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Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration
Camp, 1933-2001 (review)

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als Heimat von Juden: Strategien des 'Heimischwerdens von Juden in Nachkriegspolen, 1944–1949," in Fritz Bauer Institute, *Überlebt und unterwegs: Jüdische Displaced Persons im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1997), pp. 71–107.

6. Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 139–140.

7. See Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), pp. 53–62. Compare with more recent studies by Karl A. Schleunes, *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz: Nazi Policy toward German Jews, 1933–1939* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 62–262; and Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 28–56.

8. See Lucy Dawidowicz, "Appropriating the Holocaust: Polish Historical Revisionism," in *The Holocaust and the Historians* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 88–124. For an account of the more recent Polish response to the Holocaust, see "My Brother's Keeper": *Recent Polish Debates on the Holocaust*, ed. Antony Polonsky (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1–33.

9. Jan T. Gross, "A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews, and Communists," in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and Its Aftermath*, eds. István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 91–92.

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***Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2001*, Harold Marcuse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xxii + 590 pp., \$35.00.**

This dense and detailed book is about more than just Dachau. While the history of this infamous Nazi camp is covered thoroughly and expertly, so too is a good chunk of post-war West German history. *Legacies of Dachau* presents a sweeping social, political, and even cultural history of the Federal Republic's gradual and halting efforts to come to terms with its Nazi past, a history in which Dachau serves as both a mirror and a microscope through which to observe the national reckoning.

My primary criticism of Harold Marcuse's study concerns how much contextual detail is actually necessary on topics such as denazification and German education. In a thematic sense, the author certainly is justified in explaining how these larger issues influenced German collective memory and memorialization, and his discussion of how denazification proceedings were pushed aside for Cold War prerogatives is chilling to say the least. But when substantial parts of several chapters stray into close scrutiny of these more general issues, and when the endnotes run to 156 pages, the reader's attention is likely to stray as well. This is definitely not a work for the layman, though it is clearly written and, considering the often-difficult memory terrain it plies, noticeably jargon free.

Legacies of Dachau is organized by four parts that take the reader chronologically through the history of the two Dachaus—the town and the camp—from the nineteenth-century artist colony that flourished in the former to the major international tourist destination that today defines them both. Indeed, it is the very interrelatedness of city and camp that constitutes an important theme for understanding the conflicted ways in which memory has played out in postwar Germany. With regard to what went on in the nearby camp, the citizens and leaders of the town of Dachau embraced the same self-exculpating attitudes that informed West German politics regarding the Nazi past. These attitudes constitute what Marcuse calls the “three founding myths of the Federal Republic”: victimization, or the feeling that Germans themselves were victims first of the Nazis, then of the occupiers, and later even of the former inmates who continually were bringing attention to the camp and the town through their calls for restitution and remembrance; ignorance, or the claim to a complete lack of knowledge about what was happening in the camps; and resistance, which sought to put forth a pure “other Germany” that had steadfastly opposed Nazi barbarism. Marcuse tells the story of the development of these myths in 1945, their manipulative power and abuse in various postwar political contexts (even by former inmates such as Pastor Martin Niemöller, who evoked the victimization myth to exonerate several Nazi—or what Marcuse calls “brown-collar”—criminals), and their gradual discredit during the 1970s to the 1990s.

Dachau makes a fascinating focal point for the study of German postwar memory and Holocaust commemoration. As the first prison for suspected enemies of the Nazis and one of the last to be liberated by the Allies (who arrived shortly after a trainload of more than 2,000 Buchenwald inmates, most of them dead), more than 230,000 people passed through its gates. Nor did the camp’s functionality end there—after the war, it housed displaced persons, prisoners of war, political prisoners, and ethnic Germans from the East. The camp itself was only three kilometers from the picturesque Bavarian town from which it took its name, a fact that has caused no end of consternation to locals fond of stressing the town’s artistic and ducal heritage, and who have been unable to find a willing sister city anywhere in the world. One of the more interesting story lines in this book concerns the attempts of local and state officials, such as the longtime Dachau mayor Lorenz Reitmeier (1966–96), to undermine the implicit association between city and camp.

While more than 30,000 people died in Dachau and it had a gas chamber, the camp never functioned as an extermination center *per se*. This may seem an overly rigid definition to the Jews and other prisoners on the lower rungs of the camp hierarchy, but it helped to perpetuate the myth of the “clean camp,” which functioned to “educate” criminal and “asocial” Aryans and had nothing to do with Nazi “brown-collar” crimes. When the Americans mounted the first exhibition on the “dirty” history of the camp in the large gas-chamber complex, many Germans saw it as a barrier to any real introspection, no more than a kind of chamber of horrors. Some even lobbied for

the gas chamber and crematoria to be torn down. In the end, the structures were preserved by an international treaty, though the SS signs marking these buildings fell victim to “clean camp” zealotry.

