

Of Heroes and Victims: World War II in Austrian Memory

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World War II and the Contradictions of Austrian Memory

IN TONY JUDT'S HISTORICAL ESSAY on postwar Europe's political myths, Austria serves as a paradigmatic case for national cultures of commemoration that successfully suppressed their societies' involvement in National Socialism. According to Judt, the label of "National Socialism's First Victim" was applied to a country that after the Anschluss of March 1938 had, in fact, been a real part of Nazi Germany. "If *Austria* was guiltless, then the distinctive responsibilities of non-German nationals in other lands were assuredly not open to close inspection," notes Judt.¹ When the postwar Austrian myth of victimhood finally disintegrated during the Waldheim debate, critics deemed the "historical lie" of the "first victim" to have been the basis for Austria's failure to confront and deal with its own Nazi past. Yet, one of the paradoxes of Austrian memory is the fact that soon after the end of the war, the victim thesis had already lost much of its relevance for many Austrians.

Already in the late 1940s, other narratives about the war emerged—about the "heroism" of the soldiers and about the suffering of the *Heimat* population under the impact of war—that explicitly countered the designation of Austria as the "first victim of National Socialism" found in the Declaration of Independence of 27 April 1945, the official foundational narrative of the new Austria. Above all, commemoration ceremonies and monuments to the fallen soldiers of the German *Wehrmacht* became the sites of this counternarrative to the victim thesis. Clearly, within a few years of the war's end, milieu representing antagonistic interpretations of history had emerged that would remain largely stable until the Waldheim debate in the 1980s.

As material representations of the politics of history in social spaces, memorials offer a vivid impression of the power relations at local, regional, and national levels. In contrast to Austria's founding documents and its first postwar monuments,² all based on the thesis of Austrian victimhood, war memorials and rituals of "hero worship" dominated the regional monumental landscape from the 1950s onward. Outside Vienna, commemoration of resistance fighters and the victims of the Nazi regime occupied a marginal position. Hence, the memorial landscape

¹Tony Judt, "The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe," *Daedalus* 4 (1992): 87.

²Cf. Karl Klambauer, *Österreichische Gedenkkultur zu Widerstand und Krieg. Denkmäler und Gedächtnisorte in Vienna 1945–1986* (Innsbruck, 2004).

suggests that following a very brief period of anti-Fascist consensus in the immediate aftermath of the war, the impact of the victim thesis was restricted to a small segment of the culture of memory. It was not the narrative of Austrian victimhood, but rather a vibrant culture of commemoration for the fallen soldiers of the *Wehrmacht*, that shaped Austrian memory and that proved a potent instrument for the externalization of Nazism.

The narrative that framed Austria as a victim of hostile invasion and occupation in 1938–1945, and Austrians as a people in resistance during that period, can be qualified as a historical lie (*Geschichtslüge*, Robert Menasse³) given Austrian society's involvement in the Nazi system. Nevertheless, the thrust of this victimhood argument was clearly directed against National Socialism. The commemorative practices for the fallen soldiers, on the contrary, reduced that past to the six war years 1939–1945. In this alternate narrative, 1938, the year of Austria's annexation (*Anschluss*), and hence the issue of National Socialism itself, in general remained eclipsed. In the narrative of war memorials and the ceremonies connected with them (*Heldenehrungen*), Austrians were *not* victims of Nazism, but rather victims of the war *against* Nazism.

It was this populist understanding of victimhood—and not the anti-Fascist version of Austria as first victim of National Socialism—that predominantly shaped Austrian memory up to the Waldheim debate at the local and regional levels. This paradoxical constellation raises questions about the theory of collective memory.⁴ How could an image so antithetical to the official version of the past become so pervasive? How did a battle for memory, the competition to define meaning, evolve under these kinds of conditions? What is the place of the populist countermyth to the official victim thesis in today's post-Waldheim Austria, after its victim status was shattered and the focus of remembrance shifted to the victims of the Shoah?

World War II through the Lens of the Official Victim Thesis

The definition of Austria as “first victim” in the Moscow Declaration of 1943 was immediately linked to the question of Austria's involvement in the war. Austria may have been defined as “the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression” that should “be liberated from German domination.” But Austria's status was linked to the fact “that she has responsibility which she cannot evade for participation in the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.”⁵

American historian Robert H. Keyserlingk has shown that the Allied declaration on Austria issued in October 1943 was intended as an instrument of psychological warfare but that the Allies' aspirations were frustrated: Neither the promised restoration of national independence nor the threats of retaliation in response to Austria's involvement in the war elicited broader

³Robert Menasse, *Das Land ohne Eigenschaften. Essay zur österreichischen Identität*, 3rd edition (Vienna, 1993), 15.

⁴For a theoretical approach that focuses on the relationship between memory and social power relations, see Jeffrey K. Olick, *The Politics of Regret: On Collective Memory and Historical Responsibility* (New York, 2007); Oliver Marchart, “Das historisch-politische Gedächtnis. Für eine politische Theorie kollektiver Erinnerung,” in *Transformationen gesellschaftlicher Erinnerung. Studien zur “Gedächtnisgeschichte” der Zweiten Republik*, ed. Christian Gerbel et al., (Vienna, 2005), 21–49.

⁵Quoted in Gerald Stourzh, *Um Einheit und Freiheit. Staatsvertrag, Neutralität und das Ende der Ost-West-Besetzung Österreichs 1945–1955*, 5th edition (Vienna, 2005), 214.

resistance against the Nazi regime.⁶ It was understandable that in April 1945, however, Austria's new provisional government would adopt the "first victim" formulation. Although this formulation became the founding narrative of the Second Republic, embedded in an extensive preamble to the Declaration of Independence, the so-called "complicity clause" (*Mitverantwortungsklausel*) found only "obligatory mention" (*plichtgemäße Erwähnung*) at the end of the document and was refuted with the lapidary argument that because Austria had only resumed its independent existence on 27 April 1945, the contribution toward its own liberation demanded by the Allies could "only be modest."⁷

At the same time, the Austrian government aimed to construct an appraisal of Austrians' service in the *Wehrmacht* that was compatible with the propounded victim thesis. The Declaration of Independence recalls:

that Adolf Hitler's national socialist government of the Reich led the people of Austria, made will-less and enfeebled by means of a complete political, economic and cultural annexation of the country, in a futile and senseless war of conquest, which no Austrian has ever desired, which no Austrian was ever able to predict or to sanction, into warfare against peoples for whom no true Austrian has ever harbored feelings of hostility or hatred, in a war of conquest which sacrificed without hesitation many hundreds of thousands of sons of our country, almost the entire youth and manly power of our people on the ice fields of the north, in the sandy deserts of Africa, from the tempestuous shore of the Atlantic to the cliffs of the Caucasus, only to finally use our native mountains as refuge of stranded harbingers of catastrophe (*Katastrophenpolitiker*) and to extradite our home soil to destruction and depredation.⁸

