

Also by Bill Niven

FACING THE NAZI PAST

GERMANS AS VICTIMS (*edited*)

Also by Chloe Paver

REFRACTIONS OF THE THIRD REICH IN GERMAN AND
AUSTRIAN FICTION AND FILM

Memorialization in Germany since 1945

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3.2

Memorializing Persecuted Jews in Dachau and Other West German Concentration Camp Memorial Sites

Harold Marcuse

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Introduction

Even a cursory look at memorials dedicated to the same historical event reveals that they reflect the needs and goals of their makers far more than the events to which they are dedicated. This observation has several important implications. First, it is crucial to look carefully at the individuals and groups who initiate memorial projects, as well as at those who see them through to completion, and perhaps even at those who then use them for commemorative purposes. Second, there is a dialectical relationship between the political and cultural context in which a given memorial is created, and the memorial itself. While all memorials *reflect* the context of their establishment in some ways, most memorials are also designed to *affect* that context. This suggests, third, that it will be revealing to examine all those memorials in a given political entity, such as West Germany, that were established to commemorate a similar event, such as the persecution and murder of Jews in concentration camps. Such an analysis can reveal much about how West German understandings of the Jewish genocide developed over time and what purposes its commemoration was intended to serve. This chapter examines West German memorials to Jews murdered in concentration camps as reflections of evolving understandings of the Holocaust on the one hand, and as instruments to change commemoration on the other. It begins with a survey of the isolated initiatives to preserve memories of Jewish persecution in the first years after the Second World War, then moves to the emergence of West German nationwide practices of commemoration of Jewish life and death in Nazi Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. Examination of the memorials established in former concentration camps, especially in Dachau, which, as the most heavily memorialized site, can serve as a case study for the country as a whole, reveals the crucial roles played by Jewish Germans as compared to foreign Jews as agents of memorialization.

Jewish memorials in Germany's western occupation zones

There were four major Nazi concentration camps in the portion of Hitler's Reich that later became the Federal Republic of Germany: Dachau, Neuengamme,

Flossenbürg, and Belsen. Each of these, except for Belsen, which was technically a 'detention camp' (*Aufenthaltslager*), had from 67 to 188 branch camps, most set up after 1943, and some of which had an average inmate capacity of up to 3000-4000.¹ In all of these camps the largest group among the dead was Jewish; in Belsen and in many of the branch camps, most of which used Jewish slaves to supply labour for war industries, the vast majority of the inmate population was Jewish. For instance, in early September 1938, at least one third of the roughly 6000 inmates in Dachau were Jewish. The camp's last census in April 1945 showed that more than 22,000 (33 per cent) of the 67,665 inmates in the Dachau system were registered as Jewish.² Dachau was also incomparably more lethal for Jewish inmates: of some 700 deaths registered between March 1933 and March 1939, at least 476 (68 per cent) were Jewish.³

Given the preponderance of Jewish victims in these camps, one might expect an emphasis on Jewish commemoration at these sites. However, in accordance with the observation that memorials primarily reflect the goals of those who establish them, that was not initially the case. In the first decade after 1945 few non-Jewish Germans were interested in remembering Jewish victims, and there were relatively few Jews in any part of Germany, with only a handful among them giving thought to leaving a lasting legacy in the land of their tormentors. Aside from a few telling exceptions, it took until the early 1960s before specifically Jewish memorials were erected. By that time information about the exceptional status of Jews as targets of Nazi genocide had become readily available in the West German public sphere.

The most noteworthy of these exceptional early Jewish memorials stands in Bergen-Belsen. When British soldiers entered the camp on 15 April 1945 they found approximately 50,000 people, the vast majority of them Jews, living and dying in conditions that beggar description. Ten thousand corpses were strewn about, and inmates were dying at a rate of thousands each day, so that 13,000 more deaths would be added to the tally in the first weeks after liberation. In spite of this, the first memorial sign erected by the British army made no reference to the Jewish ancestry of the victims:⁴

This is the site of the infamous Belsen concentration camp, liberated by the British on 15th April 1945. 10,000 unburied dead were found here, another 13,000 have since died. All of them victims of the German New Order in Europe and an example of Nazi Kultur.

