CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

Introduction

The proposition that the Federal Republic of Germany has developed a healthy democratic culture centered around memory of the Holocaust has almost become a platitude.[1] Symbolizing the relationship between the Federal Republic's liberal political culture and honest reckoning with the past, an enormous Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe adjacent to the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) and Brandenburg Gate in the national capital was unveiled in 2005. States usually erect monuments to their fallen soldiers, after all, not to the victims of these soldiers. In the eyes of many, the West German and, since 1990, the united German experience has become the model of how post-totalitarian and postgenocidal societies "come to terms with the past."[2] Germany now seemed no different from the rest of Europe – or, indeed, from the West generally. Jews from Eastern Europe are as happy to settle there as they are to emigrate to Israel, the United States, or Australia.[3]

[1] Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London and New York, 2002). For an excellent overview of postwar memory politics, see Andrew H. Beattie, "The Past in the Politics of Divided and Unified Germany," in Max Paul Friedman and Padraic Kenney, eds., *Partisan Histories: The Past in Contemporary Global Politics* (Houndmills, 2005), 17–38.

[2] For example, Daniel J. Goldhagen, "*Modell Bundesrepublik*: National History, Democracy and Internationalization in Germany," *Common Knowledge*, 3 (1997), 10–18. Making the same case for the Holocaust in an international context are Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5:1 (2002), 87–106. It is no coincidence that scholars of Germany have become central players in the global memory boom: Jeffrey K. Olick, ed., *States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformation in National Retrospection* (Durham, 2003); John Torpey, ed., *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices* (Lanham, Md., 2003); Jan-Werner Müller, ed., *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002).

[3] Jeffrey M. Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (New Brunswick, 2006); Leslie Morris and Jack Zipes, ed., *Unlikely History: The Changing German-Jewish Symbiosis, 1945–2000* (New York and Houndmills, 2000).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

This rosy picture of the Berlin Republic is explicitly whiggish. Not for nothing was philosopher Jürgen Habermas hailed as the "Hegel of the Federal Republic," because his articulation of its supposedly "postconventional" identity presented the Berlin Republic as the end point of a successful moral learning process.[4] The Red-Green government of Gerhard Schröder (1998–2005) turned this philosophy into policy. Former minister for culture Michael Naumann justified the Berlin memorial by invoking the political theology of Habermas's friend, the theologian Johann Baptist Metz: the Republic's "anamnestic culture" of remembrance demanded such a commemorative gesture.[5] Twenty years after the "Historians' Dispute" (Historikerstreit) about the uniqueness of the Holocaust, "a culture of contrition" as the basis of German democracy seemed firmly embedded in German society.[6] Since (re)unification in 1990, historians and political scientists have begun attempting to explain this unexpectedly happy end to Germany's otherwise dismal twentieth century.[7]

Yet there are good reasons to regard the narrative in which Germany was redeemed by the memory of murdered Jews with some suspicion. No consensus ever obtained about remembering the Holocaust. Consider the tortured memory debates in Germany since the mid-1990s. Many Germans opposed the new memory politics, which they felt was imposed on them by distant leaders attuned to the expectations of Atlantic political and cultural elites. Research into the intergenerational transmission of German memory revealed a considerable gap between the pieties of official statements and the intimate sphere of the family, where stories of German suffering and survival endured half a century after the end of the Second World War.[8] Accordingly, the call for the

[4] Jann Ross, "Der Hegel der Bundesrepublik," *Die Zeit* (October 11, 2001), 45.

[5] Michael Naumann, "Remembrance and Political Reality: Historical Consciousness in Germany after the Genocide," *New German Critique*, 80 (Spring–Summer 2000), 22–23; Naumann, "Ohne Antwort, ohne Trost," *Die Zeit* (May 4, 2005). Cf. Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures in France and Germany since 1989: The Origins and Political Function of the Vél' 'dHiv' in Paris and the Holocaust Monument in Berlin* (New York, 2005).

[6] Karl Wilds, "Identity Creation and the Culture of Contrition: Recasting Normality in the Berlin Republic," *German Politics*, 9:1 (2000), 83–102.

