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ABSTRACT

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, Europe has experienced an increased interest in the Holocaust. After more than half a century, several countries have confronted the more neglected aspects of their Second World War history, publicly admitting their cooperation with the Nazi regime and their participation in the deportation of Jews. How can we explain this change? Is there a relationship between the growing interest in the Holocaust and a growing need for a shared history and some shared European values? Does the Holocaust represent a universal lesson that unites the member states around the imperative: Never Again? This paper will offer some explanations for how and why interest in the Holocaust developed in Europe after 1989. I will discuss whether there is a relationship between the legacies of the Holocaust and the need for a European identity. And I will point to some general patterns in the way the Holocaust has been dealt with, based on a phase model that I have developed.

INTRODUCTION

Before I begin, I would like to thank Deborah Dwork, Mary Jane Rein and Tanya Macaulay for making this, my public lecture as Visiting Professor at the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies possible. When I came here in April 2006 for my first visit, it was to set up the cooperation between the Strassler Center and the DIIS. But my immediate thought was that I wanted to return to this place – I wanted to come back, and not just for a short visit. There is a certain welcoming atmosphere at the Strassler Center, which makes it a special place – and a place that draws one back.

Today, after almost 3 months as Visiting Professor, my original impression not only remains, but has become more powerful and profound. The Strassler Center is a uniquely warm place within a field of study defined by the opposite – cruelty and ignorance. I think this unique welcoming atmosphere defines the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. And rightly so. You cannot survive within this field of study without a certain amount of humour, and without a certain amount of human kindness. The people at the Center certainly have both, humour and humanity. I am grateful to Howard Kulin and the Kulin Fund for giving me this opportunity to come to Clark and to teach and do research at the Center.

Let me turn to the topic of my talk, the legacy of the Holocaust and European identity after 1989. Embarking on such a topic is not without risk. How could the Holocaust – the killing of European Jewry during Second World War – possibly have anything to do with European identity? Am I indicating that European identity is related to an unprecedented, unimaginable, indeed, even as genocide scholars suggest, paradigmatic genocide? And why after 1989?

I am, in fact, proposing this provocative thesis. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the Holocaust has come to play an increasingly important role in Europe as a shared historical experience unifying the member countries around this specific crime. We can see this not only in the many official apologies that European heads of states offered up during the 1990s, apologies like those of the French President Jacques Chirac and the Dutch Queen Beatrix in 1995 or that of the Polish President in 2001.

Even Denmark, with its well-known rescue of 7,000 Jews in October 1943, apologized officially in August 2005 for having denied 21 Jewish refugees entry, sending them back to an uncertain fate in Germany.

But also the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust, and the Stockholm Declaration signed by more than 40 governments in January 2000, are evidence of a general acknowledgement in Europe of the Holocaust as a specific historical crime with a crucial place in Europe's public memory. As it is today, most European countries have adopted 27 of January as their annual day of remembrance honouring Holocaust victims and their families.

Trying to understand this intimate relationship between coming to terms with the Holocaust and the development of a common European identity, we need to look back at what happened in Europe during the 1990s, after the breakdown of communism.

"This was the third time I had been confronted with the *point zero* of history", writes Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulić, *They wouldn't hurt a Fly* (2005).

"First time it had happened with my father's generation after the Second World War, that

is, after the communist revolution. All history before then was rewritten. The second time was after the collapse of communism, when we had to forget about communism and begin again (and start rewriting history again) from the year 1990. And the third time is now, the present, following the end of the last war." (Drakulić 2005)

Drakulić is referring to the civil wars in Ex-Yugoslavia that broke out in Sarajevo in 1995. What happened in the former Yugoslavia after the collapse of communism came as a shock to post-1989 Europe. A Europe full of hope and dreams for a new beginning. And new questions arose:

What went wrong? How could Europe passively look on while their Serbian neighbours slaughtered 8,000 Muslims? Had Europe not learned from the past? Was Europe about to repeat the same kind of madness – the killing of innocent civilians on a massive scale – as happened during the Second World War? Was ethnic nationalism coming back? Or rather, had ethnic nationalism ever really disappeared?

The shock not only led to a debate about Europe's unconfronted past, but contributed to an increased interest both within the public, and among politicians, in the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War. And some countries like Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands established new research centers and public authorities, with a focus on the Holocaust and other genocides.

In Europe, the establishment of a new academic field, genocide studies, following the wars in the Balkans, was from the beginning closely linked with studies of the Holocaust. Today, European researchers refer to the Holocaust as the *paradigmatic genocide* (Karlsson & Gerner 2005).

