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EAC Occasional Paper No. 7

**Heritage Reinvents Europe**



# Heritage Reinvents Europe

Proceedings of the Internationale Conference  
Ename, Belgium, 17–19 March 2011

Edited by Dirk Callebaut, Jan Mařík and Jana Maříková-Kubková

EAC Occasional Paper No. 7

## Heritage Reinvents Europe

Edited by Dirk Callebaut, Jan Mařík and Jana Maříková-Kubková

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The Provincial Heritage Centre in the archaeological park of Ename (Belgium), where the local past and the future Europe meet.

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## Europe's Holocaust dissonances in East and West

*Rob van der Laarse*

**Abstract:** From the Second World War onwards European political integration is based on the assumption of a common cultural heritage and the memory of the Holocaust. Yet, does such a mutual heritage and collective memory really exist? Notwithstanding the common roots of European culture, Europe's nations share most of all a history of war and conflict. Nonetheless, the devastating horrors of two World Wars have for the last six decades stimulated a unique process of unification. Millions of fallen soldiers, the mass slaughter of European civilians, and the destruction of the Jews have determined, by an act of negation, Europe's postwar humanist identity. Politics of memory and forgetting play a crucial role in this process. Yet, I will argue that after the Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) the assumption of the Holocaust as a common European experience, and hence as a basic part of Europe's postwar identity, raises some critical objections. The Holocaust Paradigm will be challenged by a new 'Double Genocide' or Occupation Paradigm, resulting in a deep incompatibility of opinions between Western and Eastern Europe people about the impact, interpretation and meaning of the World Wars and the Cold War. This will ask for completely new interpretations, integrating (and confronting) very different twentieth century European experiences, and a fundamental rethinking of postwar politics of memory.

On a quiet day at 2.00pm on the 10 June 1944 German SS troops marched into the beautiful small village of Oradour-sur-Glane, near the city of Limoges. Without warning they started to herd together the 700 villagers, men, women and schoolchildren under the typical Nazi shout 'fast, fast, hurry up!' Men and women were separated, the women and children transported to the village church and the men lined up at the village square, after which they were split up and brought to sheds, a garage, and a wine cellar. Hours later, at the sign of a bomb explosion, the torture started when SS soldiers started to shoot with machine guns at the legs of the men, after which they were heaped on each other, covered with straw, and set on fire. The women and children imprisoned in the church heard the shootings and the crying of their relatives before the Germans returned to throw explosives in the building, after which the door was opened and the escaping people were one by one killed by gun fire. Then the Germans started a fiesta in the burning village, plundering the wine cellars and drinking until late that night surrounded by burning houses and the smell of burned bodies. Two days later the Germans returned to wipe out all of the traces by cutting up the corpses and burying them in different mass graves, making identification almost impossible (Hawes 2007).

Oradour is just one of many villages in Western Europe where Nazi units during WWII were killing people in a 'war against civilians'. In the Netherlands in October 1944 660 men of the village of Putten were transported to German concentration camps of which only 10 per cent survived the war (De Keizer 1998), and in Italy Nazi troops killed in March 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 335 civilians in the Ardeanate caves in Rome (Portelli 2003), while in Tuscany on August 12<sup>th</sup> 1944 about 300 SS troops massacred and burned down the village of Sant'Anna

di Stazzama. According to Paolo Pezzino, this was part of an organized campaign under Field Marshal Kesselring's Headquarters from 1943 to 1945 by which 3,650 people were killed in more than 200 operations, of which only a fifth was organized as a response to partisan attacks (Pezzino 2012, 6). What these massacres have in common is a cruelty against civilians unknown in Nazi occupied Western Europe up to then.

### 1. Holocaust paradigm

From the Second World War onwards European political integration is based on the assumption of a mutual cultural heritage and common cultural values. Yet we may ask, does such a consensus really exist? Notwithstanding Europe's common roots, based on Christianity and the on-going project of the Enlightenment, most European nations share mainly a traumatic history of war and conflict. Nonetheless, the devastating horrors of two World Wars have for the last six decades stimulated a unique process of European unification. Millions of fallen soldiers, the mass slaughter of European civilians, and the destruction of the Jews have determined, almost dialectically, so to speak, Europe's post-war humanist politics of memory and identity as the total negation of the Nazi and Bolshevik 'age of the camps' (Bauman 2001).

If the European project seemed finished and history ended with the Fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), the shock of the Yugoslav War and the Srebrenica Massacre of 1995 opened peoples eyes for the possibility that history repeats itself. Only since then the recognition of the Holocaust and all other genocides – and, as a consequence, the prosecution of racism, ethnic cleansing, and Holocaust denial – function as a ticket to



European and western citizenship. A citizenship based on the undisputed recognition of a common painful past.

In the *Stockholm Declaration of the International Forum on the Holocaust* of January 2000, 44 world-leaders declared the Shoah to be the main challenge of Western civilization, of which the cruelty and magnitude should be 'forever seared in our collective memory', while new genocides should be prevented by research, education and remembrance to 'plant the seeds of a better future amidst the soil of a bitter past (as quoted from the ITF website). In 2005 the General Assembly of the UN supported the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) in its mission by declaring the founding of a yearly Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27<sup>th</sup>, the day of the (Russian!) liberation of Auschwitz.

