

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY
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THE MEMORIALIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUST: DIFFERENCES IN
MEMORIALIZATION TECHNIQUES IN EAST AND WEST EUROPE

ANNALIESE THOET
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Jens Guettel
Associate Professor of History and German
Thesis Supervisor

Cathleen Cahill
Associate Professor of History
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

At the conclusion of World War II in 1945, East and West Europe memorialized the Holocaust differently by aligning remembrance with the ruling government's values. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Grossmarkthalle, Gleis 17 Memorial, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Treblinka are six memorials in West and East Europe that had divergent paths after the Holocaust and represented remembrance culture in their respective countries. When looking at each memorial, it is essential to understand the history behind each remembrance site, the public response to it, its impact on education, and, most importantly, the location of the memorial. The Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe significantly affected the memorialization techniques and progression of Holocaust sites and former concentration camps in Soviet bloc countries. Unlike Eastern Europe, the public and government in Western Europe worked together to create a remembrance culture in order to remember all victims of the Holocaust.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

As defined by *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures*, the Holocaust was “the state-sponsored persecution and murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.”¹ Europe has chosen to remember the victims of the Holocaust through the use of memorials scattered across the continent. European countries affected by the Holocaust have concluded that it is vital to memorialize the sites of horrific Nazi crimes in order to educate citizens and visitors. The purpose of this thesis is to determine the importance and effectiveness of memorials in the education of the Holocaust. The impact of the location of Holocaust sites on the development of memorials in Eastern and Western Europe will also be explored. To effectively determine the impact of location on memorialization, six sites will be examined and analyzed. Three of the sites are located in Western Europe, and the other three sites are located in the previous Soviet occupied territory of Eastern Europe. The three sites in Western Europe include the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Grossmarkthalle Memorial, and the Gleis 17 at Grunewald Station Memorial. The three sites in Eastern Europe include the International Monument at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Buchenwald Memorial, and the Memorial at Treblinka. The method by which concentration camps, sites of occupation, vacated homes, and ghettos are memorialized today will also be addressed. Actively remembering the Holocaust through memorials is imperative to the education of not only German citizens, but

¹ Kucia, Marek. "The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe." *East European Politics & Societies and Cultures* 30, no. 1 (2016): 97.

also the rest of the world. Determining the impact and effectiveness of Holocaust memorials is essential, especially given the current political and educational climate with regards to Anti-Semitism and Holocaust education.

The memorialization in Western Europe will be explored through the following three memorials: the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Grossmarkthalle Memorial, and the Gleis 17 at Grunewald Station Memorial. While there are numerous memorials across Western Germany and throughout Europe, the aforementioned three memorials will be explored in depth. Each of these memorials has a past history from pre-World War II, during the war and post-World War II. The stories of these three sites make them significant to remember today because of their prominence, chronological history, and, in the case of the Grossmarkthalle Memorial and the Grunewald Station Memorial, role during the Holocaust. The transformation of these sites into memorials will be examined through their functions, as well as why and when they became repurposed to remember the Holocaust. The question that remains is: why is it vital to remember these locations, and their history, before, during and after the Holocaust? There is also past and ongoing debate about each of these individual memorials and the overall mindset of Holocaust memorials in Germany.

The memorialization in Eastern Europe will be examined through three memorials as well. The three memorials include the International Monument at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Buchenwald Memorial, and the Memorial at Treblinka.² These three Holocaust memorial sites will be researched and analyzed for their function during World War II and the significance in remembering the role they each played under Nazi occupation. The focus will be on the

² Kucia, Marek. "Holocaust Memorials in Central and Eastern Europe: Communist Legacies, Transnational Influences and National Developments." European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. August 19, 2018.

transformation of the sites into memorials and how they were repurposed to remember the Holocaust. The impact of the occupation of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union on the memorialization of the Holocaust sites will also be the main focus. The Memorial at Treblinka is important to include as one of the six memorials analyzed because it is a rare example of Holocaust memorialization for Jewish victims by a Communist government. Most memorials under Communist rule did not make it apparent that the majority of the Holocaust victims were Jewish. Instead most memorials focused on a general category of victims of the Holocaust, and other Eastern European memorials focused mainly on the Soviet liberators.

Eastern and Western Europe had quite different paths to the memorialization of the Holocaust due to the political climate in Europe post-World War II. The influence of Holocaust memorials on the education and awareness of the history about the Holocaust throughout Europe is imperative in determining the significance of memorials today. The differences in memorialization techniques and outcomes in East and West Europe are important with respect to the effect that the delayed creation of memorials had on the level of education about the Holocaust. This is especially relevant because it is known that a better understanding and commemoration of the Holocaust in Germany came about in the late 1960's when the new generation of West Germans sought after it. Ever since the unification of Germany, the memorialization of the Holocaust has increased.³

The six memorial sites mentioned above continue to be active memorials that are visited by thousands of tourists and natives every year. While some are known better than others and have a more apparent purpose, all of the memorials are assisting in the education of both European citizens and visitors about the Holocaust. Today, all six memorials are still active

³ Winstone, Martin. *The Holocaust Sites of Europe, A Historical Guide*, I.B.Tauris, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, 77.

remembrance sites in Europe. While the memorials are valuable assets in Holocaust education, they are also utilized as a means of social remembrance for survivors and their descendants. According to Janet Jacobs, European memorial sites play an important role in “building the relationship between material culture of traumatic memory and the formation of survivor identity among the descendants of the Holocaust.”⁴ Descendants of the Holocaust are also instrumental in remembrance as they “help to preserve the master narrative of Nazi terror and Jewish genocide that gives meaning to collective representations of cultural trauma.”⁵

The memorialization of the Holocaust is relevant today due to the current political climate regarding the resurgence of neo-Nazi movements. There is also a lack of education about the Holocaust in Europe today. According to *AP News*, there has been a rise in Anti-Semitism across Europe in recent years. In the past few years, Germany has especially seen a rise in Anti-Semitic attacks while there has simultaneously been the rise of a nationalist party in Germany. The neighboring country of France has also seen a rise in Anti-Semitic attacks, which potentially resulted in thousands of French Jews moving to Israel. Additionally, in Poland, the government recently passed a law making it illegal for anyone to blame Poland for Holocaust crimes.⁶ In addition to the instances in Poland, France, and Germany, there has been a rise in Anti-Semitism and an decrease in knowledge about Holocaust history across all of Europe. Due to “the last generation of Holocaust witnesses disappearing,” UNESCO, the European Commission, and the

⁴ Jacobs, Janet. "Sites of Terror and the Role of Memory in Shaping Identity among First Generation Descendants of the Holocaust." *Qualitative Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2014): 27-42, 39.

⁵ Ibid, 40.

⁶ Grieshaber, Kirsten. "Germans Don Jewish Skullcaps to Protest Anti-Semitism." *AP News*. April 25, 2018.

Georg Eckert Institute in Germany are beginning a research project “to assess education about the Holocaust and other genocides in the European Union.”⁷

Despite Europe’s division during the Cold War and the impact of Soviet occupation on Eastern Europe, Holocaust sites became memorialized across the continent in order to preserve history and pave a way for future education of the Holocaust. The path to the memorialization of the six sites differed depending on their location in East or West Europe and the specific circumstances surrounding each memorial. Together, these six memorial sites encompass only a portion of the history of the Holocaust that will be passed down to future generations.

⁷ "New Study to Assess Education about the Holocaust and Genocides in the European Union." UNESCO. October 10, 2018.

Chapter 2

Memorialization in Western Europe

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Grossmarkthalle memorial and the Gleis 17 at Grunewald station memorial were all sites located in Western Europe during the Holocaust and the Cold War. Collective remembrance of the Holocaust began decades earlier in Western Europe than Eastern Europe. Israel, the United States, and West Germany, as well as other West European countries have viewed national memory and Europeanization of Holocaust memory as gradually more important since the 1960s.⁸ A collective memory with outside input began in West Europe, especially West Germany, long before the fall of Communism.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

The most prominent memorial in Berlin is the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe located by the Tiergarten (Zoo). As it is located in the center of the city, the German people made it clear that they wanted to remember the Holocaust.⁹ Lea Rosh, a German television journalist, was the first person to propose the idea for a memorial.¹⁰ The memorial officially opened on May 12, 2005 to remember the murdered Jews of Europe.

⁸ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 97.

⁹ *Ibid*, 85.

¹⁰ Young, James E. "Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem—and Mine." *The Public Historian*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2002, pp. 65–80. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, 65.

