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# **The Vividness of the Past: A Retrospect on the West German *Historikerstreit* in the mid-1980s**

**Jacob Westergaard Madsen**

During the 1980s, West German public life witnessed a near explosion of historical debates, some fought out in professional journals, but most of them making their way into the mass media as well. As much as reflecting a discord about the past itself - "what did actually happen?" - many of the quarrels centred around the place of the past in the present. How should the past be remembered? How does it relate to the present, and how should it function as a point of orientation for the future?

These were some of the fundamental issues in the debates over Chancellor Kohl's plans for the House of History in Bonn and the German Historical Museum in Berlin. The people involved in the planning were faced with the problem of representations of the past: what aspects of German history should be emphasised, and could such a discontinuous history be presented in a coherent museum at all? And crucially, what place should the Nazi years be given? Historians on the political Left were especially critical since they saw the whole project as the Kohl government's disguised attempt at creating a more positive national identity, backed up by conservative historians with the same aim.<sup>1</sup>

Other debates evolved around the anniversaries in 1983 and 1985. 1983 marked the 50th anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power, and 1985, the 40th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the Allied liberation of the Nazi death camps. How should these dates be commemorated? The latter anniversary especially turned into a point of vehement public debate as it became connected with the official state visit by the American President Ronald Reagan. Reagan's words " *I don't think we ought to focus on the past. I want to focus on the future. I want to put that history behind me* " <sup>2</sup> made it clear that he did not want to visit Dachau or any other concentration camp during his stay, as Kohl had suggested. Later on, three weeks before Reagan's visit, it was revealed that the planned site of commemoration, Kolmeshöhe military cemetery at Bitburg, contained several graves of Waffen SS soldiers. Despite massive political pressure, especially from Jewish groups, the plans were not altered, though a visit to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp was included. Reagan defended the plans by saying of the SS-soldiers: " *They were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.* " <sup>3</sup> The subsequent dispute became known as the Bitburg affair. A range of reactions were articulated in articles from March to May 1985. What should have been the celebration of V-E Day was instead described as a political failure which blurred dividing lines between victim and victimiser, and unsuccessfully equated reconciliation and revisionism, while questioning relevance of the Nazi past.

This all led to the controversy that broke out the following year, the *Historikerstreit* , which can only be understood in the above context.<sup>4</sup> The *Historikerstreit* will be the focus of this paper. It was revealing of West Germany's attempts at coming to terms with the Nazi past. The controversy seemed to suggest that it still occupied an important place in West German political culture. Moreover, it highlighted central themes that can be traced to a larger context of post-war German historiography.

This paper seeks to address some central issues of the *Historikerstreit*. The initial arguments that triggered off the controversy will be outlined and discussed in relation to central trends in post-war West German historiography. Finally, the paper elaborates on how

the *Historikerstreit* relates to questions pertaining to the relationship between history, national identity and politics.

Given the breadth of the issues raised by the controversy it is impossible, within the scope of this paper, to give a full account of the arguments put forward during the debate. In the following I will only introduce the very initial articles by the main characters that sparked off the debate. Then, when elaborating on the larger contexts in which the *Historikerstreit* can be located, I will return to later articles and arguments to the extent that they seem relevant to the discussion. It should also be made clear that I have been very selective concerning the contexts within which I locate the controversy. In general, I have avoided the parts of the *Historikerstreit* that I find over-influenced by Cold War logic, and instead focused on aspects that still seem to be of central importance in today's re-unified Germany.

## I

As the context suggests, a lot of factors influenced the emergence of the controversy. However, the catalyst for the series of articles known as the *Historikerstreit* was an article of June 6, 1986 in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* called "The Past That Will Not Pass".<sup>5</sup> The author was the philosophy trained historian Ernst Nolte. I will give a thorough account of the content of this article as references were made to it time and again during the subsequent controversy. Nolte's main point was that, unlike other pasts that lose their vividness as time goes by, the Nazi past still seemed to preoccupy contemporary West German consciousness in a very vital and dominant way. Especially the memories of the Final Solution made it unlikely to pass because of the scale of the crime. However, Nolte insinuated that one of the important reasons of the inability of the past to pass might be that it served certain interests: the persecuted who enjoyed the privileged status of the victim, or the new generation who used it as a point of accusation of "the fathers".<sup>6</sup> Thus it functioned as a kind of anti-myth, or bugaboo, which had the negative effect of diverting attention away from more present problems.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in order to become able to focus on the present rather than the past, it was about time to treat the Nazi years with equality to other pasts; only in this way could the black-and-white image of these years become the object of a more dissociated study.