The new interest in studying the Holocaust was intimately linked to an emerging political culture, based on international law and human rights. The lessons of the Holocaust were to be taught and remembered. Although we cannot neglect the national differences in each European country, stemming from different national experiences during the Second World War, we can understand that what happened in Ex-Yugoslavia during the 1990s was nevertheless the beginning of a Europeanization of the Holocaust, both as history and as a moral guidepost.

Within such a process, it is reasonable to ask in what way European societies have recognized and dealt with, in the words of Dutch researcher Alfred Pijpers, their "Holocaust guilt" (Pijpers 2006). What are the mechanisms? Who are the agents, bringing justice to the murdered Jews? What is the relationship between governments, the work of civil society organisations, and the changing social and political context in which the post-war trials took place?

Looking at this process more closely, we can observe a more intimate relationship between the national narratives in Western Europe and global human rights standards. During the past two decades, these standards have become increasingly influential in international politics, as described by, among others, Ariel Colonomos and Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznaider (Colonomos 2008; Barkan 2000; Bartov et al. 2002; Levy & Sznaider 2006).

The increased influence of human rights in international politics and the growing interest for a revision of Second World War-history caused European nation-states to confront their own human rights abuses, their own crimes of the past, their own dark sides. We have to understand this relationship between an increased impact of human rights thinking in international politics, and the revision of the history of Second World War. National

narratives were being rewritten by a new generation, posing a series of new questions.

History was to be reinterpreted according to a new moral standard, and this, for the generation of 1989, was human rights. Each country had to confront its past conduct, providing a clean historical record and, in this way, proving itself worthy of being a member of the European Union, and of working for the expansion of human rights in other parts of the world.

Following the collapse of communism, the need for some shared values within the EU became even more prevalent, especially after the integration of new member countries from Eastern Europe. The shared values included tolerance, diversity, and respect for human dignity, as stated in the preamble to the draft constitution of Europe, providing the EU with an identity based on human rights and the rule of law.

NATIONAL NARRATIVES AND GLOBAL MEMORY

To prove my thesis that there is a relation between the legacy of the Holocaust and European identity after 1989, I have developed a chronology of Holocaust remembrance – how the Holocaust was dealt with, or not dealt with, during the post-war years – and have related it to contemporary political developments.

This chronology shows the development from a lack of interest in the Holocaust during the first post-war decades to the use of the Holocaust as a moral lesson, combining the history of the Holocaust with shared values and human rights.

As such, one can say that the growing interest in the Holocaust and the incorporation of the Holocaust within national historiography is led by an increased focus on international human rights. A development that Nathan Sznaider and Daniel Levy also point to in their book *The Holocaust and Global Memory*.

To a certain extent, we can also observe how these global human rights standards have actually challenged the national narratives, and perhaps stimulated a change in the ways national history is being understood and interpreted, which leads us to the interesting question:

To what extent is the right of the sovereign state to interpret its own history challenged by global norms?

By examining the ways the Holocaust has been dealt with in post-war Europe, we can distinguish some general dynamics of how societies have dealt with their National Socialist past.

We can also describe how globalization affects the way history is being interpreted. And, we can discuss whether this globalization of history can stimulate a change in national identities.

Does the Holocaust, as both paradigm and moral marker, stimulate a denationalization – perhaps even an Europeanization – of the past in which individualized religious and cultural identities replace national identities? Or, should we turn the question around and ask instead: Is the crucial role of the Holocaust in European public memory in fact a reflection of a process in which European nation-states become increasingly less national?

Going deeper into the subject of tonight's talk, I want to point out that not only has the Holocaust been incorporated into European public memory as a specific crime. But, research into Holocaust memory has increased considerably during the past decade. A recently completed project at Lund University, "The Holocaust and European historical

cultures", describes, through a series of case studies, how the history of the Holocaust has been used in several European countries for educational, political, and societal purposes (Karlsson & Zander 2003, 2004, 2006).

Among other results, this project shows that for some countries, such as Sweden, the Holocaust serves as a moral legacy to educate younger generations and teach them tolerance and non-discrimination. A tendency repeated in Denmark, Norway, France, the UK, and the Netherlands (Mennecke & Brudholm 2004).

For other countries, like Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the demands from the European Union to confront and remember the Holocaust, has been experienced as a dictate coming from above (Sniegon 2008), and has now resulted in a request for a similar focus within the European Union on the crimes of communism. Thus, this research project has demonstrated the extent to which history can serve a society and be used for different purposes.