Memory and commemoration in Dachau particularly were fraught because of the large variety of prisoners: Jews (German and Eastern European), communists, criminals, “asocials,” Gypsies, Soviet POWs, French and other resisters, homosexuals, priests (there was a special section for Catholic leaders), and politicians (including such *prominents* as former Reichsbank president Hjalmar Schacht and Austrian chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg). Of course, these diverse groups had equally diverse experiences, ranging from complete deprivation and overwork to access to SS rations and walks in the environs. After the war, these distinctions made a tremendous difference in how former inmates remembered, and thus wished to commemorate, their experiences. In part three Marcuse skillfully guides readers through the commemoration politics that led to the array of chapels, churches, monuments, museums, and other memorials that currently dot the Dachau landscape. In a place where each building is symbolic and sacred (although for a short time in the early 1960s, the former disinfectory was converted into a restaurant named “At the Crematorium”), questions of what to name a church (or whether Protestants should even have one) and where to plant trees could produce years of debate and rivalry. Marcuse sensitively explores the motivations of the various survivors’ groups (German and non-German), politicians, church leaders, citizen activists, and others who weighed in on how to remake the camp. Moreover, the author proves to have a trained eye for analyzing the relationship between architectural form and commemorative function. He renders the jagged and painful international memorial, for example, with precise dimensions and a true feel for its weightiness—“a crushing burden of nameless, faceless mass death” (p. 259). The eighty-eight photographs, charts, and maps in this book document the memorialization process and help readers who have never visited Dachau to better appreciate the site.

Another factor that conditioned German collective memory and the commemoration process was timing, and this is where Marcuse’s contextual efforts pay off. Though some reviewers may criticize his attempt to fit postwar Germans into neat generational cohorts that parallel the rise and fall of the “founding myths,” this model usefully organizes an array of historical markers and competing mentalities regarding how to remember, or forget, the Nazi past. Marcuse defines his cohorts not by birth, but by the instrumental events that occurred when West Germans were coming of age. Thus the 1948ers remember the first postwar economic recovery, while the 1968ers, the first group that did not directly experience the Nazi period, were shaped by generational revolts against their parents’ past. Detlef Hoffmann, for example, was a 1968er so touched by what he saw (Alain Renais’s film *Night and Fog*) and read about the Holocaust as a youth that he became a campaigner for the preservation of concentration-camp sites. From the publication of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in the 1950s through the

Eichmann trial (1961), the American television import *Holocaust* (1979), the *Historikerstreit* (1980s), and the Goldhagen debate (1990s), Marcuse traces the downfall of the myths of ignorance (1981), victimization (1986), and, finally, resistance (1990s). In Dachau itself, the creation of a youth center, improved camp signage, and the rise of a mayor who understood the intimate and inevitable connection between town and camp, reflected this evolution in German postwar memory.

There are heroes and villains in this book, and while there is also a great deal of gray area, the reader who might idealize postwar German democratic life should be prepared for stunning revelations of individual and institutional callousness when it came to Holocaust commemoration in the first decades after the war (a few examples include public and media indifference to memorial ceremonies; public officials, including a Dachau mayor, boycotting survivors' commemorative observances; the removal by the Bavarian Castle and Gardens Administration of an exhibition from the crematorium; and the attempts by Dachau County Governor Heinrich Junker and the city council to efface the remnants of Nazi atrocities). In the end, however, the book, like Germany, moves in a positive direction. Statistics on the number of visitors to Dachau don't creep up but begin to explode in the late 1950s and again in the 1970s (though here, and well into the 1980s, tens of thousands of visitors a year missed seeing the camp because they happened to arrive on a Monday, when it was closed for maintenance by Bavarian officials unwilling to increase slightly their staffing budget), and well-intentioned groups such as Action Sign of Atonement pave the way to combat indifference and misguided attempts to bury the past. But what I found particularly enlightening in Marcuse's book, and what could be said to constitute one of its theses, was not simply his well-documented way of showing how memorials reflect the present more than the past, but his notion that sites such as Dachau "must change to keep pace with the changing prerequisites of present and future visitors" (p. 406). In other words, commemoration, like memory, must be allowed the freedom to evolve.

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***War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany*, Robert G. Moeller (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), xiii + 329 pp., \$29.95.**

***Shifting Memories: The Nazi Past in the New Germany*, Klaus Neumann (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), x + 333 pp., cloth \$54.50, pbk. \$24.95.**

***Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*, Siobhan Kattago (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 196 pp., \$67.95.**

Books on the twin topics of memory and identity in relation to Germany's attempts at dealing with (or skirting) its Nazi past are no longer limited to an internal German dis-