Nolte paired his plea with a re-interpretation of the origins of the war in the East by putting forward a preventive-war thesis. According to this, Nazi Germany had basically adopted its barbarism from the USSR, and the attack in 1941 was to a large extent explained by the fear of becoming the next victims of the Red Terror. Likewise, the extermination of the Jews was a biological copy of the social exterminism practised by the Bolsheviks. In this connection Nolte criticised the historians of National Socialism for failing to realise the causal nexus between Auschwitz and the Gulag Archipelago in Stalin's Russia. As contemporary reports of the horrifying Red Terror in the 1920s reflects, the Nazis were not wholly innovative, though their genocidal policy was more technical, and in this sense unique.<sup>8</sup> In other words, what Nolte was saying was that with the passage of time the question of guilt lost its significance and a more functionalistic perspective could be adopted.

Reactions followed soon after. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas wrote one of the first and sharpest critiques,<sup>9</sup> in which he lumped Nolte together with two other conservative historians, Andreas Hillgruber and Michael Stürmer. Habermas saw these historians as typical exponents of the *Tendenzwende* in West German intellectual life which tried to embrace history in order to encourage a more positive national identity. One of the means, according to Habermas, was to "normalise" the Nazi past through dubious comparisons to the crimes of other 20th century dictatorships:<sup>10</sup> hence the title, "Apologetic Tendencies". Earlier in 1986, Hillgruber had had an essay published in which he argued that the Jewish catastrophe, the extermination in the concentration camps, was countered by a German

catastrophe, the extermination and expulsion of millions of ethnic Germans in the East by the end of the war. Thus the Jewish catastrophe was relativised, not only by the German catastrophe, but also by other genocides, e.g. in Stalin's Russia or Pol Pot's Cambodia. Furthermore, Hillgruber called for a historicist identification with the German armies in the East who had acted heroically to protect the German population against the violent attacks from the barbaric Bolsheviks. According to him, most of the soldiers and the army leaders had known nothing about the horrors that meanwhile were being committed in the concentration camps.<sup>11</sup> Habermas read such interpretations as a contribution to the contemporary ideological struggle for the past, a struggle which Stürmer, Kohl's former speech writer, had also joined with his call for a unified German historical consciousness. I shall return to this in the third part of this paper.

With Habermas' response the controversy really took off. An enormous number of articles were published in the summer and autumn of 1986, especially in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit*. After this followed a second wave of books and longer academic articles, this time also joined by English, American, and Israeli historians.<sup>12</sup> The main questions centred around the uniqueness of Auschwitz, West German commitment to the West, and most centrally, the place of National Socialism in German history and its meaning for the identity of the Federal Republic<sup>13</sup>. The clearest rejection of the attempts at 'relativising comparison' came from Eberhard Jäckel in *Die Zeit* 12 September, 1986: "...the Nazi murder of the Jews was unique because never before has a state decided and announced, on the authority of its responsible leader, that it intended to kill in its entirety, as far as possible, a particular group of human beings, including its old people, women, children, and infants, and then put this decision into action with every possible instrument of power available to the state."<sup>14</sup> This seems to have reflected the view of the majority of those participants who went against the conservatives; the comparative method is useful, but should not lead to complete equation.

## II

There seems to have been general agreement that the *Historikerstreit* did not engender new historical knowledge.<sup>15</sup> The questions in dispute did not so much concern the historical events themselves as to which frame of interpretation to apply. Rather, the controversy was political, as reflected in the various accusations of 'apologetic tendencies' (Habermas), 'interests at stake' (Nolte), and 'progressive strangulation of history by the Left' (Stürmer). This explains why some of the participants who basically applied similar methodologies to their studies of the past took very opposite standpoints in the debate. Though the political connotations of this particular controversy were very clear, the relationship between historiography and political interests was, of course, not a novelty as such. The so-called Fischer-debate in the 1960s is a case in point. It deserves brief attention as it also points towards the *Sonderweg* thesis whose line of argument, I would argue, serves to illuminate certain aspects of the *Historikerstreit*.