Because it had the largest number of Jewish survivors, Belsen became the site of the largest Jewish displaced persons (DPs) camp in Germany after 1945, with over 11,000 residents. By 19 May these Jews had been moved to an adjacent former German Army base, renamed Belsen-Höhne. On their initiative an unpretentious memorial was erected in the field of mass graves on the outskirts of the former Belsen detention camp (Figure 15). Dedicated on the first anniversary of liberation in April 1946, the roughly 2 metre tall square column bears the inscription in Hebrew and English:⁵

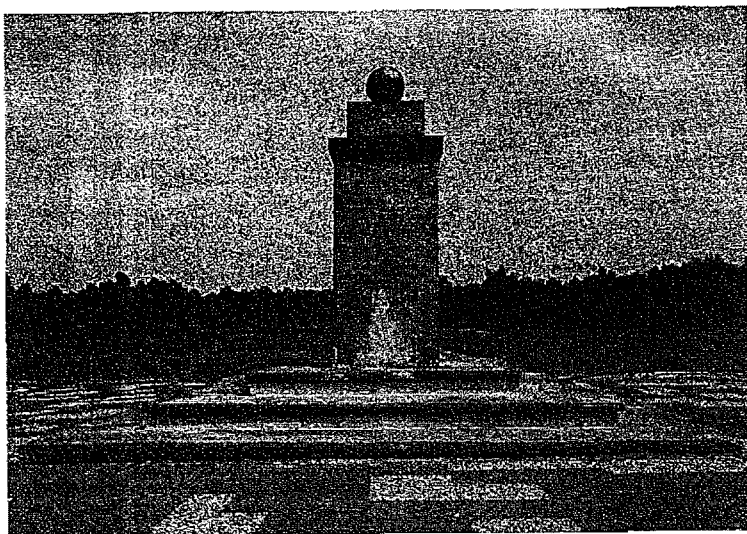


Figure 15 1946 Jewish Memorial in Belsen (photo Harold Marcuse)

Israel and the world shall remember / thirty thousand Jews / exterminated in the concentration camp / of Bergen-Belsen / at the hands of the murderous Nazis EARTH CONCEAL NOT THE BLOOD / SHED ON THEE! First anniversary of Liberation / 15th April 1946 / 14th Nissan 5706 Central Jewish Committee / British Zone.

In this case the term 'Israel' refers to the international community of Jews, and places the memory in the hands of 'the world', ignoring the fact that, given its location deep within Germany, Germans were most likely to be in charge of preserving memories at the site. After the founding of the state of Israel in May 1948, the number of Jews in the Belsen-Höhne DP camp fell dramatically. It closed completely in March 1950.

In Flossenbürg only a coincidental recognition of the Jewishness of its largest victim group appeared in the early memorialization. Thousands of DPs remained at the site for years after the war, but they were primarily Catholic Poles who did not want to return to communist-ruled Poland, not Jews. The main memorial they erected was a Catholic chapel built from the stones of demolished watchtowers. In 1947 a sign was mounted on the crematorium chimney listing the numbers and nationalities of the victims of the camp.⁶ It lists 17 countries plus 'Jews' in descending order by number of inmates, from 26,430 Russians and 17,546 Poles, to 3132 Jews in seventh position, to two Americans (who died liberating the camp). While experts now think that the total number of dead was not that sign's total of 73,296, but closer to 30,000, it is likely that many of the victims included in

various national tallies, especially Poles and Hungarians, had been imprisoned, deported, and killed because they were Jewish.

In Dachau the situation right after the war was more complex, and reflects more accurately the situation in Western Germany as a whole. Simplifying only slightly, we can say that the interplay between two main groups determined the history of the memorialization of Jewish persecution in Dachau, and by extension in all of Western Germany. On the one side was the overwhelmingly non-Jewish German public, which one can divide into two subgroups: one opposed to any sort of memorialization of Nazi crimes, and one at least willing to accept the establishment of commemorative markers. On the other side were surviving Jewish victims, who can in turn be divided into two very different groups: Jewish Germans who, after having experienced varying degrees of degradation and persecution, had emigrated from Germany during the 1930s and 1940, thereby escaping the genocidal juggernaut that was launched in 1941. The other group of Jewish survivors were eastern European Jews who had been swept up in the genocidal dragnet after 1942, but had managed to survive the 'extermination through work' programme and the final death marches long enough to be liberated. Except for a brief interlude in 1949-50, from 1945 until the late 1950s (non-Jewish) Germans shaped commemoration in Dachau. Events right after liberation indicate why Jews did not play a role until much later.

