Sinking Ships, the Lost *Heimat* and Broken Taboos: Günter Grass and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany

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'History, more precisely, the history that we are stirring up, is a stopped up toilet. We flush and flush, the shit still floats back up.'[1] Since February 2002 Paul Pokriefke, the narrator of Günter Grass's latest book, *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle* (Walking like a crab: a novella), has offered these words of wisdom to several hundred thousand readers who have made Grass's book an immediate bestseller in Germany. With plans for the book to be translated into no fewer than thirty-one languages, Pokriefke's insights will soon be available to an international audience.[2]

Those who have followed Grass's writing for the last four decades or so might expect that the past that preoccupies him in *Im Krebsgang* is the history of National Socialism, mass murder, and German crimes against humanity. Grass, the winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1999, acclaimed as 'the most important German-language writer of the later twentieth century',[3] is well known for his consistent commitment to making the Holocaust central to the collective memory of Germans. 'The incomprehensible and indefinable quality of Auschwitz has grown over time', commented Grass in 1990. Auschwitz remains an 'open wound' for Germans, 'a guilt

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[1] Günter Grass, *Im Krebsgang: Eine Novelle* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2002), 116. All translations from the German are my own.

[2] Eva-Maria Mester, 'Deutschstunde in Lübeck: Übersetzer trafen sich mit Günter Grass', Deutsche Presse-Agentur (DPA)-Europadienst, 2 April 2002.

[3] Patrick O'Neill, *Günter Grass Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1999), 13.

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that will remain'.[4] With the passage of time, guilt – the German word is *Schuld* – only seemed to increase, multiplying into *Schulden* – the German word for debt. For Grass, these debts can never be paid off.[5] As the Berlin wall fell and German unification was imminent, he explicitly, loudly, and repeatedly warned his fellow citizens that it had required 'all of Germany' to mount the 'will to accomplish an organized genocide', Unified Germans were capable of unspeakable acts, and Germans would never 'get around Auschwitz' nor should they ever attempt to avoid this past.[6]

When Grass flew to Stockholm to receive the Nobel prize, the weekly news magazine *Der Spiegel* wryly reported that he was on Swedish soil for only nine minutes before he first mentioned Auschwitz. A few questions from journalists were all that was needed to prompt Grass to 'name the well-known mortal sin'.[7] In his acceptance speech, Grass cited Theodor W. Adorno's judgement that 'Auschwitz marks a rift, an unbridgeable gap in the history of civilization', arguing that 'the only way writing after Auschwitz, poetry or prose, could proceed was by becoming memory and preventing the past from coming to an end'. The title of Grass's talk, 'To be Continued . . .' was borrowed from the nineteenth-century serialized novel, but was also meant to describe discussions of German history and memory:

> How many times when one or another interest group calls for considering what happened a closed chapter – we need to return to normalcy and put our shameful past behind us – how many times has literature resisted. And rightly so! Because it is a position as foolish as it is understandable; because every time the end of the post-war period is proclaimed in Germany – as it was ten years ago, with the Wall down and unity in the offing – the past catches up with us.[8]

In 2002, however, it was not the history of German crimes against humanity that most interested Grass. Rather, in this new novella, the biggest chunk blocking his metaphorical plumbing was a tale of German suffering. *Im Krebsgang* relates the story of the sinking of the German ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* by a Soviet submarine on 30 January 1945. The novella also tells the story of the *Gustloff's* beginnings. The Nazis originally commissioned the ship in 1937 as part of their 'Strength Through Joy' (*Kraft durch Freude* or KdF) programme, naming it in honor of a party official in charge of organisational work in Switzerland who had been gunned down by a Jewish medical student a year earlier. A martyr to the cause, Gustloff was to live on in the ship that bore his name and symbolised the Nazi's promised classless *Volksgemeinschaft*

[4] 'Der vitale und vulgäre Wunsch, Künstler zu werden: Gespräch, Köln, 16. November 1990', in Volker Neuhaus and Daniela Hermes, eds., *Die 'Danziger Trilogie' von Günter Grass: Texte, Daten, Bilder* (Frankfurt am Main: Sammlung Luchterhand, 1991), 11.

[5] Jans-Werner Müller, *Another Country: German Intellectuals, Unification and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 80. For a good introduction to Grass's biography, see Volker Neuhaus, *Schreiben gegen die verstreichende Zeit: Zu Leben und Werk von Günter Grass* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997); also Ute Brandes, *Günter Grass* (Berlin: Edition Colloquium im Wissenschaftsverlag Volker Spiess, 1998).

[6] Günter Grass, *Schreiben nach Auschwitz: Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesung* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990), 41–2.

[7] Alexander Smoltczyk, 'Ein Butt und drei Bücklinge', *Der Spiegel*, 13 Dec. 1999; also Müller, *Another Country*, 89.

[8] Nobel Lecture 1999, http://www.literature-awards-com/gunter_grass_lecture_1999.html.

(community of the people). The *Gustloff* transported the right sort of Germans – those who met the criteria for inclusion in the racial state – to far-off places, offering chances for relaxation and foreign travel to those who had never before enjoyed such pleasures. But by 1945 the ship was leaving the Baltic coast from a port near Danzig, carrying not holidaymakers, but refugees fleeing from the oncoming Red Army. Also on board were nearly four thousand submarine recruits, some soldiers, 370 naval personnel and anti-aircraft guns. Grass's narrator, Paul Pokriefke, has a very special relationship to the *Gustloff*. In January 1945, his mother, Tulla, a native of Langfuhr, a town near Danzig in East Prussia, is carrying Paul *in utero*. She is able to secure a place on the overcrowded ship and miraculously survives the attack of the Soviet submarine. As many as 9,000 other passengers were not so fortunate.[9]

Hauled out of the sea by a German rescue team, Tulla gives birth. After the war, mother and son live in Schwerin – now in the 'Soviet Zone of Occupation' – where at his mother's knee Paul grows up hearing endless variations on the theme of the *Gustloff*'s tragic demise. In a socialist state where refugees are labelled 'resettlers' and where the Soviet Union is a liberating ally, not a barbarous villain, she finds few others willing to hear her stories. Just before the wall goes up in 1961, Paul leaves East Germany for West Berlin, where he becomes a mediocre university student, then an undistinguished journalist. The sinking of the *Gustloff* and the ending of the war in the east in no way interest him. He is a gun for hire, writing first for the right-wing Springer press, then for a leftist newspaper. No one will pay for tales of German suffering, and he admits that 'around the middle of the 1960s, [he'd] had it with the past'.[10]

Historical memory skips a generation. The narrator discovers that his seventeen-year-old son Konny is a major contributor to a website devoted to the history of the *Gustloff* and its destruction. The father pursues the story in search of his son – and in search of himself – finally realizing that it should have been his generation's obligation to report the story of the 'invasion of the Soviet Army into the Reich' and 'to describe the misery of the East Prussian refugees: the treks westward in winter, death in snowdrifts, death on the side of the road and in holes in the ice when the frozen Frisches Haff [the body of water connecting Königsberg to Danzig and separated from the Baltic by a narrow sliver of land] began to break from the falling bombs and under the weight of horses . . . The white death'.[11] His failure as a father – and as a recorder of this German tragedy – has left his son to discover a highly selective version of the past from his grandmother and to create his own history in the virtual reality of the Internet.

[9] According to an account Grass cites, Gustloff was quickly inducted into the Nazi pantheon of heroes. See Wolfgang Diewerge, *Der Fall Gustloff: Vorgeschichte und Hintergründe der Bluttat von Davos*, 2nd edn (Munich: Verlag Franz Eher, 1936). For details of the ship's history and the Soviet submarine attack, Grass draws in particular on Heinz Schön, *Die 'Gustloff'-Katastrophe: Bericht eines Überlebenden über die grösste Schiffskatastrophe im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, 4th edn (Stuttgart: Motorbuch, 1995).

[10] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 77.

[11] *Ibid.*, 99.

The end of the Second World War and the consequences of the Red Army's seizure of East Prussia are not new subjects for Grass. *The Tin Drum*, the book that first won him acclaim when it was published in 1958, begins in Danzig and includes descriptions not only of the Nazi seizure of the city in 1939 but also of its forcible occupation by the Soviets fewer than six years later. The two novels that followed in quick succession – *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years* – also brought Grass back to Danzig and German defeat at the war's end. Like many other 'exiles, refugees, migrants', commented Salman Rushdie, Grass 'carried a city around with him in his baggage', making Grass a representative of 'this century of migrations'.[12] Labeled the 'Danziger Trilogy', these earlier works are now joined by *Im Krebsgang*. A trio has become a quartet.

Between the publication of *Dog Years* and *Im Krebsgang*, however, lie more than three decades in which Grass's active involvement in politics – particularly as a supporter of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) – has left him spending far more time reflecting on Auschwitz than on the expulsion of Germans from east central Europe at the end of the war. When he accompanied SPD Chancellor Willy Brandt to Warsaw in 1970, it was to commemorate Jewish victims of Nazi crimes and seek reconciliation with the nation the Nazis had set out to subjugate completely, not to remember German victims of Soviet aggression. Eschewing the radical politics of 1968, Grass claimed to be a realist, an advocate of evolution, not revolution.[13] But along with the '68ers, he insisted on the centrality of Auschwitz for West German political culture and public memory.[14]

In *Im Krebsgang*, Tulla Pokriefke, a character first introduced in *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years*, relentlessly exhorts her son to tell the story of another, forgotten German past, one in which Germans were not perpetrators, but victims. Visions of the *Gustloff*'s sinking haunt her. 'You have to write about it,' she tells her son. 'You owe us that because you were lucky enough to survive'.[15] Grass knows about the responsibility of the survivor. He has frequently commented on the 'dubious good luck' that allowed him to be alive in May 1945. Conscripted late in the war and sent into battle against the Red Army, he looked on as many others were left 'dead, torn to shreds, or mutilated' in an intense gun battle with the Soviets.[16] Because he 'accidentally survived', he bore a particular obligation to tell the story of National Socialism and the war. Unlike Chancellor Helmut Kohl – roughly Grass's age – the author never spoke of the 'blessing of a late birth' that somehow absolved those who had come of age only after 1945 from bearing any responsibility for National Socialism. But in 2002, the survivor recalled another past – the sinking of the *Gustloff*.

[12] Quoted in Neuhaus, *Schreiben gegen die verstreichende Zeit*, 14–15, see also 35–6.

[13] Günter Grass, 'Die angelesene Revolution', *frontal*, 4, 46 (Fall 1968), republished in Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Franz Josef Görtz, eds., *Günter Grass: Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung* (Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 1971), 128–36.

[14] See, e.g., Günter Grass, *Geschenkte Freiheit: Rede zum 8. Mai 1945* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985).

[15] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 31.

[16] Quoted in Neuhaus and Hermes, *Die 'Danziger Trilogie'*, 59.

The publication of *Im Krebsgang* has prompted a national sigh of relief that has resounded in much of its reception by the popular media. The mass-circulation weekly *Der Spiegel* was not alone in endorsing the need to recall a history – long put off-limits, it claimed – which featured Germans as victims, not perpetrators. 'Beyond political correctness' – that silenced any discussion of German suffering – it now seemed not only possible but legitimate and necessary to tell stories of 'the air war and the mass flight more or less without inhibition'.[17] *Im Krebsgang* illuminated the 'path of suffering of over fourteen million East Prussians, Pomeranians and Silesians, who lost their homes between 1944 and 1947 (of whom hundreds of thousands, perhaps two million, died).' This 'dark chapter' in Germany's history was now a 'theme that had advanced to the top of the list'. The time had come to acknowledge 'Germans as Victims' announced the headline in *Der Spiegel*.[18] With this history in place, Germany's historical plumbing could finally function freely.

Grass's book is an important intervention into discussions about history and memory in postwar Germany. When Germany's greatest living writer speaks, many people will listen. Nobel-prizewinning writers are, however, not necessarily good historians. The history that Grass gets wrong in *Im Krebsgang* is not the sinking of the *Gustloff* or the flight of Germans from eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. Rather, what he presents only incompletely is the history of how Germans have remembered and represented these events since 1945. In the 1950s, stories of German loss and suffering were central to the politics of memory in the Federal Republic, and even in the 1960s and 1970s, as many West Germans focused more on the victims of Germans than on German victims, they never entirely faded from view. In the 1980s, tales of the expulsion that had dominated the 'memory landscape'[19] of the immediate postwar years once again defined a central point of reference in the public remembrance of the war's end. I want to use *Im Krebsgang* as a starting point to fill in this history, outlining how Germans – particularly West Germans – have remembered the end of the war in eastern Germany in the last fifty or so years and how the larger political context has framed the public articulation of memory. Then I want to speculate about why Grass has chosen to write on this topic now. And, finally, I am interested in exploring how historians can use this book to illuminate the traumatic events that surrounded the end of the Second World War and the categories

[17] Volker Hage, '"Das tausendmalige Sterben"', *Der Spiegel*, 4 Feb. 2002. The articles on Grass's novel and historical memories of the expulsion were collected and published in a special issue, *Die Flucht der Deutschen: Die SPIEGEL-Serie über Vertreibung aus dem Osten*, Nr. 2 (2002), an edition of 'Special: Das Magazin zum Thema'.