This account was reiterated in the official *Rot-Weiß-Rot-Buch*, edited by the Austrian government in 1946 and draped in the national colors, with which the government sought to underscore "Austria's claim to the status of and treatment as a 'liberated state' under the terms of the Moscow declaration." This text emphasized in particular the significance of the "resistance of the Austrian people against the brown oppressors."⁹ The chapter entitled "The Austrians and the war" reinforced the claims of the victim thesis: "Austrians' attitudes toward 'Hitler's war' (*Hitlerkrieg*) were hostile from the very beginning, unless they perceived the outcome of the war as the only possible way to achieve liberation from the yoke of Nazism." Furthermore, Austrian soldiers could confirm "that the treatment of Austrians in the German *Wehrmacht* was particularly grim and humiliating . . . so that for many of them [only] imprisonment in Allied war captivity brought an end to their suffering."¹⁰

This official Austrian politics of history, although enshrined in the foundational texts of the Second Republic, would soon lose their initial appeal and relevance. From 1947 on, the anti-Fascist spirit of 1945 was quickly replaced by a political culture shaped by Cold War imperatives, by anti-Communism, and by the reintegration of former National Socialists into

⁶Robert H. Keyserlingk, *Austria in World War II: An Anglo-American Dilemma* (Kingston, 1988); Robert H. Keyserlingk, "1. November 1943: Die Moskauer Deklaration—Die Alliierten, Österreich und der Zweite Weltkrieg," in *Österreich im 20. Jahrhundert, vol. 2. Vom Zweiten Weltkrieg bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Rolf Steininger, Michael Gehler, 9–38 (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 1997); Günter Bischof, *Austria and the First Cold War, 1945–55: The Leverage of the Weak*, Cold War History (Basingstoke, 1999).

⁷Proclamation of 27 April 1945, *Staatsgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich*, 1 May 1945.

⁸Ibid.

⁹*Rot-Weiß-Rot-Buch. Gerechtigkeit für Österreich! Darstellungen, Dokumente und Nachweise zur Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Okkupation Österreichs. Nach amtlichen Quellen*, Erster Teil (Vienna, 1946), 3.

¹⁰Ibid., 94–95.

Austrian society.¹¹ An amnesty for marginally implicated former party members and conformists, or *Mitläufer*, the so-called *Minderbelastetenamnestie* granted in 1948, reenfranchised some 482,000 erstwhile Nazis who had been subjected to de-Nazification, making this group a considerable target for political appeals.¹² During the 1949 national elections, the “disreputable courting” of the votes of former Nazis¹³—or the *Ehemaligen*, as they came to be known—established itself as a constant feature of political culture in the Second Republic.¹⁴

The profound nature of this paradigm shift was manifested as a clear caesura in the memorial landscape. Immediately after the end of the war, all of the political parties had supported the commemoration of the crimes of National Socialism, tributes paid to resistance fighters, and the erection of memorials to Austria’s “war of liberty” (*Freiheitskampf*). But this culture of remembrance increasingly became the concern of the Communists (KPÖ) and their association of surviving concentration camp prisoners, whereas the two major parties, the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the Christian Conservative People’s Party (ÖVP), backed off. The ÖVP especially became a major political force in promoting the commemoration of fallen soldiers (*Gefallene*) and of the veteran’s institutional stronghold, the Austrian *Kameradschaftsbund* (literally, comrades’ association). The SPÖ-sponsored politics of history brought the Socialist uprising against the dictatorial corporatist state (*Ständestaat*) of February 1934 to the fore.¹⁵ Against this background, by the early 1950s, memorials for victims of the concentration camps were regarded as instruments of “communist propaganda,”¹⁶ and the former concentration camp at Mauthausen was treated as a Communist *lieu de mémoire* excluded from the Austrian landscape of memory.¹⁷ “The enemy stands on the left”—this formula would determine engagement with the Nazi past for the years to come.

At the same time, a semantic recoding of the dead *Wehrmacht* soldiers evolved. The initial image of Austria’s soldiers as victims in a futile and execrable war implied in the above-cited Declaration of Independence was transformed into an account of heroes who had sacrificed their lives in devoted obligation to their duty (*treue Pflichterfüllung*), in order to “protect the *Heimat* against impetuously intruding enemies.”¹⁸ This new definition was particularly

¹¹See, for example: Oliver Rathkolb, *Die paradoxe Republik. Österreich 1945 bis 2005* (Vienna, 2005), 363–406; Hannes Leidinger and Verena Moritz, *Die Republik Österreich 1919/2008. Überblick, Zwischenbilanz, Neubewertung* (Vienna, 2008), 52–58.

¹²Cf. Winfried R. Garscha, “Entnazifizierung und gerichtliche Ahndung von NS-Verbrechen,” in *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich. Ein Handbuch*, ed. Emmerich Tálos, Ernst Hanisch, Wolfgang Neugebauer, and Reinhard Sieder, 852–883 (Vienna, 2000); Siegfried Göllner, *Die politische Diskurse um “Entnazifizierung.” “Causa Waldheim” und “EU-Sanktionen.” Opfernarrative und Geschichtsbilder in Nationalratsdebatten* (Hamburg, 2009), 43–61.

¹³Rudolf Neck, “Innenpolitik,” in *Das neue Österreich. Geschichte der Zweiten Republik*, ed. Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalnik (Graz, Vienna, Cologne, 1975), 66.

¹⁴Cf. Brigitte Bailer, “Hoch klingt das Lied vom ‘kleinen Nazi’. Die politischen Parteien Österreichs und die ehemaligen Nationalsozialisten,” in *Themen der Zeitgeschichte und der Gegenwart. Arbeiterbewegung – NS-Herrschaft – Rechtsextremismus*, ed. Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (Vienna, 2004) (Schriftenreihe des Dokumentationsarchivs des österreichischen Widerstandes zu Widerstand, NS-Verfolgung und Nachkriegsaspekten), 120–35.

¹⁵Cf. Heidemarie Uhl, “Denkmäler als Medien gesellschaftlicher Erinnerung. Die Denkmallandschaft der Zweiten Republik und die Transformationen des österreichischen Gedächtnisses,” in *Nationen und ihre Selbstbilder. Postdiktatorische Gesellschaften in Europa*, Diktaturen und ihre Überwindung im 20. und 21. Jahrhundert 1, ed. Regina Fritz, Carola Sachse, and Edgar Wolfrum, 62–89 (Göttingen, 2008).

¹⁶G(ustav) A(dolf) Canaval, Paulus und das geistige KZ, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 27/28 March 1954.

¹⁷Cf. Bertrand Perz, *Die KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen 1945 bis zur Gegenwart* (Innsbruck, 2006).

