

MONUMENTAL SHIFTS IN MEMORY
THE EVOLUTION OF GERMAN WAR MEMORIALS FROM THE GREAT WAR TO THE
END OF THE COLD WAR

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

John Dreifort, Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

German war memorials post-1945 involved a complicated story of commemoration; the complexities ranged from war memorials adapted multiple times to fit contemporary needs, to military cemeteries which became controversial in the wake of World War II. The different memorial practices examined within this project include: Brandenburg Gate, Neue Wache, memorial sculptures by Gerhard Marcks, Bitburg cemetery, a memorial bell dedicated to Hermann Göring, and *Neulandhalle* (New Land Hall). The individual sites serve as examples of the combination of societal and political factors that influenced the original design and meaning of the locations, as well as the reinterpretations of them.

The continually shifting character of German war memorials highlights the constantly evolving perception of German soldiers who participated in World War II. To differentiate between the actions of ordinary soldiers and the Nazi war criminals, Germans citizens attempted to attribute separate functions to these two groups. The result was that German soldiers increasingly began to share a status similar to other war victims. Other factors that influenced the development of war memorials included the different ideologies that dominated in the Soviet versus Western occupation zones, and debates about whether Germany was a defeated nation or a nation of victims liberated from the Nazi regime.

Memorials function as a method for society to construct a shared history, educate future generations about their past, and create a common cultural identity. This purpose and significance helps to explain why these monuments can lead to debate and controversy. One of the main issues confronting German citizens in the aftermath of World War II was how to memorialize the soldiers who were killed while fighting for the Nazi regime.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / NOMENCLATURE

DDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
FDR	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SS	Schutzstaffel (Protective or Security Squadron)
VDK	Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (German War Graves Agency)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1985, the German magazine *Titanic*, known for its satire, published a series of proposals for potential German war memorials. These mock commemorative designs were published in the aftermath of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and United States President Ronald Reagan's controversial visit to Bitburg Germany's military cemetery as well as in response to German attempts to represent themselves almost universally as "victims" of the Nazi era, as opposed to addressing their other roles as perpetrators or collaborators. One of the satirists, Friedrich Karl Wächter, envisioned "an oversized, maimed German eagle calling plaintively from its high pedestal." Wächter's design was reminiscent of the traditional "19th century patriotic monuments to the German cultural nation." Another writer, Robert Gernhardt, recommended building "a huge stone block that has crushed 'the victims' it purports to commemorate." The author of the *Titanic* article believed this proposal was suitable because it "allows . . . the generic sacrificial victims to be redefined as needed." Historian Harold Marcuse stated that the theme for these satirists, as well as many of their contemporaries, "was the German conception of victimhood, that soothing, reconciliatory category that lumps soldiers, civilians, Jews and partisans into one neat category."¹ The idea of a shared or universal suffering was represented in many of the war memorials erected throughout post-World War II Germany.

The universal application of the term "victim" offended certain groups, such as concentration camp inmates, who felt their suffering was more intense and valid than that of the

¹ Harold Marcuse, "German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial," (lecture, German Studies Association Conference, Washington, D.C., September 25, 1997), UC Santa Barbara: History Department: Prof. Marcuse Presentations Page, March 19, 2013, accessed March 19, 2013, <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/present/neuewach.htm>.

average German civilian, and especially when compared to German soldiers. Marcuse believed a distinction existed between mourning individual losses and comparing that suffering to other victims. “[I]t is a lot to ask of normal mortals that they recognize the victimization of others without any prospect that their own suffering and loss will ever be recognized,” wrote Marcuse. “I think this is much of what is behind the German clamoring for the status of victimhood.”² He wrote that it was acceptable for Germans to “regret” their wartime losses and consider themselves “victims;” however, placing their suffering on an equal level, or higher, than other victims was unacceptable. The conflicting relationship between Germans mourning their wartime losses and categorizing themselves as victims led to intense and prolonged debates. Postwar German civilians struggled to represent their suffering. Attempts to memorialize their fallen soldiers or to create monuments for all the dead or victims of the Nazi era were highly controversial due to their often ambiguous dedications and imagery.

German war memorials from 1945 through 1990, in contrast to the more extensively-studied Holocaust or First World War memorials, involved a uniquely complicated story of commemoration; the complexities ranged from war memorials adapted multiple times to fit contemporary needs to military cemeteries which became controversial in the wake of World War II. The different memorial practices examined within this project include Brandenburg Gate, Neue Wache, memorial sculptures by Gerhard Marcks, Kölmeshöhe Cemetery in Bitburg Germany, a memorial bell dedicated to Hermann Göring, and the *Neulandhalle* (New Land Hall) community center. These sites and memorials demonstrate the complex combination of societal and political factors that influenced the original design, meaning, and any future renovations or

² Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

reinterpretations of the war memorials.³ Additionally, the perception and role of these memorials represented shifts in public memory concerning the commemoration of German soldiers.

Adolf Rieth, a history professor and former director of the Tübingen State Office for historic monuments in Germany, wrote that the result of World War II was that “millions of people had to pay for the mad experiment of Hitler and his comrades with their lives.” Rieth believed this widespread destruction of both lives and cities left lingering questions regarding the memorialization of the German participants as well as victims of the war. He was interested in how the “character” and appearance of postwar memorials would evolve, as well as the differences that would eventually develop between the communist East and capitalist West occupation zones. Rieth wondered what postwar influences would provide the impetus for these changes.⁴ Developing a memorialization practice in post-1945 Germany would prove difficult due to the complex nature of war and memory, both of which are often interpreted contrarily by different nations and by different generations; however, these commemorative issues were especially complicated for Germans due to their unique role during the Third Reich and in the Second World War.

Historically, the symbolism and interpretation of war memorials varied more between the German political conservatives and liberals, but these differences later intensified between the divided German Democratic Republic and German Federal Republic. The eastern and western sections of Germany had vastly different experiences from the time of the immediate postwar years until the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was reflected in the development and public interaction with their respective war memorials. Factors that influenced their approaches to war memorialization included the public’s continuously shifting perception of the German military,

³ For a map of the memorial locations, see Appendices A through D.

⁴ Adolf Rieth, *Monuments to the Victims of Tyranny* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., U.S., 1969), 15.

differences between the Soviet versus Western ideology, and whether an individual believed that Germany was defeated or liberated from the Nazi regime. To differentiate between the actions of ordinary German soldiers and the Nazi war criminals, Germans citizens attempted to attribute separate functions to these two groups after 1945. The result of these efforts was that German soldiers increasingly began to share a status similar to other war victims.

Additionally, the interpretation of Nazi-era history differed between the eastern German Democratic Republic versus the western Federal Republic of Germany, reflecting the Cold War struggles in Germany. Due to the postwar division of Germany, the citizens of the two German states developed national identities that often reflected their occupation zone more than actual historical fact. The differing narratives developed by the East and West Germans served to promote their state interests, frequently at the expense of the other, while also coping with their role during the Third Reich. This divisive mentality and duality of experience led to significant issues when the reunified Germany attempted to consolidate their distinct historical narratives and interpretations of events. In a sense, the nature of war demonstrates “how an individual’s social being is determined by their relationship to the objects that represent them – how objects become metaphors for the self, a way of knowing oneself through things both present and absent.”⁵ These representative objects include war memorials. Germany’s unique experiences during World War II and the legacy of their Nazi past, made constructing a unified identity through national war memorials a continuous challenge during the postwar era. Every memorial had to address both the Nazi actions as well as the German role within this system, which was required regardless of the artists’ or citizens’ intent.

⁵ Nicholas J. Saunders, “Material culture and conflict: the Great War, 1914-2003,” in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6. Saunders was referencing an argument from Janet Hoskins, a professor of anthropology and religion, which appeared in her book, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People’s Lives* (London: Routledge, 1998), 195.

One of the most noticeable differences between East and West German memorials concerned the individuals to whom a monument was dedicated, or meant to commemorate. Historian Gilad Margalit believed that the divergent memorialization practices of East and West Germany, which formed during the Cold War era, “were the products of different ideological views and bore different messages.”⁶

Memorials in the FRG initially focused on German soldiers killed in battle, although in subsequent decades other groups, such as civilian casualties and POWs who were imprisoned, were commemorated. West Germany represented resistance groups, such as the White Rose, and people who attempted to assassinate Hitler and end the Nazi regime, such as Claus von Stauffenberg and the July 20th conspirators, as heroic and “anti-Nazi.” Few memorials were dedicated exclusively to the victims of the Nazis, such as Jews and other concentration camp inmates. More often, these victims were included in monuments “to all the dead.” The German citizens considered to be “victims” of World War II were those affected by the forced expulsions from the eastern territories during and after the war, which was also intended as a condemnation of the Soviet East. Moreover, West Germans often regarded their soldiers, particularly those killed in action, as symbols of heroism.⁷

In contrast, East German war memorials were primarily erected to honor resistance fighters and victims of fascism, which emphasized the suffering of concentration camp inmates and communists who were targeted due to their political affiliations or sympathies. Official commemorative practices in East Germany focused on “antifascism” and criticized Nazism from both a moral and political stance; the emphasis on political resisters was designed to portray the communists as consistently opposed to fascism and inhumanity. Additionally, this official

⁶ Gilad Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory: Germany Remembers Its Dead of World War II*, trans. Haim Watzman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 115-16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 115-116.

narrative allowed East Germans to cast themselves as “victims” of the Allied bombing campaigns.⁸ GDR memorials simultaneously praised the actions of German communists while criticizing, if not partially indicting, the western allies for their role during World War II.

Despite their ideological differences, one commonality between GDR and FRG war memorials was their treatment of German soldiers who fought in World War II. Margalit noted that both nations “chose to view German soldiers who fell in battle as victims of the Nazis rather than Hitler’s obedient servants.” Moreover, the communist German Democratic Republic and democratic Federal Republic of Germany recast the Nazi history in such a way as to allow their nations to move forward with their new allies and in a global context, which Margalit referred to as “reconciliation narrative.” These reconciliation narratives were “characterized by a Christian imprint” and cast all the war-dead as victims, as opposed to differentiating among the many Germans killed during World War II.⁹

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, German citizens had to reconcile their distinct postwar national histories and identities, which was evident in the subsequent reinterpretation and renovation of their war memorials. The reunified Germany sought to form a common history, tradition, and culture by restoring many landmarks—including memorials—to their pre-World War II state. The continually shifting character of German war memorials post-1945 highlights the challenges faced by German citizens concerning the remembrance and commemoration of their soldiers who participated in World War II.

The individual interaction of citizens from a specific nation with a war memorial or memorial site reflects, and contextualizes, the messages and symbols included within the spaces. This led Harold Marcuse to conclude, “The only appropriate relationship for Germans to the

⁸ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 115-116.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 and 116.

Nazi past, I think, is sadness and regret.”¹⁰ Based upon Marcuse’s interpretation of the function of war memorials, German memorials erected or renovated in the wake of World War II should convey a similarly somber tone, such as Käthe Kollwitz’s *Pieta* sculpture which stands inside Neue Wache; in reality, though, their design and interpretation proved much more diverse and complex.

