And, indeed, I was able to show how there was legislative change in East Germany that made its way into West Germany. And we know that there are other areas, especially related to women's rights, where more pro-

gressive policy from East Germany did find its way into West Germany afterwards. I think this is something that a lot of scholars are interested in now, looking at the afterlives of East Germany and how the *Wende* was not just a clean break with the past but rather a messy process of amalgamation.

**Florvil:** My book focuses largely on Black German activism in the West, but it does engage with this idea of the *Wende* and the implications of the *Wende*, and how there was much more continuity, especially with regards to thinking about the larger idea of German racecraft, processes of racialization and exclusion, as well as how we see those still remaining relevant in the context of the “post-Wall.” I think it has been interesting too to see that, in many ways, Black Germans were able to initiate and lead conversations on how both East Germany and West Germany were more similar in terms of their racial politics than previously considered. There is a sense that East Germany was very much committed to international antiracist solidarity, but on the ground, the reality was far from that. Those sort of everyday experiences, racialized experiences, feelings of exclusion that Black Germans as well as other African students, who were also in East Germany, expressed, are also quite telling. Black Germans and other minoritized communities integrated those themes and discussions into “Black History Month” events and/or tackled those issues by thinking and writing about racism across time in both Germanies.

There was also a commitment to name and address the violence that was inflicted, not only on Black Germans but on immigrants, other Germans of Color. There was a Black community organization that emerged, the Black Unity Committee. It was founded in 1990 in direct response to the increase or uptick in racial violence that Black Germans were witnessing, and they shared their thoughts about the continuity of German approaches to the “Other” and how they saw that playing out in a variety of ways that seemed similar to other historical moments. They also documented the incidents to provide a record of contemporary racism. What was interesting about the

post-*Wende* period was considering the larger development of the European Union (EU). We witnessed how European countries tackled immigration, with more draconian legislative measures to keep out immigrants from Global South countries. This corresponded to the larger push for the EU in terms of keeping out those presumed to be social or economic immigrants and migrants, who were allegedly a drain on these nations. So, I think it has been interesting to see how Black Germans pushed not only for more recognition about being Black Germans, being German citizens, but also for recognition about the role that immigration has played in the German context and why fighting for migrant rights was important to pursue.

In my book, I also address the afterlives of 1989/90 and political reunification on October 3rd. Black Germans, migrants, People of Color could tell – they saw it on November 9th, 1989 – that things were not going to be positive for them. May Ayim, a Black German poet and activist whom I discuss in the book, wrote explicitly about this German ethnonationalism in her poetry, connecting it to previous moments of exclusion, thinking about *Kristallnacht*, thinking about all of those other moments of exclusionary practices, of violence that had been enacted inside and outside of the German nation, in its colonies. It has been interesting to see Black Germans connecting those longer legacies of racial violence, racecraft, in Germany, but also revealing how those processes were enacted in colonial settings like Africa, German Samoa; all of these interesting dynamics emerged during the moment. So for me, it has been largely a narrative Black German activism in the West, but Black Germans in the West were also cognizant of those dynamics occurring in the East and how the East was always an imprint of how identity and community were configured in legislative measures, in particular.

**Griffiths:** I do not have a great deal to add here, because I want to acknowledge where my expertise lies, which is in West German history and my book is squarely about the 1970s. So, I have less to say about unification. I do want to flag up Sam's

achievement in writing a comparative history of East and West German gay liberation, which is unprecedented, and is going to be incredibly useful for the field. I certainly wished that I had had that to intellectually work with, previously. I did have aspirations, back in the day, of writing a comparative history and I shied away from that task, so Sam's publication is all the more compelling. In the book I do talk about some of the links that existed between East and West Germany in the 1970s. Josie McLellan has written about how some West German gay magazines were smuggled into East Berlin and how a famous film, Rosa von Praunheim's *It Is Not the Homosexual Who Is Perverse, But the Situation in Which He Lives* [1971], could be viewed in parts of East Germany. Richard and Sam have both written about this film, too. So there were some links, but what I argue in the book is that there was not such an obvious framework for understanding. In particular, the socialism of the gay left in West Germany was very different from the socialism practiced across the German border, or even the socialism espoused by East German gay activists.

One thing worth thinking about is homosexual law reform itself, because, as Sam explains in his book, the legal situation was markedly better in the GDR, in that, unlike the West, the GDR did not enforce a Nazi-era revision of Paragraph 175 and then repealed it altogether in 1968. Much has been written in queer history about transnational influences with regard to homosexual law reform, for example the influence of the Sexual Offences Act in 1967, which partially decriminalized sex between men in England and Wales. Activists sent a copy of that law to every West German parliamentarian, but actually the 1968 reform in East Germany was also influential, I think, in concentrating West German parliamentarian minds, and that does not get acknowledged enough.

Just briefly on unification: it does fall outside my area of expertise, but I think – and Sam has much more detail about this – that the relative absence of a commercialized gay scene in East Germany was important. This was one of the reasons

why, historically, there was a somewhat greater cooperation between gay men and lesbians in the East, as opposed to the West. As part of the unification process – “unification” would be the wrong word – there was to a certain extent a “growing together” of gay male and lesbian activism, which had already been happening in the context of the HIV/AIDS crisis, but which is pushed further forward by the *Wende*.

#### **IV. Master Narratives?**

**Brückweh:** I liked all your books and I thought all your arguments very convincing. And now comes the “however”: However, I sometimes fear that we focus too much on single stories or single movements and that we somehow leave the master narrative in historical surveys to others. These surveys are being written all the time, but we do not write them. Do we need to focus on “single stories” or, as one of you said, “nuanced histories” as a step towards a bigger picture? Or should we leave master narratives behind us anyway? This goes back to Richard’s question about connections that you see among your stories. Besides historiography, it also brings us right into current political debates about the relationships between individuals and groups, and what makes a “society.” So, that is kind of a two-fold question, one that I am struggling with myself in my own writing of history.

**Huneke:** To some extent, we have already talked about how generative everyone’s work has been for each of us. And so, the first thing I would say is, although I am writing about one group, I do have all these other groups at least in the rear-view mirror. I had them in mind when I was writing the book. And these three books, as well as other books, were incredibly influential in getting me to do that, in getting me to expand the book’s implicit focus.

We are critical of various master narratives, whether that is the narrative of Germany being a white country, or whether it is the narrative of the “68ers” just being a group of leftists,

or whether it is a version of West German or German history that leaves out queer people. So, I think that we are all being critical, but I guess my hope is that it is in the interest of putting together, maybe not a master narrative, but some sort of larger narrative of Germany, of Europe, of the modern period, that takes account of these marginalized or excluded or forgotten groups, individuals, and movements. I do think that there are real ramifications for politics today in all of these works. They reveal, for instance, the dangers of focusing on identity or focusing only on narrow identity groups. Certainly in queer history, both Craig and I talk about not only the “joy” of these movements, but also the real exclusions within them, whether we’re talking about racism, misogyny, or ideological conflict. There was a huge amount of conflict over the question of age and intergenerational relationships. There was a huge amount of strife within these groups and the purpose of studying these activists’ shortcomings is to imagine new cross-coalitional political movements, to imagine the possibility of mobilizing different groups in broad ways to achieve a better future.

**von der Goltz:** Our four books are monographs, even though Sam covers forty years and two countries and his is really a survey in all but name and obviously the most ambitious in terms of just the sheer temporal scope of it and in covering two countries. But I think you need both. I think the kind of research we do and the kind of sources we work with, be it oral history or the close engagement with individual biographies, it is a particular genre and it is necessary, and then the survey is something that, to me at least, is a second step in a way.

And a note on identity politics because I think the argument is often made by conservatives that this is somehow a left-wing project and that it is about dividing up a homogeneous society into these different groups that all have conflicting identities and that this somehow undermines society’s natural coherence. Part of what I do in the book is to say: “con-

servatives also engage in identity politics.” The generational narrative that I trace in the book also conveys that “we are a group with a distinct identity,” which had already emerged at the time but then was commemorated and was always tied to specific political agendas. It was not a natural identity that was just out there, it was one that was made and that was weaponized in particular moments in time. I think that it is worth highlighting the fact that this is something that many different groups do, including conservative ones, in the modern period certainly, and especially in times of rapid social and cultural change. It is a way of fostering community and making arguments and speaking to specific groups for specific purposes. In terms of the critique that this is something that undermines social coherence, it is important to point out that this is something that happens across the political spectrum.

**Florvil:** I do think there is some utility in master narratives, and so we should not completely discard them. But the master narrative also runs into the problem of the single story. When we fixate on the master narrative, this single-story narrative, we are limited in our ability to witness much more complexity in a particular moment. And so that is why I like all of these books: because we all challenge the master narrative. For instance, Anna explains that it was not purely a leftist narrative, and the 60s were not purely a moment for leftists. It was also the emergence of conservatism, globally, and Germany played an important role in that. Sam tells us that we can see complexity when we look at both East and West Germany and their approaches to advocating for queer rights in a variety of ways that do not fixate on success or failure. Queer community-making and activism never followed a linear path on both sides of the Wall. Craig shows us that there were “dualities that helped to complicate how queer activists were working on the ground.” So, I think we are all challenging this idea of a single story in very innovative ways.

For me it was important to do that because the discourses and narratives that I kept hearing were that “Black Germans do not matter” and that “there is a small number of them.” Often followed by a question of “why are you studying this?” And I kept thinking, the number of Black Germans was comparable to the number of German Jews prior to the Second World War. This tells us that numbers still do matter in ways that we need to critically interrogate. And so our books are all challenging this idea of a single story, and mine, in particular, challenged the myth that “post-‘45” was raceless and antiracist, and that Germans (on both sides of the Wall) had overcome these issues of exclusion and racialization. Indeed, it was far from the truth. Racism and antisemitism still existed in the “post-‘45” period, and all of these dynamics are still connected. In many ways, all of our books do that. We are challenging the notion that master narratives are the only way to tell compelling narratives. Certainly, we can have a larger understanding of society, of German society quite frankly, if we pursue these novel avenues of research in ways that are not tethered to one single narrative or one single point of origin.

**Griffiths:** So – master narratives. This makes me pause. I work in a field, queer history, which is essentially antithetical to the whole idea of there being a master narrative. The queer intellectual project is about disturbing truths, overcoming narratives, disturbing normativities of any kind, whether chronological, historiographic, hetero- and homonormative, whatever. So, in that sense, I would say there *cannot* be a queer master narrative, but there can certainly be a *gay* one, and that is one of the things that I am trying to push against. To simplify the story, it would go something like this: In 1969, with the Stonewall Riots in the U.S., or the legal change in West Germany, young gays and lesbians came together, came out, overthrew decades of shame and exclusion and set us on a path to ever-unfolding greater equality, which eventually, with some sideways steps along the way, resulted in the gay



marriage laws of the last decade. This kind of “gay success story,” whatever we prefer to call it, is problematic in many ways. It presupposes that a type of legislation like gay marriage or equal marriage would be a suitable barometer of progress; however, there are a lot of exclusions built into that. This is one of my favorite words, as you can probably tell, but I do feel quite *ambivalent* about this.

We cannot deny that, at times, the insights of feminist history, Black history, queer history are gradually being somewhat better incorporated into historical work. But sometimes, that is in a tokenistic fashion, sometimes there is not a deep engagement, and, of course, it can be part of, let us say, a co-optation or an appropriation into a rosy, self-serving national narrative or, of course, one about neoliberalism, in terms of the type of change deemed possible within a certain socioeconomic system. I am thinking here about “pink washing” and homonationalism. So I am quite skeptical about master narratives, but, on the other hand, I also acknowledge, being self-critical, that a lot of us, or certainly a lot of people in queer history but also in other historical fields, do exhibit a kind of intellectual or emotional attachment to exclusion or to marginalization; that might be seen as a structural feature of the field. And there is a danger, of course, of always leaving others to write the survey histories or leaving others to write master narratives, as Kerstin highlights. So, it is something I need to think about some more.

**Brückweh:** Exactly that was my point, Craig, and thank you all for your answers. I have to think about them, too, because at the end of our project on the “Long History of 1989,” we said: “Differentiation is the new master narrative” – meaning, that it’s time to accept the different stories without wanting to write an overall narrative. But then, conventional master narratives are being written anyway and they are influential in public discourses, so I ask myself shouldn’t it be us who write them or – at least – have a greater say in them?

## V. Political and Cultural Transformations

**Wetzell:** How do you see the relationship between political and cultural transformations in the social movements that you investigated? This really was a theme in several of the books. Anna, in her book, for instance, makes a very good case and shows that the center-right “68ers” also signed on to some of the cultural transformations of the 60s that we have often associated with the left wing, in terms of sexuality, gender roles, personal appearance, and music. And by the same token, not all gay men fighting for gay rights were necessarily leftists. So, the broad question is: what do your studies teach us about the relationship between political movements and cultural change?

**Huneke:** I would say that this is one of the main points that I am driving towards in *States of Liberation*: this notion that you can have change in one realm that does not necessarily translate into change in another realm. That is really where I land in the comparison between East Germany, which has legal and policy-driven liberation, and West Germany, which does not experience that kind of legal change but does have this flourishing subculture. And, obviously, East Germany does not have anything like the West German subculture. My goal is then to conceptually decouple these two realms, to say that they are not necessarily connected to one another. You can have changes that do not translate, political changes that do not translate into cultural change and vice-versa.

**Griffiths:** I think looking at conservatism is a really fruitful avenue in social movement research, and Anna’s work has been really formative here. While I did not do this conceptually in the book, I have a piece coming out this year looking at cultures of conservatism in queer politics in the U.S. and West Germany. Regarding the link between social movements and cultural change, it’s important to incorporate different actors. I do not think it means – Anna reminds us of this – that we need to lionize conservatives or disparage those whom we

might call radical, but I do think it might require a more complex story than that sometimes told by an earlier wave of historiography on social movements that has often been written by activists themselves reflecting on their own achievements. I am not trying to set up a false divide between “academic work” and “activism,” but I think some critical distance can be helpful here, at least in gay and lesbian history, queer history.

**Florvil:** In my own work, the cultural and intellectual changes have been much more significant and present than, say, some of the political changes. So for example, in the 1980s, Black Germans argued for the creation of some type of census in order to quantify the discriminatory practices that were deeply embedded in German society. It is not until 2020 that we have an official “Afrozensus” in the German context. [For more on the Afrozensus, see <https://afrozensus.de/>.] Unfortunately, it did not happen in the 80s, in the 90s, and it was not due to a lack of interest. It finally happened in the 21st century. And so, what has been striking for me is that the cultural realm also advanced political action, even though we may not see the tangible political change immediately. And so, the mere idea and the creation of designations such as “Afro-German” or “Black German,” “Afrodeutsche,” or “Schwarze Deutsche,” were critical political and cultural moments as well as epistemic moments, in which Black Germans challenged heteronormative understandings of Germanness and racialized understandings of Germanness. And so, those are much more important in terms of, well not much more important, I should not say that. But they show us more about the boundaries and the limitations that Black Germans pushed through and against to gain more recognition, to instigate more cultural, intellectual, and social change.

**von der Goltz:** Political and cultural changes are linked in complex ways, and I think causality is often difficult to establish. In the 1980s, when “1968” was first systematically commemorated on the left and on the center-right, the notion was very powerful that “1968” had led to a cultural revolution but

lost politically – a political revolution had not occurred, but there had been a cultural revolution, which had democratized West German society from below. And I think in the last twenty years or so, that story has been increasingly questioned, and various historians have pointed out that many of those cultural changes had already been underway for some time when the student movement crested. Therefore “1968” was at most a catalyst. That is now more or less the consensus. So in that interpretation the causality is reversed, and I continue in that vein and show that center-right activists were also growing up in a society that was already changing or affected by consumer society and the pluralization of lifestyles. The chapter in the book that deals with this calls them the “children of Adenauer and Coca-Cola” because there was still a lot of admiration for the postwar chancellor but also an embrace of new cultural norms and so forth. I will conclude with the idea that the very definition of what is cultural and political is also extremely fluid. Part of the 1960s project was about broadening the very definition of what was considered political. And that happened much more so on the left. The right had a much more traditionalist idea of what politics was: it is about organizations, power, and so forth. But they also started to think that relationships and how one acts in the private sphere were actually political acts. These things were fluid, and part of what I do in the book is to trace how these understandings changed around 1968 and then in the years after.

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**Tiffany N. Florvil** is an Associate Professor of 20th-century European Women's and Gender History at the University of New Mexico. Her publications include *Black Germany: Black, German, feminist – the history of a movement* (Ch. Links, 2023), *Mobilizing Black Germany: Afro-German Women and the Making of Transnational Movement* (Illinois, 2020), and (with Vanessa Plumly) *Rethinking Black German Studies: Approaches, Interventions and Histories* (Peter Lang, 2022 pb, 2018 hc). She is currently the Joy Foundation Fellow at Harvard's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, where she is working on an intellectual biography of Black German poet and activist May Ayim.

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**Anna von der Goltz** is Professor of German and European History at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.. Her research focuses on the political and cultural history of twentieth-century Germany. Her publications include *The Other '68ers: Student Protest and Christian Democracy*

*in West Germany* (Oxford University Press, 2021); *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* (Oxford University Press, 2009); and (co-edited with Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson), *Inventing the Silent Majority: Conservatism in Western Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). She is currently pursuing a new project about political conversions in twentieth-century Germany.

**Richard F. Wetzell** is a Research Fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington and editor of its *Bulletin*. He is currently writing a book on racial science and Nazi biopolitics but has engaged with the history of post-1945 social movements in his article “Rosa von Praunheim, Martin Dannecker und das Verhältnis der deutschen Schwulenbewegung zur homosexuellen Subkultur, 1971–1986,” *Invertito: Jahrbuch für die Geschichte der Homosexualitäten* 23 (2021): 95–135. His recent publications include *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (co-edited, Cambridge UP, 2017) and *Crime and Criminal Justice in Modern Germany* (edited, Berghahn Books, paperback 2022).

# German-Speaking Refugee Historians Researching National Socialism and Their Reception in West Germany

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“I studied and taught the German past with American eyes and for American students and readers,”<sup>1</sup> historian Fritz Stern, born in Breslau in 1926, reflected in his memoirs *Five Germanys I Have Known*, published in 2006, explaining the perspective from which he wrote about the past. From the distance of US academia he spent decades observing a once-familiar Germany as one among many scholars who fled National Socialism and went on to shape the discipline of history in their new home country, the United States, during the postwar years.

Stern experienced the loss of his personal freedom when he was a young boy, one of the most influential experiences of his life. After Hitler seized power in 1933, he became burdened by an antisemitism he had not experienced before. Before 1933, Stern, who had been baptized, did not know that his grandparents were Jewish. His father, a renowned doctor, found himself enduring both professional restrictions

<sup>1</sup> Fritz Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known* (New York, 2006).

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2 Stern, *Five Germanys I Have Known*, 125–29.

3 Fritz Richard Stern, *Zu Hause in der Ferne: Historische Essays* (München, 2015), 10.

4 Fritz Stern, "German History in America, 1884–1984," *Central European History* 19, no. 2 (1986): 132; Kenneth D. Barkin, "Amerikanische Forschungen (1945–1975) zur modernen deutschen Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte," in *Die moderne deutsche Geschichte in der internationalen Forschung: 1945–1975*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, Sonderheft 4 (Göttingen, 1978), 12.

established by the NS government and personal antisemitic insults from his would-be colleagues. The middle-class Stern family soon launched into preparing to emigrate, but finding a place of refuge within Europe proved harder than they had expected.<sup>2</sup> In 1938, shortly after the November Pogrom, the family fled to the United States. Decades after their escape Stern wrote in his memoirs that he perceived their emigration as a chance to start over. In the following years, he was able to watch Germany from a new vantage point.<sup>3</sup> Stern studied history and political science at Columbia University in New York City. Only a few years after the end of the war, he began establishing scholarly contacts in his native country and focusing on the history of the recent German past.

In 1984, four decades later, at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA) in Chicago, Stern spoke about his own attempts and those of his colleagues to study German history and "the German problem" by considering specific factors in the German past that had led to the rise of National Socialism. Most of those who researched "the German problem" during and after the war, Stern emphasized, were German-speaking émigrés in Great-Britain and the US.<sup>4</sup> Stern belonged to a group of émigré historians – including Hans Rosenberg, George L. Mosse and Raul Hilberg – who intended to write the history of their native country in a new manner by challenging the interpretation of those historians who had stayed in Germany. Many émigré scholars regarded these interpretations as inconsistent with their own perspective on Germany's national development, and in particular with their efforts to explain how Germany's national identity produced (as they saw it) the Nazi regime and the Holocaust.

Their native country had become foreign to these émigré historians. After their arrival in the United States, where they were not necessarily welcomed with open arms, they learned to look at the recent German past in a fresh and unobstructed way. They wrote and taught German history in a foreign language and saw themselves as interlocutors between Germany



and the anglophone world. They quickly learned to use their novel perspective – their American eyes – to address the rise of National Socialism, antisemitism, and mass murder in Germany. In so doing, they not only became German-Americans but also translators in both directions between the two cultures. They thought and wrote about German history in an innovative way and thus contributed to the reshaping of the field of history in Germany. On the one hand, refugee historians tried not to focus on their personal background and experiences in their formal scholarly publications but, instead, emphasized their role as scholars and analysts. On the other hand, they wrote about their collective experiences in personal letters and, by the end of their careers, in published memoirs and autobiographical essays.

In my recently published book, *Unerbetene Erinnerung*, I studied how German-speaking émigré historians shaped the study of National Socialism and the Holocaust after 1945 and how their interpretations were received by their contemporaries. How did they recount and interpret National Socialism and the Holocaust in their scholarly work? What response did their interpretations receive in West Germany and the United States?

By dividing these émigré historians into two different generations, I create a narrative that draws on the history of knowledge, the history of experience, and the history of historiography. The protagonists of my study are George W. F. Hallgarten, Hajo Holborn, Adolf Leschnitzer, and Hans Rosenberg, as members of the first generation; and Henry Friedlander, Raul Hilberg, Georg Iggers, George L. Mosse, Fritz Stern, Herbert A. Strauss, and Gerhard L. Weinberg as members of the second generation. A person's emigration had a different impact on the course of their life depending on their age at the time of emigration. For the first generation, emigration interrupted their professional careers. By contrast, emigration represented a more limited break for most members of the second generation, as they were able

5 Trutz von Trotha, *Politische Kultur, Fremdenfeindlichkeit und rechtsradikale Gewalt. Notizen über die politische Erzeugung von Fremdenfeindlichkeit und die Entstehung rechtsradikaler Gewalt in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Beitrag zur Tagung „No Justice - No Peace?“* (Philadelphia, 1993), 6 f. Thomas Herz, "Rechtsradikalismus und die 'Basiserzählung': Wandlungen in der politischen Kultur Deutschlands," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 37 (1996); Thomas Herz, "Die 'Basiserzählung' und die NS-Vergangenheit: Zur Veränderung der politischen Kultur in Deutschland," *Gesellschaften im Umbruch: Verhandlungen des 27. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Halle an der Saale*, ed. Lars Clausen, 1996.

to complete high school or postsecondary studies in the United States. This made it easier for them to start a career there. However, they experienced the violence and antisemitism of the Nazi regime as children or young adults and later reflected on these experiences more intensively than the older generation.

In the book's three main chapters, I combine accounts of these protagonists' biographical backgrounds with analysis of their main topics of study and their approaches. I studied the contribution of the historians with the aid of five analytical approaches, namely thematic (How did refugee historians examine the topics of National Socialism and the Holocaust from a historical perspective?); methodological (What methods did they use to research these topics?); empirical (On which sources did they base their research?); from the standpoint of academic organization (Did they influence the process of academic institutionalization? And if so, how?); and finally with respect to public resonance (Did their approaches receive public attention?). My study regards the discourses in which these scholars were involved as struggles over interpretive sovereignty in their academic discipline. I therefore combined discourse analysis with field analysis.

In historiographical discourses about the Nazi past, a struggle over the limits of a possible cultural (and, in modern times, also national) self-understanding is evident. This is especially true for West Germany, even though it did not have an explicit national identity. Rather, there is a defensive reaction to the recent past, emphasizing the positive aspects of the national past over unpleasant ones. Thomas Herz, based on Trutz von Trotha, calls this approach the basic narrative. A basic narrative contains the following defining characteristics: (a) it is a construction of the history of a society and culture; (b) it is not just any construction but the dominant one; (c) this is because it has a legitimizing function for the society and culture; and (d) a basic narrative is inert but changeable.<sup>5</sup> According to

<b>Dogmas of the Basic Narrative</b>	
1	Relativization of the active contribution of Germans in Nazi crimes
2	The Nazis established a coercive regime against which no internal resistance could grow.
3	Germans learnt from the past
4	Germans built a plural democracy after 1945
5	The Holocaust was one crime among many others
6	Germans paid their debts

**Figure 1.** Dogmas of the West German basic narrative, Thomas Herz; table by Anna Corsten.

Herz, the basic narrative of West Germany after 1945 consisted of the six dogmas listed in the table above.

The notion of the basic narrative is crucial to my work since it functions as a legitimizing narrative that is constructed through the past. Thus, the basic narrative helps to explain how the interpretations of émigré historians have been negotiated among historians in West Germany. It contains coherent and, in some ways, simplifying ideas about how to deal with the Nazi past. The contrasting interpretations advanced by emigré scholars, which were long marginalized in West Germany, can be assessed against this framework, shedding light on the reasons for their marginalization.

The overall goal of my book is to analyze how a transatlantic historiography of National Socialism and the Holocaust emerged. It therefore focuses on different scholarly approaches to their study. For example, many historians dealt with the nineteenth century or even earlier epochs to identify long-term (mis)developments that had led to the rise of National Socialism. The caesuras of 1933 (the transfer of power to Hitler) and 1941 (the beginning of the systematic murder of Jews) were the vanishing points of their research.

Focusing on three protagonists of my study, this article seeks to illuminate the transformation of the basic narrative in West Germany as well as the key steps in the genesis of the research field of Nazi and Holocaust studies. In doing so, the article will address three questions that shaped the discourse around the recent German past and the narrative around the German past: first, the question of who was supposed to write German history; second, the conflict over how German history should be written, and third, the question of how the (symbolic) reevaluation of Nazi and Holocaust research came about.



**Figure 2.** Adolf Leschnitzer, without date, F 25117, Adolf Leschnitzer Collection, AR 25320, Leo Baeck Institute New York. Reproduced by permission.

**6** Hans von Kress and Friedrich Meinecke to Adolf Leschnitzer, Nov. 15, 1951, Adolf Leschnitzer Collection (ALC), AR 25320, Box 8/Folder 33, Leo Baeck Institute New York (LBI). German original: "Wir würden eine Zusage Ihrerseits, im Rahmen der Philosophischen Fakultät und auch für Hörer aller Fakultäten über ‚Die Geschichte und Problematik der deutsch-jüdischen Beziehungen‘ zu lesen, sehr begrüßen. Es ist uns ein Herzensbedürfnis, von unserer Seite alles zu tun, diese schwerwiegenden Probleme objektiv zu behandeln und unseren Beitrag zu leisten, um so einer Versöhnung den Weg zu ebnen, der uns hilft, über das grauenhafte Geschehen der vergangenen Jahre hinwegzukommen."

## I. Who May Write German History: Adolf Leschnitzer

Adolf Leschnitzer, born in 1899 in Posen, belonged to the first generation of émigré historians. During the Weimar Republic, he studied German and history and then worked as a high school teacher; it was only after his emigration that he embarked on an academic career in higher education.

After the war, Adolf Leschnitzer taught German language and literature in New York City. In 1951, he received a letter from the rector of the recently founded Freie Universität Berlin (FU), Hans von Kress, and its honorary rector, Friedrich Meinecke. Von Kress and Meinecke invited him to come to Berlin for a visiting professorship:

We would very much appreciate a commitment on your part to lecture on "The History and Problems of German-Jewish Relations" within the framework of the Faculty of Philosophy and also for listeners of other faculties. It is our deepest desire to do everything we can from our side to deal objectively with these grave problems and to contribute to a reconciliation that will help us to get over the horrible events of the past years.<sup>6</sup>

Von Kress and Meinecke's expectations illustrate problems in dealing with National Socialism during the early postwar

years. The idea of being able to deal with the Holocaust in an “objective” way a few years after the end of the war reveals the prevailing desire to overcome what had happened. The period 1933 to 1945 was to be analyzed objectively, without drawing moralizing conclusions from it. In the following decades, the desire for an objective discussion remained a central notion that limited discourses in historical scholarship. Meinecke’s and von Kress’ reference to the “horrific event” remained unspecific. The deed, perpetrators, and victims remained invisible in their statement to Leschnitzer. The term “reconciliation” also implied wrongdoing on both sides, suggesting both Jews and Germans had to make amends for their mistakes. In this way, too, the crimes, and above all the guilt, of the Germans were hidden.

The invitation was the result of an initiative by the émigré historian Hans Rosenberg, who knew Leschnitzer from Brooklyn College in New York City and recommended his colleague to the Free University. Rosenberg argued that Leschnitzer could contribute to a “historical self-reflection and sociological position-fixing of the present” and heartily endorsed his “academic achievements, his richly ramified professional experience and the insights gained in the wake of his international life’s wanderings” set in motion by the Pogrom Night of 1938.<sup>7</sup> Leschnitzer, however, had reservations about returning to Germany, even if it was for a limited time. Leschnitzer’s first reaction to the request revealed the discomfort it caused him: “The letter was worded carefully, cordially and nobly. [. . .] My first reaction was that I could not accept this invitation. I did not want to go to Germany even for a visit, even for such a purpose, probably a noble purpose.”<sup>8</sup>

Leschnitzer’s reaction, which he repeated in a speech he gave at the conferral of an honorary doctorate by the Free University in 1956, seems diplomatic. He interpreted the tenor of the invitation as “cautious.” That he initially intended to decline the invitation was an expression of a deeper attitude that can be interpreted as distance toward Germany. This also becomes apparent in Leschnitzer’s choice of the English

<sup>7</sup> Rosenberg to Außenkommission der FU Berlin, Oct. 1, 1951, FU Berlin University Archives (UA), GD, Hans Rosenberg. German original: “historische Selbstbesinnung und soziologische Ortsbestimmung der Gegenwart” and “wissenschaftlichen Leistungen, seiner reich verzweigten Berufserfahrung und der im Gefolge seiner internationalen Lebenswanderung gewonnenen Erkenntnisse”.

<sup>8</sup> Rede Freie Universität Berlin 1956, ALC, B 11/F 49.