In the first days after Dachau's liberation US military rabbis held special memorial services for surviving Jewish inmates, who, because of threats from anti-Semitic camp survivors, required protection by Allied forces.⁷ In June 1945 the very first memorial proposed for the Dachau camp – probably by local authorities – had equal Christian and Jewish components: two 15 metre tall columns were to be erected at a mass grave near the camp, one crowned by a cross, the other by a Star of David.⁸ This project was abandoned only a few weeks later, however, when it was discovered that the designer had been affiliated to the Nazi party. The only memorial erected in the Dachau camp itself before 1949 was a tall wooden cross on the roll-call square, reportedly set up by non-Jewish Poles who remained in Dachau for the same reasons that their compatriots stayed in Flossenbürg, namely dislike of the new Communist government at home. Descriptions of designs submitted to a memorial competition sponsored by the Bavarian Ministry of Culture for the Dachau camp in 1946 make no mention of any explicitly Jewish symbolism (the models were destroyed in a fire soon afterwards, and the project then forgotten).⁹

The next memorial project in Dachau was initiated by a rare type of Jewish survivor who bridged the two groups mentioned above: Phillip Auerbach, a Jewish German businessman from Hamburg.¹⁰ He was deported to Auschwitz in 1943, but managed to survive until his evacuation to and liberation from Buchenwald in 1945. In September 1946 Auerbach was recruited to Munich to become the first Bavarian Commissioner of 'Racial, Religious, and Political Persecutees'. In 1947 Auerbach played a crucial role in the founding of a national organization for all concentration camp survivors and other victims, namely the Association of the Persecutees of the Nazi-Regime (Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes,

or VVN), and became a key player in the struggle over who should benefit from the liquidation of the assets of the Dachau camp: the Bavarian government, or the survivors of the inmates whose labour had created the assets on the land. In August 1949 Auerbach printed a photograph of a planned commemorative sculpture on an invitation to the annual memorial ceremony at the Dachau crematorium in September, for which he was soliciting donations.

Although Auerbach was himself Jewish and involved in Jewish life in post-war Germany, this Dachau memorial proposal, a statue of two inmates, contained no Jewish symbolism. This is not surprising, given continuing evidence of anti-Semitic attitudes in the post-war years, such as a 'flood of complaints' in spring 1947 because camp survivors were receiving higher rations than the general populace, or a rash of desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in the spring of 1948.¹¹ Two tumultuous chains of events in the summer and autumn of 1949, simultaneous with Auerbach's publication of the design, ensured the rapid realization, by April 1950, of an alternative version of the statue memorial, sponsored by the Bavarian government. Those events make clear that without intervention by international organizations, the situation of Jewish survivors in occupied Germany was not conducive to the creation of memorials recalling the fate of Jews under Nazism.

The first of these noteworthy 1949 events was precipitated when the main Munich newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* printed a rabidly anti-Semitic reader's response to one of the paper's recent editorials.¹² The editorial had been written in support of a statement by US High Commissioner McCloy in a July 1949 Heidelberg speech, that the 'Jewish question' would be 'one of the real touchstones and the test of Germany's progress' towards democracy. The Munich editorial called on Germans to show 'special consideration' for Jews living in Germany. In addition to several positive responses to the editorial, on 9 August 1949 the *Süddeutsche* printed an anti-Semitic diatribe it received under the pseudonym 'Adolf Loyalist'. That same day a spontaneous gathering of about 1000 Jewish DPs began a protest march from the city centre to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung's* offices. When mounted German police arrived to disperse the Jewish protesters with truncheons, the Jews responded with a barrage of paving stones, and burned or smashed several police cars.

Another revealing chain of events set in motion on 9 August 1949 was to have direct consequences for the memorialization of Jewish persecution in Dachau. That day a member of the Dachau VVN chapter wrote to the Dachau county governor that he had seen human bones in a mining pit near a mass grave of Dachau inmates – the one for which the original cross and Star of David columns had been proposed.¹³ Although the Dachau and Bavarian authorities initially succeeded in scotching claims that they had neglected that gravesite after the unsuccessful memorial competition in 1946, a French parliamentary inquiry in November 1949 put the issue back on the front pages. Even though winter was beginning, the site was provisionally relandscaped and a Jewish star on a post, flanked by two menorahs, was dedicated in mid-December.¹⁴ Although a second inaugural event the following April was again accompanied by speeches by the Catholic and Protestant bishops of Bavaria and the State Rabbi, the memorial design unveiled

at that time was utterly devoid of religious symbolism. In fact, few if any of the 175 designs submitted for the memorial competition contained any religious references, even though its call for a monument that symbolized 'the religious and national idea of sacrifice on behalf of peace' could have encompassed Jewish motifs.¹⁵

Probably also in 1950 a small explicitly Jewish memorial was erected near the Dachau crematorium building, marking a place where human ash was buried.¹⁶ Behind two large stone blocks in the ground bearing the trilingual inscription in French, German, and English: 'Grave of Thousands Unknown' stood a cross and a wooden Star of David. Probably some time in the 1960s the wooden marker was replaced by a stone monument composed of a large circular disk inscribed with a Star of David surmounted by a menorah. Because of its location at the very back of the memorial site it is not seen by many visitors, and documentation about its origins has not yet been found, another indication of how low-key Jewish commemoration was kept during that decade.