¹⁸“Tapferkeit vor dem Feind,” *Sonntagspost*, 26 July 1959, 20.

conspicuous and programmatic in the context of the traditional Catholic commemorations on All Souls' Day. "From now on," a newspaper article on the occasion of All Hallows in 1949 remarked, the dead soldiers of World War II "will also assume a place of honor in the memory of our people," and not merely as *victims* of the war. "It is quite untrue that the hundreds of thousands were driven to death by a refined system." Rather, they died as "heroes of duty and courage."¹⁹

From the early 1950s onward, almost every Austrian town and village erected a war memorial. Frequently, lists of those who had died between 1939 and 1945 were added to existing memorials dedicated to the local fallen from World War I. The newly engraved inscriptions and commemorative celebrations of wartime "heroes" emphasized a rhetoric of duty and defense of *Heimat*. In this way, the post-World War I tradition of honoring the dead continued in 1945.²⁰ However, an examination of the initial phase of this type of remembrance shows that after 1945 the rhetoric of the heroic soldier's death was not self-evident. Examples from villages and small towns in the province of Styria illustrate the need to emphasize heroism. The first memorials for soldiers killed in World War II in military cemeteries on the battlefields of Eastern Styria emphasized soldiers' "fidelity" and "sense of duty." The consecration of the Trautmannsdorf "heroes' cemetery" (*Heldenfriedhof*) in 1948 gave the parish priest of Bad Gleichenberg the opportunity to emphasize that it was "natural (*eine Selbstverständlichkeit*) to remember the dead in honor" as "they have protected the *Heimat* and furthermore, they embraced the dreadful duty imposed on them so that no hardship and no danger could deter them. Thus they have acquired the title of heroes of duty (*Pflichterfüllung*)."²¹

Expressions and phrases that sought to shield *Wehrmacht* veterans against possible denunciation—a practice said to have developed after the end of the war—also belonged to the rhetorical arsenal of the consecration ceremonies. "Regrettably, after the collapse, the honor of the soldiers was defiled,"²² the organizing committee declared when the memorial at Graz-Andritz was unveiled in 1951. War memorials, claimed the inaugural addresses at the consecration festivities of Ratten's monument in 1953, indicate that "the honor of the soldier" has now become "inviolable" again;²³ they attest that "a soldierly obligation to duty (*Pflichterfüllung*) is among the most supreme of manly virtues and that the observance of the pledged oath of allegiance is finally regarded with the appreciation it deserves again."²⁴ Soldiers have sacrificed their lives "in loyal fulfillment of their duty on the altar of the beloved *Heimat*" (Hartmannsdorf, 1953).²⁵

With the ratification of the Austrian State Treaty in 1955, this period characterized by the erection of local memorials largely came to an end. Nevertheless, the withdrawal of Allied forces at this time did impact the landscape of memory. The years immediately after the

¹⁹"Helden und Opfer. Totengedenken im vierten Jahr nach Kriegsende," *Murtaler Zeitung*, 29 October 1949, 3.

²⁰Cf. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995); Thomas Kahler, "'Gefallen auf dem Feld der Ehre....' Kriegerdenkmäler für die Gefallenen des Ersten Weltkrieges in Österreich unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Entwicklung in Salzburg bis 1938," in *Steinernes Bewusstsein I. Die öffentliche Repräsentation staatlicher und nationaler Identität Österreichs in seinen Denkmälern*, ed. Stefan Riesenfellen, 365–410, (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 1998).

²¹H. Goll, "Jedem Kriegstoten eine würdige Grabstätte. Ein neuer Heldenfriedhof wurde in Trautmannsdorf der Bevölkerung übergeben," *Kleine Zeitung*, 3 November 1948, 4.

²²"Kameradschaft kann nicht sterben. Kriegerdenkmalweihe in Andritz," *Sonntagspost*, 16 September 1951, 9.

²³"Soldatenehre unantastbar," *Sonntagspost*, 2 May 1954, 11.

²⁴"Heldenfriedhof in Ratten geweiht," *Sonntagspost*, 13 September 1953, 23.

²⁵"Nie werden wir euch vergessen!," *Sonntagspost*, 4 October 1953, 19.

ratification of 1955 witnessed the construction of memorials that transcended a local focus and aimed to represent the immediate past of an entire federal province (*Bundesland*). The monuments designed to normatively control, enshrine, and integrate regional wartime memory *Landesehrenmäler* clearly reflected contemporary political power relations. The *Landesehrenmal* on the Riegersburg in Styria (1959), on the Ulrichsberg in Carinthia (1959), on the Geschriebenstein in Burgenland (1961), and in the pilgrimage church of Maria Taferl in Lower Austria (1963),²⁶ along with memorial sites like the Sigmar chapel in Wels (1964), which included a commemorative plaque for the Waffen SS,²⁷ all demonstrated the political power exerted by the *Kameradschaftsbund* and its constituencies.

The intention to present this commemoration of wartime heroes, as a *narrative dispositif*, the sole acceptable, legitimate, and self-evident perspective on the Nazi past tolerated no rival versions of the past. Only irreconcilable Communists questioned the narrative. Memorials to the resistance against the Nazi dictatorship constituted a materialized contradiction to this monopoly of representation. They suggested the social influence exercised by groups who were not prepared to acquiesce to this imagery of the past and who relativized, even challenged, the narrative of heroism. This latent antagonism quickly emerged and became perceptible in several conflicts over memorials.

The *Kameradschaftsbund* and the “Battlefield” Maria Langegg: A Paradigmatic Conflict over Austrian Memory in 1963

Let me illustrate my initial point about the delegitimization of Austria’s self-perception as Nazi Germany’s first victim on the regional and local level and its replacement with counternarratives of heroism ascribed to Austrians who fought in the *Wehrmacht*, with a microanalysis of a paradigmatic conflict over remembrance. In 1963, the Lower Austrian monastery of Maria Langegg witnessed a ferocious controversy over a memorial intended to commemorate both priests killed as soldiers during the war and clergy who had been murdered in the concentration camps. The unveiling of a Lower Austrian *Landesehrenmal* at Maria Taferl had immediately preceded this incident. Both memorials offer us a privileged glimpse into patterns and discrepancies in the politics of history in Austria as they materialized in the memorial landscape. Memorials to victims of the Nazi regime ignited and instigated conflict, whereas memorials dedicated to heroic soldiers produced social consensus. *Wehrmacht* soldiers received that from which resistance fighters remained excluded: unhesitating acceptance and recognition.

The Lower Austrian *Landesehrenmal* at the Maria Taferl pilgrimage site offers a consensus of all those social forces—regional government, political parties, church, and military—that enabled war memorials to appear to represent both the *Heimat* and society as a whole. This official consensus also gave them a kind of self-evidence that even today shapes the politics of history and cultural memory, particularly in rural regions. A few months after the consecration of the *Landesehrenmal*, the Lower Austrian comrades’ association refused to participate in the preparations for the dedication of a plaque designed to commemorate the murdered priests of the diocese, to be placed in the pilgrimage church of Maria Langegg.

²⁶Cf. Joachim Giller, Hubert Mader und Christina Seidl, *Wo sind sie geblieben . . . ? Kriegerdenkmäler und Gefallenenehrung in Österreich* (Vienna, 1992), 120–22.

²⁷Cf. Robert Eiter, “Zum Konflikt um die braunen Flecken von Wels,” in *Steinernes Bewusstsein II. Die öffentliche Repräsentation staatlicher und nationaler Identität Österreichs in seinen Denkmälern*. Vol. 2: *Von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Lisa Retzl and Heidemarie Uhl (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, Forthcoming 2011).

The conflict revealed that tributes to the dead soldier-heroes of World War II implicitly harbored a critique of resistance fighters who had opposed the Nazi regime. The political authorities responded to this crisis in a novel way: They took sides and enacted a set of measures—e.g., a ban on *Kameradschaftsbund* marches—that marked the advent of a process of protracted renunciation of accommodation with unrepentant former Nazis.