**9** Leo Baeck to Adolf Leschnitzer, December 21, 1951, ALC, B 5/F 7.

**10** The English version only appeared in 1956, two years after the German publication of *Saul und David*. Adolf Leschnitzer, *The Magic Background of Modern Anti-Semitism: An Analysis of the German-Jewish Relationship* (New York, 1956).

**11** German original: "Anderssein von Majoritäten und Minderheit."

language in his reply. Leschnitzer's attitude differed from that of other emigré historians of the first generation who accepted visiting professorships in Germany soon after the end of the war. Leschnitzer exchanged his thoughts about the invitation from Berlin with colleagues in the United States. The rabbi and survivor Leo Baeck recognized in it the possibility of bringing Jewish culture closer to German youth, especially to those who had not consciously experienced National Socialism, as he wrote to Leschnitzer from his post at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.<sup>9</sup>

This argument convinced Leschnitzer. In the summer of 1952, he set foot on German soil again for the first time in over 13 years. Four years later, Leschnitzer received a permanent honorary professorship at the Free University, making him the first professor of Jewish history to be anchored at a public university in West Germany. For more than two decades, he taught every summer in Berlin. On the basis of his 1952 lectures, he wrote the monograph *The Magic Background of Antisemitism*, which appeared in German in 1954 under the title *Saul und David*, in which he outlined the relations between German Jews and non-Jewish Germans since the late seventeenth century.<sup>10</sup> He emphasized as problematic that while Jews had adopted Germany's expressed cultural values – humanitarianism and tolerance – German Christians did not act according to them. This interpretation is similar to that of George L. Mosse, who in the 1980s identified Jews as the actual bearers of German educational ideals.

The reception of Leschnitzer's work remained very limited in West German professional circles, even though Jewish history and antisemitism were under-researched areas. German historian Heinrich Schnee, who had been working on the history of court Jews since the early 1940s, uncritically reproducing antisemitic images from Walter Frank's Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschland in his work, reviewed Leschnitzer's work for the journal *Das historisch-politische Buch*. According to Schnee, antisemitism was based upon the "otherness of majorities and minorities."<sup>11</sup> Since Leschnitzer

did not take this aspect into account, Schnee argued, he could not fully explain antisemitism. He also disagreed with Leschnitzer that “Jewish lecturers and professors at German universities had been set back before 1933; on the contrary [. . .] they had made a downright brilliant career.”<sup>12</sup>

In his review Schnee thus resorted to antisemitic stereotypes and at the same time denied the scope of the exclusion before 1933. Among West German historians in the first post-war decades Schnee was the only non-Jewish scholar working on Jewish history. However, he did so in continuity with antisemitic stereotypes and research from the Nazi period. Similar to his treatment of Leschnitzer’s study, he also devalued historian Selma Stern’s work. Schnee’s multivolume work *Die Hoffinanz und der moderne Staat*, which furthered classic antisemitic stereotypes by portraying court Jews as materialistic and self-serving, nonetheless received positive reviews in Germany as it appeared over the 1950s and 1960s. Historians such as Wilhelm Treue and Walther Hubatsch, as well as leading politicians, proposed Schnee for an honorary professorship at the University of Bonn and the Federal Cross of Merit. However, these proposals failed due to the objection of individual historians. In this context, the German-British historian Francis L. Carsten asked whether German professors had read his work at all.<sup>13</sup>

German daily and weekly newspapers paid more attention to *Saul und David* than his professional colleagues. Berlin’s *Telegraf* judged that “Leschnitzer [. . .] has, in a sociology superbly equipped with bibliography, revealed the history of the German-Jewish cultural and living community essentially from its political and ideological moments.” The reviewer perceived the book as a “tragic account of the decline of the German bourgeoisie.”<sup>14</sup> In the *Merkur* H. G. Adler wrote that

**12** Heinrich Schnee, review of *Saul und David*, by Adolf Leschnitzer, in *Das Historisch-Politische Buch*, No. 4/56, 113–114. German original: “jüdische Dozenten und Professoren an deutschen Universitäten vor 1933 zurückgesetzt worden sind, sie haben im Gegenteil [. . .] eine geradezu glänzende Karriere gemacht.” A biography of Schnee was published in 2017: Katharina Abermeth, *Heinrich Schnee: Karrierewege und Erfahrungswelten eines deutschen Kolonialbeamten* (Kiel, 2017).

**13** Stephan Laux, “Ich bin der Historiker der Hoffaktoren: Zur Antisemitischen Forschung von Heinrich Schnee (1895–1968),” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 5 (2006).

**14** H.G.S., “Soziologie der deutsch-jüdischen Gemeinschaft,” *Der Telegraf*, July 4, 1956. German original: “Leschnitzer [. . .] hat in einer bibliographisch hervorragend ausgerüsteten Soziologie die Geschichte der deutsch-jüdischen Kultur- und

Lebensgemeinschaft im Wesentlichen aus den politischen und ideologischen Momenten aufgezeigt.”

and “. . . tragischen Bericht über den Niedergang des deutschen Bürgertums.” Copies of this review

and those mentioned in the following footnotes are found in ALC, B 20/F 31.

**15** H.G. Adler, "Jüdische Existenz," *Merkur*, April 1956. German original: ". . . die rund 150 Jahre deutsch-jüdischer Lebensgemeinschaft mit unerbitterlicher Kritik und Selbstkritik als eine geschichtlich abgeschlossene Epoche zu untersuchen" and "Und zwar als Jude aus Deutschland."

**16** Peter Left, "Tragik der deutsch-jüdischen Symbiose," *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 12, 1955, 5. German original: ". . . die Ideologie der Ausrottung [. . .] vielleicht zum ersten Male in vollendeter Deutung von innen her." See also Wilhelm Teufel, "Saul und David," *Die Stuttgarter Zeitung*, April 2, 1955; Joseph Maier, "Warum die deutschen Juden untergingen," *Der Aufbau*, April 1, 1955; "Allgemeine Wochenzeitung der Juden in Deutschland," January 21, 1955, Book Review, in: Bayerischer Rundfunk, March 11, 1955, ALC, AR 25320, B 20/F 31, LBI.

**17** Paul Kluge to Rothfels, June 25, 1957, ID 90-3-57, Hausarchiv Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin (IfZ).

**18** Jan Eckel, *Hans Rothfels: Eine intellektuelle Biographie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005).

Leschnitzer was the first to dare "to examine the roughly 150 years of German-Jewish *Lebensgemeinschaft* with unrelenting criticism and self-criticism as a historically closed epoch." "And he did so," he added, "as a Jew from Germany."<sup>15</sup> The *Tagesspiegel* likewise regarded Leschnitzer's work as a pioneering study, for the scholar looked at "the ideology of extermination [. . .] perhaps for the first time in full-blown interpretation from the inside."<sup>16</sup>

How should we assess the discrepancy between the reception of Leschnitzer's work in the "Feuilletons" of the German press and in specialist journals? The history of Leschnitzer's reception must be placed in the context of the German historiography on Judaism. Older West German historians who had received their doctorates and habilitations before 1933 were particularly likely to ignore or criticize works published by emigré Jewish historians on the history of German Jewry and antisemitism. Yet Leschnitzer was well-known among West German historians and was considered "one of the best experts on German Jewry immediately before its demise," as the then-secretary general of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich (Institut für Zeitgeschichte, IfZ), Paul Kluge, wrote to Hans Rothfels in 1957.<sup>17</sup> Rothfels himself had emigrated to the United States during National Socialism but was one of the few historians who remigrated after 1945.<sup>18</sup>

That historians in West Germany distanced themselves from particular interpretations of Jewish history becomes clear in the example of the historian Selma Stern, who had written a fundamental study on *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of Absolutism in Europe*. The work, published in English in 1950 and based primarily on source research conducted by Stern during the 1920s and 1930s, did not appear in German for over fifty years.<sup>19</sup> In 1951, social and economic

**19** Selma Stern, *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of Absolutism in Europe* (Philadelphia, 1950); Selma Stern, *Der Hofjude im Zeitalter des Absolutismus (1640–1740)* (Hildesheim, 1999).



historian Wilhelm Treue was one of the few historians in West Germany to comment on the English edition. He accused Stern of not taking into account “historiographical viewpoints.”<sup>20</sup> Rather, Treue suggested, the book overstated the role of court Jews as victims.<sup>21</sup> Treue, who had praised Heinrich Schnee’s account of the “court factors” (German: *Hoffaktoren*), repeatedly pointed to Stern’s biographical background as a Jew persecuted under National Socialism, which in his view explained how she approached the topic. In this way, he relativized the findings of her research. At the same time, he explicitly justified the marginalization of Jewish history in West Germany, which was primarily studied outside the academic establishment.<sup>22</sup> One reason for this was that the institutional framework for such study only began to be established with Leschnitzer’s visiting and honorary professorship, and barely developed further until the 1970s. Focusing on the distorted picture of German history created by the absence of studies of the Jewish experience and of the destructive nature of antisemitism meant calling attention to the Holocaust, which German historians and society sought to avoid. Using Herbert A. Strauss as an example, the second chapter of my book shows how the situation began to change in the following decades.

In order to legitimize their interpretations of German history, historians in West Germany often excluded their émigré colleagues from their professional discourse in the 1950s and 1960s. West German historians like Gerhard Ritter tied historiography to a political agenda of the past: “We German historians will have a great deal to do to protect our German history against harmful insults. For it does not change a people for the better, but depraves it, if it loses its joy in its own history and thus loses its self-confidence.”<sup>23</sup> Ritter’s position illustrates the close connection between defensive reaction against guilt, interpretive power, and national identity. In the 1950s and early 1960s, older German historians appeared convinced that only they had a claim to interpret “their own”

**20** German original: „geschichtswissenschaftliche Gesichtspunkte“.

**21** Wilhelm Treue, review of *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of the Period of Absolutism in Central Europe*, by Selma Stern, *Historische Zeitschrift* 172, no. 3 (1951): 573.

**22** Michael Brenner, “Nichtjüdische Historiker und Jüdische Geschichte: Der Wandel in der Wahrnehmung von außen,” in *Interesse am Judentum: Die Franz-Delitzsch-Vorlesungen 1989–2008*, ed. J. C. de Vos and Folker Siegert (Berlin, 2008), 341–343.

**23** Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BArch), N 1166/225, Vorträge Gerhard Ritter, USA 1953: “The present state of historical studies in Germany.”

**24** Gabriele Metzler, *Der Staat der Historiker: Staatsvorstellungen deutscher Historiker seit 1945* (Berlin, 2018), 120 f.

**25** German original: "Ritter der Nation." Thomas Etzemüller, *Sozialgeschichte als politische Geschichte: Werner Conze und die Neuorientierung der westdeutschen Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (München, 2001), 296.

**26** Hans Kohn, "Rethinking Recent German History," in *German History: Some New German Views*, ed. Hans Kohn (London, 1954), 38. On Kohn, see Brian Smollett, "The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Vision in the Life and Thought of Hans Kohn," in *Reappraisals and New Studies of the Modern Jewish Experience: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Seltzer*, ed. Brian Smollett and Christian Wise (Leiden, 2014).

history. The early negotiations about the German past were thus closely linked to the question of who was allowed to write German history.

West German historians answered this question depending on how foreign and émigré historians interpreted German history. Among West German researchers like Ritter, the prevailing idea was that National Socialism was a "workplace accident" (*Betriebsunfall*) caused by a few zealous, diabolical Nazi bigwigs, whose reign of terror had made resistance from the population (almost) impossible. In this way, the historians who remained in Germany defended a positive national historical image. As established protagonists, they excluded historical interpretations and the personal stories of suffering of émigrés historians from the realm of the discussable if they contradicted their interpretations.

Whether someone could participate in the discourse on the German past in West Germany was thus related not only to who wrote, but also to what they wrote. The interplay of these two arguments remained crucial in the 1960s and early 1970s. Contemporary history thus pursued political goals. It was important to stabilize the young democracy via a basic narrative that interpreted National Socialism as a brief slip into a regime of injustice which had no deeper historical roots. Historians in West Germany were involved in shaping and maintaining this narrative in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup> Thomas Etzemüller has argued that the older German historians such as Ritter, Conze, and Schieder functioned as "knights of their nation" in this sense.<sup>25</sup> To protect the nation's honor, they quickly abandoned plans to revise the German historical narrative after the end of World War II.<sup>26</sup>

Younger historians – many of them associated with what became known as the Bielefeld School – were far less skeptical about those historians who had emigrated. They reevaluated the biographical background and its significance for writing German history so that it no longer meant a lack of ability to

do scholarly work.<sup>27</sup> Leschnitzer was therefore able to exert a decisive influence on the education of a younger generation of historians in West Germany who turned to Jewish history. At the Free University in Berlin, a “Leschnitzer Circle” of interested students formed beginning in 1953 and met regularly while their mentor taught in the United States. This circle included scholars who went on to contribute significantly to the establishment of Jewish history in West Germany in the 1970s and 1980s, including Monika Richarz, Stefan Rohrbacher, Reinhard Rürup, Stefi Jersch-Wenzel, Konrad Kwiet and Julius Schoeps.<sup>28</sup> Leschnitzer was thus instrumental in making Berlin an important focal point for scholars who wanted to study the history of Judaism.

The fact that, after his initial skepticism, Leschnitzer became so intensively involved in his country of origin was related to his desire to research and understand the roots of German antisemitism. Throughout his life, he saw himself as a German Jew who had found refuge in the United States, as he pointed out in 1962: “Today I feel like an American, which means: I’m grateful to this country for taking me and my family in.”<sup>29</sup> Fourteen years later, when asked to which country he felt he belonged, he replied, “Jewish-American of German descent.”<sup>30</sup> The temporary return to Germany played an ambivalent but decisive role for the scholar, shaping his work because of the ambivalence he experienced. In 1966, Leschnitzer resigned from his position at City College in New York, but retained his honorary professorship at the Free University until 1972. While he did not fulfill his ambition of writing a history of Judaism, Leschnitzer was recognized as one of the “grand old men” among German-Jewish emigré scholars upon his death in Centerport, New York, on July 24, 1980, at the age of 81.<sup>31</sup>

## II. How German History is to be Written: George L. Mosse

In the 1960s, a younger generation of refugee historians obtained key positions in American historical scholarship.

**27** Knut Borchardt, review of *Machteliten und Wirtschaftskonjunkturen*, by Hans Rosenberg, *Vierteljahrsschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 67, no. 4 (1980).

**28** Monika Richarz, “Zwischen Berlin und New York: Adolf Leschnitzer, Der erste Professor für Jüdische Geschichte in der Bundesrepublik,” in *Deutsche, Juden, Völkermord: Der Holocaust als Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Jürgen Matthäus and Klaus-Michael Mallmann (Darmstadt, 2006), 73.

**29** Adolf Leschnitzer, “Im Interview mit Radio Bremen,” in *Bremer Beiträge: Auszug des Geistes*, ed. Radio Bremen (Bremen, 1962), 168.

**30** Interview with Joan Lessing, ALC, B 2/F 15.

**31** Hans Steinitz, “Zum Tode Von Adolf Leschnitzer,” *Aufbau*, August 1, 1980.

**32** Steven Aschheim, *Beyond the Border: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad* (Princeton, N.J., 2007), 57; Andreas Daum, "Refugees from Nazi Germany as Historians: Origins and Migrations, Interests and Identities," 3 f., and Steven Aschheim, "The Tensions of Historical Wissenschaft: The Émigré Historians and the Making of German Cultural History," both in *The Second Generation: Émigrés from Nazi Germany as Historians: With a Bibliographic Guide*, ed. Andreas W. Daum, Hartmut Lehmann, and James J. Sheehan (New York, 2016).

**33** Merel Leeman, "The Transatlantic Reconstruction of 'Western' Culture: George Mosse, Peter Gay, and the Development of the German Tradition of Geistesgeschichte," *GHI Bulletin Supplement* 10 (2014).

**34** Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 64–67; Emmanuel Sivan, "George Mosse and the Israeli Experience," in *What History Tells: George L. Mosse and the Culture of Modern Europe*, ed. Stanley G. Payne, David J. Sorkin and John S. Tortorice, (Madison, Wis., 2004).

**35** Aschheim, *Beyond the Border*, 46.

Historians refer to them as the "second generation," roughly encompassing the birth cohorts 1918 to 1935.<sup>32</sup> Members of this generation came to the United States as children and adolescents and were educated there – sometimes by émigré scholars from the first generation. Like the first generation, members of the second generation sought to understand the rise and nature of the National Socialist movement. To do so, they examined ideological and symbolic mechanisms that the Nazis had exploited.<sup>33</sup> They saw illiberalism and irrationalism as the causes of Germany's *Sonderweg* (special path), not social and economic aberrations.<sup>34</sup> While the first generation of social historians regarded the transfer of government to Hitler and the downfall of liberal democracy as a major caesura in German history, cultural historians such as George Mosse postponed the crucial caesura to 1941. For them, the antisemitic policy of exclusion and persecution, which led to mass murder, was not automatically inherent in the transfer of government to Hitler, but could be explained by ideological preconditions. These historians therefore initiated a shift in perspective by turning to German cultural and intellectual history.<sup>35</sup>

George L. Mosse, born in 1918, emigrated in 1933 and studied in England and the United States. After his graduate studies at Harvard University, he worked at the University of Iowa and from 1955 onwards at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Mosse also taught at different universities such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Cambridge University, and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. In a preface included in the 1979 German translation of his first work on Nazi ideology, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (originally published in English in 1964), he reacted to the interpretations of his West German colleagues as follows:

It is easier, of course, to see National Socialism as a break with the German past, a one-time aberration under [the conditions of] war and the great economic crises of the postwar period.



**Figure 3.** George L. Mosse in Iowa City, around 1950, F 80889, George L. Mosse Collection, AR 25137, Leo Baeck Institute New York. Reproduced by permission.

The power of colossal forces, to which so many historians have referred, often seems to leave out personal responsibility.<sup>36</sup>

In this observation, Mosse implied that his colleagues were shaping a national and individual self-image that externalized responsibility for National Socialism. Karel Plessini has

sich natürlich leichter, wenn man den Nationalsozialismus als einen Bruch mit der deutschen Vergangenheit betrachtet,

als eine einmalige Verirrung unter dem Krieg und der großen ökonomischen Krisen der Nachkriegszeit. Das Spiel überdimen-

sionaler Kräfte, auf die sich so viele Historiker berufen haben, scheint oft die persönliche Verantwortung auszusparen.“

**36** George L. Mosse, *Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer: Die völkischen Ursprünge des Nationalsozialismus*, first German edition (Königstein/Ts., 1979), 1. German original: “Man macht es

**37** Karel Plessini, *The Perils of Normalcy: George L. Mosse and the Remaking of Cultural History* (Madison, Wis., 2014), 46–50, esp. 47.

**38** George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York, 1964), 1–4 (quote p. 1).

**39** Gerhard L. Weinberg, review of *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, by George L. Mosse, *Political Science Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (1966).

**40** Fritz T. Epstein to Mosse, May 14, 1965, George L. Mosse Collection (GLMC), AR 25137, B 14/F 8, LBI.

**41** Klemens v. Klemperer, review of *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, by George L. Mosse, *American Historical Review* 71, no. 2 (1966): 609. See also Hans Kohn, “Belief in Blood,” *The Nation*, April 26, 1966; Carl G. Anthon, review of *The Crisis of German Ideology*, by George L. Mosse, *Social Studies* 56, no. 4 (1965); Guenter Lewy, “Roots of Nazism,” *The Progressive*, June 1965.

argued that the book arose from a dual concern of Mosse’s: for the lingering past, which he recognized in the desecration of the Cologne synagogue in 1959, and for the present of 1979, in which liberalism and democracy were endangered. For Mosse, *völkisch* ideas still existed both in Germany and the United States. He particularly observed them in extremist groups who held antisemitic and racist beliefs.<sup>37</sup> Mosse’s work addressed both a concern for the survival of democracy and the threat that antisemitism posed to a liberal society. Mosse highlighted *völkisch* ideology as central to the rise of National Socialism. He justified his approach as follows: “Historians have not given them [ideas] much serious attention, for they have regarded this ideology [*völkisch* thought] as a species of subintellectual rather than intellectual history.” For Mosse, *völkisch* thought represented a continuity across 1933 and at the same time distinguished German fascism from Italian fascism. In his perspective, the National Socialist seizure of power was the logical culmination of particular developments in German history.<sup>38</sup>

In the United States, Mosse’s book was controversial. His perspective was considered fruitful, but not far-reaching enough. Gerhard Weinberg, a specialist in the history of World War II, argued that Mosse overstated the role of ideology while underestimating other geographical and power-political issues.<sup>39</sup> Fritz T. Epstein, a first-generation émigré historian who had fled from Germany to the United States, wrote a letter to Mosse criticizing him for not doing justice to German intellectual life by reducing it to *völkisch* thought.<sup>40</sup> In a review in the *American Historical Review* Klemens von Klemperer attacked Mosse’s work on similar grounds: “Mosse’s picture of Wilhelminian Germany is distorted and forced into a ‘volkish’ strait jacket.” Klemperer considered Mosse’s book a step backward from other contemporary historical studies. In his view, Mosse overestimated the ideological significance of National Socialism, while underestimating the “role of the immediate crisis, political, economic, and social.”<sup>41</sup> Only

a few scholars expressed consistently positive views. Carl J. Friedrich, for example, praised Mosse's approach for making it clear that National Socialism had not been an accidental product of German history.<sup>42</sup> In sum, Mosse's emphasis on German intellectual life was viewed critically. Mosse offered a new interpretation by not portraying National Socialism as a product of Nazi propaganda and the manipulation of the masses. Mosse's account did not feature a powerless population dominated by a ruthless Nazi elite. Nor did Mosse consider economic and social structures or acute crises to have been decisive. Rather, the Nazi seizure of power was the final step in a cumulative process of cultural development dating back to the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

In West Germany, the historian and specialist in modern German and English history, Bernd-Jürgen Wendt, reviewed Mosse's book in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* in 1967. He concluded that Mosse's findings were likely to meet with rejection in the discipline and among the general public because of his continuity thesis and its ideology-based approach.<sup>44</sup> He was to be proven right. The fifteen-year delay before Mosse's book was translated into German suggests the accuracy of Wendt's assessment. His book was by no means outdated at this point; rather, it presented a new interpretation of National Socialism in West Germany as cultural history began to emerge. In his 1979 preface, Mosse pointed out that his continuity thesis and his emphasis on the specificity of German fascism in particular had met criticism. He singled out Ritter (who had passed away in 1967): "[Even] if the German historian Gerhard Ritter claimed that the ideological development that led to National Socialism was not a typically German development, because other countries had experienced similar movements, this assumption is false."<sup>45</sup> Overall, the West German reaction remained limited.

Beginning in the 1980s, the lines of discourse in West German historical scholarship began to shift. This can be seen in the reception of Mosse's 1984 book *Nationalism and*

<sup>42</sup> Carl J. Friedrichs, "The Changing Theory and Practice of Totalitarianism," *Il Politico* 33 (1968): 63–65.

<sup>43</sup> Renato Moro, "George L. Mosse, Historian of Modern Irrationalism," accessed February 22, 2019, <https://histmosse.wiscweb.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/188/2017/05/1996-Moro-George-L-Mosse-1.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Bernd-Jürgen Wendt, "Eine Absage an den Westen: Wie war die Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus möglich?" *Die Zeit*, January 6, 1967.

<sup>45</sup> Mosse, *Volk*, 14. German original: "Wenn der deutsche Historiker Gerhard Ritter behauptete, die ideologische Evolution, die zum Nationalsozialismus führte, sei keine typisch deutsche Entwicklung gewesen, denn andere Länder hätten ebensolche Bewegungen erlebt, so ist diese Annahme falsch."

**46** Anson Rabinbach, "George L. Mosse 1919–1999: An Appreciation," *Central European History* 32, no. 3 (1999); Robert E. Neil, review of *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, by George L. Mosse, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 16 (1986): 736–38; Lorenzo Benadusi, "A Fully Furnished House: The History of Masculinity," in *George L. Mosse's Italy: Interpretation, Reception, and Intellectual Heritage*, ed. Lorenzo Benadusi and Giorgio Caravale (New York, 2014), 30–32.

**47** Christian Jansen, "Nationalismus, Nationalsozialismus, Sexualität," review of *Nationalismus und Sexualität: Bürgerliche Moral und Sexuelle Normen*, by George L. Mosse, *Neue Politische Literatur* 2 (1987): 345–346. German original: "Instruktive Bücher aus dem Bereich der Ideologie- bzw. Mentalitätsgeschichte [kommen] nach wie vor zu einem großen Teil aus den USA."

**48** "Historikerstreit" notes, April 17, 1988, GLMC, B 17/F 32; George L. Mosse, review of *Three Faces of Fascism*, by Ernst Nolte, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27, no. 4 (1966): 621–625.

*Sexuality*. With this book, Mosse became a pioneer in the field of the history of the body and in research on nationalism in the United States. His interest in constructions of masculinity sprang from the question of how nationalism instrumentalized myths and symbols to achieve consensus in a society.<sup>46</sup> It was primarily younger historians in West Germany, born in the 1950s, who engaged with his work. Hans Mommsen's student Christian Jansen, for example, observed that "instructive books in the field of the history of ideology or mentality continue to come to a large extent from the United States" and that "German emigrants" played a "prominent role" in this.<sup>47</sup> Jansen found Mosse's argument of the uniqueness of National Socialism convincing. The majority of West German historians, however, treated Mosse's work with silence. The reason for this was that Mosse, unlike many established West German historians, emphasized cultural causes for the popular support of National Socialism. To mobilize the population, Mosse argued, the Nazi movement drew on patterns of thought that had prevailed for decades. Mosse had repeatedly emphasized the singularity of National Socialism. In the course of the *Historikerstreit* (Historians' Controversy) of 1986, when Ernst Nolte insisted on the comparability of the Holocaust with other grave crimes against humanity, it is notable that Nolte's opponents did not take up Mosse's argument to refute him. Mosse did not intervene in the dispute because he saw it less as a scholarly debate than "as a quest for German national identity."<sup>48</sup>

What were the reasons for the marginalization of Mosse's work in the 1970s and 1980s? Defensive efforts to deny responsibility for National Socialism, as in the 1950s and 1960s, played a lesser role. Nevertheless, Mosse's approach differed from a common narrative, the basic narrative, of West German social historians, who blamed anonymous structures for Nazism. From the perspective of many West German historians Mosse's work was bound to remain speculative because he placed human thought at the center of his work. But what Mosse was concerned with



was analyzing the relationship of popular beliefs to National Socialism. There was also another meta-discourse that shaped the interpretation of National Socialism, as a public exchange between the German historian Martin Broszat and the Israeli historian Saul Friedländer illustrates. Once again, this involved the question of what status National Socialism should be given in German history. Broszat called for a “historicization” that would ensure that “this utterly depraved chapter in German history [. . .] become[s] capable of being integrated once again as a portion of one’s own national history.”<sup>49</sup> Moshe Zimmermann explains Mosse’s marginalization in this context as an attempt by West German historians “to rescue German history from Nazism in retrospect.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer, “A Controversy About the Historicization of National Socialism,” *New German Critique* 44 (1988): 100.

<sup>50</sup> Moshe Zimmermann, “Mosse and German Historiography,” in *George Mosse, on the Occasion of His Retirement, 17. 6. 85, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1986*, xx f.

<sup>51</sup> Henry Friedlander, *The German Revolution of 1918* (New York, 1992), preface.

### III. The Revaluation of Biography and Interpretation: Henry Friedlander

Unlike Mosse, Henry Friedlander, born in 1930, viewed the Holocaust as primarily a bureaucratic process. Friedlander studied history but did not turn to Holocaust research until the 1970s. In 1941, at the age of eleven, Friedlander had been deported from Berlin and survived a series of concentration camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau. Friedlander was only able to emigrate to the United States after the end of the war and then became a historian.

Reflecting on his initial direction of research, he wrote:

As we know, historians do not evaluate the past in a vacuum. Their work is influenced, perhaps even determined, by the intellectual and political climate of their times. I started research on my dissertation in the middle 1950s and at that time World War II and Nazi genocide was still immediate as both chronological event and personal experience. But I believed that those events were still too recent and too colored by personal involvement for balanced historical treatment. Instead, I turned, as did many others, to the years 1914–1920 to explain the terror unleashed between 1933 and 1945.<sup>51</sup>



**Figure 4.** Henry Friedlander visiting the Rosenstraße memorial in Berlin, 2009. Photograph taken by Benjamin Friedlander, private collection. Reproduced by permission.

Friedlander considered the Holocaust as too close in time and too personal to be treated with the necessary scholarly detachment. This was a typical attitude in both American and West German historiography, suggesting that survivors could not write “objectively” about the time period that affected them personally. Despite these reservations, Friedlander turned to the study of the Holocaust in the 1970s. He wrote about his reasons in an undated note:

The boy who has not aged without a name or face has always followed me. He looks over my shoulder, sits behind me on airplanes. For the first ten years I did not want him there. I did not think or talk about the past. Then we agreed to tolerate each other and I could think about it, and did so a lot for the next 15 years. I read the memoirs of others, the heavy tomes of the scholars,

finally even the documents. [. . .] Then after 25 years, in 1970, I had to write it down. I hesitated, I did not wish to do it. But somehow I believe the boy without a face or name understood, approved, and even encouraged me.<sup>52</sup>

This handwritten four-page manuscript, entitled “The Observer in Birkenau - A personal historiography of the Holocaust,” is found in Friedlander’s papers in a folder containing various lecture manuscripts. In November and December 1966, during his tenure at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, Friedlander gave six lectures to the Jewish community under the title “The Jew in the Modern World.” In these lectures, he covered the spread of what he called “modern anti-Semitism” at the turn of the century, the “racial” antisemitism of the Nazis, and the expulsion, ghettoization, and murder of Jews during World War II. This lecture series shows that Friedlander had certainly dealt with the Holocaust outside of an academic context. In the quoted excerpt, Friedlander portrayed his time in Birkenau as both an obstacle and an impetus to his research. By trying to leave the shadows of the past behind for over 25 years, he avoided the subject of genocide in World War II on a scholarly level. Only when he confronted his memories did he turn to the subject of the Holocaust. His personal experience, which had initially kept him from dealing with the Holocaust, now spurred him on to confront it.<sup>53</sup> Thus, Friedlander emphasized his responsibility as a survivor to research the Holocaust. At the same time, he felt it was necessary to clearly separate his memory as a survivor and his work as a scholar. In this context, he described the reservations of some colleagues who advised him against studying the Holocaust precisely because he was a survivor.<sup>54</sup> In response, Friedlander portrayed himself as an exceedingly sober and unemotional researcher, much as other Holocaust scholars who were also survivors such as Raul Hilberg and Gerhard Weinberg did.