At the fourth of the major concentration camps on West German soil, Neuengamme, there was essentially no commemoration, certainly no commemorative markers, until French survivors began to lobby for a memorial to French victims in 1951.¹⁷ Since 1947 the camp buildings had been torn down or reused as part of a model correctional facility. In response to the French survivors' initiative, the City of Hamburg commissioned its Office of Cemeteries to design a memorial. In October 1953 a modest, roughly 7.5 metre tall tapered column was dedicated on a site outside of the former prisoners' camp, where the ashes of victims had been strewn. Its minimalist inscription made no reference to Jewishness or any other identifying characteristic of the dead: 'To the Victims / 1938–1945.' This vapid dedication, similar to the non-inauguration of the Dachau-Leiten memorial, was typical of the public silence surrounding all concentration camp victims in early 1950s West Germany, especially Jews. In 1952 there was one exception to this rule, however.

Commemorating Jewish victims, 1952–1959

Within a year of the dedication of the DPs' Jewish memorial in Belsen in April 1946, the British occupiers commissioned a larger memorial, a 20 metre tall obelisk in front of a 40 metre long inscription wall. That monument was not dedicated until November 1952. It bears inscriptions from 14 of the 40 countries whose citizens had died in the Belsen camp, including an inscription in Yiddish and Hebrew, which translates as follows:¹⁸

This monument testifies to the incomparably horrific acts that the German 'Third Reich' committed against the Jewish people in the years 1939 to 1945, when the Nazi terror horribly and cruelly murdered five million of its sons and daughters. The world should never forget the innocently shed blood of these sacred victims that soaks this soil.

The inscription is interesting in that it is again – like its 1946 companion – addressed not to the Germans who visit the site, but rather to ‘the world’. It also uses a figure of five million victims, instead of the six million that became the canonical figure by the late 1950s, after the first research-based monographs about the Holocaust had been written. The dedication ceremony was attended by representatives of nine European countries and the United States, as well as of three international Jewish organizations.¹⁹ The West German government organizers noted explicitly that 65 Jews would be present. The main speeches were given by Nachum Goldmann, the president of the World Jewish Congress, and West German president Theodor Heuss. In contrast to the silence about Jewish victims that was characteristic of the more locally oriented ceremonies in Dachau, at the internationally attended event in Belsen Goldmann emphasized ‘the horrible facts of the extermination of the Jews’. Heuss’s speech also explicitly mentioned the Jewish victims numerous times, and he named ‘Jews’ first when listing the groups of victims.²⁰

However, this internationally oriented memorial and ceremony remained the exception during the 1950s. A delegation of British journalists and Winston Churchill visited Belsen in 1956, only to find it abandoned and neglected.²¹ Two further media events at that time indicate that when the Nazi genocide was presented in the West German media in the 1950s, it was in a form which downplayed or overlooked its focus on Jews. Anne Frank’s diary, a non-seller when first published in Germany in 1950 and again in 1955, did not reach a wide audience until 1957, after a ‘universalized’ theatre version of her story that downplayed her Jewishness was hugely successful on stages across Germany.²² Similarly, the widely screened French concentration camp film *Night and Fog* (1955) makes no mention that the vast majority of victims at Auschwitz and Belsen, two sites featured in the film, were Jewish.²³ The first two major histories of the National Socialist judeocide, translated into German in 1955 and 1956, did not sell well at that time. They were Léon Poliakov and Josef Wulf’s *The Third Reich and the Jews* (French 1951), and Gerald Reitlinger’s *The Final Solution* (English 1953).²⁴

The number of young Germans visiting West German concentration camp memorial sites over the course of the 1950s offers another measure of the changing interest both in the Nazi past in general, and in the German persecution and annihilation of Jews in particular.²⁵ In 1957 a number of ‘pilgrimages’ to the site of Anne Frank’s death in Belsen were organized with 800, 1000, and 500 participants. The following year 3000 attended the main ceremony in April, while in 1959 the number climbed to 10,000 participants. In Dachau the record is patchier, but documents show that the youth organization of the German trade-union association (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund or DGB) began annual commemorations at the memorial site in December 1953 on the fifth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter of Human Rights.²⁶ That year 5000 young Germans attended.