[7] Ulrich Herbert, ed., *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland. Belastung, Integration, Liberalisierung 1945–1980* (Göttingen, 2002); Klaus Naumann, ed., *Nachkrieg in Deutschland* (Hamburg, 2001); Helmut Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte* (Munich, 1999); Anne Sa'adah, *Germany's Second Chance: Trust, Justice, and Democratization* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); Siobhan Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity* (Westport, Conn., 2001); Manfred Hettling, "Die Historisierung der Erinnerung – Westdeutsche Rezeptionen der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit," *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 29 (2000), 357–78; Helmut König, *Die Zukunft der Vergangenheit: Der Nationalsozialismus im politischen Bewusstsein der Bundesrepublik* (Frankfurt, 2003); Michael Geyer, "The Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany," in Joan Copjec, ed., *Radical Evil* (London, 1996), 169–200; Edgar Wolfrun, *Die geglückte Demokratie* (Stuttgart, 2006). Careful to avoid the temptation of teleology are Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Pasts: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, N.J., 2003).

[8] Olaf Jensen, *Geschichte Machen: Strukturmerkmale des intergenerationellen Sprechens über die NS-Vergangenheit in deutschen Familien* (Tübingen, 2004).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

"normalization" of German history and national consciousness appeared regularly in public discourse.[9] Indeed, had not the writer Martin Walser complained infamously in 1998 that Holocaust memory was wielded like a "moral cudgel" to bully Germans into accepting a politically correct version of their past?[10]

Nor was the decision to construct the memorial in Berlin uncontroversial; in truth, it was highly divisive.[11] Then there were the many reminders of a half-forgotten past that appear regularly to rupture the moral smugness of official politics. In the so-called Flick affair in 2004, for instance, the son of a business tycoon who profited greatly under the Nazis by employing slave laborers, to whom his family has never paid compensation, moved his modern art exhibition to Berlin after protesters successfully hounded it from Switzerland. Herr Flick could not comprehend the motives of those who objected to the separation of his love for modern art and the moral issues surrounding his father's business dealings before 1945. Neither could Chancellor Schröder, who opened the exhibition by calling for the "normalization" of German memory.[12]

These were no isolated incidents. A year earlier, controversy had rocked the literary establishment when the celebrated rehabilitators of postwar German literature, the Gruppe 47, were accused of anti-Semitism. The seeming mania for uncovering apparent brown roots in public figures, particularly those with impeccable left-liberal credentials, continued with the claim that the prominent Germanists Walter Jens (b. 1923) and Peter Wapnewski (b. 1922) had been members of the Nazi Party. Historians were likewise shocked when it was revealed that Martin Broszat (1926–89), the longtime director of the celebrated Institut für Zeitgeschichte, which for decades had been at the forefront of innovative scholarship on Nazism, had joined the Nazi Party on April 20, 1944. In the same vein, the famous journalist and founder of *Der Spiegel* magazine, Rudolf Augstein (1923–2002), was revealed to have employed former Gestapo and SS officers in high positions in the 1950s. Then, in 2006, the Nobel

[9] Stuart Taberner, "'Normalization' and the New Consensus on the Nazi Past: Günter Grass's *Im Krebsgang* and the Problem of German Wartime Suffering," *Oxford German Studies*, 31 (2002), 161–86; Mitchell G. Ash, "Becoming Normal, Modern, and German (Again!)," in Michael Geyer, ed., *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany* (Chicago, 2001), 295–313; Konrad H. Jarausch, "Normalisierung oder Re-Nationalisierung?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 21 (1995), 571–84; Jeffrey K. Olick, "What Does It Mean to Normalize the Past? Official Memory in German Politics since 1989," *Social Science History*, 22:4 (1998), 547–71; A. James McAdams, "Review Article: Germany after Unification – Normal at Last?" *World Politics*, 49:2 (1997), 282–308.

[10] Martin Walser, *Erfahungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede: Friedenspreis der Deutschen Buchhandels 1998* (Frankfurt, 1998), 17–18.

[11] Michael S. Cullen, ed., *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal: Dokumentation einer Debatte* (Zürich and Munich, 1999); Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens, eds., *Der Denkmalstreit – das Denkmal?* (Berlin, 1999); Claus Leggewie and Erik Meyer, *"Ein Ort, an den man gerne geht"* (Munich, 2005).