When Friedlander reviewed the state of Holocaust research on the occasion of Yom Hashoah in 1975, he hinted at the dif-

**52** Friedlander, Henry, “The Observer in Birkenau - A personal historiography of the Holocaust,” folder “Jewish History Lectures”, Friedlander/Milton Papers (hereafter FMP), Box 106, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives (USHMM), Washington, D.C.

**53** See folder “Friedlander, Henry, Gedenkstunde, 01/27/1997, Saarbrücken,” FMP, Box 89.

**54** Henry Friedlander, interview with sr-online, folder “Friedlander, Henry, Gedenkstunde, 27.01.1997, Saarbrücken,” FMP, Box 89.

**55** Manuscript "Yom Hashoah", folder "Jewish History Lectures", FMP, Box 106.

**56** "Seminarconcept," folder "Touro 1973", FMP, Box 105.

**57** Herbert Strauss to Henry Friedlander, February 5, 1973, Hannah Arendt to Henry Friedlander, March 19, 1973, Peter Gay to Henry Friedlander, March 27, 1973, and Fritz Stern to Henry Friedlander, Oct. 25, 1973, all in folder "Touro 1973," FMP, Box 105.

**58** Doris L. Bergen, "Out of the Limelight or in: Raul Hilberg, Gerhard Weinberg, Henry Friedlander, and the Historical Study of the Holocaust," in Daum, Lehmann, and Sheehan, *The Second Generation*.

ficuity of making oneself heard as a survivor. "When talking about the unthinkable, reports use clichés. [. . .] Those who are sincere, must often become sensationalist when describing unbelievable accounts like the deportation of the children from Drancy."<sup>55</sup> Friedlander emphasized the lack of interest in the Holocaust among the public. According to Friedlander, the mass murder of the Jews only received attention when simplifications satisfied the public's desire for sensationalism.

Friedlander approached the subject of the Holocaust through the question of its institutionalization. In the early 1970s, he was among the first scholars to offer courses on the genocide of European Jews at the university level. However, his efforts to establish a permanent seminar, the New York Faculty Seminar on the Holocaust, met with only limited interest from his colleagues. Friedlander intended to discuss with teachers and lecturers how the history of the Holocaust could be taught.<sup>56</sup> His attempt to recruit emigré scholars from his own generation as well as the first generation met with refusals from more than half of the researchers whom he contacted. Peter Gay, for example, wrote him that it was a very important undertaking but that he could not attend because of his workload.<sup>57</sup> The topic of the Holocaust met with limited interest in a New York circle of humanities scholars, partly because their personal histories made it difficult to approach the subject as scholars. Moreover, since the topic of the Holocaust was not institutionalized in academia, studying it might hinder one's career.<sup>58</sup> This situation changed from the 1970s onwards, when the first seminars on the Holocaust and corresponding further education opportunities were offered in the US and eventually also in Europe.

In the 1980s, awareness of the crimes and horrors of the Nazi regime grew among many Germans due to cinematic and media discussions of the Holocaust that presented Jewish victims, on the one hand, and a homogeneous mass of perpetrators, on the other. This attention encouraged scholarly research as well as the institutionalization of monuments

and memorials, even if it initially remained unclear how they should be shaped. During these years, Friedlander turned to the subject of the so-called “euthanasia” program, the systematic murder of persons with disabilities, resulting in his opus magnum, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide*, published in 1995. He interpreted the “euthanasia” murders as an experimental arrangement for the Holocaust. The murder program had enabled the Nazis to find out how they could systematically murder people without much effort and without attracting too much attention. His thesis that Jews, Sinti, Roma and people with disabilities were killed for the same reason, which Friedlander called “heredity,” was controversial in both Germany and the United States. By listing Sinti and Roma as a victim group alongside Jews, Friedlander entered into a conflict between Jewish scholars and Sinti and Roma activists that vividly reflects the workings of competitive memory. In the course of the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer’s speech on the occasion of the Memorial Day of the Victims of National Socialism on January 27, 1998, in the German Bundestag, the debate on the comparability of victim groups reached its climax. Bauer emphasized the uniqueness of the National Socialist genocide of the Jews, the basis of which was antisemitic ideology. Although he referred to the Nazi murder of Sinti and Roma as a genocide, in the ensuing debate he distinguished it systematically from that of the Jews.<sup>59</sup> By contrast, Friedlander was one of the first Jewish scholars to argue that Jews, Sinti, and Roma were all persecuted for the same reason, a thesis for which he was harshly criticized.<sup>60</sup>

Overall, however, Friedlander’s book received positive reviews, especially in the United States, and won several awards. It also received praise in Germany. The political scientist Joachim Perels, for example, wrote: “His analysis is given special weight by the fact that it combines his own experiences with rights-destroying institutions of the Nazi regime with the claim of factually accurate presentation.” Friedlander’s work not only possessed the same objectivity as

**59** Yehuda Bauer, “Es galt nicht der gleiche Befehl für beide: Eine Entgegnung auf Romani Roses Thesen,” accessed May 9, 2018, [http://www.minderheiten.org/roma/index2.html?http://www.minderheiten.org/roma/textarchiv/texte/rose\\_bauer.htm](http://www.minderheiten.org/roma/index2.html?http://www.minderheiten.org/roma/textarchiv/texte/rose_bauer.htm); Yehuda Bauer, “Gedenkrede Am Deutschen Bundestag: 27.01.1998,” accessed May 9, 2018, <https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/geschichte/gastredner/bauer/rede/247412>.

**60** Yehuda Bauer and Sybil Milton, “Correspondence: ‘Gypsies and the Holocaust,’” *The History Teacher* 25, no. 4 (1992); Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif., 2009).

**61** Joachim Perels, review of *Der Weg zum NS-Genozid: Von der Euthanasie zur Endlösung*, by Henry Friedlander, *Kritische Justiz* 41, no. 2 (2008). German original: "Seine Analyse bekommt dadurch ein besonderes Gewicht, dass sich in ihr die eigenen Erfahrungen mit rechtszerstörenden Institutionen des NS-Regimes mit dem Anspruch sachlich genauer Darstellung verbinden"; "durch eigene Anschauung verstärkte Objektivität."

**62** Raul Hilberg, "'Man weiß nur, was man wissen will.': Ein Gespräch mit der Frankfurter Rundschau," *Die Frankfurter Rundschau*, July 16, 1993.

the studies of other historians, but an "objectivity enhanced by his own observation."<sup>61</sup>

In this quote, it is clear that the role of biography was valorized, especially in the 1980s and 1990s in Germany. Friedlander's biography was no longer considered a reason for his possible bias but became a source of special authority. The same argument increased the recognition of other historians such as Raul Hilberg and Mosse during this period. Overall, it can be stated that the works of the second generation experienced a reevaluation from the end of the 1970s onward, that is, they were translated more quickly and brought out by more prominent publishing houses; they were also discussed more frequently in the general press and in central publication organs of historical scholarship. If origin and biography had long been an obstacle to reception and a barrier to recognition, the opposite was now the case for the 1980s. The question arises: Why did this happen so late?

### **Conclusion: Belated Recognition as Intellectual Reparation**

When asked about the long silence on the Holocaust in an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau* in 1993, Raul Hilberg stated: "You only know what you want to know."<sup>62</sup> He was referring to the cultural function of historians, who not only produce knowledge about the past, but also reproduce and reinforce it in the form of narratives that can be approved by society. The interpretations of emigré historians presented here were often rejected by German colleagues because they damaged the self-image of a democratic population which had thrown off the burden of the Nazi interlude. While historians working in West Germany wanted to strengthen the national self-image in the first three postwar decades by referring back to their own past as positively as possible, the émigrés were concerned with a complete elucidation of this self-image in order to strengthen the awareness of democracy in the present and the future. When research gaps became apparent at the end of the 1970s due to the increase in knowledge about

the Holocaust, there was an increased turn to the work of émigré historians. They had already addressed many of the questions that were now being asked.

Overall, the aim of German historical scholarship on National Socialism and the Holocaust, as well as its use by politicians, became not only to fill research gaps but also to create the image, both at home and abroad, of a nation that dealt forthrightly with its past. The stylization of many émigré historians' works as "classics of contemporary history" reshaped a story about the avoidance of the Holocaust into a success story that fit into the narrative of the success story of the Federal Republic. Sybille Steinbacher, referring to Hilberg in this context, even speaks of the "tendency towards exaggeration in the reception of the present."<sup>63</sup> The internationalization of historical scholarship accelerated in this context.

The debates triggered by these émigré historians show that historiography consists not only of the interpretation of historical events, but also intervenes in a society's cultural self-understanding of its own past. The difficulties émigré historians had in participating in West German discourse resulted from the fact that many West German historians saw themselves as the guardians of the interpretation of their own history for a long time. The valorization of their work was thus not necessarily a sign of the shift in perspective and the opening up of contemporary history. For there was often no intensive discussion of controversial theses. Raul Hilberg thus recorded: "First they [the Germans] don't pay attention to me, then they make me a saint. Both times they don't read my books."<sup>64</sup> Doris Bergen judges that Hilberg's standard work "might be called the greatest book about the Holocaust that is the least read."<sup>65</sup> Thus, the process of reevaluation was also, as Hans Rosenberg and Fritz Stern put it, a "symbolic act of intellectual reparation."<sup>66</sup>

What can we learn from these émigré historians today? The analyses of the first generation remind us which social and economic factors contribute to a weakening of democracy

<sup>63</sup> Sybille Steinbacher, "Akribie, Ernst und Strenge: Raul Hilbergs Bedeutung für die Holocaustforschung," in *Raul Hilberg und die Holocaust-Historiographie*, ed. René Schlott (Göttingen, 2019), 25. German original: "Tendenz zu[r] Überhöhung in der Rezeption der Gegenwart."

<sup>64</sup> Hilberg, quoted in Ulrich Herbert, "Nach Kenntnis Der Akten: Nachruf," *taz*, August 8, 2007, 15. German original: "Erst beachten sie [die Deutschen] mich nicht, dann machen sie mich zu einem Heiligen. Beide Male lesen sie meine Bücher nicht."

<sup>65</sup> Bergen, "Out of the Limelight or In," 239.

<sup>66</sup> BArch, N 1376/53, Korrespondenz, allgemein, undatiert. German original: "symbolhaften Akt der geistigen Wiedergutmachung." See also Hans Rosenberg, "Rückblick Auf Ein Historikerleben Zwischen Zwei Kulturen," in *Machteliten und Wirtschaftskonjunkturen: Studien zur neueren deutschen Sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Hans Rosenberg (Göttingen, 1978), 23.

and which social groups can be involved in it. In particular, Adolf Leschnitzer's research makes clear that the exclusion and discrimination of social groups does not result from the behavior of those affected but from the prejudices of those who discriminate. Antisemitism and racism do not disappear when victims conform to a vaguely formulated notion of a *Leitkultur* (hegemonic culture). The second generation of cultural historians elucidated how authoritarian thinking feeds on fear-mongering and catastrophic scenarios. That freedom and democracy are exposed to constant threats was emphasized above all by Fritz Stern. Following George Mosse, scholars today examine the development of liberalism as well as the relationship between nationalism, racist stereotypes, and gender roles in post-1945 political culture. Finally, Holocaust scholars have clarified the conditions under which mass murder becomes possible: with the help of thoroughly organized bureaucracies, in the context of wars. Henry Friedlander argued that research should not be limited by the notion of the uniqueness of the Holocaust or focused only on certain victim groups. As Hilberg also pointed out, knowledge of the course of the Holocaust could help prevent further genocides or at least identify them quickly. What we can learn today, however, especially from these émigré historians, is that ethical principles accompany the crafting of contemporary history. As a result, historians can and must constantly question the historical narratives underlying a nation.

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**Forum:  
The German  
Treatment  
of Soviet  
Prisoners  
of War  
During the  
Second  
World War**



# The Prisoner of War Camps of the Wehrmacht: Key Findings of the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, Volume IV

Dallas Michelbacher

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Volume IV of the *USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos*, titled *Camps and Other Detention Facilities under the German Armed Forces*, published in 2022, documents camps and other types of detention sites operated by the Wehrmacht during the Second World War. The volume documents many of these sites for the first time, while providing new details about others. Among the most significant subjects explored in this volume are the structure and organization of the German prisoner of war camp system, the experiences of prisoners of war in German captivity, and the role of the Wehrmacht in the persecution of civilian populations. Of particular interest are our findings regarding Soviet prisoners of war in German captivity, a subject that has largely been neglected in the English-language historiography.

Volume IV demonstrates the massive extent and breadth of the Wehrmacht's camp system, which extended well beyond

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<sup>1</sup> See Gerhard Schreiber, *Die italienischen Militärinternierten im deutschen Machtbereich, 1943 bis 1945: Verraten, verachtet, vergessen* (Munich, 1990).

the prisoner of war camps. The volume includes individual entries for more than 600 sites, which include some well-known types of camps, such as *Kriegsgefangenen-Mannschaftsstammlager*, or Stalags (enlisted men's camps); *Offizierslager*, or Oflags (officers' camps); and *Durchgangslager*, or Dulags (transit camps); as well as lesser-known facilities such as improvised camps for interned Italian military personnel and military prisons for Wehrmacht personnel convicted of violations of the military legal code. The volume also includes entries for a wide variety of sites for civilians, including internment camps for Allied civilians in the Reich, the system of Wehrmacht-run labor camps for Tunisian Jews, and ad hoc detention camps for civilians. Volume IV is the first publication to document some of these sites, and the first to document many of them in English. Volume IV is also the first English publication to provide a comprehensive overview of the organizational structure of the Wehrmacht prisoner of war camp system, as well as the first systematic attempt to document each of the main camps.

In addition to simply illustrating the breadth of the Wehrmacht's system of camps and detention sites, Volume IV has unearthed significant new findings about many of these sites. In documenting these camps, we have come across several noteworthy trends. The first is the stark difference in the treatment of various groups of prisoners of war within the military camp system. There was a clear hierarchy in the camps, in which prisoners were stratified along national lines: Western Allied prisoners were treated well, in accordance with the Geneva Convention of 1929, which dictated the treatment of prisoners of war. Polish prisoners were treated more harshly, especially early in the war, when they were forced to live in primitive camp conditions. Italian soldiers who were interned after the armistice in 1943 were viewed as traitors by the Germans and treated poorly; of the approximately 600,000 Italian military prisoners, around 45,000 died.<sup>1</sup> The worst treatment, however, was reserved for the Soviet prisoners of war, who

were not provided with adequate housing, food, or medical care; of the roughly 5.7 million Soviet prisoners captured by the Germans, approximately 3.3 million died.<sup>2</sup> The volume also reveals more specific phenomena within these general trends, such as the dichotomy between the treatment of metropolitan French prisoners and French colonial troops from West Africa; the treatment of Jewish prisoners of war compared with the treatment of non-Jewish prisoners of the same nationality; and the general decline in conditions for prisoners of all nationalities in the camps during the final months of the war.

Our findings regarding the Soviet prisoners of war are particularly noteworthy because this subject is poorly documented in the existing English-language historiography. While German historians have created a substantial body of historiography regarding Soviet prisoners of war, historians writing in English have not given significant attention to the experiences of Soviet prisoners, and none of the major German works on the subject has been translated into English. Using a variety of sources, including official German military documentation, postwar investigative reports, and eyewitness accounts from survivors, Volume IV illustrates the mistreatment of Soviet prisoners of war in German captivity in graphic detail. The volume includes descriptions of the insufficient housing provided to the Soviet prisoners; the meager food rations they received; the lack of proper medical care for sick and injured prisoners, and the resulting epidemics of typhus and other diseases; forced labor; and the outright killing of Soviet prisoners, both as part of the 1941 “Commissar Order” issued by the German High Command (which instructed German troops to immediately execute captured political commissars) and as part of the so-called “weeding out” actions (or *Aussonderungen*), in which Gestapo personnel identified Jews, Communist Party members, and any surviving political commissars, who were then sent to concentration camps and killed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Christian Streit, *Keine Kameraden: Die Wehrmacht und die sowjetische Kriegsgefangene, 1941–1945*, 3rd ed. (Bonn, 1997), 10.

<sup>3</sup> See Reinhard Otto, *Wehrmacht, Gestapo und sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im deutschen Reichsgebiet 1941/42* (Munich, 1998); Felix Römer, “The Wehrmacht in the War of Ideologies: The Army and Hitler’s Criminal Orders on the Eastern Front,” in *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide, and Radicalization*, ed. Alex J. Kay, Jeff Rutherford, and David Stahel (Rochester, N.Y., 2012).



**Figure 1.** Stalag 349 at Uman. A German guard sitting on the end of a 20mm gun platform watches over 50,000 Soviet POWs, August 1941. USHMM, courtesy of NARA, WS #91098.

<sup>4</sup> See Streit, *Keine Kameraden*.

The volume demonstrates that the deaths of Soviet prisoners were the result of conscious and deliberate actions by the Wehrmacht, illustrating its role as an active participant in the propagation of Nazi racial-ideological policy. Wehrmacht personnel actively participated in the killing of Soviet prisoners of war and maintained the conditions that caused them to die en masse in the camps, particularly during the fall of 1941 and the winter of 1941–1942, when typhus epidemics ravaged the overcrowded camps and killed thousands of prisoners already weakened by weeks or months of starvation rations and forced labor.<sup>4</sup>

Surviving prisoners of war recounted both the horrific living conditions and the cruelty of the German camp personnel. A. E. Sukhinin, a Soviet soldier who was a prisoner at Stalag 345 in Smila, Ukraine, from October 1942 to May 1943, recalled:

To this camp they brought the wounded, to deliberately let them die. In winter, the buildings were not heated in any way, and we were warmed only by the heat of our bodies. We slept on bare boards, covered with nothing: they took away all our clothing and footwear and left us only our underwear. We slept in a ball, thrusting our arms into the neckband of our shirt with our palms



under our arms, and pressing our knees up toward our chins – that was the best way to conserve heat. The food they gave us was not enough to sustain life. I tried not even to move unless necessary, and not to speak.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the criminal actions of Wehrmacht personnel, our research has documented the involvement of virtually all parts of the Nazi security and police apparatus in the killing of Soviet prisoners of war, including the Gestapo, the Security Police (Sicherheitspolizei, or Sipo), and the Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst, or SD, the intelligence agency of the SS), as well as the military police forces and gendarmerie. Gestapo personnel were responsible for the identification of Jewish prisoners and political commissars, while the Sipo and SD were often called upon to execute these prisoners.<sup>6</sup>

Soviet prisoners of war were also transferred to concentration camps, where they were either killed immediately or held under brutal conditions and subjected to exceptional acts of cruelty, including human experimentation. One noteworthy example is the use of Soviet prisoners of war in the first Zyklon B gassing experiments at Auschwitz in September 1941. Significant numbers of Soviet prisoners were sent to other German concentration camps, including Buchenwald,

**Figure 2.** Stalag 308 (VIII E) at Neuhammer-West (Świętoszów). Soviet POWs begging for food behind a barbed wire fence, date unknown. Courtesy USHMM; public domain.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Kruglov, “Mannschaftsstaumlager (Stalag) 345,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume IV: Camps and Other Detention Facilities under the German Armed Forces*, ed. Geoffrey P. Megargee, Rüdiger Overmans, and Wolfgang Vogt (Bloomington, Ind., 2022), 345.

<sup>6</sup> See Otto, *Wehrmacht, Gestapo und sowjetische Kriegsgefangene*.



**Figure 3.** Dulag 126. Heinrich Himmler confronts a Soviet POW. Probably Minsk. Courtesy USHMM; public domain.

<sup>7</sup> Franciszek Piper, "Gas Chambers and Crematoria," in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington, Ind., 1998), 157–159.

Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen. The proliferation of Soviet prisoners of war throughout the German camp system and the involvement of so many different institutions in the killings further emphasizes the deliberate and premeditated nature of the mass murder of Soviet prisoners in German captivity.<sup>7</sup>

The volume also details the Wehrmacht's crimes against civilian populations, particularly within the occupied Soviet Union. In addition to the formal system of internment camps (*Internierungslager*) for Allied civilians within the Reich, the Wehrmacht operated a variety of ad hoc detention sites for civilians. Most of these sites were improvised camps in the occupied Soviet Union, although there were a few in German-occupied Serbia as well. Like the camps for Soviet military personnel, the conditions in these camps were terrible, with severe overcrowding and little food or medical care, and death rates were high.

Some civilians in the occupied Soviet Union were confined in German prisoner-of-war camps. Elena Shakuro, a civilian living in the village of Khrapovichi, north of Vitebsk, in



present-day Belarus, was sent along with several thousand others from the surrounding area to Stalag 313 in Vitebsk, a prisoner of war camp that was also used as a transit camp for civilians – in this case people who were suspected of aiding partisans. Shakuro recalled:

In late March 1943, German soldiers herded our whole family and the inhabitants of the village of Khrapovichy into the Vitebsk POW camp. There were a great many civilians there, old men, women, and children. In the barracks where they put us, there was no floor, only three tiers of bare plank beds on wire frames, and the overcrowding and filth were terrible. Hunger was rampant, and there was a typhus epidemic. People were dying in huge numbers, 20 to 30 a day, from starvation, typhus, and slave labor. In April 1943, our family was taken from the Vitebsk camp, in a transport of more than 1,000 people, to the Majdanek death camp.<sup>8</sup>

A particularly shocking example of the Wehrmacht's punitive actions against civilian populations was Endlager Ozarichi, located near the town of Ozarichi in present-day Belarus. In March 1944, the Wehrmacht placed thousands of Soviet civilians in a camp near the town, which was located between the German and Soviet lines. Like the other improvised Wehrmacht camps for civilians, the conditions in the camp were primitive, with no housing, food, or medical care provided. The Germans surrounded the camp with barbed wire and land mines, designed to kill any prisoners who tried to escape as well as any Soviet military personnel who approached the camp to attempt to rescue its prisoners. Soviet troops were forced to clear the mines before they could evacuate the survivors, by which time thousands of prisoners had died or been killed while trying to flee.<sup>9</sup>

Volume IV also documents the cruelty of the Wehrmacht toward its own soldiers. Despite the publication of several studies in German, notably those of Peter Lutz Kalmbach and the late Hans-Peter Klausch, who both contributed to the volume, the Wehrmacht penal system is almost entirely absent

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Kruglov, "Mannschaftsstaumlager (Stalag) 313," in *The USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume IV: Camps and Other Detention Facilities under the German Armed Forces*, ed. Megargee, Overmans, and Vogt, 302.

<sup>9</sup> Christoph A. Rass and René Rohrkamp, "Endlager Ozarichi," in *The USHMM Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume IV: Camps and Other Detention Facilities under the German Armed Forces*, ed. Megargee, Overmans, and Vogt, 571–574.

**10** See Peter Lutz Kalmbach, *Wehrmachtjustiz* (Berlin, 2012); and Hans-Peter Klausch, *Die Bewährungstruppe 500: Stellung und Funktion der Bewährungstruppe 500 im System von NS-Wehrrecht, NS-Militärjustiz und Wehrmachtstrafvollzug* (Bremen, 1995).

from the English-language historiography. Volume IV covers several different types of penal facilities, including the Wehrmacht prisons established before the war, the wartime Wehrmacht prisons, Wehrmacht penal camps, and field penal units. These facilities held prisoners accused of a variety of crimes, including homosexuality, desertion, and the broad range of offenses which fell under the umbrella of “subversion of fighting power” (*Wehrkraftzersetzung*). The prisoners experienced terrible conditions, from the dark, damp cells of the military prisons (which also served as execution sites) to highly dangerous military engineering and minesweeping work in the field penal units.<sup>10</sup> Volume IV is the first publication to address these sites in English.

Finally, Volume IV details several other categories of sites operated by the Wehrmacht that have largely been neglected up to this point. Among them are brothels for Wehrmacht personnel in which thousands of women in occupied territories were victimized; civilian labor units conscripted by the Wehrmacht; and labor camps for Tunisian Jews. Describing these sites further expands our understanding of the Wehrmacht’s interactions with the civilian population in German-occupied areas. While our analysis is limited in some cases by a lack of documentation, we have nonetheless made significant progress in uncovering these sites and the policies which led to their creation.

We believe that Volume IV has made significant strides in the documentation and analysis of the camps and detention sites operated by the Wehrmacht. Its detailed descriptions of the Wehrmacht’s crimes against both prisoners of war and civilian populations provide yet another firm rebuke of the “myth of the clean Wehrmacht,” which had long claimed that – in contrast to the SS, which was responsible for the mass murder perpetrated by mobile killing squads and in concentration camps – the German military was “clean” in the sense of having had nothing to do with mass murder. While this myth has long been discredited among historians, it nonetheless

persists in popular discourse around the Second World War and in popular culture. Thus, it is important for historians to continue to provide well-documented evidence of the Wehrmacht's role in crimes against humanity. The volume's findings represent another step in the long process of breaking down this pernicious myth. We hope that the volume will serve as both an authoritative resource for the documentation of the Wehrmacht's war crimes and a stimulus for further research on this subject, particularly in the English language historiography, where significant lacunae remain.

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# Forced Labor of Soviet Prisoners of War during the Second World War

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Prisoners of war and forced laborers of all origins constituted an indispensable workforce for the German war economy during the Second World War. Their share of the total number of workers in Germany rose steadily from 1941 onwards, from around nine percent to at least 20 percent in 1944. According to other estimates, foreigners made up as much as 26 percent of Germany's total labor force in September 1944. The vast majority were involuntary workers. In total, it is estimated that some 13.5 million people were shunted into forced labor for Germany between 1939 and 1945 – foreign civilian workers, prisoners of war, but also German prisoners. In September 1944, German authorities counted nearly six million civilian foreign workers and employees, over a third of them – 2.4 million – persons from Eastern Europe, so-called *Ostarbeiter*. Statistics from January 1945 document nearly 2.2 million prisoner-of-war workers in the German war economy. The 978,000 Soviet prisoners accounted for almost half of this contingent.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hein Klemann and Sergei Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies: An Economic History of Nazi-Occupied Europe, 1939–1945* (London, 2012); Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, "Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and survivors," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33 (2002): 169–204; Mark Spoerer, "NS-Zwangsarbeiter im Deutschen Reich: Eine Statistik vom 30. September 1944 nach Arbeitsamtbezirken," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49 (2001): 665–684.

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**2** Rolf Keller, *Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im Deutschen Reich 1941/42: Behandlung und Arbeitseinsatz zwischen Vernichtungspolitik und kriegswirtschaftlichen Zwängen* (Göttingen, 2011). See also *Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im Arbeitseinsatz. 1941-1945: Dokumente zu den Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen in Norddeutschland*, ed. Rolf Keller and Silke Petry (Göttingen, 2013).

**3** Joachim Gauck, "Was spurlos verwehen, das rufen wir in unserem Gedächtnis," speech delivered May 6, 2015, in *"Wir vergessen nicht": Reden zum Gedenken an die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus und des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Bergen-Belsen, Berlin, Dresden, Lebus, Schloss Holte-Stukenbrock 2015* (Berlin, 2015): 34–42, here 34, 42.

**4** Winfried Dolderer, "Späte Entschädigung," *Das Parlament* 65 (2015), 7; Andreas Hilger, "Schwieriges Gedenken: Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene im Erinnerungshaushalt der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nach 1989," in *Leerstelle(n)? Der deutsche Vernichtungskrieg 1941–1944 und die Vergegenwärtigung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland nach 1989*, ed. Alexandra Klei and Katrin Stoll (Berlin 2019), 117–136.

Soviet prisoners of war were present not only in numerous industries and companies throughout Germany and in the occupied territories of Poland and the USSR, but also throughout Europe, from occupied Norway to the Atlantic Wall. Nevertheless German research and memory culture have devoted little attention to the dimensions and circumstances of their labor deployment. Significantly, the most important German study on this subject, which only deals with the territory of the Reich, was not published until 2011, more than 65 years after the end of the war.<sup>2</sup> These deficits in research corresponded to a generally very limited interest in the overall fate of Soviet prisoners in German hands. As late as 2015, then-German President Joachim Gauck spoke of this mass crime as largely hidden within a German "memory shadow."<sup>3</sup> It was only in that same year that the German Bundestag made ten million euros available for so-called recognition payments (*Anerkennungsleistungen*) to former Soviet prisoners of war.<sup>4</sup> Shortly before, at the beginning of the new millennium, this large group had been explicitly excluded from payments from the compensation fund set up by the German government and industry. "Being a prisoner of war," Article 11 of the July 2000 law establishing the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility, Future succinctly stated, "does not establish eligibility for benefits."<sup>5</sup> Only prisoners of war who had been "imprisoned" in concentration camps could hope for compensation at that time.<sup>6</sup>

**5** See "Gesetz zur Errichtung einer Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft," *Stiftung EVZ*, <https://www.stiftung-evz.de/stiftung/gesetz-der-stiftung-evz.html> (accessed September 21, 2023); Henning Borggräfe, *Zwangsarbeiterentschädigung: Vom Streit um "vergessene*

*Opfer" zur Selbstaussöhnung der Deutschen* (Göttingen, 2014); *Die Entschädigung von NS-Zwangsarbeit am Anfang des 21. Jahrhunderts: Die Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" und ihre Partnerorganisationen*, ed. Constantin Goschler, 4 vols. (Göttingen, 2012).

**6** Answer of the German Federal Government to "Kleine Anfrage" (Parliamentary Question) of "Die Linke" Party, August 21, 2006, Bundestagsdrucksache 16/2423.

## I. Research Gaps

In this first section of this article we will focus on the forced-labor deployment of Soviet prisoners of war. The research gaps here are substantial. The quantity and quality of the share of forced labor of Soviet prisoners of war in Germany's wartime economic efforts as a whole must be determined much more precisely than has been done so far. The figures mentioned at the beginning of this article already demonstrate the considerable magnitude and thus the relevance of forced labor to Germany's war economy. The challenge is to break down the sweeping data into industrial sectors, agriculture, and military installations and units to put into perspective the concrete importance of POW labor for the central sectors of armaments, food, and the Wehrmacht apparatus at and behind the front.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, it remains to be comprehensively clarified to what extent the everyday working conditions of prisoners in individual industries or corresponding camp locations differed over the years and thus left prisoners with different chances of survival from the outset. Of particular interest here may be the question of whether industries and camps that were considered particularly significant to the war and war economy placed prisoners in a better or worse position. Here managerial accounts and practices as well as ideological approaches to the new labor force must be analyzed down to the lowest organizational level. Entrepreneurs, farmers, and the lower military ranks had room to maneuver which they could use to the benefit or disadvantage of the prisoners. At these levels, it is also possible to reconstruct economically-based categorizations of the captured workers – for example, by occupational group, but also by health status – and to examine the relationship between such categorizations and basic treatment. Conversely, achievement of economic goals also depended on the fundamental willingness of the prisoners to cooperate, their will to resist, and whether or not the production results of individual firms met the government's

<sup>7</sup> Matthias Puchta's dissertation at the University of Heidelberg on Soviet prisoners of war in the German-occupied territories of the RSFSR will describe, among other things, the central importance of POW labor for Wehrmacht supply centers.