Like the *Historikerstreit*, the Fischer-debate took place some 40 years after its object of dispute. The debate was triggered off by the historian Fritz Fischer's claim about the origins of the First World War. According to Fischer, these could to a large extent be explained by long held German dreams of imperial expansion - 'a place in the sun'. What was really disturbing about Fischer's thesis, however, was that it suggested a larger continuity of aggressive, authoritarian rule of Germany at a time when the then divided nation was still recovering from the subsequent world war. Published in 1961, the same year as the construction of the Berlin Wall, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, as Fischer's book was entitled, stated that the erroneous policy could not just be reduced to twelve years from

1933 to 1945. Thus it re-addressed the question of Germany's war guilt from the First World War, implicitly blaming Germany for a major share of the misery of the first half of the 20th century, though not mentioning Nazism once. In this sense it related to the critical *Sonderweg* thesis which gained power around the same time as Fischer's book was published. The notion of a special German path of development also implied emphasis on the longer lasting structures that paved the way for the Nazis. Thus it sought to answer the question, also central in the *Historikerstreit*, of how to locate Nazism and Auschwitz in German history. Likewise it implied, and still does imply, a comparative perspective: how did Germany deviate from the general Western development of democratic and parliamentary traditions?

In 1988 the then West German historian Jürgen Kocka argued for a re-adoption of the *Sonderweg* thesis which, in modified form, he believed still provided a fruitful approach to German history.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, I would argue that though it may not hold the same narrative power today as it did in the 1960s, the *Sonderweg* thesis provides, together with its counter-thesis, a framework for an understanding of the central positions of the *Historikerstreit*.<sup>17</sup> Put schematically, the thesis regards 1945 as *Stunde Null* for Germany; not until then could (West) Germany turn to the democratic and modern values of the western countries from which Germany had hitherto deviated. By emphasising the traditionalism of Nazism the supporters of the thesis could refute the values of Prussian militarism, authoritarian rule, feudalism, etc. The initial conservative reaction to this interpretation was to emphasise the singularity of Nazi anti-Semitism. The structural analysis was rejected and instead the personality of Hitler and the dynamic of the Nazi movement was stressed.<sup>18</sup> Thus the conservatives had, until the *Historikerstreit*, pointed to the uniqueness of the Third Reich as an integral part of their counter-argument. According to this interpretation it was the modern, totalitarian aspects of Nazism, that is, its lack of roots in German history, that made it special.<sup>19</sup> The twelve Nazi years were bracketed, but in no way relativised, as an aberration from an otherwise sound historical development. An important reason for the emergence of the *Historikerstreit* was the alteration, or rather the softening, of this latter conservative position.

"*The unconditional opening of the Federal republic to the political culture of the West is the greatest intellectual achievement of the postwar period; my generation should be especially proud of this.*"<sup>20</sup> This often quoted sentence by Habermas expressed a view of 1945 as *Stunde Null*. There was nothing new in this standpoint, though it may be surprising to hear it expressed in such a praising phrase by the usually very critical Habermas. In general, no new standpoints were put forward by the non-conservatives; it was the conservatives who called for revision. What Nolte did when he put forward the thesis of Hitler as an anti-copy of Stalin and the comparisons to other genocides was, in fact, to depart from the traditional conservative position described above. Gone was the stress on the internal dynamic of the Nazi movement; it was basically a reaction to Bolshevism. Gone, likewise, was the uniqueness of Auschwitz; it was basically an adoption of the Red mechanisms of extermination, an 'Asiatic' deed. These statements made the issue of comparison central to the debate. It makes sense then, to adopt the American historian Charles S. Maier's distinction between 'horizontal' comparison and 'vertical' comparison. Whereas the former compares across frontiers, the latter compares through time.<sup>21</sup> This describes two different ways of dealing with the Nazi past, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In the following, it will be argued that the conservative historians adopted the horizontal comparative perspective while neglecting the vertical.