The Competition

The former ministers garden during Hitler's chancellery, about 20,000 square meters of land next to the Brandenburg Gate, was left empty and became highly sought after once Berlin was unified again. It was determined that this would be the site for the memorial. The location had been decided, however, the design for it proved to be challenging. It took a total of ten years of planning; two competitions for the design and £1.5 million spent, and still a memorial had not been finalized. The first competition, in 1995, resulted in 528 submissions from around the world. Some of the designs were highly ridiculed like the giant skull with the victims' names engraved around the brain. Another was the partial destruction of the Brandenburg Gate in order to cause the German people pain.¹¹ The winner of the first competition was Jacob-Mark, who designed a massive concrete gravestone that was engraved with all of the names that could be recovered of the 4.5 million Jews who were murdered. The design was met with backlash when announced to the public, thus prompting Kohl to pull his support from it.¹²

The second competition instituted a Findungskommission, a five-member committee that was selected to choose the design for the German Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Of everyone on the committee, James Young, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, was the only foreigner and Jew on the panel and provided lots of insight into the selection process.¹³ The second competition narrowed it down to three designs in the end. One of the designs was by an American architect, Peter Eisenman, who had collaborated with Richard Serra, an artist. Eisenman's original design was to create a meditative garden inside a labyrinth of 4,700 stone pillars. However, after consulting with Kohl, he altered his design. He reduced the

¹¹ Staunton, Denis. "Haunted Still." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 12 Aug. 1998.

¹² Young, Germany's Holocaust Memorial Problem, 67.

¹³ Ibid, 66.

number of vertical pillars to about 2,700 and added trees to the outside.¹⁴ The pillars range from half a meter to about three meters tall and are angled in a manner that discourages visitors from climbing on them (see fig. 1).¹⁵ Eisenman described his memorial design as a place where “one feels alone and abandoned, a place without a beginning or an end, with no direction.”¹⁶



Figure 1. “Field of Stelae.” *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*, Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Acceptance of the Design

In June of 1999, the German Bundestag voted to accept the design by Peter Eisenman of a “wavering field of pillars” and create the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. According to the goals of the Findungskommision, ground was broken on January 27, 1999, to coincide with Germany’s Holocaust Remembrance Day. It also was the same day as the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945.¹⁷ The memorial was constructed on the five acres, or 19,000 square meters, between the Bradenburger Tor and Potsdamer Platz, which was right next to Hitler’s bunker.¹⁸ It consists of 2,711 concrete blocks and from afar resembles a Jewish cemetery (see fig. 1). Underneath the memorial, is an information center, which resembles a Holocaust

¹⁴ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

¹⁵ Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 78.

¹⁶ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

¹⁷ Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 68.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 65.

museum.¹⁹ As Young points out, the memorial is meant to reflect the debates surrounding memorials to the Holocaust and create questions, not give answers.²⁰

Critiques and Controversies

As with anything political, there are bound to be critics, especially in the case of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. Before the memorial was ever finalized and construction began, critics were everywhere. One of them being Gerhard Schroeder, who said that “the Holocaust cannot be portrayed abstractly, and the best memorials to the dead are the former concentration camps throughout Germany.”²¹ Schroeder capitalized on the public opinion at the time in order to benefit his political career. Others thought there were already actual Holocaust sites in Berlin, so why is it necessary to have a central memorial as well?²²

Once the memorial was erected, many individuals felt that the meaning of it was unclear and were afraid that it would become a “picturesque corner in the city center.”²³ Another critique that goes along with this thinking is that it appears to be anonymous. Meaning that visitors will have no clue what it is unless they have previous knowledge about it.²⁴ Peter Ambros, who was the former spokesman for the Jewish community in Berlin, also thought that no one would know whom it is for because a collective memory of the Holocaust does not exist. Others just thought that Berlin had enough memorials, like the Grunewald railway station and the “Topography of

¹⁹ Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe*, 85.

²⁰ Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 73.

²¹ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

²² Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 69.

²³ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

²⁴ Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe*, 85.

Terror” exhibition. The likes of Berlin’s mayor, Eberhard Diepgen, did not want the city to become a “capital of repentance.”²⁵

Other Victims of the Holocaust

Professor Julius Schoeps of Potsdam University believed that if Germany was going to build a national memorial then, ‘it should be for all the victims of National Socialism.’ He thought that this memorial should not make it possible to create a “hierarchy of victims.”²⁶ As Professor Schoeps predicted, the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe made other victims of the Nazis demand for their own memorials, especially the gypsies and homosexuals. The memorial was essentially an “emblem of memory solely for the principal community of victims of the policy of annihilation,”²⁷ which excluded the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis.²⁸ Some of the other victims of the Nazi regime included: victims of euthanasia murders, Soviet and other POWs that perished in German captivity, civilians in occupied Europe who were shot or starved to death, those that were forcibly sterilized and individuals that were “asocial elements” or “professional criminals” in concentration camps.²⁹ However, as Young pointed out, it was a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe and does not speak for the other victims of the Nazis. It may cause for other memorials to be created for the various victims and this is only beneficial in the efforts to remember the Holocaust.³⁰

²⁵ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ Zimmermann, Michael. "The Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Sinti and Roma: Problems and Points for Discussion." *Romani Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2007, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 4.

³⁰ Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 72.

Two initiatives in response to the central memorial are monuments erected for the Sinti and Roma and another for the homosexual victims. On the corner opposite from the Reichstag, construction began in 2008 for a memorial fountain dedicated to the murdered Sinti and Roma.³¹ Also on the opposite side of the bottom of the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe is a monument for the homosexual victims. It is a concrete block with a window where onlookers can peer in and see a film of two men kissing. Then every two years, it is switched out for a video of two women kissing. This monument was erected in the year 2008.³² Memorials such as these remind the world that the Jews were not the only victims of Hitler and the Nazi regime.

The Grossmarkthalle

The Grossmarkthalle has a long history dating back to the early 1920s. Martin Elsaesser began construction on the Grossmarkthalle in 1926 during the Weimar Republic. It opened for business in 1928 and housed the wholesale fruit and vegetable market that served the greater Frankfurt area. In October of 1941, the Grossmarkthalle became an assembly area for the transportation of the Frankfurt Jews. From then until 1945, the basement in the eastern wing of the Grossmarkthalle was used as a staging point to deport Jews from. More than 10,000 Jews in Frankfurt boarded trains from this location to be deported to concentration camps in the East.³³ The basement was a hidden waiting room where the Gestapo put the Jews of Frankfurt.³⁴ Today,

³¹ Winstone, *The Holocaust Sites of Europe*, 86.

³² *Ibid*, 86.

³³ Bank, European Central. "Memorial on the Site of the Grossmarkthalle." *European Central Bank*, 2017.

³⁴ Jones, Claire. "The ECB Confronts the Dark Past of Its New Home with Sensitivity." *Financial Times*, 5 Nov. 2014.

the site of the Grossmarkthalle is home to the European Central Bank, which is “one of the most important public buildings erected in Europe this decade.”³⁵



Figure 2. European Central Bank. “Memorial on the Site of the Grossmarkthalle.” *European Central Bank*, 2017.

Headquarters for the European Central Bank

The European Central Bank (ECB) was founded in 1998.³⁶ After its founding, a headquarters needed to be established for the bank. Talleyrand was charged with finding a German city to be home to the ECB. It was decided that the home city would be Frankfurt and

³⁵ Landler, Mark. “Three Visions Compete for European Bank's New Home.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 19 Nov. 2004.

³⁶ European Central Bank.

the new headquarters would be in the “neglected industrial quarter of the city on the banks of the Main River.”³⁷ In 2002, the ECB and the City of Frankfurt of Main signed a purchase agreement for the Grossmarkthalle.³⁸ Once the location was determined, it was arranged that the 18 members of the bank’s governing council would make the decision about the design of the bank. It was of the upmost importance to choose an appropriate architectural plan for the building as “the European Central Bank has established itself as one of the sturdiest symbols of Europe’s integration.”³⁹

Construction for the new headquarters of the ECB began in May of 2010. The building was officially inaugurated on March 18, 2015. It stands 45 stories high and the complete project took over 13 years to complete (see fig. 2). The President of the ECB, Mario Draghi, said at the inauguration, “this building is a symbol of the best of what Europe can achieve together. And it provides the ECB with an impressive new home to pursue its mandate.”⁴⁰

The Memorial

The headquarters for the European Central Bank (ECB) has another meaning. During World War II, the Nazi regime used the market hall to hold Jews and other persecuted groups before deporting them to concentration camps.⁴¹ In 2001, the ECB and the Jewish Community in Frankfurt decided they wanted to design a memorial at the former Grossmarkthalle. Similar to the Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe, they created a design competition; different

³⁷ Jones, *The ECB Confronts the Dark Past*.

³⁸ European Central Bank.

³⁹ Landler, *Three Visions Compete for European Bank’s New Home*.

⁴⁰ European Central Bank.

⁴¹ Landler, *Three Visions Compete for European Bank’s New Home*.

from the ECB headquarters' competition. The ultimate winners were the architects, KatzKaiser.¹⁴⁴²

Today, beneath the ECB, lays a memorial to the Jews of Frankfurt (see fig. 2). The total cost of the Grossmarkthalle memorial was 4.8 million Euros, which the ECB generously paid one million Euros of.⁴³



Figure 3. European Central Bank. "Memorial on the Site of the Grossmarkthalle." *European Central Bank*, 2017.

The memorial preserved much of the original basement room, where the Jews were held (see fig. 3).⁴⁴ The memorial includes the cellar, a ramp, pathway, railway tracks and a signal box.⁴⁵ A stepped footbridge, where people said goodbye to their loved ones and witnessed what was going on at the Grossmarkthalle, was preserved as well. A public pathway, which visitors can walk down, leads to the old railway tracks. The testimonies and experiences of both victims

⁴² European Central Bank.

⁴³ Jones, *The ECB Confronts the Dark Past*.