Yet did we really live in the shadow of Auschwitz? Auschwitz during the Cold War was still regarded a communist remembrance place, and so were most other 'civic' terrascapes. Thus in France the citizens of the rebuilt town of Oradour, next to the consecrated ruins of the 'martyred village', were voting for a communist mayor who declared his municipality independent from French officials, after the pardoning of Vichy war criminals and French SS-soldiers at the Bordeaux trial of 1953. The municipal council scrapped the plans for putting the ashes of their 'martyrs' in a state's monument and built its own, still existing local monument, posted at that time with large placards listing the nationalist members of parliament who had voted for the amnesty of some perpetrators of the Oradour massacre (Farmer 1999, 178–80).

A few years later the Netherlands' government forbade the placement of an urn with earth from Auschwitz to be put next to the symbolic ashes of fallen members of the national (non-communist) resistance movement, military soldiers, and bombing victims in the so-called urn wall of the National War Memorial (1956), opposite the Royal Palace at the Amsterdam Dam square. The urn was only much later placed in the Auschwitz Memorial at the Amsterdam Wertheim Park (1993). A decade later, in 1965, the burgomaster of Putten as well as the liberal press and the Dutch government accused the Czech village of Lidice of communist propaganda when planting roses for Putten in a local remembrance garden, trying to relate the fate of the Dutch martyred village to their own communist 'antifascist struggle' against the West (De Keizer 1998, 307–8).

Although many of these heroic cold war narratives now seem bizarre to us, I will argue that also the post-1989 assumption of the Holocaust as a common European experience, and hence as a crucial paradigm of Europe's postwar identity politics, raises some critical objections:

In the first place the iconic role of Auschwitz as the world's unique, transcending genocide is challenged by historians, arguing that the Holocaust should be put in the context of both world wars and explained by the ideological, military and geopolitical competition and confrontation of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianism.

Secondly, a series of recent memory conflicts show a deep incompatibility of opinions among politicians and citizens about the impact, interpretation and meaning of Nazi, communist and nationalist terror, genocide and dictatorship in Europe's 'Age of extremes' (Hobsbawm

1994). This concerns the traumatic politics of forgetting and 'remembering' with regard to Hitler's Germany, Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy and Vichy France as well as the even more complicated wartime and postwar occupation histories of the Balkans, Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltics.

Thus, although in many Eastern European countries today Soviet politics are held exclusively responsible for their postwar economic underdevelopment, this revisionism underestimates the consequences of the short, but devastating war period and Nazi occupation. As recently argued with help of statistical sources, occupation means something completely different in different parts of Europe. While western and north-western occupied economies were generally stimulated by German orders, eastern and south-eastern Europe faced a Nazi policy of mass killing, plundering and unscrupulous exploitation. Western countries could therefore in the first postwar period by American aid easily recover from the vicious circle of monetary chaos and food and fuel shortage, while 'the war severely and permanently damaged the economic power of the Soviets' (Klemann & Kudryashov 2012, 429). In view of this unequal development not only the start of the Cold War should be reinterpreted but also the Fall of the Wall and the future of the European Union. In other words, different war heritages might have a long lasting impact on the transnational memory culture of old' and 'new' Europe.

## 2. Anne Frank experience

Now let me first turn to the origin of the western Holocaust narrative. The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam is today, next to Auschwitz, by far the most successful Holocaust museum in Europe. At the time of its founding by Otto Frank in the 1960s in his former storehouse at the Prinsengracht, a canal in the centre of Amsterdam, no-one would have expected this unsightly place to become one of the Netherlands most visited tourist spots with more than one million yearly visitors – to compare, Auschwitz attracts at about 1,5 million visitors (Van der Lans & Vuijsje 2010), and the number is still growing.

Why do so many people more than 65 years after the war want to visit the Dutch hiding place of a German-Jewish refugee family? As Pierre Nora and others have suggested this remarkable need for a spatial experiencing of the past represents a postmodern transformation of history into memory (Nora 1996; Lowenthal 1996, 2005). Mediated memories and tourist gazing have therefore become crucial for performing the past as 'our' heritage, and heritage sites have become more popular than history books. This packaging of the past by a consumption of places fulfils a growing need for (place or staged) authenticity (Urry 2002; Ashworth 2005; MacCannell 2011). This might explain also the popularity of Holocaust memorials and museums, as they offer visitors a virtual 'Holocaust experience', a nearness of the past which history can never offer. Yet, the Holocaust, just like the Great War before, has at the same time become itself a crucial symbol of this traumatic break with the past (Winter 2006). Cut off from our postwar experiences and memories by the traumatic atrocities of war, terror

and genocide, the Holocaust memory boom may even have contributed more than anything else to the alienated sense of the past as a world we've lost – to be experienced only by literature, film and sightseeing. For heritage needs identification.

Thus Otto's daughter Anne Frank is the central figure in the Amsterdam museum's plot, based on her own world-famous script, the diary. And the museum's text is the hiding of the Franks and a befriended Jewish family in the so-called Secret Annex (the back of the house) during the persecution of the Jews from 1942 to 1944. In the making of Anne Frank as the paradigm victim of the Holocaust her personal story has been framed by her father and others as a universal narrative of human persecution and genocide (Lee 2002; Prose 2009). For, as we know, Anne Frank's diary, published in Dutch in 1947 as *Het Achterhuis* and translated in English as *The Diary of a Young Girl* in 1952 was the first of a long series of Jewish war memories mediatized in fiction and film, starting with the prize-winning American Broadway play *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1955), (revived in 1997 with Natalie Portman in the role of Anne), and George Steven's award-winning film version of 1959, up to mega Hollywood productions of other family stories, such as the television mini-series *Holocaust* (1978), *Sophie's Choice* (1982), and *Schindler's List* (1993).

