



SCHOOL of
GRADUATE STUDIES
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

East Tennessee State University
Digital Commons @ East
Tennessee State University

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Student Works

12-2007

The Long March of the German 68ers: Their Protest, Their Exhibition, and Their Administration.

Gracie M. Morton

East Tennessee State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [European History Commons](#), and the [Political History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Morton, Gracie M., "The Long March of the German 68ers: Their Protest, Their Exhibition, and Their Administration." (2007). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 2141. <https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2141>

This Thesis - Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact digilib@etsu.edu.

The Long March of the German 68ers: Their Protest, Their Exhibition, and Their
Administration

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of History
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Masters of Arts in History

by
Gracie M. Morton
December 2007

Dr. Stephen G. Fritz, Chair
Dr. Colin Baxter
Dr. Doug Burgess

Keywords: 68er, Protestbewegung, Fischer, Germany, Wehrmacht

ABSTRACT

The Long March of the German 68ers: Their Protest, Their Exhibition, and Their Administration

by

Gracie M. Morton

The postwar children coming of age in the late 1960s in West Germany mounted a wide-sweeping socio-political protest against what they saw as the strangling silence of their parents, the Nazi generation. These protesters, referred to as the 68ers for their pivotal year, continued their struggle in following decades, incorporating an important and controversial exhibition, and finally culminating in their own administration thirty years from their defining moment. Using such diverse kinds of information as parliamentary debates, interviews, and contemporary criticism, this thesis explores the impact of the 68ers' initial protest and the influence they ultimately had on their nation and society. The 68ers changed the face of German society by forcing a dialogue with the past that made a full exploration of the Nazi generation possible in Germany. They also incorporated gender politics into their protest and forced a social revolution that allowed a woman to be elected Chancellor.

CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
Chapter	
1. DIE NACHKRIEGSKINDER	5
2. OVERCOMING A SILENCE: THE CONTINUITY OF THE THIRD REICH AND THE PROTEST OF THE 68ERS	8
Nazis Still in Power	8
Inner Emigration and the Weapon of Nazism	11
Sexuality and Hypocrisy	14
Generational Guilt and the Burden of the Past	19
Intellectuals and the Student Protestors	25
Authorship and the New Left	32
The Press and the Protests	35
Their Explosive Year	40
Anti-Zionism and the 68ers	42
Social Change	46
3. THE MYTH OF THE “GOOD” WEHRMACHT: THE EXHIBITION OF THE 68ERS AND THEIR CONTINUED CONFRONTATION WITH THE PAST	48
Myth-Making and the History of Innocence	49
Myth Confronted	63
Objections and the Bundestag	69
4. TWO AFFAIRS: THE 68ER ADMINISTRATION AND THE END OF THE LONG MARCH	74

The Fischer Affair	77
The Visa Affair	84
5. MARCH CONCLUDED?	89
REFERENCES	93
VITA	98

CHAPTER 1

DIE NACHKRIEGSKINDER

There was a strange dichotomy in the West German society of the 1960s: on the one hand there were the *Nachkriegskinder* (the postwar children) who challenged those they believed to be Nazis in the government of the Federal Republic; and on the other hand there were numerous West Germans who were tired of the seemingly endless guilt for National Socialism. The student activists of the *Nachkriegskinder* who strove to expose fascism in their society would eventually be called 68ers for the most explosive year, 1968, a year marked by violence and protest. But there is an irony to the 68ers. By the time they began their protests in the mid to late 1960s, their parents' generation (the Nazi generation) was busy attempting to erase their guilt in many ways: balancing guilt with personal suffering; staunch philo-Semitism; and reparations payments to victims of National Socialism. This generation, called the silent generation by their children, for the most part found discussing their National Socialist past too difficult. There were histories and other books being written, but these were largely esoteric studies done by experts which did not venture beyond the academic realm. "It is entirely symptomatic when the writer Marcel Reich-Ranicki relates in his autobiography *The Author of Himself* that the first person in post-Nazi Germany to ask him about his concentration camp experiences was a journalist, in the late 1960s. Her name was Ulrike Meinhof, the future terrorist."¹

In protest against this silence and what the student activists saw as the hypocrisy and rampant materialism of a West Germany democratic government that employed many former Nazis, the 68ers revolted against everything they believed their parents

¹ Stephan and Norbert Lebert, *My Father's Keeper: Children of Nazi Leaders—an Intimate History of Damage and Denial*, trans. Julian Evans (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001), 190.

represented. The activism of the German 68ers “was especially motivated by a sense of shock about National Socialism, which, however, was soon instrumentalized to cast doubt on German and middle-class ways of thinking and life-styles and on the social order in general.”² In West Germany in the 1960s, that social order included a close relationship with the United States and Israel. Sparked in part by the Vietnam War and in part by tensions in the Middle East, many students demonstrated against America and Israel and protested, ironically, in favor of Palestinians, their generation’s “Jewish” victims. In turning their backs on everything their parents had come to represent, some of these activists eventually became anti-Semitic.

In West Germany in the 1960s there was a precarious balance between many who were tired of Nazi guilt and leftist activists who wanted to force their fellow Germans to confront history. But the *Nachkriegskinder* felt no responsibility for Nazi crimes; they bore the consequence of the guilt without having committed the acts responsible for the guilt. They had to bow under the pressure of this burden without understanding why. Their parents refused to address history at home and the details of the subject were taboo socially. What the postwar generation learned about National Socialist history they acquired outside the home. Young West Germans were exposed to facts about the Nazis and their crimes (books, plays, highly publicized trials), but reticence reigned at home. Unspoken guilt for having supported or participated in a criminal government and painful memories of personal suffering (i.e., the firebombing of Dresden and starvation rations) created in the typical West German home something psychologist Margarete Hecker

² Christian Meier, “Condemning and Comprehending,” in *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 International, Inc., 1993), 27.

called the “solidarity of silence.”³ In order to create and continue with a normal life, the parents from the Nazi generation established a status quo of muteness in which their children often felt stifled. In the classroom and in the public arena, the Nachkriegskinder were linked to the Nazi past through education and reparations, but the connection was lost or denied at home. Their identity and their roots as Germans were missing. “The facts about the Third Reich, which were transmitted in their school or in the media, could not provide them with the knowledge of their own roots since, as a closed topic in their own families, the subject found no personal echo.”⁴ The confusion created by this discontinuity led quite often to frustration that eventually found an outlet in accusation and political demonstration. The distance between them and their parents’ generation the Nachkriegskinder expanded with their activism, with many of them joining the New Left or opposition groups dedicated to fighting the fascism they believed was continuing to control Germany secretly.

The New Left and the philosophers of the Frankfurt School influenced these young radicals of 1960s’ Germany. Students and street-fighters mobilized in an impassioned protest against what they saw as the continuity between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic of Germany. Freedom-revoking legislation, the Vietnam War, and conflict in the Middle East spawned a number of demonstrations across West Germany, sparking violence between the state and its youth in the 1960s and 1970s.

³ Margarete Hecker, “Family Reconstruction in Germany: An Attempt to Confront the Past,” in *The Collective Silence: German Identity and the Legacy of Shame*, ed. Barbara Heimannsberg and Christoph J. Schmidt, trans. Cynthia Oudejans Harris and Gordon Wheeler (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 75.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

CHAPTER 2

OVERCOMING A SILENCE: THE CONTINUITY OF THE THIRD REICH AND THE PROTEST OF THE 68ERS

Student protestors and street-fighters saw a terrible continuity in the 1960s between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Third Reich. Fascism was perhaps their most important and their most pervasive enemy in the eyes of the 68ers of the *Nachkriegsgeneration*. The German New Left's definition of fascism made it a reaction of capitalist economies. Therefore, many influential intellectuals of West Germany did not see the Federal Republic's democratic capitalism as a break from fascism. They also called the policies of the new democracy authoritarian when they outlawed communist political parties and passed the *Notstandgesetze* (Emergency Laws), which were designed to suspend freedoms in times of national emergency. The *Notstandgesetze*, especially, appeared to be a frightening reminder of Nazism when intellectuals and student protestors pointed to the emergency measure that placed Hitler in power in 1933.

Nazis Still in Power

It was not government policy alone that reminded the *Nachkriegskinder* of National Socialism; several politicians and government officials were former members of the NSDAP.⁵ In January of 1960, *Time Magazine* published an article about Nazis in West German government positions. *Time* reported that one out of every three West German members of parliament was a former Nazi along with approximately half of all senior civil servants. Eight Federal Republic ambassadors in 1960 were former Nazi

⁵ *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*, the National Socialist German Workers Party.

party members.⁶ By 1965, sixty percent of West Germany's military officers had fought for the Third Reich while two-thirds of the judges had served under the Nazi regime.⁷ It was not limited to civil servants and judges; there were also a number of highly visible public officials who were former Nazis.

Hans Krüger participated in the failed Beer Hall Putsch in 1923 and later worked as a Nazi judge in Konitz (now in northern Poland). He served as an officer in the Wehrmacht⁸ from 1943 to 1945. After World War II, he joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU)⁹ and was a member of the *Bundestag* (parliament) from 1957 to 1965. Krüger also served a term as Minister for Expellees, Refugees, and War Claimants in 1963 but lost this position because of his suspected involvement in war crimes. According to Yad Vashem, Krüger was an SS-Captain in charge of the mass murder operations in Stanislawow in southeastern Galicia carried out by the *Grenzpolizei-Kommissariat* (Border Police).¹⁰ A court, however, denied that there was evidence to support his guilt.

Theodor Oberländer joined the NSDAP in 1933, became a professor at Ernst Moritz Arndt University, and worked actively to make it *judenfrei* (Jew-free). After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, he served on the eastern front as an officer with the Nightingale Battalion in Lvov in 1941 where he conducted anti-partisan warfare. After the war, he became a member of Konrad Adenauer's government in 1953 and joined the

⁶ "The Haunted Past," *Time Magazine*, 25 January 1960. Database online. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/archives>, s.v. "Theodor Oberlaender;" accessed 9 May 2007.

⁷ Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: the Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 33.

⁸ The National Socialist military.

⁹ The CDU is a conservative political party.

¹⁰ Dieter Pohl, "Hans Krueger and the Murder of the Jews in the Stanislawow Region (Galicia)." Yad Vashem. Available from <http://www.yadvashem.org>, s.v. "Hans Krueger;" accessed 9 May 2007.

CDU in 1956. In January 1960, he appeared before the Hague to deny accusations that he had participated in the Lvov Massacre of over 2,000 people. He claimed the Soviets had killed those people before he arrived. An East German court tried and convicted him in absentia for that massacre and sentenced him to life in prison. Protesting the trial and his innocence, Oberländer resigned from the West German government.¹¹

Hans Josef Maria Globke was one of the men who had formulated the emergency powers act that put Hitler in power in 1933. He managed to escape the official label of Nazi when Martin Bormann denied his application for party membership in 1940 for reason of Globke's past involvement with the Center Party.¹² After the war, Globke became the national security advisor to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. But it was one of Adenauer's successors, Kurt Georg Kiesinger who made some of the biggest headlines in West Germany in the 1960s. Kiesinger became the head of the *Große Koalition* (Great Coalition) and Chancellor of West Germany in 1966. Kiesinger had joined the NSDAP in 1933 and worked as a propaganda minister for the Nazis. After the war, he joined the CDU and became a member of parliament in 1949.¹³ In 1968, after a very public confrontation with Kiesinger in West Berlin, Beate Klarsfeld and her husband made it their crusade to "out" Kiesinger and others as Nazis.¹⁴

The issue of the number of Nazis in government positions in the Federal Republic began in 1948 when the United States ended the denazification program within its zone of occupation. This meant that a large number of former Nazi party members and other

¹¹ "The Haunted Past", *Time Magazine*, January 25, 1960.

¹² A Catholic-based, non-fascist political party.

¹³ Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online, "Biographie: Kurt Georg Kiesinger, 1904-1988." Available from <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/suche>, s.v. "Kiesinger;" accessed 3 June 2007.

¹⁴ KlarsfeldFoundation.org, "An Introduction." Available from <http://www.klarsfeldfoundation.org>; accessed 28 May 2007.

participants in the regime were able to reenter society without much effort. More than a few entered politics and by 1968, Kurt Georg Kiesinger and Heinrich Lübke, both former members of the NSDAP, held two of the highest offices in West Germany: Chancellor and President, respectively.¹⁵ It was quite common, especially under Konrad Adenauer's administration, to find a number of former Nazis (both "denazified" and otherwise) holding key government positions. The philosopher Karl Jaspers blamed the Western Allies for this, writing in 1966 that the old-line politicians had been forced on the Germans out of expediency.¹⁶

Inner Emigration and the Weapon of Nazism

Mirroring the politicians in their efforts to forget about the past, the authors of postwar Germany called for a *Kahlschlag*, an attempt to remove the influence of Nazism from the German language, and therefore literature. Some German authors spoke of "inner emigration;" this was the process by which artists and writers managed to resist the Nazi regime, passively, by keeping themselves removed intellectually. The *Kahlschlag*, in conjunction with the exoneration from inner emigration, was supposed to provide Germany's postwar authors with a new beginning free of any taint of National Socialism. Thomas Mann, an exiled German author, criticized inner emigration¹⁷ and later, the authors of the 1960s exposed this *Kahlschlag* as ineffective. Meanwhile, most of the immediate postwar literature dealt with the war and Nazism in purely abstract, even allegorical, terms.¹⁸ It was the female authors such as Elisabeth Langgässer (*Das unauslöschliche Siegel*, 1946) who addressed the National Socialist period, the war, and

¹⁵ Rob Burns, ed., *German Cultural Studies: an introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 213.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

the issues arising out of both directly. These female authors, largely ignored until the mid to late 1960s, wrote about all the issues the 68ers wanted their history to address, such as “daily life under fascism, resistance efforts, the civilian war experience, the persecution of the Jews, and concentration camps.”¹⁹ But such works, by and large, did not reach West German students until the issue of women’s rights was raised and seriously considered in the 1960s. “The widespread resistance to women’s participation in cultural and intellectual life was reflected in a survey of faculty members at West German universities in 1960, which found that 64 per cent of respondents were opposed to allowing women even to attend university, 4 per cent were neutral on the subject, and 32 per cent stood somewhere between neutrality and opposition; in addition 79 per cent objected to the idea of hiring women at lecturer level or above.”²⁰ This discrimination in higher education would not begin to break down until the student activists forced the issue by introducing gender politics into the national debate. Women authors and their treatment of the National Socialist past would have to be forced upon universities which were still bastions of male dominance; and this in a country that was actively and legally encouraging, even forcing women to be housewives and mothers. Begun in the Adenauer administration, the government of the Federal Republic provided National Socialist-like incentives to women and families to have many children by giving *Kindergeld* (government assistance) to the family for every child produced after the second one.²¹ Led by conservative politicians and church leaders, the Federal Republic promoted extremely traditional sexual and family values.

¹⁹ Ibid., 228.

²⁰ Ibid., 230.

²¹ Ibid., 216.

According to many of the Christian leaders in postwar Germany, the primary moral issue facing the German people in the 1950s was sexuality, rather than as Lothar Kreyssig²² believed, the guilt for Nazi crimes. A result of this emphasis on sexual morality made sexuality and sexual freedom an important issue for the Nachkriegskinder, and the 68ers melded this with images of the Holocaust to use in their attack on the institutions of power. Their mixing of Holocaust study with sexual issues was not purely academic, however. The term Nazi had become a harsh way to denounce an opponent and mixing metaphors of genocide with gender and sexual issues created a hyperbole to strengthen the argument in favor of sexual and feminist liberation.²³ Growing up in the repressive 1950s, the Nachkriegskinder were bombarded with the message that “the Nazis themselves encouraged promiscuity and illegitimacy and that their sexual immorality was inseparable from their other crimes.”²⁴ To make their argument, however, New Leftists reversed this and argued that the Nazis were sexually repressed which led to them to commit mass murder and other atrocities. Certainly there was a strong element of male chauvinism permeating National Socialism, but the cause and effect between sexual repression and genocide would remain theoretical.

The parents’ generation repeatedly brought up such terms as Nazi and Nazism in the postwar years, but not in an effort to analyze guilt issues. These terms were used as buzzwords in discussions of sex to invoke an immediate response of revulsion, horror, or fear. They used Nazism as a sexual morality lesson. The war generation were not

²² Kreyssig was the founder of *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*, a non-profit charitable organization dedicated to physically and psychologically rebuilding Germany’s relationship with the victims of the Third Reich.

²³ Dagmar Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together?: Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany,” *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2, Intimacy (Winter 1998): 397-398. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “68ers;” accessed 8 May 2007.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 397.

dealing with the past, they were using a terrible thing from their past to scare their children into behaving in an acceptable way; and thus, in the 1950s' arguments about sexuality, Nazism was used as a scare tactic. In so doing, the parents were still avoiding the issue of their generation's crimes. Instead, the Third Reich had become a morality play where the decadent Nazis were outlasted by the abstemious good Germans and abstinence became the definition of the non-Nazi in the 1950s in West Germany. The 68ers fought against this repressive definition by, ironically, using the same weapon as their parents. The accusation of Nazism was to remain a political, social, or moral weapon.²⁵

Sexuality and Hypocrisy

The 68ers, in a bid to further a sexual revolution, latched on to the psychological studies of Erich Fromm, Alexander Mitscherlich, and Reinhart Westphal. The students read scholarship that proposed sexual repression led to an increase in aggression which, if not released in a healthy fashion, would lead to murder as an extreme result. One philosophy PhD, Arno Plack, used the Auschwitz Trials of the early 1960s as fodder for his research into this issue in 1967. His study was concerned not only with the SS officers on trial, but also with the lack of popular public support for those trials by some members of the German population; specifically, "older members of society [who] called loudly for the punishment of rapists and murderers but [who] were disinclined to support the Auschwitz Trials."²⁶ Puzzled over the lack of positive response from some members of the war generation, Plack sought an explanation and proposed that "the liberties taken

²⁵ Ulrich Schlie, "Today's View of the Third Reich and the Second World War in German Historiographical Discourse," *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 543-545. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Historikerstreit Vergangenheitsbewältigung," accessed 23 September 2006.

²⁶ Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics," 403.

by individual criminals bothered people, but murderers in uniform were an object of identification.”²⁷ Plack’s work in 1967 strove to analyze the causes of fascism and violence by studying not only the perpetrators but also those in his society who were bystanders and their motives for supporting or not supporting the punishment of the war criminals. Plack’s work, specifically, also begged the question: how could someone seem to be so respectable in one moment only to become a sadistic monster the next? “As one member after another of the generation of 1968 would later testify, the similarity between the code of good behavior postwar society demanded of them and the model of behavior evidently exemplified by the executors of genocide, sickened them deeply.”²⁸ The people who, when not guarding concentration camps or participating in extreme violence on the front lines, were perfectly behaved and respectable bourgeois types, became even more horrific and monstrous after the revelation of the banality of evil²⁹, as Hannah Arendt wrote. The Nachkriegskinder were forced to look at their own parents and wonder what they had done during the war, especially those with fathers who had returned from POW camps. They were torn between defending their parents (my father was a Nazi but he did not do those things) and accusing them to rid themselves of that burden of guilt (my father may have killed a Jew but it has nothing to do with me).