Historian Michael Prince wrote that nations construct memorials as a way to connect themselves to their history, and they become “statements about who we were, who we are and who we wish to be.”¹¹ However, if the purpose of these postwar memorials was to ensure that people or events were not forgotten, this definition of memorialization becomes problematic for German citizens whose recent past was permanently linked to the Nazis. War memorials were created to form a shared public memory. They communicated the Germans’ extreme loss and suffering while also providing a form of catharsis for those left behind; however, this function was complicated by the nature of German suffering as both victims and perpetrators during World War II. Moreover, German war memorials had the potential to cause an international controversy with an overt, implied, or even accidental reference to the Nazis – which occasionally did occur during the postwar years.

Another aspect of war memorialization was the development of military cemeteries. The practice of burying soldiers killed in battle developed in response to the millions of casualties inflicted during the First World War. On September 23, 1915, the German Ministry of War established a set of guidelines which addressed the creation and maintenance of military

¹⁰ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹¹ K. Michael Prince, *War and German Memory: Excavating the Significance of the Second World War in German Cultural Consciousness*, reprint ed. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 41.

cemeteries. These new regulations centralized all of the soldiers' graves into a common area where they could be more easily maintained; however, they also ensured a proper burial.¹² After 1918, the Germany army disbanded the groups that were responsible for the upkeep of German military cemeteries. Dr. Siegfried Emmo Eulen, previously an officer in the German army and formerly responsible for military graves in Turkey and Poland, established the *Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (Care for German War Graves) on December 16, 1919 to maintain the graves of soldiers who were killed while fighting in foreign nations. Eulen envisioned the *Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* as a "privately funded and non-political" organization that all citizens were welcome to join, which he emphasized by adding "*Volksbund*" (People's Association) to the group's name. Private organizations, such as the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (VDK) in Germany, were founded to compensate for the government's lack of resources following their defeat in the First World War. The newly formed Weimar Republic "was neither politically nor economically" capable of burying or maintaining the graves of the nearly 2 million soldiers who died fighting in the war, of which only an estimated 10 percent were buried in Germany.¹³ The VDK was forced to rely on volunteers for labor and financial support, which ultimately influenced the design of German military cemeteries. Despite the fact that the Versailles Treaty assigned the maintenance of military

¹² George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 81.

¹³ "Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK): Formation of the Volksbund," *The Great War, 1914-1918*, accessed February 24, 2013, <http://www.greatwar.co.uk/organizations/volksbund-vdk.htm>. And Fritz Kirchmeier, "Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.v.: Eine Kurzdarstellung [German War Graves Association: An Outline]," *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge*, accessed August 16, 2013, <http://www.volksbund.de/volksbund.html>.

cemeteries to the country in which the graves were located,¹⁴ the design of the cemeteries continued to reflect the soldiers' country of origin.¹⁵

Although it was common for the military cemeteries of Western nations to focus on camaraderie between the fallen soldiers and utilize crosses and stones throughout their designs, Germany's were unlike their European counterparts in several ways. German military cemeteries traditionally excluded flowers due to the maintenance and planting costs; however, this made German graves distinctive when compared to their contemporaries.¹⁶ German military cemeteries emphasized standardization throughout the design and were occasionally referred to as "typically Prussian" due to their lack of ornamentation or personalization; for example, inscriptions were prohibited. To "ensure that simplicity and order were preserved" German military cemeteries were funded by the local community, not a fallen soldier's family. Iron or stone crosses, often in the shape of the Iron Cross military honor, were frequently used in lieu of headstones.¹⁷ Changes in memorial practices, initially begun in the aftermath of First World War, continue throughout the 20th century. The result of these developments was the creation of a new iconographical language that distinguished between the commemorative practices and tone of nations who viewed themselves as victors or vanquished in a war.

The practice of constructing memorials to fallen soldiers was largely a 20th century development. Prior to 1918, most monuments erected after a war appeared celebratory and were designed to demonstrate a soldier's bravery, military victory, and glorify the leadership of

¹⁴ According to Mosse, this section of the Versailles Treaty remained in effect until 1966. Before then, German military cemeteries from World War I and World War II that were located in France remained under French authority. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 82.

¹⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 82.

¹⁶ The *Volksbund*, the journal of the German Association of Landscape Architects, wrote that, "unlike the English or French, the Germans do not disguise the tragic and heroic death of the fallen by planting colorful flowers. They confront it instead, for to affirm the tragic is a sign of culture, while mere civilization seeks to ignore it." Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 85.

¹⁷ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 84-85.

generals. However, after the carnage of the First World War, Western perceptions of warfare and individual soldiers began to shift dramatically. Societies now focused attention on their sense of loss and suffering; war was considered a waste of human life. This shift in attitude was evidenced by the changes that occurred in the design of war memorials, which emphasized the somber and tragedy. Artists created war memorials that reminded the public of the horrors of trench warfare and agony of battle. However, this shift in public sentiment was not immediately reflected in war memorials, because commissioning sculptures as memorials was uncommon prior to 1918. Additionally, these early 20th century war memorials were not necessarily designed to promote quiet reflection among visitors and could take many forms. Immediately following the end of the First World War, war memorial committees often recommended using their funds to create memorials that were also “utilitarian structures,” such as libraries, parks, schools, or hospitals, instead of “commissioning sculptors to produce something figurative and symbolic.”¹⁸

Less than three decades later, German war memorials would once again transform dramatically in response to the tragedy and destruction that resulted from the Nazi ideologies and defeat in World War II. Memorializing German soldiers who died while fighting for the Third Reich created lingering disputes regarding the purpose and tone of these monuments. Michael Prince described post-1945 German war memorials as embodying “a certain grim determination to rescue the memory of those who fell not only from the oblivion of forgetting but also from the ignominy of moral taint.” He concluded that these monuments “seek to rescue the honor of the German soldiers they commemorate.” Visually, these memorials appear somber as if they are

¹⁸ Jonathan Black, “‘Thanks for the Memory’: War memorials, spectatorship and the trajectories of commemoration, 1919-2001,” in *Matters of Conflict: Material Culture, Memory and the First World War*, ed. Nicholas J. Saunders (New York: Routledge, 2004), 134. Originally in Alex King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism and Politics of Remembrance*, (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 26, 65-68.

attempting to invoke a sense of reflection and contemplation in viewers, which seems appropriate because the German term for memorial, *Denkmal*, translates as “to think a moment.”¹⁹ Historian George Mosse described the changes which occurred in German memorialization practices as a result of the First and Second World Wars. Mosse wrote, “The memorials to the fallen of the First World War referred to the war experience itself; the *Mahnmale* [Memorials] after the Second World War symbolized the consequences of war.”²⁰ Memorials can function as an indicator of a society’s opinion of the war and soldiers; however, they can also demonstrate drastic changes in public memory and perception.

To construct the history of a war memorial, the date that the piece was commissioned is significant, because the time period provides context for contemporary viewers as well as insight into the artist’s, and subsequently public’s, opinions concerning the subject matter—in this case World War II era soldiers. Moreover, in order to represent or address German feelings and experiences in World War II, artists relied on a set of nearly universal symbols and icons to communicate with viewers. Using iconography in their war memorials allowed members of a specific society to interpret a deeper message from within the sculpture. While this practice is not unique or exclusive to Germany, the iconography utilized both demonstrates the attitudes of a generation as well as highlights significant cultural influences. The symbols included, as well as those excluded, reflects shifts in public opinion and society.

Historian Margarete Myers Feinstein believed that symbols’ ambiguous nature allows them to “convey and integrate a variety of meanings, and they invite an array of interpretations.” Therefore, Feinstein concluded, “The meaning of a symbol in a particular moment depends not

¹⁹ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 42- 43.

²⁰ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 215. Mosse’s description of the memorialization differences paraphrased an argument by historian Adolf Rieth, which originally appeared in Rieth’s book: *Denkmal ohne Pathos, Totenmahle des Zweiten Weltkrieges in Süd-Württemberg-Hohenzollern mit einer geschichtlichen Einleitung* (Tübingen, 1967), 24.

only on the immediate circumstances but also on prior understandings of that symbol's significance."²¹ The continuously evolving character of symbols explains why the symbolism attributed to war memorials shifts over time as subsequent generations reinterpret the meaning of traditional icons in a manner that fits within their contemporary world. Additionally, this makes understanding memorials within the context of their original construction, and not only their contemporary form, of primary importance.

When utilizing iconography, artists often rely on cultural artifacts and traditions, such as Biblical texts or mythology, which (in theory) all members of a given society would be able to interpret; these familiar symbols were meant to function as "universal signs to be easily read and decoded."²² In Germany, it was common to include Christian symbols in order to equate the Biblical figures with contemporary individuals. For example, Christian iconography could be utilized as a way to manipulate viewers into associating their secular leadership with God. The Nazis applied this technique to the interior of *Neue Wache* in 1933, with the inclusion of a Christian cross, oak wreath, and boulder, which were intended to form a "secular altar," reminiscent of those found within Christian churches. Within the context of World War II, "[t]he sacred associations of the cross were intended to legitimize Hitler's fiction that the Nazi state was chosen by God as the successor of the Holy Roman Empire," wrote Karen Till, a geography professor who specializes in the relationship between place and memory.²³

War memorials appeal to familiar images and storylines, such as mythological figures, to give context and meaning to recent fighting and loss of life. "War-related memorials were

²¹ Margarete Myers Feinstein, *State Symbols: the Quest for Legitimacy in the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, 1949-1959* (Boston: Humanities Press, 2002), 7-8.

²² Gudrun Bayerlein et al., "Selected Examples of Iconography in German Fine Arts" (ZEPF Research Institute, University of Koblenz Landau, Germany), 206, accessed August 16, 2013, http://michelangelo.pixel-online.org/files/Manual_of_fine_arts/New%20Manual%2007%20germany_part_1.pdf.

²³ Karen E. Till, "Staging the Past: Landscape Designs, Cultural Identity and Erinnerungspolitik at Berlin's Neue Wache," *Cultural Geographies* 6, no. 3 (July 1999): 258-259.

perceived generally as intended to valorize the suffering in such a way as to justify it historically,” wrote James Young, a professor of Judaic and Near Eastern studies. “This aim was best accomplished by recalling traditional heroic icons in order to invest memory of a recent war with past pride and loyalties, which would also explain a recent war in ways visible and seemingly self-evident to the public.”²⁴

Christian and classical iconography remained the most common symbols utilized on German war memorials. These two dominant themes, which were frequently combined, “help transcend the horror of war and point to the war experience as the fulfillment of a personal and national ideal.”²⁵ However, after the First World War, the use of Germanic symbolism increased. In April 2007, Solveig Köbernick, then an art history Ph.D. candidate at the University of Leipzig, Germany, curated an exhibition at Harvard University that featured seven sculptures by well-known German artists, including Gerhard Marcks. Köbernick was interested in the reasons behind these artists’ decisions to incorporate mythology as a means of self-expression, which he felt was significant due to the extraordinary changes Germany underwent during the twentieth-century.²⁶ Individualizing these traditional stories gave artists the ability to represent contemporary developments within a familiar framework, which allowed viewers to comprehend better recent events.²⁷

²⁴ James E. Young, “Memorials and Meaning,” *Sculpture Review* 55, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 9.

²⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 103.