In particular for Jews in Israel and the United States (more than in the Netherlands itself), as well as for many tourists in search for 'virtual Jewishness', as Ruth Ellen Gruber put it, the Anne Frank House has become a universal *lieux de mémoire* in one of Europe's most important 'cities without Jews' (Gruber 2002). For if the 'selling' of Anne Frank was fundamental to the 'Americanization of the Holocaust' (Flanzbaum 1999; Cole 2000), place authenticity is still for 'fans' the unique selling point of the Anne Frank Museum. Yet nowadays the 'Anne Frank experience' can be consumed by prosthetic memory almost everywhere (Landsberg 2004). Thus the recently opened Centro Ana Frank in Rio de Janeiro offers a virtual experience by way of a replica of the famous bookcase – the secret door to the annex – and even a shoot from the now gone Anne Frank-tree in the garden behind the Amsterdam canal house. What we experience in the empty rooms with no more than some original wallpaper spotted with movie star pictures in Anne's original room in Amsterdam or in the staged 'room of Ana' in Rio de Janeiro, is a crucial aspect of the Holocaust memory boom, the experience of a heritage of loss (Van der Laarse 2011).

### 3. Landscapes without Jews

Remarkably, Anne's diary does not have anything to say about the camps. Nonetheless the notion of absence that probably originated from Hugo Bettauer's foretelling and filmed novel *Die Stadt ohne Juden* (1924), also colours our experiencing of Holocaust sites in eastern Europe; the vast 'landscapes without Jews' where the terror really happened. Thus one of the most influential Holocaust novels of the last decade, praised by critics as the first 'true story', Daniel Mendelsohn's *The Lost* (2006), is written by a Jewish American, a classicist at Princeton University with an eye for Odyssean plots, searching for stories of six lost relatives in the Ukrainian village of Bolechov in former Galicia. Mendelsohn's

obsession with his family's past started in the eighties, spurred by the finding of some old letters in the pocket of his deceased maternal grandfather Abraham Jaeger, which were written in 1939 by some relatives asking for help to flee to America after the German invasion.

As a descent of a Jewish family migrated to the US before the Second World War, Daniel Mendelsohn had to cope like many migrants with a break in his life history, and like many Jewish Americans and Israelis' after 1989 he searched as a 'root tourist' in Eastern Europe for a Jewish heritage and identity. For Bolechov only, I counted at least ten Jewish genealogist websites, among them his brother Andrew's *The Mendelsohn Family Bolechow Website*. For these second or third generation American Jews their family history had literally become a foreign country. Before the Fall of the Wall the Ukraine was never visited by Americans, and *The Lost* can be read as an attempt to recall lost stories into Holocaust memory. But the book is also an account of a disillusion. Hoping to find witnesses of his family's past, Daniel Mendelsohn only became aware of the complete fatality of the events. Asking some school children playing in a schoolyard, they answered that they had never heard of any Jew in Bolechov. We arrived at a 'death place', as he told in an interview, 'a place where nothing could be found, and certainly not the people we searched for'. Thus searching for his roots, Mendelsohn found in the Eastern landscapes of the death just a heritage of loss. Or, as he put it: 'The stories don't fit into reality' (Zeeman 2007).

In my view, Mendelsohn's quest belongs to the same semantic space as the Anne Frank House, Yad Vashem, the USHMM, or the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris, and the Polish State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau. The social exclusion and hiding of Jews that would end in the Jewish destruction camps, Anne Frank and Auschwitz, are thematised in Jerusalem and Washington as icons of present-day Holocaust discourse, with Auschwitz as the paradigmatic genocide and Anne Frank as the paradigmatic victim. In the same way the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of January–May 1943, fictionalized in novels and films, and staged for display in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as well as in other Holocaust museums, such as the Israeli Yad Mordechai kibbutz museum, represents a paradigmatic Jewish martyrdom. For in Holocaust narrative this bloody crushed rebellion is framed as the beginning of the Jewish Resurgence that would have led to the rebirth of the Zionist Muscle Jew and the founding of the State of Israel (Mosse 1993; Van der Laarse 1999; Sand 2009). Interestingly, this Jewish resistance myth with its appeal to the nationalist utopia of the New Man, show a remarkable similarity with the less known Polish partisan myth of the Warsaw Rebellion of August 1<sup>st</sup> 1944, ending up in the Nazi destruction of the city, as being fictionalized by communists and Catholics, and staged for display recently in the new Warsaw Rising Museum (Jasinski & Usielski 2007).

### 4. Unearthing the Past

Transforming personal experiences into literature Holocaust narratives – from Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel to Daniel Mendelsohn – may give a voice to the lost as well as to the Auschwitz survivors. But not

all survivors participate in this master narrative. In 2002 the French priest Patrick Desbois, head of the French episcopal office for Jewish relations, went just like Daniel Mendelsohn to the Ukraine in the footsteps of his grandfather. He had been imprisoned during the Second World War as a French soldier in a Nazi camp in the town of Rava-Ruska, and according to him his suffering was nothing compared to that of the Jews. Curious about the fate of 1,5 million Jews executed in the Ukraine, Desbois started to ask the same questions as Mendelsohn, again without getting answers. In his case, however, what started as a sort of exploratory tourism ended up in an archaeological expedition when Desbois went back three years later.