[18] Hans-Joachim Noack, 'Die Deutschen als Opfer', *Der Spiegel*, 25 March 2002. See also Günter Franzen, 'Der alte Mann und sein Meer', *Die Welt*, 9 Feb. 2002; Wolfgang Büscher, 'Wir wollen unsere ganze Geschichte', *Die Welt*, 16 Feb. 2002; 'Neues Grass-Buch löst Debatte um Vertriebene aus', *Die Welt*, 5 Feb. 2002; '"Holo-Kitsch" oder "Normalisierung"?' *Donaukurier*, 25 April 2002; John Hooper, 'Günter Grass Breaks Taboo on Refugees', *Guardian*, 8 Feb. 2002; Clemens Höges, Cordula Meyer, Erich Wiedemann and Klaus Wiegrefe, 'Die verdrängte Tragödie', *Der Spiegel*, 4 Feb. 2002; and Carol J. Williams, 'We, the Victims Too', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 March 2002.

[19] I borrow the phrase from Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

that have emerged for understanding those events. *Im Krebsgang* will appear not only on international bestseller lists but also on syllabi for courses in history and memory, on modern Germany, and on the Second World War. It is a riveting read, and Grass's ability to offer multiple perspectives on the same set of events makes it a wonderfully rich source. But I think that it should be only one part of our reading list for the study of the expulsion, and I want to offer a few reflections on some of the questions that teachers and students might want to ask when they read this important book.

Remembering the expulsion in the postwar Federal Republic[20]

In *Im Krebsgang*, Paul Pokriefke pays no heed to his mother's exhortation to write the story of the *Gustloff*. 'No one wanted to hear anything about it', he explains, 'not here in the West and certainly not in the East. The *Gustloff* and its cursed history were [themes that were] taboo for decades, for all Germans [gesamtdeutsch]'.[21] Expellees who found themselves in the Soviet Zone of Occupation after 1945 – the future citizens of the German Democratic Republic – may well recognise themselves in this description of postwar memory. According to the official East German accounts, 'resettlers' had no one to blame for their fate but Hitler and the National Socialist regime. If they had wished to stay in their homes in eastern Europe, they should have done something about it before 1939. 1945 was a moment of liberation, not defeat, devastation or loss. Although individual memories that contested this official version doubtless circulated in East Germany, there was little space in which they could percolate to the surface.[22]

The West Germany of Grass's story, however, was not the West Germany in which Grass came of age. As Grass has commented, expellees were not absent from his own work, but by 1958, when Oskar Matzerath's drumming captured the attention of West Germans, few citizens of the Federal Republic needed a brash thirty-two-year-old Grass to tell them about the expulsion of Germans from their homes in eastern Europe. Germans' experiences of loss and suffering were crucial parts of West German public memory of the Second World War.

Of some twelve million Germans who fled or were driven from eastern Europe at the end of the war, eight million ended up in the western zones of occupation. More than 16 per cent of all West German citizens came originally from parts of eastern Germany ceded to postwar Poland or other areas in eastern Europe,[23] and when the West German parliament (Bundestag) convened for the first time in September 1949,

[20] The argument in this section draws heavily on my book, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). Readers interested in a fuller account of public memory of the Second World War in the 1950s can find it here.

[21] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 31.

[22] Michael Schwartz, 'Vertreibung und Vergangenheitspolitik: Ein Versuch über geteilte deutsche Nachkriegsidentitäten', *Deutschlandarchiv*, 30 (1997): 177–95.

[23] For statistics on expellees, see Gerhard Reichling, *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen, Part 1, Umsiedler, Verschleppte, Vertriebene, Aussiedler, 1945–1985* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1986), 26–27; *idem*, *Part 2, 40 Jahre Eingliederung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1989), 14, 30–31. Nearly 57 per cent (4,541,000) came from territories that had been part of the Reich (East Prussia, Brandenburg, Pomerania, Lower Silesia and Upper Silesia);

their concerns were high on the agenda of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. His account of the war's lasting consequences prominently featured the expellees 'whose deaths number in the millions'. Adenauer's government committed itself to compensating them for their losses and fully integrating the living into the Federal Republic. The expellees would otherwise become a potential social and political powder keg, the source of 'political and economic' unrest. This made the 'distribution of burdens' of the war and the achievement of 'social justice, the highest objective of our work'.[24]

Achieving 'social justice' was not easy in a country only slowly recovering from the devastation of the Second World War, and at least in the late 1940s, the eight million so-called 'new citizens' (*Neubürger*) who found their homes in the Federal Republic were not always a welcome presence. Expellees organised quickly to defend their interests, and they were represented in all major political parties. Adenauer also created a cabinet-level Ministry for Expellees and Refugees, and although its resources were meagre and its ability directly to affect policy quite limited, it offered symbolic reassurance that the West German state acknowledged the just demands of the expellees.[25]

Annual events sponsored by regional organizations (*Landsmannschaften*) brought together hundreds of thousands of east European Germans, wearing traditional costumes and nostalgically invoking the past. Such meetings also created a platform for broadcasting serious foreign policy pronouncements. Before a partisan audience, the Chancellor could insist that although Silesia might now be Polish, 'one day [it] will again be German', and another high-ranking federal official could recall a past in which the Sudetenland – part of Czechoslovakia – that 'organic link between East and West', had been washed away by an 'Asiatic flood', the likes of which the 'occident' had not experienced since Genghis Khan.[26] Against the background of the Cold War, Asiatic floods, organic links, and the invocation of the Occident – which was often modified with 'Christian' – carried specific meanings. Anti-communism

24 per cent (1,918,000) from Czechoslovakia; 8.2% (650,000) from Poland, including Danzig; and 8 per cent (639,000) from other parts of southern and eastern Europe.

[24] *Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestags* (Bonn: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei Gebr. Scheur, 1950) (hereafter *VDB*), (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 5. Sitzung, 20 September 1949, 23, 27–29.

[25] Rainer Schulze, 'The German Refugees and Expellees from the East and the Creation of a Western German Identity after World War II', in Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak, eds., *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 307–25; also Michael Schwartz, '"Zwangsheimat Deutschland": Vertriebene und Kernbevölkerung zwischen Gesellschaftskonflikt und Integrationspolitik', in Klaus Naumann, ed., *Nachkrieg in Deutschland* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001), 114–48. On the integration of the expellees, see Michael L. Hughes, *Shouldering the Burdens of Defeat: West Germany and the Reconstruction of Social Justice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Pertti Ahonen, 'Domestic Constraints on West German Ostpolitik: The Role of the Expellee Organizations in the Adenauer Era', *Central European History*, 31 (1998), 31–63; and *idem*, 'The Expellee Organizations and West German Ostpolitik, 1949–1969', Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University (1999), 90–96.

[26] 'Adenauer: Schlesien wird eines Tages wieder deutsch', *Welt am Sonntag*, 15 Oct. 1950, copy in Presse-und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung (Bonn), hereafter PIB, Mikrofilm (hereafter MF) 1536; and quotation from Franz Thedieck, Staatssekretär im Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen to the annual meeting of the Sudeten Germans, 31 May 1952, reported in *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung*, 6 June 1952, PIB, MF 2672.

defined a political lowest common denominator that unified all but the communist party – a marginal presence in the early 1950s and legally banned in 1956.

All major political parties also supported the expellees' calls for a revision of the postwar boundary settlement. This included demands for a return to the borders of 1937 and a reversal of the settlement that had ceded sizable chunks of territory to Poland. The leaders of the Sudeten Germans – numbering some two million in the Federal Republic – called for the international recognition of the Munich treaty of 1938 and the inclusion of part of postwar Czechoslovakia in postwar Germany.[27] Clearly audible beneath such demands was a critique of Allied policy and all that Churchill and Roosevelt had bargained away at Teheran and Yalta even before the war was over. Many West Germans shared the view that the western Allies' concessions to the Soviets, finalised at Potsdam, indicated how little the West had understood of communism's inherent barbarism before 1945.

The litany of German losses in eastern Europe also provided many West German politicians – including Free, Christian, and Social Democrats, and the Bavarian representatives of the Christian Social Union – with a language for rejecting Allied moral balance sheets and the idea that what Germans had suffered was just retribution for the suffering Germany had caused. On the contrary, by acquiescing in Soviet demands at the end of the war, the Allies had responded to Nazi crimes with crimes of no less consequence, and had contributed greatly to an 'expellee problem' of virtually 'unmasterable gravity'.[28] Christoph Seebohm, Adenauer's transport minister, warned that postwar Allied policy had created a 'social atomic bomb'.[29] The unwillingness of the Allies to defuse it meant that it was up to the bomb squads in the Bundestag. The means they employed included the 'law for the distribution of burdens' (*Lastenausgleichsgesetz*), a symbolic 'reckoning for Hitler's war', that involved social welfare measures and compensation payments to millions of expellees and won support from all but the communists.[30]

Postwar parliamentary debates over the expellees delineated a community of suffering and empathy among Germans. Stories of the expulsion represented one important medium through which West Germans were able to depict themselves as a nation of victims, providing an account of National Socialism in which all Germans had ultimately done penance for a war that Hitler had started but everyone had lost. Far from forgotten or repressed, the experiences of expellees were incorporated into the political discourse of the Federal Republic. Weaving the personal testimonies

[27] On the creation of 'Sudeten German' as an identity in Czechoslovakia after 1918, see Nancy Wingfield, *Minority Politics in a Multinational State: The German Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1938* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989), xiv–xv.

[28] Quotation from Eugen Gerstenmaier (CDU), *VDB*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 48. Sitzung, 17 March 1950, 1657. See also the excellent analysis of Ahonen, 'Domestic Constraints on West German Ostpolitik'.

[29] '"Soziale Atombombe" entschärfen: Bundesminister Seebohm: Flüchtlingsproblem geht über die Kräfte Deutschlands', *General-Anzeiger für Bonn und Umgegend*, 4 Sept. 1950, PIB, MF 1530.

[30] Gerd Bucerius, 'Rechnung für Hitlers Krieg', *Die Zeit*, 13 April 1979, republished in Christoph Klessmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung: Deutsche Geschichte, 1945–1955* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 492.

of expellees into the fabric of politics, explained Bernhard Reissmann, a Bundestag representative from Münster, allowed those spared victim fates to put themselves 'in the shoes of people who at the end of the war confronted the ruin of possessions that they had earned or that were theirs because of the diligence and frugality of generations; in the shoes of those who were forced to leave their homes with bags of rags and torn clothes and who arrived in a strange land, where virtually nothing is done to care for them; in the shoes of people who have lost all personal mementos, and who only under extraordinarily difficult circumstances have been able to get their bearings'.[31] These Germans had survived to tell the tale that all Germans should take to heart. Their private stories profoundly shaped the agenda of postwar public policy and the memories of the war.

Other stories of survivors who moved from the status of outsiders and pariahs to significant contributors to a new West German state could be found in a slew of sociological accounts, written in the early 1950s. In the words of the sociologist Elisabeth Pfeil, the expellee was the symbol of 'humanity in the modern period, expropriated, not rooted, resigned to reliance on the help of the collectivity'.[32] A German everyman, the expellee was both the representative and 'the creation of an epic', who shared a common fate with all those forced from their homes 'through bomb attacks, the process of political cleansing, [or] the collapse of the political and social forms of life that have prevailed up until now'.[33] Bernhard Pfister, director of a major federally funded project to explore the regional integration of expellees made explicit what Pfeil implied: 'The expulsion of the Jews and the Germans' were comparable events. Both stemmed from 'a spirit of national and racial hatred'.[34] Sociological studies also focused on the successful integration of expellees into West Germany. Precisely the merger of 'new citizens' from the east and the indigenous western German population led to the 'creation of a new nation'.[35] The story of the expellees thus became part of a West German celebration of overcoming postwar adversity.