From 1954 to the present, the DGB has always held this commemoration on the 9 November anniversary of Kristallnacht. In 1956 we find the first public newspaper report about the annual event, in the local Dachau edition of the

Süddeutsche Zeitung. In 1957 the ceremony made the pages of the main Munich edition, which reported that attendance had fallen slightly to about 2000. On the twentieth anniversary of Kristallnacht in 1958 the Bavarian and Munich Youth Rings co-sponsored the event, but the press did not report the number of participants. Since so little is known about these events, we do not know for sure whether the speakers mentioned the Jewishness of the victims, but evidence suggests that they did not.

The emergence of explicitly Jewish commemoration in the 1960s

In the early 1960s several events in West Germany underscored that Jews had been the primary victims of Nazi persecution and genocide, precipitating a radical shift in Jewish commemorative practice in West Germany. The first event was a wave of anti-Semitic vandalism that swept across Germany from Christmas 1959 to late January 1960.²⁷ These incidents and a number of subsequent highly publicized events, including the trials of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 and of Auschwitz personnel in Frankfurt in 1964–65, focused international attention on how West Germany was dealing with anti-Semitism and the Holocaust.²⁸ In the midst of this rising awareness the first explicitly Jewish memorials were erected at Dachau, while the other West German concentration camp memorial sites – except for some private gravestones erected at Bergen-Belsen – have remained devoid of specifically Jewish commemorative markers until today. Dachau’s special status again indicates the importance of international attention for commemoration of Jewish victims in West Germany.

The impulse to finally construct a prominent Jewish memorial at Dachau came not from Jewish survivors, but from a Catholic bishop who had been imprisoned along with other notables in a special section of the Dachau camp. Suffragan Bishop Neuhäusler was one of the host organizers of the August 1960 Eucharistic World Congress, which was to be held in Munich. Neuhäusler wanted to hold a commemorative ceremony in Dachau during the congress, and he decided to construct a Catholic memorial chapel to make the site more respectable.²⁹ Backed by a national fund-raising campaign, that chapel was erected in record time, between March and August. Neuhäusler also proposed that Jewish and Protestant memorials be erected on each side of the Catholic one.

The evolution of the Jewish memorial, which was finally dedicated in 1967, illustrates the growing status of explicitly Jewish commemoration in West Germany during the 1960s. In November 1960 Munich Rabbi Blumenthal did not respond enthusiastically to Neuhäusler’s suggestion.³⁰ He answered that the Jewish community would be content with the construction of a ‘modest Star of David’ in the camp. However, the Bavarian Association of Jewish Communities disagreed, and sent a delegate to Yad Vashem in Israel to solicit advice and support. By March 1961 the Bavarian Jewish association had published a call for donations in Germany and abroad, and commissioned a well-known synagogue architect to design the memorial building.

In 1963 a memorial boom began in Dachau, including memorials for Jews. At the liberation ceremony in April 1963, for the first time since the Leiten ceremony in 1950, a representative of a Jewish organization spoke. Also in April 1963 the cornerstone for a Carmelite convent was laid at the camp wall behind the Catholic chapel, and in November at the Leiten gravesite a Catholic chapel sponsored by Italian survivors was dedicated, followed in April 1964 by a memorial for executed Soviet prisoners of war and a monument to the Jewish camp victims buried at the Dachau city cemetery. The Association of Jewish Persecutees and KZ Invalids in Munich commissioned that monument, a five metre tall tower formed from four stone blocks with six-sided faces. The top blocks are engraved with menorahs and Stars of David, the second story is inscribed simply in Hebrew, English, and German: 'Remember the Victims'. This is a rather unremarkable memorial; its establishment at this time testifies to the rising visibility of and willingness to tolerate remembrance of the Jewish Holocaust in the West German public sphere. Finally, also in April 1964, the cornerstone of the Jewish memorial building next to the Catholic chapel was laid.³¹

The architecture of this Jewish memorial, which was explicitly not a synagogue, since houses of God cannot be erected in places of death, is highly symbolic. A ramp descends 1.8 metres – the depth of a grave – into the open side of a parabolic perimeter wall (Figure 16). The rough-hewn interior walls carry 70 candleholders representing the 70 elders of Moses. The dark underground room might evoke the lightless gas chambers, but it was intended to symbolize the underground hiding places many Jews used to escape Nazi manhunts. At the apex of the parabola a vertical strip of marble extends through the roof, where light streams in, ending outside in a seven-armed menorah. The marble strip was hewn at Peki'in