⁴⁴ European Central Bank.

⁴⁵ Jones, *The ECB Confronts the Dark Past*.

and onlookers are written along the walkway. By incorporating the green belt/ walkway into the memorial, individuals are able to happen upon the memorial without purposely going to visit it.⁴⁶

Fritz Backhaus, a historian and the deputy director of Frankfurt's Jewish museum, says that the memorial "makes clear that a building such as [the Grossmarkthalle], which is part of the everyday life of the city, was the scene of the crime." He believes that it is Frankfurt's responsibility to remember the Jews that were persecuted in Frankfurt. Antje Runge, the spokeswoman at the department of culture in Frankfurt, said that these memorials are essential to remember the story and consequences of the actions by the Nazis in Frankfurt.

Gleis 17 Memorial

Grunewald station was the departure location for hundreds of trains carrying Berlin Jews to Ghettos and Concentration Camps. Over 35,000 Jews departed from Gleis 17 between 1941-1945.⁴⁷ The Deutsche Reichsbahn was responsible for a great deal of these deportations. Today, the Deutsche Bahn AG acknowledges that without the railway during the Nazi regime, it would not have been nearly as possible to deport the Jews to ghettos, concentration camps and death camps. Due to their role in the deportations, the Deutsche Bahn AG erected a memorial in Berlin that commemorates all of the Jews in Berlin that were deported during World War II.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ European Central Bank.

⁴⁷ Kinzer, Stephen. "Berlin Journal; Rail Ramps Spared, to Tell Their Sickening Story." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 25 July 1993.

⁴⁸ "The Track 17 Memorial at Grunewald Railway Station." *Deutsche Bahn*, 2017.

Protesting the Demolition of the Grunewald Station

In 1985, the Bundesbahn in West Germany and the Reichsbahn in East Germany would still not discuss the former actions of their companies.⁴⁹ Instead, German railroad planners decided to create a “modern complex serving passengers on newly improved routes between Berlin and cities in western Germany.” By doing so, they would have to demolish Grunewald station, a train station in Berlin where tens of thousands of Jews were deported. However, once these plans were made public they were met with objections from several individuals, organizations and Jewish groups. The Green Party was one of these protestors and proclaimed, “in a city that does not yet have either a Holocaust museum or a Holocaust memorial, the demolition of one of the few remaining monuments to Jewish life and the Jewish tragedy is completely irresponsible.”⁵⁰ This is further reiterated as the two other train stations that were used for deportations have since been demolished and Grunewald is the only one still intact. The city government’s culture minister, Ulrich Roloff-Momin, also hopped on board with protestors and said he is opposed to any construction at the Grunewald station that does not pay respect to its history.

It became even more evident when the Bundesbahn and Reichsbahn unified into the Deutsche Bahn AG that they had no way to memorialize the past of the railroad company.⁵¹ The railroad company decided to redesign the project in order to answer to these protestors and preserve a Holocaust site.⁵² Grunewald station became the central memorial for the company to acknowledge the company’s past actions and remember the Jews of Berlin.⁵³

⁴⁹ The Track 17 Memorial.

⁵⁰ Kinzer, Berlin Journal.

⁵¹ The Track 17 Memorial.

⁵² Kinzer, Berlin Journal.

⁵³ The Track 17 Memorial.



Figure 4. Lee, Henry. “Berlin Grunewald.” *Fotoeins Fotografie*, WordPress, 23 Apr. 2017.

The Memorial

The initial concrete memorial was unveiled at Gleis 17 (Platform 17) on October 18, 1991. This was exactly 50 years after the first carloads of Jews were deported to Lodz, a transit point on the way to death camps. Two plaques, with one in Hebrew, also hang at the station to remind those passing by of what happened there.⁵⁴ The official memorial was inaugurated on January 27, 1998 and the “Deutsche Bahn AG hopes that the memorial will help to ensure that the crimes committed during the National Socialist regime will never be forgotten. The memorial commemorates the victims, is a warning to future generations, and a place of remembrance.”

⁵⁴ Kinzer, Berlin Journal.

The memorial consists of 186 cast steel plaques, where each metal sheet represents a deportation from Berlin. The objects are presented in chronological order and list the date of transport, number of deportees, point of departure in Berlin and destination on every one (see fig. 4). Vegetation has also grown over the rails at Gleis 17, which signifies that not another train will leave from this platform.⁵⁵

The Debate

Continued conversation surrounds these three memorials and how best to remember the Holocaust in Germany. The debate over the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe “highlighted the complexity of Germany’s relationship with its history, creating unlikely alliances across party lines and fiercely dividing the country’s tiny Jewish community.”⁵⁶ There was much debate of why we want to erect a new monument when there are already numerous holocaust sites in Germany. Young perfectly sums up a response to this with the following quotation:

How important it would be to add a space to Germany’s restored capital deliberately designed to remember the mass-murder of Europe’s Jews. This would not be a space for memory designed by the killers themselves, as the concentration camp sites inevitably are, but one designed specifically as a memorial site, one denoting the current generation’s deliberate attempt to remember.⁵⁷

The question then became “how does a country who were responsible for making these people victims, memorialize them?”⁵⁸ However, Lea Rosh believed that if Germany could not make it a possibility for a memorial to be built then, the Germans are confirming “the view that the

⁵⁵ The Track 17 Memorial.

⁵⁶ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

⁵⁷ Young, *Germany’s Holocaust Memorial Problem*, 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 65.

Germans just don't want a memorial.”⁵⁹ Rosh insisted that it was a priority for Germany, as a nation, to remember its past and the Nazi regime's horrific crimes.

The Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe garnered the most debate in comparison to the Grossmarkthalle memorial and the Gleis 17 at Grunewald station memorial. While little debate surrounds the Grossmarkthalle memorial, it did prompt other German companies to look into their connection with the Nazis. In 2006, the Dresdner Bank published an analysis that showed the connections between the bank and IG Farben. IG Farben was the company that made the gas for the death camps. In 2014, Audi made it public that their predecessor company had used slave labor during the Nazi regime.⁶⁰

The memorial at the Grunewald station attracted protestors and objections before it was ever erected. The public wanted there to be a memorial at the station for all the Jews that were deported by the Deutsche Reichsbahn. They protested Deutsche Bahn AG tearing down this Holocaust site, which led to the railroad company to erect a memorial in place of Grunewald station to always remember. Debate will always exist about how to best memorialize the Holocaust and educate future generations. However, Germany is moving in the right direction with the various memorials erected since the 1990s.

Conclusion

The German government, the Deutsche Bahn AG officials and the European Central Bank successfully memorialized parts of the Holocaust in Western Europe through the erection of the three memorials. It is vital to remember these three locations and the entirety of their history because of the impact on the future education of the Holocaust. The Memorial for the

⁵⁹ Staunton, *Haunted Still*.

⁶⁰ Jones, *The ECB Confronts the Dark Past*.

Murdered Jews of Europe took over ten years to finalize, but enables conversations about the Holocaust. The memorial may be ambiguous and does not commemorate all of the victims of the Nazis, but it does draw attention to itself and probes visitors to think about their questions in regards to the Holocaust. The European Central Bank headquarters and Grossmarkthalle memorial became an important symbol across Europe. It brought together two themes, the unification of Europe and paid tribute to the deported and murdered Jews. The Gleis 17 at Grunewald station memorial made companies face their own horrific histories, recognize and acknowledge their role in the Holocaust and remembers all of the victims.

Chapter 3

Memorialization in Eastern Europe

The International Monument at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the National Buchenwald Memorial, and the Memorial at Treblinka were all sites located in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust and the Cold War. The majority of the memorials that exist in Eastern Europe and were around during the Soviet occupation are labor, death and concentration camps and sub camps that were created by the Nazi regime across Europe. By April of 1945 when Germany surrendered to the Allied Powers, all of the concentration camps had been liberated by the Allies or liquidated by the Nazis. The host countries of the concentration camps were left with the responsibility to deal with the aftermath of these events. Many concentration camps transitioned into memorials after World War II. Communism and the local political climate of the host countries had a significant impact on the memorialization of the Holocaust and the concentration camps. The concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Treblinka each had different paths to becoming memorials. Whether that was due to the function of the camps during the war, the immediate utilization of them post-World War II or the impact of communism on the sites, they became concentration camp memorials at different times in history.