The reason for this remarkable choice was a television documentary he saw in Paris about the Bosnian mass graves. A forensic expert, a woman, told the reporter about the difficulties of identifying the corpses at Srebrenica because – exactly as the Germans in Oradour – the Serbs deliberately dug them up after the shooting to quarter them and rebury the parts in different places; a method already used by the Habsburgs against the Bohemians at the Battle of the White Mountains in 1619 (Wheatcroft 1996, 179). Yet the modern researcher was able to reconstruct the killings by way of a metal detector, because as she observed: where cartridge cases are, are corpses. Back in the Ukraine, Desbois was led by the obsession to dig deeper, as he writes in *Porteur de mémoires* (2007), translated as *The Holocaust by bullets* (2009).

A young ballistic expert from Lvov, named Mischa became the man with the metal detector. What made the difference was the finding of hundreds of cartridge cases, not in a secret place but nearby the village. As Desbois noticed: ‘One bullet, a Jew; a Jew, a bullet’, because the Germans never used more than one bullet to kill a Jew (Desbois 2009, 54). From then on, people started to talk, and the silence was broken. The stories came back, not only in Rava-Ruska but all over the Ukraine. Day after day Desbois’ team interviewed hundreds of witnesses, some in their nineties – and it still goes on, counting by now already tens of expeditions. Old people brought Desbois’ team to pits where Jews were slaughtered. These places were not forgotten, nor hidden. Thus sometimes people went on to throw cadavers of cows and horses upon the corpses after the War, and a local forest was known as Lis na Jevrejach (Wood on the Jews). As Desbois found out the bullets were not only a clue to locate the victims, but also a means to recover memories – precisely as happened during this same period in other parts of the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia and in Franco’s Spain, where archaeological excavations of mass graves related to Stalinist and nationalist terror during the age of the camps started an ‘unearthing of the past’ (Paperno 2002; Jerez-Farrán & Amago 2010). In Ukraine during the Nazi occupation often complete families were loaded on trucks, and shot at the pits by German commandos. This murdering did have neither heroes nor bystanders as the villagers were often forced to support the massacres by guarding Jews, removing golden teeth, or stamping the earth of the mass graves. Yet their muteness, the wall of silence, was not caused by a deep seated anti-Semitism, as often thought by Western critics of Polish and Ukrainian massacres during the Nazi occupation. Instead, the bullet-Holocaust

seemed to have been extremely traumatic for most of these non-Jewish witnesses because the Jews were no strangers, such as those in Auschwitz, but natives, often friends or neighbours, and children from the village school. People knew the victims by name, and some still heard their screaming and begging for help, or the repeating sound of the German submachine guns and Mauser carbines: A Mauser could contain only five bullets, which explains why trucks were loaded with at about 50 people and families in the pit were shot in groups of five (Desbois 2009, 56).

This ‘holocaust by bullet’ had nothing to do with the industrial murders of Auschwitz or other Nazi camps. Here were no guards who would later claim to have never personally murdered. Neither had the stories of these witnesses anything to do with those of Auschwitz survivors, as filmed by Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah* and taped by the Steven Spielberg Project in almost all European countries, except Ukraine and Belorussia where most of the mass murders took place (though without western victims). Hence, my theme is the clash of Holocaust narratives, more precisely the mismatch of the Holocaust master narrative with the war and postwar experiences of the survivors of hundreds of Eastern European terrortscapes, faded away in the shadow of Auschwitz.

## 5. Politics of Genocide: fact and fiction

If Auschwitz has become our common heritage, it is because it was the place where ‘our’ Jews from West-European cities went to, and from which we know so much because of its many survivors. But what do we know about the experiences of the eastern European Jewish and non-Jewish populations? Many of them were already dead before the building of Birkenau in 1942, and almost none of the survivors were able to publish war memories.

As far as the camps played a role in the killing of Polish and Baltic Jews we should look at the early extermination camps of Operation Reinhardt – Treblinka, Belzac and Sobibor – of which almost no-one survived. Thus from the Netherlands Selma Engel-Wijnberg was the only Dutch-Jewish survivor of Sobibor, who escaped during the Uprising of October 14, 1943 together with her future Polish husband, though even her story would never been told as she was not allowed to return to her homeland with her foreign husband and migrated to the United States (Trouw 2010). Besides, most of the Jews were killed outside the iconic camps during the Shoah by bullet, in Poland and Ukraine as well as Lithuania, Belorussia and Rumania. Of the 1.5 million Jews killed in these three camps, Treblinka counted almost half of them and Belzac almost half a million. At the end of 1941 already one million Jews were murdered in camps and one million in villages, and buried in pits. Thus by September 1942, with the exception of Czechs and Hungarians, the Eastern Jewry was exterminated or fled to Russia (a neglected fact in Holocaust historiography).

Timothy Snyder’s *Bloodlands* (2010) has recently put the ‘ignored reality’ of the Holocaust high on the historical and political agenda (Snyder 2009 and 2010).



What are the facts?

The Holocaust by bullet made more victims than Auschwitz during the war.

The heart of the Holocaust was in Eastern Europe: 70 percent of the 5.7 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust were Poles (three million) and Russians (one million). Next to them came Rumanians, Hungarians, and Czechs, and behind them the Jews from Western Europe.

Prior to the Holocaust, the Nazi killings started with Russian prisoners of war, numbering 3.3 million, of which two million were already shot in the first nine months of the Eastern War in 1941, even before the organized persecution of the Jews. Apart from the 5.8 million Jewish victims of the Holocaust this 'Forgotten Genocide' was by far the greatest war crime in history, though completely neglected in western literature and public opinion (Berkhoff 2005; Porter 2010).