On 9 June 1963, the Maria Taferl pilgrimage church, the “unchallenged regional sanctuary of Lower Austria,” saw the unveiling of the *Landesehrenmal*. This memorial, initiated by the *Kameradschaftsbund*, is dedicated to the “dead heroes of 1914–1918 and 1939–1945” and was intended to commemorate the “dreadful struggle (*Ringen*) of our people in all the wars and the bitter fulfillment of duty by our best men.” One preeminent objective of the *Kameradschaftsbund* on this occasion was to demonstrate the organization’s strength by mobilizing its numerous members, who were encouraged to wear their wartime decorations—including the decorations of the German *Wehrmacht*. Another objective was to make visible the support the *Kameradschaftsbund* enjoyed among the highest echelons of Lower Austrian government. Paying tribute to “our dead heroes” was presented not simply as a concern restricted to members of the *Kameradschaftsbund*, but as being an issue of importance to the whole country, to the *Heimat*. The participation of Bishop Franz Zak of St. Pölten and of provincial Governor (*Landeshauptmann*) Leopold Figl, and the presence of the Republic’s army (*Bundesheer*), affirmed the highly official character of the inauguration ceremony.²⁸

Governor Figl’s speech, however, emphasized that “the memorial of honor (*Ehrenmal*) for the soldiers killed should also be a warning memorial (*Mahnmal*) for peace. If we remember the dead heroes . . .” Figl maintained, “we thereby do not indulge in the glorification of war, but rather profoundly condemn it by means of this commemoration.”²⁹

Leopold Figl’s admonition was directed primarily at the *Kameradschaftsbund*, whose display of military splendor at commemorations and flag consecration ceremonies met with increasing criticism. Soldiers’ gatherings that included German *Wehrmacht* officers, the glorification of the *Wehrmacht* at commemorative festivities, and the flaunting of Nazi insignia provoked critical reactions not only from the Communist *Volksstimme*, but also from the Socialist *Arbeiterzeitung* and the Catholic *Furche*.³⁰ The *Kameradschaftsbund* dubbed these interventions symptoms of Communist-induced “tendencies of denunciation,” but it made no secret of its positive attitude toward the *Wehrmacht*. In the context of the dedication of the *Landesehrenmal* at Maria Taferl, *Der Kamerad*, the *Kameradschaftsbund*’s bulletin, repeatedly evoked the traditions of the *Wehrmacht*, the “best *Wehrmacht* of the world.”³¹ What is most remarkable is that it was the *Kameradschaftsbund* itself that now questioned the victim thesis. The contention that “our *Heimat* was the first victim of this force” was rejected as a nonsensical claim: “The countless flowers which framed the peacefully heralded entrance of our *Wehrmacht*” indicate that “Austrians . . . saw these matters quite differently at this time and served in the *Wehrmacht* with other feelings [than those insinuated].” If there was talk of war crimes in *Der Kamerad*, the target was not National Socialism, but rather Communist peoples’ democracies, which were constantly referred to as “concentration camps.”³²

²⁸“Maria Taferl ruft zur Landesehrenmal-Weihe,” *Der Kamerad* 5, no. 5 (1963): 1.

²⁹Quoted in “25.000 bei Landesehrenmalweihe Maria Taferl,” *Der Kamerad* 5, no. 7/8 (1963): 1.

³⁰Cf. Walter Hacker, ed., *Warnung an Österreich. Neonazismus: Die Vergangenheit bedroht die Zukunft* (Vienna, Frankfurt, Zurich, 1966).

³¹O.R., “Soldaten ohne Tradition,” *Der Kamerad* 5, no. 5 (1963): 1.

³²Cf. “Ein merkwürdiger Verein . . .,” *Der Kamerad* 5, no. 6 (1963): 2; O.R., “Soldaten ohne Tradition,” *Der Kamerad* 5, no. 5 (1963): 1.

The contradiction between the two competing cultures of remembrance produced an open confrontation when a new war memorial was erected in the pilgrimage church at Maria Langegg in the autumn of 1963. Marble plaques bore the names of 125 priests and clerics of the Lower Austrian diocese who had been the “victims of both world wars,” as well as the names of three priests who had been murdered by the Nazi regime. After the inclusion of these priests who had been killed in concentration camps for their resistance activities became commonly known, the *Kameradschaftsbund* refused to participate in the ceremony. Bishop Zak received the following warning: “As soon as he (Zak) talks of priests assassinated in the concentration camps, the delegates of the ‘Kameradschaftsbund’ will turn on their heels and march off.”³³

The reasons for this anticipated reaction were laid out in an open statement published in the *Niederösterreichische Landzeitung*. The dedication of the memorial chapel to the priests of Lower Austria “killed in campaign and in the concentration camps” debased the “idea of camaraderie” (*Kameradschaftsgedanke*), because the “honest soldiers, who wore the cloth, stuck to their oath and died for it” were being equated with “various phenomena of the opposite type.”³⁴ Dr. Herbert Faber, president of the Krems *Kameradschaftsbund*, said to the press: “We cannot simply lump soldiers and resistance fighters together. We (the *Kameradschaftsbund* delegates) will immediately retreat collectively from the dedication ceremony if the priests killed in the concentration camps are commemorated.”³⁵

This stance encouraged those critics who regarded the *Kameradschaftsbund* as a menace to democracy who drew attention to the paramilitary forces of the First Republic, whose antagonism had escalated into civil war. Even the conservative *Presse* asked “[a]re the marches of the *Kameradschaftsbund*’s members not a premonition, as they parade in their formations, wearing the *Ritterkreuz* (Knight’s Cross) around their necks or the *Sturmabzeichen*, and marching past their leaders (*Führer*)?”³⁶ Although the majority of the local organizations were only interested in maintaining group ties, or *Kameradschaft*, and although the veterans’ associations were part of local social life, much like the voluntary fire brigade or the brass band, there were also the “extremists” who were concentrated “above all in Lower Austria.” “There, one refuses to accept that German decorations may only be worn without the swastika, there is no sense of where keeping up group ties ends and a—perhaps still unconscious—propensity for neo-Nazism begins, which, if steps are not taken against it, could become a danger again.”³⁷

The extremist attitude of the Lower Austrian *Kameradschaftsbund* made it necessary to react, even more so since, as the socialist *Arbeiterzeitung* reported, the occurrences at Maria Langegg not only “provoked consternation in Austria but also abroad.” The *Arbeiterzeitung* declared the small pilgrimage site Maria Langegg the “intellectual battlefield for the serious and overdue confrontation with stalwart, die-hard Nazis (*Ewiggestrige*).”³⁸ The Social Democratic Interior Minister Franz Olah immediately reacted by disbanding the Krems organization and instigating a nationwide ban on marches. *Kameradschaftsbund* events with a “paramilitary character,” such as marches and parades in military formation, were forbidden.³⁹

³³“Am Beispiel Maria-Langegg,” *Die Furche* 37 (1963): 2.

³⁴Quoted in “Am Beispiel Maria-Langegg.”

³⁵Quoted in “Maria-Langegg—Abfuhr für die Unbelehrbaren,” *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 17 September 1963.

³⁶Quoted in “Maria-Langegg—Abfuhr für die Unbelehrbaren.”

³⁷Felix Gamillscheg, “Scheidung der Geister. Die Extremisten im Kameradschaftsbund werden isoliert,” *Die Presse*, 8 October 1963, 3.

³⁸Gamillscheg, “Scheidung der Geister.”

³⁹Cf. “Olah löst den Kameradschaftsverein Krems auf,” *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 14 December 1963, 1.