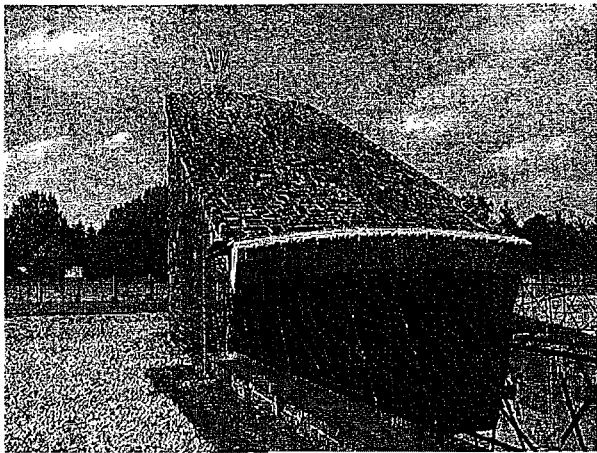


Figure 16 1967 Jewish Memorial in Dachau (photo Harold Marcuse)

in Israel, a place where at least one Jew is supposed to have lived at all times in history, thus symbolizing the continuity of Judaism and its connection with Israel. The column of light entering from the hole in the roof symbolizes hope, salvation, and liberation. This contrasts with the extreme hopelessness of the vast majority of Jews during the Holocaust. The Jewish memorial in Dachau thus emphasizes aspects relevant to contemporary Jewish identity, but is not necessarily representative of the historical events it commemorates.

Once the outer shell of the building was complete in May 1965, a discussion about the inscription began. The architect suggested a quote from Psalm 9:21 as the primary text above the entrance: 'Give them a sign of warning, eternal one! The peoples should learn that they are mortals'. A prominent Jewish German emigré survivor, however, disagreed because the ninth psalm was a 'psalm of vengeance', and conveyed anti-German sentiments. Ultimately an additional inscription was selected for the interior wall:

Monument of warning to commemorate the Jewish martyrs who died in the years of the National Socialist rule of terror 1933-1945. Their death is a warning and obligation for us. Erected by the Regional Association of Israelite Cultural Communities in Bavaria in the year 1966/5727.

In contrast to the Belsen monument of 1952, which referred to the murdered Jews as 'sacred victims', this inscription elevates them to the status of 'martyrs', from whose death obligations – presumably beyond mere remembrance – arise for the present. The émigré's objection to the initial inscription reveals that in the 1960s Jewish Germans were still worried about triggering negative feelings among other Germans.

By the time the memorial was finally dedicated on 7 May 1967, the Israeli ambassador was willing to spell out openly what such an obligation might be. Referring to the tensions between Israel and Egypt just a month before the 1967 Six Day War began, he underscored the connection between commemoration and present concerns in the conclusion to his speech: 'Many monuments to this memory have been erected, but the forests and fields of Israel are a living monument for us. Now we are able to defend ourselves without outside help because we have become independent!' His words may also have been a challenge to contemporary anti-Semitism in Germany, since a few days earlier a Jewish monument at Leiten had been desecrated, and neo-Nazi parties were making inroads in regional elections in Germany.

A final indicator of the increasing acceptance in the German public sphere of commemoration of the Jewish Holocaust in the 1960s are changes to the conception of the main museum exhibition in the Dachau memorial site – the most comprehensive West German display about the Nazi period prior to the Berlin Reichstag and Topography of Terror exhibitions of the 1980s. In contrast to the museum that camp survivors provisionally installed in the crematorium building in 1960, the plan for a much-expanded exhibition in the former camp service building, presented to the public in June 1963, included an entire section about

'The Final Solution'.³² Until the expansions of the museums at Belsen, Flossenbürg, and Neuengamme in and after the 1990s, this was the only permanent museum exhibition in West Germany devoted explicitly to the Nazi judeocide.

Routinization of commemoration in the 1970s and 1980s

Although no further Jewish memorials were erected in Dachau, a few prominent events in the 1970s and 1980s document the increasingly visible role that Jewish commemoration played at the Dachau site. Prior to the opening of the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, the West German government organized a special commemorative ceremony for international visitors at Dachau on 25 August.³³ Israel, which had opposed having West Germany host the Games, also planned a special event for its athletes, on 1 September, the anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Poland. Perhaps because they were to go to Dachau just a week later, only five of 28 Israeli athletes attended the German event. On 5 September, just as German newspapers were reporting that Israeli newspapers were critical of the Israeli athletes for their sparse attendance, eight heavily armed Palestinian terrorists broke into the quarters of the Israeli athletes. Two Israelis were murdered on the spot, and nine taken hostage. After dramatic negotiations the remaining nine died in a failed rescue attempt. In addition to indicating that Jewish commemoration in Dachau was now widely accepted as part of West German national commemorative activities, this incident also reveals how charged the politics of Jewish commemoration still were in West Germany in the 1970s.