Another aspect that has unfolded during these years is how the prosecution of crimes committed during the Second World War can affect a society, also in a longer perspective, and how it can, in some cases, stimulate a debate about what was previously neglected by the public. In this regard I note the work of Devin O. Pendas in *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965* (Pendas 2006), and British historian Tony Judt in *Post-War* (Judt 2005). Even though one can question whether trials have a moral impact on a society, they often do influence the public discourse, as shown by Joan B. Wolf in *Harnessing the Holocaust. The Politics of Memory in France* (Wolf 2004).

Research, therefore, into the dynamics of post-war trials – how they operate in different societies, and the relationship between the trials and the public – can provide a more profound understanding of the relationship between law and history. It can also leave us with a clearer perspective of the agents seeking justice on behalf of the victims, people such as Simon Wiesenthal and Serge Klarsfeld, and what role these advocates have played. Why did some societies avoid bringing Nazi war criminals to justice? And why did others not? What can we say, more generally, about the way a society uses legal instruments to confront atrocities of the past? To what extent does the law stimulate a reevaluation of history, perhaps even a revision? Is there a general pattern that we can apply to all societies?

How societies remember the past, and also how the history of the Second World War is being written and rewritten, has become a field of study that has expanded both in Europe and in the USA during the past one or two decades (Assmann 2007 & 2008; Connerton 1989; Herf 1997; Kushner 1994; Rousso 1991; Welzer 2002; Warring 2002). Based on French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, Peter Novick has described how the Holocaust was integrated into American collective memory (Novick 1999). Also Jeffrey Herf uses Halbwachs to discuss the relationship between collective memory and historical responsibility in Germany. The field now includes studies on *lieux de mémoire* – sites of remembrance – and on politics of remembrance (Lebow 2006; Kroh 2008; Young 1993).

However, few studies consider the influence of globalization and how global moral standards help develop what Sznaider and Levy term 'cosmopolitan memory'. Through examining the ways in which German, Israeli and American societies have remembered the Holocaust, Sznaider and Levy show, how ethnic-group politics, coupled with popular cul-

ture, have been strong enough to force the introduction of an alternative remembrance of the Holocaust. As such, the transition from first to second modernity has been accompanied by a new cultural understanding of the Holocaust – and an understanding of the Holocaust that includes also a new set of values.

Examining how European societies started to remember the Holocaust, and what influence global media and cultural representations had on this process, can help us to understand why the Holocaust, during the past two decades, has gained an increased attention. Such an examination can also lead us to a better understanding of the relationship between the breakdown of communism, the increasing role of international human rights standards in politics, and the Holocaust as a global symbolic reference.

THE PHASE MODEL

For the general overview, I have found it necessary to divide the ways the Holocaust has been dealt with, or not dealt with, into four chronological phases. The phases are defined by the international development, mainly in the United States, Israel, Germany, and France, and what generally characterises these phases.

My phase model is inspired partly by Tony Judt's *Postwar*, partly by the work of German memory scholar, Aleida Assmann, both of whom have lately worked on Holocaust-memory. I am grateful to both for their inspirational works and discussions.

1.	1945-1949	Confrontation
2.	1950s	Interpretation
3.	1960s-1990s	Justice
4.	1990s-	Remembrance

The four decades of Soviet influence, however, add additional layers of complexity leading to important differences between East and West European states, but generally we can speak of four phases. Each is defined by social, political and cultural developments, beginning in the immediate post-war days, with the direct confrontation of the public in the West to the crimes of the Nazis.

Here, the public in Germany, in the UK, and in the liberated countries were confronted with the horrors that had taken place in the camps. The confrontation was immediate and short-lived, and was followed by silence. Even if the world became aware, the true impact came not until two decades later and at a time when the affected countries were better prepared.

When the silence replaced confrontation, and Europe was busy recovering economically from the war, artists and writers started to articulate what otherwise seemed too monstrous to describe.

It was during the silent 1950s that some of the first artistic interpretation of the Holocaust emerged, mainly by Jewish-American *émigré* and refugee artists who, themselves, had experienced what took place in Nazi Germany. Already, the Holocaust had taken on a symbolic value (Liljefors 2002; Banke 2005).

Most scholars now agree that the breakthrough for global Holocaust awareness came with the transmission of the popular television series, *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss*, in 1978 and 1979 (Zander 2003; Judt 2005; Karlsson & Zander 2003).