As the result of this battle, it became clear that radical forces in the *Kamaradschaftsbund* had gone too far. The president of the Lower Austrian *Kameradschaftsbund* and the president of the Krems organization were forced to resign; the association made efforts to limit the damage by distancing itself from both functionaries and publicly declaring that “on the occasion of the celebrations, those who died in the field, the priests killed in the concentration camps and all the war victims of the parish of Maria Langegg will be commemorated in an appropriate manner.”⁴⁰

The reactions of the state and of the church were remarkable. At the very least, in this instance, they placed limits on the *Kameradschaftsbund*, by then a potent engine of political mobilization. About 1,500 members of the veterans’ association participated in the ceremonial dedication of the memorial chapel. Bishop Zak—according to the account given the *Arbeiterzeitung*—“cloaked in his scarlet regalia . . . like the avenging angel of the Lord with his voice sometimes failing,” spoke “almost exclusively about the terrible infatuation (*Verblendung*) of Fascism.” What had happened in the concentration camps, Zak maintained, was “so egregious that the desire of some to forget it was understandable.” The priests murdered by the Nazi-regime belonged to the “very bravest of the brave; in a time when collective sadism and the mechanical frenzy of extermination raged, they held the word of God over that of men.”⁴¹ By contrast, Governor Figl’s speech offered the two camps in the politics of history a compromise. “I myself did not wear a uniform in the war, but the striped cloth of the concentration camp prisoner. But I say to you: It does not matter whether a man died for Austria on the battlefield or in prison. The verdict on whether he fulfilled his duty can only be decided by his heart.”⁴²

Yet, not all political forces managed to distance themselves so clearly from the “unrepentants,” and the relationship of the two main parties to the veterans’ association remained ambivalent. Certainly, the *Kameradschaftsbund* gained wide support for its fight against the ban on marches, which was soon repealed as a result of political and public pressure.

That the *Kameradschaftsbund*, despite all its public protestations, tended to boycott rather than support the dedication of the memorial in Maria Langegg is because that on the same day, the Upper Austrian *Kameradschaftsbund* held its annual meeting in Linz. Through the participation of Austrian President Alfons Gorbach, the ÖVP openly demonstrated its solidarity with the *Kameradschaftsbund*. Gorbach, who had also been a concentration camp prisoner during the Nazi period, expressed his incomprehension at the attacks on the *Kameradschaftsbund* in front of around 15,000 participants.⁴³ Claiming that the directive of the Interior Minister had not yet been “officially passed on” to the security organs, the ban on appearing in military formation was ignored at this soldiers’ meeting. A large number of the participants are said to have worn decorations from the *Wehrmacht*, such as the Knight’s Cross or the Iron Cross from which the swastikas had not been removed, in contradiction of legal regulations.⁴⁴

The different scenarios of Maria Taferl and Maria Langegg clearly show how the constellation of the politics of history was structured as it emerged from the short phase of honoring resistance fighters in the “Spirit of 1945.” Resistance to National Socialism, a

⁴⁰“Der Kameradschaftsbund dementiert,” *Neues Österreich*, 13 September 1963.

⁴¹Quoted in “Maria-Langegg—Abfuhr für die Unbelehrbaren.” See note 35.

⁴²“Maria-Langegg—Abfuhr für die Unbelehrbaren.”

⁴³“Kameradschaftsbund protestiert,” *Die Presse*, 16 September 1963.

⁴⁴“Hakenkreuze beim Linzer Kameradschaftstreffen,” *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 17 September 1963, 2; “Hitler marschiert nicht mehr im Geiste mit,” *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 21 September 1963, 3.

foundation for the victim thesis, was vilified, memorials to resistance fighters and victims of National Socialism served as furnaces for conflict, whereas memorials commemorating soldiers functioned as symbols of consensual identity. This was a recurrent pattern in the local and regional politics of history.⁴⁵ The commemoration of resistance, mostly initiated and orchestrated by Socialist and Communist protagonists, recalled the conflicts of the “Austrian civil war” (Anton Pelinka) from 1938 to 1945 between National Socialists and those who had opposed Nazi rule.⁴⁶ Erstwhile loyalties were far from effaced and elided, and this applies particularly to the social spheres of villages and small towns. Inhabitants remembered local perpetrators, they recalled who participated in crimes, e.g., in the massacres that occurred during the death march of Hungarian Jews toward the end of the war,⁴⁷ or in the so-called *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd*, the rabbit hunt for Soviet prisoners of war who had managed to escape from the Mauthausen concentration camp in February 1945.⁴⁸ Soldiers’ memorials, on the contrary, served as agents of identity, which permitted the integration of National Socialists into Austrian society through the externalization of National Socialism itself. The engraved demarcation “1939–1945” excluded the Anschluss to Nazi Germany in 1938 and thus codified what could be said in this social sphere and what had to be kept silent.

However, the intellectual battlefield of the Maria Langegg incident marked the beginning of a new positioning on the part of official Austria. The extreme circles within the *Kameradschaftsbund* were recognized for the first time as a serious danger to democracy.

Two years after the conflict at Maria Langegg, when the twentieth anniversary of Austria’s Declaration of Independence was celebrated, another challenge from unrepentant Nazi nostalgics provoked an official dissociation of the Republic from tendencies of what was termed re-Nazification. Immediately before this anniversary, German-nationalist and unabashedly anti-Semitic statements by historian and university professor Taras Borodajkewycz had provoked demonstrations and clashes in the streets. A former Communist resistance fighter was fatally injured in the course of these disturbances.⁴⁹ The unveiling of the Austrian government’s first memorial to the “victims in the struggle (*Kampf*) for Austria’s freedom” (inscription) on 27 April 1965 on the exterior gates of the Vienna Hofburg gave representatives of both governing parties the opportunity to dissociate themselves from the Nazi nostalgics’ politics of history.⁵⁰

This state-sponsored memorial site was a declaration that recognizes resistance as a foundation of the Second Republic—a clear statement directed against the counternarratives to the official victim thesis, which had been gaining in relevance since 1955. The first decade after the State Treaty was a decade of renegotiating memory, a decade of testing how far the

⁴⁵Heidmarie Uhl, “Maria Taferl—Maria Langegg: ‘Helden’ und ‘Erscheinungen gegensätzlicher Art.’ Gefallenengedenken und Geschichtspolitik in der Nachkriegszeit am Beispiel zweier niederösterreichischer Kriegerdenkmäler des Jahres 1963,” in *Zeitreise Heldenberg. Lauter Helden*, Katalog zur Niederösterreichischen Landesausstellung 2005, ed. Wolfgang Müller-Funk and Georg Kugler, 104–13 (Horn-Vienna, 2005).

⁴⁶Anton Pelinka, “Der verdrängte Bürgerkrieg,” in *Das große Tabu. Österreichs Umgang mit seiner Vergangenheit*, ed. Anton Pelinka and Erika Weinzierl, 143–53 (Vienna, 1987).

⁴⁷Eleonore Lappin-Eppel, *Ungarisch-jüdische Zwangsarbeiter und Zwangsarbeiterinnen in Österreich 1944/45. Arbeitseinsatz – Todesmärsche – Folgen* (Vienna, 2010).

⁴⁸Linda DeMeritt, “Representations of History: The Mühlviertler Hasenjagd as Word and Image,” *Modern Austrian Literature* 32, no. 4 (1999): 134–45.