²⁶ *Exhibition of German 20th-Century Sculpture On View at Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum: “Making Myth Modern” Examines How German Artists Adapted Myths to Express Contemporary Concerns* (Cambridge: Harvard University Art Museums, 2007).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Traditionally, the iconography depicted on German war memorials centered on nature; oak trees were themselves a form of memorialization in German military cemeteries. Known as *Heldenheine* (Heroes' Groves), oak trees represented the romanticized idea of a soldier who "stood strong, yet alone, in a field." Additionally, the inclusion of a marble block within a memorial "symbolized primeval power," while boulders "emphasize the strength of the nation and an ideal of the genuine and enduring, as opposed to the modern."²⁸

August J. Langbehn, a German art historian, attributed the traditional German proclivity to granite as the result of its being "a Nordic and truly Germanic stone." Boulders of granite were considered representative of Germany's natural resources, both literally in terms of its geographic location and figuratively in the character of its citizens. Langbehn wrote, "Stein

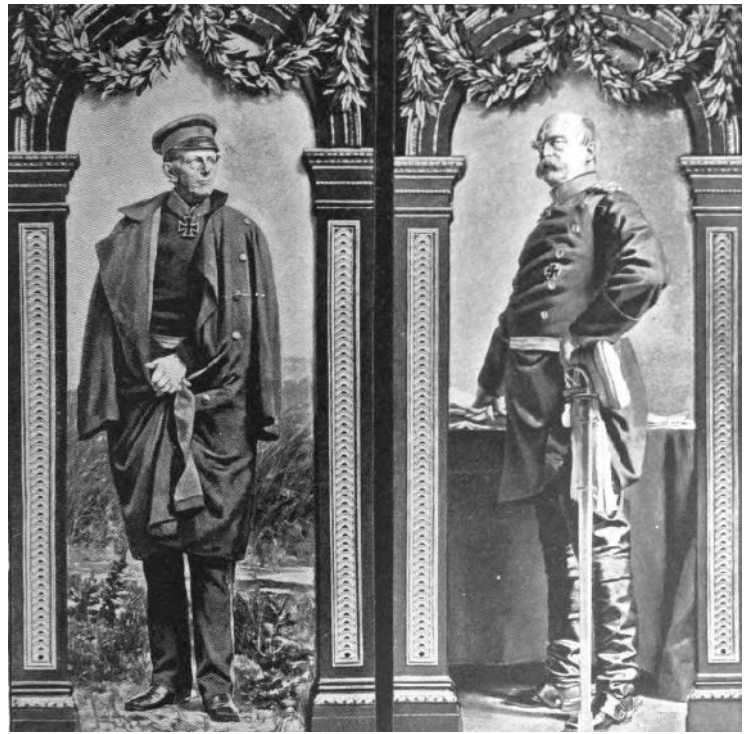


Fig. 1 Helmuth von Moltke and Otto von Bismarck in their military dress and Iron Crosses.

and Scharnhorst, Bismarck and Moltke – these are enormous boulders who serve as the political foundation stones of the German Reich."²⁹

²⁸ Till, "Staging the Past": 257-258.

²⁹ August Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt Als Erzieher: Von einem Deutschen* [Rembrandt as Educator: By a German] (Leipzig: C.L. Hirschfeld, 1890), 214. Although Langbehn's book was a success critically and commercially, it is now criticized for its racial connotations. His book was well-received among right-wing critics of modern art, including the Nazis who reprinted his book multiple times. Additionally, later editions featured a chapter praising anti-Semitism. For more information on Langbehn, see Fritz R. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: a Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (California Library Reprint Series) 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

John L. Stoddard, an American lecturer and author, quoted a man he described as a “witty Frenchman” as saying, “Prussia was born from a cannon-ball, like an eagle from an egg.”³⁰ The implication of Prussian militarism as an inherent quality was understood, and the reference to eagles would not have been lost on contemporary readers. Eagles have long been associated with Germanic culture and iconography, dating back to 800 AD when Charlemagne instituted the single-headed eagle as his chosen representation of imperial strength, and three hundred years later, a black eagle upon a gold background served as a symbol for the Holy Roman Empire until its dissolution in 1806.³¹

During the tumultuous Revolutions of 1848, the eagle was appropriated for the democratic cause when the German revolutionaries removed the imperial icons and integrated the double-headed imperial eagle into the German Confederation’s coat of arms.³² In 1871, this state emblem was once again modified, this time by Kaiser Wilhelm I; he transformed the single-headed German royal eagle



Fig. 2 Image depicts the Imperial Eagle as interpreted during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm I.

into the German Empire’s imperial armorial. Wilhelm I’s eagle had a black body and a red beak,

³⁰ John Lawson Stoddard, *John L. Stoddard’s Lectures: Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Moscow* (Boston: Balch Brothers Co., 1898), 6: 16.

³¹ “The Federal Eagle,” Deutscher Bundestag, accessed February 3, 2014, http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/bundestag/symbols/eagle/. Kaiser Frederick II was credited with introducing the double headed eagle during his reign in 1200, and after 1400 this symbol was part of the German Empire’s heraldic coat of arms, while the single headed eagle represented German royalty. According to Feinstein, the Holy Roman Empire was represented by a double headed German imperial eagle, a crown, scepter, and imperial apple. For more information, see “The Federal Eagle,” Deutscher Bundestag, and Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 39.

³² “The Federal Eagle,” Deutscher Bundestag. This appropriation of the imperial eagle was confirmed by the National Assembly in Frankfurt; however, a commemorative coin with a double-headed eagle was issued prior to their approval in order to mark the opening of the National Assembly.

tongue, and talons. Additionally, the eagle had an image of the Prussian eagle on its breastplate, with Charlemagne's crown and two intersecting arches above its head. Excluded from Wilhelm's design were the imperial scepter and orb.³³ The significance of these newly added symbols was twofold: first, they were designed to be reminiscent of the German "medieval empire," and second, they were intended as a way to represent Prussian dominance within the recently unified Germany.³⁴

Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated following the German defeat in World War I, which led to the creation of the democratic Weimar Republic. This new government reinterpreted the Germanic eagle, which was stripped of all imperial connections and given a less menacing appearance. On November 11, 1919, an official announcement declared that. . .

the imperial coat of arms shall show the single-headed black eagle on a golden background, with its head turned to the right, the wings open and feathers not spread, with beak, tongue and talons depicted in red.³⁵

The Weimar era design "represented a streamlined, more modern German eagle," and decades later it was utilized by the post-World War II government established in Bonn, the capital of the Federal Republic of Germany. Bonn intentionally chose this version of the state eagle to establish its "legitimacy as heir to German tradition."³⁶ The FRG used the standards issued in November 1919 as the basis for their state eagle. The only changes to the original document were the inclusion of "federal eagle" instead of "imperial eagle" and "federal coat of arms" replaced "imperial coat of arms."³⁷

Introducing the eagle into West German state symbols was controversial due to its association with government power, which ranged from monarchs and dictators to democracies.

³³ "The Federal Eagle," Deutscher Bundestag.

³⁴ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 39.

³⁵ "The Federal Eagle," Deutscher Bundestag.

³⁶ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 39.

³⁷ "The Federal Eagle," Deutscher Bundestag.

This long history, entwined with associations to various forms of governments, explains why the West German government selected the eagle design from the Weimar Republic era, which was seen as representing a more democratic and less authoritative tradition. Additionally, by selecting the state eagle in use prior to the Nazi takeover, the postwar West German government visually represented themselves and the West German nation as the legitimate successors of the Weimar Republic as opposed to their East German counterparts.

Despite the fact that the Nazis are most often associated with swastikas, they too incorporated the eagle into their repertoire of state symbols. In 1936, the Nazis set guidelines for their official state eagle, which specified “a swastika framed by a wreath of oak leaves, topped



Fig. 3 This Nazi era eagle was perched atop the barracks that housed Hitler’s SS bodyguards in Berlin.

by an open-winged and right-facing eagle, as the sovereign symbol of the Reich.” However, the Nazi Party also incorporated a left-facing eagle as the symbol for its political party.³⁸ This change was intended to symbolize the unity between the Nazi state and German tradition as well as represent the Nazi belief “that party symbols were symbols of the state.” One significant difference between the

traditional depiction of the German eagle and the Nazi interpretation involved the direction the bird faced. Traditionally shown facing only to the right, the Nazi state eagle’s head turned to the right, but the Nazi party eagle turned to the left; in heraldry facing left represented a bastard.

Feinstein wrote that when this heraldic association was brought to the attention of an unnamed

³⁸ “The Federal Eagle,” Deutscher Bundestag.

Nazi leader, he “improvised a response, claiming the Nazi eagle looked to the east, where Germany’s destiny lay.”³⁹

After the war, the East German government considered including the eagle in their state emblem; nineteen proposals were submitted, of which seven featured eagles. The designs ranged from eagles that closely resembled the Weimar era interpretation, to explicitly communist designs complete with hammers and sickles.⁴⁰ In spite of, or possibly because of, the heraldic association with bastardization, the East German government was presented with eagles that exclusively faced left; however, Feinstein believed this was an intentional decision to demonstrate solidarity with the Soviet Union. Other proposed East German eagles had an inverted red triangle on their chest, which referenced the patches worn by communists imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps.⁴¹ In the end, however, the Soviets “rejected both the authoritarian eagle and the martyrdom of the inverted red triangle.”⁴² Instead, the German Democratic Republic’s government chose “to emphasize the new social order rather than establish the regime’s place in German tradition.” The official state crest of the GDR featured a hammer and compasses, surrounded “by a wreath of grain ears,” and “with a ribbon of black, red and gold wound around the bottom section.”⁴³ In the GDR, Feinstein wrote, “Legitimacy, it seemed, was to come from the present restructuring of society, not from German history.”⁴⁴

Despite a recent aversion, one of the most recognizable symbols of German militarism remains the Iron Cross. The Iron Cross was designed by German architect and artist Karl Friedrich Schinkel and introduced by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1813 for soldiers who

³⁹ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 44. According to Feinstein, besides eagles, hammers and wheat were common symbols, appearing in eight proposals. Moreover, the eagle which resembled the Weimar Republic design was critiqued as needing additional modifications to distinguish it from its original predecessor.

⁴¹ Ibid., 44-45.

⁴² Ibid., 47-48.

⁴³ “The Federal Eagle,” *Deutscher Bundestag*.

⁴⁴ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 49.

exhibited “outstanding-bravery” during the Napoleonic Wars. This military honor was later awarded to veterans in the Franco-Prussian War and World War I. Adolf Hitler, a private in the German Army, reportedly said “the happiest day of his life” was when he received the Iron Cross second class for his service as a dispatch runner in the trenches of the First World War.⁴⁵

Although the Iron Cross was not awarded after 1918, Hitler reintroduced the practice in 1939; however, the Nazi government awarded a modified version of the military honor which featured a swastika in the center of the cross.

Ironically, in the fascist Third Reich, Hitler favored awarding a democratic version of the Iron Cross. This military medal was unique because all soldiers were eligible to receive the honor, as opposed to others which were bestowed upon officers only. In the aftermath of the Third Reich, the Iron Cross became more than a symbol of military bravery and triumph; it was also associated with the terror the Nazis unleashed across Europe. Although this symbol is still included on German military vehicles, after 1945 it was no longer awarded as a medal due to its association with National Socialism.⁴⁶ Allied Control Council Law No. 8 banned Germans



Fig. 4 Image demonstrates several variations to the Order of the Iron Cross from 1813-1870.

⁴⁵ Tony Paterson, “Bid to Restore Iron Cross Divides Germany,” *Independent (London)*, March 7, 2008. And Göran Therborn, “Monumental Europe: The National Years. On the Iconography of European Capital Cities,” *Housing Theory and Society* 19, no. 1 (2002): 33.

⁴⁶ Paterson, “Bid to Restore Iron Cross.”