Nolte's emphasis on the deeper roots of the Nazi genocide - the Gulag Archipelago - made it an external problem, rather than internal. Likewise, his comparisons to other genocides made Auschwitz lose its uniqueness. To be fair, Nolte did hold that Auschwitz was

qualitatively different from anything else, but his insistence to see causal links between the mass murders in the 20th century still had the effect of diverting attention from the specific German case which, after all, was Nolte's main concern. I am not going to enter the discussion of the trivialising effects of Nolte's comparisons; they have been extensively dealt with elsewhere.<sup>22</sup> Rather, I will point to a paradox in Nolte's approach. Figuratively speaking, he wanted to lift the brackets that had hitherto surrounded the Nazi years in the conservative narrative. His method was horizontal comparison. But unlike the *Sonderweg* 'model' which compares Germany's deviating past with the past of its present allies through time, Nolte compared Germany's crimes with the crimes of other non-western states which were not even potential ideological allies in the present. Moreover, he never really returned to Germany after making his comparisons across frontiers except from an unspecified claim that the genocidal acts of the Nazis were qualitatively different from the Bolshevik acts.<sup>23</sup> His mainly functionalistic view made it a general problem, rather than a specifically German one.

Like Nolte, Hillgruber was accused of diverting attention from internal German questions by focusing on external, secondary factors.<sup>24</sup> In particular, his focus on the long standing plans of the Allies to expel the Germans from East-Central Europe was the object of much criticism. Not the focus as such, but the way that it was given quantitative primacy over the German extermination of the Jews in Hillgruber's account, as measured in numbers of pages. Likewise, observers noted a shift in tone when Hillgruber turned to the Jewish catastrophe; it was described in more analytic and dissociated language than the German catastrophe.<sup>25</sup> This points towards a general characteristic of the historiography of Nazi Germany, especially the Holocaust: the importance of style, choosing words and phrases with precision because of the sensitivity of the topic. To me the Hillgruber and Nolte texts that were in dispute were marked by disproportionate emphases within the comparative framework. Furthermore, neither clearly stated the purpose of such comparisons. I would argue, with Maier, that historical comparisons are necessary; the uniqueness of Auschwitz is not communicable without plausible, even if imperfect, analogies.<sup>26</sup> But the purpose must be to gain more precise, more nuanced knowledge, not to blur important distinctions. The historical comparisons that raised the *Historikerstreit*, paired with the plea for a more positive identification with the state, justified Habermas accusation of 'apologetic tendencies'. The suspicion was not ungrounded that anticommunist views influenced the historical accounts to an unacceptable extent in the scholarly world.<sup>27</sup>

The issue of relating the memory of the Nazi experience to the fear of the USSR, (that is, relating it to external factors rather than internal), dated back further than the *Historikerstreit*. Already in 1959 the Frankfurt philosopher Theodor W. Adorno gave a lecture addressing the problem of coming to terms with the past.<sup>28</sup> Adorno acknowledged the threat from the East but considered the continued existence of National Socialism within democracy as a much more disturbing danger.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, some things had changed by 1986, but Adorno pointed to a certain tendency that Nolte and Hillgruber still represented more than 25 years later. Insisting on the necessity of looking inwards as the only way of working through the past (*Aufarbeitung*), Adorno noted the way that the post-war development of international politics had changed the view on the legacy of the war in the East: "*It appears to offer retrospective justification for the attack that Hitler launched against the Soviet Union.*"<sup>30</sup> From this point, Adorno feared, it was only a short step to the extrapolation that Hitler was also right about other things. To me, Adorno's notion of retrospective justification sheds light on the way that Nolte and Hillgruber were reading the present back into the past - although they both claimed to do the opposite. In fact, one of the central points of critique in the *Historikerstreit* was that Nolte, Hillgruber, et al., had extended the limits of respectability; far-right beliefs were becoming mainstream.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Adorno's uneasy feelings about the apparent merger of such historical revisionism with nationalism serves as a bridge to the third and last part of this paper. I will start by going back even further than Adorno's lecture.

### III

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War the renowned historian Friedrich Meinecke, more than 80 years old at the time, wrote a book called *The German Catastrophe*.<sup>32</sup> Writing in the ruins of occupied Germany, Meinecke tried to save something out of the wreck, striving to understand what had gone so terribly wrong in his fatherland. In his account of the century leading up to the Nazi seizure of power, the tension between *Kultur* and *Civilisation* was ever present. Meinecke described, and deplored, how the cultural liberalism of the Goethe era had slowly given way to the calculating and militant *Realpolitik* of the later unified Germany that betrayed all its promises - *homo sapiens* turning into *homo faber*.<sup>33</sup> Thus the main concern of the book, in addition to coming to terms with the Nazi experience, was to raise the question of how to re-establish the spirit of a more distant, more positive past. In this sense Meinecke's question was echoed by, not least, Michael Stürmer's call 40 years later for a renewed pride and patriotism.