[12] Wolfgang Joop, "Soll die Flick-Sammlung nach Berlin? Darf in Deutschland Kunst ausgestellt werden, die angeblich mit Nazi-Vermögen finanziert wurde? Eine Debatte um Geld und Moral," *Die Welt* (November 22, 2004).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

Prize–winning writer Günter Grass (b. 1927), a moralist associated with the left, admitted having been a member of the Waffen SS as a seventeen-year-old.[13] Even Habermas became the subject of speculation when the rumor that, in the 1980s, he had swallowed an order he had allegedly given as a Hitler Youth leader after it was presented to him by its addressee, was discussed in German newspapers.[14] The accumulation of these controversies in the first years of the new century led one journalist to remark on the seemingly never-ending "virulent identity crisis of the Germans."[15]

The virulence is also evident in the theme of "Germans as victims," which also made a reappearance after its high point in the 1950s. In 2002 the German public was treated to a heated debate about the morality of the Allied bombing campaign against German cities, a discussion saturated by graphic images of charred mounds of civilians that excited thoughts of Germans as victims of the British, the Americans, and perhaps even the Nazis.[16] Grass, too, signaled the preoccupation with German suffering in his novel, *Crabwalk* (*Im Krebsgang*).[17] All the while, the organizations of German expellees agitate for a memorial site for their own suffering, much to the alarm of neighboring Poland and the Czech Republic, ever alert to any sign of irredentist politics in Germany.[18]

[13] Klaus Briegleb, *Mißachtung und Tabu: Eine Streitschrift zur Frage: "Wie antisemitisch war die Gruppe 47?"* (Berlin, 2003); Hubert Spiegel, "Biographien Sprachlos: Germanisten als Hitlers Parteigenossen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (November 24, 2003); Peter Wapnewski, "Die Kartei hat immer Recht. Wie ich Mitglied der NSDAP wurde," *Die Zeit* (November 27, 2003); Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen, 2003); Otto Koehler and Monika Koehler, *Rudolf Augstein* (Munich, 2002). The "68ers" now are found to be anti-Semites like their parents: Wolfgang Kraushaar, *Die Bombe im Jüdischen Gemeindehaus* (Hamburg, 2005); "Warum ich nach sechzig Jahren mein Schweigen breche," Günter Grass in an interview with Frank Schirrmacher und Hubert Spiegel, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (August 11, 2006). In July 2007 German newspapers claimed writers Martin Walser and Siegfried Lenz and cabarettist Dieter Hildebrandt had joined the Nazi Party as teenagers. "Walser, Lenz und Hildebrandt ware in der NSDAP," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* (July 1, 2007), 25.

[14] The public discussion began after Joachim Fest obliquely referred to the incident in his memoir, *Ich Nicht: Erinnerungen an eine Kindheit und Jugend* (Reinbeck, 2006), 343. Christian Geyer, "Ein Fall Habermas? Der Verschluckte Zettel," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (October 27, 2006).

[15] Thomas Lindemann, "Es kommt spät, aber zur rechten Zeit," *Die Welt* (May 8, 2005).

[16] Robert G. Moeller, "Germans as Victims? Thoughts on a Post-Cold War History of World War II's Legacies," *History and Memory*, 17:1–2 (2005), 147–94.

[17] Jörg Friedrich. *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Munich, 2002); Lothar Kettenacker, ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern? Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940–45* (Berlin, 2003); Robert Moeller, "Sinking Ships, Lost *Heimat*, and Broken Taboos: Günter Grass and the Politics of Memory in Contemporary Germany," *Contemporary European History*, 12:2 (2003), 147–81.

[18] Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, "Memories of Universal Victimhood: The Case of Ethnic German Expellees," *German Politics and Society*, 23:2 (2006), 1–27; Aleida Assmann, "On the (In)compatibility of Guilt and Suffering in Germany Memory," *German Life and Letters*, 59:2 (2006), 187–200; Norbert Frei, *1945 und wir: Das Dritte Reich im Bewusstsein der Deutschen* (Munich, 2005); "Germans as Victims during the Second World War," special issue of *Central European History*, 38:1 (2005); Henning Sussner, "Still Yearning for the Lost Heimat? Ethnic

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

The viewpoint that the early twenty-first century marked the culmination of a collective moral learning process for Germany whose past has been successfully "mastered" seems increasingly untenable. That the "correct" answer to the Nazi past was found also ignores the proposition that such an answer is impossible to prove. Moreover, can a past such as Germany's be contained in a comfortable way? It is striking how long the debate has been framed by stark polarities: remembering or forgetting, too much memory or too little, its cynical instrumentalization or redeeming quality, capitulation in 1945 or liberation.[19] All evidence points to the fact that the meaning of memory is indeterminate, controversial, and never fully controlled by political elites.