The 68ers took this in a different direction, demanding an accounting from an entire generation. But, such realizations were deeply shocking for the Nachkriegskinder precisely for the reason that it was about their parents. This was not knowledge learned at home over the course of years but sickening realizations forced by the socio-political

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *The Banality of Evil* was the title of Hannah Arendt’s book based on her interviews with Adolf Eichmann (a Nazi bureaucrat in charge of the Final Solution) and her coverage of his 1961 trial for crimes against humanity.

climate of the time. This caused some to fight harder against the bourgeois morality of their parents which they saw as inherently hypocritical. “Above all, they had a handle on what came to seem like one of the greatest hypocrisies of postwar society, in Plack’s words, ‘the secret agreement of the society, that provides cover for the concentration camp murderer, but at the same time for example denounces the parents of a bride for the crime of pimping, if they allow the future son-in-law to spend the night.’”³⁰ The psycho-analysis of the sexual causes behind fascism was a useful weapon to counter the previous generation’s use of Nazism as a sexual morality weapon. According to the thinking of such activists as those in Kommune 1,³¹ anti-authoritarian behavior and sexual liberation, as the exact opposite of what the Nazi generation advocated both during the regime and in the democracy afterwards, was the answer. The news magazine, *Der Spiegel*, provided support for this in 1967 when it drew correlations between statements made by church fathers on sexual morality in the postwar years and Hitler’s call to eliminate elements of provocativeness and eroticism in German culture in his book, *Mein Kampf*.³² Of course, in the interest of simplicity, these studies and articles ignored the ambiguous aspect of the relationship between the Nazis and sexuality.

In conjunction with these confrontations with the bourgeois morality of their parents, the 68ers and their psychologists framed an attack on the Christian Church of Germany as well. The Church, an obvious target in their conflict with antiquated morality, also represented a center of hypocrisy when it came to the crimes of the Third Reich. The proponents of sexual liberation took the opportunity to uncover the Church’s

³⁰ Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics,” 403.

³¹ A commune established by such leftist activists as Rudi Dutschke, an influential member of several leftist activist organizations.

³² Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics,” 406.

prior position in favor of National Socialism. One author popular with the 68ers, Karlheinz Deschner, in his book *The Cross of the Church: A Sexual History of Christianity*, quoted statements made by church leaders who supported the attacks on sexual immorality made by the Nazi regime. Deschner criticized the unerring stance of Christianity on sexual morality that gave the impression that sexual promiscuity was a greater sin than murder. He attacked Rome for its preoccupation with sex rather than denouncing the slaughter of millions in the camps.³³

The churches in postwar Germany were preoccupied with the sexual decency of the German people, drawing lessons for the public between National Socialist atheism and sexual explicitness to the regime's evil and downfall. Neither the destruction of Europe's Jews nor the slaughter of millions of people was a part of the churches' argument. While the religious conservatives manipulated the imagery of Nazi violence to enforce traditional morality, the psychoanalysis of the Nazi regime favored by the 68ers married the twin issues of sex and violence and presented a correlation the churches and the CDU refused to address. The 68ers pointed not only to the similarities between the Christian religion's encouragement to procreate and the Third Reich's laws encouraging the same thing, but also at historical church support for the regime.

A very important aspect of these attacks on repressive sexual morality was the fact that the issues of the past were being raised. For the first time since the fall of the Third Reich, "commentators were quite clearly articulating their horror at what they saw as the persistence of the Nazi legacy in their present, both as it was directed at children and as it was aimed at adults."³⁴ These commentators not only used National Socialism

³³ Ibid., 408-409.

³⁴ Ibid., 410.

as a frame for their arguments but also strove to understand the mindset involved in such a murderous apparatus as the Third Reich.

But how did both sides of the debate use the same example to make their point? In postwar Germany the status quo stated that the Nazis were sexually immoral and therefore morally bankrupt. Out of a desire to prove that they were not Nazis, postwar Germans dedicated themselves to being the opposite of what they had defined as Nazi, which meant for them an emphasis on traditional morality. Bourgeois sexual and family values were a force not only in the home but also in the political arena with the CDU in political majority until 1966 when it joined with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to create the Great Coalition that controlled well over half of parliament. This meant that “the perspectives the churches fostered were not only the most widely disseminated ones but also the ones that structured criminal and civil law and state family and welfare policy.”³⁵ The anti-Nazi sexual mores embraced by the CDU rang false for the 68ers, especially when they counted how many former Nazis were active in the conservative postwar political parties.

Political conservatives, sociologists, and religious leaders not only used the taint of National Socialism as a strategy but also employed the image of genocide as a tactic to eliminate support for abortion. Dr. Hermann Frühauf was a Catholic doctor who wrote “Paragraph 218” in 1946 in which he equated abortion with Auschwitz. Part of the doctor’s agenda was to encourage the birthrate after what was the most destructive and deadliest war in history, but the use of such a shocking hyperbole was also a moral tactic. For Frühauf and his supporters, anyone who supported abortion, “whether he intends this or not; whether he understands this or not, serves those forces and powers, that trespass

³⁵ Ibid., 411.

against humanity; he finds himself at a particularly dangerous point on that precipitous slope, that in its last consequences leads to the gas chambers of some Auschwitz.”³⁶ The issue of abortion was an extremely delicate subject in Germany in the mid 1960s with many politicians refusing to discuss it. The very idea of abortion reminded many, in a highly uncomfortable way, of the Nazi T-4 euthanasia and forced sterilization programs. For many West Germans, abortion was not an issue of women’s reproductive rights but something too steeped in negative eugenics to be considered.³⁷ The use of Auschwitz, the Nazis, and genocide by political and religious conservatives as political and moral tools to mold the public mind stimulated very little argument or outcry until the 68ers countered by pointing out the National Socialist roots of those who made the argument.

Generational Guilt and the Burden of the Past

The 68ers, in actions ironically similar to that of their parents in the postwar era, strove to be the opposite of everything the Nazis represented to them and the underlying conflict between the two generations existed over what the Nazi generation termed the “guilt obsession.” Some members of the *Nachkriegsgeneration* (postwar generation), to counter the attitudes of their parents, turned to anti-authoritarian student revolts in order to confront the guilt their parents seemed determined to ignore. In the 1960s, children of the Nazi generation had reached an age where they not only asked questions, but demanded answers.³⁸

Lothar Baier wrote in *Die Zeit* in 1987:

³⁶ Frühauf quoted in Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics,” 414.

³⁷ Herzog, “Pleasure, Sex, and Politics,” 415.

³⁸ Hauke Brunkhorst, “The Tenacity of Utopia: The Role of Intellectuals in Cultural Shifts within the Federal Republic of Germany,” trans. Jamie Owen Daniel, *New German Critique*, no. 55 (Winter 1992): 131-132. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “student revolt Germany 1968;” accessed 1 May 2007.

For all the self-righteousness and occasional hysteria that accompanied the outbreak of recuperated antifascism, it must be admitted that it marked a caesura in West German postwar history: for the first time, German society in the FRG³⁹ was compelled from within to confront, politically, morally, and theoretically, its National Socialist antecedent. For the first time, the perpetrators who had reached the age of retirement unpunished found themselves facing the demand for an explanation, not from foreigners but from their own children, students, and subordinates. Even lawmakers had to tow the line and, after a period of hesitation, exclude Nazi crimes from the statute of limitations.⁴⁰

That is the difference between the 1950s and 1960s, the accusations came from home. It is easier to deny or put aside guilt when it is an outsider placing the blame. The German people dealt with the issue of guilt on the surface of their society when it was required by external forces; whether by building memorials or attending trials or paying reparations. But that was imposed guilt. As the Nachkriegskinder reached adulthood, they began to demand personal accountings from the previous generation, making the collective guilt personal and national rather than a burden imposed by external forces. For the first time since the end of the war, serious accusations were coming from among the Germans themselves.

During the process of denazification, there were a considerable number of accusations, but they were based on the guilt of being a National Socialist party member and not the atrocities of Hitler's war against the Jews. Denazification differed from the indictments of the 68ers in that the German accusers from the war generation expected an outside authority to resolve the issue for them. At surrender, the Nazis became the responsibility of the occupiers, removing the burden for the regime and the responsibility

³⁹ The Federal Republic of Germany, or, West Germany.

⁴⁰ Brunkhorst, "The Tenacity of Utopia," 132-133.

for punishing its proponents from the Germans. After denazification ended in the American zone in 1948, the Germans prospered under a blanket of approval for having completed the program. 1950s' West Germany was characterized by appropriate public contrition, philo-Semitism, and philo-Zionism. The issue of hidden Nazis was not addressed again until the 1960s. Germany had been denazified and the German people considered themselves clean. The Nachkriegskinder, however, growing up in a struggling democracy weighed down by a fear of communist oppression believed to be surrounding the nation, accused their parents and their government of avoiding the issue. As one historian put it, "Hating communism meant one thing: marginalizing the Holocaust and rebuilding a new Germany."⁴¹

Some young Germans even made attempts to atone for the sins of their parents by joining *Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste*. The ASF was founded by an anti-Nazi German minister named Lothar Kreyssig. After the end of the Second World War, Kreyssig believed the Christians of Germany had betrayed their ideals and beliefs by supporting the Third Reich and participating in the Holocaust. In the 1950s, Kreyssig preached atonement for Germany's sins. "We Germans began World War II and by this alone, more than others, we are guilty of bringing immeasurable suffering to humankind. We ask the peoples who suffered violence at our hands to allow us to perform a good deed in their countries with our hands and resources...as a sign of atonement."⁴²

Kreyssig's organization brought young Germans into contact with the victims of National Socialism in an effort to promote healing. Young adults would travel to war-torn areas to

⁴¹ Gulie Ne'eman Arad quoted in *After Auschwitz: Battle for the Holocaust*, prod. and dir. Paul Yule, 53 min., Channel Four Television Corporation, 2001, videorecording.

⁴² Kreyssig quoted in Ruth Rovner, "Emissaries of Good Will—Young Germans Participate in a Unique Project," *German Life*. Available from http://www.germanlife.com/Archives/1998/9802_01.html; accessed 14 May 2007.

rebuild cities and in 1961, were invited to Israel for the first time to work on collective farms. The young Germans who participated in the ASF had taken their parents' guilt onto themselves out of a need to expunge what they saw as Germany's guilt and their guilt as Germans. In contrast, the protest of the student activists was based on the guilt of others, which they saw as divorced from themselves.

In order to study how Germans bore guilt, a survey was conducted in West Germany in 1961 to gauge people's responses to the trial of Adolf Eichmann. It produced intriguing results: 67% of West Germans believed Eichmann should either be sentenced to death or life with hard labor. This particular survey also included lists of statements with which the participants could agree or disagree: 59% agreed and 28% disagreed with the statement, "I personally had nothing to do with it [the Holocaust] and don't want to hear anything more about it." Likewise, 53% agreed and 33% disagreed with the statement, "it would be best to forget about this affair and to concern ourselves exclusively with the present and future." Seventy-two percent of the population of the Federal Republic in 1961 believed most Germans in the 1940s knew what the Nazis were doing to the Jews, but 88% denied feeling any guilt for the Holocaust.⁴³ Yet, while the West German population appeared to be unconcerned with the past, the percentage of those who believed Germany was solely responsible for WWII rose from 32% in 1951 to 62% in 1967.⁴⁴ Up to the late 1960s, more and more West Germans believed that their world image was tied to Nazism. In 1955 only 13% believed Germans were internationally "unloved," whereas 38% believed it in 1969. Also, the number of

⁴³ Frederick Weil, "The Imperfectly Mastered Past: Anti-Semitism in West Germany since the Holocaust," *New German Critique*, no. 20, Special Issue 2: Germans and Jews (Spring-Summer 1980): 144-145. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "'The Holocaust' West Germany," accessed 15 May 2007.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

Germans in the Federal Republic who desired a cutoff point with their past (*Schlussstrich ziehen*—literally, drawing an end-line) nearly doubled from 34% in 1958 to 67% in 1969.⁴⁵

In 1970, a series of interviews with over fifty citizens of Heidelberg in West Germany was published. The interviewees ranged from high school students to Catholic priests, college students, and one seventy-year-old former soldier. In one interview with two teenage boys, the deficiency of Heidelberg's education of its students on National Socialism and the Third Reich becomes clear. One boy complained that he had not been taught anything about that period of his nation's history while the other boy explained that he was being taught quite a lot about it. This, however, he attributed to having a young teacher who showed "movies of the Third Reich and [told the students] what different people had to say about them [the films], Jews and so on, people who were interviewed after they'd seen them."⁴⁶ Apparently this teacher was interested in giving his students a fairly comprehensive lesson about the Nazis; the student explained that his class had, chronologically, just reached Hitler's seizure of power in their studies. Another high school student described a similar experience at her school. She explained that her teacher "attached great importance to it [learning about National Socialism]."⁴⁷ Of course, both teachers were fairly young, probably in the same age range as most of the 68ers.

The conflict begun by the 1960s' young adults demanding an open dialogue with the past filtered down into the high schools. However, many West Germans, including

⁴⁵ Ibid., 140.

⁴⁶ Jürgen Neven-du Mont, *After Hitler: A Report on Today's West Germans*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970) 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 165.

some of these young adults, desired a break with the past, a drawing line where they could stop discussing the Third Reich. A twenty-year-old college student explained that she was exposed to education about the Nazis quite frequently, but described a sterile atmosphere. “When, for example, someone delivered a report about the concentration camps or about the Jewish question, no one was allowed to express any opinion.”⁴⁸ She complained that people were tired of talking about it. In fact, a number of people interviewed both denounced the rise of neo-fascism (in the guise of the NPD)⁴⁹ and then deplored being made to suffer a burden of guilt. One twenty-seven-year-old college student blamed his parents for being too submissive to the Nazis and thereby allowing the atrocities to happen, but later declared that Germans had dwelt too long on the past. He complained of what he called “this eternal breast-beating.”⁵⁰ There was a strange dichotomy between wanting to learn more about the National Socialist period and yet wanting to talk about it less. One sixty-four-year-old professor of law observed the change in how his college students related to Germany’s National Socialist past and what their views were at the time of the interview in the late 1960s:

Immediately after the War our typical student was only relatively intelligent but always conscientious.... He regarded the National Socialist period as a historical fact that lay behind him, for which perhaps our fathers were responsible but to which he himself had not been committed. He studied, he tried to secure a successful future by getting good marks in his courses and examinations. It was only around 1960 that a change occurred and now the National Socialist period is again becoming a burning issue. Now incisive questions are

⁴⁸ Ibid., 90.

⁴⁹ Founded in 1964 in Hannover, the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD) is a right-wing extremist political party. Party membership was 18,000 in 1966, over 38,000 in 1967 and approximately 50,000 in 1969. Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online, “NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands).” Available from <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/suche>, s.v. “NPD;” accessed 19 July 2007.

⁵⁰ Neven-du Mont, *After Hitler*, 112.

raised: “What actually happened? How did people behave?” I regard this as a very good sign.⁵¹

However, this interest seemed to be concentrated in predominantly universities with the majority of West Germans either unconcerned with or apathetic about their own history. This issue of apathy came from a sense of bearing a burden they did not own. Most young West Germans felt disconnected from a National Socialist past that they saw as unfairly dominating their present. The law professor explained that many of his students disagreed with continued reparations payments to Israel and were tired of carrying around eternal guilt.⁵² While some members of the Nachkriegsgeneration wished, like many of their parents, to leave the past behind, the 68ers pressed forward with their confrontation. The locus of this move to address the National Socialist past originally lay in West Berlin with the student activists of the New Left who strove to unearth corruption in their government and change their society.

Intellectuals and the Student Protestors

The students who made up a large part of the protest movements in West Germany in the 1960s were leftists opposed to the materialism of capitalism as well as the allegedly imperialist policies of capitalist nations such as the United States. They feared increasing authoritarianism that appeared to be taking over the government of the Federal Republic. The Great Coalition of the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats in November 1966 gave the new organization ninety percent of the seats in the Bundestag⁵³ and was led by Kurt Georg Kiesinger, a former National Socialist. With the governing coalition very close to holding complete control over parliament, many

⁵¹ Ibid., 112-113.

⁵² Ibid., 114.

⁵³ Richard L. Merritt, “The Student Protest Movement in West Berlin,” *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 4 (July 1969): 523. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “Dutschke 1968;” accessed 1 May 2007.

student activists joined the so-called *Außerparlamentarische Opposition*⁵⁴ (APO) in an attempt to establish a political counterweight to the Great Coalition. Of course, such seemingly authoritarian measures as the Notstandsgesetze were immediately denounced by the protestors as “Nazi”. The National Socialist past permeated the 1960s’ Federal Republic during the student protests, partly for the authoritarian measures proposed by the West German government and partly for the number of former Nazis not only left over from Adenauer’s government, but those who (like Kiesinger) were quickly rising to greater power in the new democratic government. To the 68ers, already alienated from silent parents unwilling to discuss their Nazi past, all of this seemed hypocritical and undemocratic. And to make matters worse, one of the largest publishing concerns in West Germany, Springer Verlag, was obviously biased against the students. Axel Springer’s newspapers regularly indulged in yellow journalism, denouncing the protestors and labeling their leaders (like Rudi Dutschke) communists, something that was a highly sensitive subject especially in the “island” of West Berlin.

Fear of communism was a thread that ran through West Germany, and especially West Berlin. But starting in the 1960s with students and others protesting against the government, these became areas fearful of the words Nazi and fascist as well. These became words of denouncement, and for the left-wing activists, words of political and social anathema. It seemed that everywhere one looked in local or national government there were former Nazis, deemed successfully denazified by the occupation powers, and others who managed to escape denouncement altogether until exposed by the 68ers.

West Berlin was an area extremely politically sensitive. The students, centered mainly in the Free University of Berlin, initially sought a change in their traditional

⁵⁴ The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition.

universities' structures and policies, things they saw as confining and outdated. The Free University was itself established as a protest to the communist dominated Humboldt University in the Soviet controlled sector of Berlin in 1948. Called the "Berlin Model", this new university was established on a principle of participation by students and cooperation between students and faculty.⁵⁵ The students of the Free University of Berlin were introduced to a more democratic system that encouraged the students to speak their minds in open forums. But by 1960, even this open and democratic institution was falling back on older, more authoritarian ways when it seemed that fewer and fewer students were interested in participating in politics. The administration and faculty seized the opportunity to regain and monopolize control of the university. The "Berlin Model" of an open and fully democratic university had failed and because of this, up and coming student leaders felt frustrated and betrayed by the one system in which they should have had full participation.⁵⁶

As in the United States and France in the 1960s, anti-government protest movements often sprang from the fertile soils of universities. West German student leaders often became politically active since there were many university and student organizations affiliated with political parties; organizations such as the *Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten* (RCDS) which was an affiliate of the CDU, or the *Sozialdemokratischer Hochschulbund* (SHB) which was affiliated with the Social Democrats.⁵⁷ However, it was a non-affiliated group, the *Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* (SDS),⁵⁸ that was often in the middle of or behind many of the protests.