Stürmer's arguments were shaped by Cold War concerns about taking a clear stand against the Communist threat from the East. In order not to reawaken "the German question" that might weaken the NATO alliance, it was necessary to encourage a predictable national identity based on a clear vision of continuity between past, present and future. In this connection Stürmer recalled Karl Jasper's observation from 1930: "*There is nothing that is not questionable*".<sup>34</sup> By drawing a clear analogy to a time when a lack of orientation prevailed, Stürmer indicated that the spirit of 'ecological pacifism'<sup>35</sup> might lead to a new situation of instability and vulnerability. Only this time, the totalitarian threat to democracy came from the Communist ideology. Hence the necessity of a strengthened national identity as a moral bulwark against the enemy in the East. This call for a historically based national identity engaged Meinecke's questions.

Stürmer and Meinecke were connected in the sense that they both sought to overcome the twelve Nazi years by reclaiming a language of nationalism that had been damaged by the National Socialists. It was a problem of special magnitude for Meinecke, writing just after the war. How could the vocabulary of *Volk*, *Geist* and *Vaterland* be used at all? This was to become a general problem for German historians writing national history after 1945. Meinecke's aim was to show that these words had an older history than Nazism and dated back to previous centuries and positive connotations. Thus the way out of the misery, according to Meinecke, was to rediscover the humanitarian, Christian heritage usurped by one-dimensional militarism of the latest decades.<sup>36</sup> Apart from the Christian element, Stürmer argued roughly along the same lines as Meinecke. When he referred to Germany as a 'Land without History', he meant rather that there was too much of one history and too little of others. His call for *Sinnstiftung* as the answer to the present "lack of orientation"<sup>37</sup> faced the same problem: how to deal with the enormity of the Nazi crimes? On one hand, I think it was fair to state that all German history should not be seen through the lens of Nazi Germany; if all pre-1933 events are seen as leading straight to the Final Solution, one ends up in what Geoff Eley has called 'retroactive determinism'.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Stürmer related the lack of orientation to the 'strangulation of history by the left'; that is, anti-fascism weighed too heavily over anti-communism, in Stürmer's view. When one takes the so-called *Tendenzwende* into consideration, this looked rather like the spectre of 1968 haunting Stürmer. I would argue that this revealed a paradox in Stürmer's thinking. He called on history as a general source of national identity, but at the same time he wanted to be the



custodian of which history to in- and exclude. In my view, Charles Maier has offered the most valid criticism of this standpoint: "...insofar as a collection of people wishes to claim existence as a society or nation, it must thereby accept existence as a community through time, hence must acknowledge that acts committed by earlier agents still bind or burden the contemporary community."<sup>39</sup> Exactly because Stürmer wanted history, and not, for instance, religion or something else, to be the pillar in his renewed nationalism, it was incoherent not to accept the burden of the most disturbing era of this history.

John Torpey has argued that an important aspect of the *Historikerstreit* was the question of the meaning of West Germany's incorporation into the West.<sup>40</sup> Thus a central disagreement between Stürmer and Habermas was whether commitment to the West meant NATO or Enlightenment ideas. I would change the focus a little bit, however, since Habermas' ideas on this matter also were, and still are, reflected in his view on national identity and historiography. Habermas' concept of a post-conventional identity was central in his rejection of his opponents' call for a new patriotism. I will shift to a larger perspective and show how his critique of Stürmer related to his critical view of two great features of German historical thought.

First, the critique of the new conservative nationalism corresponded to Habermas' view on Hegel's concept of national identity. According to this concept, national self-consciousness is 'the internal reflection of the *existing* external institutions which constitute the nation in its particularity'.<sup>41</sup> This counters Habermas' post-conventional identity in two ways. The internal reflection of the existing institutions excludes a critical stand in the Enlightenment spirit. Likewise, the particularity of the nation is contrary to what Habermas in the *Historikerstreit* expressed as the only way not to be alienated from the West: "A commitment to universalistic constitutional principles which is anchored by conviction...";<sup>42</sup> hence the term 'constitutional patriotism'.