This book suggests an alternative way of thinking about the past sixty years of German memory debates. Rather than posit linear progress or transformations in collective memory, it tries to explain the source of controversies about the national past between 1945 and 2005 as manifest enactments of an underlying structure of German political emotions. This structure was articulated in rival memory projects after the end of the Nazi regime, and it began to dissolve only at the beginning of the twenty-first century with the change of generations. As I show in Chapter 1, this structure was inscribed in the subjectivities of Germans as individuals because their past, and therefore their collective identity, had been polluted and stigmatized by the criminal deeds of the German regime between 1933 and 1945. This structure underlay discourse because it was intrinsic to postwar German identity. There was no escaping its stain: as a German, an individual necessarily partook in a national identity. As a structure, it framed the reaction to this stain in two ways, exemplified respectively by the "Non-German German" or the "German German": either Germans could try to convince themselves and others that they had invented a new collectivity, divorced from an unbearable past, or they could defend the viability of their collective identity by making the national past bearable through a variety of displacement strategies. (As subsequent chapters make clear, I also refer to Non-German Germans as "redemptive republicans" and leftists, and German Germans as "integrative republicans" and conservatives.) The structural gaze allows the reader to abjure the moralistic tone in some of the secondary literature. Like anthropologists, we are observing the workings of a foreign cultural system.

A Political Consensus

For all that, a consensus about German political institutions – as opposed to national identity – *did* develop over the past sixty years. Disputed as the meaning

German Expellees and the Politics of Belonging," *German Politics and Society*, 22:2 (2004), 1–26.

[19] Klaus Naumann made this aspect of German memory debates clear to me in a conversation in Hamburg in October 2003. See Jan-Holger Kirsch, "'Befreiung' und/oder 'Niederlage'? Zur Konfliktgeschichte des deutschen Gedenkens an Nationalsozialismus und Zweiten Weltkrieg," in Burkhard Asmuss et al., eds. *1945 – Der Krieg und seine Folgen: Kriegsende und Erinnerungspolitik in Deutschland* (Berlin, 2005), 60–71.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

of the Nazi past was for the German collective self-representation, republican political institutions became secured by broad agreement in the political class and population. From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, West Germany's epochal transformation – epochal in view of its moral and cultural ruin in 1945 – is easy to take for granted. With the guiding hand of the Allied occupation and the country's westernization and modernization, it was only a matter of time until liberalism took root and Germany became "like us," as one American commentator reassuringly put it.[20] The problem with this view is that it possesses the deterministic air of a script in which the happy ending is assured if the actors play their role. But that such a consensus would develop in the Federal Republic was not inevitable. Nor can the remarkable transformation in political culture that has taken place here be captured by the paradigms historians have employed, such as "westernization," "Americanization," and "modernization."

The modernization approach has gathered increasing adherents since the call of the Bonn contemporary historian Hans-Peter Schwarz to view the economic boom in the 1950s as a rapid modernization rather than as the restoration of an antidemocratic constellation of social forces. Was not the democratic system strengthened, rather than weakened, by this capitalist modernization, he asked?[21] The most significant product of this line of investigation has been the collection of Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek in which Schwarz's affirmative reading is both confirmed and differentiated.[22] Rapid modernization had indeed taken place, and the new system was consolidated, as Christoph Kleßmann put it, "under a conservative guardianship."[23] The westernization paradigm, advanced by historians at the University of Tübingen, examines the intellectual and cultural reorientation of the republic to the West, and especially to the United States, in the 1950s and 1960s.[24]

[20] Goldhagen, "Modell Bundesrepublik."

[21] Hans-Peter Schwarz, "Modernisierung oder Restauration? Einige Vorfragen zur künftigen Sozialgeschichtsforschung über die Ära Adenauer," in Kurt Düwell and Wolfgang Köllmann, eds., *Vom Ende der Weimarer Republic biz zum Land Nordrhein-Westfalen* (Wuppertal, 1984), 278–93; Schwarz, *Die Ära Adenauer. Gründerjahre der Republik, 1949–1957* (Stuttgart, 1981), 382. A similar argument is A. J. Nicholls, *Freedom with Responsibility: The Social Market Economy in Germany, 1918–1963* (Oxford, 1994).