“from wearing, bestowing, or accepting civilian or military orders, citations, and medals.” This ban included the Iron Cross. Indeed, German soldiers often voluntarily disposed of these military honors to protect themselves from possible Allied retribution or postwar accusations of having “fought zealously for the Nazis.”⁴⁷

Contemporary attempts to reintroduce the Iron Cross as a military honor have led to debate among members of the German Bundestag. In 2007, more than 5,000 German citizens reportedly signed a petition in favor of reinstating the Iron Cross as a military honor. Army Reserve Colonel Ernst-Reinhard Beck, who also served as a conservative MP in Angela Merkel’s government and President of the Army Reservists’ Association, supported this suggestion due to the service of German soldiers stationed abroad. Those who favor continuing the practice of awarding the Iron Cross emphasize the long history of the medal, which extends well-beyond the Third Reich and Nazis. However, opponents to the reintroduction of the Iron Cross believe Germany’s more recent history has permanently altered the perception of this military honor. “Given the legacy of Hitler and the Second World War, the medal is too burdened by the past for it to be reintroduced,” Rainer Arnold, a Social Democrat politician, stated. Other German politicians, such as Elke Hoff, a military specialist for the liberal Free Democrats party, recommended spending funds on improving the training or equipping of troops, not issuing medals.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 154.

⁴⁸ Tony Paterson, “Bid to Restore Iron Cross.”



Fig. 5 Image of a World War I era Iron Cross Second Class.



Fig. 6 Simplified drawing of the military honor bestowed during the Nazi era.

These symbols derived from Germanic tradition, and passed down throughout successive German governments, were not only used to legitimize state power, but were also used to commemorate their past. Steel helmets and iron crosses once held a prominent place in German iconography, but now rarely appear on post-World War II memorials. These icons are shunned by most German citizens due to their association with a “militaristic style” which was deemed “inappropriate” for war memorials located in urban areas, although they can still be found in some rural or more remote areas.⁴⁹ The cemeteries of small towns frequently display war memorials in remembrance of civilian and military casualties; however, the symbols included on these monuments can differ greatly from their urban counterparts, seemingly due to their geographic location. Possible explanations for the disparity in style could include stronger ties to folk traditions or symbols, a more established localized identity in rural areas, or a lack of funds to commit to redesigning these monuments.

⁴⁹ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 43.

When discussing the reunification of Germany, sociologist Göran Therborn believed several issues arose concerning which buildings, streets, and monuments should be maintained, renovated, or demolished. “These issues are objects of heated political controversy, often also of no less heated aesthetic polemics,” Therborn wrote. “The outcome will have enduring effects, moulded in stone as it is.”⁵⁰ The significance of these choices was in their ability to define the new state, government, and German identity. Specifically, war memorials function as a method for society to construct a shared history, educate future generations about their past, and create or identify with a common cultural identity. This purpose and significance helps to explain why these monuments led to debate and controversy in postwar Germany. Germany’s experiences during the war, combined with the legacy of their Nazi past, made constructing a unified national identity a difficult endeavor, which was illuminated by the controversies surrounding the creation and interpretation of their war memorials. Moreover, German citizens continue to face challenges when attempting to commemorate their soldiers, because each form of their post-World War II memorialization is forced to confront or address their Nazi past as each is viewed within this context.

Issues specifically relating to German war memorials post-1945 concerned who to classify as a victim, what symbols should represent universal mourning, and the reinterpretation of historical facts due to the German role in the Second World War. Most of the controversy concerned the memorialization and remembrance of German World War II era soldiers and their perceived roles as either perpetrators or victims. These debates were further complicated by the division and political climate of post-war Germany, which experienced multiple dramatic shifts in government. All of these factors can be seen in the construction, renovation, and interpretation of Germany’s memorialization practices.

⁵⁰ Therborn, “Monumental Europe”: 26.

Although hundreds of memorials have been excluded from this study, such as those dedicated specifically to concentration camp victims or constructed for Communist leaders during the Soviet occupation, the issues arising in the examples discussed in this thesis represent broad themes, and are in some ways universal to the discussions and debates concerning the entirety of post-World War II German military commemoration. The selected individual sites serve as examples of both the various forms of war memorialization that have developed in Germany, from cemeteries to monuments, as well as the challenges that they engendered. Each memorial discussed was chosen for its specific contributions to the understanding and creation of war memorials and memorial spaces. All were significantly influenced by the Nazi era, even if it was constructed prior to the Third Reich. Moreover, the legacy of this decade in German history continues to effect the interpretation and role of these sites.

CHAPTER 2

Brandenburg Gate: A Monument to Victory and Memorial for Peace

Brandenburg Gate, situated along the western edge of Berlin's *Pariser Platz*, served for decades as the ceremonial entrance onto the famed *Unter den Linden*, which cuts across the German capital and leads to other landmarks such as the Prussian Imperial palace and the home of Field Marshall Helmut von Moltke. The buildings located along *Unter den Linden* hearken back to the Prussian military traditions and emphasis on monarchy.



Fig. 7 Drawing of Brandenburg Gate circa 1898.

In 1734, Brandenburg Gate was commissioned as part of a customs and excise wall designed to control the movement of goods and people in and around Berlin; it formed one segment of the city walls that encompassed the entirety of Berlin from 1736 until its demolition more than a century later. It was necessary to remove the customs wall because it hindered the urban development of Berlin as the German capital grew in population and expanded its city limits.⁵¹

⁵¹ Hermann G. Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin: A Study in Environmental Planning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 18.

Although eighteen of these city gates were constructed, only the famed Brandenburg Gate remains. In 1788 Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm II commissioned Carl Gotthard Langhan to revitalize Brandenburg Gate. The Kaiser wanted this gate to function not only as an entrance into Berlin, but also as a grand entryway onto Unter den Linden, which led directly to the Prussian palace. Construction began in 1789 and was completed two years later. Langhan's redesign of the monument was inspired by the Propylaea, the ancient gate leading to the Greek Acropolis.⁵² The similarities between the two gateways are easily identifiable because both feature several of the same prominent features. Brandenburg Gate is approximately 65 feet high, 213 feet in length, and 36 feet in depth; it was constructed from sandstone with 12 Doric columns along the front.⁵³ The columns are arranged into two groups of six which creates five portals. Traditionally, the center portal was reserved exclusively for the Kaiser and members of royalty, while the other portals were open to the public; however, this practice ended with the kaiser's abdication after World War I.⁵⁴

The top of Brandenburg Gate features several sculpture friezes which depict mythological figures such as Hercules.⁵⁵ The symbols depicted on Brandenburg Gate are significant indicators of the priorities and values of modern Germany. According to the Berlin Senate Department, "Personifications of virtues like friendship and statesmanship are represented, along with symbols of arts and sciences, because they make a city like Berlin bloom in times of peace." Moreover, the inclusions of Hercules' feats "allude to the time of the wars and the subsequent period of reconstruction, during which Friedrich II made Prussia into a

⁵² Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 80.

⁵³ For additional information on Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns, see Helen Gardner, et. al. "Gods, Heroes, and Athletes: The Art of Ancient Greece," *Gardner's Art through the Ages, the Western Perspective, 12th ed. vol. 1* (Belmont: Thomson Higher Education, 2006).

⁵⁴ Therborn, "Monumental Europe": 33.

⁵⁵ "Unter den Linden: Brandenburger Tor," Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment, accessed February 25, 2013, http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/denkmal/denkmale_in_berlin/en/unter_den_linden/brandenburger_tor.shtml.

European power and laid the foundation for flourishing trade and crafts.” Additionally, Brandenburg Gate functions as a memorial for the emperor who died shortly before its construction.⁵⁶

In 1793, a statue by Gottfried Schadow was added to the top of Brandenburg Gate. Known as the *Quadriga*, this statue originally depicted the Goddess of Peace, Eirene, wearing armor and raising a staff as she rode in a chariot drawn by four horses.⁵⁷ The Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment in Berlin described the *Quadriga* as a victory goddess “crowning” their iconic gate and “‘who brings peace’, marching into the city.”⁵⁸

Kaiser Friedrich II reportedly considered Berlin “primarily a gigantic parade ground.” This impression was likely due to the fact that Germany’s largest garrison was stationed in the capital city. Additionally, until the nineteenth century, the majority of Berlin’s population was comprised of military personnel.⁵⁹ Göran Therborn believed capital cities were “manifestations of political power,” and that rituals formed a significant aspect of capitals, which included royal demonstrations such as military parades through Brandenburg Gate, which were especially significant in Berlin, one of few capitals with “centrally located parade grounds.”⁶⁰

Several contemporary sources likened the military processions through Brandenburg Gate to the Romans marching triumphantly home from battle.⁶¹ Architectural historian Hermann Pundt, a Berlin native, wrote that Brandenburg Gate was “Berlin’s propylaeum, marking the western entrance to the Unter den Linden, Prussia’s future via triumphalis, and facing east

⁵⁶ “Unter den Linden: Brandenburger Tor,” Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment.

⁵⁷ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 80.

⁵⁸ “Unter den Linden: Brandenburger Tor,” Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment.

⁵⁹ Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin*, 25.

⁶⁰ Therborn, “Monumental Europe”: 26 and 29.

⁶¹ “The German Capital: Unter Den Linden and the Palace,” *Sunday Inter Ocean (Chicago)*, March 6, 1892. And “Bismarck’s Trap,” *The Georgia Weekly Telegraph and Journal & Messenger*, June 27, 1871.

toward the palace in the heart of the city.”⁶² In 1892 an American journalist wrote that this gate “is as much a part of the history of Germany as the battles of Frederick or the history of the Great Electors.”⁶³

This image of Berlin did not change until after the death of Friedrich II and Friedrich Wilhelm III came to power. Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III wanted Berlin to not only demonstrate the military strengths of Germany, but also its culture. After 1786, and with the help of architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Friedrich Wilhelm III slowly transformed this “relatively isolated provincial city” into “a capital of progressive cultural standards” from which he ruled Germany.⁶⁴ Despite his efforts, however, the militaristic nature of German culture and society was well engrained among Berliners and Brandenburg Gate remained central to military commemorations.



Fig. 8 Image is an allegorical depiction of Prussia triumphing over France: Napoleon attempts to leave Berlin with his malnourished horses while the goddess of victory guides the Quadriga back toward Brandenburg Gate. The caption reads, “Arrogance took her away – bravery returns her.”

In 1806, the *Quadriga* was stolen by the French, following the Prussian defeat during the Napoleonic Wars. French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte took the large statue back to the Louvre

⁶² Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin*, 12 and 14.

⁶³ “The German Capital: Unter Den Linden and the Palace.”

⁶⁴ Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin*, 25.

in Paris to commemorate his victory. This event “spawned a vigorous German nationalism,” and in 1814, General Gebhard Leberecht Blücher returned the *Quadriga* to Berlin and its prominent position atop Brandenburg Gate, after what the Germans refer to as “the victorious conclusion of the



Fig. 9 Close up view of the Goddess’ staff after restoration (circa 1991).

wars of liberation.” This episode in German history was reflected in the modifications that the Kaiser commissioned for the *Quadriga* which was transformed from the Goddess of Peace Eirene into “a Prussian Victoria.”⁶⁵ The oak wreath atop of the Peace Goddess’ staff was adorned with an Iron Cross inside the wreath, while a crowned Prussian eagle was perched above.⁶⁶ These changes to the goddess’ staff drastically altered “the figure’s interpretation from a courier of peace into a goddess of victory.”⁶⁷

During his visit to Berlin during the late 1890s, John Stoddard described his impressions of Brandenburg Gate. Stoddard, an American writer and lecturer, was accompanied by his friend, a longtime resident of Berlin, who reminded Stoddard “that through these parallel arcades, and in the very direction in which we are now looking, triumphal entries into Berlin are always made.”⁶⁸ The German Army triumphantly marched through Brandenburg Gate after defeating their enemies, which was a tradition dating back to the Napoleonic Wars, although Stoddard

⁶⁵ Therborn, “Monumental Europe”: 33.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁷ “Unter den Linden: Brandenburger Tor,” Senate Department for Urban Development.