Second, the critique of Stürmer's methods for a renewed nationalism corresponded to Habermas' view on historicism. According to Habermas, the state legitimising historicism which dominated German historical thought for so long did not survive the Nazi period "because of its proven impotence against or even complicity with the Nazi regime."<sup>43</sup> Thus it was substituted by a more pluralist approach in the 1950s. However, when Habermas charged Stürmer with advocating a more unified picture of history through the notion of *Sinnstiftung*, he accused him of a revival of the nationalist aspirations of historicism. "Historical consciousness as a substitute for religion - isn't this old dream of historiography really asking too much of historiography?"<sup>44</sup> Thus Habermas, with his universalistic Enlightenment principles, could reject a historical approach that served narrow, political purposes. History should not be engaged in providing national identity, rather it should be a critical enterprise. In principle I agree with such a view, but if one looks at today's re-unified Germany, how does the picture look then? Are the Germans spiritually unified by a common commitment to the post-conventional, constitutional principles of the Enlightenment, or does a phenomenon such as collective memory still play a role? Or maybe one should rather talk of a divided memory; in a recent study Jeffrey Herf has pointed to the way that post-war political memory functioned as a means of constructing democracy and dictatorship, respectively. That is, the memory of the Nazi past divided along political lines.<sup>45</sup> Such memories do not just disappear, regardless of their politicised character.

To finish, rather than conclude, I will suggest that a lot of the issues on the agenda of the *Historikerstreit* still have relevance today. The re-unification of Germany a decade ago raised a range of questions concerning history, national identity and collective memory which, ten years later, still seem to be very crucial. Re-unification took place under the shadow of a national memory which had only existed from 1871 (in large part within

unstable borders) and which seemed to be totally dominated by the Nazi experience. Moreover, the question of which shared values unite the Germans was highlighted after forty Cold War years of separation of East and West. Forty years of contentious historical narratives is a long time. But as the *Historikerstreit* showed, history could not unite the minds of the Federal Republic. Given this background, I believe that the plurality of viewpoints expressed in the controversy could serve as an ideal of what history should be about: To display the past in all its ambiguity and its vivid relation to the present in order to provide a more complex and yet revealing portrayal of events.

1. For an account of the dispute which evolved around these museum plans, see Charles S. Maier (1988) chapter 5: "A Usable Past? Museums, Memory, and Identity". Maier, and the non-conservative historians he refers to, related this to the so-called *Tendenzwende*, the conservative turn of German intellectual life since 1977. This was strengthened by the return of the C.D.U./C.S.U. to government in 1982.
2. Quoted in Geoffrey Hartman ed, *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, (Bloomington, 1986), p.xiii.
3. Ibid. p.xiv.
4. One could also have added the dispute following from the decision of the Frankfurt City Theatre to stage Fassbinder's play *Trash, City and Death* with its anti-Semitic undertones. Or, more political, the forthcoming Reichstag election in 1987.
5. Translated from the German title: "Vergangenheit die nicht vergehen will". *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler?*, Translated by J. Knowlton and T. Cates (New Jersey, 1993) pp.18-23.
6. Ibid p.19.
7. Ibid pp.18-19.
8. Ibid. pp.21-23.
9. J.Habermas: "A Kind of Settlement of Damages: The Apologetic Tendencies in German History Writing" (*Die Zeit*, July 11, 1986) in *Forever...* (New Jersey, 1993), pp.30-44.
10. Ibid p.40.
11. For an account of Hillgruber's *Two Kinds of Downfall*, see R.J.Evans *In Hitler's Shadow* (New York, 1989) pp.21-22 and pp.49-64. It should be borne in mind, though, that Evans is very critical towards Hillgruber's points, i.e. Evans is not impartial.
12. G.Eley, "Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987" in *Past and Present* No.121 (1988) p.177.
13. J.Kocka: "German Identity and Historical Comparison: After the *Historikerstreit*" in P.Baldwin Baldwin, P. (ed): *Reworking the Past* (Boston, 1990), p.279.
14. Quoted in R.J.Evans *In Hitler's...* (New York, 1989) p.76. See also G.Eley 'Nazism...' (1988) p.175.
15. See e.g. Richard J.Evans *In Hitler's...* (New York, 1989) p.118, Hans Mommsen: "Reappraisal and Repression..." in P.Baldwin (ed): *Reworking...* (Boston, 1990) p.173, and Ralf Dahrendorf: "Introduction" in Thomas, G. (ed) (1990): *The Unresolved Past* (A Wheatland Foundation Conference, September 1987) (London, 1990) p.v.
16. J.Kocka: "German Identity..." in P.Baldwin (1990) p.279-293.
17. For a critique of the explanatory power of the *Sonderweg* thesis, see G.Eley (1988) pp.202-208. By 'counter-thesis' I do not refer to Eley's critique but to the initial conservative reaction in the 1960s. I shall return to this in the following.
18. Ibid. p.175. As Eley states, this rejection of structural analysis was also a defence against Marxist tendencies to lump together capitalism and fascism.
19. See also R.J.Evans (1989) pp.114-115 for an account of the two positions.
20. J.Habermas: "A Kind of Settlement..." in *Forever...* (1993), p.43.
21. Maier, C.S. *The Unmasterable Past*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1988) p.18. Maier was inspired by Hans Mommsen's observation of a 'polarised historical consciousness' in West Germany, two different modes of interpreting the recent past.
22. See especially C.S.Maier (1988), chapter 3, and R.J.Evans (1989), chapter 4.
23. E.Nolte: "The Past..." in *Forever...* (1993) p.22.
24. Habermas has already been mentioned. See also e.g. Micha Brumlik: "New Myth of the State..." (*Die Tageszeitung*, July 12, 1986) in *ibid.* pp.45-49.
25. See e.g. R.J.Evans (1989) chapter 3.
26. C.S.Maier (1988) p.98.