At the end of the 1970s another national event triggered a huge upsurge in the visitor numbers in Dachau. When the 1978 US television mini-series *Holocaust* was broadcast on West German national television in April 1979, the response from viewers was unprecedented.³⁴ The annual number of visitors, especially young German visitors, to the Dachau memorial site increased by 55 per cent in 1979, on their way to a plateau of just under 1 million during the 1980s. During the 1970s a Jewish ceremony at the 1967 Jewish memorial building became a regular event immediately preceding the annual liberation commemoration in early May. Hosted by the Bavarian Association of Jewish Communities, it is also attended by non-Jewish notables.

This survey of memorials to Jewish persecution in Nazi concentration camps in West Germany shows how isolated early commemorations initiated primarily by non-German Jews in the 1940s and early 1950s gradually gave way to institutionalized commemorations by indigenous German Jews with non-Jewish German participation in the 1960s. At sites of former camps other than Dachau, where no significant memorial infrastructure had been created in that decade, Jewish commemoration has remained very low-key, rare, or non-existent. The international commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War in 1985 underscores this point. After Jews in the United States, in particular, protested against the West German government's plan to invite US president Reagan to visit only a military cemetery, a visit to a concentration camp memorial site was added to the itinerary. Dachau was selected first, but when top officials determined that

the memorial infrastructure there was too 'grisly' for the reconciliatory purpose of the commemoration, the bland Belsen memorial site was chosen instead.³⁵ In this case, Dachau represented a more concrete and detailed understanding of the Holocaust, which was, however, deemed unsuitable for the commemorative purpose at hand, to promote West German-US relations. A less affecting site was more suitable for the politicians' purposes. Shortly thereafter, in 1987, a West German initiative that ultimately produced the largest single memorial in the world 'for the murdered Jews of Europe' began. The vigorous debates accompanying its development until its dedication in 2005 indicate how Jewish commemoration in Germany moved from relative isolation at concentration camp memorial sites to the centre of the national capital in Berlin.³⁶

Notes

1. Data compiled from M. Weinmann and International Tracing Service (eds), *Das nationalsozialistische Lagersystem*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), p. 483, pp. 492–4, pp. 554–6, and pp. 559–61.
2. P. Berben, *Dachau, 1933–1945: The Official History* (London, 1975), p. 13 and p. 219.
3. S. Zámečník, *Das war Dachau* (Frankfurt am Main, 2007), pp. 106–7, and G. Kimmel, 'Das Konzentrationslager Dachau', in M. Broszat (ed.), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* (Munich, 1977), vol. 2, pp. 349–413, here p. 372 and p. 385.
4. The sign was erected prior to the 1946 publication of a photograph in D. Sington, *Belsen Uncovered* (London, 1946).
5. For details of the monument's creation, see H. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 264 with references on p. 512, note 10.
6. The sign is depicted in P. Heigl, *Konzentrationslager Flossenbürg in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Regensburg, 1989), p. 88.
7. See Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 263–4, and A. Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame: American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944–1948* (Detroit, 1992), pp. 38–9.
8. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 189–90.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 192.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 447, note 29 and pp. 134–41; also G. Fürmetz, 'Die Auerbach-Korrespondenz im Bayerischen Hauptstaatsarchiv', *Zeitenblicke* 3:2 (2004), <http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2004/02/fuermetz/index.html> (accessed 21 November 2008).
11. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 265, citing the report answering a July 1948 Bavarian parliamentary inquiry.
12. On this and the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 143–4.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 142–50, and H. Marcuse, 'Die vernachlässigten Massengräber: Der Skandal um dem Leitenberg, 1949–50', *Dachauer Hefte* 19 (2003), 3–23.
14. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, fig. 36.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–7 and figs 33–5.
16. See D. Hoffmann (ed.), *Das Gedächtnis der Dinge. KZ-Relikte und KZ-Denkmäler, 1945–1995* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1997), p. 66.
17. U. Wrocklage, 'Neuengamme', in Hoffmann (ed.), *Das Gedächtnis der Dinge*, pp. 175–205, esp. pp. 186–90.
18. German translations of the inscriptions can be found at http://www.bergenbelsen.de/pdf/zurgeschichte_2008-10-07.pdf (accessed 24 October 2008), 8. A photograph can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/wordridden/1814038360/in/photostream> (accessed 31 October 2008).