The majority of memorials under Communist rule did not make it apparent that most of the Holocaust victims were Jewish. Instead these memorials focused on a general category of victims of the Holocaust, and other memorials in Eastern Europe mainly focused on the Soviet liberators. The memorialization process was affected by the history of the pre-Communist state

and how each country's past would impact the current Soviet occupied region. In the Eastern bloc countries, "any discussion of the Holocaust often raised difficult questions of how the pre-Communist state treated their Jewish citizens before, during, and even after the war years."⁶¹ Therefore, the question is to what extent should the role of Poles and the Home Army in the Holocaust, as well as the Holocaust in general, be included in memorialization in Eastern Europe.⁶²

The International Monument at Auschwitz-Birkenau

Function During the Holocaust

The Auschwitz concentration camp was founded in 1940 when the first Polish political prisoners arrived in June. The original structure for the Auschwitz concentration camp was leftover from previous wars and included 22 prewar brick barracks buildings. Auschwitz consisted of three different major camps and numerous sub-camps.⁶³ The main camp, Auschwitz I, was located right outside the town of Oswiecim and functioned as a concentration camp and the base camp. Auschwitz II-Birkenau was the largest of the roughly 40 camps and sub-camps that made up the Auschwitz complex. It opened as a branch camp in March of 1942 where it served as the center for the extermination of the Jews. About 90 percent of the victims of the Auschwitz concentration camp died in Auschwitz II-Birkenau. The third major camp was Auschwitz III-Monowitz, which housed prisoners who worked at the I.G. Farben 'Buna'

⁶¹ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ "Auschwitz I." Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. 2018.

industrial plant.⁶⁴ During the summer of 1944, the peak of the Auschwitz concentration camp, there were about 135 thousand prisoners at the camp. This number accounted for about a quarter of the total amount of people in the entire concentration camp system.⁶⁵

Utilization of Auschwitz-Birkenau Post-WWII

Auschwitz-Birkenau, located in Poland, was the largest camp that was not entirely evacuated by the Nazis before the Allied Powers could liberate it. Therefore, when the Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz on January 27, 1945, 7,600 inmates were found alive at the camp. Upon arrival, the Soviet troops provided aid to the survivors and sent them to find their own way home because the war was not yet over. Additionally, local civilians were charged with helping to clean up the camp and facilitate burials for the dead.⁶⁶

After liberation, the victims of Auschwitz developed the idea of safeguarding the site for future generations to learn from. Auschwitz-Birkenau was unique in that it was one of the first concentration camps to become a memorial. In 1947, the idea of creating a permanent physical memorial for the victims became a reality.⁶⁷ In July of 1947, the Polish parliament passed a law that stated: "the grounds of the former camp of Auschwitz and Birkenau" would be preserved as

⁶⁴ Charlesworth, Andrew and Michael Addis. "Memorialization and the Ecological Landscapes of Holocaust Sites: The Cases of Plaszow and Auschwitz-Birkenau." *Landscape Research* 27, no. 3 (2002): 229-251, 238.

⁶⁵ "Auschwitz I."

⁶⁶ Wachsmann, Nikolaus, and Caplan, Jane, eds. *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.

⁶⁷ Sommer, Anna. "Auschwitz Today: Personal Observations and Reflections about Visitors to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum and Memorial." *Les Cahiers Irice* 7, no. 1 (2011): 87-94. doi:10.3917/lci.007.0087.

the “Martyrdom Memorial for Polish People and Other Nations.”⁶⁸ Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau were incorporated into the State Museum of Auschwitz Birkenau.

Then, in 1966, the European Parliament released a document titled “Resolution on Auschwitz,” which was addressed to Poland. The resolution followed a neo-Nazi demonstration through the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. The resolution referenced that the camp should function as a lesson to all of humanity. Additionally, it addressed and acknowledged that most of the victims at Auschwitz were Jews.⁶⁹

Impact of Soviet Occupation on Memorialization

Since the creation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum in 1947, more than 30 million people have visited the memorial. During the Communist-era, representatives of Soviet satellite countries mostly visited the memorial. During this time, the camp portrayed the Poles as, “the leading group of Auschwitz victims, while almost completely ignoring the Jewish victims.”⁷⁰ In Sommer’s opinion of the time period, “there was no space for Jewish victims in Auschwitz and other extermination sites in the collective communist ideology.”⁷¹ Under Communist rule, Soviets were seen as the main victim of Nazi aggression, and those who were “imprisoned, tortured, and murdered in the concentration camp system were usually described as opponents of fascism, and rarely, if ever, as Jews.”⁷²

In 1998, Prime Minister Orban decided to restructure Hungary’s historical past through the Hungarian pavilion at the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial. The proposed plans for the

⁶⁸ Sommer, 87.

⁶⁹ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 104.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 90.

⁷¹ Ibid, 90.

⁷² Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

commemoration of Hungarian victims of the Holocaust downplayed Hungarian ant-Semitism.

The plans were rejected because they had falsified the history of Jews in Hungary, as well as the Holocaust. They had attributed all Holocaust related crimes to the Nazis when that was not the case. In a public statement, the chief counselor to Orban said that “World War II was not about the Jews or the genocide,” but rather the exterminator and rescue of the Jews was a secondary issue.⁷³



Figure 5. "International Monument." Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. 2018.

⁷³ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

The Memorial Today

When the fall of communism came around in 1989, there was a decline in the number of visitors to Auschwitz. Since 2006, there has been a rapid increase in the number of visitors, which is due to Poland's membership in the European Union, and the proximity of the memorial to Krakow, which is a tourist town.⁷⁴ "Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is one of eight Holocaust sites in Poland protected and supported" by the government's Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.⁷⁵

The National Buchenwald Memorial

Function During the Holocaust

The SS built the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1937. It was located in east-Central Germany, about five miles from Weimar.⁷⁶ The camp opened to male prisoners in July 1937. Political prisoners were the first prisoners at Buchenwald until 1938 when the German SS and police sent about 10,000 Jews to Buchenwald after Kristallnacht.⁷⁷ The purpose of the camp was to "combat political opponents, persecute Jews, Sinti and Roma, and permanently ostracize 'strangers to the community' – among them homosexuals, homeless persons, Jehovah's Witnesses and ex-convicts – from the 'body of the German people.'"⁷⁸ Buchenwald was an important source of forced labor during the war as prisoners were used in the, "German Equipment Works (DAW), an enterprise owned and operated by the SS; in camp workshops; and

⁷⁴ Sommer.

⁷⁵ Adams, Geraldine Kendall. "Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum Suffers Wave of Abuse following New Law." Museums Association. May 14, 2018.

⁷⁶ "Buchenwald: History & Overview." Jewish Virtual Library. 2019.

⁷⁷ Buchenwald.

⁷⁸ "Buchenwald Memorial." Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation.

in the camp's stone quarry."⁷⁹ By the end of World War II, Buchenwald was the largest concentration camp in the German Reich. Over 280,000 people were imprisoned at Buchenwald and its 139 sub-camps.⁸⁰

Utilization of Buchenwald Post-WWII

On April 11, 1945, Buchenwald was liberated by the United States military. In August of 1945, the American forces had to evacuate the area and hand it over to Soviet occupation forces due to an agreement from 1944, which stipulated occupation zones.⁸¹ On August 20, 1945, the Soviet Union transformed Buchenwald into an internment camp, otherwise known as the Special Camp No. 2.⁸² The first prisoners of Buchenwald post-World War II were former or suspected Nazis. Therefore, the first anniversary of the liberation of Buchenwald on April 11, 1946 could not be held at Buchenwald, and instead occurred at Goethe-Platz. The Soviets created a red triangle monument for the anniversary. During the Holocaust, if an individual wore a red triangle on their clothing it indicated a political inmate. The ceremony focused on only one group of prisoners, political prisoners, at the expense of all of the other victims of Buchenwald.⁸³ From 1945-1950, Buchenwald held 28,455 postwar prisoners.⁸⁴ In February of 1950, the Special Camp No. 2 housed at Buchenwald was evacuated, therefore making the site unfit to be an authentic place to memorialize fascism.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Buchenwald.

⁸⁰ Buchenwald Memorial.

⁸¹ Monteath, Peter. "Narratives of Fascism in the GDR: Buchenwald and the "myth of Antifascism"." *The European Legacy*4, no. 1 (1999): 99-112. doi:10.1080/10848779908579948.

⁸² Wachsmann.

⁸³ Monteath.

⁸⁴ Wachsmann.

⁸⁵ Monteath.

The GDR Memorialization of Buchenwald

One concentration camp that embodied the German Democratic Republic's perspective on the memorialization of the Holocaust is Buchenwald. In East Germany, Buchenwald served as the official National Site of Commemoration and Warning. Buchenwald was "where some of the most prominent communist prisoners, including party leader and former presidential candidate Ernst Thälmann, had been imprisoned and murdered."⁸⁶ The National Memorial at Buchenwald "provided the GDR with its central foundation myth."⁸⁷ In 1958, the National Buchenwald Memorial officially opened and served as a "symbol of the triumph of antifascism."⁸⁸ The German Democratic Republic viewed itself as full of individuals who "heroically resisted fascism."⁸⁹ Anti-fascism was adopted as the state ideology in the GDR and differentiated it from the Federal Republic of Germany. East Germany believed that the inmates at Buchenwald engaged in opposition, especially in the form of anti-fascist resistance at the camp. They claimed that the communist-led in-mates overthrew the SS rule at Buchenwald, not the advancing American troops. Because the GDR believed that the "conquest of fascism was the work of German communists operating within the very heart of Germany and learning a combination of anti-fascist elements from a variety of political and national backgrounds to victory."⁹⁰ From 1958 to 1959, the memorial emphasized the communist resisters in Buchenwald and ignored the history of the Soviet Special Camp No. 2.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Wachsmann, 200.

⁸⁷ Monteath, 100.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 109.

⁸⁹ Monteath, 101.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 104.

⁹¹ Wachsmann.



Figure 6. "Buchenwald Memorial." Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation. Accessed February 19, 2019. <https://www.buchenwald.de/en/1371/>.