⁴⁹Gerard Kasemir, “Spätes Ende für ‘wissenschaftlich’ vorgetragenen Rassismus. Die Affäre Borodajkewycz,” in *Politische Affären und Skandale in Österreich. Von Mayerling bis Waldheim*, ed. Michael Gehler and Hubert Sickinger, 486–501 (Thaur, Vienna, Munich, 1995).

⁵⁰Uhl, *Denkmäler als Medien gesellschaftlicher Erinnerung*, 78–79.

accommodation with unrepentant former National Socialists could go. The prevalent public attitudes in 1955 regarded the official narrative of Austria's victim thesis and disentanglement from Nazism—which in hindsight was identified as a prerequisite of the State Treaty—as obsolete in the light of the latter's eventual ratification.

For example, in 1957 the commemorative plaque for the Catholic resistance fighter Franz Mair, installed in the Innsbruck Diet immediately after the end of the war, was removed and replaced with a watered-down version. Now the “Nazis could say: we finally won,” as a letter to the editor of the *Volksbote* remarked.⁵¹ The original inscription had to be restored, however, with some small changes after fervent criticism from Catholic circles.⁵² In Vienna, the torchlight-procession that crossed the Ringstraße in 1959 on the occasion of the Schiller anniversary was, to many, a warning symptom of returning German nationalism. Critical voices warned of neo-Nazi activities and of re-Nazification tendencies in the first decade following the ratification of the State Treaty.⁵³ In this context, the memorial erected by the federal government to pay tribute to Austria's “struggle for freedom” was a sign of official Austria's noncompromising position vis-à-vis Nazi nostalgia.⁵⁴ This clear commitment to renewing the victim thesis as a legitimate historical framework for understanding the recent past was, however, limited to the national, state level. Local and regional memory politics remained largely unaffected by this narrative.

In subsequent years, scholarly engagement with the Nazi past from a perspective which emphasized resistance and persecution began to take off. Contemporary history (*Zeitgeschichte*) became an established subdiscipline at Austria's universities, and committed young historians who experienced their decisive socialization in and around the 1968 student movement initiated research projects on the systems of persecution established under Nazi rule.⁵⁵ Resistance against Nazism also began to assume a place in schoolbooks.⁵⁶ Paradoxically, the victim thesis first began to prevail in the collective consciousness after its reinstallation in the mid 1960s. In this way, narratives that contradicted the memorial culture for the fallen *Wehrmacht* soldiers still practiced actively in local and regional environments became an indispensable part of the younger generation's intellectual toolkit. This disjunction of narratives structured the positions available in the later debate over Waldheim, which in turn clearly reflected intergenerational tensions.

By contrast, little seems to have changed on the regional level of memorial culture. The conflicts of the early postwar period had waned, both rival memorial cultures had carved out their respective territories, and new memorials were scarcely erected. The victims' associations, on the one hand, and the veterans' organizations, on the other, repeated their annual rituals of commemoration. On All Hallows' and All Souls' days, the former laid

⁵¹“Die geänderte Tafel vor dem Landhaus,” *Der Volksbote*, 7 October 1957.

⁵²Cf. Gabriele Rath, Andrea Sommerauer, and Martha Verdorfer, eds., *Bozen – Innsbruck. Zeitgeschichtliche Stadtrundgänge* (Vienna, Bozen, 2000), 96f.; Horst Schreiber, *Widerstand und Erinnerung in Tirol 1938–1998. Franz Mair—Lehrer, Freigeist, Widerstandskämpfer* (Innsbruck, Vienna, Munich, 2000), 130–62.

⁵³Walter Hacker, “Warnung an Österreich,” in *Warnung an Österreich. Neonazismus: Die Vergangenheit bedroht die Zukunft*, ed. Walter Hacker (Vienna, Frankfurt, Zurich, 1966), 9.

⁵⁴On the caesura in the 1960s, Ernst Hanisch, *Der lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert*, Österreichische Geschichte 1890–1990 (Vienna, 1994), 456f.

⁵⁵Helmut Konrad, “Die 68er Generation der österreichischen ZeithistorikerInnen – eine Perspektive auf generationenspezifische Sozialisationsmerkmale und Karriereverläufe,” *Zeitgeschichte* 30, no. 6 (2003): 315–19.

⁵⁶Peter Utgaard, *Remembering and Forgetting Nazism. Education, National Identity and the Victim Myth in Postwar Austria* (New York, Oxford, 2003), 90–120; Ina Markova, “Geschichtsklitterungen – Zäsuren – Neuverhandlungen. Visuelle und sprachliche Strategien der Repräsentation der österreichischen Vergangenheit 1934 – 1938 – 1945 – 1955 in Geschichtsschulbüchern,” (Dipl. Arbeit, University of Vienna, 2010), 140–45.

wreaths on the memorial sites to resistance victims and concentration camp prisoners, whereas the latter held memorial ceremonies for wartime heroes. The structures of social power associated with these rituals of commemoration diverged remarkably. The *Kameradschaftsbund's* commemoration of soldierly heroes became an indispensable part of the pattern of local folklore as a result of participation of political parties, guilds, and school pupils, but also primarily because of its integration into Catholic ceremonies of mourning the dead.

The official presence of the Nazi regime's victims remained marginal outside Vienna. But even in Vienna, under the premises of anti-Fascist memorial culture, the resistance against the dictatorial Corporate State and the civil war of February 1934 constituted the main foci of historical reference.⁵⁷ The retroactive integration of the period 1934–1938 into the commemoration of the victims of “Fascism” was a salient feature of a Social Democratic politics of history. Already in 1948 the municipal memorial initially dedicated to the victims of Nazi persecution had to be complemented with commemorative plaques paying tribute to the casualties of the battle against the Corporate State.⁵⁸

Against this background, it is not surprising that in postwar Austria the commemoration of Jewish victims remained almost entirely absent from the public sphere. Above all, it was the Jewish community itself that commemorated its victims. In the main, this consisted of unremarkable commemoration plaques, which remembered the “murdered brothers and sisters” (Offices of the Jewish Community in Graz, 1963). The community feared anti-Semitic reactions, and not without cause. Often plaques were placed inside buildings, for example, in the foyer of the synagogue in Vienna's Seitenstettengasse, the only synagogue to have largely been spared the destruction of the 1938 November pogrom. The plaque with the inscription “In memory of the Jewish men, women and children, who lost their lives in the fateful years 1938–1945” remained the only significant place of memory in Vienna dedicated to the Austrian victims of the Shoah until the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial in 2000.

War Memorials and the Challenges to a New Culture of Commemoration in Post-Waldheim Austria

It was not until the Waldheim debate in 1986 that the public commemoration of the fallen *Wehrmacht* soldiers became an issue of public debate again. The debate over Waldheim “finally uncorked the bottle in which the ghost of Austria's past resided” and brought to the fore the previously hidden contradictions and controversies that characterized Austria's engagement with the past.⁵⁹ Kurt Waldheim's strategy of exculpation when confronted with allegations of his perpetration of or involvement in war crimes was very much in the vein of the glorification of his soldierly duty. Waldheim famously maintained that he “did the same as (*nichts anderes als*) hundreds of thousands of other Austrians, namely fulfilling my duty as a soldier.”⁶⁰ Waldheim's position split the country into two camps whose fault lines ran

⁵⁷*Gedenken und Mahnen in Vienna 1934–1945. Gedenkstätten zu Widerstand und Verfolgung, Exil, Befreiung. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes and Herbert Exenberger, Heinz Arnberger, and Claudia Kuretsidis-Haider (Vienna, 1998).

