

Hans Erler. *Erinnern und Verstehen: Der Völkermord an den Juden im politischen Gedächtnis der Deutschen.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003. 348 S. EUR 34.00, gebunden, ISBN 978-3-593-37361-4.



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Published on H-German (January, 2006)

Today's literature on memory offers the reader a seemingly endless amount of options. If North American scholars were somehow able to read all the works from this side of the Atlantic, they could thereafter consider the material that continues to appear in Europe. One option is Hans Erler's packed collection of articles, divided into six sections and consisting of a total of thirty-four contributions from a variety of authors, which seeks to improve our understanding of the boundaries that still exist between Jewish and German memories of the Holocaust, and how, if possible, these barriers can best be overcome in the twenty-first century. The threads that unite these articles are clearly explained in the introduction to this collection. According to it, the most dependable way to remember the Holocaust is to construct a memory that does not fully exist today. Doing so essentially means to unite modern memory trends with a more concrete Jewish memory culture. Transforming German memory culture into Jewish memory culture, meaning that non-Jews would need to accept the Jewish inheritance, would enable the ongoing memorials of the Holocaust to remain an active participant in contem-

porary culture and avoid the risk of fading into history (p. 17).

The first section attempts to establish a context for modern memory in Germany, showing how serious the stakes are and how easy it is to forget. This section's first contribution, Alphonse Silbermann's "Erinnern und Vergessen," discusses the potential and real impact of the general public on individual memory (pp. 23-29). In this argument the dangers of forgetting are indeed very real, because of the strong influence the community has over individual memory. Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich's "Der Umgang mit der Erinnerung" examines the singularity of the Holocaust, the need for memory, the possibilities of reconciliation between the Jewish and German communities, and, possibly the most serious question of this book, how the younger generations will remember the Holocaust (pp. 30-37). The articles become even more personal in Emil L. Fackenheim's "Die moderne 'Entjudung' in Deutschland und ihr Nachher," which focuses on the meaning of the Holocaust and how a Jew could possibly exist in modern-day Germany (pp. 38-45). Günter B. Ginzler's

"Ein Lächeln, so überraschend weich ... ': Gedenksplitter eigener Erfahrungen" expresses how he felt the enormity of remembering all who died, along with other unpleasant experiences in confronting neo-Nazis and other skeptics (pp. 46-50). Salomon Korn's "Grenzen des Darstellbaren: Der Holocaust als Gegenstand von Denkmalkunst" advocates the need for a vigilant, collective memory and examines the difficulties of communicating the horrors of the Holocaust to present-day and future generations through the various types of available memorials (pp. 51-55). In "In jeder Woche ein 'Heiliger Abend,'" Lea Fleischmann explains that though the Nazis murdered millions of people, they were unable to extinguish a tradition (pp. 56-59). This section closes with "Wie dunkel der Raum des Vergessens," a short contribution from Hanna Rheinze (pp. 60-63). She argues that in the Jewish memory culture, forgetting is impossible.

The next section of this collection examines borders between Jews and non-Jews. Ehrhard Roy Wiehn's "Zur unsichtbaren Grenze zwischen Juden und Nichtjuden: Grenzerfahrung als Herausforderung, Zumutung und Chance" helps the reader better understand the long history of the Jewish side of this divide. Contributions from Matthias Heyl and Harald Welzer also raise critical issues regarding the bridging of borders. One of the most serious, and a problem that has persisted since 1945, has been the attempt to obliterate the differences among Hitler's victims and essentially equalize their experiences in the camps. The world witnessed this tendency in the former GDR through the regime's elevation of communist suffering under National Socialism, which threatened to transform the Holocaust into a heroic anti-fascist narrative. Apparently this problem has continued after 1989, and risks creating a memory of Auschwitz that lessens its real impact.

The third section continues the general discussion and emphasizes the need for integrating Jewish memory into the entire European culture.