In other tales of the 'expulsion of Germans from east central Europe', the focus was not on how expellees had recovered but on what they had suffered. The story of the expulsion was told in the early 1950s in many different forms. In radio broadcasts, illustrated magazines, and novels, West Germans had access to 'mass-mediated'

[31] Bernard Reissmann (Zentrum), *VDB*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 53. Sitzung, 28 March 1950, 1958.

[32] Elisabeth Pfeil, *Der Flüchtling: Gestalt einer Zeitenwende* (Hamburg: Hans von Hugo Verlag, 1948), 110.

[33] *Ibid*., 145. And in general on this literature, Uta Gerhardt, 'Bilanz der soziologischen Literatur zur Integration der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge nach 1945', in Dierk Hoffmann, Marita Krauss, and Michael Schwartz, eds., *Vertriebene in Deutschland: Interdisziplinäre Ergebnisse und Forschungsperspektiven* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 41–63.

[34] Bernhard Pfister, 'Geleitwort des Herausgebers', in Helmut Arndt, ed., *Die volkswirtschaftliche Eingliederung eines Bevölkerungszustromes: Wirtschaftstheoretische Einführung in das Vertriebenen- und Flüchtlingsproblem* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1954), 8–9.

[35] Eugen Lemberg, *Die Entstehung eines neuen Volkes aus Binnendeutschen und Ostvertriebenen* (Marburg: N.G. Elwert Verlag, 1950). See also Eugen Lemberg and Friedrich Edding, eds., *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland: Ihre Eingliederung und ihr Einfluss auf Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft, Politik und Geistesleben*, 3 vols. (Kiel: Ferdinand Hirt, 1959).

accounts of the sufferings of those Germans driven from their homes in the east.[36] The West German government complemented these efforts with a project to document the *Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, making the expulsion a central part of West German 'contemporary history' (*Zeitgeschichte*). Under the initiative, sponsored by the Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and the War-Damaged and directed by a group of eminent West German historians, eight thick volumes were compiled of first-person testimonies that provided massive amounts of evidence of individual suffering and loss.[37]

For those West Germans – doubtless including a young art student, Günter Grass – who chose not to slog through the more than 4,300 densely printed pages that made up the documentary collection, other reminders of the fate of the expellees abounded in the first decade and a half after the war. In 1959 the *Gustloff* sank for a second time, in a film studio in Göttingen. The KdF ship was a central character in Frank Wisbar's movie, *Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen* (Night fell over Gotenhafen) mentioned in passing in *Im Krebsgang*, whose narrator informs us that it 'ran with only moderate success in the West and like the unfortunate ship, it was forgotten and ended up stored in archives'.[38] In early 1960, when the movie had its premiere, critics would not have agreed. Indeed, the reviewer for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* praised Wisbar because he 'seeks reality . . . and he achieves an absolute realism', comparing Wisbar not with the author of *The Tin Drum*, but with Tolstoy, Thomas Mann and Carl Zuckmayer for his impressive 'power of . . . imagination'.[39]

Wisbar's was only one of many West German movies of the 1950s that took up the theme of the expellees and the collapse of the 'German east', hardly surprising in a nation where such a large percentage of the population were '*Neubürger*' whose former homes were now behind the 'iron curtain'. *Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen* came at the close of a decade that had started with Hans Deppe's *Grün ist die Heide* (The heath is green, 1951), the story of displaced Pomeranians who find a new home in the Lüneburger Heide. By the time Wisbar's film came into cinemas some nineteen million West Germans had seen Deppe's movie. In Wolfgang Liebeneiner's *Waldwinter: Golcken der Heimat* (Forest in winter: the bells of home, 1956), the heroes and heroines were expelled Silesians – now at home in Bavaria. Appearing two years after *Waldwinter, Ännchen von Tharau*, directed by Wolfang Schleif, was praised by one reviewer because it 'illuminated the problems that thousands experienced, who

[36] Louis Ferdinand Helbig, *Der ungeheuere Verlust: Flucht und Vertreibung in der deutschsprachigen Belletristik der Nachkriegszeit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988); and Karl O. Kurth, 'Presse, Film und Rundfunk', in Lemberg and Edding, *Die Vertriebenen in Westdeutschland*, III, 402–34. Michael Geyer discusses the importance of 'mass-mediated' memories of National Socialism. The media also played an important role in producing memories of the expulsion. See Geyer, 'The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany', in Joan Copjec, ed., *Radical Evil* (London: Verso, 1996), 184–6.

[37] Useful background information on the project is found in Matthias Beer, 'Im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Zeitgeschichte: Das Grossforschungsprojekt "Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa" ', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49 (1998): 345–89; and Moeller, *War Stories*, 51–87. Theodor Schieder, the historian who headed the project, had applauded the German invasion of Poland and developed prognoses of how Germans could serve as a force of order in eastern Europe.

[38] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 113.

[39] 'Mit vollen Regiehänden', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 March 1960.

Figure 1. *Frank Wisbar's 1960 film,* Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen*, told the story of the sinking of the* Wilhelm Gustloff*. Celebrated for the 'absolute realism' that it captured, it told the story of the expulsion and the end of the war in the east. Courtesy of Deutsches Filminstitut.*

were robbed of their *Heimat*'.[40] In *Suchkind 312* (Lost child 312) a film directed by Gustav Machaty that had its premiere in 1955, the adorable protagonist, once again an expellee, is a child, lost on the trek at the war's end, and reunited a decade later with her father, whose return from the eastern front is delayed by an involuntary stay in Soviet captivity.[41]

These were not the only movies in which the eastern front collapsed or expellees appeared on West German cinema screens in the 1950s. As Curt Riess, a film commentator, remarked, 'Refugees are particularly popular in movies at this time, because there is hardly a movie theater where refugees aren't in the audience'.[42] But movies about the expellees spoke not only to the expellees themselves. Their experiences could stand in for the fate of those evacuated from bombed-out cities, who fled East Germany to find refuge in the West, or who were quickly exiting a declining agrarian sector for work in urban areas in the 1950s. There were many forms of 'homelessness' in the postwar era, and viewers could see themselves in tales of new beginnings.

[40] 'Film mit fränkischer Kulisse', *Volksblatt*, 7 Aug. 1954, copy in Deutsches Filminstitut.

[41] For a complete discussion of these movies, see Moeller, *War Stories*, 123–70.

[42] Curt Riess, *Das gibt's nur einmal: Das Buch des deutschen Films nach 1945* (Hamburg: Henri Nannen, 1958), 265–6.

Some reviewers of *Im Krebsgang* have remarked on the repression – *Verdrängung* – of the memory of the ending of the war on the eastern front and the expulsion of Germans from eastern Europe. By the late 1950s, Adorno was using similar Freudian categories to describe German silence about Nazi crimes against humanity.[43] However, repression – an unconscious mechanism that buries painful memories – incompletely describes how in the first fifteen years after the war many West Germans confronted either German suffering or the suffering inflicted by Germans on others. Neither German past was completely submerged, and both were often mentioned in virtually the same breath.[44]

In the address to the Bundestag where he remembered the millions of dead expellees, Adenauer also invoked the memory of millions of murdered European Jews when he spoke out against nascent forms of antisemitism, expressing his distress that 'after all that has happened in our time, there should still be people in Germany who persecute Jews because they are Jews'.[45] By 1951 Adenauer was also calling for a treaty with Israel, which would provide 'moral and material indemnity' for the 'unspeakable crimes that have been committed in the name of the German people'.[46] Although Adenauer's passive formulation differentiated between guilt and responsibility and left the perpetrators nameless, his government's initiative meant that in 1951–2, the same West German legislators who hammered out the details of the 'law for the distribution for burdens' debated the treaty that determined reparations for Israel and compensation for Jewish victims of National Socialism. The ubiquitous term 'millions' joined together victims of many sorts. 'Six million disappeared' was the count offered by one Bundestag spokesman not only of Jewish victims of Nazi terrorism but also of expellees – the victims of communist terrorism.[47] Jews and Germans had experienced the same forms of persecution, stated Seebohm, because 'the methods that were used by the National Socialist leaders against the Jews and that we most vehemently condemn are on a par with the methods that were used against the German expellees'.[48] And Adenauer linked compensation for German and Jewish survivors of forced population transfers, explaining that whatever Israel received would be limited by the 'bitter necessity of caring for the innumerable war victims and the support of refugees and expellees' in Germany.[49]

Some of the testimonies captured in the massive documentation project sponsored by the federal government also linked the experiences of Jewish victims of the Nazis

[43] Theodor W. Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', in Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 114–29.

[44] Moeller, *War Stories*, 20–50.

[45] *VDB*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 5. Sitzung, 20 Sept. 1949, 27–28.

[46] Adenauer's remarks to the Bundestag are republished in Rolf Vogel, ed., *Deutschlands Weg nach Israel: Eine Dokumentation mit einem Geleitwort von Konrad Adenauer* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1967), 36.

[47] Konrad Wittmann, *VDB*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 115. Sitzung, 31 Jan. 1951, 4374. Wittmann had been expelled from the Sudetenland after the war.

[48] Hans-Christoph Seebohm to Franz Böhm, 21 May 1952, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, B136/1127, quoted in Constantin Goschler, *Wiedergutmachung: Westdeutschland und die Verfolgten des Nationalsozialismus (1950–1954)* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1992), 203.

[49] Adenauer, *VDB*, (1.) Deutscher Bundestag, 252. Sitzung, 4 March 1953, 12093.

and German victims of communist aggression. Maria Zatschek, an expellee from Czechoslovakia, remarked that history had repeated itself, once as tragedy, once as farce: 'What a bad comedy all this is: nothing is original, a copy of the Hitler regime, again and again we have to hear: "Just as you have treated the Jews"'.[50] Far from denying knowledge of German crimes against Jews and even farther from repressing their own experiences, at least some expellees settled on a powerful analogy to describe their fate: the end of the war confronted east European Germans with circumstances that 'could not have been worse [than] a concentration camp'.[51]

Commenting on the meanings of German defeat 'Zehn Jahre danach' (Ten Years After), Hans Rothfels, editor of the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Quarterly Journal of Contemporary History), West Germany's most important new postwar historical journal, emphasised the importance of memories of suffering – the suffering of Jews, the suffering of Germans driven from their home by the Red Army. Rothfels held a chair in German history at the University of Königsberg in the 1930s, until the Nazis removed him from his position because of his Jewish ancestry. With no choice but to seek exile, he settled in the United States, returning to West Germany after the war to take a position at the University of Tübingen. Writing in 1955, he recalled 'the horrible things that took place in occupied areas, particularly in the east', and what was done 'to real and imagined opponents in concentration camps', but in even greater detail he described the 'eastern side of the defeat, that is, the expulsion and separation, the loss of a thousand-year-old history and the loss of German unity'.[52] German crimes against Jews, Soviet crimes against Germans – both sets of memories were at home in the Federal Republic. If anything, 'ten years after', West Germany was filled with too many memories, not too few. Obsession, not repression, might be the Freudian category that best applies to West German memories of the lost 'German east'.

The shifting 'memory landscape' of the post-postwar years

A decade after *Nacht fiel über Gotenhafen* appeared in German cinemas, moviegoers could see newsreel footage of another sort of drama as their Chancellor, Social Democrat Willy Brandt, stepped off a plane in Warsaw to make peace with the communist government of Poland.[53] If ever silence surrounded memories of the expulsion of Germans from the east, it coincided with Brandt's moves to normalise

[50] 'Erlebnisbericht der Frau Maria Zatschek aus Brünn', in Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, ed., *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, Vol. 4, *Die Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus der Tschechoslowakei*, (Leer [Ostfriesland]: Gerhard Rautenberg, 1960), Part 2, 439.

[51] 'Erlebnisbericht (Brief) des Kaufmanns und ehemaligen Stadtrats Hubert Schütz sen. aus Jägerndorf . . . 4. Januar 1947', *ibid.*, 216.

[52] Hans Rothfels, 'Zehn Jahre danach', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 3 (1955), 227–8, 232, 234–5, 237–8. Rothfels's sentiments were widely echoed in contemporary press accounts commemorating the tenth anniversary of the end of the war. See, e.g., 'Vor zehn Jahren: Zusammenbruch', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 May 1955; C. H. Zodel, 'Die grosse Zeremonie des Friedens steht noch aus', *Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 5 May 1955.

[53] The literature on Ostpolitik is vast. For an introduction, see Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993).

relations with Poland, recognising the Oder-Neisse line as that country's western border, and rejecting expellees' claims to a 'right to *Heimat*' in areas that had once been part of the Reich.