[22] Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek, eds., *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre* (Bonn, 1998); Axel Schildt, "Nachkriegszeit. Möglichkeiten und Probleme einer Periodisierung der westdeutschen Geschichte nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg und ihrer Einordnung in die deutsche Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 44 (1993), 573–74; Thomas Schlemmer and Hans Woller, eds., *Die Erschließung des Landes 1949–1973* (Munich, 2001); Schildt, ed., *Gesellschaft im Wandel 1949–1973* (Munich, 2002).

[23] Christoph Kleßmann, "Ein stolzes Schiff und krächzende Möven: Die Geschichte der Bundesrepublik und ihre Kritiker," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 11 (1985), 485.

[24] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?* (Göttingen, 1999); Michael Hochgeschwender, *Freiheit in der Offensive? Der Kongreß für kulturelle Freiheit und die Deutschen* (Munich, 1998); Julia Angster, *Konsenskapitalismus und Sozialdemokratie: Die Westernisierung von SPD und DGB* (Munich, 2003).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

There is much to be said for these approaches. They moved beyond the standard leftist view that regarded the 1950s as a decade of stagnation and dangerous authoritarianism when in fact rapid technical, industrial, and architectural changes transformed the face of the country.[25] Yet the processes and structural changes highlighted by these paradigms cannot account for the political consensus that has taken place among the West German intelligentsia over the past half-century.[26] After all, westernization also served as a synonym for the anticommunism that had rendered the German middle classes vulnerable to National Socialism. The self-understanding that opposed the "Christian West" to Soviet communism also disdained American popular culture and other apprehended manifestations of secular "materialism."[27] Here were mental continuities with the Nazi and pre-Nazi past that hindered consensus.

The same problem applies to modernization. Since the *Sonderweg* (special path of modernization) debate of the 1980s, it has become apparent that modernization and "bourgeois dominance" do not automatically issue in political liberalization. The reverse may even be the case. The *Sonderweg* was not an antimodern utopia, as some have misunderstood it, but an authoritarian, explicitly illiberal version of technical modernity.[28] The East Asian "tigers" – Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea – are contemporary examples of countries that have successfully industrialized without liberalizing their culture and political system, although the latter two are moving in that direction. If one considers the difficulties of combining a market economy and parliamentary politics in the rapidly transforming countries of Eastern Europe, the contingent relationship between economic system and political culture becomes equally apparent. Functioning liberal democracies appear to be the exception rather than the rule.[29]

What was different in the Federal Republic? The conventional view is that the Federal Republic was redeemed by the "1968 generation," not least by journalists and academics of that generation who have dominated the public sphere and universities. Born between 1938 and 1948, the so-called sixty-eighters are supposed to have corrected the political and moral deficiencies of

[25] Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Deutsche Zeitgeschichte nach 1945," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 41 (1993), 28–29.

[26] Paul Erker, "Zeitgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte. Forschungsstand und Forschungsdefizite," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 19 (1993), 202–38; Werner Conze and M. Rainer Lepsius, eds., *Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik: Beiträge zum Kontiniutätsproblem* (Stuttgart, 1983).

[27] Maria Mitchell, "Materialism and Secularism: CDU Politicians and National Socialism, 1945–1949," *Journal of Modern History*, 67 (1995), 278–308.

[28] For an example of the difficulty of linking liberalization to modernization, see Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek, "'Reconstruction' and 'Modernization': West German Social History during the 1950s," in Robert G. Moeller, ed., *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor, 1997), 439–40; and Arnold Sywottek, "Wege in die 50er Jahre," in Schildt and Sywottek, *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau*, 13–42.

[29] For the origins of the *Sonderweg* thesis, see William Hagen, "Descent of the *Sonderweg*: Hans Rosenberg's History of Old-Regime Prussia," *Central European History*, 24 (1991), 24–50; cf. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Modernisierungstheorie und Geschichte* (Göttingen, 1975), and Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1965).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

German public and private life with their generational rebellion. In the words of one observer, "it was only in 1968 that the Federal Republic became a Western, liberal country. In Germany . . . the 1968 generation is seen not just as a cultural avant-garde but as Germany's saviour from its National Socialist past."[30] As this generation ages and the events of its youth pass into "history," we can make an elementary, analytical distinction – namely, between the consciously pursued project of the sixty-eighters and the cultural changes of which they were the bearer. The *intentions* and *outcomes* of 1968 are by no means the same. Let it be said: the aims of the sixty-eighter intellectuals were anything but liberal. They were divorced from reality by an illusory revolutionary self-understanding and were driven by a radicalizing voluntarism.[31] Wolfgang Kraushaar, himself a "sixty-eighter," drew attention to the fundamental anti- and illiberalism of the student leaders.[32] Older sympathizers of the student movement were appalled by this dimension of the protest.[33] It is difficult to make a case for the proposition that the liberal self-understanding of the Federal Republic was solely the result of 1968. The system and institutions that were established in 1949 were, among other things, its very target.