The Memorial

A few days after liberation by the American third army on April 11, 1945, the first memorial at Buchenwald was created. The American third Army created a pile of all of the dead bodies and made the townspeople of Thuringia, which was located a couple miles down the road, visit the camp and view the pile of dead bodies. The American Army also showed the visual representation of the Holocaust to, “delegations of visiting American and then British parliamentarians.”⁹² On April 19, 1945, the surviving prisoners of Buchenwald created a wooden obelisk and inscribed “KLB 51000” on it to remember the 51,000 individuals that lost their lives

⁹² Monteath, 104.

at Buchenwald.⁹³ In July of 1945, a former inmate, Werner A. Beckert, published a report stating that the camp should not be destroyed, but instead converted to a memorial in order to serve as a warning to future generations and honor the dead. At the end of 1951, a national memorial competition was established and in 1958, the National Buchenwald Memorial opened.⁹⁴

The Memorial at Treblinka

Function During the Holocaust

Treblinka was both a labor camp and a death camp during the Holocaust. The Treblinka camps were located near the Village of Treblinka about 100 km from Warsaw.⁹⁵ In November 1941, the forced labor camp for Jews and non-Jewish Poles was established as Treblinka I.⁹⁶ Prisoners were used as a cheap labor force to work in the gravel pit and help with concrete production. In April 1942, the Polish and Jewish prisoners from the labor camp then helped construct the death camp, Treblinka II.⁹⁷ Construction of the killing center, Treblinka II, was completed in July 1942 and it was the third camp built as part of Aktion Reinhardt.⁹⁸ The Treblinka death camp existed until 1943 when prisoners revolted at the second camp. Prisoners feared that the SS would liquidate the camp soon as they heard of German defeats on the battlefield. A group of Jewish prisoners, nicknamed the “Organizing Committee” launched the revolt on August 2, 1943. 300 prisoners managed to escape during the revolt, and about 100

⁹³ Monteath, 104.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Webb, Chris, Chocholaty, Michal, and Lawson, Tom. *The Treblinka Death Camp: History, Biographies, Remembrance*. Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2014. Accessed February 19, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁹⁶ "Holocaust Encyclopedia." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed February 20, 2019. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/treblinka>.

⁹⁷ Webb.

⁹⁸ Holocaust Encyclopedia.

survived the SS manhunt afterwards. One of the committee members, Jankiel Wiernik, survived the uprising and published his memoirs of Treblinka through the Jewish underground in Warsaw secretly, which were then smuggled to England and the United States.⁹⁹ The other surviving prisoners of the revolt left behind at Treblinka II were forced to dismantle the camp and then were shot afterwards. The Treblinka labor camp continued operations until July 1944 when Soviet troops were quickly approaching. All of the remaining Jewish prisoners were shot, the camp was dismantled and everyone evacuated. Treblinka I existed from December 1941 until the end of July 1944 when it had been completely liquidated, and Soviet troops arrived at the labor camp and killing center during the last week of July.¹⁰⁰ Despite the death camp only operating for a little over a year from July 23, 1942 to the autumn of 1943, the total death toll was 800,000 to 1,000,000 people.¹⁰¹ The majority of the victims at Treblinka were Jewish; however, Roma, Sinti, and Polish political prisoners were also killed.¹⁰²

Utilization of Treblinka Post-WWII

The Allied Powers never liberated Treblinka as the Nazis had liquidated and completely burned the camp before there was even a possibility of liberation. Treblinka was one of the four Aktion Reinhardt camps and one of the eight major concentration camps located in Poland.¹⁰³ It was also one of the six extermination centers in Poland, but the least known of the camps to the

⁹⁹ "Treblinka Death Camp Revolt." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed February 19, 2019.

¹⁰⁰ Holocaust Encyclopedia.

¹⁰¹ Colls, Caroline Sturdy, and Michael Branthwaite. "'This Is Proof'? Forensic Evidence and Ambiguous Material Culture at Treblinka Extermination Camp." *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 22, no. 3 (July 20, 2017), 432.

¹⁰² Ibid, 430.

¹⁰³ Wachsmann.

outside world.¹⁰⁴ Treblinka was one of the “relatively remote ‘Aktion Reinhardt’ extermination centres in Poland that the Nazis dismantled and effaced in 1933-1944, before their retreat.”¹⁰⁵ It was one of the forgotten and ignored sites of the Holocaust and did not begin to be memorialized until the 1960s at the earliest.¹⁰⁶ The only known details of Treblinka were due to testimonies given by the Nazi SS-men and the accounts from the few Jewish survivors.¹⁰⁷ After World War II, Treblinka had no immediate use or purpose.



Figure 7. "Treblinka Museum of Struggle and Martyrdom." Information Portal to European Sites of Remembrance. Accessed February 19, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ "Concentration Camps: List of Major Camps." Jewish Virtual Library. 2019.

¹⁰⁵ Wachsmann, 187.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Concentration Camps.

The Memorial

In 1947, a competition was held to design a memorial for Treblinka. However, the communist regime came to power in Poland in 1948/49 and the memorial was forgotten. By 1963, “a large granite memorial stone, designed to resemble a Jewish tombstone” was erected in the spot where the gas chamber had previously stood.¹⁰⁸ Under and around the memorial, the ashes of 800,000 victims of Treblinka were placed. In addition, the memorial is a rare example of memorialization for Jewish victims by communists. In January of 2012, mass graves were discovered at Treblinka, which provided evidence to the atrocities committed at this extermination camp.¹⁰⁹ The current memorial at Treblinka is “a symbolic graveyard with boulders bearing the names of places in Europe where the victims lived before they were sent to the camp in occupied Poland.”¹¹⁰ The ceremony that was held on August 2, 2018 marked 75 years since the revolt at the Treblinka death camp.¹¹¹

The Finding Treblinka Project

“Therefore, despite the physical presence and impact that Treblinka extermination camp had, it has come to be defined by absence.”¹¹² In 2007, a forensic archaeological investigation “launched to locate, record, and interpret any surviving physical evidence at Treblinka.”¹¹³ The project was launched in order to add to the already existent archives, witness testimonies, and

¹⁰⁸ Concentration Camps.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Associated Press. "Ceremony Marks 75 Years since Treblinka Death Camp Revolt." AP News. August 02, 2018.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Colls, 433.

¹¹³ Ibid, 431.

modern digital data.¹¹⁴ The Finding Treblinka Exhibition showcases “items found during archaeological excavations, along with a handful of items found on the surface of both camps in the decades since the war.”¹¹⁵ These items show the only visible traces that visitors could see of Treblinka because not actual site of the Treblinka camp exists today. However, the Find Treblinka Exhibition wanted to avoid displaying the material culture of the camp in a way that was sensationalized or censored.¹¹⁶

Prior to the Finding Treblinka Project, which began in 2010, the memorial at the Treblinka death camp housed the Museum of Struggle and Martyrdom in Treblinka, which included a small permanent exhibition and a memorial landscape that was constructed in the 1960s.¹¹⁷ Right after World War II, investigators did attempt to lead “non-archaeological” excavations; however, after only spending a short period of time at the site “they failed to locate features such as the foundations of the gas chambers, which were buried under a considerable amount of sand and rubble.”¹¹⁸ Items at Treblinka failed to be found for more than 70 years after the Holocaust, which “demonstrates that the Nazis were, for a long time, successful in hiding the evidence of mass murder.”¹¹⁹ These items are especially important today, when physical evidence is seen as “vital evidence of the Nazis’ crimes and victims’ experiences.”¹²⁰

Items found during the Finding Treblinka project included building materials (tiles, bricks and plaster), personal belongings (jewelry, hair clips, a belt buckle, and coins), and

¹¹⁴ Colls, 431.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 443.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 444.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 433.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 442.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 442.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 442.

functional items (scissors, a knife, bullets, a battery, glass), as well as many other items.¹²¹ “The discovery of the tiles and building materials during the archaeological excavations confirmed the location of the old gas chambers and the testimonies of witnesses that stated that the floor was covered with red/terracotta tiles.”¹²²

Impact of Soviet Occupation on Memorialization

In Eastern bloc countries, “the omission or minimization of the Jewish victims was typical of Polish Communist-era memorials.” Often this was because the memorialization of the Holocaust would raise questions about the morality of the pre-Communist states. However, how a country chooses to memorialize or forget the Holocaust demonstrates how the memorial creators see their “national present as it does about how they remember their national past.”¹²³ On numerous occasions, those in pre-Communist countries were Nazi allies and potentially collaborated or helped in the “spoliation, enslavement, deportation, and murder of their Jewish population.”¹²⁴ Before Communism fell, there was little to no public memory of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe, despite the majority of the Holocaust taking place there.¹²⁵

After Communism fell and since 1989, many of the memorials in Poland have either been amended or replaced and the new states after the end of Communism were finally given the freedom to design their own memorials and create their own Holocaust remembrance.¹²⁶ Since 1989, previous Eastern Bloc countries have taken different approaches to memorialization of the Holocaust. These three approaches are aphasia, deflective negationism, and complete openness

¹²¹ Colls, 435.

¹²² Ibid, 441.

¹²³ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

¹²⁴ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

¹²⁵ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 98.