Named chancellor in 1969, Brandt wasted no time in reminding his fellow citizens that they should accept collective responsibility for National Socialism. In May 1970, as the West German parliament commemorated the end of the Second World War for the first time, Brandt called officially for a sober confrontation with the Third Reich, not only for those who had lived through it, but also for those born since the end of the war, because 'no one is free from the history that they have inherited'.[54] Brandt's trip to Warsaw in the same year and his aggressive pursuit of Ostpolitik made explicit that confronting National Socialism included acknowledging the consequences of German aggression in the past.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, mourning the loss of the 'German east' and the massive human suffering that it entailed was invariably tied to calls for a revision of postwar boundaries. Indeed, in the first half of the 1960s, Social Democrats continued to endorse expellee demands for restoring Germany's 1937 borders and publicly supported claims to a 'right to *Heimat*'. This was part of a calculated strategy to win favour with expellee organisations and the voters they claimed to represent. Only in the second half of the decade did SPD leaders join growing numbers of journalists, youth organizations, religious groups, writers and other public intellectuals in calling for the recognition of the postwar borders as the essential means for West Germans to achieve improved relations with their east European neighbors, distancing themselves from what Helmut Schmidt called the 'illusions of the 1950s'.[55]

Although members of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and their Bavarian allies in the Christian Social Union (CSU) remained critical of Brandt's moves eastward, insisting that a renegotiation of borders might still be possible in the context of German reunification, the vast majority of the CDU/CSU parliamentary delegation abstained from the vote on ratification of the treaty with Poland, allowing the measure to pass with a sizable majority.[56] Polling data indicated that in 1970 only 25% of West Germans opposed the treaty, and by 1972 that figure had fallen below 20%.[57] Although the CDU/CSU did not publicly reject the possibility of a future border revision, it was by now only the representatives of expellee organisations who harboured any serious expectation that parts of the Reich added to Poland at Potsdam would ever again become parts of Germany.

[54] Quoted in Helmut Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte: Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestages* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999), 133.

[55] Quoted in Ahonen, 'Expellee Organizations', 346; and in general Ahonen's excellent discussion of Social Democratic policy in *After the Expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe, 1945–1990* (forthcoming, Oxford University Press, 2003).

[56] See the discussion in Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*; see also Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 223.

[57] Heinrich August Winkler, *Der Lange Weg nach Westen*, Vol. 2, *Deutsche Geschichte vom 'Dritten Reich' bis zur Wiedervereinigung* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 287; Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*; and the insightful discussion in Hans-Werner Rautenberg, 'Die Wahrnehmung von Flucht und Vertreibung in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte bis heute', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 47, B53 (1997): 34–49.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, many West German historians were also systematically rethinking the past in ways that had implications for how the 'German east' was remembered. Particularly important was the work of historians who defined a German *Sonderweg* (particular path) that led from an authoritarian Kaiserreich to an authoritarian Third Reich. From this perspective, National Socialism emerged not as a 'catastrophe', an aberration or the demonic projection of a small elite – as it had been characterized in the late 1940s and 1950s – but rather as a system deeply rooted in German society. Research into the Third Reich emphasised that most Germans had enthusiastically supported the Nazi state and illuminated the racism, terrorism and aggressive expansionism that had characterised the regime.[58] From the perspective of these critical historians, the postwar settlement – the loss of territory in the east and the division of Germany – was causally linked to the terror that Germans had wrought in eastern Europe. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, the leading proponent of the *Sonderweg* thesis, summarised this view in a recent interview, stating that the 'regions that were inhabited by Germans for hundreds of years, are lost to us. That is the price [to be paid] when a country twice risks total war.'[59]

Joining those calling for a critical approach to the history of National Socialism was a postwar generation of radical students – who, unlike Paul Pokriefke, took a great interest in their own history. Raised on tales of a suffering Germany, they directly criticised their parents, who, they charged, had never faced the enormity of the crimes of the Nazi regime. Reviving Marxist analyses of fascism, they discovered a path that had not ended in 1945; rather, the capitalist system that had brought fascism to Germany tied Hitler's Third Reich to Adenauer's West Germany. Intent on naming perpetrators and ending their parents' silence about the crimes of National Socialism, they identified with the victims of the Nazis, asserting that 'We are the Jews of today'. As Harold Marcuse's important work shows, such metaphoric claims revealed precisely how little leftist students knew about how Jews had experienced the Third Reich, but they certainly were not inclined to identify with the victim next door. In a binary world of victims and perpetrators, it was clear that the generation of their parents belonged in the latter category.[60] Though highly critical of the SPD's moves towards the middle of the political spectrum, radical students joined left–liberal historians and advocates of Ostpolitik in insisting that a history of National Socialism

[58] Jane Caplan, 'The Historiography of National Socialism', in Michael Bentley, ed., *Companion to Historiography* (London: Routledge, 1997), 545–90; also Müller, *Another Country*, 51; and in general, Edgar Wolfrum, *Geschichtspolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Der Weg zur bundesrepublikanischen Erinnerung, 1948–1990* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999).

[59] '"Die Debatte wirkt befreiend": Der Historiker Hans-Ulrich Wehler über die verspätete Aufarbeitung von Leid und Elend der Vertriebenen', *Der Spiegel*, 25 March 2002.

[60] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 300, 312–17. Also particularly insightful on the divisions between West German intellectuals and between an older generation of critical intellectuals and the '68ers is Anthony Dirk Moses, 'The Forty-Fivers: The Languages of Republicanism and the Foundation of West Germany, 1945–1977', Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley (2000), 255–311; and *idem*, 'The Forty-Fivers: A Generation Between Fascism and Democracy', *German Politics and Society*, 17 (1999), 94–126. See also the reflections of Peter Schneider, 'Alles reimt sich auf Faschist', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26 March 2002.

should focus on the victims of Germans, not what German victims had suffered at the war's end.

In the 1950s, the evocation of the expulsion and the 'lost German territories' served two important political purposes: it reminded West Germans – and their Western Allies – that it might be possible to revise postwar borders; and it created a moral ledger in which German suffering could be balanced against German crimes, and Germans too could appear as victims of 'Hitler's war'. By the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, few Germans held any illusions that the east European borders laid down at Potsdam in 1945 would be revised, and for leftists and liberals who saw Auschwitz as an indelible stain on the German nation, any nationalist rhetoric that included claims to restore Germany to its prewar boundaries was anathema.[61] No more palatable was a rhetoric of German victimisation. For many in the liberal middle and on the left, acknowledging the enormity of crimes committed *by* Germans, not, as Adenauer had put it, in their name, left little room for any discussion of what Germans had lost during the Second World War.[62]

The willingness of growing numbers of West Germans to accept responsibility for the horrors of National Socialism, support a government headed by a Social Democrat (Brandt) who had spent the war in the Norwegian resistance, and affirm the postwar boundary settlement reflected in part their success at surmounting other pasts – the pasts of their own suffering. When Adenauer's Christian Democratic successor Ludwig Erhard, announced in 1965 that 'the postwar years are at an end', he referred to West Germany's phenomenally rapid economic recovery and the achievement of material wellbeing. Students of public opinion recorded that an interest in politics rose as worries about the economic future diminished. The end of the 'postwar years' opened a space in which a more critical examination of the *pre*-postwar years was possible.[63]

Explanations of what made possible new perspectives on the history of the Third Reich emphasise the growing numbers of critical intellectuals and political leaders who came of age only after 1945. This group paid close attention as Adolf Eichmann went on trial in Jerusalem for his part in the Nazi extermination of Jews, and they

[61] See the useful discussion of the emergence of a 'post-national subjectivity' in A. Dirk Moses, 'Coming to Terms with Genocidal Pasts in Comparative Perspective: Germany and Australia', *Aboriginal History*, 25 (2001), 94–95; Geyer, 'The Politics of Memory', 172; and in general, Jan-Holger Kirsch, *'Wir haben aus der Geschichte gelernt': Der 8. Mai als politischer Gedenktag in Deutschland* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999), 56–60; and Jeffrey K. Olick, 'Genre Memories and Memory Genres: A Dialogical Analysis of May 8, 1945: Commemorations in the Federal Republic of Germany', *American Sociological Review*, 64 (1999), 390–2.

[62] See the discussion of the proposed but never published concluding volume in the *Vertreibung der deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa* series, in Beer, 'Im Spannungsfeld', 378–85; also a volume commissioned from the national archive by the parliament in 1969, completed in 1974, but not published until 1989, Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, ed., *Vertreibung und Vertreibungsverbrechen, 1945–1948: Bericht des Bundesarchives vom 28. Mai 1974* (Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen, 1989).

[63] Quoted in Axel Schildt, 'Materieller Wohlstand – pragmatische Politik – kulturelle Umbrüche: Die 60er Jahre in der Bundesrepublik', in Axel Schildt, Detlef Siegfried and Karl Christian Lammers, eds., *Dynamische Zeiten: Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften* (Hamburg: Hans Christians Verlag, 2000), 21.

were also intent on prosecuting Nazi criminals at home and removing former Nazis from all positions of authority in the Federal Republic. Contributing to the complication of the past in the 1960s were also intellectuals and politicians who had long insisted that Germans should accept their responsibility for National Socialism. For example, when the editor of *Der Spiegel*, Rudolf Augstein, sought to introduce his readers to the larger historical context that framed the trials of Auschwitz guards in the early 1960s, he chose to interview Karl Jaspers, one of the first to raise the question of German guilt immediately after the war, though in the late 1940s and 1950s his opinions were not widely discussed. Twenty years after the end of the war, however, Jaspers had a national audience for his warnings that right-wing radicalism – embodied in the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) – and the 'continued influence of the old National Socialists' represented a 'fundamental rupture with the internal constitution of the Federal Republic'.[64]

Of significance as well in explaining a shift in attitudes was the momentary waning of the Cold War, which had profoundly shaped West German public memory in the 1950s. By 1957, a year after Nikita Khrushchev's revelation of Stalin's crimes, N. A. Bulganin, the Soviet premier, was encouraging Adenauer to entertain 'a decisive shift from mutual distrust and even a certain enmity to trust and friendship', based in part on the recognition that 'in the last war the Soviet and the German people made the greatest sacrifices'.[65] West Germans loudly protested against the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, but increasingly they accepted the Cold War division that it symbolised. The Federal Republic had been founded on an anti-totalitarian consensus,[66] but by the early 1960s, as more and more West Germans recognized that the Cold War offered a stable status quo, anti-communism diminished in force, reducing the political space in which it was possible for stories of Soviet barbarism at the end of the war to attract widespread attention.

However, even in the 1970s stories of German suffering were not entirely absent from public discourse, nor were they ever the exclusive preserve of the political right.[67] As he prepared to accompany Brandt to Warsaw in 1970, Grass called for the creation of a foundation devoted to 'preserving the cultural substance of the lost regions in the east', lest Germans lose the *Heimat* a second time – first literally, then culturally and linguistically.[68] Although Grass's proposal went nowhere, the art of historic preservation he recommended could be found in literature. Siegfried Lenz,

[64] Quoted in Detlef Siegfried, 'Zwischen Aufarbeitung und Schlussstrich: Der Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit in den beiden deutschen Staaten 1958 bis 1969', in Schildt, Siegfried and Lammers, *Dynamische Zeiten*, 101, and in general, 77–113; and the general discussion in Robert G. Moeller, 'What Has 'Coming to Terms with the Past' Meant in Post-World War II Germany? From History to Memory to the "History of Memory" ', *Central European History*, 35 (2002): 223–56. Very useful on the intellectual history of the 1960s is Moses, 'The Forty-Fivers', especially 211–254.

[65] Letter of 5 Feb. 1957 to Adenauer, published in *Pravda*, 12 Feb. 1957, and reprinted in Boris Meissner, ed., *Moskau-Bonn: Die Beziehungen zwischen der Sowjetunion und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1955–1963* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975), III, 1, 233–37, quotation on 234.

[66] Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte*.

[67] See the useful discussion in Olick, 'Genre Memories and Memory Genres', 381–402.