⁵⁵ Merritt, "The Student Protest Movement," 518-519.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 519-520.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 520.

⁵⁸ Federation of Socialist German Students.

The SDS began, like the SHB, as a student affiliate of the Social Democratic Party, but the relationship soured in 1959 when the political party officially renounced Marxism and began to move more center than left. The SDS continued in what the Social Democrats considered to be too radically leftist a direction.⁵⁹ The most outspoken ideologue of the SDS, Rudi Dutschke, stressed the use of open confrontation with not only the university but the government as well. Eventually calling more and more for violence, Dutschke explained that his fellow students would, “through systematic, controlled and limited confrontations with the power structure and imperialism in West Berlin...force the representative ‘democracy’ to show openly its class character, its authoritarian nature [and] force it to expose itself as a ‘dictatorship of force.’”⁶⁰ Another irony of the 68ers lay in Dutschke’s campaign for violence against the state: his were the same words and the same tactics used by the National Socialists in the early 1930s when they took advantage of the democracy of the Weimar Republic and destroyed it. This would not be the last irony, since a number of 68ers would also turn to violent anti-Semitism.

Influenced greatly by Herbert Marcuse (*Critique of Pure Tolerance*) and Frantz Fanon (*The Wretched of the Earth*), both left-wing intellectuals who advocated that the oppressed use violence to overthrow their oppressors, Dutschke and others (following the examples of such left-wing revolutionaries as Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara) resorted to direct action against those they deemed to be their oppressors.⁶¹ It was no surprise then that Dutschke’s followers demonstrated in front of the publishing houses of his nemesis, Axel Springer, after the student leader was shot in April 1968.

⁵⁹ Merritt, “The Student Protest Movement,” 520.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 521.

⁶¹ Ibid., 532.

Dutschke and the other student activists were also strongly influenced by the social and philosophical theories of the Frankfurt School of Social Research. The foundation of the student protest movement in West Germany in the 1960s was a seemingly generalized anti-authoritarianism, described by activist Rudi Dutschke: “Today no abstract theory holds us together; instead, it is the existential disgust with a society which chatters about freedom while subtly and brutally oppressing the immediate interests and needs of individuals and the people fighting for their socio-economic emancipation.”⁶² Dutschke, and other members of the SDS, did absorb the theories of the Frankfurt School, however. The Frankfurt School of Social Research produced the *Critical Theory*, developed by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Another influential member of the school, Jürgen Habermas, was a student of Adorno and Horkheimer. Habermas, in a 1977 interview, described his shock as a young college student when he discovered that some of the most influential men of postwar Germany had been Nazi supporters, “eminent men like Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt.” Both men had delivered statements in support of the National Socialist regime. “The first [Heidegger], as chancellor of the University of Freiburg, had welcomed the Nazis’ seizure of power and exalted its significance metaphysically, while the second [Schmitt] had theoretically vindicated that state which Hitler created.”⁶³ But, perhaps the worst crime was the fact that neither ever retracted those statements nor did they provide any explanation for offering support to a criminal regime.

⁶² Dutschke quoted in Horst Mewes, “The German New Left,” *New German Critique*, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 26. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “German New Left;” accessed 4 June 2007.

⁶³ Jürgen Habermas, “A Test for Popular Justice: The Accusations against the Intellectuals,” trans. Mark Franke, *New German Critique*, no. 12 (Autumn 1977): 11-12. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “student activism Habermas;” accessed 4 June 2007.

The *Critical Theory*, asserted by 1960s' West German intellectuals, was concerned with Marxism and its supposed decline and with totalitarianism as evidenced not only by the Third Reich but by the postwar Western societies as well. Horkheimer wrote in the *Critical Theory* in the 1960s: "The Third Reich of which I am conscious each waking hour of that part of my life which escaped it, historically was no absurdity, but instead a signal of the totalitarianism which appears to be more and more timely even on this side of the Iron Curtain."⁶⁴ The Frankfurt School framed its *Critical Theory* in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, also written by Adorno and Horkheimer. The *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, in contrast to popular historical theory of the time that claimed that the Third Reich was an inevitability that grew out of a thread of barbarity underlying German history, proposed instead that the Third Reich was the natural outgrowth of the "mathematical formalism" of the Enlightenment. Adorno and Horkheimer defined the Enlightenment as "the reduction of the total universe to the mere stuff for domination by man, himself conceived as an abstract, immaterial identity of pure thought."⁶⁵ Therefore, any society which participated in the Enlightenment or attempted to socially engineer a utopia would experience an inevitable progression toward totalitarianism, the prime example being the Third Reich of Germany.

The Frankfurt School was very influential in forming the sociological base of such student groups as the SDS. Horkheimer, Adorno, and Habermas, as Marxist sociologists, believed that West Germany was in danger of succumbing to the *Kulturindustrie* (culture industry) of the United States and was becoming an *autoritärer Staat* (authoritarian state). The Frankfurt School's philosophy was anti-capitalist and

⁶⁴ Horkheimer quoted in Mewes, "The German New Left," 26.

⁶⁵ Mewes, "The German New Left," 26.

stated that “the individual in a capitalist society [is] a subconsciously ‘uniformed’ mass-man, lacking autonomy and thus capable of authoritarian surrender to powers which require large numbers of consumers.”⁶⁶ The Frankfurt School believed that materialism forced on the individual would turn him into a consumerist slave ignorant of not only his enslavement but also of the actions of his government.

Ethically and morally speaking, Habermas believed that the Germans could not legitimately embrace their new democracy (and perhaps did not deserve it) because they did nothing to rid themselves of the totalitarianism of the Third Reich. National Socialism was taken from the Germans; they did not give it up. And because there was no “explosive act,” no “spontaneous sweeping away”, everything in Germany was tainted with Nazism.⁶⁷ Because of this, the parents’ generation did not deserve the new democracy and was not actually creating one. At no time did they fight against the criminal regime; therefore, so many elements of that criminal regime permeated the so-called new Germany. This was the legacy handed down to the Nachkriegsgeneration, that of a tainted society. This was part of what the students believed they were struggling against, what was taught to them by the Frankfurt School. The post-war generation believed they were being forced to suffer the crimes to which their parents would not admit.

From the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* and the *Critical Theory*, the students learned to relate everything to their nation’s National Socialist past. The Third Reich

⁶⁶ Michael A. Schmidtke, “Cultural Revolution or Culture Shock? Student Radicalism and 1968 in Germany,” *South Central Review* 16, no. 4, Rethinking 1968: The United States & Western Europe (Winter 1999-Spring 2000): 81. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “student revolt 1968 Germany;” accessed 1 May 2007.

⁶⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Interview with Jürgen Habermas Starnberg, March 23, 1979,” interview by Detlev Horster and Willem van Reijen, trans. Ron Smith, *New German Critique*, no. 18 (Autumn 1979): 31. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “Holocaust Protestbewegung;” accessed 1 May 2007.

permeated nearly every aspect of their lives from their parents to their professors to their politicians. The intellectuals of the Frankfurt School and authors such as Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll taught them that the National Socialist past was not something that could or should be ignored. If their protests were to be successful, they had to uncover the past and make sure it was no longer neglected.

Authorship and the New Left

German authors, most notably Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll, began to publish works that dealt with the issue of National Socialism beginning in 1959 and 1960. Breaking away from the failed literary experiment of Kahl Schlag and inner emigration, these new works “offered a critical, essentially historical view of National Socialism located within the wider spectrum of German militarism in the twentieth century.” Böll’s 1963 work, *Ansichten eines Clowns*, set the stage for the 68ers’ criticism of Nazis in their democratic government by illustrating the ease with which former Nazis regained affluence and influence in the new government and how they had retained aspects of National Socialism.⁶⁸ In the early 1960s, two major events took place that most likely affected the choice of subject: the highly publicized arrest and trial of Adolf Eichmann and the series of Auschwitz Trials. The Nazis were once again center stage and impossible to ignore. German theater especially reflected this influence by breaking away from the collective silence and producing a series of documentary dramas centered on National Socialism, inspired by the Auschwitz Trials.⁶⁹ Such social commentary came from a variety of areas and addressed a range of topics, none more controversial

⁶⁸ Burns, *German Cultural Studies*, 235.

⁶⁹ Heinar Kipphardt’s drama, *Joel Brandt*, produced in 1965 was based on the Eichmann trial while Peter Weiss’s *Die Ermittlung*, also 1965, was based on the Auschwitz Trials. Burns, *German Cultural Studies*, 238.

than the proposed Notstandgesetzte. In 1966, Karl Jaspers published *Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?* In this work, the philosopher called for an examination of the oligarchy he believed to be dominating West German politics. He then proposed that if continued unchecked, such an oligarchy could become a dictatorship and the Notstandgesetzte (Emergency Laws) were a step in the same process that put the Nazis in total power in 1933.⁷⁰ Student activists seized on this logic and a demonstration of approximately 20,000 strong marched in Frankfurt in October 1966 in protest against the Notstandgesetzte. Many of the activists who marched against these Emergency Laws were members of the German New Left.

The *Neue Linke* (New Left) was created by intellectuals, such as those of the Frankfurt School, and radicals who disagreed with communism, sparked in part by the violent policies of the Soviet Union with such countries as Hungary during its revolt in 1956. The New Left also broke away when many of the groups of the old Left renounced Marxism in 1959. Intellectuals like Herbert Marcuse believed that because the people of the working class were under the spell of capitalism, they had become, as the Frankfurt School believed, “mass-men.” The New Left believed that the working class was mesmerized, made passive by material abundance and consumer goods and therefore incapable of breaking free on its own. The working class would not be able to free itself without such intellectuals and radicals as those of the New Left to break the chains, without whom there would be no proletariat uprising. The New Left also accused the old Left of hidden authoritarianism and manipulating public opinion. This resounded with students who experienced comparable situations in their universities and began to believe that their government was not committed to the democracy it claimed to have

⁷⁰ Burns, *German Cultural Studies*, 239.

established.⁷¹ For some of these students, the only way to affect the situation was no longer through petitions and open forums, not when university rectors continuously overturned any reforms agreed upon. The student New Left decided, instead, on a course of *Subversive Aktion* (Subversive Action). The intention of Subversive Action, according to member Rudi Dutschke, was to uncover hidden power structures in their society through protests, demonstrations, and other planned situations; these would provoke a violent, repressive response from the government and would thereby reveal the true fascist nature of the regime.⁷²

Dutschke, also a member of the SDS, participated in many protests and gave many speeches in which he outlined the students' goals. "As early as their statement of 'The University in a Democratic Society' in 1961 the SDS had advocated a university that would train them to think critically and to act politically, which would result in more democracy at the university and in the society."⁷³ These students saw their university as a microcosm of their society and a basis for change. Until 1967, the student movement remained small and closely confined to the universities. In June of 1967, the protests against the Shah of Iran, sparked by his visit to Berlin, turned violent. At the end of May, some six thousand students had protested the Shah in Munich without incident, but on 2 June three thousand Berlin students clashed with police and a twenty-six-year-old student named Benno Ohnesorg was shot and killed. In the following days, nearly one hundred thousand students would demonstrate across the Federal Republic in protest against police brutality and in support of free speech and democracy.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Schmidtke, "Cultural Revolution or Culture Shock?," 82.

⁷² Ibid., 83.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 84.

A year earlier, the *Kuratorium Notstand der Demokratie* (Committee Against the State of Emergency) was created to oppose nuclear weapons, U.S. actions in Vietnam, and the Notstandgesetzte proposed by the West German government (a law that would suspend personal freedoms in a time of emergency). When Ohnesorg was shot, this proved to the Kuratorium that “uncontrolled executive power would use violence against demonstrations in any future state of emergency.” Taking advantage of Ohnesorg’s death, the Kuratorium distributed leaflets and held lectures that swayed a number of university students to oppose the Notstandgesetzte.⁷⁵ A year after the violence of the Shah’s visit, the committee held a protest in Bonn (seat of the Federal Republic’s parliament) and approximately 50,000 people demonstrated against the reading of the Notstandgesetzte. The *New York Times* wrote that the “majority condemned the emergency legislation as Nazi.”⁷⁶ To the students, these laws were dangerously similar to those that put Hitler in power in 1933 and revealed the hypocrisy of their government’s dedication to democracy. The only concession gained by the Kuratorium was a slight change in the legislation that would decrease the power of the executive branch in the enactment of the laws. Otherwise, the Notstandgesetzte were passed intact on 30 May 1968.

The Press and the Protests

Another concern for the students was free speech and freedom of press, something they saw as monopolized by Springer Verlag, “which controlled 78 percent of the daily newspaper and magazine circulation of Berlin and nearly a third in West

⁷⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 86.

Germany.”⁷⁷ Springer newspapers wrote daily against the students and other activists, accusing them of being communists and even labeling Rudi Dutschke “Red Rudi.” For the students, this was very similar to the *Hugenberg-Konzern*, the publishing concern of industrialist Alfred Hugenberg, who had helped put Hitler in power in the 1930s. The accusation of communism also turned the German public strongly against the activists. The antagonism between the students and the Springer concern exploded in April 1968 with the attempted murder of Dutschke by a fascist named Josef Bachmann. Student activists blamed Springer as the mastermind behind the attempt on Dutschke’s life and attacked Springer offices across the Federal Republic. Over the following days of what would be called the Easter Riots, thousands of students attacked Springer delivery vans, clashed with police, and held protests in cities around West Germany. These riots were the largest expression of student anger and frustration at a supposedly democratic system apparently determined to keep them oppressed. The most obvious reason for this oppression was, for the students, the influence of Nazis in an unbalanced government.

The political system in West Germany played a large role in the student protests of the 1960s. After World War II, the Federal Republic of Germany, with the Constitution of 1949, attempted to forestall the postwar political chaos of the Weimar Republic by expanding the power of parliament and political parties at the expense of the office of the president. A five percent rule was also introduced which reduced the number of political parties represented in parliament. Increased parliamentary power, coupled with the reduced number of parties, would give the Große Koalition incredible political control from 1966 to 1969.⁷⁸ To many student activists and political opponents

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 78.

of the SPD and the CDU, this looked frighteningly like the bid for power made by the Nazis in the early 1930s.

It was not until the young anti-authoritarians of the New Left began to question the previous generation about National Socialism that attempts to address and deal with that part of Germany's history became anything other than intermittent and singular. The Nachkriegskinder were raised in a tense silence when it came to National Socialism. Some parents did discuss the past, but such discussions were typically limited to the war itself and personal suffering during and after. With the exception of singular issues such as reparations, the Nazi generation did not discuss the atrocities committed by the regime under which they had lived. Therefore, it was not until the Nachkriegskinder reached university that many of the postwar generation began to learn more about the horrors of National Socialism. The more they learned, the more they felt lied to by their parents. Because of the horrific nature of their parents' pasts, this postwar generation became very active in opposing any and all forms of injustice, sometimes in controversial and confrontational ways. They became extremely opposed to anything they considered fascist. However, the student activists' definition of fascism had been set by *Das Argument* and other left-wing journals; fascism became "an extreme response of capitalism to economic crises."⁷⁹ This link with capitalism would be crucial in the protests of the 68ers as they demonstrated against the United States, against Israel, and against their own government. They, as the New Left had taught them, linked capitalism to National Socialism, making the government of the Federal Republic merely a continuation of the Third Reich.

⁷⁹ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 32.

The answering protests that accompanied American action in Vietnam held a second significance for the West German student activists. For many in the Federal Republic, the fact that Vietnam was tied to communism made the subject a delicate one since West Germany was supposed to be a bulwark against communist encroachment from the east. The student protests against the Vietnam War incited a heated conflict between them and the Springer press concern that labeled them “reds.” The student protests, however, were multilayered and not as simple as “communist.” Leaders like Rudi Dutschke spoke of genocide in Indochina to incite the protestors but also because the young New Left saw such protests as their especial responsibility as Germans to oppose any actions related to fascism. “The Vietnam War was subject to the double-coding that defined young Germans’ perceptions.”⁸⁰ Most events of their day they viewed as either stemming from the Nazi era or as throwbacks to Nazi policy. Any authoritarian action was labeled fascist and therefore Nazi. It became a responsibility of young West Germans to be anti-authoritarian in order to avoid repeating the crime of acquiescence committed by their parents. Sometimes activists took this self-imposed responsibility to extremes and, at times, used aggressive hyperbole. “In 1966, banners were secretly placed on the memorial site entrance at the Dachau concentration camp proclaiming, ‘Vietnam is the Auschwitz of America’ and ‘American leathernecks are inhuman murderers like the SS.’”⁸¹ Such hyperbole did draw public attention as intended but also served to relativize the Holocaust, erasing its uniqueness by linking it to other events. Such historical relativism would be condemned as uncircumspect during the *Historikerstreit* (Historians’ Debate) of the mid 1980s.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁸¹ Ibid., 35.

Controversial protests, like the banners at Dachau, by the students and the New Left made West Germans very uncomfortable. Anti-communism was the only acceptable stance at the time since West Germany considered itself surrounded by communist oppression. By the 1960s, West Berlin's population had swelled due to an influx of young people: young men seeking to escape mandatory military service (West Berlin's residents were exempt) and gays and other social non-conformists who sought the freedom of experience in the city's historically tolerant neighborhoods. Like Greenwich Village in New York and the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, West Berlin in the 1960s attracted a spectrum of non-conformists who often comprised the protestors and demonstrators. West Berlin became a "radical-workshop stage."⁸² The West Berlin 68ers believed in Marxism, but for them Marx didn't have anything to do with the people on the other side of the wall that shocked them when it was built in the early 1960s. Rather, Marxism was the opposite of the United States and the opposite of National Socialism.⁸³ Marxism was a tool of their protest and Marxists revolutionaries such as Rosa Luxemburg and Che Guevara were the objects of hero worship in West Berlin among the student activists who carried placards with these faces on them at protests. The conservative West German press used such images to paint the students as supporters of East Germany and even spies which fed the near-hysterical anti-communism of some West Berliners and led to more incidents of violence, not just between students and police, but also with counter-demonstrators. When the student protestor, Ohnesorg, was shot and killed by police during a demonstration in early June 1967, the violence escalated. The activists blamed not only the police, but the Springer press concern and

⁸² Jane Kramer, *The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany* (New York: Random House, 1996), 8.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

the government. “At an emotional meeting on the night of June 2 [the day Ohnesorg was killed] of the German SDS (Sozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund), the future RAF founder Gudrun Ensslin exclaimed ominously: ‘This fascist state means to kill us all... Violence is the only answer to violence. This is the Auschwitz generation, and there’s no arguing with them.’”⁸⁴ The press served to polarize the situation by reporting inaccuracies in favor of the police and the conservative politicians of the CDU condemned the students for attempting to incite a riot and vowed to have all such student activists removed from the universities.⁸⁵ Student response was not immediate, but when it did come the following year, it would shake a great many West Germans out of their comfort zone.