19. J. Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 317–26.
20. A translation of Heuss's speech is printed in R. Stackelberg and S. A. Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook* (London, 2002), pp. 401–2.
21. See Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 201.
22. See A. Rosenfeld, 'Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank', in P. Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies* (Evanston, IL, 1991), pp. 243–78, and H. Loewy, 'Saving the Child: The "Universalisation" of Anne Frank', <http://www.cine-holocaust.de/mat/fbw001473emat.html> (accessed 14 November 2008).
23. See R. Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard by Alain Resnais: On the Making, Reception and Functions of a Major Documentary Film* (Aarhus, 1987) and E. van der Knaap, *Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of Night and Fog* (New York, 2006).
24. L. Poliakov and J. Wulf, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden* (Berlin, 1955); based on Poliakov's *Bréviaire de Haine: La Ille Reich et les Juifs* (Paris, 1951). It was published in English as *Harvest of Hate* in 1954. On the small readership in the 1950s, see H. Broder, *Erbarmen mit den Deutschen* (Hamburg, 1993), p. 75. G. Reitlinger, *Die Endlösung. Hitlers Versuch der Ausrottung der Juden Europas, 1939–1945* (West Berlin, 1956).
25. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 201.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 203–4.
27. See W. Bergmann, *Antisemitismus in öffentlichen Konflikten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1997), pp. 235–50.
28. On these and other contemporary events see Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 212–14.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 230–1 and pp. 266–8.
30. For this and the following, see *ibid.*, pp. 266–8.
31. The construction of a modest 'document house' in Belsen, which opened in 1966, should be mentioned in this context. A large gathering of Jewish survivors marked the 1965 anniversary of liberation; see: S. Bloch and World Federation of Bergen-Belsen Associations, *Umikum un Oyfikum. Holocaust and Rebirth, Bergen-Belsen, 1945–1965* (New York, 1965).
32. B. Distel and R. Jakusch (eds), *Concentration Camp Dachau, 1933–1945* (Brussels, 1978), pp. 173–89.
33. Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 271–2.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 343–7, pp. 350–3 and fig. 73.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 359–64.
36. The debates are documented in U. Heimrod et al. (eds), *Der Denkmalstreit – Das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das 'Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas'. Eine Dokumentation* (Bodenheim, 1999).

3.3

Remembering Nazi Anti-Semitism in the GDR

Bill Niven

Introduction

In his book *Divided Memory*, the American historian Jeffrey Herf argued that, while public memory of the Holocaust and sympathy for the concerns of Jewish survivors found a home in West Germany, in East Germany this was not the case.¹ Herf's book portrays the anti-Semitic purges in the GDR of the 1950s, the relegation of Jewish survivors in East Germany to the status of second-class victims, and the GDR's hostility towards Israel – which it regarded as an imperialist and capitalist country, and to which it flatly refused to pay restitution. Herf also describes the SED's shameless use of the Holocaust as an instrument in the Cold War against West Germany, some of whose official representatives became the subject of SED smear campaigns based on their roles or alleged roles during the Third Reich. According to Herf, 'while some East German novelists and filmmakers addressed anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, these issues remained on the margins of East Germany's official anti-fascist political culture.'² Herf sees evidence that marginalization, indeed even exclusion of reference to Jews was characteristic of commemorative practices in the GDR generally, and particularly in the opening ceremonies of the Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen memorial sites: 'solidarity with the Jews had no part in these ceremonies of remembrance', which foregrounded rather antifascist resistance.³ Claudia Koonz is equally damning in her assessment of the GDR's museum and memorial landscape at Buchenwald, which, focused as it was on the effects of 'international fascist capitalism', left no room for a memory of the Holocaust.⁴ Moreover, while Thomas Fox takes issue with the claim that there was no place for the Holocaust at GDR memorial sites, his study of representation of the Holocaust in the GDR nevertheless largely supports Herf's 'marginalization' thesis.⁵

There can be little doubt that the Holocaust was not central to East Germany's understanding of the Nazi past. In the GDR, the official view was that anti-Semitism was a means of distracting the masses while the Nazis, representing capitalist interests, set about dismantling the trade unions and the parties of the working class. The genocide of the Jews was interpreted as a by-product of rampant profiteering. Nazism, then, was about class conflict and greed, not about