⁵⁸Klambauer, *Österreichische Gedenkkultur zu Widerstand und Krieg*.

⁵⁹Historian Helene Maimann, quoted in “Über Österreichs Vergangenheit offen reden. Eine Diskussion im Dr. Karl-Renner-Institut,” *Die Zukunft* 1 (1988): 5.

⁶⁰Quoted in Neues Österreich, ed., *Pflichterfüllung. Ein Bericht über Kurt Waldheim* (Vienna, 1986).

across parties, families, and generations. On the one hand, Waldheim became a figure of identification for the so-called “war generation” and enabled many to repudiate any criticism of their wartime involvement as an attack on their biography and family histories. On the other hand, he also came to stand for the past with which Austria had still failed to come to terms. At the heart of the debate lay Waldheim’s justificatory argument of his “fulfillment of duty” in the German *Wehrmacht*. It was this very point that crumbled the foundations upon which the self-evident tradition of soldiers’ commemorations had rested.

Soldiers’ memorials now appeared in a different light. They reemerged from this conflict as signs and symptoms of a “false” memory, a memory that clearly contradicted Austria’s claim of victimhood and of its claim to have engaged in resistance and the “struggle for freedom.” More alarmingly, the memorials appeared to have eclipsed Nazism from history and retroactively to have transformed a National Socialist war of aggression into a battle to protect the *Heimat*. As political scientist Anton Pelinka observed in the first analyses of war memorials in 1991, war memorials “unequivocally and irreconcilably contradict the ‘philosophy’ of the Second Republic; there is no reference [here] to Austria’s liberation by Allied forces, no reference to Austrian resistance, no mention of Austria’s German occupation.”⁶¹ The constitutive image of soldierly duty and obligation became all the more fragile when an exhibition organized by the Hamburg Institute of Social Research threw the *Wehrmacht*’s involvement in the war of extermination in Eastern Europe into relief. This *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, as it came to be known, fomented emotional debates on collective and individual guilt that had massive repercussions on the memorial discourses that were in circulation.⁶²

Since 1986 there have been noticeable symptoms of a new memorial culture dedicated to the victims of National Socialism and the Shoah, along with the implementation of new concepts of the past in Austria’s public sphere. The erection of new memorials in the heart of Vienna (“Monument against War and Fascism” by Alfred Hrdlicka, completed in 1988, “Holocaust Memorial” by Rachel Whiteread, unveiled in 2000) found international resonance. This new sensibility for the voids and lacunae of collective memory is not limited to Vienna. Smaller towns have also started to commemorate hitherto “forgotten” victims of massacres, of detention, and of euthanasia. Memorials to murdered Jewish citizens, as well as to Roma and Sinti, have been erected; and for the first time some rural communities have opted to commemorate and honor local victims of political persecution. This partial reorientation owes as much to the revision of Austria’s role as the first victim of Nazism that took place in the aftermath of 1986 as it does to the growing recognition of the “share of responsibility for the affliction and harm brought to other humans and peoples not by Austria as a state but by citizens of this country,”⁶³ as federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky remarked in his address to the Austrian parliament on 8 July 1991.

The caesura of 1986 has bolstered critical attitudes toward justifications of National Socialism linked to the tradition of honoring fallen soldiers, as this emerged in postwar Austria. The postwar rhetoric of fulfilling one’s duty and defending the homeland, perpetuated by veterans’ associations and engraved in local war memorials all over the country, began to

⁶¹Anton Pelinka, “Vorwort,” in *Kriegerdenkmäler. Vergangenheit in der Gegenwart*, ed. Reinhold Gärtner and Sieglinde Rosenberger (Innsbruck, 1991), 7.

⁶²Cf. Hannes Heer, Walter Manoschek, Alexander Pollak, Ruth Wodak, eds., *Wie Geschichte gemacht wird. Zur Konstruktion von Erinnerungen an Wehrmacht und Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Vienna, 2003); Hannes Heer, ed., *The Discursive Construction of History: Remembering the Wehrmacht’s War of Annihilation* (Basingstoke, 2008).

⁶³Quoted in Gerhard Botz and Gerald Sprengel, eds., *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte. Verdrängte Vergangenheit, Österreich-Identität, Waldheim und die Historiker*, Studien zur Historischen Sozialwissenschaft 13, 2nd edition (Frankfurt, New York, 2008), 645f.

attract public criticism and debate. In particular, this attention affected the annual commemorations held at the Carinthian *Landesehrenmal* on the Ulrichsberg.⁶⁴ This commemoration offers an occasion for various *Wehrmacht* and Waffen-SS veterans' leagues and unions from all of Europe to meet and has aroused particularly acerbic criticism, directed in particular at the participation of the Austrian army, the *Bundesheer*, in the ceremonies. The observances on the Ulrichsberg provide a venue where the specific appreciation of and justifications for National Socialist warfare can be reiterated and modified, and where "comrades of the Waffen-SS" are explicitly included in these tributes.⁶⁵

In 1990, Jörg Haider, then leader of the Freedom Party (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) and governor of Carinthia, addressed the veterans, among them former members of the Waffen-SS. "Your sacrifice will be put into perspective in the years to come, because the overarching development of Europe will reveal that you laid the foundations for peace and liberty."⁶⁶ The commemoration ceremonies on the Ulrichsberg in Carinthia were virtually the last place in Austria to be characterized by the rhetoric of the postwar era, and the annual debates offered a *déjà vu* perception of the battlefields of the history of politics of the 1960s. In the meantime, even this ritual has exhausted itself. In 2009, Minister of Defense Norbert Darabos (SPÖ) prohibited the participation of the Austrian army at the Ulrichsberg meeting; in 2010, the ceremony was cancelled.⁶⁷

Waffen-SS veterans also repeatedly participated in the commemorations held at the soldiers' memorial in Salzburg's municipal cemetery, which also provokes critical responses on a national scale.⁶⁸ The 1 November parades of *Kameradschaft IV*, (keepers of the flame of the Waffen-SS's heritage) and the laying of a wreath with the inscription "To the fallen (*gefallenen*) comrades of the Waffen-SS" on the ribbon have been met by protest rallies. The *Kameradschaftsbund*, however, indignantly rejects any criticism of the ceremony or of *Kameradschaft IV* involvement. In 2000, a counter commemoration initiative intending to pay tribute to the victims of National Socialism was planned for the same time as the commemoration ceremony of the *Kameradschaft IV*. Fearing public clashes, the Salzburg federal police department prohibited the counter event, arguing that—according to official parlance—it was "not a customary folk (*volksgebräuchlich*) gathering."⁶⁹ This argument shows very clearly that the incorporation of commemorative practices into the fabric of local and regional folklore had proved successful and pervasive.

But this was not the only case in which the *Kameradschaftsbund* faced public criticism. Increasingly, the veterans' associations now had to defend those monuments and rituals that had heretofore been a self-evident part of political folklore. In 1990, the city of Salzburg mandated a study of the inscriptions and dedications on municipal war memorials.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁴Cf. Walter Fanta and Valentin Sima, "Stehst mitten drin im Land." *Das europäische Kameradentreffen auf dem Kärntner Ulrichsberg von den Anfängen bis heute* (Klagenfurt/Celovec, 2003).