⁶⁸ The victory procession that Stoddard found most striking, however, occurred in 1871, the year the Germans defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War. He described the streets as lined with “thousands of admiring relatives and friends” welcoming home their victorious German veterans. Stoddard, *Lectures*, 12.



Fig. 10 Prussian troops parade home through Brandenburg Gate on June 16, 1871.

believed the triumphal procession following Germany's victory in the Franco-Prussian War was "the most inspiring."⁶⁹

Throughout the nineteenth century, American newspapers were filled with reports of massive parades, royal celebrations, and descriptions of

the funeral processions such as those for Field Marshall Helmut von Moltke and Kaiser Wilhelm I; each event centered on Brandenburg Gate, which was always decorated for the occasion. The military victory displays were accompanied by massive crowds of cheering Germans, flowers were strewn along the streets, and cannons were fired. The scenes accompanying the funerals of Moltke and Wilhelm I were no less a spectacle as their coffins were drawn through Unter den Linden and Brandenburg Gate on their way to their final resting place. Crowds filled the streets and military bands played music at several points during the ritual; however, the windows along their route, as well as Brandenburg Gate itself, were draped in black cloth as a symbol of mourning. During Wilhelm's funeral procession, an arch was built in front of Brandenburg Gate that read "God bless you," and Prussian Eagles were displayed atop tall, black draped pillars at street corners.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Stoddard, *Lectures*, 12. Author's note: According to the Deutsches Historisches Museum, in 1806 Napoleon's army was the first to utilize Brandenburg Gate for a victory procession, which Friedrich Wilhelm III imitated years later when his troops marched home. "Napoleon entering Berlin through the Brandenburg Gate on 27th October 1806," Deutsches Historisches Museum, accessed March 5, 2014, http://www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/staendige-ausstellung/1789-1871/objekt_en.html#objekt11.

⁷⁰ "The German Rejoicing," *Vermont Watchman and State Journal*, June 21, 1871. And "To the Tomb: Imposing Ceremonies at the Funeral of the Late German Emperor," *Atchinson Daily Globe*, March 17, 1888.

In 1878 an unnamed American journalist who wrote for the *Independent Statesman* traveled across Europe in order to report home about European society and culture. In Berlin, the journalist admired the beautiful architecture and sculptures that decorated Unter den Linden; the journalist's only critique involved the trees, which the author wrote "are not beautiful in form nor in foliage at this season of the year."⁷¹ This critique regarding the trees was echoed by several contemporary sources; however, the reporter admired Brandenburg Gate and its neighboring structures, often speaking of their unrivaled beauty on the European continent. The journalist wrote that Berlin "is rich in statues of all kinds, and especially on war monuments." The majority of the article focused on these works of art, including Brandenburg Gate, most often commentating on their militaristic themes and qualities. Equestrian statues, mosaics depicting scenes of war, Victory Goddesses, and monuments dedicated to specific German wars were described in detail. The pride that German citizens took in their military success was evident.⁷² During his visit to Berlin during the late 1890s, John Stoddard described the German capital as "the most warlike of cities." He wrote:

No other capital in Europe has so many statues in its streets, yet almost every one portrays some military hero or some warlike deed. Thus, within a little distance of each other are the figures of Frederick the Great with his attendant generals, and the great Prussian leaders in the national uprising against Napoleon, -- Blücher, York, Gneisenau, Bülow, and Scharnhorst. . . . Such statues make the Unter den Linden a kind of Triumphal Way and suggest courage, victory, and conquest. In time of peace they are impressive; in time of war they must be thoroughly inspiring. At every step the dullest cannot fail to comprehend that he is in a nation of warriors. Nowhere is this better exemplified than by the groups of statuary on some of the Berlin bridges. One, in particular, personifies Prussia; and without doubt the sculptor's idea was correct. For what could be more characteristic of the Prussian nation, under its present *regime*, than the portrayal of a stalwart warrior teaching an ardent youth the art of war?⁷³

⁷¹ "Letters From Abroad- No. 14," *Independent Statesman (Concord)*, November 14, 1878.

⁷² "Letters From Abroad- No. 14," November 14, 1878.

⁷³ Stoddard, *Lectures*, 17-18.

American journalists frequently commented on the prevalence of the military in German society and culture, which seemed at times to overwhelm foreign visitors. One reporter wrote in 1878, “One sees military everywhere here until he almost sickens of it.”⁷⁴ Nearly all German celebrations or events, even as reported around the world, could not exclude the role of Brandenburg Gate as a significant symbol within the new state.

In 1914 a war far bloodier than those who lived through the Napoleonic Wars could have imagined erupted across Europe. The First World War lasted four years, and in that time led to the deaths of millions of young men and devastated the industry and societies across the European continent. Although the war ended with the defeat of the mighty German army in 1918, when the veterans returned home, they too entered through Brandenburg Gate, where they were greeted as heroes. Stefan Lorant, a Hungarian-American photojournalist, described the homecoming, and wrote, “Even though this time they brought defeat, Unter den Linden resounded with cheers and hurrahs and bands played as if it were a victory celebration.”⁷⁵

Friedrich Ebert, a Social Democrat politician chosen to lead the government after the Kaiser’s abdication, assured the crowds of soldiers that they “have not been beaten on the



Fig. 11 Germans lined the streets to greet their troops in 1918. Friedrich Ebert consoled the soldiers, claiming they “have not been beaten on the battlefield.”

battlefield.” The statement that Germany’s soldiers were not returning as a defeated army would haunt Ebert for years to come. This mentality contributed to the theory that Germany was “stabbed in the

⁷⁴ “Letters From Abroad- No. 14,” November 14, 1878.

⁷⁵ Stefan Lorant, *Sieg Heil! (Hail to Victory): An Illustrated History of Germany from Bismarck to Hitler* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), 73.

back,” meaning their war effort was undermined by people on the home front. The scapegoats chosen ranged from Jewish people to the “November Criminals,” which referred to the German postwar government responsible for signing the armistice that ended the fighting in World War I.⁷⁶ The belief in a “stabbed in the back” conspiracy preserved the honor of the German military and set the stage for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party.

Brandenburg Gate and Unter den Linden underwent dramatic changes during the Nazi era. Brandenburg Gate was utilized by the Nazis as a propaganda site, which included a torchlight parade through the gate to celebrate Hitler’s victorious election in 1933. Peter Fritzsche, a German and cultural historian, wrote that “hundreds of thousands” of German citizens, reportedly a crowd almost as large as when Germany



Fig. 12 Nazi parade through Brandenburg Gate, circa 1933.

celebrated its unification, attended the parade and shouted “Deutschland über Alles” and “Heil.” Andre Francois-Poncet, the French Ambassador, watched the parade from the windows of the French Embassy. “From these brown-shirted, booted men, as they marched in perfect discipline and alignment, their well-pitched voices bawling war-like songs, there rose an enthusiasm and dynamism that were extraordinary,” he said. Melita Maschmann witnessed the Nazi parade with her family. She recalled feeling “overcome with a burning desire to belong to these people for whom it was a matter of life and death.” Although she admitted to being drawn to the “socialist”

⁷⁶ Lorant, *Sieg Heil*, 72-73 and 106.

aspects of the Nazis, she said her parents attended out of a sense of German nationalism.⁷⁷

Decades later, the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development described this display as “a martial torch parade, introducing the darkest chapter of German history, ultimately leaving the city destroyed and Germany divided.”⁷⁸

Additionally, the trees which previously lined Unter den Linden were removed and subsequently replaced by tall pillars topped with swastikas and eagles. For special occasions, such as Hitler’s fiftieth birthday, Nazi flags were draped from Brandenburg Gate and along the avenue. According to Manfred Höfert, a man who blogs about German history, the changes implemented by the Nazis gave Unter den Linden “some rather eerie traits at night.”⁷⁹ His unease was likely in response to the multitude of swastikas that adorned the boulevard as well as the intensity of the pillars topped with Nazi eagles. Due to the presence of these symbols prominently placed along Unter den Linden, the impression of Brandenburg Gate was menacing.



Fig. 13 Unter den Linden was bedecked in swastika banners and a large parade was held in honor of Adolf Hitler’s 50th birthday in April 1939.



Fig. 14 Postcard with picture of Brandenburg Gate decorated with Nazi flags in 1939.

⁷⁷ Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 41.

⁷⁸ “Unter den Linden: Brandenburger Tor,” Senate Department for Urban Development.

⁷⁹ Manfred Höfert, “Unified Germany and Its Capital Berlin,” Red Barons Webseiten, July 13, 2013, accessed May 31, 2013, http://www.mhoefert.de/berlin_landmarks.htm.

Rolf Johannesson was a member of the German Navy in 1933, when Hitler delivered a speech at his base. He later recalled being unimpressed by Hitler's untidy appearance and their new oath of allegiance sworn to Hitler, not the German *Vaterland*. In July 1937, Johannesson covertly left Berlin in order to fight in the Spanish Civil War, because he believed that "an officer should seize every possible chance to experience a war." Johannesson was part of the Condor Legion's intelligence and sabotage unit before he was given command of a German destroyer in the spring 1939. He participated in a victory parade that the Condor Legion organized through Berlin in June 1939. "We marched through the Brandenburg Gate and were received by Hitler, Göring, and Ribbentrop," Johannesson said. "So you see, I was once able to march through the streets of Berlin as a victor after all, adorned with a German and a Spanish medal."⁸⁰

Aside from the victory procession to celebrate Hitler's rise to power and the veterans of the Spanish Civil War, few sources recount any large scale military parades during the Third Reich. Hitler gave a possible explanation while touring the recently conquered French capital in June 1940. Although Hitler and his entourage reportedly discussed the possibility of staging a military parade through Paris, the Führer ultimately decided against such a display due to the threat posed by the British Royal Air Force. Hitler concluded, "In any case, I am not in the mood for a victory parade. We aren't at the end yet." Germany's total defeat at the end of World War II prevented the Nazi army from parading home through Brandenburg Gate as had occurred after the Franco-Prussian War and First World War.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Johannes Steinhoff, Peter Pechel, and Dennis E. Showalter, *Voices from the Third Reich: An Oral History*, Da Capo Press ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1994), 16-18.

⁸¹ Lorant, *Sieg Heil*, 303. Hitler's tour of the defeated French capital was documented by Albert Speer, and was originally published in Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York, 1970).



Fig. 15 Soviet soldiers wave their national flag from atop the Quadriga.



Fig. 16 Brandenburg Gate post-1945.