[68] 'Günter Grass: Kalte Heimat', *Der Spiegel*, 28 Sept. 1970, in Arnold and Görtz, *Günter Grass: Dokumente zur politischen Wirkung*, 129; also *idem*, 'Was ist des Deutschen Vaterlandes?', in *Günter*

Grass's contemporary who, once released from a British POW camp after the war, returned not to his native East Prussia but instead started a new life in Hamburg, had also gone with Brandt to Warsaw. In his 1978 novel, *Heimatmuseum* (The Heritage), he described the end of the war in the east and reflected on what parts of the past could be brought into new surroundings.[69] And as the SPD pursued Ostpolitik, the fate of German minorities whose homes *were* still in the east remained an item on the agenda of virtually every negotiating round between West Germany and its east European neighbours.[70]

The lost east German *Heimat* also remained important to others who were not easily identified with conservative nationalist circles. Consider a few examples. In *Deutschland, bleiche Mutter* (Germany, Pale Mother), a film that premiered in 1979, feminist director Helma Sanders Brahms told the story of a mother – daughter odyssey from Hitler's Germany to Adenauer's Federal Republic. An indictment of patriarchy and Nazism, it also depicted the war that mother and daughter experienced in an unspecified German east, where they seek refuge from the bombs falling on Berlin. The mother repeatedly sings a traditional German folk song that tells of a sleeping child, a father at war, and a 'Pomerania burned to the ground', the same Pomerania from which many Germans fled westward in 1945 and the same song sung by the heroine in the 1945 Nazi movie, *Kolberg*, which played in German cinemas even as the Red Army advanced into East Prussia.[71] In one of the most extended sequences in the movie, mother and daughter find refuge in an abandoned factory, where smokestacks and ovens in the background evoke the fate of other victims and suggest comparisons. And a boy, wandering through a landscape of destruction, incorporated into the film with original documentary footage, is a representative of the innocents who lost home and family during the expulsion.

The same film clip appeared in a sober 1981 three-part television series, produced by state-owned television and accompanied by a richly illustrated large-format book, aimed at a lay audience. *Flucht und Vertreibung* (Flight and Expulsion) came two years after the West German broadcast of the US mini-series *Holocaust*, an event often cited as a high point in West Germans' confrontation with the individual faces of mass extermination. The television series on the expulsion documented a different tragedy and advertised itself as an attempt to address directly a topic 'as good as taboo' in the Federal Republic.[72]

Grass: Deutscher Lastenausgleich: Wider das dumpfe Einheitsgebot. Reden und Gespräche (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990), 112.

[69] See also 'Das unermessliche Leid darf nicht vergessen werden', *Die Welt*, 7 Feb. 2002, which includes an interview with Lenz.

[70] See, in particular, Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*; also Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 231–44.

[71] Peter Fritzsche, 'Walter Kempowski's Collection', *Central European History*, 35 (2002), 260–1. Fritzsche calls attention to the reference to *Kolberg* and the song in the testimony of 'Die RAD-Maid Helga Gross *126' on 30 Jan. 1945, cited in Walter Kempowski, *Das Echolot: Fuga furiosa, Ein Kollektives Tagebuch Winter 1945, 29. Januar bis 5. Februar 1945* (Munich: Albrecht Knaus, 1999), 143. Also, the reference in Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 155. On Sanders-Brahms, see the discussion and references in Moeller, *War Stories*, 183–4.

[72] Rudolf Mühlfenzl, 'Warum erst jetzt?', in *idem*, ed., *Geflohen und vertrieben: Augenzeugen berichten* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1981), 8.

Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*, the eleven-part made-for-television drama that aired in 1984, focusing on the saga of one German town from the end of the First World War until the early 1980s, evoked memories of those left *heimatlos* by the war and a German *Heimat* in eastern Europe that was now forever lost.[73] The expellees were not on the silver screen, as they had been in the 1950s, but as West Germans retreated into forms of leisure that took place at home, they could see this same past repeated again and again on the small screen in their living rooms, as they watched movies from the 1950s that remained a staple of German television. Paul Pokriefke may well have missed these developments, but even in the altered 'memory landscape' of the 1970s and early 1980s, the 'German east' had hardly vanished without a trace.

Remembering what was never really forgotten

In the 1980s, the parameters of international and domestic politics shifted once again, creating conditions in which tales of expellees figured more prominently in West German public discourse. When the Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl became Chancellor in 1982 – ending the SPD reign – he demanded that West Germans define a usable past that did not collapse modern German history into an extended prologue to the horrors of National Socialism. An intensified Cold War framed Kohl's search for a positive identity for Germany. Increased concern among US policy makers in the late 1970s that the Soviets remained a major threat, capable of besting the West with nuclear weapons, reached a climax when Ronald Reagan entered the White House in January 1981. Reagan denounced the Soviet Union as the 'evil empire' and explicitly included the Federal Republic among those states that had countered communism with 'peaceful and democratic progress'.[74] The history of a country so vital to the Western Alliance, such an exemplar of democratic values, could surely not be reduced to the history of the Third Reich.

In 1985, the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war brought the US president to West Germany to commemorate the event with Kohl, but Reagan's appearance in the Federal Republic was aimed more at celebrating West Germany's membership of a Western alliance – backed by missiles armed with US nuclear warheads on German soil – than at remembering the Allied defeat of Nazism.[75] Enlisting West Germans in the struggle against communists in 1985 involved acknowledging how Germans had struggled against communists forty years earlier.

In the context of this Cold War revival, it was not surprising that the West German Chancellor also was ready to acknowledge the 'evil empire's' past excesses.

[73] See Alon Confino, 'Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* and German Nationhood: Film, Memory, and Understandings of the Past', *German History*, 16 (1998), 185–208.

[74] Reagan's speech to the House of Commons, 8 June 1982, www.town.hall.com/hall of fame/reagan/speech/empire.htm. For a highly readable account of these developments, see Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

[75] Jeffrey Herf, *War By Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York: Free Press, 1991). And on Reagan's meeting with Kohl, see Hartman, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*.

Shortly after his meeting with Reagan, Kohl attended the annual gathering of those Germans expelled from Silesia at the end of the war. When Kohl took the stage, banners were unfurled, proclaiming that 'Silesia Remains Ours'. Remembering this past also included scrutinising postwar boundary settlements. A public opinion poll conducted in the same year revealed that although 76 per cent of all West German were ready to 'come to terms' with the postwar border with Poland, 24 per cent were not.[76]

The end of the war in the east was also at the centre of one of the main battles in the 'historians' dispute' (*Historikerstreit*), the highly contentious debate among some of West Germany's leading historians over how best to construct a usable past for the Federal Republic of Germany. The historian Andreas Hillgruber's book, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums* (Two Sorts of Demise: The Destruction of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry) represented one of the most important interventions in the debate. Hillgruber had long been a student of the German presence in eastern Europe. His dissertation was a study of German – Romanian relations in the years from 1938 to 1944, and the book that earned him a professorship analysed Hitler's planning for the war in the east. Hillgruber was hardly an apologist for National Socialism, and his scholarship had also done much to illuminate the relationship between the Wehrmacht's last-ditch attempt to hold back the Red Army in 1944 and 1945 and the aggressive pursuit of the 'final solution'. In the early 1970s he was among the first to challenge accepted claims that the Wehrmacht's war in the east was in no way linked to the brutal murder of many Soviets and the campaign to exterminate European Jews, and he also consistently emphasised the centrality of antisemitism in Hitler's strategy.[77] His reputation was well established as one of the leading German historians of Nazi war strategy and foreign policy.

In the slim volume that appeared in 1986, Hillgruber focused primarily on the first of his 'demises': the collapse of the German front in East Prussia in winter 1944–5. The historian who considered the end of the war and searched for a point of empathetic identification must, argued Hillgruber:

> identify himself with the concrete fate of the German population in the east and with the desperate and sacrificial exertions of the German army of the east and the German fleet in the Baltic, which sought to defend the population of the German east from the orgy of revenge of the Red Army, mass rapes, arbitrary killing, and compulsory deportations.[78]

As if to underscore where his readers' empathy should lie, Hillgruber provided far more detailed descriptions of the circumstances of Germans in the east than of the

[76] 'Schindluder mit der Friedenspolitik', *Der Spiegel*, 4 Feb. 1985, 93. See also Kirsch, *'Wir haben aus der Geschichte gelernt'*, 71–2.

[77] See in particular Andreas Hillgruber, 'Die "Endlösung" und das deutsche Ostimperium als Kernstück des rassenideologischen Programms des Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 20 (1982), 133–53; and the discussion in Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 19.

[78] Andreas Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1986), 24–5.

suffering of Jews, his second 'demise'. In the pointed formulation of the historian Charles Maier, 'If indeed these two experiences are two sorts of destruction, one is presented, so to speak, in technicolor, the other in black, grey, and white.'[79] The *Gustloff* may have been missing from Hillgruber's litany, but what the downed ship represented was central to the public discourse of the mid-1980s.

Thirty years earlier, when Hans Rothfels discussed the same two 'demises' in similar terms, he echoed a view held by most West Germans. In 1986 Hillgruber's position was roundly criticized. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas summarised the left – liberal view that had emerged in the previous decade when he questioned the motives of 'whoever insists on mourning collective fates, without distinguishing between culprits and victims'.[80] Habermas's position also had an intellectual lineage that extended back to the immediate postwar period; it echoed the views of Eugen Kogon, Karl Jaspers and others in a minority that had criticised Germans who sought to mitigate their own culpability for National Socialism by emphasising their own suffering and who did not recognize the 'blessing of defeat' (Kogon).[81] Four decades after the end of the war, however, a broad spectrum of West German historians, public intellectuals, and the president of the Federal Republic Richard von Weizsäcker echoed this position, distinguishing debates over competing pasts in the 1980s from precedents in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The past of Nazi crimes emphasised by some critical observers in the first postwar decade had moved from the margins to centre stage. Still, it was by no means the only actor, and the past of German victimisation did not have to be scripted anew, because it was already in place. It had been written not only around the kitchen table, over a beer at the local pub, and in organizations of expellees; it had also been shaped by the rhetoric of high politics and the formulation of public policy, the work of distinguished historians, and large-format, richly illustrated books, novels, movies, illustrated magazines, and television shows.

By the late 1980s the integration of the expellees into West German society had also become a major focus for scholars who set out to write a social history of the Federal Republic's beginnings.[82] The stories of expellees could also be found in more accessible places. In 1985, state-sponsored television broadcast a series documenting 'The German Postwar Miracle: Suffering and Accomplishment of the Expellees'. And in 1987, a three-part television mini-series brought viewers a dramatic version of Arno Surminski's novel *Jokehnen*, the fictionalised story of daily life in the East Prussian town of the same name, covering the period from Hitler's rise to power to

[79] Maier, *Unmasterable Past*, 23.

[80] Jürgen Habermas, 'A Kind of Settlement of Damages (Apologetic Tendencies)', *New German Critique*, No. 44 (1988), 26. See also Moses, 'Coming to Terms', 96–8.

[81] Eugen Kogon, 'Über die Situation,' *Frankfurter Hefte* 2 (no. 1) (January 1947): 17–37, quotation on 34.

[82] A representative collection of the work can be found in Rainer Schulze, Doris von der Brelie-Lewien and Helga Grebeing, eds., *Flüchtlinge und Vertriebene in der Nachkriegsgeschichte: Bilanzierung der Forschung und Perspektiven für die künftige Forschungsarbeit* (Hildesheim: August Lax, 1987). See also the excellent bibliography in Hoffmann, Krauss, and Schwartz, *Vertriebene in Deutschland*, 440–71, which cites these and older studies.

German defeat and the westward trek of the village's inhabitants.[83] And those who had missed the volumes of expellees' first-person testimonies published by the federal government in the 1950s could read this version of the 'contemporary history' of the *Vertreibung der Deutschen* in an inexpensive paperback edition, reissued by Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, one of West Germany's most important publishers.

In the midst of the 'historians' controversy', Ernst Nolte bemoaned the 'past that will not pass', and Joachim Fest fretted that 'the public sphere, despite all encouragement from the political side, has still not emerged from the shadow cast by Hitler and the crimes committed under him'.[84] In the 1980s, however, it was clear that there was more than one past that refused to pass, and Hitler's long shadow did not block out all images of a story of the war that included tales of German loss.

Memories of the expulsion in the post-Cold War world

The expellees had been present at the birth of the Federal Republic, and they were also there as West Germany passed into history. As reform swept through eastern Europe in the summer of 1989 and an end to the Cold War was imaginable, expellee leaders once again expressed their belief that a renegotiation of borders in eastern Europe was possible. They received encouragement from Kohl's Finance Minister, Theo Waigel, who told a meeting of Silesian expellees in July 1989 that the incorporation of former German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line might be part of the process of redefining eastern Europe.