But *Holocaust*, and its popular success, would not have been possible without the national trials that took place in Germany and elsewhere in Europe from the late 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, and the concurrent publication of important scholarly

works, documenting the Holocaust as a crime in and of itself.

Thus, the third phase is characterised by documentation and, to some extent, the pursuit of justice. It is during this third phase that the Holocaust is regarded as a deliberate crime, a genocide, and the dimensions of the anti-Jewish policy of the Nazis are introduced to the public by a new generation of scholars who based their works on archival research (Raul Hilberg 1963; Lucy Davidowitz 1975; Saul Friedländer 1966).

It is important to emphasize this interdependent relationship between historical research, the trials in Germany and later in France, and the continuous striving for justice on behalf of the Jewish people.

The discussion about what trials can mean, not only for different societies, but also for the understanding of history, was introduced by Hannah Arendt when she questioned the Eichmann trial's legitimacy (Arendt 1963). Arendt's reflection gave rise to a still ongoing discussion among philosophers and lawyers, but also historians, about to what extent trials can be used for writing history.

Every court operates – from a historian's point of view – with a limited vision of the past. The court can only judge the past according to the evidence available to it. Thus, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg is a reflection of the prosecuting countries' interpretation of the Second World War at that time – an interpretation that has since been revised by historians (Marrus 2002; Paxton 2001; Finkielkraut 1989/1992).

The fourth phase is characterised by an increased activity of remembrance, and was clearly dependent on the historical documentation, the trials, and the quest for justice for the murdered Jews.

I am well aware of the risk of oversimplification that is inherent in creating such a chronological model of the phases of how the Holocaust was dealt with, and that some of the phases are overlapping. Nevertheless, this model provides a structure that can help us to identify more general patterns and dynamics, and is useful for an overall analysis of how the past operates in a society and through which agents.

Through such a chronological phase model, actors and agents become visible, and cases are more easily compared at a concrete level. The model thus suggests a classical sociological actor perspective of history that focuses on individual agents of change, groups and representatives operating in a specific social and political situation.

However, to study how the past operates in a society, we cannot simply observe and describe. We have to add theories. Within memory studies, different concepts and theories have been suggested, like Halbwalchs' 'collective memory', 'historical culture' introduced by Paul Connerton, and 'historical consciousness' used by, among others, the Danish historian Bernard Eric Jensen.

However, the concept of 'collective memory' can be criticized for being an organic metaphor, not suitable for modern societies, as suggested by memory scholar Aleida Assmann (Connerton 1989; Jensen 1994; Assmann 2007 & 2008). Instead, we need to look at theories of globalisation and social change.

The relation between globalisation, social change, and the development of new kinds of identity with new historical orientations can be described through theories of nation-building, as developed originally by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith, and theories of 'de-nationalisations', as described by Georg Delanty and Bryan S. Turner (Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983; Smith 1999 & 2000).

With globalisation a new kind of citizenship, based less on national identities, has arisen, leaving room for other forms of identity making (Turner 2001; Delanty 2000). In this sense, the global human rights standards challenge not only the sovereign right of the nation state to interpret its own past, but also national identity, based, as it is, on an organic perception of history, on national 'collective memory'.

So, in conclusion, why is this important? Why is it relevant to describe how the Holocaust was first neglected, then later dealt with, and, finally, acknowledged and for which an apology was made? Why point to a relationship between the Holocaust and the development of European identity?

First of all, let me turn back to my initial reflections on the need for some shared values in an old Europe being reunited with the East. The Holocaust has come to represent these shared values. However strange it may sound, there is a general agreement within Europe that the Holocaust represents a unique historical lesson, and that the shared European values stem from this lesson.

Second, as was also indicated at the beginning, the Holocaust as a specific field of study stimulates a certain degree of de-nationalisation of national narratives, maybe even a Europeanisation, leaving room for more individualised religious and ethnic narratives. As such, the increased interest for the Holocaust in Europe during the past two decades is also a sign of fundamental changes taking place during these years in many European societies. We can see this in the case of France, where the French Jewish community during the past two-three decades has made an effort to integrate the *Shoah* into French public memory.

And finally, the history of how the Holocaust has been dealt with in post-war Europe, and also how the Holocaust was integrated into European public memory, has become an example, perhaps even a model, for how past atrocities, in general, can be addressed, recognised, and maybe even apologised for officially, showing other victims the way to acknowledgement and, to a certain extent, justice.

Thank you for your attention

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