These groups of data show the original Eastern European character of the Holocaust, a project of destruction developed during the Nazi war against Bolshevism. Yet the Holocaust was not unique. The Russians too were mass killers. Prior to the ten million civilians killed by Germans, the Bolsheviks killed, or were responsible for the death of another five million, although, to paraphrase Snyder, as a general rule the Nazis killed non-German citizens, whereas the Bolsheviks killed Soviet citizens.

In the Belarusian and Ukrainian killing fields, the center of the Holocaust by bullet, Kulaks had already been victimized by Stalin's policy of forced collectivization to finance industrialization (1929), which resulted in the 'terror-famines' of 1932–3 among whom the Kazakh Famine (one million deaths) and the Ukraine Famine (three million deaths), followed by the Great Terror of 1937–8 with another 600,000 victims shot by KNVD bullets, as reconstructed for Ukraine even before the opening of the Soviet archives. Though strongly criticized for its use of sources and far too high numbers, Robert Conquest's pioneering *Harvest of Sorrow* (1986) has become after the Orange Revolution of 2006 the academic legitimation of the 'Holodomor' – the official term for what politicians also named the 'Ukrainian genocide' or 'Ukrainian Holocaust'. The Ukrainian parliament has declared its official remembering at the fourth Saturday in November, whereas President Viktor Yushchenko even suggested making the denial of the Terror Famine punishable by law.

Remarkably, the Ukrainian government did not seem to have noticed that the impact of the Nazi *Hunger Plan* of the winter of 1941–2 by far exceeded that of Soviet forced collectivization. This second terror famine deliberately caused the starvation of another another 3-4 million people after the German conquest of Belorussia and Ukraine that became the Third Reich's largest colony (Berkhoff 2004, Snyder 2010, 411). The *Hungerplan* was a prelude to Heinrich Himmler's *Generalplan Ost*, the planned Germanization of conquered Poland and Western Russia, implemented after the German invasion of Russia in 1941 by the SS-policy of *Ostkolonisation*. Under the slogan 'Heim ins Reich' this resulted in the annexed West Poland, renamed as Warthegau, in the forced deportation of at least 100,000 Poles and the complete extermination of the Jews, to be replaced by Baltic *Volksdeutschen* (Rössler & Schleiermacher 1993; Heineman 2003; Van der Laarse 2009).

Thus Auschwitz was not the Holocaust, not the beginning, nor the end of ethnic cleansing in Eastern Europe. The Nazi planned destruction of the Jews was part of a greater project to destroy all Bolsheviks and Slavic populations, which only in the case of the Jews has been completely implemented. So, for instance, the Germans succeeded in killing at least 750,000 people in the fight against partisans (of which at least 350,000 in Belarus), and 100,000 Poles at the crush of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, not to be confused with the Jewish Ghetto Uprising a year before. Of the ten million civilians killed in Eastern Europe by German mass slaughter, however, half of them were Jews. Belarus, Poland and the Ukraine were the center of the German killings, and the deadliest place in the world. Here between 1941–4 at least 20 per cent of the population (almost 15 million people) died of warfare, terror and hunger, whereas – insofar statistics may have any use for this catastrophic period – approximately another 20 per cent were forced to flee their countries (Klemann & Kudryashov 2012, 414–5).

It might be clear that from an Eastern European perspective the suffering in Western Europe was almost negligible. Thus in the Netherlands about 200,000 people were killed by fighting, bombings and persecution, among whom 102,000 were Jews, which is 2.3 per cent of the population. Nazi Germany suffered most of the Western countries with 7.5 million deaths (10.8 per cent of the population), among them some 165,000 Jews and 70,000 euthanasia patients killed by the Nazi's, and 5.3 million military victims of which 460,000 soldiers died of starvation in Allied war prisoner camps (Overmans 2000), among them 360,000 in Russian POW camps, which is just a tenth though of the number of Russian soldiers who died in German POW camps. Roughly 370,000–600,000 of 1.8 million German civilian deaths were killed by Allied bombings of cities (Friedrich 2004), and at about ten per cent (600,000) of a total number of six million German war refugees died on the run for Stalin's Red Army in 1944–5. Yet only few felt victim to the more organized post-war expulsion of another six million German Heimatvertriebenen felt victim to the expulsion of Germans from Poland and the Czech Republic. Besides, Mass migration was not a German monopoly during this period of shifting German-Polish and Polish-Ukrainian (now Russian) borders. Next to the Jews and the Germans of Polonized Prussia and the Baltics, eastern Poland was ethnically cleansed from Ukrainians and western Ukraine from Poles, after which only ruins and graveyards remind postwar inhabitants and root tourists of centuries of multiculturalism (Snyder 2003; Lowe 2012).

I hope this will put the recent debate on German victimhood in a broader perspective (Neven 2006), and question also the legalistic way of dealing with genocide, such as in the case of the Demjanjuk trial, which seems to me completely irrelevant in the light of the Western neglect of the millions of Ukrainian victims during the Hitler-Stalin War. It should also warn us for too much praise of Lord Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg and other Wehrmacht heroes for their failed assassination attack on Hitler in July 1944, for these were the officers responsible for Himmler's *Ostkolonisation*. As shown in Wibke Bruhns' *Meines Vaters Land* (2004), a stout-hearted quest to the wartime role of her father Hans Georg Klamroth, a

liberal entrepreneur from Halberstadt who became a member of Hitler's Nazi party and Himmler's SS, and served as a Wehrmacht officer at the Eastern Front. To his daughters astonishment he had returned two years before at his own request to the Russian killing fields where he cherished good memories of earlier fights in the First World War. Although plotting against Hitler in the July Bomb Plot, Klamroth never questioned in his letters and diary the Germanizing of Poland, the killing of the political elite, and the destruction of the Jews.