However, as Soviet, US, British, French and German leaders negotiated over the post-Cold War shape of the two Germanies, Kohl and his Free Democratic coalition partners reassured Poles – and the rest of the world – that they recognised the postwar boundary settlement as permanent. In October 1991, over the protests of expellee leaders and their representatives in the CDU/CSU, the Bundestag ratified a treaty with Poland that confirmed what most Germans had accepted for at least twenty years: no one would hold out for the possibility of changing Poland's borders.[85]

In this altered geopolitical climate, there were new possibilities for remembering the end of the war in the east. Addressing the Bundestag in May 1995, the Polish Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski reminded Germans that 'the rupture of 1989 created the possibility for an open political discussion' of the history they

[83] Alfred Theisen, 'Die Vertreibung der Deutschen: Ein unbewältigtes Kapitel europäischer Zeitgeschichte', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 45, B7–8 (1995), 21; and Arno Surminski, *Jokehnen: oder, Wie lange führt man von Ostpreussen nach Deutschland?* (Stuttgart: Werner Gebühr, 1974). The three-part mini-series was directed by Michael Lahn and was produced in 1987.

[84] Ernst Nolte, 'Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will: Eine Rede, die geschrieben, aber nicht gehalten werden konnte', in *'Historikerstreit': Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich: Piper, 1987), published in English as *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*, trans. James Knowlton and Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993). Quotation from the German edition, 45. Joachim Fest, 'Die geschuldete Erinnerung: Zur Kontroverse über die Unvergleichbarkeit der nationalsozialistischen Massenverbrechen', in *'Historikerstreit'*, 100.

[85] See the discussion in Ahonen, *After the Expulsion*; also Ash, *In Europe's Name*, 229–30.

shared with their eastern European neighbours.[86] Two years later, Germans and Czechs joined in a resolution in which Kohl's government acknowledged historic responsibility for Germany's part in the Munich Agreement of 1938 and the destruction of the Czechoslovakian Republic, and honoured the memory of the victims of National Socialism. For its part, the Czech government formally expressed regret for the forced transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia at the end of the war, a process that 'contradicted elementary humanitarian principles' and unjustly had the 'character of a collective attribution of guilt'. Both sides agreed that they should remain 'conscious of the tragic chapter of their history' as they moved forward to define a common future in a post-Cold War Europe, a sub-plot in the larger drama of proposals to include the Czech Republic in an expanded European Union.[87] Open archives joined open markets and open borders as signs of a new Europe, making possible far more sophisticated historical treatments of the expulsion.[88]

There was, however, still more than one way to incorporate memories of the end of the war into the present of a unified Germany. The year 1994 marked the opening of the House of German History. The permanent exhibit, housed in a massive new building on the 'museum mile' in Bonn, reviewed the history of Germany since 1945. It had been planned long before unification, but by the time it was completed, it was a museum for all Germans. Upon entering the exhibition, what first captured

[86] Władysław Bartoszewski, 'Rede bei der Sondersitzung von Bundestag und Bundesrat am 28. April 1995 in Bonn (Auszug)', in Klaus Bachmann and Jerzy Kranz, eds., *Verlorene Heimat: Die Vertreibungsdebatte in Polen* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1998), 33; on the tensions that still remain in the German-Polish relationship, Klaus Bachmann, 'Von der Euphorie zum Misstrauen: Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen nach der Wende', *Osteuropa*, 50 (2000), 853–71; and in general on the 1990s, the very useful discussion in Jeffrey K. Olick, 'What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in German Politics since 1989', *Social Science History*, 22 (1998), 547–71.

[87] 'Deutsch-Tschechische Erklärung über die gegenseitigen Beziehungen und künftige Entwicklung vom 21. Januar 1997', http://www.deutsche-botschaft.cz/doc pol/dte.html. See also Karel Vodička, 'Tschechisch-deutsche Beziehungen und die Versöhungserklärung', *Osteuropa*, 42 (1997), 975–86; Andres Götze, 'Der schwierige Weg zur Verständigung: Zur sudetendeutschen Frage in den deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen nach 1989', *Osteuropa* 45 (1995), 1034–47; Tomás Staněk, 'Abschiebung oder Vertreibung?', in Walter Koschmal, Marek Nekula and Joachim Rogall, eds., *Deutsche und Tschechen: Geschichte, Kultur, Politik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 528–35.

[88] See Detlef Brandes, Edita Ivaničková and Jirí Pesek, eds., *Erzwungene Trennung: Vertreibungen und Aussiedlungen in und aus der Tschechoslowakei, 1938–1947* (Essen: Klartext, 1999), Detlef Brandes and Václav Kural, eds., *Der Weg in die Katastrophe: Deutsch-tschechoslowakische Beziehungen, 1939–1947* (Essen: Klartext, 1994); Richard G. Plaschka, Horst Haselsteiner, Arnold Suppan and Anna M. Drabek, eds., *Nationale Frage und Vertreibung in der Tschechoslowakei und Ungarn, 1938–1948* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997); Detlef Brandes, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938–1945: Pläne und Entscheidungen zum 'Transfer' der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001); Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg and Robert Traba, 'Erinnerung und Gedächtniskultur: Flucht und Vertreibung in deutschen und polnischen Augenzeugenberichten', in Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, Renate Stössinger and Robert Traba, eds., *Vertreibung aus dem Osten: Deutsche und Polen erinnern sich* (Olsztyn: Borussia, 2000), 7–27; Jörg K. Hoensch and Hans Lemberg, eds., *Begegnung und Konflikt: Schlaglichter auf das Verhältnis von Tschechen, Slowaken und Deutschen 1915–1989* (Essen: Klartext, 2001); Włodzimierz Borodziej and Klaus Ziemer, eds., *Deutsch-polnische Beziehungen, 1939–1945–1949: Eine Einführung* (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2000); and the interesting collection of materials for classroom use in Ursula A. J. Becher, Włodzimierz Borodziej and Robert Maier, eds., *Deutschland und Polen im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert: Analysen-Quellen-didaktische Hinweise* (Hannover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2001).

Figure 2. *The photographer Hilmar Pabel captured this image of a refugee with her son in a forest near Potsdam at the end of the war. Such powerful documentary images were also part of a 1981 television mini-series,* Flucht und Vertreibung *(Flight and Expulsion), and Guido Knopp's 2001 five-segment documentary,* Die grosse Flucht *(The Great Flight). Courtesy of Bildarchiv preussischer Kulturbesitz.*

the visitor's attention was a huge video screen that displayed an endless film loop depicting the treks of expellees, pushing on across ice and snow in winter 1945. In this telling, postwar German history began not with the memory of Auschwitz or the

forceful presence of Adenauer, but with the expulsion of Germans from areas near the Baltic in late 1944 and early 1945.[89] And a month before Bartoszewski addressed the Bundestag in 1995, an advertisement in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, signed by some three hundred prominent politicians, journalists and academics, called on Germans to guard 'against forgetting' (*gegen das Vergessen*). May 8 was a day of liberation, but the commemoration of the end of the war was also a moment to remember 'the beginning of the terror of the expulsion and a new oppression in the East and the origin of the division of our country'.[90] How little reminding many Germans needed was suggested by a public opinion poll conducted by *Der Spiegel* which asked respondents whether 'the expulsion of the Germans from the east [was] just as great a crime against humanity as the Holocaust [was] against the Jews?' 36 per cent of respondents – and 40 per cent of those over sixty-five – answered yes.[91] Newspapers throughout Germany published historical reflections on the end of the war in the east, reaffirming that the expulsion was a crucial part of postwar memory, and voices calling for Germans to affirm their 'right to mourn' were legion.[92] To be sure, in 1995 in a huge number of public ceremonies and museum exhibitions, many Germans took care to remember the enormity of Nazi crimes and to recall the names and faces of the victims of the Third Reich. There was no question that the Holocaust was central to the memory culture of the Federal Republic. But it was still possible to find examples of the moral calculus that had characterised discussions of victims of Germans and German victims in the 1950s and in the context of the 'historians' dispute'.

By the end of the decade, however, there were signs that there might be other ways to assess the enormity of German loss that did not involve such equations. In September 1999, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the Social Democrat who had pushed Kohl out of office a year earlier, was also recalling the expellees, forced 'by their difficult fate to carry the burden of responsibility for the Third Reich'. Schröder – born only a little less than a year before Paul Pokriefke – became the first postwar SPD chancellor to address the annual meeting of the Union of Expellees, successor to the first national organisation to represent expellees' interests, founded fifty years earlier. Drawing analogies between the flight of Germans from eastern Europe at the end of the war and the 'pictures from Kosovo', showing a world audience 'people who

[89] In a personal communication of 18 Sept. 1998, Hans-Joachim Westholt, the curator of the exhibition, confirmed that the film is a compilation of different clips from the winter of 1944/45. He writes that the film 'contains different materials cut together. The scene "Flight across Fields of Ice" can definitively be dated for winter 1944/45. The exact location cannot be identified, although it is probably the so-called "Frisches Haff", part of the Baltic Sea.' See also Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), 208.

[90] '8. Mai 1945: Gegen das Vergessen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 7 April 1995; and Kirsch, *'Wir haben aus der Geschichte gelernt'*, 170–9; also Edgar Wolfrum, 'Zwischen Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtspolitik: Forschungen zu Flucht und Vertreibung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 36 (1996), 501–2.

[91] 'Die Jungen denken anders', *Der Spiegel*, 8 May 1995, 76–7.

[92] Klaus Naumann, *Der Krieg als Text: Das Jahr 1945 im kulturellen Gedächtnis der Presse* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998), 72–90.

had lost their belongings, their families, friends and neighbors, their very *Heimat*', Schröder concluded that 'every act of expulsion, however different its historical origins may be, is a crime against humanity'.[93] Endorsing this vision of Germany's past, the Social Democrat Peter Glotz joined Erika Steinbach, a CDU parliamentary representative and head of the Union of Expellees, to call for the creation of a Centre Against Expulsion, in which Germany's experience would be located in a comparative context with other forced population transfers in the twentieth century. Steinbach, born in West Prussia in 1943, and Glotz, born in Bohemia in 1939 of a Czech mother and a German father, presented an alliance that could claim to represent unified Germans, not party political or special interests.[94] Even the Green Party's Antje Vollmer identified the Bosnian war as the moment when the political left realised that the '68ers confronted the perpetrators, but there was always too little interest in the victims'. While warning against the potential dangers of some expellees' belated claim for reparations, she agreed that it was time to 'take seriously the victim as victim'.[95]

Eighteen months before the publication of *Im Krebsgang*, Grass made the same point. Speaking as part of a forum on the 'future of memory' in Vilnius where he was joined by Polish and Lithuanian colleagues, Grass opined that the writer 'remembers as a profession'. His list of those to be remembered included European Jews, gypsies and slave labourers. But he also commented on how 'curiously disturbing' it was that 'we remember only belatedly and with hesitation the suffering that came to Germans during the war'. Grass claimed that only in the margins was it possible to read stories of the 'death of hundreds of thousands of civilians, [killed] by saturation bombing, and expulsion and the misery of some twelve million East German refugees'. Even writers had left little room for these memories as 'one injustice repressed another'. In 2001, mused Grass, it was finally time to give voice to the 'silence of the victims'.[96]

For those who worried more about what Schröder had to say about the state of the German economy than the end of the war, or cared little about their Nobel laureate's reflections on memory, television remained another source of stories of the expulsion. In 2001, Guido Knopp, a historian who has made a career of producing

[93] 'Grusswort des Bundeskanzlers zum "50. Tag der Heimat" des Bundes der Vertriebenen am 5. September 1999 in Stuttgart', http://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/nr4_00.html.

[94] Peter Glotz, 'Wo ist das Recht der Vertriebenen?': his address to the Tag der Heimat, 1 Sept. 2001, http://www.bund-der-vertriebenen.de/rede glotz010901.html. In early December 2002, the German – Polish Institute in Darmstadt organized a conference to discuss what form such a centre might take. See http://www.deutsches-poleninstitut.de/Pressemitteilungen/pm_Kolloquium.html

[95] Sonja Zekri, 'Tiefe Resignation: Bundestagsvizepräsidentin Antje Vollmer zur Vertriebenen-Frage', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 Feb. 2002.

[96] Günter Grass, 'Ich erinnere mich . . . ', in Martin Wälde, ed., *Die Zukunft der Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2001), 27–34, quotations from 29, 31–3. The speech is also available at http://www.steidl.de/grass/a2 5 vilnius html. The bombing war was also central to W. G. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999), and it has most recently re-entered the discussion with the publication of Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Munich: Propyläen, 2002). I was not able to obtain a copy of this book before this article went to press. See the discussions in Michael Sontheimer, 'Schillerndes Ungeheuer', *Der Spiegel*, 2 Dec. 2002; and Andreas Kilb, 'Das Zeugnis', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20 Nov. 2002.