**8** See *Rotarmisten in deutscher Hand: Dokumente zu Gefangenschaft, Repatriierung und Rehabilitierung sowjetischer Soldaten des Zweiten Weltkrieges*, ed. Andreas Hilger, Rüdiger Overmans, and Pavel Polian (Paderborn, 2012), chapters 2.1, 2.6 and 2.7.

requirements. These complex overall constellations helped determine working conditions and the success and failure of labor operations on the ground, notwithstanding the exhortations of political and military leaders.

It also remains to be clarified how the actual or planned use of Soviet POW labor was incorporated into the implementation of the policy of extermination – or, at the other extreme, the use of coerced labor for Nazi prestige projects. In the fall of 1941, for example, some 25,000 prisoners of war were assigned to the construction of concentration camps. However, within a few weeks, these prisoners were deliberately and purposefully destroyed by being worked to death. Nevertheless, as late as 1942 there were plans for POW camps housing as many as 100,000 prisoners who would have been specifically assigned to SS projects. At the same time, an unknown number of Soviet POWs were diverted toward initiatives such as the so-called “new construction of Munich” or, in October 1941, to work on prominent jobs in Berlin.<sup>8</sup>

It follows from these considerations that a precise reconstruction of the numerous work sites and labor assignments with their concrete conditions is necessary to grasp the labor deployment of Soviet prisoners of war in its contemporary relevance and visibility at all levels of the economy, military, and society. This comprehensive approach will allow new insights into camp societies and the worlds of experience of the prisoners themselves. The imposed differentiations from the world of work could structure camp society and establish hierarchies. Prisoners were able to pursue individual survival strategies in the face of different working conditions in different economic sectors, or on the basis of their own abilities, and, if necessary, to influence the working environment itself with their activities. These desirable insights into politics, the military, and the economy, which are only sketched here, have yet to be worked out for the years from 1942 onward and especially for occupied areas in the East and West. With respect to prisoners’ experiences, there are significant gaps



for virtually the entire period and all regions. In addition, this research may also yield further insights into the fate of female prisoners of war, about which far too little is known; many of them were apparently forcibly transferred to so-called civilian employment as “Eastern workers.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A dissertation by Luisa Eckert on the German treatment of female Soviet prisoners of war is being written at the HSU Hamburg.

With regard to the decision-making processes and decisions at the highest German levels, we still lack detailed and comprehensive analyses of the extent of competition for prisoner-of-war labor between the front and the homeland, between the Wehrmacht and the economy, and between individual branches of industry and business. These collisions and their outcomes also had important implications for the ever-changing power positions of competing players in the overall National Socialist structure. It can be assumed that the prospects of victory or defeat intensified such conflicts, but this has not been empirically researched either for specific settings or for overall policy.

## II. German Prisoner of War Policy

Other basic features of German policy regarding the use of Soviet prisoners of war for labor, however, have been quite well researched. This research has revealed the ambivalence of a policy that generally – most explicitly only after the failure of the Blitzkrieg strategy – attached great importance to the forced labor of Soviet prisoners as a means to bring about victory, while nevertheless remaining substantially shaped by the ideological premises and objectives of the war of extermination.

According to labor office data, in the summer of 1941 some 2.6 million positions in the German war economy were unfilled. It thus became a self-evident expectation among business enterprises and associations that the prisoners the war against the USSR produced would become available to fill job vacancies, especially in labor-intensive positions. The Wehrmacht was also interested in the labor of prisoners to

**10** Klemann and Kudryashov, *Occupied Economies*, 138.

**11** OKW order (*Befehl*) of Oct. 31, 1941, in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 430–431.

**12** OKW order (*Befehl*) of Nov. 4, 1941, in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 432–434.

relieve German soldiers or, depending on the situation at the front, to free them for actual military tasks.<sup>10</sup>

Against this general background, the coal mining, armaments, and agricultural sectors calculated as early as July 1941 that they wanted to use 500,000 Soviet prisoners of war in the Reich more or less immediately. Hitler, however, was not prepared to tolerate more than 120,000 Soviet prisoners within the Reich's borders. After months of back and forth, at the end of October 1941, Hitler finally bowed to the realization that the "shortage of manpower was developing into an increasingly dangerous obstacle to the future German war and armaments economy." Moreover, in view of the situation at the front, the hoped-for "relief through soldiers being granted extended work leave [*Freistellungen*] from the Wehrmacht" was out of the question. Hitler now ordered "that the manpower of the Russian prisoners of war is also to be exploited . . . through their large-scale use for the needs of the war economy."<sup>11</sup>

On November 4, 1941, the German high command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* or OKW) laid down the basic objectives and conditions for the large-scale use of the labor of Soviet prisoners that would guide German policy in the future.<sup>12</sup> In essence, from this point on, the aim was to use as many Soviet prisoners as possible, especially for heavy and mass work, and to use skilled laborers as effectively as possible in accordance with their training.

These objectives motivated the so-called "Aufpäppelung" (pampering) campaigns from the winter of 1941/42 onward, by which exhausted prisoners were to be made fit for work again by temporarily receiving additional or better rations and better general care. The same objectives led to repeated inspections of prison camps everywhere by special commissions of the state labor offices, who sought prisoners who were fit for work and/or had previous specialized training. Short-term "Aufpäppelung" and the rapid exploitation of prisoners went hand in hand. In mid-July 1942, for example, a commission from the Vienna-Lower Danube Regional Labor Office

traveled to East Prussia “to recruit prisoners of war for use” in its own district. According to its report, the commission concentrated on “combing out” those camps “that, on the one hand, by their size, and on the other hand, by the high level of *Aufpäppler* [prisoners who had supposedly been pampered], gave a certain guarantee from the outset that the . . . task would be fulfilled.”<sup>13</sup> In view of the increasing demand for manpower inside and outside the Reich for industry and the Wehrmacht, the Wehrmacht and the National Socialist security services began, from 1942/1943 onward, to elevate the capture of as many enemies as possible to an operational objective in their war planning. “The purpose of the ‘Citadel’ attack,” the Army High Command (*Oberkommando des Heeres*, OKH) stated in April 1943, “is, in addition to the destruction of enemy formations and war material and a shortening of the front, to gain prisoners of war and civilian manpower for the employment of labor important to the war effort.”<sup>14</sup>

From November 1941 onward, military authorities sought to ensure the distribution of the prison labor force took into account and balanced the respective needs of the Wehrmacht, agriculture, and industry – with a focus on armaments, coal and infrastructure. At the same time, racial ideological hierarchies were to be observed in deployment and treatment. The absolute priority of taking care of the needs of Germans – soldiers and civilians – was never in question in this approach. For the treatment of the forced laborers who were prisoners of war, the guidelines meant that, regardless of work requirements, *Soviet* prisoners were worse off than prisoners from other countries in matters of rations, medical care, (minimal) compensation (in cash or kind) pay and general treatment. It was not until the spring of 1945 that, at least on paper, the rations of Soviet prisoners were brought up to the level of those of other prisoners of war. Even if the agencies involved were able or willing to implement this improvement in practice, the change no longer had any substantial effect. Even in the event of (Allied) air raids, priority was given to the protection of non-Soviet workers. In principle, Soviet prisoners continued

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Representative of the President of the Vienna-Lower Danube Regional Labor Office, July 16, 1942, in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 474–478.

<sup>14</sup> Befehl OKH, April 15, 1943, and Order of the Chief of the Gang Combat Units, Sep. 1, 1943, both in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 291–292, 294–295.

**15** Andreas Hilger and Oskars Gruzinš: "Intimacy, 'Treason,' and 'Ideological Transgression': POWs and Women on the Eastern Front of the Second World War," in *Prisoners of War and Local Women in Europe and the United States, 1914–1956: Consorting with the Enemy*, ed. Matthias Reiss and Brian K. Feltman (Cham, 2022), 190–229.

**16** Telex from the General of Pioneers and Fortresses at the OKH, Oct. 29, 1941, and draft note on the meeting with Reichsmarschall Göring on November 7, 1941, dated Nov. 11, 1941, both in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 429, 436–440.

**17** Johannes Hürter, *Hitlers Heerführer: Die deutschen Oberbefehlshaber im Krieg gegen die Sowjetunion 1941/42* (Munich, 2007); Dieter Pohl, *Die Herrschaft der Wehrmacht. Deutsche Militärbesatzung und einheimische Bevölkerung in der Sowjetunion 1941–1944* (Munich, 2008); Tanja Penter, *Kohle für Stalin und Hitler: Arbeiten und Leben im Donbass 1929 bis 1953* (Essen, 2010).

to be regarded as posing a special danger that could only be dealt with by particularly strict measures. This included, for example, work in "work gangs" under particularly strict guard, deliberately harsh reprisals against escape attempts, and also the constant readiness to "weed out" and kill prisoners who were unwilling or unable to work. The extraordinarily harsh persecution of Soviet prisoners' private relationships with Germans was the final element in this set of policies.<sup>15</sup>

The vast majority of employers in the Wehrmacht, industry and agriculture were apparently fine with the politically motivated downgrading of living and labor conditions for the Soviet contingents. This was exemplified by the fact that the Wehrmacht summarily assigned Soviet prisoners of war to clear mines, and by no means only trained specialists.<sup>16</sup> Excessively long workdays in industry and agriculture alike demonstrated that little thought was given to whether the work and working conditions were tolerable for the individual prisoners. On the whole, when it came to deployments in the Wehrmacht, in coal mining, or in individual factories, the living and working conditions of Soviet prisoners of war bear more similarity to "slave labor" than to the labor deployments of prisoners protected under international law.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, the German actors in charge of labor deployment tried to resolve the contradictions of such a policy – which on the one hand ordered the widespread use of prisoners for labor and on the other hand remained bound to the logics of a war of extermination – by mercilessly exploiting the prisoners, with disastrous results. Even after the great mass deaths of 1941/42, the mortality rate among Soviet prisoners was many times higher than that of Western prisoners until the end of the war.

### **III. The Research and Database Project "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees"**

The project "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees," initiated in 2016, contributes to filling the gaps in

research mentioned above. It is funded by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and in some respects continues earlier work by the Saxon Memorials Foundation (Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten). The host institution (*Träger*) for the overall project is the German War Graves Commission (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.).

The project aims to clarify individual fates and to make the corresponding documents and data accessible to relatives, researchers, and memorial work. Within the framework of this project, the German Historical Institute in Moscow (DHIM) organized the research for documents on Soviet prisoners of war in post-Soviet, German, and other international archives until 2022/2023. Since then, the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe & EurAsia has organized this research. The fates of Soviet POWs can only be clarified through international cooperation. Project work has taken place in Russia, Latvia, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Germany, Serbia, France, Georgia, and Switzerland. After the Russian attack on Ukraine in February 2022, the project suspended all collaborations in Russia.<sup>18</sup> Work outside Russia (and outside Belarus) continues. In Germany, the results of the research on Soviet prisoners of war – digitized files and personal data – are being incorporated into the “Memorial Archives” research platform operated by the Flossenbürg concentration camp memorial on behalf of the German Federal Archives.<sup>19</sup>

The project’s approach focuses on the hitherto nameless Soviet soldiers and commanding officers who were taken captive by the German army. The project provides fragmentary documentary evidence for the reconstruction of hundreds of thousands of biographies, from a person’s capture to labor deployment, resistance, collaboration, death, repatriation, “filtration,” Soviet postwar trials, amnesties, and rehabilitations. By combining biographical data from various archives, it is possible to more precisely chronicle the experiences of Soviet prisoners of war in various industries, camps, and regions. The integrated access also allows us to trace the

**18** A brief history of the project is outlined in Andreas Hilger, *Russisch-deutsche Beziehungen seit den 1990er-Jahren - Kultur und Wissenschaft* (Paderborn, 2023), 17–27.

**19** <https://memorial-archives.international>

20 Penter, Kohle, 313–326.

21 Marina M. Panikar, *Sovetskie voennoplennye v Norvegii v gody Vtoroj mirovoj vojny* (Arkhangelsk, 2010); Marianne Neerland Soleim, *Sovjetiske krigsfanger i Norge, 1941–1945: Antall, organisering og reparering* (Oslo, 2009).

history of social and ethnic collectives in the labor commandos as well as prisoners' survival strategies.

As mentioned above, when the German Bundestag passed legislation authorizing the so-called recognition payments (*Anerkennungszahlung*) in May 2015, an estimated 2,000 to 4,000 former Soviet prisoners of war were still alive. In the current discussion about remembering the crimes of World War II without contemporary witnesses, it becomes clear that access to history through individual fates remains important. Sources about individuals are in great demand in educational work and for exhibition projects.

#### **IV. Work Assignment, Forced Mobility, and the International Dimension of the Project**

The labor deployment of Soviet POWs resulted in very high forced mobility. Soviet POWs passed through numerous stations of the far-flung German camp network. After their capture, Soviet military personnel were taken to assembly points at the front and then sent to the so-called “Dulags” (short for *Durchgangslager*), transit camps in the rear army areas. After forced marches and train rides, often lasting for days, which many did not survive, they reached the “Stalags” (short for *Stammlager*), the main camps for enlisted men, or the “Oflags” (short for *Offizierslager*), the camps for officers.

Soviet prisoners of war were transported for forced labor not only to Germany, but across occupied Europe. We still know very little about prisoner transports within occupied portions of the Soviet Union, and forced labor there has barely been researched.<sup>20</sup> Large contingents of Soviet prisoners were taken to Poland, France, and Norway, as well as to countries allied with Germany, such as Hungary and Romania.<sup>21</sup> When the Allies agreed to repatriate their citizens quickly at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, over five million Soviet citizens were located outside the Soviet Union as a result of

2<sup>e</sup> DIVISION MAROCAINE  
 ETAT-MAJOR - 2<sup>e</sup> BUREAU *2000*  
 COMPTE RENDU D'INTERROGATOIRE DE P.G.

N <sup>o</sup>	NOM ET PRENOMS	NE LE	GRADE	UNITE	OBSERVATIONS
I311	WENDELE Karl	9.9.09	<del>XXXXXXXXXX</del> Pl. Bon715		(1 <sup>o</sup> Cie)
I312	KUNAU Ederhard	18.7.25		9/15	
I313	ZSCHEYE Werner	26.9.21			
I314	STRELOVNIK Josef	6.3.18		3/100 G.J.R.	
I315	KORUS Hubert	9.7.11		FLAKABT 945	Polonais désert.
I316	HOFFPNER Gunter			1/Pl 356 D.I.	
I317	GHERMANN Friedrich	14.11.16	s/Off.	5/12 Starn Rgt.	
I318	BALVN Heret	28.12.22		5/12 Starn Rgt.	
I319	ZETTLHOKER Johann	29.8.25		" " "	
I320	CORNELIUS Johann	6.12.24		" " "	
I321	GRWGOR Manfred	7.1.25		" " "	
<b>23 JUIN 1944</b>					
I322	FLIEGGER Sebastien	20.8.13		8/71 - 356 D.I.	
I323	MEYER Helmut	16.7.21		7/12 Starn Rgt.	
I324	JOHN Alex	2.12.25		8/71	Polonais
I325	RILL Adolf	3.7.09		8/71	"
I326	KOWALZYK Felix	29.5.13		8/71	Polonais
I327	BUNK Kasimir	21.5.23		8/71	
I328	HEK Brinec			12 Para.	
I329	MEYER Hans			12 Para	
I330	SEREDA Philippe	25.10.1892			
I331	LEWANDOWSKI Yvan	27.1.1920		Organ.Todt	Russe
I332	CHANGPRVICH Wladislaw	4.4.1924		" "	"
I333	SZYSZKA Tadens	4.6.22		" "	Polonais
I334	HAFPA Yvan			" "	Russe
<b>24 JUIN 1944</b>					
I335	RAPANO Michel			" "	Russe
I336	RIMENIOFF Wassilief			" "	"
I337	CHALAGHAIEFF Paul			" "	"
I338	TIOCKINE Feodor			" "	"
I339	CIGNANI Miche			" "	"
I340	OLIMOWE Jakob			" "	"
I341	PTUSCHKOW Georges			" "	"
I342	TALLNIKOW Nikoloi			" "	"
I343	BELEKOW Eugen			" "	"

P.C., le 24 JUIN 1944

*2*

Corps Esp. *français*  
 Des. d'arr. *français*  
 27 JUIN 1944  
 N<sup>o</sup> d'arr. *74643*  
 2

**Figure 1.** Soviet prisoners of war as forced laborers in the Organisation Todt. List of the intelligence section of the 2e division marocaine. Source: Historical Service of the French Ministry of Defense (SHD) <sup>23</sup> / Service historique de la Défense, Vincennes, GR 10 P 37.

the war. Among the repatriated, according to current Russian figures, were 1.8 million former prisoners of war who were located across almost all European countries as well as in the United States. <sup>22</sup>

This situation is reflected in archival records in all these countries. As already mentioned, first project results are available, among others, from Russia, from Baltic and Central Asian states, from Western and Southeastern Europe, from Georgia and, thanks to a preceding project, from Ukraine and Belarus. The extension of the current work to further countries, namely to archives of Ukraine, but also to Moldova, is currently being planned.

<sup>22</sup> Repatriacija sovetских graždan s okkupirovannoj teritorii Germanii, 1944–1952, ed. Ol'ga V. Lavinskaya and Vladimir V. Zacharov, vol. 1, 1944–1946 (Moskva, 2019), 29; Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The Motherland Calls: 'Soft Repatriation' of Soviet Citizens from Europe, 1945–1953," *Journal of Modern History* 90 (2018): 323–350.

<sup>23</sup> The documents in the French archives were reviewed by Dr. Daniel Bißmann as part of the project.

**Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben**

Verpflichtung der Schutzleistung Nr. 39222

Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: Stalag X D (310) Post: Stalag X D (310)

Name: DUBININ Staatsangehörigkeit: Russe

Vorname: WASILIJ Dienstgrad: Soldat

Geburtsort und -ort: 25.11.1908 d. Tajdaxowo gau Tula Truppenteil: 250 I.R. Komp. ufo.: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: g.o. Stellung: Böcker Berufs-Ort: \_\_\_\_\_


Vorname des Vaters: Iwan Matr.Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaats): \_\_\_\_\_

Familienname der Mutter: Kondratjew Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): 16.11.41 St. Medwed

Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert: gesund

---

**Das Kriegsgefangenen**

Bild 	Größe <u>178</u>	Haarfarbe <u>schwarz</u>	Nähere Personalbeschreibung Besondere Kennzeichen: <u>Augenfarbe - schwarz</u>
	Fingerring des rechten Ringfingers		

General

Die Besetzung der Personalkarte ist durch den Kommandanten des Lagers zu bestätigen.  
 Die Besetzung der Personalkarte ist durch den Kommandanten des Lagers zu bestätigen.  
 Die Besetzung der Personalkarte ist durch den Kommandanten des Lagers zu bestätigen.

**Figure 2.** Personalkarte I (Registration card), recto, for Soviet Prisoner of War Vasilij Dubinin. Source: Russian State Military Archive Moscow (RGVA) f. 517, op. 1, d. 47019, l. 106.

## V. Sources on the Forced Labor of Soviet Prisoners of War

The 1929 Geneva Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which Germany had signed, obliged all signatory powers to register prisoners and to establish an official information center. The German Reich refused to treat Soviet prisoners of war according to the principles of the Geneva Convention. Registration by the Wehrmacht bureaucracy deviated from that approach to a certain degree. In 1939, the Wehrmacht set up an Information Center (Wehrmachtsaufsuchtsstelle, WAST) in Berlin, with a Department VIII for “Foreign Prisoners,” where all information on Soviet prisoners of war in German custody was collected. But, again



Dr. 39222  
 Reger: S.D./B10

Ereignisse im St.-Def.-Lager	Datum		Grund der Verletzung		Ermalung	

Erkrankungen während der Befreiungszeit gegen

Todes		Schwere Verletzungen (z.B. Paraty, Stabe, Cholera etc.)		Krankheit	Erkrankungen	
am	gegen	am	gegen	von	bis	von
am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			
Erfolg	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			
am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			
Erfolg	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			
am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			
Erfolg	gegen 12.7.41	am 12.7.41	gegen 12.7.41			

Verletzungen		Stapel-Def.-Lager		Verletzungen	
Datum	Grund der Verletzung	Datum	Grund der Verletzung	Datum	Grund der Verletzung
12.7.41		Stalag X A			
12.7.41		Stalag I B			
12.7.41		Stalag X A			
16.10.44	R.A. W. Nieier v. orf	Stalag 321 VI K			

16.10.44 R.A. W. Nieier v. orf Stalag 321 VI K

Kommandos		
Datum	Art des Kommandos	Stichtagdatum
7.11.41	Aschwalden R.W.199	
12.11.41	Stalag I B	
12.11.41	Stalag I B	
12.11.41	Hauting-Wandsleben R.F.K. 7173 XB	
4.8.42	Lager X B Sandbosten	
11.8.42	Lager X B Sandbosten	
12.11.42	Höb n Wandsbeck 7173	
30.9.43	Höb n Wandsbeck 7173	14.9.41
26.1.44	Höb n Wandsbeck 7173	12.58
16.10.44	Höb n Wandsbeck 7173	

GX  
78865



**Figure 3.** Personalkarte I, verso, for Vasilij Dubinin. Source: Russian State Military Archive Moscow (RGVA) f. 517, op. 1, d. 47019, l. 106.

in violation of the Geneva Convention, the WAsT never provided any information about prisoners to the USSR.<sup>24</sup> The “Personalkarte I” (registration card) filed for each prisoner of war formed the basis for planning the labor deployment of the Soviet prisoners of war. The registration of the prisoners in the camps – mostly in the Stalags and Oflags – provided the German authorities with an overview of the number and location of the prisoners, their occupation, gender, ethnicity, state of health, and other criteria that were important for the organization of work detachments.

For example, the registration card for Vasilij Dubinin, now at the Russian State Military Archives in Moscow (RGVA), shows that this soldier, born in 1908, was taken prisoner on August

<sup>24</sup> Rolf Keller and Reinhard Otto, “Das Massensterben der sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen und die Wehrmachtsbürokratie: Unterlagen zur Registrierung der sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen 1941–1945 in deutschen und russischen Institutionen,” *Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen* 57 (1998): 149–180, here 154.

25 <https://gedenkstaettenfoerderung.stiftung-ng.de/de/forschung-dokumentation/wehrmacht-kriegsgefangene/kriegsgefangenenlager/storage/x-d-310-wietzendorf/> (accessed Nov. 12, 2020). Information provided by the Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation, which works with the project as a cooperation partner.

26 Keller and Petry, *Sowjetische Kriegsgefangene*, 17.

16, 1941 in Medved' near Novgorod. He was registered in the fall of 1941 in Stalag XD (310), in the Wietzendorf camp. Wietzendorf in the Lüneburg Heath was one of the so-called Russian camps, intended exclusively for Soviet prisoners of war. Built in the summer of 1941 on a military training area, the Wehrmacht provided hardly any permanent housing. In the winter of 1941/42, prisoners had to seek shelter from cold, wind, and snow in earth caves and self-built hovels. By March 1942, more than 14,000 Soviet prisoners of war had already died in Wietzendorf from malnutrition and the other unbearable conditions of their captivity.<sup>25</sup>

Prisoners were registered in the camps and given a number according to the order of their arrival. Vasilij Dubinin was given prisoner number 39,222. From this it can be concluded that in the first months of the war, by the fall of 1941, around 40,000 Soviet prisoners of war had already been transported to Wietzendorf for forced labor, despite the lack of accommodation and supply facilities.

Rolf Keller and Silke Petry have shown that for the Wietzendorf camp alone, more than 200 external labor detachments (*Arbeitskommandos*) were established in the region ("Wehrkreis X").<sup>26</sup> The placement of POWs at companies and farms was handled by the existing civilian labor offices (*Arbeitsämter*). However, the Wehrmacht remained responsible for the POWs and recorded their labor assignments on the registration cards and other personal documents. The recording of the labor detachments in these documents gives us precise information about the dimensions and the differentiation of the labor deployment as well as mortality rates. References to thousands of labor detachments in German villages and towns in the records also underscore the pervasive presence of Soviet POWs in the everyday life of local communities.

The registration cards, when compared with other documents, also allow statements to be made about the prisoners' survival strategies. The occupation of the prisoners was

entered on the registration cards. According to the entry, Vasilij Dubinin was a baker. The indication of occupations such as baker or farmer was likely to increase the chances of survival, since it could facilitate access to food. Initial sampling of the project inventories gives rise to the hypothesis that the occupational designation farmer is found for an improbably high number of Soviet prisoners of war. It is true that the Red Army was still to a considerable extent a peasant army during World War II, despite the forced industrialization in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. However, occupational information (as well as a number of other details) must always be read in the context of the prisoners' options for action, as they were often based on self-reporting during registration due to the lack of documents.

We still have hardly any information on which criteria determined whether a prisoner of war would receive a labor assignment near the front or be transported to Germany or other countries for forced labor there. The previously mentioned OKW order of November 4, 1941, stipulated that skilled workers should be transported to Germany as a matter of priority.<sup>27</sup> Representatives of German industry were not very satisfied with the implementation of this order. In August 1942, Siemens complained that technical criteria were not being taken into account: "The German military administration provided the Russian prisoners of war for the work assignment only roughly sorted, i.e., the examination extended essentially to their physical condition." Regardless, Siemens noted "severe manifestations of malnutrition and physical deterioration" among members of "the Russian Wehrmacht [sic!]." Siemens classified half of the assigned Soviet prisoners of war as unfit for work and was unwilling to employ them. Five percent of those who "successfully" passed muster died in their first days at Siemens. Siemens asked the Wehrmacht offices to spare "German industry considerable time in mustering and training" by preselecting them before they were transported to Germany.<sup>28</sup>

**27** Befehl OKW, Nov. 4, 1941, in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 432–434.

**28** CAMO f. 500, op. 12453, d. 131, l. 2–3, 7, 34, <https://wwii.germandocsinrussia.org/de/nodes/3927-akte-131-vierteljahresbericht-ber-den-arbeitseinsatz-der-sowjetischen-kriegsgefangenen-im-kleinbauwerk-der-siemens-schuckertwerke-a-g-in-berlin-siemensstadt-vom-29-august-1942#page/1/mode/grid/zoom/1> (accessed Nov. 12, 2020).

**29** Pavel Polian, "Soviet-Jewish Prisoners of War in German Captivity," *Kritika* 6 (2005): 763–787; Tanja Penter and Dmytro Titarenko, *Opyt nacistskoj okkupacii v Donbasse: Svidetel'stvujut očevidy* (Donetsk, 2013), 90–108. Jews were categorized as a nationality in the Soviet Union.

**30** Latvian National Archives (=LNA), LVA 1821. f., 1 apr., 102. l.; LNA LVVA 816. f., 3 apr., 116. l.

**31** Bundesarchiv (=BArch) ZA 11, BArch ZA 12. These are British and US personnel files on former Soviet prisoners of war who were in the service of the Wehrmacht and became British or US prisoners of war. The files were handed over to the Deutsche Dienststelle and digitized as part of the project.

Other categories noted on the registration cards, such as "nationality," point to a complex web of factors in the selection of POWs for work commands, auxiliary services, and special assignments. Although German documents such as the Siemens report cited above refer to "Russian prisoners of war," the responsible German authorities well understood that the Soviet Union was a multiethnic state. German ideas of how to use this fact for Germany's war aims were by no means uniform and changed in the course of the war. In this regard, German policy was largely guided by the list of nationalities created and subsequently expanded in the Soviet Union as part of the *korenizacija* policy of the 1920s. On the registration cards, entries for "nationality" never say "Soviet" but rather "Uzbek," "Ukrainian," "Russian," "Mordovian," and so on. According to the principle of „divide and conquer," the Germans purposely fostered ethnic divisions and conflicts in the POW camps. In the process, the Soviet hierarchization of nationalities, as it had been established under Stalinism and especially during World War II, underwent a reordering. After the Jews, the Russians were at the bottom of the scale. Soviet Germans, Balts, Ukrainians, and, later, Caucasians had better chances of survival.<sup>29</sup>

How this policy was reflected in the use of labor is one of the major research desiderata. A systematic evaluation of the project's holdings is still pending. Documents from Riga indicate that Latvian farms, for example, were predominantly staffed by Russian and Ukrainian prisoners of war, while Latvian prisoners of war were partially released from captivity.<sup>30</sup>

Several hundred thousand Soviet prisoners of war who ranked relatively high in the camp hierarchy were released from captivity. For many, this did not mean freedom, but was tied to the obligation to work for the Wehrmacht or the police service, for example, as "auxiliary volunteers." This suggests that the complex topic of collaboration also requires a discussion of the boundaries between forced labor and voluntary work.<sup>31</sup>

In Germany, the factory owners who selected forced laborers from the ranks of Soviet prisoners of war and put them to work in their factories included emigrants from pre-revolutionary Russia and the early Soviet Union, most of whom had left their homeland in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Here, too, ethnic criteria helped determine the selection.<sup>32</sup> German occupation and prisoner-of-war policies, closely intertwined with Soviet nationality policies, thus contributed significantly to a reshaping and strengthening of national identities in the Soviet Union and the territories annexed by the USSR in 1939.

The most extensive holdings of personal documents on Soviet prisoners of war are in the archives of Russia and other successor states of the Soviet Union. In case of death, the registration cards that accompanied the prisoners on their way through the Stalags were sent to the WAST. The camp administrations were required to report deaths and all changes such as additions, transfers, and hospital stays to the WAST in Berlin. In 1943, due to the bombing of Berlin, part of the WAST's records were moved to Meiningen (Thuringia) to the Drachenberg Barracks. After the liberation of Meiningen, American troops took over the WAST and handed over the records on Soviet prisoners of war to the Red Army.<sup>33</sup> A large part of the files handed over to the Soviet Union in 1945 is now in the Central Archives of the Russian Ministry of Defense (CAMO) in Podol'sk. With respect to Soviet prisoners, the CAMO holds mainly personal documents of Soviet prisoners of war who died in German custody. While these registration cards were indexed in the CAMO as part of the aforementioned predecessor project, the project now records the corresponding documents in the Federal Archives. Digitized copies of these were handed over to the Russian cooperation partners for the OBD Memorial database of the Russian Ministry of Defense until February 2022. Transfers to other successor states of the Soviet Union are being sought.