Their Explosive Year

1968 was an explosive year in the Federal Republic of Germany and is the reason why the activists of this generation are called 68ers. On 1 February, a demonstration once again turned deadly when a right-wing extremist counter-protestor was killed in a clash with anti-fascist protestors.⁸⁶ That same month, students and intellectuals participated in a “Springer Tribunal,” which declared the Springer press concern to be a dangerous monopoly that deliberately incited violence against the students. As a result of the so-called tribunal, Springer offices were attacked but suffered only minimal damage. On 2 April 1968, members of the APO attacked two department stores in Frankfurt, setting fires after closing time. Two of the future founders of the violent activist group

⁸⁴ Ibid., 39.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online, “Chronik 1968.” Available from <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/suche/chroniken.html>; accessed 23 May 2007.

*Rote Armee Fraktion*⁸⁷ (RAF), Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin, were arrested and charged with arson. That same month, a young right-wing extremist shot Rudi Dutschke, one of the leaders of the APO and the SDS, in West Berlin. Dutschke survived the attack, but protests exploded all over the Federal Republic. Violent confrontations between police and demonstrators took place in front of Springer offices and activists interfered with the delivery of Springer papers all over the country. For many of the activists it was obvious that the authoritarian government and its fascist press were targeting them the way the Nazis had targeted the Jews. “Since the Third Reich, the object of attack has been switched: the hooked Jewish nose in [the infamous Nazi weekly] *Der Stürmer* had been replaced in the cartoons in *Bild* and *BZ*⁸⁸ by the beard of the student, considered subhuman like a gorilla. The demand “Jews Out” prepared the way for the gas chamber.”⁸⁹ By equating themselves with the Jewish victims of the Nazi genocide the students were placing themselves on a martyr’s pedestal, which in West Germany could be an unassailable position. In short, it empowered them in the light of their nation’s history and they felt themselves absolved of any guilt for continued violence.

In May 1968, thousands of protestors marched on Bonn in opposition to the Notstandsgesetze which were passed at the end of that month. In November, more violent clashes between police and student protestors took place in West Berlin. Also in

⁸⁷ Red Army Fraction, a protest group classified by the Federal Republic of Germany as a terrorist organization. It was most active in the 1970s and responsible for the violence of the “German Autumn” of 1977.

⁸⁸ *BZ*—*Berliner Zeitung*. *Bild* and *BZ* were Springer publications.

⁸⁹ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 40.

November 1968, twenty-nine-year-old Beate Klarsfeld slapped Chancellor Kiesinger in the face and called him a Nazi on the stage at the CDU congress in West Berlin.⁹⁰

Many of the resisters, as some of the student protestors began to call themselves, followed the intellectual, Herbert Marcuse. Andreas Baader quoted Marcuse's essay "Repressive Tolerance" at his arson trial. In that essay, Marcuse denounced the perversion of tolerance in advanced industrialized nations and advocated resistance, even violent resistance, something the future members of the RAF internalized.⁹¹ However, for many of the 68ers, the violence of 1968 and their failure to prevent the passage of the Notstandsgesetze drastically reduced the momentum of the movement. The APO disbanded in 1968 and even the splinter groups of the SDS likewise dissolved in early 1970.⁹² As a result, a few of the frustrated activists joined more extremist groups like the RAF and enacted violence that culminated in the German Autumn of 1977 when the RAF committed kidnapping and murder in the name of their cause.

Anti-Zionism and the 68ers

The student activists of the 1960s viewed themselves as champions of good causes such as sexual liberation, women's rights, and in 1967, the Palestinians. Prior to the Arab-Israeli War, the young New Leftists were pro-Israel, most likely as a reflection of the West Germany's philo-Zionism. The Arab-Israeli War changed all of that with images of Palestinians suffering under the violent oppression of invading Israelis.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the student generation began to reject the blackout history that characterized the underside of the official "*Wiedergutmachung*" [literally, making up for], and many were morally outraged at the inability of the previous generation to confront the horrors

⁹⁰ Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online, "Chronik 1968."

⁹¹ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 42-43.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 66.

of Auschwitz. With the Six-Day-War, however, the situation reversed itself: German conservatives now embraced Israeli military success as a vindication of their own wartime behavior and the tabloid press was so unabashedly identified with this aspect of Israel, that the student Left did an about face, now seeing Israel as the imperialist aggressor and the Palestinians as the heroic victims. By calling the Palestinians the “Jew’s Jew” the mantle of guilt could be completely removed.⁹³

For the young Leftists in West Germany, the Palestinians were transformed into Jews; they became the victims of fascist imperialist aggression. By 1970, with the visit of the Israeli foreign minister to Germany, the 68ers were anti-Zionist, describing Israel as a “Zionist, economically and politically parasitic state.”⁹⁴ Any number of reasons for this change in position have been proposed: that the students were reflecting the buried anti-Semitism of Nazi parents; that they had a desire to vilify Israel, thereby expunging some of Germany’s guilt; or that because they were the *Nachkriegskinder* (postwar children), they were innocent of Nazi guilt, including that of anti-Semitism, and as such were free to condemn Israel without any moral or ethical constraints.⁹⁵

Whatever the psychological reasons behind this rising anti-Zionism, some young Leftists considered violence an acceptable form of protest against Israel. One of the more extreme activists, Dieter Kunzelmann, saw it as his duty to resist the oppression of Israel by force and consequently plotted a bombing of the Jewish Community Center in Berlin. The bomb was set to explode on 9 November 1969 when over two hundred people would be gathered in the Community Center to remember *Kristallnacht*. The bomb failed to detonate. In a 2005 interview with *die tageszeitung*, Tilman Fichter (brother of Albert

⁹³ Jessica Benjamin and Anson Rabinbach, “Germans, Leftists, Jews,” *New German Critique*, no. 31, West German Culture and Politics (Winter 1984): 184. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “Vergangenheitsbewältigung;” accessed 4 June 2007.

⁹⁴ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 69-70.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

Fichter, the man who planted the bomb for Kunzelmann) described Kunzelmann and the anti-Semitism that underlay this student activist's motives. According to Fichter, Kunzelmann promoted "anti-Semitism tout court," rather than the analytical/intellectual anti-Semitism of the rest of the New Left that was supposed to distinguish between "the Jews in the diaspora and the State of Israel."⁹⁶ What is interesting is that Fichter tried to make a distinction between what he saw as two different forms of the same prejudice, but he never denied 68er anti-Semitism. For him, it was an intellectual, political issue that required analysis and debate while Kunzelmann's violent anti-Semitism was more visceral. The other leftist activists of the student movement failed to discuss either the failed bomb attack or Kunzelmann's anti-Semitism, however. Fichter described the topic as taboo:

It was taboo to say there could be something like anti-Semitism on the Left. Because the Left had been a victim, because it had suffered together with the Jews in the concentration camps, it never thought it possible that this problem could also exist in its own ranks. I [Fichter] was severely criticized at the time, even by comrades I still think highly of today. They said, "Tilman, you shouldn't make such a big thing of it. We can settle this internally." When I started discussing it openly with my article on anti-Semitism I was treated like a bit of renegade, as if I were eroding solidarity on the Left, and opening up a can of worms that had to be cleared up among ourselves. But it was never cleared up. That was the problem.⁹⁷

Avoiding the issue, refusing to address the situation, and most especially indulging in violent anti-Semitism, these were the exact things the 68ers accused their parents' generation of doing and the irony did not stop with the 68ers ignoring the issue. Some of

⁹⁶ Tilman Fichter, "The anti-Semitism of the 68ers," Sign and Sight, interview by Philipp Gessler and Stefan Reinecke (*die tageszeitung*, 25 October 2005), trans. Lucy Powell and John Lambert, posted 31 October 2005. Available from <http://www.signandsight.com/features/434.html>; accessed 3 June 2007.

⁹⁷ Fichter, "The anti-Semitism of the 68ers."

the activists eventually became anti-Semitic right-wing extremists; Horst Mahler, for example.

Horst Mahler was a leftist activist who became associated with the violent protest group called the Rote Armee Fraktion. When Andreas Baader was put on trial for the Frankfurt department stores arson, Mahler was one of the lawyers who represented him. Mahler continued to represent the RAF until his arrest in October 1970. He was arrested based on an anonymous tip that labeled him as a member of the violent group. Mahler was acquitted at his first trial but later convicted in 1973 for participation in armed robberies and for being a founding member of the RAF. The RAF was classified as a terrorist organization in the Federal Republic and membership was therefore illegal. After the violence of the German Autumn of 1977, Mahler turned away from not only the RAF, but from leftist activism.⁹⁸ He was released from prison in 1980 and resumed his legal practice with the help of former leftist comrade and future West German Chancellor, Gerhard Schröder. Twenty years later, the former left-wing activist declared that he had joined the NPD, Germany's right-wing extremist party. Then Mahler began to host retreats where right-wing extremists would plan the so-called "Fourth Reich", which was supposed to replace what the extremists believed to be an illegitimate government forced on them by occupiers.⁹⁹ Interviewed by the *Times* of London after one of these neo-Nazi gatherings where he declared that the "Jews and their cult" would be banned in the new Reich, Mahler opined that the protest of the 68ers was never against the Nazi generation. Instead, he claimed that the protests were about opposing American

⁹⁸ Varon, *Bringing the War Home*, 200.

⁹⁹ Hans Kundnani, "From One Extreme to Another," *The Times (London)*, 22 March 2003. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Horst Mahler;" accessed 8 May 2007.

imperialism only.¹⁰⁰ In contrast to Mahler's political about-face, other former 68ers drew closer to the political center while still others became officials in the German government. With the exception of some remaining extremists like Mahler, the 68ers, on their long march through the institutions, became a part of the establishment; instead of fighting the system, they became the system.

Social Change

Despite the public and often controversial attempts by the 68ers to change conceptions of the past, there did not seem to be widespread support among the Germans of the Federal Republic for them. Thanks in part to the reporting practices of Springer journalists, the press portrayed the students as communists and this view was echoed in the population. The label of communism was a dangerous one, most especially in the "island" of West Berlin. This labeling probably prevented the efforts of the 68ers from being more effective and extensive. There would be no breaking away from the past, no drawing line. The Federal Republic of Germany, as a whole, would slowly alter its perceptions of its National Socialist past in the 1960s. The victims of National Socialism began to gain a greater voice in both literature and drama and the mid 1960s saw the establishment of a number of concentration camp memorials.¹⁰¹ The Jews emerged to the forefront of the lists of Nazi victims, helped in part by the 68ers; at least until the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. This war, in which Israel was seen by the West German activists as imperialist aggressors, eliminated popular support for Israel among the students.

Suddenly the Palestinians had their cause taken up by the same anti-authoritarian anti-

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Atina Grossmann, "The 'Goldhagen Effect': Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany," in *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past; Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany*, ed. Geoff Eley (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), 99.

fascists that denounced Nazism in their West German government. In an interesting turn of logic, the Israelis/Jews had become the Nazi-like oppressors of the poor Palestinians. The 68ers began to decry the philo-Semitism and philo-Zionism of their denazified parents. The APO and other student activist organizations became anti-Zionist and anti-Israel. The student generation's anti-authoritarian, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist stance was stronger than their dedication to uncovering the truth about their parents' National Socialist past. By the 1970s, it appeared that the 68ers' activism on behalf of the "truth behind Nazism" was in fact a tool to discredit politicians, denounce government, and put forward the cause of sexual liberation. The forward progress in National Socialist and Holocaust history made by and because of the student activists called the 68ers was vital, nonetheless. In pursuit of their agenda, they forced their fellow West Germans to examine the Third Reich in greater detail and exposed a number of politicians for being former Nazis.

The change effected by the protests of the 68ers was a breaking of what Hermann Lübke called the "communicative silence." "The postwar generation of activists of 1967 and 1968 succeeded in disrupting the 'communicative silencing' of the Nazi past on a broad scale and in calling up the repressed memory of Auschwitz in the collective consciousness. This was a moral achievement, for which this generation alone would have every reason to be proud."¹⁰² The 68ers would continue their attack on this collective silence in the 1990s with a controversial exhibition designed to expose the truth about twenty million "innocent" Germans.

¹⁰² Brunkhorst, "The Tenacity of Utopia," 131.

CHAPTER 3

THE MYTH OF THE “GOOD” WEHRMACHT: THE EXHIBITION OF THE 68ERS AND THEIR CONTINUED CONFRONTATION WITH THE PAST

In the 1990s, the Hamburg Institute for Social Research (HIS) wanted to explore violence in the 20th century. It launched a project entitled, *Angesichts unseres Jahrhunderts. Gewalt und Destruktivität im Zivilisationsprozeß*. (In the Light of Our Century: Violence and Destructiveness during the Twentieth Century). Under the direction of Doctor Jan Philipp Reemtsma, the Institute developed an exhibition that was to explore the role of the German military in National Socialist atrocities during the Second World War. Opening in March 1995, *Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen. Wirklichen und Wirkungen einer kollektiven Gewalterfahrung* (The Wehrmacht and Nazi Crimes: Realities and Impacts of a Collective Experience) concentrated on the Wehrmacht’s actions in Serbia, Byelorussia, and Stalingrad. Hannes Heer,¹⁰³ a former 68er who designed and chaired the exhibition, wanted to illustrate the consciously criminal nature of the actions of the Wehrmacht within the context of the war, which, the Institute argued, was entirely criminal itself. Heer and the Institute treated the crimes committed by the Wehrmacht as intentional rather than as unforeseen by-products of the violence of war.¹⁰⁴ By portraying the guilt of an organization long believed to be innocent, the Wehrmacht exhibition “forced the issue of war crimes into German homes,

¹⁰³ Hannes Heer was born in 1941 and studied history and literature in Bonn, Freiburg, and Cologne. He was an active member of the socialist German student federation (SDS), an organization to which most 68ers belonged.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Philipp Reemtsma, “Zwei Ausstellungen—Eine Bilanz (Two Exhibitions—A Review).” Posted Spring 2004, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, “Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944.” Available from <http://www.his-online.de/>, s.v. “Wehrmacht Bilanz Reemtsma;” accessed 27 January 2007.

often for the first time.”¹⁰⁵ This would allow a new generation to confront their nation’s past.

Myth-Making and the History of Innocence

Did the German Wehrmacht, during the Second World War, commit atrocities? The position among historians originally favored the view of the "good" Wehrmacht. The dispute over this has heated up in recent decades with more historians positing the guilt of the German army. The debate raged over four major categories of Wehrmacht participation in the atrocities committed by the Nazis on the eastern front: the army needing and protesting in favor of the POW and Jewish labor force in their clothing, armaments, and other manufacturing areas; the Wehrmacht taking no action, for or against, but merely observing the murderous actions of the Einsatzgruppen and the Special Order Police; troops rounding up victims and handing them over to the Einsatzgruppen to be killed; or soldiers of the regular army capturing, enslaving, torturing, and killing the people themselves.

Where did the legend of the “good” Wehrmacht originate? It must partly have come from wartime propaganda such as the article published in the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* on 24 July 1942, in a report on the Jews in Holland:

Our correspondent in Amsterdam informs us that Dutch citizens are showing a lively animosity toward the Jews. The Jews have appealed to the Wehrmacht for protection. Despite the eternal Jewish enmity, the Wehrmacht has taken the Jews under its protection, and, at their request, has transferred them to Germany, where they will be employed according to their ability. To show their gratitude for this generosity, the Jews have put their

¹⁰⁵ Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), x.

furniture and apartments at the disposal of the German victims of the English bombings.¹⁰⁶

As preposterous as this now sounds, this newspaper report probably allowed more than a few Germans to rest a little easier when it came to stories of brutality from the front; and most Germans would not wish to entertain such terrible thoughts of a husband, son, or father in the Wehrmacht killing innocent civilians.

Another possible basis for the “good” Wehrmacht legend is the fact that the Allied Tribunal, after the war, declared the General Staff and High Command not to be criminal organizations according to Article 9 of the Charter for the International Military Tribunal, unlike the SS¹⁰⁷ and SD.¹⁰⁸ Dr. Hans Laternser, counsel for the defense of the General Staff and High Command, was also quite adept at refuting the statements delivered by Nazi witnesses against the Wehrmacht. He convinced the court of the self-serving nature of the testimony of such high ranking Nazi officials as SS-Generals Schellenberg¹⁰⁹ and Ohlendorf.¹¹⁰ Laternser further declared that the army had played no role in the exterminations; this despite the evidence delivered by Rudolf Höss on 5 April 1946 which stated that the transports that delivered the Soviet POWs, as well as the Jews, to the camps were staffed and commanded by the Wehrmacht.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Leon Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate: the Nazi program for the destruction of the Jews of Europe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971), 169-170n.

¹⁰⁷ The *Schutzstaffel*, meaning "protective squadron", originally existed as Hitler's personal bodyguard but grew into a paramilitary organization under the command of Heinrich Himmler, *Reichsführer-SS*.

¹⁰⁸ The *Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführer-SS* was the intelligence and security police which operated as a sub-sect of the SS and was under the command of Reinhard Heydrich.

¹⁰⁹ SS Major-General Walther Schellenberg served as a personal aide to Himmler and became a high ranking official in Heydrich's *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, Reich Security Main Office.

¹¹⁰ SS Major-General Otto Ohlendorf was, as well as being a member of the SD, the commanding officer of Einsatzgruppen D.

¹¹¹ "Unter den hingerichteten und verbrannten Personen befanden sich ungefähr 20.000 russische Kriegsgefangene (die früher von der Gestapo aus den Gefängnissen der Kriegsgefangenen ausgesondert waren); diese wurden in Auschwitz von Wehrmacht-Transporten, die von regulären Offizieren und Mannschaften der Wehrmacht befehligt wurden, ausgeliefert." Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss,

The Tribunal declared that the OKW¹¹² (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) was, in fact, merely “an aggregation of military men, a number of individuals who happen at a given period of time to hold the high-ranking military positions.”¹¹³ Defining an army or its command as a criminal organization held obvious problems for the International Military Tribunal; too broad a definition and any military could be considered guilty. To solve this problem, one of the judges suggested that the definition be based on that of conspiracy. “To declare an organization criminal...all the Court needed to do was define the organization as having a membership limited to those who knew the group was criminal and who had joined voluntarily.”¹¹⁴ Based on this narrower definition, the Tribunal declared the OKW to be a non-criminal organization. The three Western Allied judges overruled the dissenting Soviet judge in this decision. The Judgment then went on to censure the brutal actions of the General Staff and High Command of the Wehrmacht and, basically, accuse them of conduct unbecoming officers:

When it suits their defense they say they had to obey; when confronted with Hitler’s brutal crimes, which are shown to have been within their general knowledge, they say they disobeyed. The truth is they actively participated in all these crimes, or sat silent and acquiescent, witnessing the commission of crimes on a scale larger and more shocking than the world has ever had the misfortune to know.¹¹⁵

Reprimanding someone does not have nearly the same effect as a conviction by a court of law. By declaring the General Staff and High Command of the Wehrmacht non-

“Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss, vom 5. April 1946,” in *Zweihundert Jahre Deutscher Kultur*, ed. Claude Hill (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), 395.

¹¹² High Command of the Armed Forces.

¹¹³ Judge John J. Parker, “Judgment: The Accused Organizations, General Staff and High Command,” *The Avalon Project at Yale Law School*. Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/>, s.v. “judgment accused organizations;” accessed 15 January 2007.

¹¹⁴ Bradley F. Smith, *Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977), 163.