None of this is to deny that cultural modernity came with and through 1968, as it did in all Western countries. The political scientist Claus Leggewie argued plausibly that the movement was eminently successful if viewed as a "laboratory of the postindustrial society."[34] Conservatives are prepared to subscribe to this view.[35] What Jürgen Habermas called the "process of fundamental

[30] Heinz Bude, "The German *Kriegskinder*: Origins and Impact of the Generation of 1968," in Mark Roseman, ed., *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770–1968* (Cambridge, 1995), 293. See also his *Das Altern einer Generation: Die Jahrgänge 1938 bis 1948* (Frankfurt, 1995).

[31] Detlev Claussen, "Chiffre 1968," in Jan Assmann et al., eds., *Revolution und Mythos* (Frankfurt, 1992), 219–29; Claus Leggewie, "Vergeßt '68! Denkt gefährlich!: Verrat am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Kursbuch*, 116 (1994), 148; Wolfgang Eßbach, "Protest Bewegung, Scheinrevolution, postmoderne Revolte? Nachdenken über '68," paper presented at the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg, November 19, 1997; Dagmar Herzog, "'Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together': Post-Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany," *Critical Inquiry*, 24 (Winter 1998), 393–444; cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Die Scheinrevolution und ihre Kinder," in his *Protestbewegung und Hochschulreform* (Frankfurt, 1969), 188–201.

[32] Wolfgang Kraushaar, "Autoritärer Staat und anti-autoritäre Bewegung," *1999*, 2 (July 1987), 103; cf. Fritz Walter, "Eine deprimierende Bilanz," *Die Woche* (May 22, 1998), 10: "The 68er revolt was no liberal revolution. The APO activists had contempt for no one more than the 'bloody liberals' [*liberalen Scheißer*], and they could not laugh more scornfully than about democracy, the constitution, and the division of powers." Cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Berliner Gemeinplätze," *Kursbuch*, 11 (1968), 151–69.

[33] Hellmut Becker, *Aufklärung als Beruf: Gespräche über Bildung und Politik* (Munich, 1992), 186.

[34] Claus Leggewie, "1968: Ein Laboratorium der nachindustriellen Gesellschaft?" *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 20 (May 13, 1988), 13–20; cf. Christian Meier, "Nicht Zerstörung aber neue Herausforderung der Vernunft. Erwartungen an deutsche Intellektuelle nach 1989," in Martin Meyer, ed., *Intellektuellendämmerung? Beiträge zur neuesten Zeit des Geistes* (Munich, 1992), 81ff.

[35] See Wolfgang Jäger, "Vierzig Jahre Demokratie: Phasen der bundesdeutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte," *Die Politische Meinung*, 34 (March–April 1989), 10.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

liberalization" – the transformation of authority relations in the family, workplace, and classroom and the readiness for democratic participation and protest – became an integral part of the West German landscape.[36]

At the same time, if we want to account for the continuity of those dimensions of the West German consensus that the sixty-eighters regarded as dubiously authoritarian – representative democracy, the social market economy, intellectual pluralism, and *Westbindung* (embedment in the West) – then an important factor is that 1968 *failed* in its explicit and avowed objectives.[37] This book argues that the answer to the question about the sources of German political reorientation can be found by looking at another generation: the comparatively neglected "generation of 1945," those young men and women (but mostly men – these were still patriarchal times) who were between fifteen and twenty-five years of age at the end of the war and who constituted the first postwar generation of university students. The "forty-fivers" became the young academics and journalists in the 1960s who commenced the task of subjecting the national intellectual traditions to a searching critique in light of their experience of the rupture of 1945 when many of them had to begin reconsidering what they had been taught in the Hitler Youth or army.