The WAST's successor agency, the Deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen der Gefallenen

<sup>32</sup> Sebastian Cwiklinski, *Volgatars in World War II Germany: German Ostpolitik and Tatar Nationalism* (Berlin, 2002), 49.

<sup>33</sup> Keller and Otto, "Massensterben," 158.

**34** Our thanks for the documentation go to Anette Meiburg, Director of the German Federal Archives, Department of Personal Information, and her team.

**35** Artem V. Latyšev, "Sistema proverki voennoslužbaščich Krasnoj Armii, ver-nuvšichsja iz plena i okruženijsa. 1941–1945 rr." (Ph.D. diss., Lomonosov Moscow State University, 2016), <http://www.hist.msu.ru/Science/Disser/Latyshhev.pdf>.

**36** NKVD and NKGB orders of June 16, 1945, in *Rotarmisten*, ed. Hilger, Overmans, and Polian, 799–802.

**37** Ukaz Prezidenta RSFSR ot 24.08.1991g. No. 82. Ob archivach Komiteta gosudarstvennoj bezopasnosti SSSR <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/142> (accessed Nov. 12, 2020).

der ehemaligen deutschen Wehrmacht (German Service for Notification of Next of Kin of the Fallen of the Former German Wehrmacht) transferred additional documents to the Soviet Union between 1946 and 1948 and in 1990.<sup>34</sup> Some of the documents remained in Germany and were transferred to the Federal Archives in 2019.

The documents of surviving prisoners of war took a different route. Wehrmacht documents were a central part of the so-called "filtration" process. Soviet soldiers and especially officers who had survived German captivity were collectively accused of treason in the Soviet Union. The groundwork for vetting former prisoners of war was laid immediately after the German attack on the USSR and steadily expanded as the Red Army advanced.<sup>35</sup> In view of the large numbers involved, initial plans to subject prisoners deported to Germany and other European countries for forced labor to intelligence checks at the sites of their liberation were not feasible. The majority of the checks were carried out by the local NKVD and NKGB bodies in repatriation camps on Soviet territory and at the places of residence of the repatriated prisoners, where the filtration files and their corresponding personnel cards are also located today.<sup>36</sup> Thus, local and regional archives in all successor states of the Soviet Union are of central importance, with often difficult access conditions. In Russia, for example, a decree issued by President Boris Yeltsin in August 1991 ordered the transfer of these files from the KGB archives to the state civil archives of the regions and of Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>37</sup> The order was only partially implemented and was invalidated in 1999. Thus, in Russia, the civil regional archives, information centers of the Ministry of Interior, FSB archives, and RGVA, among others, were of central importance for person-related research on the repatriated POWs, which took place until 2022.

The filtration files reveal very strong differences across regions in the processes followed. Statements on the forced labor of Soviet prisoners of war are found primarily in questionnaires, autobiographies, witness statements, and inter-

Опер-уполномоченному  
 Особого отдела  
 от Кошкина  
 Александра Михайловича  
 заявление.  
 Я, Кошкин Александр Михайлович  
 находясь вместе с Маслобоевым  
 Иваном Васильевичем в рабочей ко-  
 манде на медно-рудной шахте в г.  
 Айслебене с 7 января 1945 г. до  
 освобождения американцами.  
 Маслобоев Иван Васильевич в не-  
 мецкой армии не служил, а также  
 и в РОА. В полиции тоже не рабо-  
 тал.

Подпись: Кошкин (Кошкин)  
 23/VIII-45 г.  
 Присяжные: Зейтлин

**Figure 4.** Extract from the filtration file of repatriated prisoner of war Ivan Masloboev, testimony. Latvian National Archives, LNA LVA 1821. f., 1 apr., 36357. l., 7. lp.

rogation protocols. For example, in his interrogation by the NKVD in August 1945, Ivan Masloboev, a Russian born in Latvia, party member, and commander of the Red Army, answered the question where he had been during the war as follows: “In the camp of the town of Eisleben (Germany) I worked as an unskilled laborer in the copper ore mine until the liberation.”<sup>38</sup>

This work deployment was confirmed by several witnesses:

Statement. I, Koškin Aleksandr Michailovič, together with Masloboev Ivan Vasilevič was in the labor detachment in the copper ore mine in the town of Eisleben from January 7, 1943 until the liberation by the Americans. Masloboev Ivan Vasilevič did not serve in the German army, nor in the ROA [i.e. the

**38** “В лагере города Айслебен (Германия) работал в медно-рудной шахте чернорабочим до освобождения”. LNA LVA 1821. f., 1 apr., 36357. l., 5. lp.

<sup>39</sup> <https://german-docsinrussia.org/de/nodes/1-russisch-deutsches-projekt-zur-digitalisierung-deutscher-dokumente-in-den-archiven-der-russischen-f-deration> (accessed Nov. 12, 2020).

<sup>40</sup> Walter Sperling, "Überlieferung und Nutzung deutscher Beuteakten des Zweiten Weltkrieg in sowjetischen und russischen Archiven," <https://www.dhi-moskau.org/de/institut/team/wissenschaft/dr-walter-sperling.html> (accessed 12.11.2020).

Russian Liberation Army, a collaborationist formation, primarily composed of Russians, that fought under German command]. He also did not work in the police.

Filtration files are to be read primarily as sources from the Stalinist rather than National Socialist regime. Nevertheless, a source-critical evaluation in combination with other documents allows for substantial conclusions on various aspects of forced labor of Soviet prisoners of war, such as locations and chances of survival, formation of collectives, etc.

The work of the "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees" project also benefits from another earlier major project of the German Historical Institute in Moscow which digitized and made available online German files taken to the USSR in the course of World War II as so-called "captured records" (*Beuteakten*) and still held in various Russian archives, including CAMO. These documents provide insights into all decision-making levels of the Wehrmacht and into the organization of labor deployment.<sup>39</sup> A research project is underway analyzing the transmission and use of these files from which new insights into the forced labor of Soviet prisoners of war may emerge.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the various approaches link biographical with structural questions of labor deployment and provide information about the use of archival records. Moreover, on this basis, biographical and structural approaches to the history of the labor deployment of Soviet prisoners of war can be productively combined in order to finally bring this deployment out of the German — and pan-European — "memory shadow."

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**Esther Meier** has been Scientific Director of the project "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees" since 2019, which from 2019-2023 was associated with the German Historical Institute Moscow and, since 2023, is associated with the Max Weber Network Eastern Europe & EurAsia. Meier's research interests address the history of World War II, Soviet history, and the history of the Soviet Afghan War. Her publications include *Breschnews Boomtown: Alltag und Mobilisierung in der Stadt der LKWs* (Paderborn, 2016); *Sovietnam: Die UdSSR in Afghanistan 1979-1989*, ed. with Tanja Penter (Paderborn, 2017); and, with Heike Winkel, "Unpleasant Memories: Soviet Prisoners of War in Collective Memory, in Germany and the Soviet Union/Russia," in *Dimensions of a Crime: Soviet Prisoners of War in World War II*, ed. German-Russian Museum Berlin-Karlhorst (Berlin: Metropol, 2021), 224-239.



# The Hell of the Soviet Prisoner of War Camps

Edward Westermann

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I want to thank Dallas Michelbacher and Esther Meier for their excellent presentations.<sup>1</sup> Michelbacher offers an overview of the scale, scope, organization, and structure of German prisoner of war camps and assorted detention sites that reveals the key role played by Wehrmacht forces in acts of violence, atrocity, and mass murder against Soviet prisoners of war (POWs), but also against other civilian and military victims. Meier's project seeks to "reconstruct biographies of Soviet prisoners – both men and women" and to "clarify their fate." This effort not only restores the identity of those killed but situates them as historical actors in their own right. Furthermore, Meier helps us to understand the double-edged fate of those Soviet POWs who survived Nazi incarceration yet also faced a reckoning with Stalin's paranoia and the experience of filtration led by the NKVD (Soviet secret police) after their liberation. Significantly, her research dispels the "widespread assumption that the majority of former

<sup>1</sup> Edward Westermann's paper was originally delivered at the German Historical Institute's symposium "Keine Kameraden": The Treatment of Soviet Prisoners of War in German POW Camps during the Second World War," organized in cooperation with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, which took place on October 20, 2022 and included presentations by Esther Meier and Dallas Michelbacher. Michelbacher's presentation is published in this issue of the *Bulletin*. We are unable to publish Meier's original presentation in this

issue but, instead, have included a different contribution by Esther

Meier, co-authored with Andreas Hilger, which also draws on

the project "Soviet and German Prisoners of War and Internees."

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**2** Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933–1945* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991)

**3** Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge, Eng., 2006).

**4** David Rolf, *Prisoners of the Reich: Germany's Captives, 1939–1945* (London, 1988), 12.

**5** Mark Edele, "Take (No) Prisoners! The Red Army and German POWs, 1941–1943," *Journal of Modern History* 88 (2016): 342–379; Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing, and Dying*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York, 2012), 89–94.

POWs was sent to the Gulag"; as she notes, the majority of former POWs were sent back into combat.

Over three decades ago, the historians Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann published a work that labeled the Third Reich as *The Racial State*.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, both Michelbacher and Meier underline the Wehrmacht's embrace of a racial hierarchy in the sorting of POWs, a process that had profound implications for the chances of individual survival as expressed in deaths of 3.3 million Soviet POWs, or roughly 60 percent of those captured, versus 45,000 Italian POWs, or slightly over 7 percent of those taken prisoner, as noted in Michelbacher's paper. Michelbacher also remarks on the lethal distinction made between combatants from metropolitan France and soldiers from the French colonial empire in West Africa, a precedent, it might be added, that was set in the German invasion of France, which resulted in the massacres of as many as 3,000 black French troops in the summer of 1940, as revealed in Raffael Scheck's *Hitler's African Victims*.<sup>3</sup> As the experience of British prisoners taken at Dunkirk shows, however, summary execution was not simply reserved for the racial enemies of the Reich but included those who collapsed on marches to the rear and were "shot out of hand," as were starving members of the British Expeditionary Force who broke ranks to scavenge French farmers' fields after their capture.<sup>4</sup> The practice of summary execution of prisoners unable to keep up with transportation columns occurred as early as the Polish campaign in 1939, and one of the hidden statistics of Soviet prisoner mortality in 1941 involves the summary execution of thousands if not tens of thousands of Soviet prisoners by Wehrmacht forces in the opening months of the invasion.

The routine use of summary killings – whether as a reaction to stubborn Soviet resistance, acts of perfidy during fake surrender attempts, or stories of the mutilation and desecration of Wehrmacht soldiers by Red Army troops – demonstrates how preconceptions of the "Jewish-Bolshevik" enemy facilitated mass killing from the first days of the invasion.<sup>5</sup> As the German

*Landser* Willy Peter Reese confided in his journal, “We found only a few isolated Red Army soldiers . . . They were shot. An order had been given not to take any prisoners.”<sup>6</sup> Reese’s experience was not exceptional. Another German soldier’s letter home openly discussed his own participation in the murder of surrendering POWs: “The first Russian. Since then I have shot hundreds, I have such a rage . . . I took one Russian prisoner, a German [i.e., *Volksdeutscher*].”<sup>7</sup> Here again, ethnicity determined a prisoner’s fate and the practice of summary execution became a routine practice that extended to the widespread shooting of concentration camp prisoners by SS guards during “death marches” at the end of the war.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to ethnic or national hierarchies, Meier alerts us to the role of gender as another measure used by Wehrmacht forces in the classification and treatment of POWs. Without doubt, female Red Army soldiers – the so-called *Flintenweiber* or “shotgun wenches” – became special targets of retribution by German soldiers in a regime in which rigid perceptions of masculinity framed expectations of acceptable female behavior.<sup>9</sup> In a secretly recorded conversation, a captured German soldier described Red Army female soldiers as “wild beasts” and, when asked about what was done to them, he responded, “We shot them too.”<sup>10</sup> In truth, these women not only faced execution, but also the added specter of sexual humiliation and sexual violence, as occurred to one female Soviet soldier who was shot, stripped of her pants, posed with her legs splayed, and left along the road.<sup>11</sup> With regard to gender, more research is needed on the issue of Wehrmacht brothels as tools of sexual exploitation, a subject that has received widespread attention with respect to abuse of the so-called “comfort women” by Imperial Japanese forces in the Pacific theater.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to Jewish POWs, both Michelbacher and Meier note the “special treatment” of Jewish versus non-Jewish POWs regardless of nationality and Meier emphasizes that Jewish Soviet POWs were “at the bottom of the list.” In the words of one historian, Jewish POWs in both Poland and

**6** Willy Peter Reese, *A Stranger to Myself: The Inhumanity of War, Russia, 1941–1944*, trans. Michael Hofmann (New York, 2005), 48.

**7** Quoted in David Stahel, *The Battle for Moscow* (Cambridge, Eng., 2015), 42.

**8** Alexander Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, Ideology, and Atrocity* (Lawrence, Kan., 2003), 180–181, and Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 154–196.

**9** Edward B. Westermann, *Drunk on Genocide: Alcohol and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2021), 193.

**10** Neitzel and Welzer, *Soldaten*, 92.

**11** Regina Mühlhäuser, *Sex and the Nazi Soldier: Violent, Commercial and Consensual Encounters During the War in the Soviet Union, 1941–1945*, trans. Jessica Spengler (Edinburgh, 2021), 62.

**12** Yoshimi Yoshiaki, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During World War II*, trans. Suzanne O’Brien (New York, 2000).

**13** Aron Shneyer, *Pariahs Among Pariahs: Soviet Jewish POWs in German Captivity, 1941–1945*, trans. Yisrael Cohen (Jerusalem, 2016) and Jochen Böhrer, “‘Tragische Verstrickung’ oder Auftakt zum Vernichtungskrieg? Die Wehrmacht in Polen 1939,” in *Genesis des Genozids, Polen 1939–1941*, ed. Klaus Michael Mallmann and Bogdan Musial (Darmstadt, 2004), 49.

**14** Shneyer, *Pariahs among Pariahs*, 40, 66.

**15** Edward B. Westermann, “Partners in Genocide: The German Police and the Wehrmacht in the Soviet Union,” *Journal of Conflict Studies* 31 (2008): 771–796.

**16** Rossino, *Hitler Strikes Poland*, 185.

the Soviet Union emerged as “pariahs among pariahs” and became targets of ritual violence and summary execution by German forces.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Poland, a mere 500 of an estimated 60,000 Jewish-Polish soldiers survived the war, less than one percent of the total. Wehrmacht and SS actions in Poland established a lethal precedent for the invasion of Russia in 1941. In but one example, the Security Service (SD) murdered 8,000 Jewish-Soviet POWs interned in Mariupol alone at the end of October 1941.<sup>14</sup> With regard to this last point, Michelbacher and Meier note the cooperation between the Wehrmacht and SS and police forces in the exploitation and murder of POWs, a key point that reveals the partnership of both organizations in the prosecution of genocide.<sup>15</sup>

I would like to underline the importance of previous campaigns in Poland and Serbia in establishing the practices and precedents that became part and parcel of the German way of war in the East, especially with regard to POWs and hostages. As the historian Alexander Rossino aptly argued, “More than any other aspect of the Wehrmacht’s campaign in Poland, the widespread nature of crimes against Polish prisoners of war demonstrates the already brutal conduct of the German army in 1939.”<sup>16</sup> It should be emphasized that these crimes committed against Polish POWs occurred despite the fact that both Germany and Poland were signatories to the Third Geneva Convention of 1929, which protected the rights of prisoners. This is a critical point as it reveals subsequent Nazi justifications for the atrocious treatment of Russian POWs, based on the specious argument that the Soviet Union was not a signatory to the convention, as a cynical facade.

By June 1941 a process of accelerating radicalization linked the Nazi regime’s civil and military planning well before Wehrmacht soldiers and their allies moved across the Soviet frontier. As Geoffrey Megargee argued, “Almost from the moment that [the planning] process began, the principals understood that the coming war would be unlike any conflict in modern history . . . because of the ideologically driven policies that

would shape it.”<sup>17</sup> Close collaborations between administrative organizations of the Nazi Party, the SS, and the Wehrmacht led to a series of well-known “criminal orders” that explicitly freed the German army as well as SS and police forces from the constraints of the laws of war. The critical role of senior and mid-level commanders in creating a command climate that promoted the radicalization of behavior among their subordinates is apparent, even if a few military leaders attempted to maintain troop discipline and prevent atrocity.<sup>18</sup>

While the criminal orders signified the radicalization of German military policy at the institutional level, the pre-invasion agreements related to the supply of these forces in the East reveal the role played by German bureaucrats and Wehrmacht planners in establishing a dynamic in which genocidal massacre became an intrinsic element of the campaign from its inception. The Wehrmacht’s embrace of this so-called hunger policy provides another critical context for evaluating the army’s role and guilt in the mass death of Soviet POWs. Already on May 2, 1941, German economic and logistical experts had approved a concept for resupplying German forces that only can be described as the largest blueprint for mass murder in history. These administrators bluntly informed army planners that “the war can only be waged if the entire Wehrmacht is fed from Russia.” Not only did they recognize the inability of the Reich to supply food to the troops, they also recognized the implications of such a policy in the remark “as a result x million people will doubtlessly starve.”<sup>19</sup> The initial estimate of “x million” deaths as a result of a policy of premeditated mass starvation would later be concretized in the number of thirty million persons.<sup>20</sup> In this regard, the mass deaths of some two million Soviet POWs in the first seven months of the invasion, the highest death rate experienced by any victim group until the implementation of the “Final Solution” and the “peak killing” year of 1942 involving the mass murder of the European Jews, must be seen as an intended and indeed intrinsic part of this process. It was not, in other words, an

**17** Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941* (Lanham, Md., 2006), 19.

**18** Waitman Beorn, *Marching into Darkness: The Wehrmacht and the Holocaust in Belarus* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), Ben Shepherd, *Hitler’s Soldiers: The German Army in the Third Reich* (New Haven, Conn., 2016), and Ian Rich, *Holocaust Perpetrators of the German Police Battalions: The Mass Murder of Jewish Civilians, 1940–1942* (London, 2018).

**19** Alex J. Kay, “Germany’s Staatssekretäre, Mass Starvation and the Meeting of 2 May 1941,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41 (2006): 685–700, here 685.

**20** Alex J. Kay, “The Purpose of the Russian Campaign is the Decimation of the Slavic Population by Thirty Million: The Radicalization of German Food Policy in Early 1941,” in *Nazi Policy on the Eastern Front, 1941: Total War, Genocide, and Radicalization*, ed. Alex J. Kay (Rochester, N.Y., 2012), 111.

**21** Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford, Eng., 2010), 249.

**22** International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 13 (Washington, D.C., 1952), 319.

**23** Edward B. Westermann, *Hitler's Ostkrieg and the Indian Wars: Comparing Genocide and Conquest* (Norman, Okla., 2016), 90–91.

unintended consequence of an overstretched logistics system that prevented adequate food and medicine from reaching the prisoner camps.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Heinrich Himmler, the Reich Leader of the SS and Chief of the German Police, made this point explicit in his notorious speech on October 4, 1943 in Poznań (Posen) where he described the invasion of the Soviet Union in the following words:

The Russian Army was herded together in great pockets, ground down, taken prisoner. At the time, we did not value the mass of humanity as we value it today: as raw material as labor. The fact that prisoners died of exhaustion and hunger in tens and hundreds of thousands is by no means regrettable from the standpoint of lost generations, but it is deplorable now for reasons of labor.<sup>22</sup>

In short, the initial genocidal massacre of Soviet prisoners was part of a larger Nazi policy that envisioned the elimination of tens of millions of Slavs, the complete destruction of the Jews, and the racial restructuring of the occupied territories in the pursuit of a “new Garden of Eden,” a blueprint formulated by Himmler’s SS planners in the General Plan East.<sup>23</sup>

In the final analysis, the Wehrmacht’s responsibility for the direct and indirect murder of over three million Soviet prisoners of war represents the single greatest crime committed by the German military during the war. Whether in public commemoration or scholarly discourse, the treatment of the Soviet POWs is finally beginning to receive the attention it deserves, as is apparent with the publication of Volume IV in the USHMM’s *Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos* and in “The Research and Documentation Project ‘Soviet Prisoners of War’” as ably presented here this evening by Dallas Michelbacher and Esther Meier. Not only have they offered valuable insights into the institutional face of annihilation, but perhaps more importantly their papers offered examples of the human costs of these policies on specific individuals and allow these actors to regain their voices and their identities.



I, too, would like to close this evening with the voices of two historical actors. First, Konrad Jarausch, a Protestant theologian and German soldier involved in the administration of a Soviet POW camp, lamented to his wife in a letter on September 20, 1941, “The world is so barren without God both here and on the other side of the front . . . yet another one of our [Soviet] prisoners lie dying . . . Such deaths occur by the millions. This is truly the work of the devil.”<sup>24</sup> For his part, Gabriel Temkin, a Jewish Red Army soldier who, remarkably, survived German incarceration recalled of his captors: “The perpetrators may have been ‘normal’ and perhaps even ‘banal,’ but what about their deeds? To speak of ‘the banality of evil’ [as expressed by Hannah Arendt] is to trivialize evil.”<sup>25</sup> At least in these two testimonies, both perpetrator and victim found agreement concerning the hell of the POW camps and the diabolical nature of Hitler’s “Crusade in the East.”

<sup>24</sup> Konrad Jarausch, *Reluctant Accomplice: A Wehrmacht Soldier's Letters from the Eastern Front*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (Princeton, N.J., 2011), 291.

<sup>25</sup> Gabriel Temkin, *My Just War: The Memoir of a Jewish Red Army Soldier in World War II* (Novato, Calif., 1997), 59.

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# Conference Reports



## Everyday Histories of Airports

Conference at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies (IFK) of the University of Art and Design Linz in Vienna, March 29–31, 2023. Co-sponsored by the IFK, the German Historical Institute Washington, the Research Platform “Mobile Cultures and Societies” at the University of Vienna, and the City of Vienna. Conveners: Nils Gütler (University of Vienna), Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş (GHI Washington), Britta-Marie Schenk (University of Lucerne), in cooperation with Alexandra Ganser (University of Vienna). Participants: Susanne Bauer (University of Oslo), Sonja Dümpelmann (University of Pennsylvania), Ole Frahm (LIGNA Artist Collective), Markus Grossbach (Fraport AG Archiv), Karin Harrasser (International Research Center for Cultural Studies Vienna), Thomas Macho (International Research Center for Cultural Studies Vienna), Carole Martin (University of Munich), Torsten Michaelsen (LIGNA Artist Collective), Anke Ortlepp (University of Cologne), Annegret Pelz (University of Vienna), Martina Schlünder (Max Planck Institute for the History of Science), Lauren Stokes (Northwestern University), Annette Vowinckel (Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History [ZZF] Potsdam).

Airports are not a typical object of study for historians. For a long time, only sub-disciplines such as transport history and the history of technology were devoted to the study of airports. It is only in recent years – and inspired by Alastair Gordon’s seminal 2004 book *Naked Airport* – that more works have appeared that examine airports from the perspectives of political history, social history, the history of knowledge, or environmental history, thus placing them more deeply in the history of the regions and societies surrounding them. The conference tied in with this trend while at the same time testing a new approach: it looked at airports from the angle

of *Alltagsgeschichte*. The participants explored how everyday life in the airport cosmos was connected to social, political, and transnational processes, and they investigated how social developments, crises, and continuities affected a place that for many people was and is not a space of exception, but rather an everyday place. By focusing on specific groups of actors – including homeless people, social workers, baggage handlers, migrants, and animal caretakers – the presenters challenged the notion that airports are spaces of exception and emergency. Focusing instead on daily routines, they demonstrated that airports are places that on the one hand (re)produce larger social structures, but at the same time also create their own everyday life shaped by the highly technical setting. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference, which featured not only historians but also literary and cultural scholars, an artist collective, and the archivist of the Fraport AG (Frankfurt Airport's operating company), made this new view of airports possible.

Three presenters at the conference illuminated airports as everyday sites of migration. Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş argued in her talk that airports became places of social conflict against the backdrop of West Germany's history of migration and asylum in the 1980s. Focusing on the church-affiliated airport social service and its welfare work at Frankfurt Airport, she showed how the social workers criticized the government's asylum policies and managed to intervene on behalf of asylum seekers at the airport, even while they held an ambivalent position as mediators between the German Federal Border Guard and refugees. Liebisch-Gümüş thus put the airport in the context of the heated "asylum debate" in the Federal Republic, showing how over the course of this debate airports turned into contested sites of migration control. Lauren Stokes focused her presentation on "cracks in the Iron Curtain" – loopholes of escape to the West during the Cold War, one of which was the airport in Gander, New-

foundland. Because planes flying between Cuba and the Eastern Bloc depended on the stopover for refueling, Gander evolved into a location of opportunity for refugees to ask Canadian immigration officers for asylum. Not only citizens from Cuba, the GDR, and other Eastern Bloc countries but also asylum seekers from the Middle East made use of this loophole. Stokes argued that the dictatorial border regime of the GDR, aimed at preventing *Republikflucht*, and the liberal democracy of Canada, seeking to stop asylum immigration from the Middle East rather than from the Eastern bloc, met in their shared efforts to prevent unwanted forms of airborne refugee migration. Carole Martin extended the focus on migration policies with a literary perspective on the context of the Vietnam War, when temporary marriages between U.S. military personnel and Vietnamese refugees at airports provided a means of entry into the United States, as recounted in the short story "Bound" from Aimee Phan's collection *We Should Never Meet* (2004). Martin explained how, on the one hand, such fictional pieces reflect the emancipation of migrants and their perspectives from dominant historiography. On the other hand, she pointed to the limitations of such literary works as historical sources. While the practice of "visa marriages" at airports at the time of the Vietnam War did indeed take place, it did not necessarily lead to successful immigration.

During a panel on mobility and traffic management – the functional core of the airport – Markus Grossbach, chief archivist at the Fraport AG, presented on the labor history of air travel. He highlighted the challenges faced by baggage handlers who felt threatened by the introduction of baggage carts in the 1970s, even resorting to hiding them to protect their jobs. He also examined the perspectives of luggage cart developers and marketers, who aimed to cater to the needs of travelers. However, their efforts were influenced by gendered perceptions, as they used images of young

women in their advertisements and anticipated potential issues that female travelers might face with the new technology. Annette Vowinckel explored how travelers from East and West Germany reacted to service disruptions and flight cancellations at Berlin's GDR-controlled Schönefeld Airport in the 1970s. Vowinckel argued that the complaints lodged by these individuals reflect a demand for seamless mobility. Disruptions and travelers' responses to them thus highlight what was considered the expected norm. GDR citizens, in particular, were careful to frame their demands in the language and the political framework preferred by the state. This might be seen, Vowinckel suggested, as a distinctively socialist approach to filing complaints. During the ensuing discussion, Vowinckel observed that historians tend to focus more on moments of disturbance than on the smooth flow of traffic, possibly due to the nature of the source material. However, when assessing the impact of airports and air travel on modern societies, it is crucial not to overlook their inclusive effects, especially the democratization of mobility that occurred during the era of mass flight, Vowinckel stressed.

How are airports and flying imagined and narrated? With this question in mind, one panel of the conference took a literary look at the everyday location of the airport: Annetta Pelz took the audience on a journey through European literature, spanning from antiquity to the recent past with Daniel F. Galouye's novel *Simulacron-3* (1964). Her talk began by highlighting the lack of literary discourse on airports: while airports are often featured briefly in literature as places of departure and transit, the focus tends to be on flying itself and the aerial perspective. According to Pelz, the distant view of the world from above provides a chance for literary meta-reflection and self-exploration, which could be applied by researchers studying airports as well. Alexandra Ganzer examined a different type of air-



port: the space station, as portrayed in contemporary U.S. television series. While drama and emotion drive the stories set in space stations, social and environmental issues such as resource consumption and labor often remain invisible. Ganser argued that the “everyday space life” depicted in these shows is dominated by the hero myth, where the female astronaut who sacrifices her personal life for space exploration becomes a recurring trope. The astronauts themselves shape the meaning of the confined space they live in. Invoking Michel de Certeau’s theory of everyday life, Ganser highlighted the importance of considering how everyday practices shape the meaning of spaces like the space station and airports.

Air travel today is often associated with concerns about environmental impact and the climate crisis. One panel at the conference demonstrated that the airport environment is in fact complex, destructive, and ecologically rich at the same time. In their joint paper, Susanne Bauer, Nils Güttler, and Martina Schlünder focused on the treatment of animals on airport grounds, highlighting the challenges and conflicts that arise when living beings move within the complex interplay of cargo and passenger transport. The presenters contrasted the processing of these “animal passengers” with the rescue of injured wild animals and an animal shelter at the edge of the airport grounds. Not all animals in the airport environment fit into the logics of transit and global trade, as the airport becomes a border space where global animal mobility and regional fauna meet. In her contribution to the panel, Sonja Dümpelmann further expanded on human-environment relationships at airports, using sheep as her subject. She illustrated how sheep grazing alongside the runways have historically been used as “mowers,” while also providing images of pastoral idyll, rootedness, and home that contrasted with the airport. Dümpelmann spoke of “bio-techniques of naturalization” to describe the use of sheep for

image campaigning and for painting the picture of a harmonic airport environment – a form of greenwashing.

The presentations of the last panel dealt with the airport experiences of marginalized groups in Germany and the USA, examining how structures of inequality and discrimination manifested at airports and to what extent they also became sites of resistance and subversion. Anke Ortlepp used several case studies to illustrate the struggles for desegregation at U.S. airports in the South during Jim Crow. It was only through the increasing protests of activists and numerous lawsuits that the pressure on airports grew until, in 1963, Shreveport airport became the last U.S. airport to desegregate by court order. Airports, Ortlepp argued, represented an important arena of the civil rights movement because they symbolized civic ideals of mobility and freedom as parts of citizenship, as well as access to the commercial boom of the postwar era. In the last talk of the conference, Britta-Marie Schenk shed light on the everyday experiences of homeless people at Frankfurt Airport. Tracing the phenomenon of homeless people flocking to the airport in the year 1991 back to preceding social and urban policy developments in the Main metropolis, she emphasized the need to view airports as integral parts of urban space. Schenk then highlighted the opposition between the homeless and the airport security service, which set up a “homeless people” unit aimed at expelling and banning them from the airport. Schenk’s analysis thus revealed the airport as an exclusionary institution, shaped by social and political factors that extend beyond the airport itself. But she also showed how homeless people strategically adapted to this place by blending in with crowds of travelers and waiting passengers, often carrying suitcases to avoid unwanted attention.