¹¹⁵ Parker, “Judgment: The Accused Organizations.”

criminals and by dismissing the commanders with only a dressing down, the Tribunal in effect released the whole of the Wehrmacht from complicity in and guilt for the crimes against humanity planned and perpetrated by the Third Reich. This not-guilty verdict placed the Wehrmacht in a category closer to that of victims; they had successfully presented themselves as unwilling, order-following pawns, the typical defense at Nuremberg. Once that happened, it was left to historians to illustrate the guilt of the common Wehrmacht soldier in World War II.

According to one argument in favor of the "good" Wehrmacht, they were not guilty of crimes against humanity because they tried to save the Jews and Soviet POWs for their labor force. Their motives here, while admittedly not altruistic, were still not in opposition to the murderous policies of the Third Reich. The debate following the Polish campaign of 1939 was between the Attritionists and the Productionists. The Attritionists such as Himmler, Heydrich, and the SS, wanted to solve the Jewish problem by leaving the Jews to die from malnutrition, starvation, and disease. The Productionists, who were mainly Wehrmacht commanders, saw the Jews as labor and even skilled labor, who could aid the German war effort. They would use this same argument concerning the 5.7 million Soviet POWs (of which only 2.4 million survived¹¹⁶) the Wehrmacht captured after Operation Barbarossa in 1941.

Productionists such as General von Ginant, the commander of the Wehrmacht in the Government-General (Poland), protested the removal of the Jews working in German army industry. In a memorandum to the OKW dated 18 September 1942, von Ginant listed areas of production in which 25% to 100% of the laborers were Jewish. He

¹¹⁶ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 107.

estimated that out of roughly one million industrial workers in occupied Poland, 300,000 were Jewish and a third of those were skilled workers. Von Ginant hoped to impress upon his commanders in the Wehrmacht the necessity of stopping the immediate removal of his Jewish workforce. He argued that military industry would suffer from a drastic reduction of labor, including skilled labor, which would cost precious time in training replacement personnel. He suggested that the removal of the Jews be carried out locally, step by step. "The general policy will be to eliminate the Jews from work as quickly as possible without harming work of military importance."¹¹⁷ General von Ginant did not protest the killing of the Jews and he was not resistant to the removal of them from his workforce, he only took exception to the speediness of their withdrawal.

By 1944, those Jewish workers had been replaced with approximately two million prisoners of war who took positions in such army industries as "armaments and munitions in flagrant violation of the Hague and Geneva conventions, which stipulated that no war prisoners could be employed in such tasks."¹¹⁸ The Russian children encountered by the Wehrmacht were not spared either. They were rounded up by the thousands to be shipped to the Reich in order to fill a need for apprentices. Alfred Rosenberg's¹¹⁹ office wrote a memorandum in June 1944 about this practice along the eastern front. "Army Group Center intends to apprehend forty to fifty thousand youths

¹¹⁷ General Kurt Freiherr von Ginant, "Memorandum by General von Ginant to the General Staff of the Wehrmacht in Reaction to the Removal of the Jews from Industrial Production, September 18, 1942," in *Documents on the Holocaust: selected sources on the destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, ed. Yitzhak Arad, et al. (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), 287.

¹¹⁸ William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1988), 946-947. A further violation of international convention and a source of some humor within the Armed Forces command of the Third Reich was the use of Soviet slave POWs to man the anti-aircraft artillery for the Luftwaffe.

¹¹⁹ Alfred Rosenberg was the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories.

from the age of 10 to 14...and transport them to the Reich."¹²⁰ Of especial note, in the memorandum from the Political Section of Wehrmacht headquarters in June 1944 on this action is the statement that the idea originated in the Ninth Army.¹²¹ Wehrmacht commanders were, especially in 1944, active in devising ways of obtaining the slave labor they craved. This *Heuaktion* (Hay Action) was also intended as a racial measure in that it was “not only aimed at preventing a direct reinforcement of the enemy’s strength but also as a reduction of his biological potentialities.”¹²² The document mentioned propaganda to be used in support of the action entitled “Reich Aid to White Russian Children, Protection Against the Partisans,” as well as a similar action under way within another army group, which was also pressing acceptable teenage Russian boys into service in the SS.¹²³

Some historians, and most former soldiers, argued that the Wehrmacht did not take part in the killings along the eastern front in World War II. They claim that the army itself took no action, for or against the slaughter; that they merely observed the murderous actions of the Einsatzgruppen, the Special Order Police, and other killing squads. In Poland in 1940, Walther von Brauchitsch (Commander in Chief of the German Army at the time) was concerned that the Wehrmacht was suffering lapses in discipline due to the exterminations carried out by the Einsatzgruppen. As occupiers, he wanted the army's reputation among the Poles to be secure. Von Brauchitsch was also worried about the negative effects observation of the killings was having on his men. "We need not mention again the unhappy role played by the Wehrmacht, forced to be a

¹²⁰ Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 947.

¹²¹ Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, 275.

¹²² Shirer, *Rise and Fall*, 947.

¹²³ Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, 275.

passive witness to these crimes."¹²⁴ It is interesting to note that he used the word "crimes," a general term for dissenting Wehrmacht commanders to use in reference to the Einsatzgruppen's actions. This is not to say that von Brauchitsch or the other army commanders were against the murders. Rather, they were against the way the people were being killed and the ill effects it was having on the troops and the population. "The methods and means of slaughter employed are most damaging [for us], complicating the problem, and making matters far worse than they might have been if a sensible and systematic course of action had been taken."¹²⁵ Von Brauchitsch argued against the brutal methods employed in Poland out of apprehension that it was providing the enemy with easy propaganda, giving the Poles a reason to protect the Jews, and would result in lower moral standards of "the most valuable German human material."¹²⁶ As typical with such protests from the Wehrmacht, he never raised objections to the murders themselves. Then, in May 1941, the leaders of the Wehrmacht met with the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, the Reich Security Main Office) to discuss the imminent invasion of the USSR, the Criminal Orders¹²⁷ and to negotiate Einsatzgruppen functions along the eastern front in the Soviet Union. With von Brauchitsch's earlier objections in mind, the Wehrmacht agreed to cooperate in the ideological war under the stipulation that the executions of the "enemies" be carried out in a more unobtrusive manner.¹²⁸

The Criminal Orders, which were discussed at the meeting, carried four sets of instructions to the Wehrmacht commanders and the SS. Part one regulated the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 42.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ These were the orders given by Hitler to the Wehrmacht calling for the execution of political undesirables along the eastern front and which also protected the troops from any prosecution for these brutal actions.

¹²⁸ Poliakov, *Harvest of Hate*, 118.

Einsatzgruppen and gave them the freedom to operate directly behind the front lines. Part two, *Die Einschränkung der Kriegsgerichtsbarkeit* (the Curtailment of Military Jurisdiction), made it legal to shoot any and all persons suspected of guerrilla activities. It also ordered that if no suspect could be located, then the local civilians were to bear the brunt of the reprisals. The third part of the Criminal Orders was the infamous *Kommissarbefehl*¹²⁹ that ordered that all Soviet political commissars be taken prisoner and executed immediately. The last part of the Criminal Orders consisted of the "Guidelines for the Conduct of the Troops in Russia." This part of the orders demanded the annihilation of any and all forms of resistance, especially that from "Bolshevik agitators, guerrillas, saboteurs and Jews."¹³⁰ A further order was given by Reichenau on 10 October 1941 which made perfectly clear his intentions regarding Jews: "the soldier must have full understanding for the necessity of a severe but just revenge on subhuman Jewry."¹³¹ What action was taken in dissent by OKW leaders took the form of supplemental orders attached to the Criminal Orders. Von Brauchitsch issued one such supplemental order on 24 May 1941, prior to Operation Barbarossa.

Criminal acts of a minor nature are, always in accordance with the combat situation, to be punished according to detailed orders from an officer (if possible, a post commander) by resorting to provisional measures (for instance), temporary detention at reduced rations, roping-up on a tree, assignment to labour). ...It must not come to it that the individual soldier commits or omits any act he thinks proper toward the indigenous population; he must

¹²⁹ The Commissar Order.

¹³⁰ Bartov, *Eastern Front*, 106.

¹³¹ Field Marshal Walter von Reichenau, "Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories, 10 October, 1941," translation of Document No. NOKW-309, Office of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, trans. Frank Freudenthal, in *The Holocaust: selected documents in eighteen volumes*, vol. 10, *The Einsatzgruppen or Murder Commandos*, ed. John Mendelsohn (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982), 11.

rather feel that in every case he is *bound by the orders of his officers*.¹³²

First and foremost, von Brauchitsch was worried about threats to the discipline of his troops, not humanitarian issues regarding the systematic slaughter of civilians. "Issuing vague supplemental orders was the same method the army used during the Polish campaign to weaken Hitler's orders that soldiers not be punished for any offenses against Jews."¹³³ Von Brauchitsch's supplement to the Kommissarbefehl was as vague as it needed to be in order to prevent Hitler dismissing it. It, like many such supplemental orders, was open to any number of personal interpretations by the officers to whom it was issued and who, in turn, enforced it or not among their men.

Despite this one concession, the executions were still public enough for rumors of them to circulate within the Reich itself and for soldiers to view them and comment in letters and diaries. After the Nazi press published pictures of an alleged Soviet bloodbath in East Prussia, a 6 November 1944 report to the Stuttgart SD recounted local statements and remarks spurred by the anti-Soviet government propaganda.

What motive does the leadership have in publishing pictures like those in the *NS-Kurier* on Saturday? They must surely realize that every intelligent person, upon seeing these victims, will immediately think of the atrocities we have committed on enemy soil, yes even in Germany. Did we not slaughter the Jews by the thousands? Don't soldiers repeatedly tell of Jews who had to dig their own graves in Poland? And what did we do with the Jews who were in the KZ [concentration camp] in Alsace? After all, Jews are also human. We have only shown the enemy what they can do with us should they win.¹³⁴

¹³² Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, "Maintenance of Discipline, 24 May 1941," *German High Command Trial Part III*, United Nations War Crimes Commission, 1949. Available from <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/WCC/ghctrail3.htm>; accessed 17 January 2007.

¹³³ Eugene Davidson, *The Trial of the German: an account of the twenty-two defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 559.

¹³⁴ Marlis G. Steinert, *Hitler's War and the Germans: Public Mood and Attitude During the Second World War*, ed. and trans. Thomas E. J. De Witt (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1977), 288.

The German public as far from the front lines as southwestern Germany knew what their troops were doing the east. Even more heinously, some executions became little more than freakish side shows, spectacles intended to entertain the troops in the area. One such event took place in Zhitomir in Ukraine in August 1941 as described by a Wehrmacht soldier present. "One day a *Wehrmacht* vehicle drove through Zhitomir with a megaphone. Over the loudspeaker we were informed...that at a certain time that day Jews would be shot in the market-place."¹³⁵ What followed was a sadistic show of beatings and murder for the benefit of the troops and, no doubt, the pleasure of the men of the SS-Einsatzgruppen. Far from being passively entertained, some Wehrmacht soldiers even joined the slaughter. "One member of an *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squad) claimed after the war that 'on some occasions members of the *Wehrmacht* took the carbines out of our hands and took our place in the firing-squad."¹³⁶ Then in August 1942, Hitler issued another order intended to contain the "bandit" problem along the eastern front. "The Chief of the Army General Staff is solely responsible for action against bandits in *operational areas*. ...*There must be no German in the area threatened by bandits who is not engaged, actively or passively, in the fight against them.*"¹³⁷ The definition of bandit was left to the discretion of the commander interpreting it, but usually meant partisans, Jews, and any civilian suspected of anti-German activity. It also left no doubt that no one would be allowed to disobey said order.

¹³⁵ Stephen G. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: the German Soldier in World War II* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 58.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹³⁷ Adolf Hitler, "Directive No. 46, Instruction for intensified action against banditry in the East, 18 August, 1942," in *Blitzkrieg to Defeat: Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945*, ed. H. R. Trevor-Roper (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), 133-135.

Another facet of the argument for the "good" Wehrmacht is the myth of animosity between the army and Himmler's SS. Largely it has been the lukewarm attempts at challenging the brutal actions of the Einsatzgruppen in Poland and early in the Russian campaign by a couple of OKW leaders, and later, the harsh measures taken by the SS to discourage army deserters, that has provided support for this view. Nevertheless, the simple fact is that without the cooperation of the Wehrmacht the Einsatzgruppen would not have been able to kill the number of people that they did. There was actually such a high level of cooperation between the army and Himmler's SS that what regularly occurred was the Wehrmacht's participation in the collection of Russians (most of whom were civilians) to give to the SS for execution. In other instances, the SS would assist the Wehrmacht in army operations. In an Einsatzgruppen Activity and Situation Report, it was recorded that "a Kommando of the Security Police and the SD consisting of sixty men was put at the disposal of the 87th Division for use against Russian Cavalry."¹³⁸ Initially, the Wehrmacht turned a disinterested eye to the "eliminations" performed by the Einsatzgruppen, but very shortly, soldiers from the regular army were participating in the executions. Around September 1941, local army commanders learned that twenty-one German soldiers had been shot in Topala, Moldavia (at the time, a part of the Ukraine). "As a reprisal two thousand one hundred Jews and Gypsies were killed solely by the Wehrmacht."¹³⁹ There are reports from numerous other such actions taken in revenge by the army.

Some historians argue that because the troops were so far from the ideological center of the Third Reich, the commanders of individual divisions could and frequently

¹³⁸ Ronald Headland, *Messages of Murder: a study of the reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943*, (London: Associated University Press, 1992), 142.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

did dissent by ignoring the Kommissarbefehl. There can be little doubt, and there is some evidence to support, that not every commander followed the Criminal Orders in the same way. Such variance was built into the orders themselves. They were left purposefully vague enough to encourage Wehrmacht commanders to interpret them themselves based on the ideology in which they had been indoctrinated. This could conceivably have allowed some commanders to disregard such orders, as Jay Baird pointed out in his book, *Nazi War Propaganda*:

As a general rule, the farther one traveled from Hitler's headquarters, the more humane were the Army directives regarding the treatment of the Russian population. Indeed, many field commanders issued orders that the Russians were to be treated as Allies. Some went so far as to declare, "Whoever among the indigenous population participates in the struggle against Bolshevism...is not our enemy but our fellow-fighter and fellow-worker in the struggle against the world-foe."¹⁴⁰

Unfortunately, the possibility of a large number of Wehrmacht commanders issuing orders openly contradictory to those given by the OKW or Hitler or simply ignoring the ones received is highly unlikely. Those commanders would have been committing blatant treason and executed for it immediately. *Manneszucht* (military discipline) was the mandate of the Wehrmacht and anything that interfered with it was dealt with decisively. "Desertion and subversion were regarded as particularly serious offenses insofar as they threatened discipline among the troops. These crimes were thus prosecuted relentlessly; and they occasioned most of the death sentences that were imposed by German courts martial during the Second World War."¹⁴¹ Whether the

¹⁴⁰ Jay W. Baird, *The Mythical World of Nazi War Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1974), 159.

¹⁴¹ Birgit Beck, "Sexual Violence and Its Prosecution by Courts Martial of the Wehrmacht," in *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945*; ed. Roger Chickering, Stig Förster,

troops followed the Criminal Orders out of agreement with the ideology or from fear of punishment, they followed the orders. Any sizable amount of disobedience by the military along the eastern front, as suggested by Baird, would not have gone unnoticed and unpunished.

Secondly, such an order would and could never have included Jews. Since the invasion of Poland in the autumn of 1939, treatment of any and all Jews encountered by the Germans, whether by the Wehrmacht or the SS, was intentionally and ideologically brutal. And third, the order quoted by Baird is dated 14 March 1943, nearly two years after the invasion of the Soviet Union. To give the order the proper weight it must be placed in its context within the war. In September 1942, during the Battle of Stalingrad, the Wehrmacht was unexpectedly tied down within the city by snipers and other Soviet soldiers and guerrillas, and was split in two when Hitler sent a sizable portion of the army south to the Caucasus with the intention of capturing the oil fields there. In early November 1942, the Western Allies were victorious at El Alamein. The Soviet counteroffensive at Stalingrad was launched on 19 November 1942 and in very early January of 1943 the Germans were forced to withdraw from the Caucasus after over-extending their supply lines. The United States began their bombing raid on Germany proper on 27 January 1943 and the vital Soviet victory at Kursk was in early February 1943. Around the time Baird's order was given, the Wehrmacht was engaging the Red Army at Kharkov.¹⁴² Kharkov, or Kharkiv, located in eastern Ukraine, was a territory

and Bernd Greiner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 321. Available from <http://www.netlibrary.com>, s.v. "A World at Total War;" accessed 15 January 2007.

¹⁴² "World War Two in Europe," The History Place. Available from <http://www.historyplace.com>, s.v. "world war two;" accessed 23 January 2007.

known to have had German sympathizers (prior to *Generalplan Ost*¹⁴³). The order quoted by Baird was most likely given out of the desire not to alienate further a people (*Hilfswilliger*¹⁴⁴) who had helped the German army in the past and a need for cooperation from as much of the local population as possible to ensure fewer distractions from the battle, if not assistance against the Soviets. When placed in context, the order Baird quoted that he suggested exonerated Wehrmacht commanders appears as yet another political and calculated move to ensure German victory over the Soviet Union.

In fact, the typical German soldier invading the Soviet Union in 1941 viewed ruthlessness toward the Russians as either deserved or necessary. One lieutenant in the Wehrmacht stationed in Russia wrote in his journal about a Russian prisoner who burned himself on the camp stove. The injured man was denied medical attention and left outside in November in -20° C weather to die in the snow until another Russian prisoner of war wrapped him in a cloak and carried the man back to the POW camp. The lieutenant then commented in his journal:

But one should always remember, when reading this, that 200,000 German soldiers died in Siberia in the Great War [World War I]. Perhaps many more suffered even more painfully than this Russian who, after all, is only one of many. Russia, a land of cruelty, will likewise be handled cruelly.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ This was the Plan for the East, circa spring 1942, which more or less included the Ukrainians in the Nazis' murderous plans for all Soviets.

¹⁴⁴ Sometimes referred to as *Hiwis*, these were local volunteers.

¹⁴⁵ "Aber beim Lesen dieser Zeilen soll man sich immer vor Augen führen, daß in dem großen Krieg (1914-1918) in Siberien über 200.000 deutsche Soldaten starben. Vielleicht noch viel leidensvoller [sic.], viel qualvoller, als dieser eine Russe, der aber auch nur einer von vielen ist. Rußland, ein Land voller Grausamkeiten will auch grausam behandelt sein." Oberleutnant Wolf Helmuth Dose, "19 November 1941," Kampfberichte von der Ostfront vom 24 Juni 1941 bis 31 März 1942. Available from <http://www.collasius.org/ZEITZEUGEN/1941-00-dose/41dose00.htm>; accessed 3 February 2007.

The young man's words echo with the justification and ideology of the regime he served and its Wehrmacht. The Russians were numerous, barbarous *Untermenschen* who deserved to be eliminated by whatever means necessary to secure the future of the Third Reich and avenge the Great War. These are not the words of a dissenter.