German history on the small screen, chose the topic of the 'great flight' for a five-segment documentary, broadcast nationally on state-owned television. Among his stories were the fall of 'fortress Breslau', the 'big trek', the 'time of the women', and the 'lost *Heimat*'. Viewers could also see the 'sinking of the *Gustloff*'. The ship had gone down again. Appearing early in the next year, Grass's novella would sink it one more time.[97]

'Why only now?'

Grass begins *Im Krebsgang* by asking 'Why only now?' Given that many parts of the story he tells are familiar, a better question might be: why now in this particular form? Grass provides one answer. He wants to ensure that memories of the *Gustloff* – and by extension, the expulsion – are not deployed by right-wing political groups in a fashion that would equate what happened to Germans with what Germans inflicted on others.[98] Grass holds himself in part to blame for the danger that the past can be hijacked by the radical right. Like Paul Pokriefke, he and other writers on the left failed to provide a complete story of the lasting legacies of the war. Even Konny's mother, Gabi, an expert in pedagogy, completely misreads her son's interest in history and does little to illuminate the complexity of the German past. If writers like Grass had provided sophisticated – and sympathetic – accounts of German suffering, Grass suggests, others would not so easily have substituted partial versions of the truth. Grass's critique of the narrator is a critique of the generation of 1968 – represented by Paul – but it is also a critique of himself.

Konny's textbooks are his grandmother's stories and the Internet. In their rush to name German crimes and atone for German wrongdoing, even critical historians have failed to tell the whole story. Konny's enlightened teachers – in East and West alike – prevent him from reporting about the Nazi ideal of the 'classless *Volkgemeinschaft*' and, in *Im Krebsgang*, Grass expresse concern that for most Germans, knowledge of National Socialism extends little beyond the ritualistic condemnation of Göring and Goebbels.[99] By reducing the Third Reich to the lowest common denominator of absolute evil, Grass implies, it becomes impossible to understand – or critically analyse – its appeal to millions of Germans, and by writing off German suffering, left-wing intellectuals have made it impossible for Germans to mourn.

When Paul asks Konny what he seeks to achieve with his single-minded pursuit of the *Gustloff*, his son responds: 'I'm doing historical research, good enough answer for

[97] The series is available on video as *Die grosse Flucht*, BMG Video, Universum Film, 2002. See also Guido Knopp, *Die grosse Flucht: Das Schicksal der Vertriebenen* (Munich: Econ Verlag, 2001); *idem, Der Untergang der 'Gustloff': Wie es wirklich war* (Munich: Econ Verlag, 2002). This was not the only series. The ARD-Ferhsehanstalten Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk and the Norddeutscher Rundfunk produced a series called 'The Expellees: Hitler's Last Victims'. See the accompanying book, K. Erik Franzen, *Die Vertriebenen: Hitlers letzte Opfer* (Munich: Econ Ullstein List Verlag, 2001).

[98] See Peter Sandmeyer and Gerada-Marie Schönfeld, 'Eine Katastrophe, aber kein Verbrechen', *Stern*, 14 Feb. 2002; also 'Eine Katastrophe, kein Verbrechen', *Die Woche*, 8 Feb. 2002.

[99] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 37.

you?'[100] And without instruction from his father, the educational system, professional historians – and historical novelists like Grass – he cobbles together a past as best he can. To prevent the creation of other Konnys, Grass tells us, Germans need historical accounts that include both their crimes and their tragedies.

In the 'Danziger Trilogy' Grass has already outlined how it is possible to write such a history. It does not commence at the end of the war in a hail of falling bombs or the icy waters of the Baltic. Explaining National Socialism means revisiting 1933–9, not just 1945, and understanding why Germans in overwhelming numbers supported the Nazis. As Grass also knows, though it is not part of the story of *Im Krebsgang*, it is also difficult to comprehend the brutality of the expulsion of Germans from eastern Europe without seeing it in the context of the brutality of German prosecution of the war against the Soviet Union, and occupation policies in Poland, where Hitler made it clear that he sought the destruction of the Polish nation, and in other parts of eastern Europe where Germans were hardly invited guests.[101]

In *Im Krebsgang*, Grass makes the story even more complicated by adding yet another perspective, presenting not only the *Gustloff*'s history as a 'strength through joy' pleasure cruiser *and* a floating coffin for thousands of expellees, but also the drama of the Soviet submarine commander, Alexander Marinesko, who sinks the ship. Marinesko is born in pre-First World War Odessa, which Grass describes as a multi-cultural idyll, filled with 'Ukrainians and Rumanians, Greeks and Bulgarians, Turks and Armenians, gypsies and Jews'. During the Russian civil war, Marinesko looks on as the Red Army marches in and 'cleansing actions took place'. Soviet barbarism precedes Nazi barbarism, and the 'ethnic cleansing' of the spring of 1945 finds a parallel in the political cleansing of Stalinism.[102] Marenko is a womaniser, and his exploits during a shore leave in Finland are misinterpreted by the Soviet secret police as spying. He attempts to redeem his reputation by sinking a German ship, but although the ship goes down, his fortunes do not rise. His war ends with imprisonment and three years of hard labour in Kolyma, part of the Gulag

[100] *Ibid*., 76.

[101] There is a vast literature on German policy in Poland. See Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik, 1939–1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1965 [1961]); Valdis O. Lumanns, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: The Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German National Minorities of Europe, 1933–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Robert L. Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); Jan Tomasz Gross, *Polish Society Under German Occupation: The Generalgouvernement, 1939–1944* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); and on the postwar period, several of the essays in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*. The causal relationship was also acknowledged in the earliest West German historical accounts of the expulsion. See Bundesministerium der Vertriebenen, ed., *Die Vertreibung der deutschen Bevölkerung aus den Gebieten östlich der Oder-Neisse*, Part 1 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag [1954], 1984), 136–7E. Estimates of German deaths during the expulsions vary greatly. The claims that circulated in the 1950s of some 2,000,000 German deaths are probably greatly exaggerated. Rüdiger Overmans provides evidence that places the number closer to 500,000. See Rüdiger Overmans, 'Personelle Verluste der deutschen Bevölkerung durch Flucht und Vertreibung', *Dzieje Najnowsze*, 26 (1994), 51–65; and *idem, Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 299.

[102] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 13.

Archipelago. *Im Krebsgang* depicts the clash of two totalitarian regimes. Neither is without blame, and both claim victims without just cause.

Perhaps there are still other ways to tell the story. As Hans-Ulrich Wehler remarks in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, the publication of *Im Krebsgang* has sparked a 'debate [over the expulsion and the ending of the war that] has a liberating effect',[103] inviting us to think through how these events can be written into German history nearly sixty years after the end of the war. What follows are some thoughts about how we might proceed to rethink that history, questions that are intended as a contribution to the debate that Wehler calls for and that Grass's novel has prompted.

1. What can we learn from a comparative approach?

In the 'historians' dispute' of the mid-1980s, Ernst Nolte argued that the 'final solution' was not in any way *sui generis*, but was rather an expression of extremism and politically motivated violence that could be traced back at least to the 'reign of terror' of the French Revolution and had reached a twentieth-century highpoint with mass murder and mass deportations under Stalin.[104] In the context of the Cold War, seeing German crimes and crimes against Germans outside this comparative framework, firmly grounded in theories of totalitarianism, was extremely difficult. Similar evils begat similar evils, and all evils seemed more or less equally horrifying.

Norman Naimark's recent book *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* outlines an alternative comparative framework in which German tragedies at the end of the Second World War become examples of the excesses of a twentieth-century European nationalism that claimed many other victims. He offers a careful analysis in which Armenians, killed or driven from their homes by Turks, Jews, systematically marginalised from German society in the 1930s and physically removed from Nazi-occupied eastern Europe after 1939, Crimean Tartars and the Chechens-Ingush, deported by the Soviets, Germans driven out of Czechoslovakia at the end of the Second World War, and Kosovo's Albanians can all find a place.

Naimark structures his analysis around the distinction between genocide – 'the intentional killing-off of part or all of an ethnic, religious, or national group' – and 'ethnic cleansing' – the attempt to 'remove a people and often all traces of them from a concrete territory'. Both ethnic cleansing and genocide are rooted in late nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific conceptions of race and 'an essentialist view of nations, a view which excluded the "other" and forswore assimilation', but their logic and consequences are not identical.[105] Achieving ethnic homogeneity through the de facto transfer of population – either because a population flees an invading army or is forcefully displaced – even when it results in some deaths is different from

[103] '"Die Debatte wirkt befreiend"'.

[104] Nolte, 'Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will', 45. See the discussion in Maier, *Unmasterable Past*, 29–30, 66–99.

[105] Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), quotations, 3, 7. See also Philipp Ther, 'A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of "Ethnic Cleansing"', in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*, 43–72; and Mark Kramer, 'Introduction', *ibid.*, 1–41.

achieving ethnic homogeneity by means of the systematic, mass extermination of the 'other.'[106]

Comparisons of what distinguishes policies and outcomes – mass deportation as opposed to mass extermination – can lead us in turn to ask questions about what distinguishes regimes that pursue a common goal of ethnic homogeneity but employ very different means to achieve it. Why in some cases do political leaders – and many of their followers – believe that the ideal community they envision can be achieved by forcibly removing minority groups, while in others, the perceived threat presented by those groups leads those in power to conclude that they must exterminate the 'other'? Are the differences explained by ideology? by the particular historical forms of interaction between minority and majority populations? by the structure of political decision-making and the personalities of individual leaders? by the response – or lack of response – from a larger international community? The purpose of comparison is not to question the exceptional nature of genocidal regimes, but rather to question why in pursuing the goal of what Amir Weiner has called 'delineating the . . . socio-ethnic body', some regimes become genocidal and others do not.[107]

For the loved ones of the German civilian victims of the Red Army at the end of the war, the analytic distinction between genocide and ethnic cleansing may well have

[106] In addition to Naimark, see the useful insights offered by Charles A. Maier, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 807–31; Mark Mazower, 'Violence and the State in the Twentieth Century', *American Historical Review*, 107 (2002), 1158–78; and Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also Alan S. Rosenbaum, ed., *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, 2nd edn (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, 'The Politics of Uniqueness: Reflections on the Recent Polemical Turn in Holocaust and Genocide Scholarship', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 13 (1999), 28–61; Steven T. Katz, *The Holocaust in Historical Context*, Vol. 1, *The Holocaust and Mass Death before the Modern Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), esp. 125–36; Philipp Ther, 'A Century of Forced Migration: The Origins and Consequences of "Ethnic Cleansing" ', in Ther and Siljak, *Redrawing Nations*, 43–72; and Robert M. Hayden, 'Schindler's Fate: Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and Population Transfers', *Slavic Review*, 55 (1996), 727–48.

[107] Amir Weiner, 'Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999): 1114–55. On the possibilities – and limitations – of comparative approaches, see the insightful comments of Maier, *Unmasterable Past*, 69–70; also, in general, Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction*; also the suggestive discussion in Patrick Raszelenberg, 'The Khmers Rouges and the Final Solution', *History & Memory*, 11 (1999), 62–93. Naimark joins others who have identified the Turkish massacare of Armenians as a case of genocide. See also Vahakan N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn, 1995), xvii; also *idem*, 'The Convergent Aspects of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide: A Reinterpretation of the Concept of Holocaust', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3 (1988), 151–69. See also Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Naimark considers only European cases, but to this list we could add Rwanda, where no fewer than 500,000 Tutsi – some 77 per cent of the Tutsi population – were killed in 1994. See Alison Des Forges, *'Leave None to Tell the Story': Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 15. For a higher estimate, of one million deaths, see Charles C. Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 1. See also Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

been irrelevant. Death is death, mourning is mourning, loss is loss, whatever their origins. But the distinction may help historians to establish appropriate frameworks for comparison, to analyse better differences in intentionality and motivation, and to specify why state attempts to achieve ethnic homogeneity in the twentieth century take on different forms and have different consequences.[108]

2. Is it still possible to include Jews and Germans in the same story?

In the broad comparisons that Naimark proposes, the histories of victim groups do not directly intersect, and each victim group is cordoned off into its own chapter. In telling the story of the end of the war in eastern Germany, perhaps there are ways to bring Germans and Jews onto the same page. In January 1945 they both were present in the part of the world Grass describes in *Im Krebsgang*, and if subsequent editions of the book include a map, readers will see that Gdynia, transformed into Gotenhafen by the Nazis – the point of departure for the *Gustloff* – is not far from Stutthof, site of a German concentration camp, from which some 37,000 Jews were evacuated in early 1945. Only about 20,000 would survive the 'death marches' and attempted evacuations by sea.[109] To the south at the opposite end of Poland lies Auschwitz, where three days before the German tragedy of 30 January, the Red Army liberated the camp. In telling the tales of the war's end, there might be ways to allow the paths of Germans and Jews to cross. Grass has provided a 'German Requiem' – the metaphor used by the German critic and nationally televised opinion maker, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, to describe *Im Krebsgang*[110] – dedicated to those whose lives ended in the Baltic on 30 January 1945. But it might be possible to describe January 1945 in East Prussia in ways that also make it possible to hear a Kaddish recited for the victims of the concentration camps that dotted eastern Europe, including the area surrounding Danzig.