⁶⁵Hans Klingbacher, "Der Österreichische Kameradschaftsbund. Organisation und Strukturen unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der historischen Entwicklung," (PhD diss., University of Vienna, 1987), 113–14.

⁶⁶Quoted in Hubertus Czernin, ed., *Wofür ich mich meinetwegen entschuldige. Haider, beim Wort genommen* (Vienna, 2000), 26.

⁶⁷"Ulrichsberg-Treffen: Darabos sagt Teilnahme des Heeres ab," *Die Presse*, 25 August 2009. http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/503844/Ulrichsberg_Darabos-sagt-Teilnahme-des-Heeres-ab.

⁶⁸Cf. http://www.doew.at/projekte/rechts/chronik/2000_11/salzburg.html

⁶⁹Quoted in Doron Rabinovici, "Tracht und Zweittracht. Oder Politik als Folklore," in Rabinovici, *Credo und Credit. Einmischungen* (Frankfurt, 2001), 131.

⁷⁰Herbert Dachs, "Über die Opfer der Kriege und ihre Denkmäler. Bemerkungen zu einer bitteren Kontroverse," in *Salzburger Jahrbuch für Politik 1991*, ed. Herbert Dachs and Roland Floimair, 194–205 (Salzburg, Vienna, 1991).

Kameradschaftsbund responded with a resolution that castigated this “tactless desecration” and “iconoclast devastation.”⁷¹ The creation of civil society initiatives against those forms of remembrance that linked traditional forms of commemorating the dead to the trivialization of National Socialism also led to long-running conflicts in the Upper Austrian town of Wels. In 1988, the initiative “Citizens of Wels against Fascism” demanded in vain the removal of the commemorative plaque dedicated to the *Waffen-SS* in the Sigmar chapel. There was no majority for this motion on the city council, despite the support of eminent historians for the measure. The eventual removal of the plaque did not result from continuing criticism—the debate ended when the plaque was stolen in 1994.⁷² In the course of this protracted conflict, Wels became a symbol of the tenacity of so-called “brown spots,” *braune Flecken*, in the political culture of the Second Republic. Nowadays, the Wels initiative cooperates closely with the municipal authorities, and the city of Wels erected a Holocaust memorial in 2004.

These examples show that the fundamental debates over the politics of history in post-Waldheim Austria did not fail to affect the war memorials. These conflicts and controversies challenged the basis on which the commemoration of fallen soldiers in the Second Republic had been built. They also produced a distancing from the trivialization of National Socialism and from the justification of World War II as a defense of the homeland on the part of official Austria. The latter argument had constituted, to a certain extent, the founding myth for commemorations of fallen soldiers. The symbolic power of the social groups whose influence materialized in the war memorials themselves has lost relevance over the years. In contrast, those who participated in military resistance to the Nazi regime, who were denigrated in the postwar period as traitors to their country (*Vaterlandsverräter*) and ostracized as murderers of their comrades (*Kameradenmörder*), have come to assume a fixed place in public commemoration in recent years.

In particular, within the Austrian army, an institution hitherto closely connected to the maintenance of traditions practiced by the *Kameradschaftsbund*, critical voices successfully called for a new approach to military cultures of memory. Hence, it was a highly symbolic act that the inner courtyard of the Rossauer Barracks in Vienna, the seat of the Ministry of Defense, was renamed the “Carl Szokoll-Hof” in 2005, after a member of the military resistance.⁷³ That the honoring of the resistance not only took place at the level of the state could be seen through numerous other initiatives.

For example, in 2004 the academy for noncommissioned officers (*Unteroffiziersakademie*) in Enns, Upper Austria, erected a memorial to Robert Bernardis, executed because of his participation in the attempted coup d'état of 20 July 1944.⁷⁴ On the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the Anschluss, 11 March 2008, the military command of Vienna unveiled a commemorative plaque in honor of three officers executed in the very last days of the war. This ceremony was attended both by the Minister of Defense and the Mayor of Vienna.⁷⁵ The “new consciousness” characteristic of the army’s transformed sense of its past is also reflected in its concerted attempts to “revise misconceived traditions.”⁷⁶ This new

⁷¹“Resolution des Österreichischen Kameradschaftsbundes und des Österreichischen Schwarzen Kreuzes – Kriegsgräberfürsorge, ‘Hände weg von unseren Totengedenkstätten,’” *Der Kamerad* 5 (1990).

⁷²Cf. Eiter, *Zum Konflikt um die braunen Flecken von Wels*.

⁷³Cf. *Das Amtsgebäude in der Roßau – ein Haus mit Geschichte*, ed. Militärhistorische Denkmalkommission (Vienna, 2006), 88.

⁷⁴Peter Barthaus and Matthias Hoy, “Traditionspflege vor neuen Herausforderungen,” *Der Soldat*, 13 February 2008.

⁷⁵“Schicksalsjahr 1938.” Gedenktafel für Widerstandskämpfer. <http://www.bmlv.gv.at/cms/artikel.php?ID=3896>

⁷⁶Barthaus and Hoy, “Traditionspflege.”

trend can be seen in a new sensibility for the problematic historical heritage of barracks and property owned by the army: the former sites of executions, suspected mass graves, and wartime relics found in military museums. An independent commission not subjected to ministerial directives has been entrusted with reviewing the *Bundesheer's* commemorative plaques, buildings, and real estate.⁷⁷

In the final chapter of *Postwar*, historian Tony Judt assessed the current tendencies in European memory. The decades-long blocking out of National Socialism under the auspices of postwar myths has given way to the idea that today's Europe is, according to Judt, built "out of the crematoria of Auschwitz."⁷⁸ "Those who would become full Europeans in the dawn of the twenty-first century" must recognize the Holocaust as a European point of reference.⁷⁹ This transformation also characterizes the development in cultures of remembrance in Austria. This not only refers to the spectacular shattering of the official myth of Austria as the first victim of National Socialism. The confrontation with the suppressed Nazi past has also robbed the often hegemonic local and regional countermemory rooted in the commemoration of fallen soldiers of its status as self-evident. The rhetoric of commemorating heroes has largely faded, but in their materiality, the soldiers' memorials are still present and point to a culture of remembrance that aimed at the symbolic rehabilitation, the restoration of the "honor" of the former *Wehrmacht* soldiers. The Austrian case clearly raises the question of how the wartime service of the German *Wehrmacht* was integrated not only into the memory cultures of the two German states after 1945, but also into that of other European societies.⁸⁰

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⁷⁷Wilhelm Theuretsbacher, "Belastete Kasernen. Denkmalkommission: Das Bundesheer erforscht die Geschichte seiner Liegenschaften und säubert die Kasernen von NS-Symbolen," *Kurier*, 6 May 2008, 12.

⁷⁸Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2007), 831.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 803.

⁸⁰Cf. Jörg Echternkamp, Stefan Martens, eds., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Europa. Erfahrung und Erinnerung* (Paderborn, 2007); Jörg Echternkamp and Manfred Hettling, eds., *Bedingt einsatzbereit. Soldatengedenken in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2008); Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II* (Bloomington, 2010).