The International Military Tribunal dismissed the case against the Wehrmacht at Nuremberg. It declared the German army to be a non-criminal organization and was therefore innocent of crimes against humanity. This verdict, as well as the self-serving accounts written by Wehrmacht commanders after the war, has provided the foundation for the myth of the "good" Wehrmacht. The supplemental orders to the Criminal Orders issued by such high ranking OKW leaders as von Brauchitsch have, for some historians, painted a picture of regular soldiers trapped by a ruthless, murderous regime with which they had nothing in common. The truth, as far as it can be known, is that the Wehrmacht in World War II was not only complicit in the atrocities committed along the eastern front but perpetrated them as well. It employed millions of slaves in its industries, some of whom it actively sought out. Its troops stood patiently by and watched as the SS and SD slaughtered thousands in Poland and Russia. Finally, the soldiers of the Wehrmacht captured, starved, and killed untold numbers of people along the German eastern front in the Second World War.

Myth Confronted

The esoteric debate among historians over the guilt of the Wehrmacht has been all but decided. Nevertheless, the German people have, for the last fifty years, been largely convinced of the innocence of the nearly twenty million men who served Hitler on the

front lines. It took a highly controversial photographic exhibition to shatter, publicly, the myth of the good Wehrmacht.

Produced and hosted by the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, this itinerant exhibition was launched in 1995. It was primarily a photographic display of atrocities carried out on the German eastern front during the Second World War. The purpose of the exhibition was to explore the war of extermination carried out by the Nazis; this meant exposing the guilt of the last bastion of German innocence during the National Socialist period, the Wehrmacht. During the 1950s, the focus of National Socialist history was on the guilt of the government bureaucrats of the Third Reich, the most visible of whom were tried at Nuremberg. In the 1960s and 1970s, with the 68er revolts, the focus of National Socialist history turned from relativizing that history to the collective guilt of the Nazi generation. In the 1980s, the debate on National Socialist history was whether the Holocaust was a singular, unique event or was Stalinist cruelty an equivalent. Beginning in the 1990s with this controversial exhibition, the focus of National Socialist history was on the guilt of the “common man.”

The Wehrmacht exhibition, as part of the larger research project, “In Light of Our Century: Violence and Destructiveness during the Twentieth Century,” sought to expose the truth about the average German soldier in Hitler’s aggressive and criminal war on the Soviet Union and Europe. It presented photographic evidence, often taken by the soldiers themselves, of the Wehrmacht’s participation in the Holocaust. The HIS sought to overturn the misconception of the innocent German infantryman had held sway over the German public since the end of the war.

After the Second World War, the necessity of rebuilding a destroyed Germany took precedent over understanding and addressing German guilt. Every accusation of German guilt had been carefully balanced with descriptions of German suffering or, as in the 1960s, German contrition (i.e., reparations and Holocaust memorials).

A variety of factors combined to produce the uneasy and faltering processes of confronting the past in the West [of Germany], which in the end amounted to a pious public confession of collective responsibility for acts which had been committed, in the passive voice, on the soil of Germany, in the name of the German people, but apparently not by any (or many) members of the German people.¹⁴⁶

Until the 68ers revolted against this repression, West German history operated under a thin veneer of contrition that covered a careful balancing act. Many in the Federal Republic, most especially those of the war generation, balanced guilt for the Nazi regime and its atrocities with stories and images of German suffering during the war and after. Nearly thirty years after their initial revolt, the 68ers of the Nachkriegsgeneration once again mounted a campaign to confront the past.

In 1994, the year before the Wehrmacht exhibition, the city of Wülfrath presented an exhibition on the hardships of the immediate postwar years, entitled *Zeichen der Not* (Times of Misery). Local citizens were asked to bring in items from 1945 to 1948. Those who had lived through that time were asked to come and share their experiences. They were also asked to compare and contrast the postwar years with the war years. For many of these people, the war was still too painful to discuss in any great

¹⁴⁶ Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity After the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999), 59.

detail.¹⁴⁷ The 68ers had managed to awaken Germany, but silence was still the mandate of a number of individuals of the war generation. However, the German public faced reminders of National Socialism at every anniversary, read memoirs and scholarly books, watched documentaries and films, and attended a number of exhibitions. The result of this, according to German literary editor, Sigrid Löffler, is that “Europe is at a standstill and looking back. Grandchildren are writing about what happened to their grandparents, using diaries and reminiscences. They’re relaxed, not personally involved like the generation of ’68, but they’re interested. The Holocaust is the negative founding myth of the new, unified Europe. We have to discuss the horrible stories of the 20th century.”¹⁴⁸

The *Wehrmachtsausstellung* (Wehrmacht exhibition), as it came to be called, ran for four and a half years before succumbing to controversy over the accuracy of some of the photographs as well as the overall presentation of the images, some of which had no accompanying text. This first exhibition was dismantled, reorganized, and re-presented a few years later under the new title, *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944* (Crimes of the German Wehrmacht: Dimensions of a War of Annihilation, 1941-1944). “The information presented at this exhibition has a completely different emotional force than other exhibitions which deal with the Nazi Period. This force is directed at the families. This potentially concerns everyone.”¹⁴⁹ According to Reemstma, the intention of both exhibitions, aside from documenting

¹⁴⁷ Elisabeth Domansky, “A Lost War: World War II in Postwar German Memory,” in *Thinking about the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 234.

¹⁴⁸ Susan Wyndham, “Don’t Mention the Wall”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 November 2003. Available from <http://www.smh.com.au/index.html>, s.v. “Sigrid Löffler generation 68;” accessed 10 February 2007.

¹⁴⁹ Jan Philipp Reemtsma, “Das Reden über Verbrechen hat die frühe Bundesrepublik überfordert,” *Die Welt*, interview by Thomas Schmid, 5 June 1999. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. “Wehrmachtsausstellung;” accessed 21 March 2007.

criminal acts, was to illustrate to the German people just how comprehensive was the guilt for the Holocaust

Reemstma, the director of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, declared his Institute's desire to impart to the visitor, through the photographs, a sense of being a contemporary witness. He wanted people, within the context of the larger research project, to ask themselves, "how did it—not only through National Socialism—come to this immense demarcation of destruction?"¹⁵⁰ As Reemtsma repeatedly explained, the Wehrmacht exhibition was not aimed at influencing the perceptions of historians who had known of and studied the Wehrmacht's guilt for decades. Rather, the Institute sought to challenge the perceptions of the German public, those who fought in the Wehrmacht and those whose fathers and grandfathers fought for Hitler. Thomas Schmid, the reporter who interviewed Reemtsma in 1999 for the publication *Die Welt*, remarked during the interview that the Wehrmacht generation seemed absentminded when it came to their history. Schmid proposed that the exhibition forced these men to reacquire a consciousness. Reemtsma clarified that he believed the members of that generation had different perceptions, which made their reactions range from harsh denial to acceptance, because the Institute's exhibition seemed to them to be a collective accusation against the entire Wehrmacht. Reemtsma further explained that there were also many who welcomed the exhibition and told the Institute that such information should have been revealed in 1945 or in the years since.¹⁵¹

Hannes Heer, former 68er and organizer of the Wehrmacht exhibition, set out to demythologize the members of the German military as the pawns of Hitler, an idea that

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

fit quite comfortably into the two-wars theory developed in Germany as a way of repressing the truth about the past. In the two-wars theory, the Second World War is cut in half with Hitler and his murderous plan occupying one side of the war effort and the Wehrmacht's noble intentions of staving off communist hordes to protect Germany (and indeed, all of Europe) on the other side. The HIS aimed to show World War II as an inherently criminal war with the Wehrmacht not merely *verstrickt* (caught-up in), but active participants. "According to Hannes Heer, one of the exhibition's creators and its most active proponent, the number of Jews killed 'directly or indirectly' by the Wehrmacht can be put at 1 to 2.5 million".¹⁵² The majority of Nazi atrocities were committed on the eastern front and, because of Hitler's ideological focus on the racial war, the majority of the nearly twenty million Wehrmacht soldiers rotated through that front. These twenty million young men comprised nearly a quarter of Nazi Germany's population. This meant that during the war nearly every German family was related to or knew someone who was a member of the Wehrmacht, and the same was true in the 1990s. Immediately following the war and in the years after, veterans waged a campaign to whitewash their reputation, called *Persilschein*. Veterans' organizations would, and still do, hire lawyers to defend the honor of the Wehrmacht and discredit the research of such historians as Manfred Messerschmidt¹⁵³ of the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* (Military History Research Organization).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 145.

¹⁵³ Manfred Messerschmidt was also a member of the academic committee that reviewed the first exhibition after it was shut down.

¹⁵⁴ Jürgen Förster, "Complicity or Entanglement? Wehrmacht, War, and Holocaust," in *The Holocaust and History: the Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 266-267.

Objections and the Bundestag

Resistance to the Wehrmachtsausstellung was not limited to veterans, however. Debunking such an entrenched myth as that of twenty million innocent young men was certain to be met with backlash from many directions. Initial objections were visceral and political. Many Germans reacted negatively to the images displayed by the HIS, challenging what they claimed was a one-sided argument. Some responded personally by relating lengthy autobiographical stories. These veterans sought to rebut the evidence by presenting their own memories, while children and grandchildren would relate stories told them by a father or grandfather. Some of the stories related by visitors were not accurate. “A man, nearly 80, came to us [the HIS] and told us a story of how a group of Jewish children were saved. It involved a known case and we were able to prove to the visitor, with all kinds of sources, that the children had in fact been murdered.”¹⁵⁵

The personal impact of the history presented by the HIS, even at a distance of fifty years, was compounded by the political aspect that split Germany down the middle. The leftist political groups such as the Green Party (a political party containing a number of former 68ers) strongly supported the exhibition. Rightist political groups such as the CDU and the CSU were hostile to the efforts of Heer and the HIS. The political division sparked protests and demonstrations on both sides.¹⁵⁶ Then, in 1997, the controversy was taken up by the Bundestag (the German Parliament).

By the time the Wehrmachtsausstellung reached Munich in February 1997 it was alternately condemned as a generalized indictment and hailed as a torch of illumination. The German Parliament took up the debate in March of that year. On 13 March, the

¹⁵⁵ Reemtsma, “Das Reden über Verbrechen”, 5 June 1999.

¹⁵⁶ Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 144.

Green Party led the discussion when Representative Gerald Häfner defended the exhibition as a source of truth. Häfner also expressed concern about *Geschichtsklitterung*, which he believed held sway over Germany. *Geschichtsklitterung* is a kind of historical falsification where historical events or facts are joined in misleading ways. It also refers to the omission of vital facts in order to slant evidence to fit a preformed conclusion. This type of falsification is frequently used to whitewash war crimes and to enhance the positive aspects of a biography or an event. The purpose of *Geschichtsklitterung* is to provide a conclusion differing from that of accepted historiography.¹⁵⁷ Häfner accused the right-wing parties of this type of myth-making when they condemned the Wehrmacht exhibition for waging a *moralischen Vernichtungsfeldzugs gegen das deutsche Volk* (moral destruction campaign against the German people), a statement Häfner classified as right-wing propaganda.¹⁵⁸

Dr. Alfred Dregger of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a conservative political party, rejected Häfner's entire speech. Dregger then questioned the true purpose of the Wehrmachtsausstellung and the legitimacy of Hannes Heer and Jan Philipp Reemtsma. Dregger accused both men of attempting to hurt the German people deliberately by foisting their subjective opinion on them. He went on to exonerate not only the majority of the Wehrmacht but also the German people who lived under the Third Reich by separating them from "the criminal clique who had taken control." Dregger spoke at length of the innocence of the Wehrmacht, citing many of the established arguments including the acquittal at Nuremberg. He stated that all those who

¹⁵⁷ "Geschichtsklitterung." Available from <http://www.wikiweise.de/wiki/Geschichtsklitterung>; accessed 23 April 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Deutscher Bundestag, "13. Wahlperiode—163. Sitzung," 13 März 1997, 14708-14709. Available from <http://www.bundestag.de/bic/plenarprotokolle/pp/1997/index.htm>; accessed 21 March 2007.

described the Wehrmacht as a criminal organization lied. Classifying those Germans who made such arguments as self-haters, he declared that they distracted everyone from the most important thing: “the deep mourning for victims of war and despotism...and of the infinite loss which the Nazis caused by the destruction of the German Jews. Who knows what contributions they could have made to German science, to the German economy and to German culture.” By Dregger’s definition, the Jews were a commodity and the German people and the men of the Wehrmacht were the victims. Lastly, Dregger dismissed the Wehrmachtsausstellung as having nothing to contribute to German society but destructive generational conflict.¹⁵⁹

When former 68er lawyer and future Minister of the Interior Otto Schily addressed the assembly, he related the discussion to the debate over the realizing of German history begun by the students in the 1960s. Schily had been a friend of Rudi Dutschke’s and had worked closely with the SDS. He was also one of the lawyers who had defended many members of the 1970s left-wing terrorist group, Rote Armee Fraktion, including Horst Mahler.¹⁶⁰ In 1997, Schily made the same accusations against the right-wing political parties that the 68ers had made against the war generation: they were guilty of an indignation and inability to face the historical truth concerning the crimes of the Nazi dictatorship. He deplored the attempts made by political opponents to discredit and dismantle the exhibition. He also called for the use of more direct language in discussions of National Socialist history. “The debate on the role of the Wehrmacht is difficult and painful, certainly. But it is inevitable. Unfortunately, the grammar of the

¹⁵⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, “13. Wahlperiode,” 14711-14712.

¹⁶⁰ Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin LeMO: Lebendiges virtuelles Museum Online, “Biographie: Otto Schily, geb. 1932.” Available from <http://www.dhm.de/lemo/suche>, s.v. “Otto Schily;” accessed 23 May 2007.

political language prefers the passive in historical retrospectives: it became, it passed, it occurred, it happened. The subject, the individual, the debt, the responsibility disappears behind these veils of words.”¹⁶¹ But, he warned against the temptation of self-righteousness so often present in the accusations of the 1960s. He charged every German to deal honestly with his/herself and also to ask one more important question: how would you have acted in such an extreme situation as that illustrated by the exhibition?¹⁶² Schily’s statements before the Bundestag during the Wehrmachtsausstellung debate are illustrative of how the argument of the 68ers had matured in thirty years to include other perspectives and a greater consideration for the hardships of their parents’ generation.

The 68ers made accusations and passed judgment on the war generation when they began their movement in the mid to late 1960s. It was a hostile and severely politicized and polemicized environment. While the Wehrmacht exhibition was met with hostility, particularly from conservative politicians and right-wing extremists, there was less of a sense of accusation in the questions from the younger generations. Finally, the important questions were being asked by a German public inspired to confront the truth. “Thanks to the Wehrmacht exhibit, Germans broke the cycle of reiteration and repetition.”¹⁶³ The exhibition, funded in part by former 68ers-turned-politicians and created by former 68er Hannes Heer, did spur great debate, but it also opened the door to communication between the generations; particularly between the war generation and

¹⁶¹ “Die Debatte über die Rolle der Wehrmacht ist schwierig und schmerzhaft, gewiß. Aber sie ist unausweichlich. Die Grammatik der politischen Sprache bevorzugt leider häufig in der historischen Retrospektive die Passivform: es wurde, es passierte, es ereignete sich, es fand statt. Hinter diesen Wortgeweben verschwinden das Subjekt, das Individuum, die Schuld und die Verantwortung.” Deutscher Bundestag, “13. Wahlperiode,” 14714.

¹⁶² Ibid., 14713-14714.

¹⁶³ Wette, *Wehrmacht*, viii.

their grandchildren.¹⁶⁴ Such questioning and unburdening was documented and often filmed by the HIS and negated the fears of destructive generational confusion and conflict expressed by the exhibition's detractors in March 1997.

Hannes Heer made a distinction between the intentions of the protestors in the 1960s and the purpose of his Wehrmacht exhibition. The 68ers had initiated a dialogue with the past by framing it as an indictment of their parents. In the 1990s, their tactic changed from demanding answers of their fathers to inquiry and self-reflection. Echoing Schily, Heer stated that:

Only if we can supplement the question "Father, where were you?" with the question "On which side would I have stood? How would I have reacted?" will we be able to bring this war to an end.¹⁶⁵

Most likely, the war to which Heer referred was not the Second World War, but the friction between the generations sparked by the 68ers.

In thirty years, many 68ers had continued their search for the truth about their parents' National Socialist past, as illustrated by the Wehrmachtsausstellung. They spent their time writing articles and books as well as organizing and participating in historical conferences, debates, and exhibitions. Many former 68ers, like Hannes Heer, dedicated their lives to uncovering and analyzing the truth about Germany's history. Others, like Otto Schily, embraced political office as the next stage of life. All of them, however, left an indelible mark on Germany and the study of German history during their long march through the institutions; a march that culminated in the 68er administration of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, elected in 1998.

¹⁶⁴ Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past*, 160.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 4

TWO AFFAIRS: THE 68ER ADMINISTRATION AND THE END OF THE LONG MARCH

From headstrong teenagers to rebellious college students and street fighters to driven professionals and politicians—the 68ers ran the gamut of possibilities in one generation, leaving few stones unturned and few authorities unchallenged. However, the new generation of Germany in the new millennium was seeking something other than 68er idealism and the unrest that tended to accompany it. In 2001, the controversy over Germany’s past shifted again. As before, during the student revolts, objectors were pointing fingers at Germany’s public officials. This time, however, the controversy was not surrounding National Socialism and the Nazi generation, it was the 68ers. The accusations made in 2001 themselves differed very little from those made in 1968. It was already common practice “to use the secure footing of the present to criticize the deeds of one’s parents and grandparents.”¹⁶⁶ Back in the spotlight, the 68ers were being called upon by the next generation to give an accounting for their actions decades prior. As they had confronted their parents, the 68ers of the Nachkriegsgeneration were confronted.

After the violence of the 1970s, which disillusioned more than one 68er, the former student radicals and street fighters continued on their long march through the institutions. Having fought the establishment for a number of years, many of them entered that establishment as politicians. Two former 68ers-turned-politicians rose to prominence in the ensuing years. Gerhard Schröder and the extremely popular Joschka Fischer formed the vanguard of the new administration. Referred to as the 68er

¹⁶⁶ Christian Meier, “Condemning and Comprehending,” 27.

administration, a socialist lawyer and a street-fighting autodidact completed the 68er journey through Germany's institutions.

Gerhard Schröder was a member of the Young Socialists and became chairman of that organization in 1978. He entered law school in 1966 and passed all requisite legal exams ten years later in 1976. A Marxist and an environmentalist from the beginning, Schröder entered parliament in 1980 as a Social Democrat, the same year the Green Party was officially formed.¹⁶⁷ That was also the year he helped friend and former RAF lawyer, Horst Mahler, re-enter society after being released from prison.