¹²⁶ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

regarding the Holocaust. Aphasia is the full or partial avoidance of the Holocaust, while deflective negationism involves shifting the blame of the Holocaust to other perpetrators or trivializing the entire history. The final approach is complete openness about the Holocaust and historical analysis of the events. According to Blutinger, “in many Eastern European countries there has been a shift over time from the aphasic approach to a greater willingness to confront the past directly.”¹²⁷

Conclusion

The sites of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Treblinka demonstrate the differing paths that concentration camps took to become memorials. Memorialization of the camps was impacted by the Soviet liberation of the camps. As the camps were located in East Germany and Poland, they were subject to memorialization impacted by Communist memorialization of the Holocaust. Camps such as Buchenwald and Auschwitz-Birkenau diminished the Jews as victims of the Nazis and focused the memorials on the anti-fascists or the communists. Communist rule, which lasted from the late 1940s to 1989-1991, had a significant impact of memorialization; however, Western memory of the Holocaust reached Eastern Europe after countries were liberated from Communism.¹²⁸ Then, “across Eastern Europe, the new governments that emerged in the years following 1989 faced the difficult task of creating new post-Communist national identities.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

¹²⁸ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 98.

¹²⁹ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

Chapter 4

Memorialization in East vs. West Europe

The six memorials will be analyzed and discussed further based upon their history, utilization post-World War II, memorialization in Eastern versus Western Europe, transition into memorials, and impact on education. These memorials were chosen because of the difference in their histories of utilization post-World War II and their function today. Each of the six memorials offers a different perspective and provides a holistic approach to the topic of memorialization of the Holocaust. In addition, a broader comparison of Holocaust education and memorialization in East and West Europe will be addressed to provide background for the history of the memorials.

Post-WWII

The split of Eastern and Western Europe and the implementation of communism affected the memorialization of concentration camps. The main difference between how the communist governments in Eastern Europe and the capitalistic governments in Western Europe memorialized the Holocaust was through who was portrayed as the victims of the Nazis. In Poland and East Germany, Jews were not always viewed as the main victims of the Nazis.¹³⁰ Instead, the communists were seen as the primary victims of the Holocaust. In the GDR, “the attempted extermination of European Jewry was written out of East German narratives of the

¹³⁰ Monteath, Peter (2008) Narratives of fascism in the GDR: Buchenwald and the “myth of antifascism”, *The European Legacy*, 4:1, 99-112, DOI: 10.1080/10848779908579948

Second World War until the 1980s.”¹³¹ In Poland during the Communist-era, it was typical for Jewish victims to be omitted or diminished in memorials. The original memorials set at Auschwitz-Birkenau even embodied the mindset of forgetting the Jewish victims.¹³² Additionally, the new communist government in Poland chose a selective history of World War II where they emphasized “the Red Army victory over Nazi Germany rather than to present the historic truth.”¹³³ On the other hand, the West German “development of educational memorial sites was characterized by survivors’ grass-roots lobbying efforts gradually overcoming resistance in the local populace and bureaucracy.”¹³⁴

In Western Europe, private and semi-public Holocaust memory groups were afforded the opportunity to challenge the government on its memorialization of the Holocaust due to the open public sphere. However, in Eastern Europe, the government was responsible for determining what the countries remembered of the Holocaust and World War II.¹³⁵ In comparing the changes of collective memories of the Holocaust in Western and Eastern Europe, Western countries changed how they remembered the Holocaust frequently from the 1950s to the 1970s; however, in the eastern bloc countries, recollection did not change until the late 1980’s.¹³⁶ Although, “official West German recollection did not change until the student unrest of the late 1960s explicitly rejected this myth of Germans as victims.”¹³⁷ Then Willy Brandt was voted into office as the West German chancellor in 1969, and the following year in December, he knelt in front of

¹³¹ Ibid, 110.

¹³² Blutinger, Jeffrey. "An Inconvenient Past: Post-Communist Holocaust Memorialization." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 29, no. 1 (2010): 73-94.

¹³³ Sommer, 89.

¹³⁴ Wachsmann, Nikolaus, and Caplan, Jane, eds. *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*. London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2009, 200.

¹³⁵ Martel, Gordon, ed. *A Companion to Europe, 1900-1945*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2011, 1098.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 1098.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 1079.

the Warsaw ghetto memorial during a state visit to Poland, which was “recognition of Nazi Germany’s primary victims” and “implicitly acknowledged German perpetration.”¹³⁸

In the former Soviet Union, the word “Holocaust” (kholokost) was unknown in Russian scholarly literature until the 1990s. Instead the word katastrofa (catastrophe) was used to discuss the events of World War II.¹³⁹ In many Soviet works of literature about the World War II time period, the Holocaust is passed over, acknowledged and described, or just aspects of it are discussed. An example of this is a six-volume official Soviet history of the war book that does not reference the Jews once.¹⁴⁰ Despite little reference to the Holocaust in general literature prior to 1989, literature geared towards Yiddish readers and speakers discussed the Holocaust. “Almost every issue of Sovetish Heymland, the officially sponsored Soviet Yiddish monthly that appeared from 1961-1991, contained material on the Holocaust.”¹⁴¹

World War II and the Nazi occupation of the Soviet Union has become a tool for state propaganda in the Soviet Union, in which it was used to create a unified Soviet identity.¹⁴² In the Soviet Union, World War II was referred to as the “Great Patriotic War” and the terms like “‘popular struggle for liberation’ stress the notion of the common interests of all Soviet peoples and the Soviet government in this combined struggle against the foreign invader.”¹⁴³ While Soviet history did acknowledge and teach the atrocities committed by the Nazis against Soviet citizens, “it rarely concentrated specifically on the tragedy of the Jewish population under the

¹³⁸ Martel, 1079.

¹³⁹ Murav, Harriet. *Music from a Speeding Train: Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia*. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2014, 151.

¹⁴⁰ Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2005. *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union: symposium presentations*. Washington, D.C.: Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 102.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 103.

¹⁴² Baranova, Olga. "Politics of Memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union." Institute for Human Sciences (IWM). February 22, 2016.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

occupation.”¹⁴⁴ A reasoning for this is that “speaking separately of the tragedy of Jewry and emphasizing Jewish role and fate was discouraged since it could diminish all-Soviet effort and suffering, reinforce individual Jewish national consciousness and slow down assimilation of the Soviet Jews.”¹⁴⁵

Memorialization Post-1989

Ever since the unification of East and West Germany in 1989, “many of these Communist-era monuments in Poland have been amended or replaced.”¹⁴⁶ Throughout Eastern Europe, all of the new governments that were formed after 1989 were faced with the “difficult task of creating new post-Communist national identities.”¹⁴⁷ In 1989, after the unification of Germany, East Europe began to tell a comparable history of the Holocaust in relation to Western Europe, and then modified the concentration camp memorials and museums to reflect it. However, after 1989, some recollections of the Holocaust became overshadowed by memories of Soviet repression in many of the eastern bloc countries. Although, East Germany was a unique case once it reunited with West Germany in 1990. East Germans soon adopted similar Holocaust recollections as their West German counterparts.¹⁴⁸ Today, all six memorials serve as powerful reminders of the past that thousands of visitors travel to every year. The Holocaust sites, especially Auschwitz-Birkenau have become important destinations for Jews and school groups to travel to from all around the world.

¹⁴⁴ Baranova.

¹⁴⁵ Baranova.

¹⁴⁶ Blutinger, *An Inconvenient Past*.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

¹⁴⁸ Martel, 1082.

Additionally, since the late 1980s, an international consensus on the recollection of World War II had come into being. In January 2000, heads of states, prominent scholars, and survivors from around the world attended the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.¹⁴⁹ At the forum, where 44 countries were present, a declaration of principles was drafted stating, “the magnitude of the Holocaust planned and carried out by the Nazis must be forever seared in our collective memory.”¹⁵⁰ Additionally, at the international forum in Stockholm, the first federal German culture minister, Michael Naumann, gave a speech highlighting the importance of unifying Germany through remembering its history in both East and West.¹⁵¹ Naumann said:

This Government, my Government and my office have embarked on a new culture of remembrance and I have just come from the groundbreaking of the Memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe in the center of Berlin. The memorial sites in East and West Germany will now be funded on a much larger scale by the Federal Government as well.¹⁵²

Additionally, the establishment of national Holocaust museums and exhibitions in Washington, London, and Berlin provides evidence that the international community is coming together to remember the Holocaust. As well as nationally significant memorial days, such as the creation of national memorial days on January 27 for the day Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviet army prove that the Holocaust is being remembered across the world post-1989.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Martel, 1099.

¹⁵⁰ Langenbacher, Eric, and Shain, Yossi, eds. *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010, 20.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 59.

¹⁵² Ibid, 59.

¹⁵³ Martel, 1099.

Europeanization of Holocaust Memory

The European Parliament, an institution of the European Union, launched the Europeanization of Holocaust memory, which was mainly active from 1989 to 2014. Europeanization of Holocaust memory is “the process of developing a transnational European memory of the Holocaust,” which assisted in the development and implementation of educational and remembrance norms across Europe.¹⁵⁴ Europeanization of the Holocaust began in Western Europe after Eastern European countries became liberated from the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁵ This process significantly contributed to Holocaust memorialization in Eastern Europe; however, it also presented a challenge for Eastern European countries of whether to develop their own memories of the Holocaust or adopt the European memory.¹⁵⁶

During that time period, the European Parliament adopted 12 documents “that may be considered constitutive for the Europeanization of Holocaust memory.”¹⁵⁷ The first document was published in February of 1993 and was a resolution on “European and international protection for Nazi concentration camps as historical monuments.”¹⁵⁸ The first resolution did not contain the words “Jews” or “Holocaust” and solely focused on concentration camps without mention of death camps. The Europeanization of Holocaust memory spread across the European Union and enveloped the entire continent, especially Eastern Europe.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 98.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 97.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 98.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 102.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 102.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 103.

The Memorials in Recent History

The six memorial sites are still active today and are frequented by visitors from around the world. However, there has also been recent controversy surrounding some of the memorials. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, located in Berlin, has become the backdrop for selfies in the age of social media. Visitors are often seen hopping between the blocks, posing on top of the slabs of concrete, and taking photos of themselves within the memorial. Best selling author Shahak Shapira, a 28-year-old Israeli transplant to Berlin, launched a project that published photos of visitors who disrespected memorials and blended them with backdrops of the Holocaust in an effort to shame them publicly. Many people became upset over Shapira's project, especially when "controversy, discomfort and the memory of the Holocaust often go together."¹⁶⁰

However, controversy has surrounded the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe since the beginning. In recent years, Björn Höcke, a member of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, said the memorial is a disgrace.¹⁶¹ In response, the Berlin based art collective Center for Political Beauty unveiled its latest project in Bornhagen, Germany in November 2017. The project, which was made of 24 concrete slabs, paid homage to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and was placed in a nearby property to Björn Höcke.¹⁶² The project was named Bornhagen's mini-Holocaust memorial and is expected to stay there for two years, or the activists will remove it if "Höcke agrees to falling on his knees and begging for forgiveness in front of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin."¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Faiola, Anthony. "'This is Not a Place for Fun Selfies'." *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 01, 2017.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Taylor, Adam. *Activists Build a Mini-Holocaust Memorial Outside German Far-Right politician's House*. Washington: WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post, 2017.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

This pays homage to when “Chancellor Willy Brandt unexpectedly dropped to his knees during a 1970 visit to a memorial commemorating the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.”¹⁶⁴

Today, the Grossmarkthalle remains a prominent location in Europe as the headquarters for the European Central Bank. Mario Draghi, the president of the European Central Bank, reminded those attending a reception to inaugurate a visitors’ center in the ECB headquarters that during “World War II the Nazis used the Grossmarkthalle building as a center from which it would deport Jews to concentration camps.”¹⁶⁵

“There can be no more powerful reminder in these times of rising intolerance and nationalism across parts of Europe and beyond of why the values of peace and tolerance upon which the European union was founded remain relevant today,” said Mr. Draghi. “Against this backdrop it is essential that we at the ECB explain our role” to citizens to encourage understanding and build trust, he said.¹⁶⁶

Draghi brought up the history of the Grossmarkthalle in order to condemn rising populist trends across the world, and the event occurred after a nationalist party gained momentum in Germany’s parliamentary elections.¹⁶⁷

The Gleis 17 Memorial is known as a place for silence and reflection as it borders the woods of Grunewald today. Birches, with some taken from Auschwitz, grow on the track’s far end, and traces of a railway remain. Grunewald Station is already set back from the noise of the city, unlike the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which is located in the center of Berlin. Therefore, visitors are already silent and solemn before reaching the memorial, and are perceived as respecting the memory of the site.¹⁶⁸ Unlike other memorials, Gleis 17 is simply an

¹⁶⁴ Taylor.

¹⁶⁵ Buell, Todd. "Draghi Invokes ECB Building's Nazi Past in Fight Against Populism." *The Wall Street Journal*. October 04, 2017.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Alexander, Phil. "Sounding the Holocaust, Silencing the City: Memorial Soundscapes in Today's Berlin." *Taylor and Francis Online*. November 26, 2018.

abandoned train station: “the contradiction, aptly, is perverse: that Gleis 17 ‘does’ nothing is precisely what makes it mean much. It has been stripped of its function because its function was unspeakable atrocity. And yet its materiality signifies; its silence speaks.”¹⁶⁹

In 2018, Poland passed a bill that criminalized “accusations that the Polish state or people were complicit in the Holocaust,” which has recently incited abuse against the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial. Polish nationalists and right-wing media outlets accused the museum of misrepresenting the country’s involvement in the Holocaust via social media mainly and have targeted the director of the museum, Piotr Cywinski. Protesters further pushed that Poles should be the only guides at the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum in order to take back control of the narrative of Holocaust history in Poland.¹⁷⁰

A spokesman for Auschwitz-Birkenau, Pawel Sawicki, said the concentration camp museum had been the “collateral” victim of a heated debate sparked by the legislation, which passed in February and has been criticized as an attempt to stifle discussion of Poland’s history during the Second World War.¹⁷¹

However, recent protests and abuse have not deterred visitors or prevented any guides from working.¹⁷² In 2016, the Auschwitz-Birkenau memorial saw a record attendance with over two million visitors from around the world. Ever since 1999, when they launched a website dedicated to the memorial, visitors have risen significantly.¹⁷³

During the unification of Germany, 1989-1990, the number of visitors to the National Buchenwald Memorial declined. Before the fall of communism, school groups had been required to visit the memorial and army conscripts had their mandatory swearing-in ceremonies at

¹⁶⁹ Alexander.

¹⁷⁰ Adams.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Reynolds, Daniel P. *Postcards from Auschwitz: Holocaust Tourism and the Meaning of Remembrance*. New York: New York University Press, 2018, 1.

Buchenwald.¹⁷⁴ Then after unification in 1989, the Buchenwald “museum and memorial site was reoriented away from a focus on resistance to a more victim-centered paradigm” and thus the type of visitor changed.¹⁷⁵

In recent news, politicians from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) are not allowed to attend Holocaust remembrance ceremonies at the Buchenwald Memorial located in central Germany. The camp’s memorial foundation announced in January 2019, “the AfD could not take part in any future services ‘until it has convincingly distanced itself from the anti-democratic and anti-human rights stances and historical revisionism within the party.’”¹⁷⁶ The foundation director, Volkhard Knigge backed up his decision by citing an inappropriate statement by the leader of the AfD in Thuringia, Börjn Höcke. Previously, Höcke was banned from attending memorial services at Buchenwald in 2017 and has recently “demanded a ‘180-degree turn’ in Germany’s culture of remembrance for Nazi crimes, which he once called an ‘idiotic coping policy.’”¹⁷⁷

In January 2019, the National Bratwurst Museum announced that it would be building a museum where the “Martha II” camp used to stand, which was an extension of Buchenwald.¹⁷⁸ Although, the owners of the museum only learned of the history of the location after announcing its construction plans.¹⁷⁹ The new museum was backed by the Muhlhausen City Council in Germany, which incited protests from the Jewish community and several liberal lawmakers in

¹⁷⁴ Wachsmann.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 200.

¹⁷⁶ "Far-right AfD Barred from Buchenwald Concentration Camp Memorial Services." DW Akademie. January 25, 2019.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Oster, Marcy. "A Sausage Museum Will Be Built on Former Buchenwald Concentration Camp Grounds." Jewish Telegraphic Agency. February 1, 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Schuetze, Christopher F. "A German Bratwurst Museum Unwittingly Starts a Holocaust Controversy." The New York Times. February 01, 2019.

Thuringia, where Muhlhausen is located.¹⁸⁰ However, the city council voted to allow zoning for the museum in addition to creating a memorial on the site. Coincidentally, “the vote came hours after the Israeli historian Saul Friedländer addressed the German Parliament, warning of the perils of rising anti-Semitism. The speech, delivered in German, was part of the annual commemoration of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops in 1945.”¹⁸¹ Spokesman for Buchenwald Memorial Center, Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau said, “the problems with such locations ‘has been a common theme since 1945 — a negation of history in the use of these historical crime scenes’”¹⁸²

In the immediate time following the Holocaust, forensic investigators believed that the Nazis destroyed all areas of the Treblinka camp. Leading up to the recent discovery of evidence, little material culture existed of Treblinka. The only known history of the camp was based on what people encountered while there.¹⁸³ For over 70 years at Treblinka, evidence of the camp was left undiscovered, until recently when significant evidence was uncovered related to the mass murder that occurred there.¹⁸⁴ In 2013, targeted excavations confirmed the presence of mass graves at the execution site near the labor camp. From this excavation, a significant quantity of material evidence surfaced.¹⁸⁵ This entire excavation effort was called the “Finding Treblinka” project, which was “initiated with the goal of using modern techniques to create a more accurate record of the extermination and labor camps.”¹⁸⁶ The motivation behind the

¹⁸⁰ Oster.

¹⁸¹ Schuetze.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 431.

¹⁸⁴ Colls, 430.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 434.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 433.

project was to identify physical evidence of the extermination camp in order to enrich the historical account of Treblinka.