## 6. Contested memories

Aleksander Smolars, the Polish-French sociologist, has rightly called for attaching more importance to Eastern European memories in a post 1989 politics of European memory. Yet Holocaust and post-communist memory cultures have not much in common. If the Holocaust has become the cornerstone of Western war remembrance and democracy (next to the postcolonial inheritance of slavery and racism), than Central-Eastern Europeans may ask for a new memorial agenda of their own. Feed by the 'betrayal myths' of the Western role at Munich (1938) and Yalta (1945), and the Russian role at the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pakt (1939) and the Warsaw Uprising (1944), this will reconsider the traumatic impact of both Nazi and Communist terror. Personally I don't think it is wise to create another series of international remembrance days – but for a *European* politics of memory to become successful we should recognize at least at Holocaust Memorial Day, the day of the liberation of Auschwitz, the shortcomings of the Stockholm narrative.

In the first place we should not forget that the national-militarist appropriation of the commemoration of the Allied forces and armed resistance has suppressed in most European countries up to the 1980s the memory of the Holocaust. Although the Second World War has become in Western countries almost completely associated with the Holocaust, for decades the persecution of the Jews did not play a crucial role in war remembrances. In the West as in the East commemorating took place along national and often nationalist lines. In most Western European countries, such as the Netherlands, Dachau, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz were mainly commemorated by former political prisoners and other camp survivors, and only from the 1970s Auschwitz and other camps gradually developed into significant Holocaust icons.

Secondly, although Europe's memory culture might nowadays be put under the shadow of Auschwitz, the Polish State Museum and Memorial Auschwitz-Birkenau was established in 1947 to commemorate 'the martyrdom of the Polish nation and other nations in Oswiecim', and was still nominated as such for the UNESCO world heritage list in 1978. One year later though, the Polish pope John Paul II on his visit to Poland transformed this Polish 'Auschwitz without Jews' with theological support of his future German successor cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, into a Catholic martyrrium and a national site of resistance *against* communism (Dwork & Van Pelt 1996, 367–71). Thereafter Auschwitz-Birkenau witnessed contesting appropriations of UNESCO experts, Polish catholic nationalists, the State of Israel and American-Jewish organizations, the

German Federal Republic and the European Union (Zubrzycki 2006). While on the one hand the original State museum Auschwitz I still represents the same sort of patriotism as today's Warsaw Rising Museum, on the other Birkenau or Auschwitz II has become the main touristic spot for an in situ 'Holocaust experience'. Polish visitors of the prison cell of Father Maximilian Kolbe, 'the martyred saint of Auschwitz', are competing with Israeli and American-Jewish root tourists as well as Western European citizens searching for virtual Jewishness in Birkenau and Krakau's Kazimierz district. Holocaust sites might therefore become more and more contested spaces, characterized by both a globalization and localization of memory.

Thirdly, one could argue that the recent discussion on the 'Holocaust by bullet' – the mass killing of Jews at the Polish and Ukrainian killing fields – undermines the paradigmatic role of Auschwitz (or the camps), as most European Jews, living in Eastern Europe, were already killed before the building of Birkenau. We might therefore expect that long neglected terrascapes would attract more academic and public attention, such as the Kiev site of the Babi Yar massacre of 29–30 September 1941 (34,000 Jewish deaths), the Vilnius site of the Ponary or Paneriai massacres (estimated 70,000 Jews and 20,000 Poles killed between July 1941 and August 1941), and the Massacres in Transnistria, numbering alone in Odessa at 22 October some 25,000 Jewish deaths), executed by German, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and Romanian troops.

And finally, as an unexpected result of the Fall of the Wall (1989) the Western Holocaust memory boom might become challenged by a deep incompatibility of opinions about the impact, interpretation and meaning of the World Wars between present-day Western and Eastern European populations. As symbols of the Age of the camps both Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipel have made us blind for the hundreds of normal citizens acting as mass murderers or killed by mass slaughter at local terrascapes were people had to cope with the less spectacular, but much more effective NKVD and Nazi murdering by bullet, and the total absence of their stories in Western Europe.

## 7. Memory wars and Occupation paradigm

Although the Age of the Extremes, terrorized by Nazism, communism and civil war, seem to have finally ended in 1989, the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 functioned as a wake-up call, fading away the naïve, liberal illusion of an end of history. The unusual call for military intervention, framed in Western Europe and the United States from the perspective of the atrocities of the Jewish extermination camps, was illustrative for Auschwitz's new symbolic role as the paradigmatic genocide.

Yet, as it seems to me, the project of European expansion creates new and fundamental tensions in memory politics. Because of the post-Cold War expansion of the EU from 12 to 27 member states, we may even expect in the near future a paradigm shift in Europe's memory culture. For, starting with Eastern Germany (after the 1990 German reunification) and the former neutral nations Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995, the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 resulted

in twelve new member states of Central Eastern Europe as well as in Ukraine and Belarus sandwiched as New Eastern Europe between the European Union and Russia, the Holocaust seem to be held by neo-nationalist politicians as a Western construct that completely ignores the long-lasting impact on their societies of Bolshevism from 1918 up to 1989. Hence, for many (non-Jewish) people in Eastern Europe today not the German SS or Wehrmacht but the Red Army functions as the main symbol of oppression.