Joschka Fischer, the son a butcher, dropped out of school in 1965 and two years later, became deeply involved in the left-wing demonstrations in Stuttgart, moving from there to Frankfurt.¹⁶⁸ Fischer cited the killing of Benno Ohnesorg in 1967 as a moment that would help define him. "Looking back, his death was a tragedy that more than anything else, made me want to get involved in politics. I wanted to make sure that nothing like that could ever happen in Germany again."¹⁶⁹ A self-styled autodidact, Fischer's radicalist roots led him to join the Green Party and become a parliamentary representative in 1983, while his own ambition helped him lead his party into power in Schröder's 1998 administration. It was not an easy victory for Fischer. Around the reunification of Germany, the Green Party had lost popularity and was split between the *Realos* and the *Fundis*. Moderating his youthful radicalism, Fischer, as a Realo, wanted

¹⁶⁷ "Profile: Gerhard Schroeder", *BBC News Europe*, 9 September 2005. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/Europe/2242899.stm>; accessed 16 August 2007. "Germany's Political Parties," *BBC News Europe*, 6 September 2005. Available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/Europe/4219274.stm>; accessed 16 August 2007.

¹⁶⁸ "Joschka Fischer, Popular Radical," *Deutsche Welle*, 20 July 2005. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. "Joschka Fischer;" accessed 18 August 2007.

¹⁶⁹ Fischer quoted in Tony Paterson, "The Last Hurrah of a Green Giant," *Independent (London)*, 28 June 2006. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Joschka Fischer pacifist;" accessed 17 August 2007.

the Greens to work within the political establishment. The Fundis, in a nod to the party's 68er roots, wanted a return to the streets and the Außerparlamentarische Opposition. The Realos won the argument and the Green Party subsequently gained more popular national support.¹⁷⁰

Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, both the Green Party and the Social Democratic Party gained influence and popularity until in 1998, with the election of Gerhard Schröder as Chancellor of Germany, the two political parties entered into the Red/Green Coalition headed by Schröder and Joschka Fischer, Minister of the Foreign Office. When Fischer was beginning his street-fighting in the mid 1960s, Schröder was pursuing his law degree and idealizing Chancellor Willy Brandt. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* (East-Politics) was a strong influence on Schröder and inspired his attempts to bring Germany closer to Eastern Europe. Backed by the popularity of Fischer and his Greens, Schröder guided their coalition on a left-center path: approving the dismantling of Germany's nineteen nuclear power stations over a twenty-year period¹⁷¹ and providing initial support for the United States' war on terror (support which was publicly unpopular in Germany). Schröder and Fischer, neither an avowed pacifist, steered Germany back to the more popular anti-war, anti-military position in time to be narrowly re-elected in 2002.¹⁷² Within three years, Schröder's emphasis on Ostpolitik and a mishandling of visa reform by Fischer's office would mean the end of the 68er administration.

¹⁷⁰ Paterson, "The Last Hurrah of a Green Giant," *Independent*, 28 June 2006.

¹⁷¹ "Joschka Fischer—from street-fighter to pin striped foreign minister," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 4 September 2002. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Joschka Fischer pacifist;" accessed 17 August 2007.

¹⁷² "Curtain Falls on Media Chancellor," *Deutsche Welle*, 10 October 2005. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. "Gerhard Schröder;" accessed 19 August 2007.

This 68er administration was the first German government since 1945 that had no direct ties to either World War II or the Nazis. Thirty years from their defining moment, the 68ers took control of the establishment, with Fischer carrying much of the popularity. But the scruffy, long-haired rebel was no longer visible; instead, the 68er administration presented a clean-cut, Italian-suited visage to the world. Fischer entered politics as the casual street-fighter, even wearing sneakers to his swearing-in in the early 1980s. Once achieving real power in the German government in the 1990s, however, Fischer shed his rebellious past and gritty image for that of a polished, suit-adorned political leader. The student radicals and street-fighters appeared to have matured and left their radicalism behind, something Bettina Röhl and some members of the German press interpreted as hypocrisy.

The Fischer Affair

In January 2001, two events collided to create what the news media dubbed the Fischer Affair. Bettina Röhl had presented the press with what appeared to be incriminating photographs of Joschka Fischer attacking a police officer in the early 1970s. Concurrently, Fischer was called as a witness in the murder trial of former 68er-turned-terrorist, Hans-Joachim Klein.

Bettina Röhl¹⁷³, the daughter of RAF terrorist Ulrike Meinhof, was compiling information for a book about her mother and the RAF when she came upon old photos of Fischer in his street-fighting days. In the 1960s, Ulrike Meinhof and Bettina Röhl's father, Klaus Rainer Röhl, published the leftist magazine *Konkret* in West Germany. Five years after contributing to the so-called Fischer Affair, Bettina Röhl published an

¹⁷³ Bettina Röhl and her sister were still children when their mother died in prison in the mid 1970s. At one point in Röhl's childhood, Meinhof attempted to ship her pre-adolescent daughters to a training camp in the Middle East, failing in the endeavor when their father stopped her.

exposé of her parents and their magazine designed to reveal its communist base and the links between *Konkret*, East Germany and the 68ers.¹⁷⁴ Calling her mother an “East-obsessed 26-year-old brat” and her father a “useful idiot,” Röhl had dedicated a majority of her journalism to exposing the motivations behind her extremist parents and other 1960s’ radicals like Joschka Fischer.¹⁷⁵ On her website, Röhl explained that her purpose for publishing the eleven photographs was to unmask the “fraud” of Joschka Fischer. The pictures were taken during a demonstration in Frankfurt in 1973 by *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* photographer, Lutz Kleinhans. Röhl questioned why it took twenty-seven years for these images to reach the public; her conclusion was a Fischer-based conspiracy to hide his violent past.¹⁷⁶ The scene in the photos was described by Röhl for a book entitled, *Sag Mir, wo Du stehst*:

At the beginning of April 1973, there was a large demonstration. Joschka Fischer tackled a policeman and set the overwhelming scenario [*Überwältigungsszenario*] in motion, as had been practiced. In the following seconds, he and four of his comrades-in-arms [*Kampfgenossen*] surrounded the policeman on the ground. Fischer raised his hand to strike. The event was interrupted when two fellow police officers rushed in and grabbed the weapon.¹⁷⁷

When interviewed by *Stern* about his past, Fischer stated that he had been a militant and a street-fighter and had never denied the fact, but he vehemently denied ever attacking police with weapons. Fischer stated that he fought government authority but also “fought against the pressure of events that was causing some to break away in the

¹⁷⁴ The title of Röhl’s book: *Making Communism Fun! Ulrike Meinhof, Klaus Rainer Röhl and the Konkret Files*.

¹⁷⁵ “My Mother, the Terrorist,” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 March 2006. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. “Bettina Röhl Joschka Fischer;” accessed 18 August 2007.

¹⁷⁶ Bettina Röhl, “Zu meiner kleinen Veröffentlichung in Stern und Bild, Hamburg den 4. Januar 01,” Der Fischer. Available from <http://www.bettinaroehl.de>; accessed 23 July 2007.

¹⁷⁷ “Ja, ich war militant,” *Stern*, 4 January 2001. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. “Fischer Röhl;” accessed 26 July 2007.

mid 70s and go underground.”¹⁷⁸ Hans-Joachim Klein, Fischer’s friend and *Mitläufer* (nominal member) in the street-fighting scene, was one of those breaking away to become more radical. When asked if he felt responsible for Klein’s descent into terrorism, Fischer denied having any negative influence over either Klein or the other more violent members of the 68er protests. *Stern* asked Fischer to explain to young Germans how he could have participated in demonstrations that had frequently turned violent.

Vietnam, Notstandsgesetze, the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke, the suspicious continuity between the Nazi state and the Federal Republic. ... We encountered so much hate when we demonstrated for freedom. If you go demonstrating today, you no longer hear: ‘Go away!’ [*Geh nach drüben!*]. That was only the most harmless variant. ‘Off to the labor camp!’ [*Ab ins Arbeitslager!*] or ‘You should be gassed!’ [*Ihr gehört vergast!*], we heard that a lot. ... I got my first five weeks without probation because of resistance against government authority [*Widerstand gegen die Staatsgewalt*], disturbing the peace [*Landfriedensbruch*], and violation of the Bannmeilengesetz¹⁷⁹. ... All these events. They [today’s youth] must see the general context. ... For us, the German democracy appeared to show a National Socialist face again. ... That set us on the path where the question of enmity in relation to the state was no longer a question of theory, but where one wanted the complete fall of the constitutional order—that sounds so crazy today.¹⁸⁰

The violence of the 68ers’ conflict with authority continued to escalate until it erupted in the 1970s. Several 68ers, including Hans-Joachim Klein, became violently anti-Israel. Two Frankfurt Germans participated in the 1976 hijacking of the Air France flight where the Jewish passengers were separated from the other passengers and killed.

¹⁷⁸ “Ja, ich war militant,” *Stern*, 4 January 2001.

¹⁷⁹ A law that created protected zones around such government buildings as the Bundestag and the Federal Constitutional Court. This law prohibited gatherings and other such activities in such areas. “Bannmeile,” Juraform. Available from <http://www.juraform.de/lexikon/Bannmeile>; accessed 25 July 2007.

¹⁸⁰ “Ja, ich war militant,” *Stern*, 4 January 2001.

Such actions disillusioned Fischer and others. Fischer described the murders of the passengers as “disgustingly terrible.”¹⁸¹ Severe anti-Semitism also became Klein’s reason for leaving the violence behind. He became disillusioned with anti-Zionism during a training stint in the Middle East. Klein told Daniel Cohn-Bendit (fellow 68er and friend to both Klein and Fischer) that he and the other militant leftists were being trained next to fascists at the camp. Klein claimed to be shocked that the Palestinian cause was not the anti-fascist, anti-Nazi one he had believed it to be. Rather, it was simply an anti-Jewish cause.¹⁸² A similar shock ran through the German New Left at the discovery of the identity of the Air France hijackers killed at Entebbe. When the terrorist leader was revealed as Wilfried Böse, Fischer was dumbfounded that a friend of his would resort to such anti-Zionist violence.¹⁸³

By the mid 1970s, with the drastic increase in leftist terrorism, the idealism was being drained from the 68er revolution. Actions began to have dire and often bloody consequences. The bloodshed at Entebbe was a direct result of the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel resolutions passed at the PLO conference in Algeria, which Fischer had attended in 1969. The 68er revolution had mutated from sit-ins, demonstrations, and pamphleteering to kidnapping and murder. The increasingly violent nature of some members of the New Left made Fischer extremely uncomfortable. He recognized the fine line the 68ers were walking when resorting to any kind of violence. Declaring that he had never been a pacifist, Fischer, as Foreign Minister, acknowledged repeatedly the necessity of the use of force in certain situations. The Foreign Minister illustrated his belief when he

¹⁸¹ “Ja, ich war militant,” *Stern*, 4 January 2001.

¹⁸² Paul Berman, *Power and the Idealists: Or, the Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 55-56.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 58.

supported armed NATO action in the former Yugoslavia to end the genocide there, saying, “The answer to Auschwitz is not never again war but never again Auschwitz.”¹⁸⁴ However, he also understood the dangers that any use of force contained for his generation. The year 1976 represented for Fischer a terrible hypocrisy: his generation was stepping over the same line they had accused their parents of crossing.

When questioned about his past, Fischer, both in the press and on the witness stand at Klein’s murder trial, apologized for the violence of the radical 1960s and 70s. He lamented that any of the 68ers had turned to killing. In January 2001, Hans-Joachim Klein was tried for the 1975 murders of three officials participating in the OPEC conference in Vienna. The Foreign Minister appeared as a character witness for the defense and was questioned by the prosecution about violence in his own radical past. In a symbolic and a very real way, the 68ers were on trial. One 68er who had turned his youthful idealism into terrorism and murder had as a character witness another 68er who had fashioned his own youthful idealism into a high-ranking position in the very establishment they had both once fought against. On the stand, Fischer described the initial 68er motive as a desire to organize a *Gegenwelt* (counter culture). Both on the stand and in the *Stern* interview, Fischer explained that their youth was a different life, a different time and place. In the interview, the Foreign Minister never acceded to committing any real violence beyond throwing a few stones. The most he admitted to *Stern* was “resisting” the police. At Klein’s trial, Fischer was questioned repeatedly about throwing Molotov cocktails at police, an allegation Bettina Röhl had made about Fischer in the press. Prosecutor Volker Rath confronted Fischer with having allegedly

¹⁸⁴ “Joschka Fischer—from street-fighter to pin striped foreign minister,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 4 September 2002.

admitted to such actions on television. Fischer denied having thrown the flaming projectiles and denied ever inciting the Frankfurt street-fighters to do so themselves. Rath then mentioned a statement allegedly made by one of Fischer's former roommates and provided to the prosecutor's office by Bettina Röhl. Rath claimed that the statement provided proof that what the prosecutor called the *Fischer Wohngemeinschaft* (Fischer Commune) was the fertile ground for the RAF. Fischer dismissed the statement as *Völliger Quatsch* (complete rubbish) while the judge declared it irrelevant. Rath then accused Fischer again of throwing Molotov cocktails and avoiding the question. Fischer replied: "No you don't. I don't evade anything. I exclude. Clear. Explicit. Period."¹⁸⁵

The Röhl photographs and Fischer's testimony at the Klein trial expanded into threats of parliamentary inquiries and criminal investigations. The Foreign Minister's irreverent attitude toward many of his political fellows had not gained him many friends in the German government. Some, particularly those in the opposition parties, saw an opportunity to discredit Fischer and the Red/Green Coalition.¹⁸⁶ However, throughout the Fischer Affair, the Foreign Minister remained extremely popular with the German public. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the former Young Socialist, defended his irreverent friend and the young radicals of their generation: "This republic would be quite different without the 68ers. It would lack the general openness with regard to many social-political questions, including questions as to the causes of fascism."¹⁸⁷ The 68ers were once more center-stage but had come under scrutiny for their own histories. No

¹⁸⁵ "Nichts da. Ich weiche nicht aus. Ich schliesse das aus. Klar. Eindeutig. Punkt." Hans Holzhaider, "Eine Sitzdemo von 90 Minuten Joschka Fischer als Zeuge: 'Wir wollten das richtige Leben im falschen,'" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17 January 2001. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Röhl;" accessed 26 July 2007.

¹⁸⁶ Charles Hawley, "Joschka Fischer with His Back Against the Wall," *Spiegel Online*, 22 February 2005. Available from <http://www.spiegel.de/international>, s.v. "Fischer visa;" accessed 30 July 2007.

¹⁸⁷ "Fischer's Blast from the Past," *Europe*, May 2001. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer street fighter;" accessed 4 August 2007.

longer the new generation, the former radicals were the ones being forced to provide an account of their pasts. Fischer's former roommate and France's most prominent 68er, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, was quoted as saying: "At long last there is a German politician who says, 'Yes, it was me;'" ironically, the same thing Hitler said at his trial in 1924. Along with this approbation for Fischer's admission, Cohn-Bendit expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of other politicians willing to admit to Communist or Nazi pasts.¹⁸⁸ While friends spoke out in support of the Foreign Minister, Bettina Röhl and Michael Schwelien (Fischer biographer) openly accused Fischer of deliberately encouraging and participating in violence against police at demonstrations in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸⁹

Fischer supporters and Fischer detractors lined up on either side of a generational debate: was a radical and (disputably) violent past acceptable in Germany's politicians of today if it was unacceptable in Germany's politicians of thirty years ago? The Fischer Affair represented the next step in the generational conflict begun by Fischer's generation.

The main subject in the Fischer affair was a simple political scandal involving a well-regarded foreign minister. But the scandal was set against a background consisting of events from twenty-five or thirty years earlier, from the time of the New Left. The Fischer affair invited us, even required us, to make a few judgments about that background. But the New Left background turned out, on closer inspection, to have a background of its own.... Not the generation of 1968, but the generation of 1938. Not the New Left, but the Nazis.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ "Never a pacifist," *Time International*, 22 January 2001. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Klein trial;" accessed 4 August 2007.

¹⁸⁹ Stefan Theil, "The Minister's All Right," *Newsweek International*, 22 January 2001. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Klein trial;" accessed 4 August 2007.

¹⁹⁰ Berman, *Power and the Idealists*, 35.

In Fischer's youth, anyone with a definably National Socialist background was unacceptable in any public office. His generation was imminently instrumental in exposing the objectionable histories of a number of West Germany's most prominent politicians, including Chancellor Kiesinger. But, while Joschka Fischer may have never attempted to hide his own radical past, he, like his parents' generation before him, made no attempt to address it directly until the issue was forced by the next generation. It was not until 2001 that Fischer discussed or analyzed his own past openly. A published author by 2001, his book was not about the student revolts or the Frankfurt street-fighters; rather, it was about his life-affirming weight-loss.¹⁹¹ The Röhl photographs and the Klein trial forced Fischer and the 68er administration to answer the question, "where were you then and what did you do?"

The Visa Affair

The 68er administration would survive the Fischer Affair of 2001 with popularity and reputation largely intact. However, in 2005, the German Foreign Office came under heavy attack when a loophole in recent immigration legislation was discovered by the press, though that legislation had actually been revoked a year earlier. In an effort to further relations with former Eastern Bloc countries, Fischer's Foreign Office had modified its immigration policies and procedures in March 2000 under the "Volmer Edict".¹⁹² The edict relaxed the restrictions for accepting tourist visas in Germany. The mandate from Fischer's office to all German consulates was, "when in doubt, decide for freedom of travel." By the next year, over 300,000 Ukrainians had applied for tourist visas with only ten percent rejected. One of the main concerns at the time was the 11%

¹⁹¹ "Never a pacifist," *Time International*, 22 January 2001.

¹⁹² Named for then Deputy Foreign Minister Ludger Volmer.

unemployment rate in Germany. Some German officials were worried that a large number of these foreign tourists would become de facto immigrants, which would then further exacerbate the unemployment issue Chancellor Schröder had promised to address.¹⁹³

Even worse than the unemployment issue was that, unfortunately, the new visa policy allowed a large number of criminals into Germany indefinitely, including known human-traffickers and members of prostitution rings. Relaxing the policy on temporary visa approval in favor of the applicant had flooded the consulates with a large number of requests they were not staffed to handle; requests that were then rubber-stamped without the proper background checks. This allowed young women forced into sexual slavery to enter the country as “tourists” and pimps to pass as “business travelers.”¹⁹⁴

Fellow European Union Schengen Agreement member states began to complain to Berlin that lax German visa regulations were impacting them as well. The Schengen Agreement of 1985 involved thirty European nation-states, including Germany. In 1995, Germany and five other European countries including France and Spain officially implemented Schengen, which meant that once legally in one Schengen member nation, a person could move freely through all other Schengen participant nations without further passport checks.¹⁹⁵ If criminals were entering Germany legally, then by extension, they could move freely in France, Spain, and many other nations, without need of separate French or Spanish visas. In 2004, under pressure from these other Schengen nations,

¹⁹³ Leon Mangasarian, “Visa-gate threatens German foreign ministry,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 26 January 2005. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. “Fischer Joschka visa;” accessed 16 August 2007.

¹⁹⁴ Hawley, “Joschka Fischer with His Back Against the Wall,” *Spiegel Online*, 22 February 2005.

¹⁹⁵ Julia Gelatt, “Schengen and the Free Movement of People Across Europe,” Migration Policy Institute, posted October 2005. Available from <http://www.migrationinformation.org>, s.v. “Schengen;” accessed 16 August 2007.