Focusing on specific groups and local contexts, all the presentations underlined that historiographical perspectives

contradict the notion that airports are “non spaces” (Marc Augé) presumably characterized by uniformity, anonymity, and detachment from society. Rather, the speakers demonstrated, the meaning and spatial character of airports depend on the group of actors one takes into focus. This was also underlined by the video walk “The Passenger” presented by Ole Frahm and Torsten Michaelsen from the artists collective LIGNA. Using smartphone technology to take viewers on a global tour of airports, their project highlights the ecological and social problems that arise from their expansion. From the eviction of residents in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to make way for airport expansion to the destruction of rainforests in Yaoundé, Cameroon, to produce rubber for aircraft tires, the video emphasized that airports are both globally connected and locally impactful places.

The conference provided an experimental intellectual platform to explore how airport history and *Alltagsgeschichte* can be productively integrated. While the concept of everyday life was at times unclear and ambiguous, one participant emphasized that it should not be mistaken for the accretion of anecdotes but rather as a lens to reveal the routines and systems which have shaped airports. If one takes the core idea of *Alltagsgeschichte* seriously – to uncover the relationship between actors and larger structures – studying airports from this perspective reveals no less than the crises, challenges, and moments of exclusion as well as the promises and opportunities of mass mobility for modern societies. Even the temporary stays of less mobile groups at the airport, like homeless people, is indirectly shaped by the primacy of mobility there. Moreover, the everyday lives of those who work at the airport demonstrate the urban, regional, and social structures that underlie the management of mass mobility. These insights offer answers to the central question of what makes everyday life at the airport unique and distinguishes it from other transit places. One participant suggested that the airport is special in that it is a confined,

highly structured, and technical space where global mobility gets tightly curated, processed, and controlled. The organizers also noted that perhaps everyday life at the airport is not the opposite of crisis and exception; rather, it seems that at airports, the extraordinary is *alltäglich*.

**Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş** (GHI Washington) and  
**Leontien Potthoff** (GHI / University of Cologne)

# Knowledge Production in Displacement and Forced Migration

Workshop at the University of California, Santa Barbara, April 17–18, 2023. Co-sponsored by the Pacific Office of the German Historical Institute and the University of California, Santa Barbara. Organizers: Joshua Donovan (GHI, Pacific Office), Vitalij Fastovskij (GHI, Pacific Office), Vladimir Hamed-Troyansky (University of California, Santa Barbara). Participants: Evren Altinkas (University of Guelph), Roy Bar Sadeh (Yale University), Nadezhda Beliakova (University of Bielefeld), Barbara Henning (University of Mainz), Rustam Khan (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Jan Lambertz (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum), Charis Marantzidou (Columbia University), Nour Munawar (Doha Institute for Graduate Studies), Martin Nekola (Independent), Phi Nguyen (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Lausanne), Benjamin Tromly (University of Puget Sound), Nino Vallen (GHI, Pacific Office), Ramon Wiederkehr (University of Neuchâtel), Ani Yeremyan (Jawaharlal Nehru University).

In recent years, the focus of the German Historical Institute Washington on knowledge in transit has initiated fruitful dialogues between the history of migration and the history of knowledge. Taking its cue from these conversations, this two-day workshop brought together historians from Asia, Europe, and the United States to discuss knowledge production in displacement and forced migration. Historical research about refugees and forced migration has been booming in recent years. Yet, as the workshop organizers underscored in their opening remarks, existing scholarship tends to concentrate on the production of knowledge about displaced persons rather than the knowledge they them-

selves use and produce. Shifting the perspective toward the latter can contribute to changing our understanding of the ways in which those who were displaced grappled with the myriad challenges they faced because of their displacement and contributed to the societies where they arrived, either temporarily or permanently.

But the study of knowledge production among refugees and displaced persons also raises a series of theoretical and methodological questions. What do we mean when we talk about knowledge? How do we preserve a meaningful distinction between knowledge, information, and experience? What knowledge did displaced persons preserve, produce, and transmit, and how was it shaped by their experiences of being relocated? In what ways did different actors use this knowledge? What archival resources can be used and how do we deal with diverse epistemological and ontological positions? These questions resurfaced again and again over the course of the two-day workshop, in which pairs of participants presented two of the other pre-circulated papers.

In the first panel Ani Yeremyan and Benjamin Tromly discussed papers by Martin Nekola and Phi Nguyen. Nekola's research explored the experiences of Czech refugees in Bavarian refugee camps after the Communists took control in Czechoslovakia in 1948. In addition to discussing the challenges and hardships, Nekola zoomed in on refugee newspapers and education programs established to foster communal sentiments and increase the chances to acquire a visa. Phi Nguyen's work examined the urban and mnemonic landscape of the Vietnamese city of Hue, focusing on the role of the River Hương in the creation of a consecrated landscape that was shaped by the different migrant groups that had arrived in the region over the past millennium. Although the papers dealt with different topics, they prompted a lively discussion about the tensions between nation-making and migrant knowledge, inter-generational

transfers of knowledge, and the challenge of presenting to broader audiences the knowledge about refugees academics produce.

The second panel focused on the role of refugees in different modernization projects. Jan Lambertz and Nour Munawar commented on papers written by Evren Altinkas and Charis Marantzidou. Altinkas's paper studied German scholars of Jewish origin and their role in the formation of the Turkish higher education system. According to Altinkas, the arrival of refugee professors like Ernst E. Hirsch, Fritz Neumark, and Ernst Reuter in the Turkish Republic contributed strongly to the efforts of the Turkish government to modernize scientific education and research. Marantzidou's paper explored the involvement of Russian refugees fleeing the October Revolution and the Russian Civil War in Bulgaria's educational and professional world during the 1920s and 1930s. Marantzidou argued that these refugees' knowledge and expertise, together with the prestige they enjoyed as former agents of the Russian empire, allowed them to negotiate their role in Bulgarian society. The papers raised questions about the performative nature of expertise, collisions between distinct knowledge traditions, and the kinds of knowledge that gave some refugees advantages over others.

The third and final panel of the day produced a discussion about distinct types of migrant knowledge production, with Martin Nekola and Rustam Khan commenting on papers by Roy Bar Sadeh and Barbara Henning. Based on a study of Soviet *muhajirs'* (refugees) ideas about "minority rights" during the early 1930s, Bar Sadeh argued that muhajir activism and knowledge production were a means for Muslim thinkers to reconsider the premises of global governance in the Middle East. Through the legal category of "minority rights" muhajirs shaped solidarity as well as anti- and pro-Soviet sentiments in the Middle East. Henning's paper explored a different knowledge regime, created around the century-old tradi-

tion of members of the Ottoman imperial elite tracing their origins back to the Prophet. Henning contended that families that were displaced as a result of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire used this regime to cope with far-reaching and multilayered shifts that characterized this period of conflict. Ancestral knowledge, embedded in narratives and genealogical archives, provided anchors for continuity as borders were being redrawn and new orders produced new epistemologies. A conversation ensued about the interaction between displacement status and knowledge production, the typification of the knowledge produced by muhajirs at the General Islamic Congress in Jerusalem (1931), and the role of women as producers of genealogical knowledge.

The fourth panel explored refugee newspapers and their role in the production of knowledge about and by displaced persons. Roy Bar Sadeh and Phi Nguyen discussed papers by Ramon Wiederkehr and Ani Yeremyan. Wiederkehr's paper studied two Swiss periodicals (*Über die Grenzen* and the *Informations-Dienst für Rück- und Weiterwanderung*) and their role in the dissemination of refugee knowledge. Wiederkehr underscored the importance of these periodicals as an expression of a trans-national refugeedom, opening a transnational space in which information linked to refugee interests and necessities circulated. Ani Yeremyan adopted a different perspective on the function of diasporic newspapers in her paper on identity-making in the Armenian diaspora. Engaging with Jürgen Habermas's idea of the public sphere and Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined communities, she argued that newspapers written in the vernacular helped shape a new global Armenian diasporic identity grounded in national consciousness, a common cultural origin myth, and the deployment of knowledge in the collective fight for recognition of the Armenian genocide. These detailed studies of refugee newspapers prompted debate about the agency and voice of refugees and the importance of shared outlets in the forging of solidarity.



Participants also reflected on how these cases revealed the significance of collaborations with the (imperial) state in the making of refugee communities, and the role foreign languages played in the process, thereby contradicting common ideas about the relationship between vernacular language and the building of national communities.

In the fifth panel Barbara Henning and Charis Marantzidou commented on papers by Rustam Khan and Nour Munawar. Khan's paper explored the experiences and social struggles of labor migrants in Belgium between the 1950s and 1970s, against the background of the country's energy transition. Khan argued that the increasing dominance of oil over coal and the development of car manufacturing created conditions in which discourses about human rights produced a new alliance between traditional left activists and migrant workers. Munawar's work, by contrast, explored the knowledge that is produced in the making of a sense of home among Palestinian refugees in Syria. Comparing stories of forced displacement provided by a third-generation Palestinian refugee family, media narratives, and autobiographical accounts, Munawar showed how and what knowledge people produce as they reconsider and reframe their conceptions of home and homeland. Grappling with different postcolonial legacies, the papers inspired further reflections on the meaning and racialization of the migrant category as well as the intergenerational and multi-layered constellations of displacement that colonialism produced. The conversation also turned to questions about heritage, both material and immaterial, of displacement, and the kind of knowledge that is invoked when talking about both human rights and home.

The sixth and final panel grappled once more with the instrumentalization of refugee knowledge, with Ramon Wiederkehr and Evren Altinkas discussing papers by Jan Lambertz and Benjamin Tromly. In her work on two

Swedish repatriation ships, the MS *Gripsholm* and the SS *Drottningholm*, Lambertz examined the role of migrants and refugees coming from Japan and Europe in spreading “Holocaust knowledge” across the globe. Although the cataloguing of atrocity stories never was an objective of governmental agencies, and refugees were reluctant to tell them out of fear for retaliation, such narratives did nonetheless find their way to the Americas, contributing to a new kind of knowledge transfer. Tromly’s work explored popular and scholarly discourse on the Soviet general and Nazi collaborator Andrei Vlasov in the United States and Germany in the first two postwar decades. The paper demonstrated how the collective memories of former Vlasovites became the building blocks for narratives that were suited to the new reality of the Cold War. With both papers providing fascinating insights into the ways in which migrant knowledge was instrumentalized in the context of World War II and the Cold War, participants discussed the tension between institutional and refugee knowledge, as well as the agency of refugees in shaping narratives that were subsequently instrumentalized by state actors.

There is no doubt that the use of the migrant knowledge lens opens new perspectives onto the history of specific migratory or refugee movements. The empirically rich papers discussed during this workshop testify to this potential. They revealed the many different forms of knowledge that migrants and refugees produced, often in cooperation with non-migrant actors. They also showed the varying ways in which this knowledge was used by states, organizations, and displaced persons themselves to affect changing realities. Still, some doubts about the uses of this approach remained. During the final round table, participants brought up the necessity to further unpack what is meant when we speak about knowledge. The term was used to speak about different forms of information, stories, rumors, and experiences, but are these truly the same things? Several participants

advocated for more terminological clarity, while others warned that a focus on knowledge could be too restrictive. One way in which these doubts could be addressed would be by paying more attention to the ways in which specific groups themselves understood knowledge and what it was supposed to do. Ultimately, the round table did make clear that these discussions help us understand much better the agency of displaced persons not only in the making of the places to which they arrived but to migratory and refugee regimes as well. I am looking forward to the continuation of these dialogues as the co-organizers proceed with the publication of selected papers.

**Nino Vallen**  
(GHI Pacific Office)

# Seventh Junior Scholars Conference in Jewish History

## **Diaspora and Debris: Material Culture in German-Jewish History**

Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington, April 26–27, 2023. Conveners: Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI Washington), Mark Roseman (Indiana University, Bloomington), and Miriam Rürup (Moses Mendelssohn Zentrum für europäisch-jüdische Studien, Potsdam). Additional support provided by the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo Baeck Instituts. Participants: Merle Bieber (Institut für Jüdische Geschichte Österreichs, St. Pölten), Moishi Chechik (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), Kimberly Cheng (GHI Washington), Sören Groß (Deutsches Optisches Museum, Jena), Ron Hellfritzsch (Deutsches Optisches Museum, Jena), Sol Izquierdo de la Viña (Technical University Berlin), Shir Kochavi (University of Leeds), Tammy Kohn (Latin American Rabbinical Seminary, Buenos Aires), Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), Zvi Orgad (Bar-Ilan University, Israel), Anna Rosemann (Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)), Judith Siepmann (Leibniz-Institut für jüdische Geschichte und Kultur – Simon Dubnow, Leipzig), Roni Tzoreff (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev), Hannah-Lea Wasserfuhr (Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg), Richard F. Wetzell (GHI Washington).

“Diaspora and Debris: Material Culture in German-Jewish History” assembled a transatlantic group of junior scholars to explore new research in Jewish history with a focus on the intersection between material culture and Jewish history, especially in the context of Jewish migration/transit, exile, global diasporas and Holocaust studies. Over two days the participants presented their individual research projects and themes, which opened discussions on sources, methodology,

and theory, enabling assessment of current and future trends in the writing of the modern history of Jews in Europe, the United States of America, and beyond. The analysis of material objects as testimonies to Jewish history connected several fields of research, e.g. studies on Jewish consumer cultures, German-Jewish diasporas, provenance research, and to the crucial question of the fate of European Jewish material culture after the Holocaust.

After a warm welcome and introduction by the director of the GHI and the three conveners, the first panel on “Objects of Migration and Exile” began. Chaired by Richard F. Wetzell, the theme of the panel produced several examples of how different perspectives and contexts of object-biographies can tell us life-stories of their Jewish owners and their self-identity, tradition, and not least their experiences of migration and exile. The first speaker, Kimberly Cheng, presented “All Things Considered: Shanghai’s WWII German-Speaking Jewish Refugees and Objects of Material Culture.” Cheng used everyday objects to discuss how Jewish refugees experienced life in the multiethnic metropolis of Shanghai during World War II. The experience of being in transit changed the understanding, meaning, use and value of the items Jewish refugees carried with them. What has been less researched thus far is how refugees interacted with locals, for instance to sell their shoes, clothes, handbags, and other goods. By focusing on material culture in exile, Cheng shed light on Jewish refugees’ contacts with locals and the types of local knowledge that refugees acquired on the ground. Before leaving Shanghai, many refugees left goods and private objects with neighbors, landlords, or family members, and even today some of these objects still circulate on the city’s markets. Merle Bieber’s paper “A *Steirerhut* in Edinburgh: *Tracht* in the Field of Tension of Persecution, Identity and Memory for Austrian Jewish Emigrants and their Descendants” offered additional insights. Using various biographic examples, she characterized the *Steirerhut* (a

felt hat, usually gray-green in color with a dark green hat-band) as a costume fashion of the Austrian middle class, a symbol of Jewish integration and acculturation, and a token of the search for acceptance. Public figures like Theodor Herzl, Felix Salten, or Sigmund Freud wore the *Steirerhut* as a sign of identity. After the ban of traditional costumes for Jews in 1938 the *Steirerhut* turned into a sign of identity and memory for Austrian Jewish emigrants and their descendants. In “The Dispersal of the Silesian Pinkus Collection” Judith Siepmann explained discourses of “Heimat” and Silesia. Discussing two collections of the Pinkus family – one of Silesian Judaica and the other a Silesian arts and crafts collection – she analyzed the seizure of a large portion of their contents by the National Socialists and subsequent purchases by various Silesian museums. Some objects were taken into exile by the expelled heirs; others were destroyed, dispersed, lost, or sold out of hardship and despair. After 1945, the whereabouts of most of the objects were unknown and the memory of the collections and survivor Hans Pinkus’ search for his family’s possessions became what kept the collections “alive” in some form. Siepmann found that objects of the collection were later sold at Sotheby’s, some are shown in the Jewish Museum in New York, and others remain entries in Lost Art registries.

The second panel, “Judaica and Jewish History,” was chaired by Anna-Carolin Augustin. The panel included papers dealing with research on *Torah* arks, *Shiviti* objects, and the development of the *tallit*, which gave insights into recent studies on religious Jewish objects and Jewish history. Zvi Orgad discussed “Concise Shrines: *Torah* Arks of Franconia” as nonverbal sources. Orgad argued that the study of *Torah* arks helps clarify the characteristics and life of small Franconian Jewish communities, which do not exist anymore and left few written sources. Some *Torah* arks, for example, feature the mixture of local Franconian and Jewish ornaments in their design. Some arks were used at

home and show the relation between the private and public. Interestingly, Franconian arks were influenced in their design and colors by Jewish visual culture in Poland and Lithuania, thus revealing long-distance European-Jewish networks and cultures of travel in early modern times. Roni Tzoreff's talk examined "*Shiviti* Objects, Temple Consciousness and Modern Ashkenazi Identity." A *Shiviti* (or *Menorah*) generally appears as an illustration in a prayer book, or as a plaque placed in the synagogue. It can be found in various Jewish communities, while its function and appearance vary somewhat from one geographic location to another. Tzoreff argued that the *Shiviti* turned the depiction of worship in the temple into a visual and commonly available option for contemplation. *Shiviti* can, according to Tzoreff, represent the diasporic, symbolic, religious, and gendered forms of affinity with Judaism's holy places. These objects were and are also influenced and inspired by political ideas, such as Zionism. In "The Birth of the *Tallit*," Moishi Chechik presented the history of the *tallit* as a Jewish object with a long tradition. The *tallit* developed from an article of clothing into a prayer shawl. From the twelfth century onwards, Jewish sources discuss the use of the *tallit* in the synagogue. At this point the *tallit* was no longer treated as an everyday object, but rather as a ritual garment specifically designed for the performance of a *mitzvah*. Chechik marked the change of the *tallit*'s use as an internal revolution in the shift from ancient times to the Middle Ages and from the Mediterranean basin to Europe. The *tallit* changed its form but never its uses. In recent decades the *tallit* has also turned into a popular image of modern Judaism.

A visit to the David and Fela Shapell Family Collections, Conservation and Research Center of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Bowie, Maryland, was also a feature of the conference's first day. The curators and conservators showed the highly specialized laboratories and climate-controlled environments where a wide variety

of artifacts are treated and preserved. The field trip to the Shapell Center illustrated how, through acquisitions, education, and scholarship, future generations will continue to honor the memory of Holocaust victims and learn from their history to build a better future. The following day Alexandra Drakakis and Colleen Rademaker (Rubenstein Institute) guided a tour through the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and opened a discussion about presenting the Holocaust and exhibition formats.

The third panel, "Nazi Looting, Restitution, and Provenance Research," chaired by Mark Roseman, dealt with material objects as testimonies of Jewish lives and persecution during World War II, placing the role of cultural responsibility for restitution and the importance of provenance research at the center of discussion. Sören Groß and Ron Hellfritzsch started the panel with "Escaping from the Nazi Regime: The Persecution and Emigration of Two Jewish Businessmen." The two provenance researchers reconstructed how Julius Carlebach and Otto Bettmann escaped Germany, using sales records and correspondence with the Optisches Museum in Jena during the 1930s. This research is a product of the provenance research project at the Deutsches Optisches Museum in Jena and shows how objects in museums and collections can be important testimonies of the persecution and emigration of Jewish people. The field of provenance research is an important key to reconstruct the past and keep the culture of remembrance alive. Tammy Kohn presented "German Judaica: Material Culture of German Jews in Argentina." Kohn showed how the books and objects immigrants brought led to the migration of ideas and material traditions from their place of origin to their new homes and communities. Synagogues and archives in Argentina are now a reservoir for Jewish ritual objects mixed with Holocaust-related items. The study of the continuity and disruption of Jewish German material traditions in Argentina is expected to raise new questions for further debate about the meaning of these



objects as primary historical sources of Jewish and general history. Shir Kochavi's talk "Rethinking the Narratives of the Jewish Past: Exhibiting Provenance Research" discussed three exhibitions – "Recollecting: Looted Art and Restitution" (2008–2009), "Memory Objects: Judaica Collections, Global Migrations" (2018) and "Afterlives: Recovering the Lost Stories of Looted Art" (2021) – as examples of different approaches museums are adopting to examine the translocation of Jewish objects with respect to World War II and the Holocaust. While "Recollection" used contemporary artistic methods to display archival materials, museums used original objects in "Memory Objects" and "Afterlives." All three clearly connected the Jewish owners of the cultural objects with the tragedy of the Holocaust, but also offered critical stances on restitution, current migration/refugee controversies, and the afterlives of objects with complicated provenance and migration histories.

The fourth panel, "Blind Spots: Hidden (Parts of) Object Biographies," was chaired by Miriam Rürup. Three junior scholars presented their research to uncover hidden objects, based on private photo collections, press photographs, and magazines. Sol Izquierdo de la Viña discussed "Two Albums Divided by the Atlantic: Objects' Biographies from the Legacy of an Exiled Jewish Woman Artist," focusing on the photographs of and belonging to the Jewish-Austrian artist and collector Lene Schneider-Kainer. The artist's first album, including scenes of family portraits, excursions, and visits to European cities, recovers the memory of Jewish life during the Weimar Republic. The second album, dating from 1929 to 1951, depicts Schneider-Kainer's life as she left Europe and immigrated to the United States. The trajectories of the two albums – the first was likely looted in Germany, and only reemerged there in the 1980s, while Schneider-Kainer kept the second album and later donated it to the Leo Baeck Archives in New York – reveal processes of transfer entangled in the looting and migration of twentieth-century history. Anna Rosemann

presented the topic “Modern Press Photography – A Forgotten Heritage of German Jewish Material Culture.” Roseman examined photographic testimonies as a forgotten heritage of German Jewish material culture, with people of Jewish origin becoming increasingly active in the emerging field of press photography from the end of the nineteenth century onward. Using three case studies, Roseman explored the major role of Jewish owners of press photo agencies in the development of press photography in Germany. “Tracing Jewish Visibility on German Main Street” by Hannah-Leah Wasserfuhr closed the last panel of the conference. Tracing entries in various magazines and advertisements, the paper sought to reconstruct the manufacturers and the market networks for producing and selling Judaica in Germany between 1871 and the 1930s. She showed different methods to trace Jewish visibility and the history of material objects before they were transformed by use into German Judaica. Reconnecting the objects to their manufacturers’ backgrounds might help to situate them into the general consumer culture. The paper exemplified how using economic and cultural history methods offers new explanations which complement insights from the art history approach.

Overall, it became clear in the conference contributions and discussions that by taking into account the overarching issues of Jewish history and relating them to material Jewish culture, new perspectives can be provided, be it with regard to migration and exile studies, museum and memory studies, works on consumer culture and gender studies, or in the growing field of provenance research, to name just a few.

**Sören Groß**

(Deutsches Optisches Museum, Jena)

## **Fifth West Coast Germanists' Workshop, 2023**

Workshop at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C., April 29–30, 2023. Co-organized by the Pacific Office of the German Historical Institute Washington and the Department of History, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Conveners: Heidi Tworek (University of British Columbia) and Richard F. Wetzell (German Historical Institute Washington). Participants: Krista Baillie (University of British Columbia), Kristine Bell (University of Colorado, Colorado Springs), Noah Bender (University of California, Berkeley), Benjamin Bryce (University of British Columbia), Elizabeth Drummond (Loyola Marymount University), Kyle Frackman (University of British Columbia), Annika Frieberg (San Diego State University), Heike Friedman (German Historical Institute Washington), David Gramling (University of British Columbia), Susanne Hillman (San Diego State University), Patrick Hohlweck (University of California Berkeley), Anna Holian (Arizona State University), Ilinca Iurascu (University of British Columbia), Philipp Lenhard (University of California, Berkeley), Alan Maričić (University of Saskatchewan), James McSpadden (University of Nevada, Reno), Patricia Milewski (University of British Columbia), Madeleine Miller (University of Texas, Arlington), Caitlin Murdock (California State University, Long Beach), Jörg Neuheiser (University of California, San Diego), Joseph Patrouch (University of Alberta), Thomas Pegelow Kaplan (University of Colorado, Boulder), H. Glenn Penny (University of California, Los Angeles), Sandra Rebok (University of California, San Diego), Preetham Sridharan (University of Oregon), Elizabeth Sun (University of California, Berkeley), Phillip Wagner (University of California, Berkeley/University of Halle), and Elissa Waters (University of Southern California).

The West Coast Germanist Workshop at the University of British Columbia on scholarship in progress in the field of German history and German studies was temporally and

spatially wide-ranging and featured a number of fascinating presentations and conversations around research. In the first panel, "History and Geography," chaired by David Gramling, H. Glenn Penny, Caitlin Murdock, and Noah Bender discussed alternative forms of belonging, non-belonging, and connectedness in the southern German borderlands. Penny focused on spatial belongings during two hundred years in an area ranging from Salzburg to Basel, and the role of water access as a mode of local interconnection as well as the importance of global connections, such as through museums and tourism to and away from the area. Caitlin Murdock meanwhile discussed a group of German-speaking migrants from Czechoslovakia, the so-called Joachimsthaler, and the way in which mysterious illnesses (forms of cancer) they acquired as a result of work in Czechoslovak uranium mines became integrated into a larger postwar discourse on public health in West Germany. She pointed to the shifting understanding of radiation as a public health safety hazard and resistance to this narrative. Finally, Noah Bender introduced an interesting alternative economic history of migration routes from Central Europe as shaped by steamboat shipping companies in multiple countries, their political engagement with each other, and with other business interests. All in all, German-speaking populations were connected and disconnected internally and internationally, here based on economic, spatial, and geographic factors, to reshape our understandings of national belongings and traditional borders.

Panel 2, "Germany, Empire, and the World," was moderated by Heidi Tworek and spanned from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Joseph Patrouch described the travels of the Habsburg imperial court in one particular year, 1570, and the political and cultural effects of its travels. Sandra Rebok turned her attention to German scientists and thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their conceptualization of the American West. Interestingly, German production of knowledge was integral and relevant to several

empires operating in western North America, including the Russian and Spanish empires. Finally, Alan Maričić's presentation concerned West German-Yugoslav relations in the era of the 1950s Hallstein Doctrine. He concluded that despite hostile official relations, cultural relations between the two states were unaffected and surprisingly lively. Maričić focused particularly on the efforts of the Goethe Institute to introduce German culture in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav interest in studying at the institute, but also examined the West German film industry's practice of filming its popular western movies, based on the books by Karl May, in Yugoslavia for cost-saving purposes.

On the second day of the workshop, the third panel, "Language and Religion," was chaired by Ilinca Iurascu and included papers by Elizabeth Drummond and Preetham Sri-dharam. Drummond focused on a relatively unknown nineteenth century artist, Max Thalmann, and how the spiritual philosophy of Theosophy influenced his artistic production. She based her presentation on a collection of art accessible at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, pointing to its spiritual and artistic connections and context. She argued that, despite his relatively limited influence and reach as an artist, Thalmann can be understood as a window into culture and art in the early to mid-twentieth century. Preetham Sri-dharan's research concerned how German Romantic thinkers and their religious thought intersected with the history of ideal language theories. His paper examined the language theories of philosophers such as Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt, including their beliefs that languages can aspire to perfection and in the potential of improving languages toward a utopian ideal.

Panel 4, "German-ness: Race, Work, and Citizenship," was chaired by Richard Wetzell and featured papers by Kristine Bell, Jörg Neuheiser, and Philipp Wagner. Kristine Bell's paper discussed the Aryan myth, including the origins of the term "Aryan" and its initial usage. She then traced it into the

Enlightenment period and showed its contextualization by histories of language and etymology which drew connections and parallels between Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Celtic, and Gothic, not all of them factually based. Finally, she covered its usage in Theosophy from the nineteenth century into the 1930s. Jörg Neuheiser was concerned with the notion of “German work” and how that concept engaged with the democratization of postwar West Germany. Using union and company papers and magazines from, among other groups of sources, Maschinenfabrik Augsburg Nürnberg AG (MAN), he illustrated the complexities, continuities, and discontinuities of ideas around the concept of a specifically German work ethic in the aftermath of the Nazi era and how these contributed to the shaping of fluid concepts of democracy. Philipp Wagner, like Neuheiser, complicated scholarly approaches to the implementation of democracy in postwar West Germany but did so in the context of education. While educational reformers agreed that the schools should be engaged in stabilizing society and securing democracy, there is little agreement on how this should happen. Models of creating a “democratic elite” through meritocratic training for particularly talented students competed with more egalitarian models of broader educational ideals. He showed that in the actual implementation of educational models, students were treated differently and thus differentiated from each other based on class and gender.

Panel 5, “Weimar and Nazi Germany,” was chaired by Benjamin Bryce and included papers by James McSpadden and Elissa Waters. McSpadden reconceptualized Weimar politics on three levels through the lens of the political couple Katharina and Siegfried von Kardorff. First, he challenged the notions of Weimar politics as a chaotic and violent scene, instead pointing to the collegiality and civility of networking in Weimar political circles. Secondly, he used Siegfried von Kardorff’s activities to discuss the continuities in networks even when there were political breaks on an official,

outward-facing level. Finally, McSpadden emphasized the inclusiveness and gendered dimension of the behind-the-scenes networking in politics through his attention to Katharina von Kardorff. Elissa Waters presented a close reading of the artistic and cultural-political position of artist Renate Geisberg. While Geisberg's work has often been interpreted in the postwar era as anti-Nazi, Waters pointed out that in reality, she was politically neutral, and her work was sometimes officially sponsored by the National Socialists. Overall, Waters argued that Geisberg's position and art pointed to the open-ended nature of the 1930s art scene, and to the balancing act vis-à-vis politics that was typical of many artists at the time.