Thus the European continent is not only strewn with lots of newly discovered terrortapes, but New Europe's former communist states seem unwilling to handle their traumatic war *and* postwar experiences in terms of the Western Holocaust master narrative. Therefore I see at the moment at least three possible scenarios for Europe's theater of memory:

The first scenario opens the perspective of a growing number of memory and heritage wars. So, for instance, the Bronze Soldier of Tallinn, the communist national liberty monument of 1945 has been relocated in 2007, together with the remains of some Red Army soldiers to a Russian war cemetery, because most Estonians regarded the Soviets as occupiers instead of liberators. The old monument of a Red Army partisan honored during the Soviet period, now functions only as a proud symbol of the ethnic Russian minority, whereas Estonian nationalists remember 'their' fallen soldiers at the Monument of Lihula (2002); a bronze bas-relief of a fascist 'freedom-fighter' with a German *Stahlhelm*, representing the SS Unions fighting alongside the German Wehrmacht and Waffen SS in the anti-Partisan war against the 'Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy'. As a tribute to these anti-communist martyrs in the 'War for Estonian independence' the Lihula monument raised a lot of protest by Western Jewish organizations such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center. The removal of the monument by EU and US pressure, caused however a storm of protest among Estonians, after which it has been relocated in 2005 at the privately owned Museum of the Fight for Estonian Freedom at Lagedi nearby Tallinn (Melchior & Visser 2011).

In the context of the long-lasting Russification of the Baltics these memory wars will also have personal consequences, which might be seen as a second scenario. Thus the Ukrainian partisan Stepan Bandera, killed by the KGB in 1959, has been posthumously proclaimed a 'national hero' by president Yushchenko in 2010 whereas he is treated as a war criminal in Poland for his role in the ethnic cleansing during the German occupation. Cleverly using human right narratives and the Western war on terror, nationalists are also trying to change the markers of terror and genocide by demanding the persecution of communist perpetrators, such as in the case of the Lithuanian 'war crimes investigation' against one of the last surviving Jewish communist partisans Dr Rachel Margolis and Fania Brantsovsky, both escaped from the Vilnius ghetto where they lost their entire families. Although a public hero for many years Brantsovsky has now been accused of murdering 38 'innocent' Lithuanian villagers in January 1944; a 'massacre' though, according to Yad Vashem, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the British House of Lords and Prime Minister, and US congressmen applying to Lithuanian leaders in 2009, which happened to be an ordered punishment

expedition against nationalists collaborating with the Germans in the killing of 3500 Jews in a bordering village (Hendriks 2009).

Yet more serious than these bizarre accusations is the EU attitude or more precisely that of the European Court of Human Rights on historical war crimes. Thus the Russian former partisan Vitali Kononov, accused in Letland for murdering nine villagers in 1944, who helped the Nazis catching partisans, was sentenced by a Latvian Court in 2004. Not unlikely under Russian pressure – Moscow opposed the verdict as an hostile attempt to undermine the 'good war' against Nazism – the Latvian Court of Appeal declared the lawsuit illegal; a decision, though, dismissed by the Strasbourg Court in 2010! In terms of jurisdiction this incredible, legalist verdict, representing as it seems Europe's geopolitical power shift, may cause enormous problems in the EU's dealing with the past and its external relations, whereas its historical amnesia seriously undermines the Court's authority by legitimating the 'human right strategy' adopted by streetwise Holocaust negationists, trying to rewrite history.

A last scenario concerns the dissemination of the revisionist 'double genocide' paradigm by the use of new memorial museums (Otto 2010). This occupation paradigm is supported by the 2008 Prague Declaration that, as an alternative to the Holocaust's paradigm's Stockholm Declaration, demands from the EU to 'recognize Communism and Nazism as a common legacy' and deal with communist crimes in the same way as the Nuremberg Tribunal did with Nazi crimes. An EU parliament resolution of April 2 2009 recommends in the spirit of the 'red-brown' myth of the Eastern European suffering as victims of *two* regimes of terror, the 'Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian regimes' (Katz 2012). Thus, after the post-communist relocation of monuments and the renaming of streets the Riga Museum of Occupations 1939–91 replaces the memory war with a museological script of three occupations: the Russian annexation of 1939, the 1941 German incorporation as *Reichskommisariat Ostland* (welcomed by nationalists at the time as a liberation!), and the postwar Russian 'occupation' that lasted until Latvia's independence of 1991. The Occupation museum pays attention to long 'forgotten' NKVD genocides, such as the mass graves of Latvian freedom fighters already used in Nazi propaganda, although the highly contested elimination of the Riga and Liepaja ghettos in 1943 and the murdering of the Jews from Vilnius and Hungary in Riga's Kaiserwald concentration camp in 1944 is also mentioned. The Riga museum may work as a laboratory for new critical questions, but behind the ongoing debate on numbers and ethnicity ideological wars are still fought out with Russia as well as Europe (Nollendorf 2008; Rislakki 2008).

That this relatively balanced position is not self-evident, though, is shown by the one-sided display of Vilnius' Genocide Museum, located in a former KGB headquarter and devoted mainly to the murdering of 70,000 citizens under Soviet occupation without paying much attention to the Lithuanian Holocaust, except for a small room recently added in reaction to Western critique. The same applies to the Budapest Terror House museum (2002), which tells more about the Hungarian Holocaust of 1944, but likewise silences their