Germany revoked the Volmer Edict. Deputy Foreign Minister Volmer, when questioned about Germany's visa policy change, alternated between taking all the blame on himself and placing the majority of it on Fischer, saying that Fischer had forced him to change the regulations in 2000 despite his own misgivings.¹⁹⁶

The Visa Affair was the second time in less than five years that Foreign Minister and former 68er Joschka Fischer occupied an unfavorable spotlight. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* posed the question: "To what extent was it really Green ideological blindness which damaged German interests because it simply dismissed the many warnings?"¹⁹⁷ As the head of one half of the Red/Green Coalition, Fischer came under attack for his administration's idealism. Germany's relationship with its *Gastarbeitern* (guest workers) and immigrants had been shaky at best and throughout the 1990s attacks on immigrants had increased in the more heavily populated areas of Germany. The Red/Green Coalition had intended to establish Germany officially as an immigrant nation in the new millennium. By encouraging the immigration of Eastern Europeans, Fischer intended not only to support Schröder's relationship with those nations but also perhaps to atone for the sin of Auschwitz.¹⁹⁸

Altruism aside, as an investigative committee and the news media dug deeper into the stacks of visa applications and consulate paperwork, a growing number of infractions were discovered with some of the more serious ones involving Albania. After the introduction of the Volmer Edict in 2000, the number of approved visas coming from Tirana increased by over 10,000, jumping from 8,000 to 19,000. During the

¹⁹⁶ Mangasarian, "Visa-gate," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, 26 January 2005.

¹⁹⁷ "European Press Review," *ONASA News Agency*, 15 February 2005. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Joschka visa," accessed 16 August 2007.

¹⁹⁸ Hans Kundnani, "Goodbye to the 68ers," *Prospect*, 28 July 2005. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Joschka visa," accessed 16 August 2007.

investigation, stacks of bribe money were found hidden in between the applications while some approved applications had never been signed by the applicants. This led Berlin to believe that the German consulate in Albania was being used as a human-trafficking weigh-station.¹⁹⁹ Over 800,000 Germans watched as Fischer gave testimony before a parliamentary investigative committee in 2005. *The Financial Times Deutschland* remarked on Fischer's twelve-hour testimony: "He was quite the old Joschka Fischer—belligerent, lacking respect, eloquent and witty. But his show was being played out in the wrong theater. It was all about how far he is responsible for mass human trafficking offences and from this point of view he wasn't convincing."²⁰⁰ The negative publicity of the Visa Affair became a storm that Fischer and the 68er administration could not ignore.

All of this reflected very badly on a Foreign Minister, an administration, and two political parties that had prided themselves on humanitarianism and opposition to oppression. The mainstream German press accused Fischer of ignoring a potentially dangerous issue while more extreme accusations of supporting international prostitution and slave trading flowed toward Germany from the international press. Unfortunately for the 68er administration, the explosive Visa Affair hit them during an election year. Neither Fischer, nor the rest of the Schröder administration survived the Visa Affair intact the way they had the Fischer Affair involving controversial photographs and a sensational murder trial four years earlier. German voters expressed their lack of confidence in the 68ers by voting them out of government in 2005. The long march of the 68ers had come to an end.

¹⁹⁹ "German mission in Tirana suspected of aiding illegal entry of Albanians," *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 15 February 2005. Database online. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>, s.v. "Fischer Joschka visa;" accessed 16 August 2007.

²⁰⁰ "Should Fischer Stay or Go?," *Deutsche Welle*, 26 April 2005. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. "Joschka Fischer;" accessed 19 August 2007.

Their administration is currently being analyzed, but what is the real legacy of the German 68ers? They progenerated the frank discussions of National Socialism taking place in Germany today. Their legacy also lies in the galvanization of Germany's commitment to anti-fascism and behind every one of the memorials to the victims of the Third Reich. They helped establish the equality of the sexes that elected a female chancellor and inspired a commitment to improving immigrant relations and citizenship reform. The 68ers opened the eyes of a nation and ensured that Germany's past will never be ignored or forgotten.

CHAPTER 5

MARCH CONCLUDED?

The 68ers, famous for their student protests in favor of democracy, for their confrontation of their parents' Nazi history, and, notoriously, for the violence of the 1970s, were extremely popular in 1998 when Schröder's administration took power. But their latest legacy was unfavorably marked by rising unemployment and a serious mishandling of visa reform. In 2001, the most popular member of the 68er government, Joschka Fischer, was confronted with his own violent past in much the same way as he and his compatriots confronted the National Socialist generation. In 2005, the long march through the institutions came to an end as the so-called Visa Affair broke and the 68er administration was voted out of power. Following his coalition's election defeat, Joschka Fischer resigned from politics altogether; taking up, instead, a teaching post at Princeton University in 2006. Rounding out an incredibly dynamic career, Fischer went from being a drop-out autodidact, to a street-fighter, to Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor of Germany, to professor of "International Crisis Diplomacy" at one of the United States' most prestigious universities.²⁰¹

What kind of mark these former young radicals will continue to make on Germany remains to be seen. "Although some aspects of the 1960s' baby boom liberalism is now deeply rooted in German society, in many other respects 1968er radicalism (moderated with age) seems to have passed through the system leaving few marks on the successor generation."²⁰² The time of the 68ers had passed, as evidenced by

²⁰¹ Louisa Schaefer, "Former Foreign Minister Fischer Bids Farewell to Politics," *Deutsche Welle*, 27 June 2006. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. "Joschka Fischer;" accessed 19 August 2007.

²⁰² Kundnani, "Goodbye to the 68ers," *Prospect*, 28 July 2005.

the election of the more conservative CDU government and Chancellor Angela Merkel. Will there be a new study of the National Socialist period through the lens of a new generation standing on the other side of the impassioned 68er protest? Maybe yes, maybe no. The new generation, “many of whom are indifferent or even hostile to the values of the 1968ers,” is less interested in confronting Germany’s Nazi past and practicing 68er idealism than it is interested in solving unemployment and reforming the German economy. This new generation does not have to confront Germany’s past in order to take their place in their nation. They do not have to fight against remnant Nazis in power, they way their parents did. Germany’s youth are more concerned with world conflict and the environment. In 2006, despite being defeated by the CDU, the Green Party still held fifty percent of the under-twenty-five-year-old vote.²⁰³ Those voters represent the first generation of Germans to grow up in a Germany involved in a dialogue with its National Socialist past. By the turn of the last century, there were approximately four thousand museums in Germany which displayed exhibits concerning some aspect of the Second World War and the Third Reich. By the year 2000, Germany was spending DM 115 million a year on Holocaust memorials.²⁰⁴ Rather than having to fight silent shadows to learn about the past, today’s Germans are immersed in their nation’s history, thanks to the efforts of the 68ers throughout the years.²⁰⁵

The 68ers’ confrontation with the past has left a deep mark in every corner of German society, but their path was not always clear. Their long march through the

²⁰³ Jane Paulick, “Germany Sheds the Spirit of ’68,” *Deutsche Welle*, 14 October 2005. Available from <http://www.dw-world.de>, s.v. “Joschka Fischer;” accessed 20 August 2007.

²⁰⁴ Michael Naumann, “Remembrance and Political Reality: Historical Consciousness in Germany after the Genocide,” *New German Critique*, no. 80, Special Issue on the Holocaust (Spring—Summer 2000): 21-22. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. “Vergangenheitsbewältigung;” accessed 4 June 2007.

²⁰⁵ Kundnani, “Goodbye to the 68ers,” *Prospect*, 28 July 2005.

institutions had been, at times, a confusing one. In 1999 when NATO attacked Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, Joschka Fischer publicly supported the action and Germany sent in its own air support. Fischer characterized his support as a uniquely German responsibility to oppose genocide wherever found. His Green Party strongly dissented and Fischer was hit with a red paint bomb at the 1999 Green Party conference in protest against the military action Fischer had sanctioned. Instead of adhering to his political party's dedicated pacifism, Fischer, in a throw-back to his radical past, decided that no action was worse than intervention.

With the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Schröder, backed by his 68er administration, declared “unconditional solidarity” with the U.S. and promised support in the U.S.’s war on terror. Overcoming a vote of no confidence in the Bundestag, the 68er administration sent troops to Afghanistan. Then, in 2002, Schröder and Fischer opposed the proposed American attack on Iraq. In concert with German public opinion, Schröder and Fischer refused to support a war on Iraq, with Fischer returning to the German Green Party mantra of “never again war;” this time without the “never again Auschwitz” emphasis.²⁰⁶

The new, younger German government of 2006 has promised to draw Germany closer to the United States and to establish a more comprehensive, Western-based foreign policy than Fischer and Schröder’s Ostpolitik-inspired approach. Unlike the prior administration, Chancellor Angela Merkel’s government is not based in 1968. Rather, the new government takes 1989 and reunification as its springboard. The German voters in 2005 appeared to be seeking more stability than the 68ers gave them, electing instead a chancellor who favors the conservative values of Adenauer’s administration, the very

²⁰⁶ Kundnani, “Goodbye to the 68ers,” *Prospect*, 28 July 2005.

thing the 68ers opposed. But, the very fact that Germany's chancellor is female is another nod to all that the 68ers managed to change. The 68ers protested against their parents' silence and governmental hypocrisy, they protested in favor of sexual liberation and equal treatment for women. The 68ers created the society and government that Angela Merkel and the new generation has inherited.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Kundnani, "Goodbye to the 68ers," *Prospect*, 28 July 2005.

REFERENCES

- After Auschwitz: Battle for the Holocaust.* Produced and directed by Paul Yule. 53 minutes. Channel Four Television Corporation, 2001. Videorecording.
- Baird, Jay W. *The Mythical World of Nazi War Propaganda, 1939-1945.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 1974.
- Bartov, Omer. *The Eastern Front, 1941-45, German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- Beck, Birgit. "Sexual Violence and Its Prosecution by Courts Martial of the Wehrmacht." In *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction, 1937-1945.* Edited by Roger Chickering, Stig Förster, and Bernd Greiner. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Available from <http://www.netlibrary.com>, s.v. "A World at Total War." Accessed 15 January 2007.
- Benjamin, Jessica and Anson Rabinbach. "Germans, Leftists, Jews." *New German Critique*, no. 31, West German Culture and Politics (Winter 1984): 183-193. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Vergangenheitsbewältigung." Accessed 4 June 2007.
- Berman, Paul. *Power and the Idealists: Or, the Passion of Joschka Fischer and Its Aftermath.* New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005.
- Brauchitsch, Field Marshall Walther von. "Maintenance of Discipline, 24 May 1941." In *German High Command Trial Part III*, United Nations War Crimes Commission, 1949. Available from <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/WCC/ghctril3.htm>. Accessed 17 January 2007.
- Brunkhorst, Hauke. "The Tenacity of Utopia: The Role of Intellectuals in Cultural Shifts within the Federal Republic of Germany." Translated by Jaime Own Daniel. *New German Critique*, no. 55 (Winter 1992): 127-138. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "student revolt Germany 1968." Accessed 1 May 2007.
- Burns, Rob, ed. *German Cultural Studies: An Introduction.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Davidson, Eugene. *The Trial of the Germans: an account of the twenty-two defendants before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966.

- Domansky, Elizabeth. "A Lost War: World War II in Post War German Memory." In *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*. Edited by Alvin Rosenfeld. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Dose, Oberleutnant Wolf Helmuth. "19 November 1941." Kampfberichte von der Ostfront vom 24 Juni 1941 bis 31 März 1941. Available from <http://www.collasius.org/ZEITZEUGEN/1941-00-dose/41dose00.htm>. Accessed 3 February 2007.
- Förster, Jürgen. "Complicity or Entanglement? Wehrmacht, War, and Holocaust." In *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*. Edited by Michael Berenbaum and Abraham J. Peck. Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Fritz, Stephen G. *Frontsoldaten: The German Soldier in World War II*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997.
- Fulbrook, Mary. *German National Identity after the Holocaust*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999.
- Ginant, Kurt Freiherr von, General. "Memorandum by General von Ginant to the General Staff of the Wehrmacht in Reaction to the Removal of the Jews from Industrial Production, September 18, 1942." In *Documents on the Holocaust: selected sources on the destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*. Edited by Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, and Abraham Margalit, 287-289. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981.
- Grossmann, Atina. "The 'Goldhagen Effect': Memory, Repetition, and Responsibility in the New Germany." In *The "Goldhagen Effect": History, Memory, Nazism—Facing the German Past*. Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany. Edited by Geoff Eley. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Habermas, Jürgen. "A Test for Popular Justice: The Accusations against the Intellectuals." Translated by Mark Franke. *New German Critique*, no. 12 (Autumn 1977): 11-13. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "student activism Habermas." Accessed 4 June 2007.
- _____. "Interview with Jürgen Habermas Starnberg, March 23, 1979." Interview by Detlev Horster and Willem van Reijen. Translated by Ron Smith. *New German Critique*, no. 18 (Autumn 1979): 29-43. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Holocaust Protestbewegung." Accessed 1 May 2007.
- Headland, Ronald. *Messages of Murder: a Study of the Reports of the Einsatzgruppen of the Security Police and the Security Service, 1941-1943*. London: Associated University Press, 1992.

- Hecker, Margarete. "Family Reconstruction in Germany: An Attempt to Confront the Past." In *The Collective Silence: German Identity and the Legacy of Shame*. Edited by Barbara Heimannsberg and Christoph J. Schmidt. Translated by Cynthia Oudejans Harris and Gordon Wheeler. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Herzog, Dagmar. "'Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together': Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2, Intimacy (Winter 1998): 393-444. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "68ers." Accessed 8 May 2007.
- Hitler, Adolf. "Directive No. 46, Instruction for intensified action against banditry in the East, 18 August, 1942." In *Blitzkrieg to Defeat: Hitler's War Directives 1939-1945*. Edited by H. R. Trevor-Roper, 132-135. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.
- Höss, Rudolf Franz Ferdinand. "Eidesstattliche Erklärung von Rudolf Franz Ferdinand Höss, vom 5. April 1946." In *Zweihundert Jahre Deutscher Kultur*. Edited by Claude Hill, 394-396. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966.
- Kramer, Jane. *The Politics of Memory: Looking for Germany in the New Germany*. New York: Random House, 1996.
- Lebert, Stephan and Norbert. *My Father's Keeper: Children of Nazi Leaders—an Intimate History of Damage and Denial*. Translated by Julian Evans. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001.
- Meier, Christian. "Condemning and Comprehending." In *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy Concerning the Singularity of the Holocaust*. Translated by James Knowlton and Truett Cates. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1993.
- Merritt, Richard L. "The Student Protest Movement in West Berlin." *Comparative Politics* 1, no. 4 (July 1969): 516-533. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Dutschke 1968." Accessed 1 May 2007.
- Mewes, Horst. "The German New Left." *New German Critique*, no. 1 (Winter 1973): 22-41. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "German New Left." Accessed 4 June 2007.
- Naumann, Michael. "Remembrance and Political Reality: Historical Consciousness in Germany after the Genocide." *New German Critique*, no. 80, Special Issue on the Holocaust (Spring—Summer 2000): 17-28. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Vergangenheitsbewältigung." Accessed 4 June 2007.

- Niven, Bill. *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Parker, Judge John J. "Judgment: The Accused Organization, General Staff and High Command." The Avalon Project at Yale Law School. Available from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/>, s.v. "judgment accused organizations." Accessed 15 January 2007.
- Pohl, Dieter. "Hans Krueger and the Murder of the Jews in the Stanislawow Region (Galicia)." Yad Vashem. Available from <http://www.yadvashem.org>, s.v. "Hans Krueger." Accessed 9 May 2007.
- Poliakov, Leon. *Harvest of Hate: the Nazi Program for the Destruction of the Jews of Europe*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971.
- Reemtsma, Jan Philipp. "Zwei Ausstellungen—Eine Bilanz (Two Exhibitions—A Review)." Posted Spring 2004. Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung, "Verbrechen der Wehrmacht. Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944." Available from <http://www.his-online.de>, s.v. "Wehrmacht Bilanz Reemtsma." Accessed 27 January 2007.
- Reichenau, Field Marshal Walter von. "Conduct of Troops in Eastern Territories, 10 October, 1941," translation of Document No. NOKW-309, Office of Chief of Counsel for War Crimes. Translated by Frank Freudenthal. In *The Holocaust: selected documents in eighteen volumes*. Vol. 10, *The Einsatzgruppen or Murder Commandos*. Edited by John Mendelsohn. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1982.
- Röhl, Bettina. "Zu meiner kleinen Veröffentlichung in Stern und Bild, Hamburg den 4. Januar 01." Der Fischer. Available from <http://www.bettinaroehl.de>. Accessed 23 July 2007.
- Schlie, Ulrich. "Today's View of the Third Reich and the Second World War in German Historiographical Discourse." *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 2 (June 2000): 543-564. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "Historikerstreit Vergangenheitsbewältigung." Accessed 23 September 2006.
- Schmidtke, Michael A. "Cultural Revolution or Culture Shock? Student Radicalism and 1968 in Germany." *South Central Review* 16, no. 4, Rethinking 1968: The United States and Western Europe (Winter 1999—Spring 2000): 77-89. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "student revolt 1968 Germany." Accessed 1 May 2007.
- Shirer, William L. *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: a History of Nazi Germany*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1988.

- Smith, Bradley F. *Reaching Judgment at Nuremberg*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977.
- Steinert, Marlis G. *Hitler's War and the Germans: Public Mood and Attitude During the Second World War*. Edited and translated by Thomas E. J. De Witt. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1977.
- Varon, Jeremy. *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.
- Weil, Frederick. "The Imperfectly Mastered Past: Anti-Semitism in West Germany since the Holocaust." *New German Critique*, no. 20, Special Issue 2: Germans and Jews (Spring—Summer 1980): 135-153. Database online. <http://www.jstor.org>, s.v. "The Holocaust' West Germany." Accessed 15 May 2007.
- Wette, Wolfram. *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*. Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

VITA

GRACIE M. MORTON

- Personal Data: Date of Birth: May 14, 1979
 Place of Birth: Birmingham, Alabama
- Education: Public Schools, Greensboro, North Carolina
 B.A. German, East Tennessee State University, Johnson
 City, Tennessee 2003
 M.A. History, East Tennessee State University, Johnson
 City, Tennessee 2007
- Professional Experience: Graduate Assistant, University of South Carolina, Ted
 Mimms Foreign Language Learning Center, 2003-
 2005
 Tuition Scholarship, East Tennessee State University,
 Department of History, 2005-2006
 Graduate Assistant, East Tennessee State University,
 Sherrod Library, 2006-2007
- Presentations: “The Myth of the ‘Good’ Wehrmacht: The Debate Over the
 German Army and Atrocities on the Eastern Front
 in the Second World War;” Graduate History
 Forum, University of North Carolina at Charlotte,
 March 17, 2007
 “Overcoming a Silence: The Continuity of the Third Reich
 and the Protest of the German 68ers;” invited to
 present for the Protest Issues and Actions section of
 the Popular Culture Association Conference, San
 Francisco, California, March 2008