The sixth and final panel, "Postwar Germany," was chaired by Kyle Frackman and included papers by Anna Hollian, Thomas Pegelow Kaplan, and Elizabeth Sun. Anna Hollian's research concerned East European Jewish business owners and businesses in postwar West Germany. She discussed this community's existence, its relationship to West Germany, and the varying approaches and strategies which the business owners used to negotiate the relationship with the Germans, past and present, as historical agents or as customers necessary for their businesses' survival. Thomas Pegelow Kaplan discussed how, in the 1960s, leftwing activists, including the West German SDS and the Black Panther Party, formed transnational networks which sought to expand and reconceptualize definitions of genocide. By connecting police violence in the United States and the Vietnam War to the German historical memory of moral injustice and antisemitism during the Holocaust, this generation of activists sought to alter the valence of genocide and thereby mobilize it for present and more wide-ranging activism. Finally, Elizabeth Sun introduced an approach based on digital humanities and public history through her work on digitalized migrant narratives in the twenty-first century while also referring back to historical refugee writings, such

as those of Anna Seghers. Her presentation introduced the project “Weiter Schreiben” (<https://weeterschreiben.jetzt>), a digital space for refugee authors to resume writing and find a platform for their work even after displacement.

The final conversation of the workshop included questions of future financing, whether the format should be changed or remain as it currently is, whether to open parts of it to larger audiences, and whether a keynote speaker should be invited. The participants also discussed whether future workshops should continue to be open-ended or have more specific themes.

**Annika Frieberg**  
(San Diego State University)



# Concrete Dreams: Infrastructure and the Regulation of Behavior in the Global Twentieth Century

Workshop held May 14–15, 2023 at the Max Kade Institute for Austrian-German-Swiss Studies at the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles. Co-sponsored by the GHI Washington, USC Dornsife Dean's Office, and USC's Center on Science, Technology, and Public Life. Conveners: Andreas Greiner (GHI), Jan Hansen (Humboldt University of Berlin/USC), and Paul Lerner (USC). Participants: Andrew Demshuk (American University, Washington), Anna-Christine Grant (Occidental College), Juliana Kei (University of Liverpool), Ognjen Kojanic (University of Cologne), Brigitte Le Normand (Maastricht University), Tambet Muide (Tartu University), Christoph Schimkowsky (University of Tokyo), Laura Isabel Serna (USC), Oliver Sukrow (Technical University, Vienna), Katherine Zubovich (University at Buffalo, SUNY).

This two-day workshop explored the history of attempts to influence human behavior through interventions in urban infrastructure. In the past, scholars have analyzed the emergence of techniques through which the modern state reacted to or managed social change and ultimately attempted to manipulate human actions. Government interventions such as laws, economic incentives, educational campaigns, or the enforcement of personal hygiene have received extensive scholarly attention, as have penal institutions, most famously the prison. However, we know little about how various actors sought to use the built environment to regulate behavior, that is, to direct the flow of people, enhance social interaction, reduce crime, encourage more environmentally sound choices, or promote individual physical or mental health. This gap is all the more surprising given that social engineering became a defining feature of the rise of the metropolis and the emergence of distinct spaces for work,

family, and leisure in both the capitalist and communist worlds in the twentieth century.

Addressing this gap, the Concrete Dreams workshop sought to understand how the built environment and architecture as techniques of governmentality have regulated life and behavior. The workshop also sought to historicize the belief that space and the built environment could shape human behavior. Focusing mostly on Europe and the United States in the twentieth century, the papers covered a wide range of topics, including the construction and utilization of various infrastructures such as transportation systems, mining pits, utility networks, and housing developments, as well as the domestic infrastructure of single-family homes. Allowing for comparisons across time and space and rendering transnational currents visible, each of the papers revolved around questions including: Which normative assumptions are designed into the built environment? Who has the power to make and unmake decisions about human behavior, in terms of ideology, but also in terms of design and building? What are the roles of state and commercial actors, architects, and social reformers in these processes? How did users – or those imagined as users – react to and interact with infrastructure? What, finally, were and are the ongoing environmental consequences of these schemes?

After opening remarks by Paul Lerner, Katherine Zubovich addressed some of these questions in her keynote lecture on high-rise architecture in Stalinist Moscow. By examining the planning and (partial) construction of seven skyscrapers in the Soviet capital before Stalin's death in 1953, Zubovich eloquently highlighted high-rise architecture in Moscow as an extreme case of attempting to shape human behavior. Not only did the Soviet leadership envision the city as a vital site of surveillance, but they also aimed to instill specific values in the people and make them concrete. In her lecture, Zubovich offered a number of novel perspectives on Moscow's

Stalinist transformation, discussing the eviction and displacement of Muscovites to the city's outskirts (where they struggled to adapt to country life), the employment of forced labor, and the many complaint letters written by tenants. Zubovich's discussion of high-rise architecture – clearly inspired by American towers but strictly dissociated from them in official discourse – also highlighted how attempts to shape the urban environment transcended the political and ideological divides of the Cold War.

Andrew Demshuk opened Panel 1 on “Socialist and Post-Socialist Landscape and Environment” with a paper on open-pit mining in the German Democratic Republic. He outlined the social and economic consequences these coalfields had on the Leipzig region, causing air and water pollution, the creation of “moonscapes,” and the dislocation of villages to seemingly modern high-rise districts. Addressing official plans to tackle these problems in the 1980s, Demshuk highlighted one important aspect inherent to many large-scale infrastructure projects: long-term planning. Officials projected the eventual transformation of mining pits into recreational lakes but operated the mines largely heedless of this potential future, leaving the burden of dealing with environmental consequences to future generations. Brigitte Le Normand's presentation focused on urban planning in Belgrade from c. 1945 to 1970. Placing Yugoslav reconstruction in the broader history of social engineering through urban planning, she demonstrated, firstly, that urban infrastructure was meant to influence social behaviors and transform peasants into socialist citizens. Secondly, she emphasized that the plans for reconstruction of Belgrade's city center betrayed the influence of Le Corbusier, thus again highlighting the circulation of concepts and ideas in a transnational sphere. The panel's concluding paper by Ognjen Kojanic also tackled urban transformation in Belgrade, but from a different angle: scrutinizing the Pančevo Marshes outside of the city, he showed how the

Agricultural Combine Belgrade created and developed a suburban neighborhood out of a mostly uninhabited area. Urban development went hand in hand with raising the standards of living of the new settlers through apartments enabling new patterns of consumption and hygiene. The new inhabitants, however, as Kojanic also revealed, were not easily transformed into urban residents and retained some of the practices of rural living.

The second panel, “Urban Planning, Rural Retreats, and Behavior Regulation” was opened by Juliana Kei with a presentation on the origins of the “built environment” concept. Focusing on discussions among British urban planners and architects in the 1960s, she illuminated the evolution of the term and its role in underscoring the importance of building design and town planning on a national scale. Kei argued the initial usage of the term was motivated by the belief that altering urban layouts could wield an influence on society and could also be interpreted as an effort to fortify the linkages between urban planning and social science research. Oliver Sukrow’s paper focused on resorts and spas in the post-World War II era, a period often overshadowed by the 19th century, the golden age of spa culture. As Sukrow detailed, health resorts adapted to the new phenomenon of mass tourism and resorts in Central and Eastern Europe were reimagined as places of fitness and active vacations. From this perspective, amenities such as bathhouses, pools, and water pipes emerge as elements of the built environment designed to empower guests/patients in the pursuit of good health and to become better citizens. It also became clear in Sukrow’s talk that spas, located outside of populated areas, were understood as a remedy for the allegedly immoral life and deleterious influence of the urban environment. Anna-Christine Grant drew a similar conclusion in her paper on penitentiary agricultural colonies, comparing the Mettray colony, founded in 1839 near the French city of

Tours, and the Gorky colony, founded in 1920 near Poltava, Ukraine. In both places, troublesome youth from urban spaces were to be confined and monitored in rural settings to elicit moral betterment. The structure and layout of both colonies were intended to bolster this effort through distinct spatial arrangements.

Panel 3, “Urban Flow: Mobility, Consumption, and Lived Experience” was opened by co-convener Jan Hansen with a paper on how electric meters shaped consumer behavior in interwar Los Angeles. By shedding light on the prevalent issue of “electricity theft” in the early twentieth century, Hansen introduced an innovative perspective on urban electrification. He showed that utility engineers relied significantly on consumers for critical tasks like meter reading, and that only after 1920 did this approach give way to more formalized meter-handling procedures. Moreover, his presentation demonstrated how this shift reflected a purposeful effort to shape behavior through interventions in the built environment. The decision to relocate meters from within houses to their exterior walls was one such disciplinary tactic, he argued, aimed at dissuading users from tampering with their electrical setups. Likewise focusing on Los Angeles, Laura Isabel Serna zoomed into the microcosm of domestic space and its furnishing. In early-twentieth-century Southern California, Mexican immigrants were considered difficult to assimilate. Targeting Mexican women, reformers developed a model home in a boxcar, simulating a domestic environment in which immigrant women were taught sewing, cooking, and sanitation, in this way also being exposed to the English language. As Serna argued, the model boxcar home aimed to Americanize immigrant women and make them participate in mainstream social life. The third paper in this panel, by Christoph Schimkowsky, examined transport infrastructure in Tokyo from the 1880s through the present. Until the mid-twentieth cen-

tury, he observed, tramway usage was marked by disorderly and dangerous behavior as passengers frequently boarded and disembarked between stops. Only in the 1960s, when it became clear that transport capacity had reached its limit, did proper queuing become more common. This reinterpretation of proper behavior in the public, Schimkowsky argued, went hand in hand with a broader renegotiation of what the public and society meant. He thus found that official governance entailed both “governing for infrastructure” – making users fit into the system, e.g. through teaching proper codes of conduct – as well as “governing through infrastructure” – making users adapt their behavior through changes in the layout and arrangement of stations and carriages. In the fourth and final paper of this panel, Tabet Muide explored the roots of the current dominance of cars in Tallinn and Estonians’ preference for driving over public transportation. The boom of car ownership after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Muide argued, was not solely a result of newly awakened capitalist dreams of ownership but also of the previous decades of infrastructure planning. While mobility was already very car-centered in the Soviet era, the administration struggled to develop a scheme for rapid tramways, which was conceptualized in the early 1980s but barely implemented before eventually being abandoned in the 2000s. Pathways that had been marked out as future train routes instead became parkways.

After these three panels, closing remarks by co-convener Andreas Greiner and an ensuing discussion highlighted the common themes and surprising areas of continuity and similarity across geographical and political divides. One key topic that emerged was the differentiation between the urban and the rural. Multiple papers showed how the countryside was conceptualized as a counterbalance to allegedly morally corrosive and insalubrious urban landscapes, but also reminded us that the divides between urban and

rural were seldom clear cut and were often reimagined and reconfigured. The new inhabitants of the Pančevo Marshes, for instance, kept farm animals in their backyards, a behavior that was strongly discouraged and even punished. A second recurring theme was the question of transfers. Several case studies convincingly demonstrated that similar processes and debates occurred in different systems, whether communist or capitalist. They also indicate urban planners on both sides of the Iron Curtain transferred practices and drew on similar sources. A third recurring theme was the question of who engaged with the built environment and for what purpose. Architects, state officials, and designers were the central actors in most of the papers, but users also mattered whether they accepted the provided arrangements, criticized them, or subverted them. Connected to this issue was the question of the agency of the built environment itself. The organization of the built environment may be a conduit for translating planning concepts into patterns of human behavior, yet new insights might also be gained from considering how objects and spatial configurations also wield agency. Participants also asked how users reacted to intended and unintended consequences and managed their disappointment when systems failed. Again and again, the papers demonstrated that official efforts were not always successful. Often, state authorities and planning experts overestimated their abilities, misjudged the responses of affected populations, or failed to surmount environmental obstacles to their visions.

As a whole, the Concrete Dreams workshop successfully brought histories of human behavior and psychology into dialogue with the study of the built environment. Its contributors brought diverse perspectives to a topic that had been treated mostly by scholars of urban planning, architecture, and infrastructure, and seldom analyzed in transnational context. Ultimately, this workshop was just a beginning, and

ideally opens the door to further cross-disciplinary conversations at the intersection of behavior regulation and urban infrastructure, addressing their entanglement with imperial and post-colonial projects in a world on the brink of environmental catastrophe.

**Andreas Greiner** (GHI Washington), **Jan Hansen**  
(Humboldt University of Berlin/UCSD),  
and **Paul Lerner** (USC)



## **28th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History: Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century German History**

Seminar held at Villa Vigoni, German-Italian Centre for the European Dialogue, Loven di Menaggio, Italy, June 29 – July 2, 2023. Co-Organized by the German Historical Institute Washington and the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University, in cooperation with Villa Vigoni. Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University) and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI Washington). Faculty Mentors: Samuel Clowes Huneke (George Mason University), Paul Lerner (University of Southern California), Miriam Rürup (Universität Potsdam), Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Technische Universität Berlin). Participants: Joachim Brenner (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg), Jonathon Catlin (Princeton University), Émilie Duranceau-Lapointe (University of Michigan), Jack Guenther (Princeton University), Martin Hamre (Freie Universität Berlin), Philipp Henning (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), Christian Kleindienst (Universität Leipzig), Till Knobloch (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Kate McGregor (University of New Brunswick Fredericton), Verena Meier (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg), Robert Mueller-Stahl (Potsdamer Leibniz-Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung), Tabea Nasaroff (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), Kay Schmücking (Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg), Rachel Weiser (Boston University), Brenna Yellin (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Francesca Zilio (Villa Vigoni).

The 28th Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History once again brought together doctoral students from North America and Europe working on dissertations in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German history. The seminar took place in the beautiful environment of the Villa Vigoni, the

German-Italian Centre for the European Dialogue, whose general secretary, Christiane Liermann Traniello, and academic advisor, Francesca Zilio, provided an exceptionally welcoming atmosphere, as did the Villa's remarkable staff. Taking place over three full days, the seminar was organized in eight panels, usually featuring two papers each, which opened with two comments by fellow doctoral students, followed by discussion of the precirculated papers.

The seminar started with a panel that brought together papers on the related topics of catastrophe and the atomic age. Jonathon Catlin's paper "Thinking against Catastrophe: A Concept in Twentieth-Century German Thought" presented his conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) of the concept of "catastrophe" in German thought and politics from the aftermath of World War I to contemporary climate change. Against the prevailing tendency to depict catastrophe as a sudden, discrete, and external event, Catlin critically reconstructed the notion of history itself as a "permanent catastrophe" that was developed by the Frankfurt School critical theorists Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno from the 1930s to 1960s. This notion, he argued, might help us conceptualize the ongoing threats of climate change as a slow (if not permanent) process immanent to late capitalist forms of life. Joachim Brenner's paper "Unser Freund Atom(ino): 'Atomare Kindheit' und die transnationale Popularisierung von Atomenergie in Kindercomic und Fernsehen" analyzed the Walt Disney production "Our Friend the Atom" and the Italian comic strip "Atomino" to examine how children in the United States, Italy, East and West Germany were prepared for the "atomic age." Anthropomorphized atoms and metaphors of friendship were used to win support for civil uses of nuclear power in order to stimulate interest in and a responsible attitude towards nuclear power, the key technology of the Cold War, among the youngest members of society.

The second panel examined the issue of race in the contexts of German colonial history and the Nazi regime. Kate McGregor's paper "'Es gibt nur einen Weg zur Schönheit!' ['There is only one way to be pretty!']: Racialized Beauty Norms in the German South Pacific Colonies 1884–1916," examined how normative conceptions of beauty shaped the lives of white German women and forcibly colonized populations in the South Seas. McGregor demonstrated that in the German Empire beauty was neither a frivolous nor an exclusively female concern. White German women (and men) in German Samoa and German New Guinea applied their definitions of beautiful and ugly to the colonized populations to maintain the racialized colonial hierarchy. Émilie Duranceau-Lapointe's paper "How Racial Categories Become Realities: The Bureaucratic Journeys of 'Jewish' Petitioners to the Standesamt in Nazi Berlin, 1939–1945" provided a close analysis of petitions to Berlin's *Standesämter* (marriage bureaus), filed between 1939 and 1943 by German citizens who were classified as "Jewish" or of "mixed race" by the Nazi regime and challenged their racial classification. In her analysis, Duranceau-Lapointe revealed how the *Personenstandsgesetz* of 1937 – in concert with two decrees from the *Reichsminister des Innern* (1936 and 1941) – sought to permanently record and fix a person's religious affiliation in order to prevent any "erasure" of "Jewishness" and thus to render "Jews" permanently visible and legible.

The third panel explored the role of gender in two very different contexts. Christian Kleindienst's paper "The Politics of Jewish Invisibility: (Un-) Sichtbarkeit jüdischer Feminist:innen und Wahrnehmung von Antisemitismus in feministischen Bewegungskontexten" analyzed antisemitism and Jewish invisibility as intertwined problems that de-normalized socially produced orders of visibility and made them the object of feminist critique. As some Jewish feminists raised the question of their (in-)visibility, they formulated claims for recognition

that connected the fight against antisemitism to the question of Jewish visibility within the feminist movement. Rachel Weiser's paper "Her Place in Production: Gender, Labor, and Socialist Brigades in the German Democratic Republic" considered the gendered nature of industrial work in the German Democratic Republic, specifically through workers' brigades. Women, she argued, carved out space for female community within brigades and developed relationships centered on gender solidarity rather than the intended class comradeship. As a result, the factory served as a space for women to participate in and refashion East German socialism.

The fourth panel featured transnational perspectives on German history. Jack Guenther's paper "The Idea of Hamburg: Interpreting Interdependence from the Wilhelmine Era to West Germany" asked how attempts to rebuild Germany's economic connections with the world coexisted and contended with the early years of Nazi rule. Guenther's analysis of a 1932 campaign against autarky and the Nazis' early overtures to Hamburg's mercantile sector argued that the city's free traders supported Nazism on the basis of global, not domestic, considerations; the same global perspective, however, led other Hamburg merchants to reject Nazi rule, laying the foundation for a contested postwar recovery. In his paper "Orientalism in Deutschland und Italien zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus und Faschismus: Ideologie, Geopolitik und Propaganda" Philipp Henning showed that both fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany were strongly influenced by Orientalist modes of thought, which found expression both in their ideologies and in their geopolitical aims. But Henning's analysis of Italian and German radio propaganda for the Arab world after 1934 also demonstrated that the ideas that the two countries projected onto the imaginary space of the "Orient" differed substantially.

The fifth panel explored different aspects of the Second World War. Till Knobloch's paper "The Human Element in

Diplomacy and the Outbreak of the Second World War” showed that French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier’s foreign policy was substantially shaped by his experiences during the First World War. Knobloch argued that Daladier’s perception of Adolf Hitler was, from early on, influenced by his pacifist quest for Franco-German reconciliation. Although Daladier recognized Hitler’s aggressive intentions more clearly during his second term in office, his decisions during the 1938 Munich conference were still influenced by his war trauma. Kay Schmücking’s paper “Heroisierungsversuche zwischen Uniformität und Differenz: Die mediale Präsenz des heroischen Opfertodes im Nationalsozialismus” investigated the Nazi cult of heroism from the perspective of media history. The project focused on Nazi attempts to transform the memorialization of the war dead during the Second World War into a cult of heroism through a variety of media strategies, while also revealing the problems and limits of these strategies.

The sixth panel brought together papers on two different types of migration: the emigration of Jews from Nazi Germany and the postwar resettlement of so-called “ethnic Germans” from Eastern Europe in the Soviet occupation zone. Robert Mueller-Stahl’s paper “Die Flucht festhalten: Emigrationsnarrative in der deutsch-jüdischen Privatfotografie” examined a remarkable discrepancy and tension in the photographs that Jewish families took of the Dutch internment and transit camp Westerbork, in which they were interned after 1940. The happy mood that some of these photographs convey seems at odds with their threatening and hopeless environment. Mueller-Stahl argued that by not depicting the structures of confinement the pictures created a “Gegenraum” (“counter-space”). Brenna Yellin’s paper “*Die Neue Heimat*: An Analysis of the Zentralverwaltung für Deutsche Umsiedler’s Illustrated Monthly Magazine, 1947–1949” analyzed discussions in the magazine *Die Neue Heimat* about the relationship between *Umsiedler*, “ethnic

Germans" expelled from parts of Eastern Europe, and local populations in the Soviet Occupation Zone. Arguing that this often-overlooked source provides necessary insights into the triangular relationship between resettlers, locals, and the state, Yellin showed that state officials attempted to rely on *Heimat* and Germanness to unite the two groups and revealed the contradictions this strategy produced.

The seventh panel examined different aspects of how post-war Germany dealt with its Nazi past. Verena Meier's paper "Kriminalpolizei und Völkermord: Die NS-Verfolgung von Sinti\*zzze und Rom\*nja sowie die Aufarbeitung dessen unter den Alliierten und in der DDR" employed the concept of "transitional justice" to analyze the process by which Nazi perpetrators were prosecuted, convicted, or amnestied in the Soviet Occupation Zone and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the extent to which victims received compensation. Using 585 personal files of the criminal police in Magdeburg to trace individual biographies of perpetrators and victims, Meier reveals important continuities across 1945 in the state's relationship to the Sinti and Roma minority. Tabea Nasaroff's paper "Disziplin als demokratische Tugend: Zu Theodor Eschenburgs Bürgerbildern (1945–1965)" examined the analyses of the political attitudes of the West German population that Tübingen political scientist Theodor Eschenburg provided in West German media. Her analysis focused on the strategies by which Eschenburg established himself as an authoritative spokesperson for the majority of the West German population but also revealed that some members of the public challenged this claim.

The eighth and final panel featured Martin Hamre's paper "Notions and Practices of Fascist Internationalism in the 1930s." In this paper Hamre analyzed the Lausanne-based International Centre of Fascist Studies (CINEF), which functioned as an international propaganda think tank for Fascist Italy from 1927 to 1930. CINEF, he argued, disseminated

not only ideas of fascism as a “universal” phenomenon and a “third way” beyond liberalism and communism but the argument that the adoption of fascism in Europe and the world would enable a “peaceful” and “true” form of (fascist) internationalism.

Organizers and participants expressed their appreciation to the four faculty mentors who offered their comments and questions both in the panel discussions and in many informal conversations during the breaks. In the final discussion, which closed the three-day seminar, participants reflected on the seminar’s collegial atmosphere as well as the great diversity of topics and themes in twentieth-century German history, while noting that the nineteenth century was almost absent among this year’s projects. One commonality among many of the papers were transnational approaches to German history, which clearly have become mainstream. As always, the seminar had an important networking function, connecting participants on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Richard F. Wetzell**

(German Historical Institute Washington)





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# **GHI News**



## Berghahn Books and GHI Announce Open Access Agreement

In April 2023 the GHI Washington and Berghahn Books reached an agreement to transition the *Studies in German History* book series to Gold Open Access. GHI Director and Series Editor Simone Lässig commented: “In the last several years, the GHI has endeavored to transition our publications to Open Access, and we are gratified that we can now add this series to our OA portfolio. This important shift allows us to bring trend-setting and innovative scholarship in German and Central European history, especially by early-career historians and those whose research we have fostered through fellowships and conferences at the GHI, more effectively into transatlantic dialogue.”

Mark Stanton, Books Editorial Director at Berghahn, said, “We are delighted to continue our long collaboration with the GHI Washington with this exciting new step to publish the majority of future books in this important series Open Access. The series will continue to showcase high-quality research from scholars of German history, and this move will enable a much wider audience to access it. It also demonstrates Berghahn’s continued commitment to Open Access publishing and making the work we publish widely available.”

Launched in 2004, the series serves as a transatlantic forum on German and Central European history and currently has 28 volumes covering topics from the 19th-century educational system to 20th-century globalization and from violence in the Weimar Republic to coping with the Nazi past. To date, only two of those volumes are Open Access, so this agreement will greatly increase the availability and accessibility of this important research. The first new Open Access series volume, Timon de Groot’s *Citizens into Dishonored Felons: Felony Disenfranchisement, Honor, and Rehabilitation in Germany, 1806–1933*, was published in April 2023.

## GHI's Book Series with Cambridge UP Moves to Open Access

In October 2023 the GHI Washington announced that all forthcoming titles in its Cambridge University Press book series, *Publications of the German Historical Institute*, would be available in Gold Open Access (OA) from day one of publication. "The new Cambridge policy," GHI Director and Series Editor Simone Lässig noted, "reaffirms the GHI's long-standing commitment to barrier-free access to scholarship and historical sources and also marks the final step in the Institute's transition to Open Access in our print publication program." The GHI's *Transatlantische Historische Studien* series, published with Franz Steiner Verlag, transitioned to Open Access back in 2019, and *Studies in German History*, with Berghahn Books, followed suit earlier this year. The GHI *Bulletin* has long been published in free digital form.

From now on, each new GHI Cambridge title will appear as a hardcover book available for purchase (with an eventual paperback option), an e-book available for purchase, and as an Open Access PDF available for free download. "We view these formats as mutually supportive – each has its own advantages, whether it be ease of reading or enhanced discoverability, and by offering all three," Lässig explained, "the GHI will better support its existing readers while reaching new ones."

The first book scheduled for publication under the new OA agreement, Adam Bisno's engaging monograph *Big Business and the Crisis of German Democracy: Liberalism and the Grand Hotels of Berlin, 1875–1933*, appeared in print in November 2023 and was also made available for download on the Cambridge University Press website. The book's compelling central question – why did a group of Jewish hotel owners ultimately decide that Hitler would be better for business than democracy? – together with its elegant prose, rich illustrations, and multidisciplinary approach make this title uniquely well-suited for the type of broad readership that Open Access can help attract.

The next book under contract, Jan Jansen and Kirsten McKenzie's *Mobility and Coercion in an Age of Wars and Revolutions: A Global History, c. 1750–1830*, is a collection of essays by twelve scholars who live and work in cities across the globe and who specialize in the entangled histories of war, empire, and forced migration in different regions – from Chile and Argentina, and New Orleans and the Caribbean, to London and Sydney. The Jansen/McKenzie volume is forthcoming in 2024, as is Michelle Kahn's prize-winning manuscript, *Foreign in Two Homelands: Racism, Return Migration, and Turkish-German History*, which draws on a range of lesser-known sources from German and Turkish archives.

With strong manuscripts in the pipeline and a new Gold Open Access policy, the GHI-Cambridge series is poised to make exciting contributions to the fields of German, transnational, and global history in the coming years. Here, Lässig notes, "At a time when the Institute is expanding its research network internationally, the new access policy fully aligns our goals."

## 2023 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize

The 2023 Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, which is awarded annually by the Friends of the German Historical Institute for the best dissertation in German history completed at a North American university, was awarded to Christina Matzen for her dissertation "Women's Prisons and the Politics of Punishment in Nazi and Postwar Germany," completed at the University of Toronto in 2022 under the supervision of Doris Bergen. The Stern Prize was presented to Christina Matzen at the 31st Annual Symposium of the Friends of the German Historical Institute, which took place in Washington on May 19, 2023.

The selection committee consisted of Lisa Todd (University of New Brunswick, chair), Eli Rubin (Western Michigan University), and Laura Stokes (Stanford University). The committee's Stern Prize citation (*laudatio*) read as follows:

“Dr. Christina Matzen’s dissertation, ‘Women’s Prisons and the Politics of Punishment in Nazi and Postwar Germany’ is a remarkable achievement. By illustrating how conventional prisons operated before, after, and alongside the concentration camp system, Matzen addresses a historiographical gap in the gendered history of criminality, highlights under-memorialized Holocaust victims, and sheds light on contemporary carceral practices. She does all this by closely analyzing the evolution of two prisons from the 1920s to the 1950s: Aichach Women’s Prison in Bavaria, and Barnim Street Prison in Berlin Friedrichshain. Having to contend with uneven archival materials, Matzen creatively uses a wide variety of sources to analyze the histories of the institutions, their employees, and the women they imprisoned.

“Matzen’s research provides an important new vantage point on change and continuity between democracies and dictatorships in Germany’s twentieth century. She at once illustrates how consistently women’s crimes remained tied to economic hardship and ‘deviant’ sexuality, while also showing crucial shifts in lived realities for imprisoned people. Daily prison routines may have remained consistent after 1933, but Matzen illustrates how prisoners were among the first groups to experience the ruthlessness of the Nazi regime. For instance, guards clearly targeted Jewish prisoners for ill treatment, especially after 1938. During the war years, Aichach and Barnim Street were dangerous sites – Matzen describes violent forced labour practices, physical vulnerability during bombing raids, and German courts who meted out an unprecedented number of death sentences. As the war continued, Matzen contends that conventional prisons became ‘sites of ever-increasing brutalization that in many ways mirrored concentration camps.’ And, especially after 1942, many prisoners were transferred directly to camps in the East. Indeed, Matzen contends that German prison authorities participated in the murder of tens of thousands of prisoners and played a direct role in the Holocaust. Allied occupation authorities set out to reform this prison system after 1945, but Matzen shows how this process took decades to complete. American officials released women from Aichach imprisoned by Nazis on ideological

grounds and reduced the unduly harsh sentences of others; however, they also continued to imprison women for sexualized 'crimes,' including spreading venereal diseases and having intimate relationships with GIs. In East Berlin's Barnim Street Prison, Communist officials constructed a memorial to former prisoner Rosa Luxemburg, while the current prisoners suffered uneven treatment, poor living conditions and sometimes served their time alongside convicted Nazi war criminals. In tracing such myriad developments through decades of turmoil, Matzen admirably keeps the women prisoners as her central focus.

"The significance of this research stretches beyond Germany; indeed, Matzen encourages us to interrogate the continuing gendered nature of incarceration and punishment. As her supervisor, Prof. Doris Bergen, writes, Matzen's work 'stands out as a model of engaged scholarship,' and as 'a determined intervention against the erasure of incarcerated people.' The prize committee agrees and is pleased to award this year's Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize to Dr. Christina Matzen."

## **2023 Franz Steiner Prize in Transatlantic History**

The 2023 Franz Steiner Prize, offered biennially by the German Historical Institute to recognize an outstanding work in transatlantic and North American history, was awarded to Maximilian Klose for his manuscript "Why They Gave: CARE, the US Public, and Humanitarian Engagement for Germany after World War II." The prize was presented to Klose at the annual meeting of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS) in Rostock in June 2023 by Deputy Director Axel Jansen, together with Katharina Stüdemann of the Steiner Verlag. His manuscript, a dissertation completed at the Freie Universität Berlin in 2022, uses a carefully selected set of case studies to explain why women's clubs, New York intellectuals, and members of labor

unions decided to give money to the humanitarian organization CARE to provide relief packages to individuals in Germany in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. Klose's work shows how, in the context of an emerging consumer nation, Americans developed specific modes of transatlantic humanitarianism. As part of the Steiner Prize, Klose's manuscript will be published as an open-access volume in the *Transatlantische Historische Studien* (THS) book series, published by the Steiner Verlag in association with the GHI.