own participation in Nazi terror. Nonetheless, although these new museums show a tendency to operate as an intermediary between nationalist, anticommunist public opinion and the EU's Holocaust memory culture, the Holocaust paradigm only functions as a model for adaptation as far as it concerns the narrative of trauma and victimhood, whereas the message is completely different. One should wish therefore a much more self-critical and subtle attitude on the perpetrator's role of Holocaust victims and national freedom fighters, some of whom fought against Soviet and Nazi occupiers as well as collaborated with them as perpetrators in the context of civil war and ethnic warfare (Lotnik 1999). Next to ideology, historical complexity confuses the paradigm debate. This might be shown by the case of Katyn that combines all the above mentioned scenarios. The highly contested memorial site at Smolensk in Russia (former Polish) became world news in 2010 because of the air crash that resulted in the death of the Polish president Lech Kaczynski and 95 members of a Polish delegation on their way to the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the massacre. Here the Russian NKVD (the forerunner of the KGB) shot approximately 22,000 Polish officers after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1940, of which 4,500 are buried in three mass graves (Sanford 2005). Ever since the Germans discovered the pits in 1943 and let the corpses be inspected by an international war crime committee Katyn functioned as a horrible example of the Bolshevik 'Red Danger' in Nazi war propaganda. As might be expected, the communists blamed the Germans for wartime propaganda, and responded after the War with counter-memorials. Thus in 1969 in the Belarus village of Khatyn (Chatyn), a few hundred kilometers from 'Polish' Katyn, the Soviet Union built a memorial for the Nazi massacre of the 149 inhabitants of this Belarusian village. Interestingly, with president Boris Yeltsin's 'second destalinization' the Russian government accepted guilt to the Katyn massacre in 1990, after which documents were handed over to the Polish president Lech Walesa, and treaties signed. From then a binational Polish-Russian memorial remembers both the Polish and Russian victims of Stalinist terror. Although the present place looks like an idyllic park in a forest, with four great mounds, the Katyn memorial during the last decades did not really function as a place of reconciliation. In 2010 the new Polish president Komoraswki and Russia's president Dmitri Medvedev commemorated here together the air-crash deaths and the victims of the Katyn massacre. Yet the Russian recognition of Stalin's guilt to the massacre was based on the acceptance of at about 1,800 Polish people killed, without classifying Katyn as war crime or genocide. Besides, Russian historians point to a contextualization of the 'dark site' of the Katyn massacre by putting it into the context of the earlier Polish outrage of 1920–21, when during the Russian civil war of Red and White armies, ten thousands of Red Army prisoners starved in Polish camps near Warsaw whereas, as we saw, three million Russian war prisoners died in German camps. In this highly politicized climate even the online publication in 2010 of the documents of March 5<sup>th</sup> 1940, confirming the massacre was to be carried out on Stalin's and Beria's orders, did not stop the questioning of archival sources, or the German cartridge cases found on the spot, which suggested the possibility of a

Nazi cover-up. However, just as in the case of the bullet Holocaust people started talking after the opening of the Russian archives about the locations of Stalin's Great Terror and the NKVD prison massacres of 1941. The last one numbering almost 9,000 in Ukraine (Berkhoff 2004, 14), whereas the Kurapaty massacre near Minsk, numbering 200 graves in the forest, has been estimated as with from 30,000 up to 250,000 victims (according to Norman Davis in 2004). Yet of them only five people are identified because in this case no earlier research has been carried out and no NKVD archives have been found (Kaminska 2011).

Yet behind every fact politics are at stake. This was after all a war starting in 1939 with a staged 'Polish' attack on a German radio station of German soldiers in Polish uniforms and dead injected German political prisoners 'playing' Polish victims. A scenario directed by Himmler and Heydrich, which offered Hitler a pretext to legitimate his Polish invasion (Breitman 1991, 66). Thus the American Slavic scholar Irina Paperno wondered in the case of the Ukrainian Vinnytsia massacre of 1937–8 (9,400 deaths) about the uncritical use of 1943 German documents and photos, handed over to the international war crime commission – just like in Katyn. Because no later forensic or archaeological research has been carried out, postwar Ukrainian refugees, American historians, and Kyiv Memorial researchers of the 1990s, all relied on these same sources. Strangely, no-one questioned the Nazis manipulation of data to proof a Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy by neglecting to include in propaganda the Jewish and Russian victims, mentioned in the original documents, nor the ordered ethnic identification of NKVD perpetrators as 'Jews' (Paperno 2002). Whereas these reports objectified Nazi propaganda so to speak, new memory wars are started, however, by neo-Nazis on the internet, suggesting an American-Jewish conspiracy for silencing the ethnic component of Vinnytsia as the Ukrainian Katyn: 'The Jews own all of those media. And the Ukrainians don't own Hollywood, so they can't make movie dramas about Vinnitsa either, like Steven Spielberg does about the so-called "Holocaust"' (Pierce 1998). This should warn us that digging deeper may reveal the truth as much as it might feed new myths!

### To conclude

As the topography of terror did have a much deeper imprint in Eastern Europe than generally thought in the West, the European expansion in Eastern direction will result, without doubt, in a further transformation of the EU's politics of memory.

For Western Europe might be overshadowed by Auschwitz, Oswiecim is still in Poland (Citroen & Starzynska 2011). Yet even in Old Europe, with its growing Euroscepticism, one might expect a reduced support for the 'Holocaust-centered European mnemonic community' in the nearby future (Kansteiner 2006). With regard to this fundamental relocation of memory, even small conflicts about painful heritage and traumatic memories run the risk of ending up in a clash of cultures. Thus against the assumption of the Holocaust as a common European experience I would pose the prospect of Holocaust dissonances. But memory wars and paradigm conflicts should,

in my view, not be resolved by top-down European declarations and legal procedures. Instead we should search for new interpretations of different, if not opposing, European experiences, and a fundamental rethinking of Holocaust history, memory and heritage, to be grasped from a transnational comparative perspective.

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