Jews are not completely absent from Grass's story. Those he describes include David Frankfurter, the medical student who shoots Gustloff, he explains, 'because I am a Jew', and another David, a young man whom Konny first encounters in the virtual reality of an internet chatroom, then meets in Schwerin, where he shoots him 'because', echoing Frankfurter, 'I am a German'.[111] During the court proceedings in Konny's trial for murder, it becomes clear that David is Wolfgang Stremplin. Konny's victim is not born Jewish but has assumed a Jewish identity and adopted Judaism out of a sense of the need to atone for 'war crimes and mass murder' and the

[108] Michael Jeissmann, *Auf Wiedersehen gestern: Die deutsche Vergangenheit und die Politik von morgen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), 72–4, 82–3.

[109] Marek Orski, 'Organisation und Ordnungsprinzipien des Lagers Stutthof,' in Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, eds., *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Entwicklung und Struktur* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1998), I, 285–308. See also Heinz Ludwig Arnold, 'Günter Grass's *Im Krebsgang*'. *Die sieben Göttinger Literaturtipps der TEXT + Kritik-Redaktion*, March 2002, http.wee.etk-muenchen.de/g7/rdm2002–03.html; and Martin Bergau, *Der Junge von Bernsteinküste: Erlebte Zeitgeschichte 1938–1948* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt, 1994).

[110] Arnold, 'Günter Grass's *Im Krebsgang*'; and the reference in Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 139.

[111] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 28, 175.

belief that 'everything Jewish was somehow sacred.'[112] David/Wolfgang reminds us of the profound ways in which the 'German question' and the 'Jewish question' are intertwined,[113] but all but missing from *Im Krebsgang* are Jews.

It is possible that Grass's reluctance to make German and Jewish suffering at the end of the war part of one story reflects a concern that such a narrative can lead to a false equation of pain that stemmed from very different sources. Reflecting on the sixtieth anniversary of the German invasion of Poland, Grass recalled the 'injustice and the loss of *Heimat*' that had befallen millions of Germans – himself included – at the end of the war, but this suffering was a consequence of 'the crimes that we Germans' committed. In 1970, when Brandt's knees hit the ground in Warsaw, Grass continued, it became clear that 'the loss of the *Heimat*' paled in comparison with the 'murder of six million Jews, planned and carried out by Germans, [and] the crimes and the extermination camps of Chelmno, Treblinka, Auschwitz, Birkenau, Sobibor, Belzec and Majdanek'.[114] Grass wanted to insist on distinctions that were blurred when sociologists compared German and Jewish diasporas in the 1950s, when Maria Zatschek testified that she had been treated 'just like the Jews', and when Hillgruber paired 'two demises' in the 1980s. *Im Krebsgang* appears against the background of the Federal Republic's pledge to compensate the victims of slave labour regimes in Germany and elsewhere in Nazi-occupied Europe and the ongoing discussion of the monument to the 'murdered Jews of Europe' in Berlin.[115] In this context, it is sometimes possible to hear an implicit 'too' behind receptions of Grass's book that emphasise that it is now finally possible to speak of how Germans suffered. The taboo that has allegedly vanished is the one that gave primacy of place to the victims of Germans. And from 'too' it has sometimes been a short step to 'like' and that tendency towards apologia.[116] When Stutthof, Langfuhr, Danzig and Auschwitz are parts of the same story, when German victims rushing on to the *Gustloff* are juxtaposed with Jewish victims, some saved by the arrival of the Red Army, others driven to their

[112] *Ibid.*, 185.

[113] See Anson Rabinbach, 'The Jewish Question in the German Question', in Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 45–73; also, Michael Geyer and Miriam Hansen, 'German-Jewish Memory and National Consciousness', in Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 175–90.

[114] Günter Grass, 'Scham und Schande: Zum 50. Jahrestag des Kriegsausbruchs', in *idem, Deutscher Lastenausgleich: Wider das dumpfe Einheitsgebot. Reden und Gespräche* (Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990), 28, 30–31.

[115] On compensation for slave laborers, see http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/Holocaust/germanco1.html. See also the law regulating compensation at http://www.compensation-for-forced-labour.org/. And on the monument, Michael S. Cullen, ed., *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal: Dokumentation einer Debatte* (Zurich: Pendo Verlag, 1999); and Michael Jeismann, ed., *Mahnmal Mitte: Eine Kontroverse* (Cologne: Dumont, 1999). Extensive documentation of the debate is also available at http://www.lrz-muenchen.de/~jgk/Walser-Bubis-Kontroverse.htm.

[116] See Harald Welzer, 'Zurück zur Opfergesellschaft: Verschiebungen in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3 April 2002; Volker Hage, 'Autoren unter Generalverdacht', *Der Spiegel*, 9 April 2002; 'Der böse Geist der Charta: Ralph Giordano fürchtet, dass die Diskussion über die Grass-Novelle die Ursachen der Vertreibung vergessen macht', *Die Welt*, 9 Feb. 2002; Joachim Güntner, 'Opfer und Tabu: Günter Grass und das Denken im Trend', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 23 Feb. 2002.

deaths by SS guards, and when we recognise what distinguishes genocide from ethnic cleansing, however, the tragedy of German loss is not confused with the Holocaust, and the 'too' does not become a 'like'.

Telling such a story in which Poles, Soviets, Jews and Germans all appear as parts of one drama is possible. For example, in *Das Echolot: Fuga furiosa*, the second instalment of his staggering compilation of a range of voices from the Second World War, Walter Kempowski creates a timeline of documents that leads his reader through a little more than four weeks in January and February 1945.[117] Kempowski juxtaposes perspectives. We read the minutes of a meeting in the Reich Chancellery when General Heinz Guderian reports to Hitler on the advance of the Soviet troops, and descriptions of Auschwitz by Danuta Czech and Primo Levi. Excerpts from the memoirs of concentration camp survivors immediately precede excerpts from survivors of the expulsion. *Echolot* is the German word for a sonic depth finder, and such juxtapositions of evidence are perhaps a necessary first step for those who seek to plumb the complexity of the last months of the Second World War. Perhaps it will be possible for writers – of the power, insight, and intelligence of Germany's Nobel laureate–and historians to put these pieces together in a narrative. This may require 'walking like a crab,' 'crawling back in order to move forward',[118] as Paul Pokriefke describes it, but Grass has amply proved that he knows how to make these moves.

3. How can we make Im Krebsgang *part of the 'history of memory' in the Federal Republic?*

Finally, as students of the German past revisit the history of the end of the war in *Im Krebsgang*, we should remember that this is precisely what we are doing – *re*visiting a past that has been discussed endlessly since 1945. Some commentators on Grass's book took note of this,[119] but those who praised Grass for breaking a taboo seemed uncritically to accept Grass's account of postwar memory. *Der Spiegel* and others who credited Grass for taking a courageous step assumed that the left had dominated accounts of the German past, privileging Auschwitz and pushing German suffering to the margins. If the left was loath to speak about the end of the war in the east, this did not mean that the topic was cloaked in silence nor was it ever the exclusive preserve of irredentist expellee groups. Discussions of the National Socialist past have always been far more complex, and victims of Germans and German victims have always competed for space in public memory.

[117] See Fritzsche, 'Walter Kempowski's Collection'; and Kempowski, *Das Echolot: Fuga furiosa, ein kollektives Tagebuch Winter 1945*, 4 vols. (Munich: Albrecht Knaus Verlag, 1999); and Kempowski's criticisms of Grass's claims to break taboos by telling the story of the *Gustloff*, 'Grass-Bestseller hat seinen ersten Kritiker gefunden', *Der Stern*, 3 April 2002.

[118] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 116.

[119] See in particular, Arnold, 'Günter Grass's *Im Krebsgang*'; Hellmuth Karasek, 'Bewältigte Vergangenheit: Grass erinnert an deutsches Leid: Das ist wichtig für ihn, nicht mehr für das Land', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 17 Feb. 2002; and Thomas E. Schmidt, 'Ostpreussischer Totentanz', *Die Zeit*, 8 Feb. 2002.

Grass's opening question, 'why only now?' could have been asked in the 1950s, when the expulsion crucially structured national political identity; in the 1960s, when it remained a stock-in-trade of West German politicians, including the SPD; in 1981 when it filled West German television screens,[120] in the mid-1980s when it was linked by Hillgruber with the Holocaust; after the end of the Cold War, when Germans were warned 'against forgetting'; and at the end of the decade when it was the stuff of foreign policy negotiations between Germans and their east European neighbours and conciliatory public ceremonies that included German, Polish and Lithuanian writers. The answer to the question depends on the larger context in which stories of German suffering are repeated.[121] In 2002, Grass, the renegade outsider who had been critical of unification, returned to the fold, putting forth a blueprint for an account of the end of the war that could be *gesamtdeutsch* (wholly German), pulling together East and West and spanning a political spectrum that stretched from Christian to Social Democrats, but when we read his book, we should remember that he was offering an important variation on familiar themes.

When Grass claims that the suffering of millions of expellees has been silenced and memories of 'one injustice repressed another', he assumes that in speaking for himself, he is speaking for all Germans, and he misrepresents what Aleida Assmann calls the 'history of memory'[122] – not the events themselves, but rather how these events have been commemorated and remembered. As we continue to consider how to present this past, we should also pay heed to the ways in which the past has been contested again and again since 1945.

'If we plan for the future', commented Grass in his remarks in Vilnius in 2000, we find that the 'past . . . has already staked out its traces and marked the way.'[123] Published in a volume entitled *Die Zukunft der Erinnerung* (The Future of Memory), Grass's comments underscore beliefs that he has expressed for over forty years: Germans should not seek to escape or put behind them the past of National Socialism and the Second World War. For Grass, the past should not be 'mastered'. What Grass calls for is far more akin to *Aufarbeitung* – a 'working through' – of the past, a process that is living, dynamic and urgently relevant to the contemporary context. For Grass, this means that historians – and historical novelists – bear a particular responsibility. Their reflections on the past have significant consequences for the politics of the present.

[120] Indeed, the same question served as the title for the introductory essay in the book that accompanied the television series. See Mühlfenzl, 'Warum erst jetzt?', in *Geflohen und vertrieben*.

[121] See the useful comments of Jürgen Kocka, '1945 nach 1989/90: Zur sich wandelnden Bedeutung des Endes von NS-Diktatur und Krieg', in Christian Jansen, Lutz Niethammer and Bernd Weisbrod, eds., *Von der Aufgabe der Freiheit: Politische Verantwortung und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Hans Mommsen zum 5. November 1995* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), 599–608.

[122] Aleida Assmann and Ute Frevert, *Geschichtsvergessenheit/Geschichtsversessenheit: Vom Umgang mit deutschen Vergangenheiten nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 30. See also Moeller, 'What Has "Coming to Terms with the Past" Meant?'; and Volkhard Knigge and Norbert Frei, eds., *Verbrechen Erinnern: Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2002).

[123] Grass, 'Ich erinnere mich . . . ', 32.

Im Krebsgang ends with Paul Pokriefke's discovery that his son – now incarcerated for the murder of David/Wolfgang – is being celebrated in another website, www.kameradschaft-konrad-pokriefke.de. Paul concludes that 'this will never end, it will never end',[124] the last words in the book. His valediction can, however, be read more than one way. Grass wants to warn us that without constant vigilance, the right-wing neo-Nazi tendencies that have helped to shape Konny will remain with us. But the other 'this' that will not end in Germany is the ongoing confrontation with the history of National Socialism and the legacy of the Second World War. *Im Krebsgang* and the discussions that have surrounded its publication provide powerful evidence that this past is alive and well. This is no cause for despair, but rather attests to the significance of the politics of memory in solidifying the democratic bases of the Berlin Republic and the ways in which Germany will remain of tremendous interest to all who seek to explain how history, memory, politics and national identity are intertwined.

[124] Grass, *Im Krebsgang*, 216.