Intellectuals and Memory

This book focuses on intellectuals and public debate among the forty-fivers, in particular those disputes over university reform, because they viewed universities as the site of national defense and renewal. Simply cataloging debates is inadequate, however. Their terms need to be exposed and explained. I employ the concept of "political languages" from the history of political thought to capture the importance of background understandings of good and evil that stand behind the customary ideological differences. Because memories and ideas about Germany's past, present, and future are expressed linguistically, it is necessary to examine what Germans most adept at deploying these political languages have said and written about their collective past.

Postwar German intellectuals utilized two languages of republicanism in their debates, "redemptive" and "integrative," the former expressing the Non-German German wish for a republic divorced from corrupted national traditions, and the latter articulating the German German imperative for positive,

[36] Jürgen Habermas, "Der Marsch durch die Institutionen hat auch die CDU erreicht," *Frankfurter Rundschau* (March 11, 1988), 11. Habermas was adapting the phrase of Karl Mannheim, who wrote about a "fundamental democratization." The Freiburg-based project on the Federal Republic, led by Ulrich Herbert, similarly utilizes the liberalization concept: Herbert, *Wandlungsprozesse in Westdeutschland*; Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945–1973* (Göttingen, 2006); Karin Hunn, *"Nächstes Jahr kehren wir zurück. . . . " Die Geschichte der türkischen "Gastarbeiter" in der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2005).

[37] Jochen Vogt, "Have the Intellectuals Failed? On the Sociopolitical Claims and the Influence of Literary Intellectuals in West Germany," *New German Critique*, 58 (Winter 1993), 7–8.

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-14571-8 - German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past
A. Dirk Moses
Excerpt
More information

national continuities. If both languages were committed to a German republic, they entertained very different political visions of its future. Both laid claim to the German past to fashion narratives of legitimacy for their respective visions. The fact is that none of the languages of republicanism and the scholarly approaches they underwrote satisfactorily explains the development of a consensus about the political meaning of the Holocaust. As I argue in Chapter 2, the political consensus about the liberal political institutions of the new republic emerged out of a protracted and bitter public discussion about the *meaning* of the German past for the Federal Republic's present and future. West German democracy, then, is a *discursive* achievement, not an antifascist or conservative-integrationist one.

This book is not a conventional intellectual history. It relates the ideas of intellectuals to their political emotions. There is insufficient work linking individual subjectivity, social psychology, and intellectual life. Too often, ideas are isolated from the lives of their articulators, although it is readily apparent that the conceptual blockages and blindnesses that constitute the underlying structure of postwar German memory are bound up in the formative, adolescent experiences of the country's leading intellectuals. Close inspection of their writings undertaken in this book shows their intellectual production can be seen as stagings of their personal histories.[38] The embedding of ideas in individual and collective experiences is all the more important in Germany where the national past, guilt, shame, and democracy were of existential significance for its intellectuals. In this way, this book seeks to overcome the distinction between the history of ideas and the social history of intellectuals; the former runs the danger of denuding ideas of the existential meaning they possessed for intellectuals, and the latter tends to reduce ideas to a function of social status.[39]

A note on "intellectuals." It is customary in Germany to use the term in connection with dissident writers and/or leftist scholars about whom much has been written.[40] Less has been written about the historians, philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, and educationalists of this generation, many of whom made decisive interventions in the public sphere, served as ministers and political advisers, and liberalized German intellectual life.[41] I aim to redress

[38] Barbara Kosta, ed., *Recasting Autobiography: Women's Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film* (Ithaca, 1994).

[39] Daniel Wickberg, "Intellectual History vs. the Social History of Intellectuals," *Rethinking History*, 5:3 (2001), 383–95. German scholarship typically traces intellectual networks rather than analyzing texts. Michael Grunewald and Uwe Puschner, eds., *Das konservative Intellektuellenmilieu, seine Presse und seine Netzwerke* (Bern, 2003); Dirk van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens* (Berlin, 1993). American scholarship, by contrast, is more often interested in what intellectuals thought: Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe: German Intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1997).

[40] Jochen Vogt, *"Erinnerung ist unsere Aufgabe." Über Literatur, Moral und Politik, 1945–1990* (Wiesbaden, 1991); Hauke Brunkhorst, *Die Intellektuellen im Land der Mandarine* (Frankfurt, 1987); Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, *Protest and Democracy in West Germany: Extra-Parliamentary Opposition and the Democratic Agenda* (London, 1988).

[41] Robert Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (London and New York, 1991).

© in this web service Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org