## **In Memoriam: Robert Gerald Livingston (1927 – 2023)**

The German Historical Institute Washington mourns the death of Robert Gerald Livingston, a Senior Visiting Research Fellow at the GHI since 1997. Born in 1927, Livingston studied at Harvard University, where he also earned his PhD. From 1956 to 1974, he was a U.S. Foreign Service Officer, with postings in Salzburg, Hamburg, Belgrade, Berlin, Bonn, and Washington. In 1974 he became Vice President of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, headquartered in Washington, and went on to serve as its President from 1977 to 1981. After a stint as research professor at Georgetown University, in 1983 he became the founding director of the American Institute for Contemporary German Studies (AICGS, now the American-German Institute) of the Johns Hopkins University, serving until 1994. Livingston made the AICGS an important player in the world of Washington DC think tanks. From the outset, he made sure that AICGS connected academic research and policy work – and covered both West and East Germany. As Senior Visiting Fellow at the GHI, Livingston provided valuable advice to the members of the Institute, especially regarding programming about postwar German history. Many will remember his incisive questions after lectures at the Institute. His presence, his knowledge, and his advice made a great contribution to the life of the Institute; he will be missed.



# New Institute Publications

## Publications of the German Historical Institute (Cambridge University Press)

Adam Bisno. *Big Business and the Crisis of German Democracy: Liberalism and the Grand Hotels of Berlin, 1875–1933.*

## Studies in German History (Berghahn Books)

Timon de Groot. *Citizens into Dishonored Felons: Felony Disenfranchisement, Honor, and Rehabilitation in Germany, 1806–1933.*

Michael Weaver. *Political Friendship: Notables, Networks, and the Pursuit of the German Nation State, 1848–1866.*

## Transatlantische Historische Studien (Steiner Verlag)

Anna Corsten. *Unbequeme Erinnerung: Emigrierte Historiker in der westdeutschen und US-amerikanischen NS- und Holocaust-Forschung, 1945–1998.*

# Staff Changes

**Sylwia Biel** joined the GHI as Head of Administration in August 2023 after previously holding responsibility for vocational education project funding in the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). Prior to joining the BMBF, she was an officer in the German Federal Armed Forces for 12 years.

**Susanne Fabricius**, event coordinator at the institute since January 2012, retired in July 2023.

**Isabel Richter** joined the GHI as Deputy Director and head of the Pacific Office in October 2023. A historian of modern Germany, she was previously DAAD professor in the

departments of history and German at the University of California, Berkeley from 2017 to 2022.

**Claudia Roesch**, research fellow since January 2018, has taken a position with the chair and working group for the history of knowledge in the department of history and sociology at the University of Konstanz.

**Raphael Rössel** joined the GHI as research fellow in North American history in October 2023. At the GHI, he is developing a project on the history of hazing at U.S. colleges in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Before joining the institute, he was a research fellow at the Universities of Kiel and Hagen.

**Sören Urbansky**, research fellow since January 2018 and Head of the GHI Washington Pacific Office since January 2021, left the GHI in August 2023 to take up a professorship for East European History at Ruhr-University Bochum.

**Nino Vallen**, research fellow at the GHI Washington Pacific Office since April 2022, was appointed as an assistant professor for early modern cultural history at the Radboud University (Nijmegen, The Netherlands) in November 2023.

## GHI Fellowships and Internships

### Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships

The GHI awards short-term fellowships to European and North American doctoral students as well as postdoctoral scholars to pursue research projects that draw upon primary sources located in the United States. We are particularly interested in research projects that fit into the following fields: German and European history, the history of German-American relations, the role of Germany and the USA in international relations, and American history (European doctoral and postdoctoral scholars only). Proposed research projects should make use of historical methods

and engage with the relevant historiography. We especially invite applications from doctoral students and postdoctoral scholars who currently have no funding from their home institutions. The fellowships are usually granted for periods of one to five months.

The GHI also offers a number of other long-term doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships with more specific profiles to strengthen key research interests at the institute, including the history of knowledge, the history of migration, kinship, and belonging, the history of race and ethnicity, and the history of the Americas. In addition to these opportunities, the GHI also offers the following fellowships: a Binational Tandem Research Fellowship for the History of Migration, based at the institute's Pacific Office, the Fritz Thyssen Pre-Dissertation Fellowship in German history, for students at universities in western North America, and the Gerda Henkel Fellowship for Digital History, based in Washington, offered in collaboration with the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University.

For further information about these programs and current application deadlines, please check our website at [www.ghi-dc.org/fellowships](http://www.ghi-dc.org/fellowships).

## **Internships**

The GHI Internship Program gives German and American students of history, political science, and library studies an opportunity to gain experience at a scholarly research institute. Interns assist individual research projects, work for the library, take part in the preparation and hosting of conferences, and help with our publications. Internship opportunities are also available for students of public relations, public administration, and public management. Interns receive a small stipend. The program is very flexible in the sense that the GHI tries to accommodate interns' interests, abilities, and goals. A two-month minimum stay is required; a three-month stay is preferred. There is a rolling review of applications. For further information, please check our website at [www.ghi-dc.org/internships](http://www.ghi-dc.org/internships).

# **GHI Fellowship Recipients, 2023–24**

## **Long-term Visiting Fellowships**

**Mimi Cheng (Freie Universität Berlin)**

China on the Horizon: Art, Science, and Cartographies of Empire

**Jonathan Dentler (Université Paris Nanterre)**

Submerged Ties: The Atlantis Myth and the Lure of Analogy, 1860–1970

**Maximilian Klose (Universität Freiburg)**

Men of Empires – Empires of Men: Masculinity in US-German-Japanese Relations, 1868–1914

**Ezra Rudolph (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)**

Victims of Terrorism as Political Stakeholders in Germany and the US

## **Gerda Henkel Fellowship for Digital History**

**Wouter Kreuze (University College Cork)**

The Genesis of a News System: The Travel Routes of the Handwritten Newsletter Network

## **Tandem Fellowships in the History of Migration, GHI Washington Pacific Office**

**Amy Kerner (University of Texas, Dallas)**

Political Violence, Human Rights, and Migration from the Cold War Southern Cone

**Fabio Santos (Freie Universität Berlin)**

Multidirectional Mobilities and Insular Illegalities: Haitian “Boat People” in Puerto Rico

## **Short-Term Doctoral Research Fellowships**

**Annika Bärwald (Universität Bremen)**

Colonial Countercurrents in Hamburg

**Max Gaida (Universität Köln)**

The Sexual Politics of Antiurbanism in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley

**Nora M. Lehner (University of Vienna)**

Kommerzielle Sexualität und sexueller Tauschhandel im Wien der Nachkriegszeit (1945–1974)

**Thomas Rettig (Universität Greifswald)**

Die Russische Freiwillige Westarmee: Eine Geschichte imperialer Verflechtung in Europa nach dem Zerfall der Imperien (1917–1923)

**Manuel Schmidgall (University of Cambridge)**

From Slaveholders to Imperial Outposts: German Presence in the Caribbean 1850-1914

**Andreas Schurr (European University Institute, Florence)**

“Curing the Sick Man of the New World”: Mexican Immigration Schemes, German-Speaking Migrants, and the Attempted “Re-Colonization” of Mexico, 1830s–1860s

**Christian Stenz (Universität Heidelberg)**

Planting Coffee, Gathering Knowledge: Scientific Objects, Plantation Economies and Knowledge Production in Nineteenth Century Guatemala, c.1850–1887

**Antonia Wegner (Universität Freiburg)**

Politische Ideengeschichte des Gender-Konzeptes in den USA seit den 1970er Jahren

**Anastasiia Zaplatina (Universität Bielefeld)**

The American-Soviet Medical Society (1943-1947): Academic Exchanges between Allies and their Cold War Legacy

**Alina A. M. Zeller (Universität Erfurt/Universität Graz)**  
Trachtenvereine in the U.S.: Practices of Bavarian Customs Associations in the Negotiation of German American Ethnicity, Culture and Tradition

### **Short-Term Postdoctoral Research Fellowships**

**Silke Hackenesch (Universität Köln)**  
Colorblind Love or Racial Responsibility? (Black) Adoptive Families in Postwar America and Transnational Civil Rights

**Thilo Neidhöfer**  
Eine Wissensgeschichte von Rumor Control: Sicherheitsdenken und Knowledge Engineering in den USA, 1941–1974

**Elisabeth Piller (Universität Freiburg)**  
US Humanitarians, Postwar Europe and the Making of the American Century

**Anna Strommenger (Universität Bielefeld)**  
Außenperspektiven ausländischer Reisender auf das nationalsozialistische Deutschland und den Holocaust: Aufstieg – Verfasstheit – Nachleben (1920er–1960er Jahre)

# GHI RESEARCH SEMINAR AND COLLOQUIUM, SPRING 2023

**January 18**

**Dagmar Ellerbrock (TU Dresden)**

How to Write an Emotion- and Knowledge-based History of the German Re-unification

**January 19**

**Pia Herzan (Universität Erfurt)**

Governed by Voluntariness: Voluntary Civic Engagement and Political Practices during the Yellow Fever Crisis in Philadelphia's Early Republic (1793–1820)

**Lukas Held (Universität Zürich)**

Governing a Fractured World: A History of the Commons-Paradigm and the Transformation of the Public Spirit, 1960s–2000s

**February 15**

**Phil Tiemeyer (Kansas State University)**

The Confines of Cosmopolitanism: A Postcolonial History of Aviation and Jet Age Culture

**March 9**

**Nicola Camilleri (University of Padua)**

German Emigrants, Armed Sociability, and the Making of Legal Regimes (1850s–1920s)

**Kristin Meißner (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam)**

Im Wandel. Urbanität, Globalisierung und demokratische Kultur im Vergleich der Städte Berlin und New York City 1980–2000

- March 15**                      **John M. Efron (UC Berkeley)**  
All Consuming: Germans, Jews, and the  
Meaning of Meat
- April 27**                      **Jan Hua-Henning (Duke Kunshan  
University)**  
Incendiary Cities: Fire and Technology  
in Germany and the U.S., 1850–1900
- Andrew Gibson (Georgetown University)**  
Machiavelli and Machtpolitik: Reading  
the Florentine Secretary into Twentieth-  
Century Politics (1915–1965)
- May 3**                            **Jana Weiß (University of Texas at  
Austin)**  
Transatlantic Brewing Science:  
German-American Brewers and Know-  
ledge Transfer in the 19th Century
- May 25**                      **Jan Siegemund (Technische Universität  
Dresden)**  
Flugmären im Wandel. Gerüchte und die  
Entwicklung des Kommunikationssys-  
tems im europäischen und transatlanti-  
schen Fernhandel in der Frühen Neuzeit
- Jan-Niklas Kniewel (Universität Bern)**  
Extracting (Certain) Humans from  
Nature: Negotiating the Conservation  
Frontier in Africa, c. 1960–2003
- June 1**                        **Lisa Gabriel (Goethe Universität  
Frankfurt)**  
Gegen die Missachtung und Recht-  
losigkeit: Vielfalt und Ideengeschichte  
radikaler Perspektiven auf das Problem  
der sexuellen Gewalt im Kontext der  
sozialen Bewegungen in den USA, circa  
1940–1975



**Anna Kozlova (Carleton University)**  
Ancestral Homelands and Onward  
Migration: Oral History Narratives of  
Post-Soviet German and Jewish  
Migrants in Canada

**Washington Area German History Seminar, Spring 2023**

- February 27**      **Robert Gerwarth (University College  
Dublin)**  
Germany in Europe's Age of Civil Wars  
(1917–1949): A Sonderweg?
- March 27**      **Samuel Huneke (George Mason  
University)**  
Lesbians in Nazi Germany
- April 24**      **Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown  
University)**  
Writing the History of Post-1945  
Germany: Transatlantic Developments  
in the Historiography

# GHI Calendar of Events, 2023–2024

**June 29–July 3**

**28th Transatlantic Doctoral  
Seminar: German History in the  
Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**

Seminar organized by the GHI and the BMW Center at Georgetown University, held at Villa Vigoni, Loven di Menaggio, Italy  
Conveners: Anna von der Goltz (Georgetown University) and Richard Wetzell (GHI Washington)

**July 4–7**

**Historicizing the Refugee  
Experience, 17th–21st Centuries**

Third Annual International Seminar in Historical Refugee Studies, Duisburg  
Organized by the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE), the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI) and the American Historical Association (AHA), in cooperation with the Interdisciplinary Center for Integration and Migration Research (InZentIM), the Institute for the Advanced Study in the Humanities (KWI) and the Centre for Global Cooperation Research (KHK/GCR21)

**July 4**

**Humanitarian Time and Refugee  
Presence: On Palestinian Lives in  
Extended Displacement**

Keynote Lecture (Virtual) at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg / Centre for Global Cooperation Research  
Speaker: Ilana Feldman (George Washington University)

- September 7**                      **TV Series and the Public Memory of Colonia Dignidad: An Interdisciplinary Conversation and Screening about the German-Chilean TV Series “Dignity”**  
 Discussion and Screening at the Goethe-Institut Washington  
 Speakers: María Elena Wood, Andreas Gutzeit, Stefan Rinke, Holle Meding
- September 8**                      **Latin America’s Contested Pasts in Telenovelas and TV Series: A Cross-Sector Dialogue between Academia, Entertainment and Society**  
 Conference at GHI Washington  
 Conveners: GHI Washington and GUMELAB
- September 12**                      **“Harlem in Germany”: Race, Migration, and the American Analogy in the Federal Republic**  
 Lecture at GHI Pacific Office  
 Speaker: Lauren Stokes (Northwestern University)
- September 15**                      **Science Communication: Changes in the Relationship between Science and Society**  
 Workshop at GHI Pacific Office
- September 18–24**                      **Bucerius Young Scholars Forum Histories of Migration: Transatlantic and Global Perspectives**  
 Seventh Annual Bucerius Young Scholars Forum at the GHI Washington Pacific Office, Berkeley and Sitka, Alaska  
 Conveners: Holly Guise (University of New Mexico), Sören Urbansky, and Nino Vallen (both GHI Washington Pacific Office)

- September 19**                      **DCHDC Meetup: In-Person  
Careers Chat**  
Event at GHI Washington  
Speakers: Suzanne Chase  
(Georgetown University), Purdom  
Lindblad (Maryland Institute of  
Technology in the Humanities),  
Megan Martinsen (Georgetown  
University), Amaobi Otiji (Library of  
Congress), Crystal Sanchez  
(Smithsonian Institution)
- September 27–28**                      **Migrants, Environmental Knowled-  
ge, and Consumer Society**  
Academic and Policy Symposium at  
the GHI Washington Pacific Office  
Conveners: Axel Schäfer (Obama  
Institute for Transnational American  
Studies at Johannes Gutenberg  
University Mainz) and Atiba Pertilla  
(GHI Washington)
- September 27**                      **Selling Wine Country, Hiding Wine  
Work**  
Keynote Lecture at the GHI  
Washington Pacific Office  
Speaker: Kathleen A. Brosnan  
(University of Oklahoma)
- October 2**                              **Coalition in Distress? The Rise of the  
Far Right in Germany and How to  
Contain It**  
Lecture at the GHI Washington  
Pacific Office  
Speaker: Andrea Römmele (Hertie  
School)

- October 19**                      **Occupied Germany & Japan after WWII from Global Cultural History Perspectives**  
Lecture at the GHI Washington Pacific Office  
Speaker: Robert Kramm, Freigeist-Fellow (LMU Munich)
- October 24**                      **Struggling for Sovereignty, Changing Political Alliances: Western and Eastern European Military Assistance for Revolutionary Cuba During the Early Cold War**  
Lecture at the GHI Washington Pacific Office  
Speaker: Albert Manke (University of Göttingen)
- October 27**                      **Fluid Dreamscapes: Lin Hierse in Conversation with Elizabeth Sun and Deniz Göktürk**  
Virtual Event  
Speakers: Lin Hierse, Elizabeth Sun (UC Berkeley), and Deniz Göktürk (UC Berkeley)
- November 2**                      **The Other Half of Germany: New Perspectives and Controversies on East Germany**  
Panel Discussion at GHI Washington  
Speakers: Katja Hoyer (King's College London), Christina Morina (Universität Bielefeld), and Joyce Mushaben (Georgetown University);  
Moderator: Samuel Huneke (George Mason University)

- November 7**                      **Tipping Points for Global Economic and Ecological Transformation**  
6th Bucerius Lecture at the David Brower Center, UC Berkeley  
Speaker: Marcel Fratzscher (German Institute for Economic Research)
- November 13**                      **Minority and Majority as Asymmetrical Concepts: The Perils of Democratic Equality and Fantasies of National Purity**  
Lecture at the GHI Washington Pacific Office  
Speaker: Till van Rahden (Université de Montréal); Moderator: Philipp Lenhard (UC Berkeley)
- December 1**                      **Anti-Globalism, Then and Now**  
37th Annual Lecture at GHI Washington  
Speaker: Tara Zahra (University of Chicago); Comment: Madeleine Herren-Oesch (University of Basel)
- 2024**
- February 23–24**                      **Sixth West Coast Germanists' Workshop: Globalizing German History in Research and Teaching**  
Workshop at University of California, Los Angeles  
Conveners: Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI Washington), Glenn Penny (UCLA), and Isabel Richter (GHI Washington Pacific Office)

**March 14–16**

**Exploring Epistemic Virtues and Vices: Data, Infrastructures, and Episteme between Collaboration and Exploitation**

Sixth Conference on Digital Humanities and Digital History at the Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH)

Conveners: Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History (C2DH), in collaboration with the GHI Washington, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, and the German Institute for Japanese Studies

**April 15–16**

**Music, Knowledge, and Global Migration, ca. 1700–1900**

Symposium at the GHI Washington Pacific Office

Conveners: Tina Frühauf (Columbia University/CUNY Graduate Center), Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), and Francesco Spagnolo (Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life, UC Berkeley)

**May 20–21**

**Fugitive Histories and Migrant Knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean**

Workshop at the University of California, Irvine

Conveners: Kevan Antonio Aguilar (University of California, Irvine), Amy Kerner (GHI Washington Pacific Office), Fabio Santos (GHI Washington Pacific Office), and Chelsea Schields (University of California, Irvine)

**June 28–29**

**Archives in/of Transit; Historical Perspectives from the 1930s to the Present**

Workshop at the University of Southern California

Conveners: Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI Washington), Jane Freeland (Queen Mary, University of London), Wolf Gruner (University of Southern California), Simone Lässig (GHI Washington), Jennifer Rodgers (California Institute of Technology), Christine Schmidt, Toby Simpson (both Wiener Holocaust Library, London), Swen Steinberg (GHI Washington/Queens University), Dan Stone (Royal Holloway, University of London)



## GHI Library

The GHI library concentrates on German history and transatlantic relations, with emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to providing essential literature for scholarly research, the library fulfills an important cultural mission: no other library in the United States offers a similarly condensed inventory of modern German history.

The library houses about 43,000 books, DVDs, CD-ROMs, microfiches, and 220 print journals. In addition, we offer access to almost 20,000 e-books and 1,000 current and historic online journals.

The collection includes books on American history written by German authors as well as historical literature of the institute's past research foci: global history, religious studies, exile and migration studies, environmental history, and economic history. However, the library does not include archival material. While we carefully select print resources to fit with the current work of the institute, our electronic collection is developed in cooperation with our ten sister institutes of the Max Weber Foundation and therefore also contains titles not specifically in our own collection focus.

The GHI library offers free access to scholars as well as the general public. Our reading room is open by appointment. The library does not lend materials, but visitors may consult material from the entire collection in our beautiful reading room, which also offers access to a variety of databases for journal articles, historical newspapers, genealogical research, and bibliographical research.

For the library catalog and a list of our databases and electronic journals, please visit <https://www.ghi-dc.org/library>. Or send an email to [library@ghi-dc.org](mailto:library@ghi-dc.org) for any further questions.

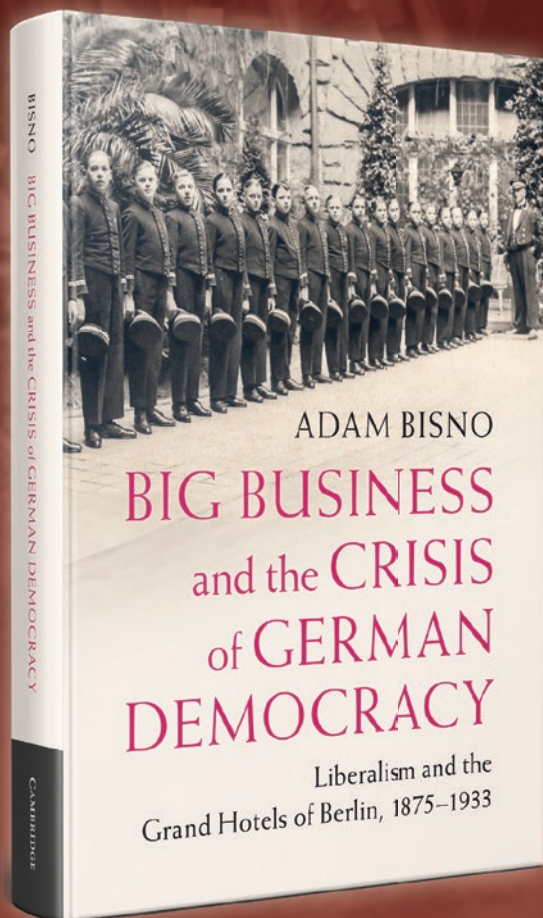
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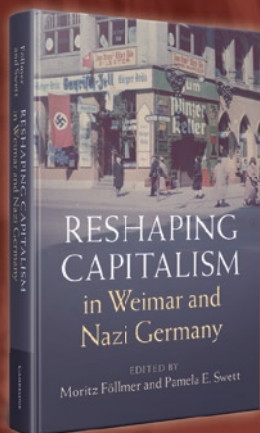
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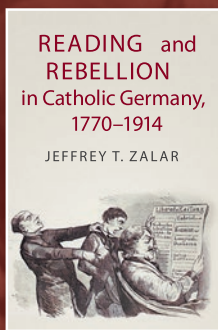
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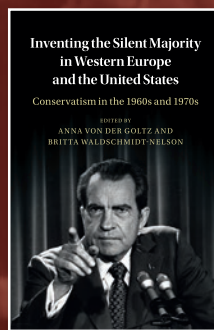
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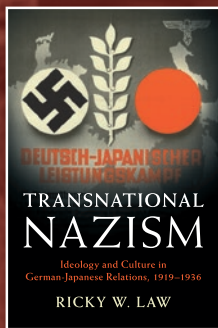
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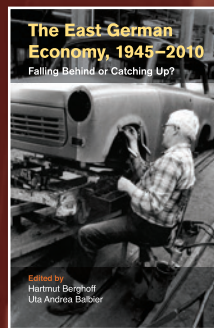
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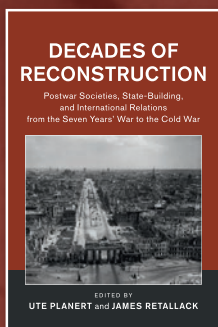
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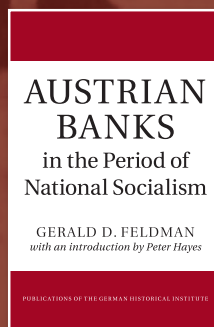
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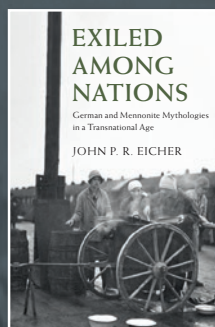
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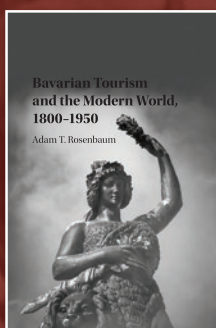
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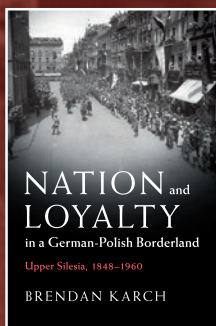
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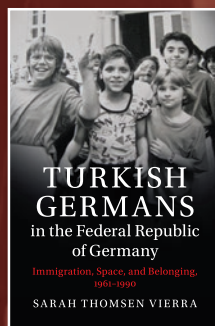
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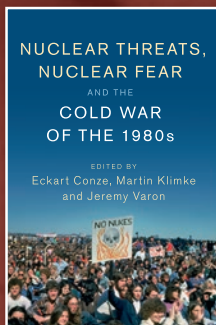
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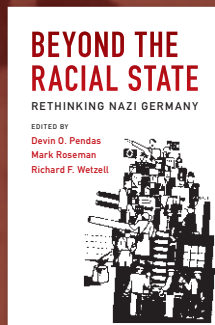
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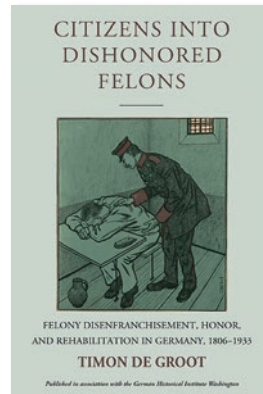
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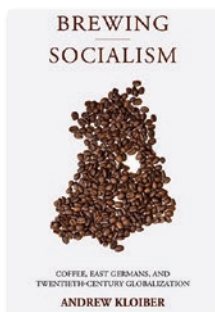
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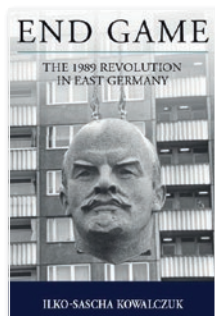


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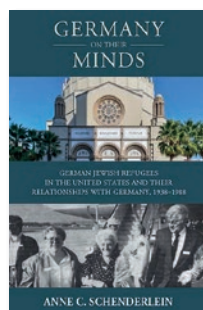
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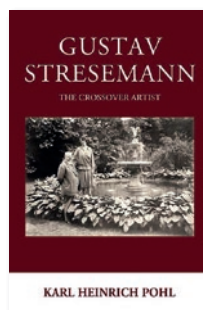
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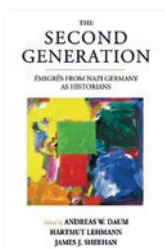
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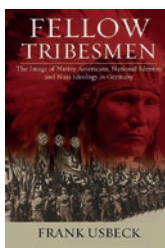
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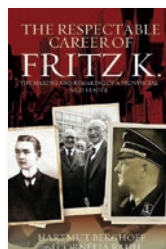
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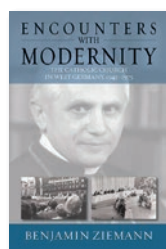
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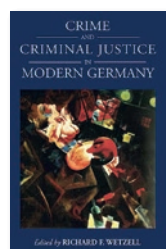
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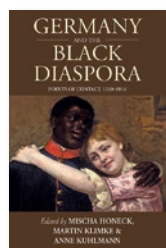
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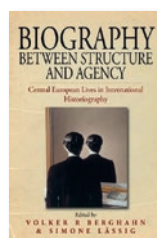
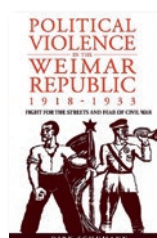
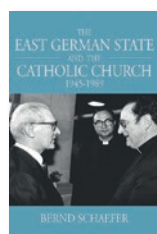
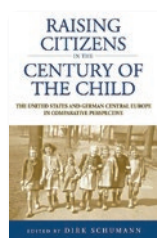
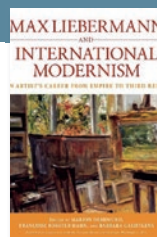
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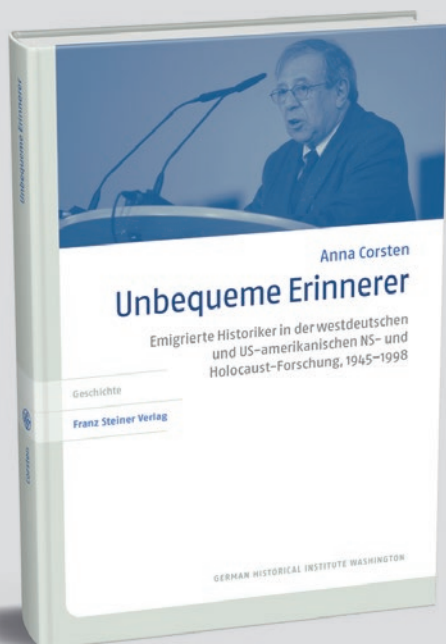
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Anna Corsten is a research associate at the Chair of Modern History/Contemporary History at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. Her research focuses on Nazi and Holocaust studies, the history of knowledge, the history of property, and transatlantic history.



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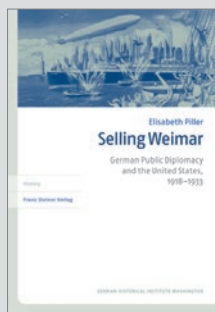
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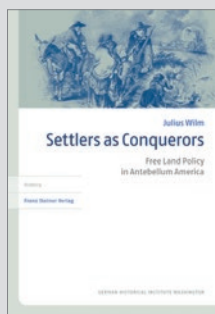
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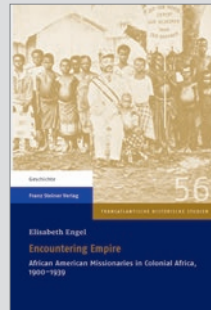
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**Dr. Carolin Liebisch-Gümüş**, Research Fellow

International history and global history (19th-20th centuries), history of modern Europe and Turkey, international organizations and internationalism, mobility/border studies, migration and airport history

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Digital history, financial history, U.S. history, 1865–1945, history of migration, history of masculinity and gender, urban history

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History of the Americas (19th and 20th centuries), transatlantic history, mobility studies, history of knowledge, environmental history, urban history and housing research

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History of college life; history of eugenics; disability history; care history; family history studies, global and transnational history

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## FEATURES

### **New Research on Social Movements in Cold War Germany: A Roundtable**

Tiffany N. Florvil, Craig Griffiths, Samuel Clowes Huneke,  
and Anna von der Goltz in conversation with  
Kerstin Brückweh and Richard F. Wetzell

### **German-Speaking Refugee Historians Researching National Socialism and Their Reception in West Germany**

Anna Corsten

## **FORUM: THE GERMAN TREATMENT OF SOVIET PRISONERS OF WAR DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

### **The Prisoner of War Camps of the Wehrmacht: Key Findings of the *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Volume IV***

Dallas Michelbacher

### **Forced Labor of Soviet Prisoners of War during the Second World War**

Andreas Hilger and Esther Meier

### **The Hell of the Soviet Prisoner of War Camps**

Edward Westermann

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