Brandenburg Gate, like much of Germany, suffered extensive damage during the final days of World War Two. The destruction to the *Quadriga* was apparently so complete, that little of the original sculpture survived. Such damage was revealed by Peter Kroh, a photojournalist, who compiled a book of photographs from war-torn Berlin in order to commemorate the 65th anniversary of Germany's surrender. Included in his book are images of Soviet soldiers posing with their flags above German monuments, including "hundreds" of images in which Soviet soldiers posed atop Brandenburg Gate with flags raised above the *Quadriga*.⁸²

The East and West German governments attempted to reconcile some of their differences by collaborating to restore and repair Brandenburg Gate in the early 1950s. The West Berlin Senate proposed a plan for the gate, but were unable to move forward due to political and financial constraints. Six years later, the GDR proposed a compromise, in which they would restore the gate while the FRG recast the Quadriga. Germans were optimistic that this joint-effort would lead to greater political cooperation; however, the east and west governments were unable to reconcile their visions for Brandenburg Gate. Despite their attempts, they had failed to reach a consensus because the two nations had vastly different interpretations concerning the function

⁸² Solveig Grothe, "Devastation of War: Archival Discovery Reveals a Ruined Berlin," *Der Spiegel Online*, May 7, 2010, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/devastation-of-war-archival-discovery-reveals-a-ruined-berlin-a-693452.html>.

and history of this gate, as well as its future in German society. Specifically, the GDR hoped to transform Brandenburg Gate into a symbol of peace, while the FRG wanted to restore the gate to its traditional Prussian design. However, Feinstein wrote that similarity between the two German nations was that in both states “the public increasingly viewed the Brandenburg Gate as a symbol of anticommunism,” which was evidenced by its prominent role in protests during the Berlin blockade and the June 17 uprising of 1953. The debate regarding the symbolism and message of Brandenburg Gate lasted several years and only served to increase hostilities.⁸³

Despite the extensive structural damage and postwar animosity, between 1957 and 1958 Brandenburg Gate was eventually restored to a GDR approved design, which included the victory goddesses’ staff crowned with an olive wreath instead of an eagle and Iron Cross.

Additionally, the socialists and GDR flags were displayed alongside the gate.⁸⁴ Only three years

later, the tensions surrounding the Cold War came to a dramatic climax at this site. In 1961 the Soviet government constructed the Berlin Wall which not only divided Germany, and subsequently Europe, into two distinct sections, it sealed this iconic gateway and transformed it into a barrier

designed to inhibit the movement of its citizens.⁸⁵



Fig. 17 On September 27, 1958 the last of the restored Quadriga was returned to Brandenburg Gate.

⁸³ Feinstein, *State Symbols*, 80-81.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 80-82.



Fig. 18 Photographs of Brandenburg Gate (circa 1985) as seen from the FRG (top row) and GDR (bottom row). The gate was sealed from 1961-1989 due to escalating Cold War tensions.

In November 1989 new regulations were announced in the GDR which allowed greater freedom of movement and reduced the East German travel restrictions; news quickly spread that, effective immediately, the GDR border was opened.⁸⁶ Germans along both sides of the Berlin Wall began celebrating and calling for the removal of the wall, even chipping off pieces themselves. Serge Schmemmann, a journalist, described the chaotic yet celebratory scene that followed. He wrote:

The heaviest action was at the Brandenburg Gate, a war-battered ceremonial arch that has stood for more than 40 years as a symbol of Berlin's fate. On Thursday night, a few hours after the announcement of the new regulations, thousands of Berliners from East and West scaled the wall before the gate and rushed together through its arches. It was the only spot where the wall was physically breached, and soon East German border guards

⁸⁶ “History of the Berlin Wall: 9 November (Thursday) and 10 November (Friday),” Chronik der Mauer, 1961-1989/90, March 5, 2014, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/index.php/de/Start/Index/id/652138>.

arrived to clear the people who crowded the top of the wall - which is broad and flat as it passes the Gate - and who had begun chipping chunks of concrete to take home.⁸⁷

Brandenburg Gate remained closed for over thirty years, until December 1989, when the Berlin Wall came crashing down. The decision to remove the wall was made by GDR Premier Hans Modrow and FRG Chancellor Helmut Kohl, after which Kohl addressed a crowd of cheering East Germans. “I, like many others, have often stood at the Brandenburg Gate and we used to discuss whether we would live to see the day when we could walk through,” Kohl said. “This is one of the happiest hours of my life.”⁸⁸ The fall of the Wall, which also signified an end to the Cold War hostilities, was celebrated by Berliners who flooded on foot and by car through Brandenburg Gate. On December 23, 1989 Schmemmann reported that despite rainy weather, “tens of thousands of Germans” attended a ceremony at Brandenburg Gate to inaugurate two new pedestrian crossings. He wrote that “the reopening of the two-century-old landmark offered symbolic confirmation that the German nation was again to become whole.”⁸⁹



Fig. 19 Berliners climbing over the Berlin Wall behind Brandenburg Gate in November 1989.

⁸⁷ Serge Schmemmann, “Clamor in the East: Reunion in West Berlin; For All, East and West, a Day Like No Other,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1989.

⁸⁸ Serge Schmemmann, “Cheers as Brandenburg Gate Reopens,” *New York Times*, December 23, 1989.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

During the 1990s, Brandenburg Gate underwent another renovation, this time with the intent of restoring the gate to the 1814-1945 design. Proposals for the reconstruction of the historic district of Berlin, which includes Neue Wache and Brandenburg Gate, featured “‘typical’ (yet vague) European landscape images of ‘appropriate’ royal, pre-national pasts.” This reconstruction was intertwined with politics, history, and the German economy, and proved to be as unifying as it was controversial. “The pre-national is a safe and seemingly uncontested period to recreate when presented as an European rather than purely Prussian heritage,” Karen Till, a professor of geography and society, wrote. “It is based upon nostalgic landscape icons and highly stylized histories that attract tourist dollars and provide a sense of pride in the past.”⁹⁰



Fig. 20
Photograph of the
restored Quadriga
post-
Reunification.

The most noticeable change to the Brandenburg Gate was on the *Quadriga*; the victory goddess’ staff once again featured an Iron Cross, surrounded by a wreath, with a Prussian eagle perched on top.⁹¹ This symbolic gesture visually represented the reunification of the formerly polarized Germanies by symbolizing an era prior to the fascist Third Reich or communist GDR. Referencing their shared past created a foundation for the newly reunified Germany to begin

⁹⁰ Karen E. Till, “Staging the Past: Landscape Designs, Cultural Identity and Erinnerungspolitik at Berlin’s Neue Wache,” *Cultural Geographies* 6, no. 3 (July 1999): 270.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 269.

compromising and reach some consensus in the difficult years post-Cold War. The government leading the reunified Germany was plagued not only with practical issues of employment, housing, and consolidating two states, they also had to recreate a new German national identity and reconcile their postwar narratives into a comprehensive national dialog.

Throughout its long history, Brandenburg Gate has functioned both as a monument to German military prowess and as a memorial the disaster fomented by unrestrained force. The prominent location of this gateway speaks to its dual roles of monument and memorial, as Arthur Danto, an American art critic and philosopher, explained that memorials are traditionally “a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead.” This is in contrast to monuments which he believed, “make heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present and part of life.”⁹² This gateway stands as a symbol of Germany’s pre-Nazi tradition, but also represents the impact of the Third Reich on the present.

Originally configured as a customs checkpoint, Brandenburg Gate became a central location through which to parade victorious armies and since then has been featured within multiple significant events in German history. This gate became synonymous with the turbulent history of Berlin, from the era of the kaisers through the end of the Cold War. Brandenburg Gate has been the site of numerous protests in the aftermath of World War II due to its symbolic significance among German citizens. This gate represented unity, tradition, and victory, which explains its role as a rallying point for Germany.

Brandenburg Gate underwent a series of renovations from its original construction through the end of World War II due to warfare, changes in government, and shifts in public opinion. The architectural and iconographic changes on the monument reflected domestic interests, such as contemporary attitudes of German citizens, and demonstrated the impact of

⁹² Arthur Danto, “The Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” *The Nation* 241(August 31, 1986): 152.

outside forces, such as the foreign occupation armies and Cold War. With each remodel and reinterpretation, Brandenburg Gate symbolized a new era in German history. This iconic gateway demonstrated the intersection of society and politics, their impact on national monuments, and how these relationships are renegotiated to fit contemporary needs. The shifting, but continual, significance of this quintessentially German landmark explains its prominent role and controversial symbolism throughout the various periods of dramatic upheaval in German history.

CHAPTER TWO

Constructing Public Memory through the Renovation of War Memorials

Perhaps no memorial can better reflect the complications of German postwar memorialization practices than the highly emotional debates regarding the role of Neue Wache in Berlin. Neue Wache, (New Guardhouse) provides another example of a structure along Unter den Linden that is steeped in historical significance. This building was not only repurposed multiple times from its original commission in 1815 through German reunification in 1989, its interior and façade also underwent dramatic transformations with the rise of each new form of German government. The structural changes to Neue Wache were indicative of the dramatic political and social changes occurring within Germany. Additionally, Neue Wache demonstrated the correlation between governmental changes accompanied by memorial reinterpretations, which became increasingly pronounced throughout Germany's tumultuous twentieth-century.

Neue Wache currently functions as a memorial dedicated to “the victims of war and tyranny,” which is an intentionally vague phrase resulting from the complicated nature of post-World War II commemoration in Germany. Ironically, this building was originally built by

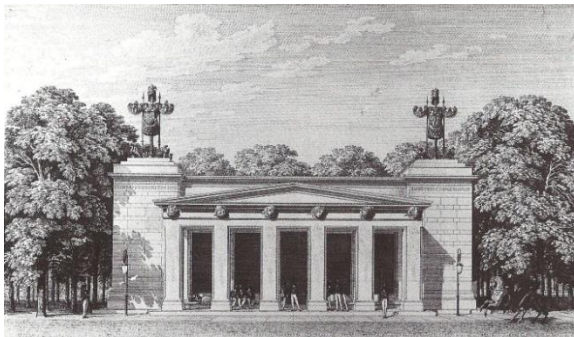


Fig. 21 Schinkel's second design for Neue Wache drawn in 1816.

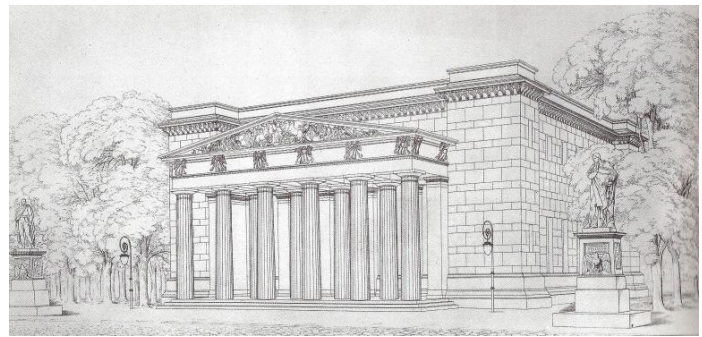


Fig. 22 Perspective view of Neue Wache drawn by Schinkel in 1819.

Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III in 1815 to house the soldiers who were responsible for guarding his palace in Berlin.⁹³ American author John L. Stoddard wrote that the soldiers stationed in Neue Wache were always prepared to either “quell the slightest insurrection” or “present arms to any royal or distinguished personage who happens to be passing.”⁹⁴ Stoddard seemed to pity the soldiers, who he wrote lacked any time to relax because they were required to salute all officers, “and as the number of officers on this Berlin promenade is almost beyond computation, the arms of the poor sentries rise and fall with the precision of machinery.”⁹⁵

In 1815, Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm III signed the Paris Peace Treaty that ended the Napoleonic Wars, and then appointed German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel⁹⁶ to design his new guardhouse, which would stand across from his palace in Berlin.⁹⁷ According to Marcuse, prior to the construction of Neue Wache soldiers were quartered in civilian homes; however, the military also needed a central location for the soldiers to report for duty.⁹⁸ The Kaiser envisioned a grand structure to replace the original wooden building, but due to “massive debts” accrued during the Napoleonic Wars, the guardhouse would also need to be an “economical” design.⁹⁹ Construction began the following year and was completed two years later in 1818. Schinkel’s

⁹³ For a map of Schinkel’s buildings, including the location of Neue Wache on Unter den Linden, see Appendix E.

⁹⁴ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.” According to historian Harold Marcuse, Neue Wache was fortified after 1848 (presumably in response to the Revolutions of 1848) in order to be easier to defend against a civilian uprising.

⁹⁵ Stoddard, *Lectures*, 25.

⁹⁶ Karl Friedrich Schinkel was born in 1781 and spent his early childhood in the town of Neuruppin, located in the Mark of Brandenburg. When he was six years old, a fire incinerated the majority of his hometown. This traumatic event was made worse by the fact that his father died while attempting to rescue others. This event likely left a strong impression on Schinkel, who witnessed both the destruction and reconstruction of his town. In 1792 Schinkel’s family relocated to Berlin, where he spent six years attending Gymnasium before deciding to drop out and pursue studies in fine arts. In 1798 Schinkel became a full-time architecture apprentice. However, it was not until 1815, nearly 20 years after the start of Schinkel’s architecture career, that he created his most well-known and enduring structures. Pundt, *Schinkel’s Berlin*, 35.

⁹⁷ Pundt, *Schinkel’s Berlin*, 107.

⁹⁸ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

⁹⁹ Henry Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration: Two Berlin Memorials”, *Modernism/modernity* 12, no. 1 (January 2005):139.

plans for Neue Wache were described as “a synthesis of Roman castrum and Greek temple;”¹⁰⁰ the architectural design called for an open concept with “four sturdier corners towers” and an interior courtyard.¹⁰¹ The front of the building had two rows of six Doric columns, which “created deep recesses and dramatic shadows that contrasted with the solid, cubic structure.”¹⁰²

Schinkel’s original architectural design included two “victory trophies” to stand atop the corners of Neue Wache. Additionally, he planned five statues to commemorate the German generals who featured prominently in Napoleon’s defeat. However, due to budget restrictions the victory trophies and three of the statues were never constructed.¹⁰³ In 1816, the German sculptor Christian Daniel Rauch was commissioned to sculpt two statues for the exterior of Neue Wache, which were unveiled in 1822, on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Rauch sculpted Napoleonic War heroes General von Bülow and General von Scharnhorst out of white Carrara marble. Henry Pickford described Rauch’s statues as more reminiscent of “philosopher-



Fig. 23 Photograph of Neue Wache circa 1898.

scholars than as soldiers,” which was a feature of the neo-classical tradition.¹⁰⁴

According to Marcuse, after 1871 Neue Wache no longer functioned as a guard house, because “guard duty at the castle became purely ceremonial.” He believed this resulted in Neue Wache becoming “a kind of

¹⁰⁰ Till, “Staging the Past”: 256.

¹⁰¹ “Unter Den Linden: Neue Wache,” Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment, accessed March 2, 2013,

http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/denkmal/denkmale_in_berlin/en/unter_den_linden/neue_wache.shtml.

¹⁰² Till, “Staging the Past”: 256.

¹⁰³ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration,”: 140.

¹⁰⁴ Pickford, “Letter from Berlin,”: 154.

living museum to drill and display historic uniforms.” Despite this transformation, the building continued to function as the backdrop for significant state events.¹⁰⁵

Neue Wache was just one aspect of the Kaiser’s plan to transform Unter den Linden into a “monumental and orderly projection of royal power,”¹⁰⁶ but in spite of his intentions, not all visitors were impressed by the building’s appearance. Stoddard described Neue Wache as “a somber, melancholy looking structure, apparently in want of a second story.”¹⁰⁷ Henry Pickford, a professor of Germanic and Slavic language, wrote that the building appeared to be “dwarfed by its neighbors in size and historical significance.” However, Pickford believed Neue Wache was significant as a representation of Germany’s commemorative struggles, and wrote, “the very multifarious rememorative *uses* to which the building has been put constitutes its, and Germany’s, historical predicament.”¹⁰⁸

In August 1914 the German military issued its orders to mobilize at Neue Wache. Following the German defeat four years later, in 1918, Neue Wache was again chosen as the location from which the orders to demobilize the troops were proclaimed;¹⁰⁹ however, a significant difference between 1914 and 1918 was the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the creation of the democratic Weimar Republic. Neue Wache reflected the upheaval occurring in German politics and society, and the building transformed from a structure “well suited to represent the power of the Prussian state” into a memorial that symbolized the feelings of German loss and mourning.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration,”: 140.

¹⁰⁶ Till, “Staging the Past”: 257.

¹⁰⁷ Stoddard, *Lectures*, 25.

¹⁰⁸ Henry Pickford, “Letter from Berlin,” *Harvard Review* 6 (Spring, 1994): 153.

¹⁰⁹ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

The evolution of Neue Wache from a defunct guardhouse into a war memorial occurred during the interwar era, which historian Karen Till referred to as “a historical period when the dead, rather than the living, symbolized the nation.” Additionally, Till wrote that during this era the “. . .temporal frameworks of identity were selectively defined by male elites,” such as representatives of the Weimar government.¹¹¹ On the tenth anniversary of the First World War, Reichspräsident Friedrich Ebert stated that he believed Neue Wache should be redesigned into a *Reichsehrenmal* (National Monument of Honor). Ebert’s declaration on August 3, 1924 precipitated years of debate.¹¹² Neue Wache was falling into disrepair by the end of the 1920s, when Otto Braun, the Prussian Minister President of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), proposed transforming the structure into a “Memorial Site for the Fallen of the [First] World War.”¹¹³ In 1929, Braun commissioned six artists to submit designs for the renovation of Neue Wache; a proposal by German artist Heinrich Tessenow was selected.¹¹⁴ Despite the fact that Tessenow’s design was chosen, he had envisioned a radically different memorial than what was ultimately constructed.¹¹⁵

Tessenow said he had intended to create a space that would resemble an “abysmal hole,” because he believed this dark emptiness was “the only adequate expression for this war and its millions of victims.”¹¹⁶ Included in his design plans were the enclosure of the open courtyard to

¹¹¹ Till, “Staging the Past”: 257. Till was paraphrasing John R. Gillis from the introduction to his edited work, *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

¹¹² Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 141.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹¹⁴ Tessenow also worked as an instructor at a university in Berlin, and among his notable pupils was architect Albert Speer. Speer is infamous for his role in the creation of Hitler’s idealized visions for the Third Reich, which included designing the Reich Chancellery and plans for the redevelopment of Berlin, as well as for his role as the Minister of Armaments. Speer was convicted of war crimes during the Nuremberg Trials and was sentenced to twenty years in Spandau prison. For more information, see Joachim Fest, *Albert Speer: Conversations with Hitler’s Architect* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 141. And Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹¹⁶ Sergiusz Michalski, *Public Monuments: Art in Political Bondage, 1870-1997*, Essays in Art and Culture (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), 173. Quote originally from: Wulf Herzogenrath, “Denkmäler wider das

form a single circular skylight, and the addition of a large, gold and silver plated oak wreath placed upon a six-and-a-half foot tall black marble block.¹¹⁷ The marble, which was situated in the center of Neue Wache, was inscribed “1914-1918.” Two candelabra, which were placed along the back wall, flanked the memorial altar. Additionally, the interior walls were covered with light gray limestone and basalt-lava stones were laid to create a mosaic on the floor.

Although Tessenow’s design was considered “modern for its day,” the symbolism utilized throughout the memorial harkened back to Germany’s early history – such as, the oak wreath¹¹⁸



Fig. 24 Interior of Neue Wache after Tessenow redesigned the building into a memorial for the fallen of World War I.

and granite.¹¹⁹ Tessenow intentionally created a minimalist space that presented visitors with an ambiguous message, which they could variously interpret.¹²⁰

Tessenow’s designs for Neue Wache were significantly altered when the site was designated as a memorial

location for the “Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.” However, no soldier’s remains were initially laid inside.¹²¹ George Mosse believed the development of the “Unknown Soldier” memorial was significant for German memorialization practices because it focused on a centralized tomb and

Vergessen,” in *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit: Bilder Des Ersten Weltkrieges: Eine Ausstellung Des Deutschen Historischen Museums, Berlin, der Barbican Art... Imperial War Museum, London (German Edition)*, ed. Rainer Rother (Berlin: Ars Nicolai, 1994), 449-50.

¹¹⁷ Till, “Staging the Past”: 257-258.

¹¹⁸ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 88. According to Michalski, the wreath was intended to remind viewers of a Roman *corona civica*, which was “bestowed on a citizen or soldier who had saved someone’s life in battle.” However, because this wreath was formed from oak leaves, it could also be perceived “in a solely military and Prussian” manner.

¹¹⁹ Till, “Staging the Past”: 257-258.

¹²⁰ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 88.

¹²¹ Malcolm Humble, “The Unknown Soldier and the Return of the Fallen: The Political Dimension of Mourning in German Texts from the First World War to the Present,” *The Modern Language Review* 93, no. 4 (October 1998): 1034.

icon. Although military cemeteries were located all across Germany and abroad, the nation lacked a single national site for collectively mourning their fallen soldiers. “Nations needed a center for the cult of their fallen which would remind the living of their death and subsequent national mission – a place where crowds could participate in regular ceremonies like Armistice Day,” wrote Mosse. “The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier fulfilled this function”¹²² Art historian Sergiusz Michalski believed this new form of memorialization, which centered on the unknown soldier, was the result of “unprecedented mobilization of mass armies and the quasianonymous [*sic*] character of the war and of many of the fallen soldiers,” which made the Unknown Soldier “a universally understandable and seemingly pertinent solution.”¹²³

In 1931, two years after Tessenow’s renovations began, Neue Wache was officially unveiled as a war memorial dedicated as a “Memorial Site for the Fallen of the World War.” At the dedication ceremony, SPD Minister President Otto Braun discussed his intentions for this memorial, which he hoped would promote a pacifist mission. Braun wanted Neue Wache to stand as a symbol of remembrance for the millions of German soldiers who had “sacrificed their blood in a way never before imagined in world history, and in a way, as we hope and as we will try to ensure, that the course of history will never call for again.”¹²⁴ However, Braun’s pacifist sentiments were not shared by others within the German government or among military generals. Only three German generals attended the dedication ceremonies, the majority chose to not attend the event because they believed Braun and his message were “anti-patriotic.”¹²⁵ During his

¹²² Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 93.

¹²³ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 78.