Education of the Holocaust in West and East Europe

Since the end of World War II in 1945, public interest in the memorials has fluctuated based upon the social and political climate in the world. Jews around the world have made it a priority to visit the sites of the Holocaust and it has now become a “secular ritual.”¹⁸⁷ The state of Israel and the March of the Living host annual trips to Auschwitz that mirror a pilgrimage. The Israeli Ministry of Education organized the first youth trip to Poland in 1988. The government of Israel felt it was necessary for their youth to gain a deeper understanding of the history of Israel and remember it for future generations. To this day, on Holocaust Memorial Day, thousands of Jews march from Auschwitz to Birkenau to remember the victims of the Nazis.¹⁸⁸ Besides Jews who make pilgrimages to the Auschwitz memorial, 60 percent of the visitors are students. However, many of the individuals who visit Auschwitz have a difficult time understanding the events of the Holocaust that transpired there because they do not have previous knowledge of the subject. Many teachers will use a trip to Auschwitz as a substitution for a history lesson about the Holocaust.¹⁸⁹ In Sommer’s opinion, a tour guide at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the country or nationality of the person does not determine how they will react to Auschwitz, but “a higher level of education and awareness of the historical issues surrounding this location is the single most important factor” in an individual’s reaction to the memorial.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Meng, Michael. *Shattered Spaces: Encountering Jewish Ruins in Postwar Germany and Poland*. Cumberland: Harvard University Press, 2011, 221.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Sommer.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 92.

Professor Ilya Altman, founder and co-chairman of the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre, thoroughly analyzes the challenges and achievements of Holocaust education in Russia today. Altman said that the teaching of the Holocaust in Russia began in the 1990s when the government launched a pilot public education program from 1991-1994. However, the majority of educators that taught and advocated for the teaching about the Holocaust were individual enthusiasts.¹⁹¹ In Russia, there are two non-governmental organizations that are mainly behind Holocaust education, which are the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre and the Holocaust Foundation. Established in 1992, the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Centre has a main objective of organizing the teaching of Holocaust history in Russian schools and universities. The year 2003 marked a turning point of Holocaust education in Russia when the Holocaust was included in a draft of the official “Russian Standard of History Education.” In Russia today, “government institutions for the professional development of educators hold regular lectures and seminars on the subject of the Holocaust for teachers of history and social studies throughout the country.”¹⁹²

Problems with Memorialization

Over the years, problems with Holocaust remembrance have arose. One problem is “the over-identification with the West.”¹⁹³ Victims who we do know well like Anne Frank and Victor

¹⁹¹ Altman, Ilya. "Holocaust Education in Russia Today: Its Challenges and Achievements." The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Tismaneanu, Vladimir, and Bogdan C. Iacob, eds. *Remembrance, History, and Justice: Coming to Terms with Traumatic Pasts in Democratic Societies*. Central European University Press, 2015.

Klemperer “belong to relatively small groups of Jews, whose chances for surviving in the German case, although it might seem ironic, were far greater than the chances for survival of Jews elsewhere.”¹⁹⁴ The less deadly the Holocaust was, then “the more likely we were to learn something about it, because there could be survivors who could leave us with memoirs, recollections, or novels.”¹⁹⁵ “Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is one of eight Holocaust sites in Poland protected and supported” by the government’s Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.¹⁹⁶

Holocaust Tourism

Holocaust tourism is a “sightseeing connected to the genocide of European Jews and the murder of millions of other victims.”¹⁹⁷ Ukrainian film director Sergei Loznitsa, who directed a probing documentary film, “Austerlitz,” believes that those visiting concentration camps or Holocaust memorials should not perceive it as any mundane tourist experience, but see the significance of it.¹⁹⁸ Loznitsa especially is adamant about how tourists behave while visiting these memorial sites after a couple incidents at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum. During the summer of 2016, people playing a phone video game (Pokemon Go) were roaming through Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum as well as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. because the smartphone game Pokémon Go led its users to those locations to play. Additionally, a few years before that incident, an American tourist posted a

¹⁹⁴ Tismaneanu, 32.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 32.

¹⁹⁶ Adams.

¹⁹⁷ Reynolds, 2.

¹⁹⁸ Friedman, Gabe. “Questions Raised about “Holocaust Tourism”.” *The American Israelite*, 2017.

smiling selfie at Auschwitz on Twitter, and the Facebook group “With My Besties in Auschwitz” became known to the media.¹⁹⁹

Conclusion

Holocaust memorialization has significantly changed from immediately post-World War II to today. The location of Holocaust recollection and education in West Europe and East Europe also played an important role at the rate at which memorials were created, curriculum about the Holocaust was established in schools, and a collective memory was formed. Previous eastern bloc countries saw major changes in Holocaust recollection in the 1990’s when the Soviet Union no longer had control over memorialization. Additionally, the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust demonstrated a collective memory of the Holocaust forming through out the world. Despite various negative events surrounding the six memorials today, each still remain a vital piece of Holocaust education and memorialization.

¹⁹⁹ Friedman.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Europe is the pinnacle of Holocaust remembrance today. Memorials to all the victims of the Holocaust are spread through out the continent. The creation of memorials has led to the education about the Holocaust both in the community and at schools. However, memorials have developed and changed over time in the previous Soviet bloc countries and especially in relation to collective memory across Europe.²⁰⁰ The Soviet Union had a significant impact on memorialization in Eastern European countries. Then post-1989, memorials in Eastern Europe began to remember all victims of the Holocaust, not just Soviets. The transition is evident when comparing the West and East European memorials, as well as analyzing the timeline of memorials in Eastern Europe from post-World War II to today.

The three memorials in Western Europe, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Grossmarkthalle, and the Gleis 17 Memorial demonstrate a history of the Holocaust untouched by the previous Soviet Union. However, when the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe first debuted, numerous critiques and controversies surrounded it. Critics wondered why it was necessary to build a memorial when there were so many other Holocaust sites through out Europe that could be memorialized. Additionally, critics believed it was unclear what the memorial meant or the significance of it was. Others believed that the memorial should not just focus on the Jewish victims, but on all the victims of the Holocaust. Today, the previous

²⁰⁰ Kucia, The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe.

Grossmarkthalle is both the headquarters for the European Central Bank and a memorial for all those deported from the location during the Holocaust. The creation of the Grossmarkthalle memorial prompted other buildings and companies in Germany to look into their connections with the Nazis. In the 1980's, well before the fall of communism, protests erupted in response to the proposed demolition of the Gleis 17 station. As a result of the public protests, the Gleis 17 Memorial was unveiled in 1991 and the building remains untouched.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, and Treblinka memorials demonstrate the transition of Holocaust memorials from the period of Soviet occupation to post-1989. Auschwitz-Birkenau was one of the first concentration camps to become a memorial in 1947 when it was preserved as the "Martyrdom Memorial for Polish People and Other Nations." Buchenwald was the largest concentration camp in the German Reich at the end of World War II, and then functioned as an internment camp after World War II for former or suspected Nazis. The first ceremony was held on April 11, 1946 at Goethe-Platz instead of Buchenwald, and solely focused on political prisoners as the victims of the camp. In 1958, the memorial officially opened and emphasized the communist resisters in the camp. On the other hand, Treblinka was completely liquidated before it could be liberated by the Allied Powers. Therefore, Treblinka was not memorialized with material objects until the Finding Treblinka Project, and the museum expanded during the 2000's.

After World War II, Eastern and Western Europe portrayed different victims of the Holocaust in memorials. Additionally, in each respective region, those in charge of memorialization differed. Post-Cold War memorialization brought about an international consensus on how to remember the Holocaust. After 1989, East and West Germany unified and East Germany adopted the memorialization culture of West Germany. Since the 1990s,

Holocaust memory has become “a cornerstone of the new European identity.”²⁰¹ Holocaust remembrance has been a collective effort across Europe since the 1990s, and post-Communist countries in Eastern Europe have incorporated it.²⁰²

Today, Holocaust tourism is prevalent around the world, and especially across Europe. The year 2005 was the height of interest in Holocaust remembrance by the European Parliament. On January 27 of that year, a record number of heads of states and government from around the world had attended commemorations at the former Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. The European Parliament then adopted the resolution: “Resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and racism.”²⁰³ The resolution created the European Holocaust Memorial Day across the European Union for January 27th and reinforced Holocaust education.²⁰⁴ Every country educates differently about the Holocaust, and memorials have a significant impact on Holocaust education.

²⁰¹ Kucia, *The Europeanization of Holocaust Memory and Eastern Europe*, 98.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 97.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, 106.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

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Academic Vita of (Annaliese Thoet)

Aft5105@psu.edu

Education: The Pennsylvania State University

Major(s) and Minors(s): History and International Politics

Honors: History

Thesis Title: The Memorialization of the Holocaust: Differences in Memorialization Techniques
in East and West Europe

Awards: Gene And Roz Chaiken Endowment For The Study Of The Holocaust, Hintz Honors
Scholars in Liberal Arts Scholarship, Radomsky/ Ellzey Honors Scholarship Liberal Arts, History
302W Best Paper Award, Penn State Colorado Alumni Chapter Scholarship

Community Service Involvement: Mortar Board National Honor Society, No Lost Generation at
Penn State, Fresh START Day of Service