27. It seems to have been the conservatives' purpose of "normalising" rather than the method itself that caused the greatest dispute. In fact, the method was not so far from Martin Broszat's "historicisation". Broszat also emphasises the aspects of relative normality in the Nazi era, but with a totally other purpose, namely to point at some larger structures in German history. That is, both structures that reach beyond 1933 and structures that have survived 1945. See M.Broszat: "A Plea for the Historization of National Socialism" in P.Baldwin (1990) pp.77-87. He has been criticised for this, but on methodological grounds, not political. See M.Broszat & S.Friedländer: "A Controversy about the Historization of National Socialism" in *ibid.* pp.102-132.
28. Adorno, T.W. (1959): "What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?" in G.H. Hartman (ed): *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, 1986), pp.114-129
29. *Ibid.* p.115.
30. *Ibid.* p.119.
31. See e.g. R.J.Evans (1989) pp.136-139.
32. Translated from German: Die Deutsche Katastrophe. Meinecke, F, *The German Catastrophe* (Boston, 1963)
33. *Ibid.* p.38.
34. M.Stürmer: "History in a Land without History" (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 25, 1986) in *Forever.....*(1993), pp.16-17. Later Stürmer repeated the reference to Jaspers in "How Much History Weighs" (*Frankfurter.....*, November 26, 1986) in *ibid.* pp.196-197. In the former of these articles Stürmer had echoed the dogma of the Party in George Orwell's 1984 by stating: "*..in a land without history, the future is controlled by those who determine the content of memory, who coin concepts and interpret the past.*" One must assume that Stürmer did this deliberately, and thus it must be read as a clear warning not to leave the history writing in the hands of the political Left.
35. *Ibid.* p.196. Stürmer referred to the national security policy of the Green Party.
36. F.Meinecke (1946), pp.102-121. Actually, the 'Christian West' became the official term that served to unite the citizens of the Federal Republic, after *Volksgemeinschaft* had lost its justification. This corresponded with Meinecke's suggestion - at least the term itself.
37. M.Stürmer: "History.." in *Forever* (1993) p.17.
38. G.Eley (1988) p.204.
39. C.S.Maier (1988) p.14.
40. Torpey, J. (1988): "Introduction: Habermas and the Historians" in *New German Critique* No.44 (Spring/Summer 1988), p.6.
41. Gallagher, S. (1993): "The Historikerstreit and the Critique of Nationalism" in *History of European Ideas* Vol.16, No.4-6 (1993),p.921.
42. J.Habermas: "A Kind of Settlement.." in *Forever.....*(1993) p.43.
43. *Ibid.* p.42.
44. *Ibid.* p.42.
45. Herf, J, *Divided Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), chapter 1.