Among the contributions are an attack against attempts in Germany to relativize Jewish suffering and an argument for the need to better understand Jewish culture as part of the entirety of European history. The articles in section 4 focus on the Holocaust and education, specifically the connection between memory and teaching. Indeed the memory of the Holocaust will depend upon how it is taught to future generations, giving this task considerable imperative. Again, collective memory shapes individual memory, meaning that fifty to one hundred years from now, after the witnesses are long gone, how the Holocaust is remembered depends upon how it is taught in the present day. The extent to which Jewish memory is integrated into European memory could likely determine the extent to which non-Jews forget the crimes of National Socialism.

The objective in the fifth section is to explain several ongoing pedagogical projects in the Federal Republic. These are very noble projects, seeking a variety of ways to include the younger generations in the ongoing attempt to critically understand and work through the problems of the Holocaust. In addition to education, the objective is to instill universal values of tolerance, along with a respect for democracy and human rights in the students. This section provides seven examples. In "Berufsmilieus im Nationalsozialismus als sozialgeschichtlicher Stoff: Seminare im Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz," Lore Kleiber confronts the difficulties of using the horrific site of the Wannsee house for something productive (pp. 233-245). It is indeed possible to use this place to teach students about what happened and to better enable them to confront crimes of National Socialism. Regina Wyroll, in "Das Projekt: www.lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de" has written on a long and ongoing project that encourages and helps young Germans to better confront the most difficult chapter of their nation's past (pp. 246-250). In "'DenkT@g' der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.: Ein Jugendwettbewerb im Internet" Ariane Vorhang explains an internet competition to help

young people intensify their understanding of the Holocaust (pp. 251-258). Peter Schwiderowski in "Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst': Ein Jugendprojekt als der Alten Synagoge Essen" focuses on an ongoing project for young people that seeks to do more than explain and learn from the Holocaust (pp. 259-266). An important goal is to use the lessons of the past to create a democratic model for the present and future. Lothar Ulsamer and Manfred Grieger examine efforts in industry to promote a better understanding of the Holocaust. Ulsamer's "DaimlerChrysler AG--Lehren aus der Vergangenheit ziehen" examines the past of Daimler-Benz, while Grieger, in "Erinnerung in der Fabrik: Zwangsarbeit und Geschichtsbewusstsein im Volkswagenwerk," examines efforts by Volkswagen to confront its own past (pp. 267-283). Finally Birgit Gantz-Rathmann's "Bahn-Azubis gegen Hass und Gewalt" concludes this section with a brief contribution on the work of the German Rail to educate its trainees (pp. 284-286).

The final section of the collection contains reflections on the various larger-scale projects to remember the Holocaust. These include the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe and the declaration of January 27 as a day of memory to the victims of National Socialism. Finally Hans Erler, who opened this collection, leaves the reader with some concluding thoughts on the ongoing difficulties of Jewish existence and the role that Israel can play to alleviate these problems.

For specialists, *Erinnern und Verstehen* has much to offer. Those wanting to know how Germans continue to grapple with the burden of the Holocaust have the opportunity to read a variety of essays on how memory continues to weigh on twenty-first-century Germany. As a generation leaves the world stage and is replaced by its successors, it is indeed important to reflect on how the Holocaust will be remembered in the coming decades. Even today, as most of us know, there are those who are willing and able to deny or at least

lessen the impact of the crimes of National Socialism. Their task will become easier as the witnesses to this crime continue to dwindle. For non-specialists, this collection is a bit daunting. Nonetheless much within this work is worth considering, specifically the many ongoing projects to educate young people and raise the importance of universal democratic and human values. In a world such as ours, as long as this vigilance is maintained, there is some reason to feel optimistic about the future.

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Citation: David E. Marshall. Review of Erler, Hans. *Erinnern und Verstehen: Der Völkermord an den Juden im politischen Gedächtnis der Deutschen*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. January, 2006.

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