¹²⁴ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹²⁵ Till, “Staging the Past”: 258.

speech at the dedication ceremony, Reich Minister of Defense Wilhelm Groener, “embedded the Neue Wache squarely in the Prussian military traditions of war memorials.”¹²⁶ Groener said:

We consecrate today the remodeled Neue Wache to the fallen of the World War. Built by the warriors of Leipzig and Belle-Alliance, for a century it was the emblem of the Prussian army. The heroic greatness of its form is equal to the greatness of the sacrifices [*Opfer*] that ever new generations have made so that Germany may live.¹²⁷

The difference in mentality between these two government officials highlights the divisions within German society concerning the perception of soldiers and warfare in the aftermath of the First World War. Whereas Braun emphasized the waste of life and trauma that resulted from war, Groener spoke of the heroism of soldiers in battle and the honor of military sacrifice. Due to the fact that these politicians’ interpretations of the memorial were in extreme opposition, it was unlikely that Neue Wache would fulfill the expectations of German President Paul von Hindenburg, who hoped the memorial site could “contribute to the development of inner unity.”¹²⁸

The unifying potential of Neue Wache was never fully realized, because the Weimar Republic was short-lived before Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party seized power. This dramatic change in government, from democratic to fascist, was reflected in the architecture and function of Neue Wache. Art historian Daniel Koep believed that the iconography utilized within Tessenow’s design “had played into the hands of the political right” with the inclusion of natural elements such as fire and the open skylight. Koep wrote that these elements “contributed to the evocation of a natural mysticism” and represented the First World War as “a god-willed

¹²⁶ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 142.

¹²⁷ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 142. Originally quoted in: “Hindenburg weiht die Neue Wache zum Ehrenmal,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 2, 1931.

¹²⁸ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

catastrophe.”¹²⁹ In 1933, just two years after its dedication as a memorial to the fallen of the First World War, the Nazis altered the interior of Neue Wache in an attempt to recast the pacifist message with a more heroic narrative.

Although Neue Wache sustained minimal renovations during the Third Reich, Hitler added two significant symbols that represented his ideology and legitimized his regime: large oak wreaths were added to the façade and an oak cross was included inside. Hitler wanted visitors to Neue Wache to associate a soldier’s death with the death of Christ, and to replace the idea of death as a loss or end with the belief that death was “a necessary act for the renewal and resurrection of the state.” According to historian Karen Till, the links between Christ’s sacrifice and the death of German soldiers were established through the blending of “more general Christian meanings with specific Nazi myths.” Hitler’s reinterpretation of Neue Wache transformed the memorial from a somber place of contemplation, to a celebration of heroic soldiers who died in service of the Nazi state, and in doing so gained eternal honor.¹³⁰

During the Third Reich, Neue Wache and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier became integral parts of



Fig. 25 Volkstrauertag parade circa 1933.

German national commemorations and “self-representation,” although the “heightened national consciousness” inspired by this commemorative practice was reportedly “displaced into a variety

¹²⁹ Daniel Koep, “Modernity and tradition: public sculpture by Gerhard Marcks, 1949 – 67,” in *Figuration/abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe, 1945-1968*, ed. Charlotte Benton, *Subject/object--new Studies in Sculpture* (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2004), 100.

¹³⁰ Till, “Staging the Past”: 258-259.

of war memorials or ceremonial rites.”¹³¹ Pickford wrote that “in 1934 the Neue Wache became a ‘memorial of honor’ [*Ehrenmal*] for fallen soldiers and an inspiration for new ones.”¹³²

The Nazis utilized Neue Wache as a war memorial, but they changed its function from an *Ehrenmal* (a cenotaph) or a *Gedächtnisstätte* (a place of remembrance) to a *Reichsehrenmal* (national memorial of honor). The designation of Neue Wache as a Reichsehrenmal during the Nazi era was accompanied by changes in the design and function of the site.¹³³ During the Third Reich, military parades marched along Unter den Linden towards Neue Wache, where memorial day ceremonies were arranged on *Volkstrauertag* (literally translated as People’s Day of



Figure 26. Adolf Hitler, Paul von Hindenburg, and Franz von Papen lay wreaths at Neue Wache on Volkstrauertag.

Mourning)¹³⁴, which during the Nazi era was known as *Heldengedenktag* (Heroes Remembrance/Memorial Day) or *Reichstrauertag*.¹³⁵ On Heldengedenktag,¹³⁶ German citizens lined the streets to watch the ceremony as Hitler and other Nazi leaders placed wreaths at Neue Wache and the

Wehrmacht paraded along Unter den Linden. When military parades and crowds were not filling the streets around Neue Wache, a military guard, as opposed to a civilian guard, remained

¹³¹ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 98.

¹³² Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 142.

¹³³ Till, “Staging the Past”: 258-259.

¹³⁴ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 148. Volkstrauertag is held the last Sunday before the first Advent.

¹³⁵ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 1.

¹³⁶ According to Margalit, despite the fact that the term “Heldengedenktag” is associated with the Nazi era, this alternative name is still occasionally used among Germans in reference to Volkstrauertag. Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 1-2. Additionally, since 1952, Volkstrauertag, which occurs on the third Sunday in November, has functioned as “a collective day of remembrance of German soldiers and civilians who died in the two world wars.” This memorial day was originally established in 1923 as *Gedenktag* (Remembrance Day) to honor the soldiers killed in World War I; however, as a result of Germany’s role in World War II, this day of remembrance now can potentially encompass a vast range of Germans, from innocent victims to convicted war criminals. Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 148.

stationed outside.¹³⁷ Pickford described the changing of the guard (which occurred on Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday) as “a public spectacle.”¹³⁸

Neue Wache, like many of Germany’s structures, was heavily damaged during World War II, particularly by the Allied bombing of Berlin. Pickford wrote that due to the bombing, Neue Wache’s “roof burnt away, two columns were shattered, the south-eastern corner collapsed, [and] the memorial stone was partially melted in the heat.”¹³⁹ However, the destruction did not end with the war. In 1948, the oak wreath was stolen from the front façade of Neue Wache, and two years later the tympanum and porch collapsed.¹⁴⁰ Shortly after the war ended, Tessenow described his reaction to the destruction of Neue Wache. “If it were now up to me, I would not give the building any other form whatsoever,” Tessenow said. “As damaged as it is now, it truly speaks history. A little cleaning up and straightening out, and let it stand as it is.”¹⁴¹



Fig. 27 Interior of Neue Wache post-1945.



Fig. 28 Damaged exterior of Neue Wache, 1946.

¹³⁷ Till, “Staging the Past”: 258-259.

¹³⁸ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 142.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 143.

¹⁴⁰ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁴¹ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 143. Originally quoted in: “Die Neugestaltung Berlins,” *Nachtextexpress Berlin* (December 15, 1945).

As a result of the postwar division of Germany, Neue Wache was located in the Soviet occupation zone. Consequently, the government and ideology dominant in the eastern section of Germany was dramatically shifted from fascism to communism, which was visible in the iconographic changes and function of Neue Wache. The East German government initially planned to demolish Neue Wache due to “its militaristic history, and because people continued to lay flowers and wreaths there in remembrance of recent war dead, even after the building’s iron doors had been chained shut.” However, the Soviet government opposed this proposal. Instead, the Soviets recommended recasting Neue Wache as “a museum of Soviet-German friendship,” which according to them characterized the two nations’ early history, when the Russians and Prussians “joined forces to defeat Napoleon.”¹⁴²

To demonstrate this Soviet-German friendship, the government of the GDR replaced Rauch’s statues of Bülow and Scharnhorst with images of the Communist Party leadership and texts that praised Josef Stalin. During the Soviet occupation, several of Schinkel’s buildings located in East Germany were demolished.¹⁴³ Neue Wache survived due to its position on Unter den Linden¹⁴⁴ and because it was easily able to be incorporated into the East German landscape.¹⁴⁵ According to Pickford, Lothar Bolz, the Minister for the Construction of the GDR,

... stipulated that the capital’s architecture—so long as it could be integrated into socialist inner-city planning—was to be rebuilt in the national and regional traditions, in ideological contrast to the “Americanization” of the Federal Republic’s architecture just across no man’s land. Returning to a national architectural tradition meant above all that the historical center, the so-called *Forum Fridericianum* of Unter den Linden—the Neue

¹⁴² Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 143.

¹⁴³ In February 1949 the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) unsuccessfully argued that Neue Wache should be demolished due to the building’s connections to Prussian militarism. Although Neue Wache remained, several other buildings designed by Schinkel were demolished, including the: Berlin city castle (1950), Potsdam city castle (1959-60), and the Potsdam Garrison Church (1968). Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 143 and 145.

¹⁴⁴ In 1950 the Fifth Party Congress passed a resolution that stated the “center of the capital of the GDR,” meaning Berlin, was to be entirely reconstructed by 1965. Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 145.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

Wache, the Armory, the National Opera, the Prinzessinnenpalais—was to return to Schinkel’s classicism.¹⁴⁶

The restoration of Neue Wache began in 1951; however, it was unclear what purpose the memorial would serve. Suggestions from within the Berlin city government ranged from a bookstore for Humboldt University, to a site to house a model of Berlin, and to a memorial reinterpreted in honor of the victims of World War II. According to Marcuse, the uncertainty surrounding the future of Neue Wache ended on September 21, 1956, when the Magistrate of the city of Berlin, on behalf of the Politbüro of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), decided that Neue Wache would become a “Mahnmal für die Opfer des Faschismus und beider Weltkriege” (Memorial for the Victims of Fascism and both World Wars).¹⁴⁷ The following year, Neue Wache was once again transformed, only this time in order to both demonstrate and promote the Soviet’s ideology.¹⁴⁸

Heinz Mehlan,¹⁴⁹ the East German director of the Department of Historic Buildings, began the repurposing of Neue Wache by restoring much of the interior to Tessenow’s original design, which included the removal of Hitler’s oak cross. However, Mehlan also replaced



Fig. 29 GDR reinterpretation of Neue Wache by architect Heinz Mehlan, circa 1957-1965.

¹⁴⁶ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 145.

¹⁴⁷ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁴⁸ Till, “Staging the Past”: 259-260.

¹⁴⁹ Heinz Mehlan was a German architect in the GDR. He was credited as serving as the lead designer for the majority of the East Germany’s historic reconstruction. Florian Urban, *Neo-Historical East Berlin: Architecture and Urban Design in the German Democratic Republic 1970-1990*, Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series (Farnham, England ;: Ashgate, 2009), 251.

the inscription “1914-1918” with the dedication “to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism,” which was emblazoned along the back wall of the memorial. Despite making some changes, Mehlan kept the “disfigured” memorial stone from Tessenow’s design. The GDR’s first series of renovations to the interior of Neue Wache were completed in 1960, and the memorial was “reopened with a military ceremony.”¹⁵⁰

Outside of Neue Wache, the East German government maintained many of Germany’s militaristic traditions with “goose-stepping soldiers protecting the sacred site.”¹⁵¹ On May 1, 1962, the East German government reintroduced the ceremonial changing of the guard, which drew crowds of spectators to Neue Wache each Wednesday and was also broadcast live on the GDR’s state radio.¹⁵² This practice endured nearly thirty years until October 1990, when it was discontinued following the reunification of Germany.¹⁵³

In 1966, the interior of Neue Wache underwent another dramatic renovation after “it became ever more clear that the interior design of the memorial [*Mahnmal*] did not correspond to the understanding of socialist society.”¹⁵⁴ To remedy this discrepancy, German architect Lothar Kwansnitza was given responsibility for transforming Neue Wache into an example of Soviet ideology.¹⁵⁵ One of the most noticeable changes was the inclusion of the German Democratic Republic’s crest (comprised of a hammer and a compass) on the back wall of the memorial. The circular skylight in the ceiling, above the former location of Tessenow’s altar, was sealed with a “glass cupola,” and the floor was “covered by bright, polished marble plates.” Additionally, a

¹⁵⁰ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 145.

¹⁵¹ Till, “Staging the Past”: 262.

¹⁵² Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 145-146. