

Memorialization, Remembrance, and Acts of Commemoration

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Why do memory, commemoration and memorialisation matter?

In history:

- damnatio memoriae: cancel every trace of the person from the life of Rome, as if he had never existed, in order to preserve the honour of the city**
- Forgetting/cancelation of memory (abolitio) as condition for peace and reconciliation**
- abolition of (past) sins as redemption**

“Omnem memoriam discordiarum oblivione sempiterna delendam“ (All memory to the murderous divides are to be cancelled by eternal forgetting“

Cicero after the murder of Cesar in the Roman Senate on March 17, 44 a. Chr

„that all past evil be abolished (abolitio) between and among us and that all this shall be torn from our hearts with all the evil and anger in such a way, that in the future nothing will remain in our memory so that there will not be revenge for the evil.“

Treaty of Meerssen in 851

„Art. II.- Both sides grant to each other eternal forgetting and amnesty (perpetua oblivioet amnestia) of all what happened since the beginning of war on any place and of any kind committed by the one or the other here or there with hostile intentions (...)“

Westphalian Treaty in 1648

„Préambule.- (...) En cherchant ainsi à renouer la chaîne des temps, que des funestes écarts avaient interrompue, nous avons effacé de notre souvenir, comme nous voudrions qu'on pût les effacer de l'histoire, tous les maux qui ont affligé la patrie durant notre absence.(...)

Art. 11.- Toutes recherches des opinions et votes émis jusqu'à la restauration sont interdites. Le même oubli est commandé aux tribunaux et aux citoyens.“

Charte Constitutionnelle de Louis XVIII vom 4. Juni 1814

Commemoration is important to:

- prevent repetition**
- prevent revenge**
- recognize suffering and ensure reparation**
- reach for justice/retribution**
- drive change and progress**
- overcome the past**
- reconcile and educate**
- preserve culture and identity**

How do physical spaces, cultural expressions and symbolic gestures address the past?

Example 1: Positive Identification with Resistance - „the other Germany“ (first Memorials in Germany)



1952-1954

Example 2: The expulsion of the Germans from Central Eastern Europe- Germans as victims



Example 3: The commemoration of the Holocaust- empathy/ identification with victims (late 1960ies- 1980ies)

Memorial in West-Berlin from 1967 and East Berlin from 1985

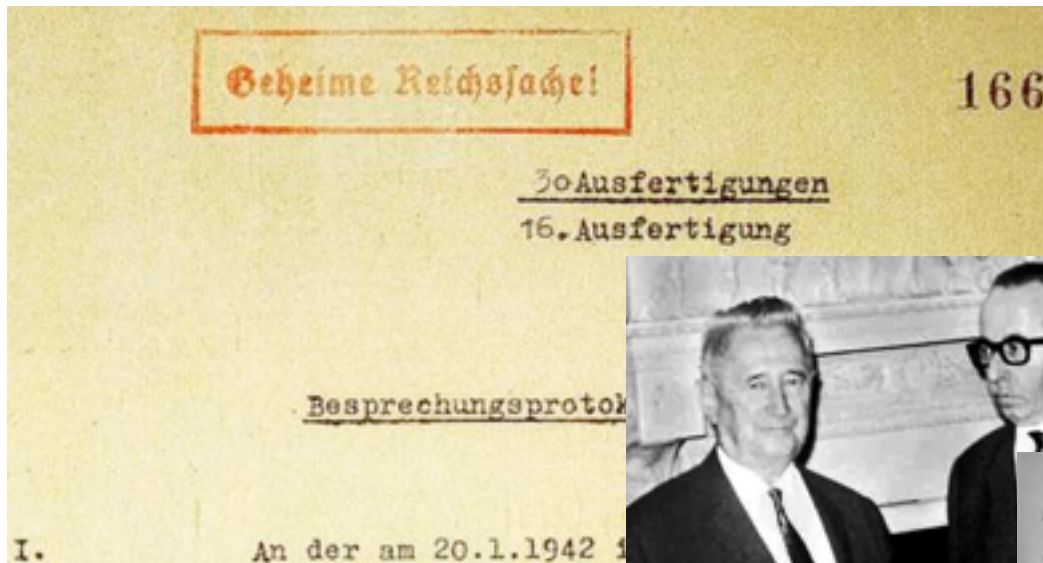


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Example 4 - Naming the perpetrators. The case of the Wannsee-Memorial



Example 5: The Holocaust mourned as a loss. Voids and stepping stones in Berlin



Who defines the past?

Example 1: The „Neue Wache“- attempt of revising history



DIE NEUE WACHE IST DER ORT DER ERINNERUNG
UND DES GEDENKENS AN DIE OPFER
VON KRIEG UND GEWALTHERRSCHAFT.

WIR GEDENKEN
DER VÖLKER, DIE DURCH KRIEG GELITTEN HABEN.
WIR GEDENKEN IHRER BÜRGER, DIE VERFOLGT WURDEN
UND IHR LEBEN VERLOREN.
WIR GEDENKEN DER GEFALLENEN DER WELTKRIEGE.
WIR GEDENKEN DER UNSCHULDIGEN,
DIE DURCH KRIEG UND FOLGEN DES KRIEGES
IN DER HEIMAT, DIE IN GEFANGENSCHAFT UND
BEI DER VERTREIBUNG UMS LEBEN GEKOMMEN SIND.

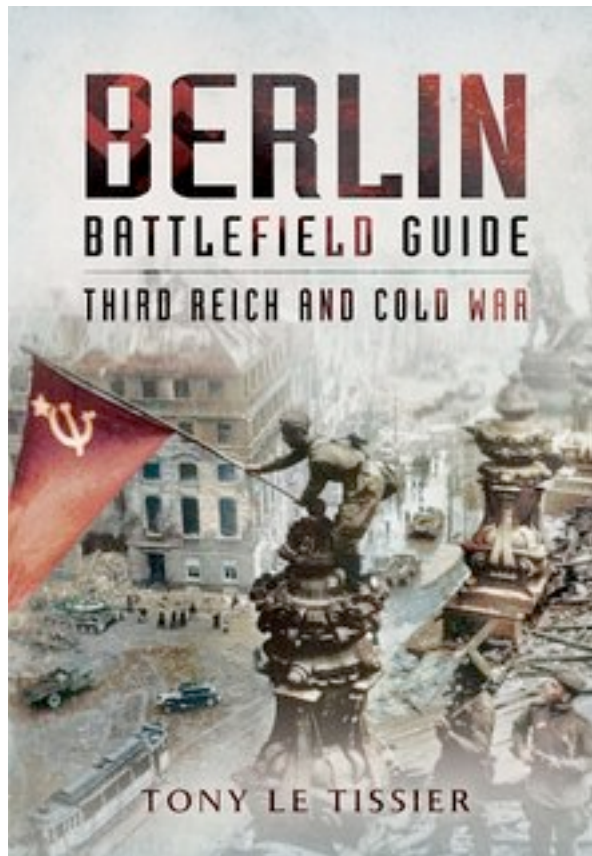
Example 2: Gestures: Kneeling Willy Brandt at the Ghetto Monument Warsaw, Dec. 7, 1970



Example 3: Action- Occupying public spaces- commemoration in the new millennium?



Example 5: Demand i.e. by tourism:



Questions remaining for discussion:

- How are conflicts about the past mediated in memorialization, remembrance and commemoration?***
- How do memorials, as instruments in the the public recognition and acknowledgement of state violence and repression, help create a healthy and democratic dialogue about the past and promote healing and reconciliation?***

Thank you for your kind attention!

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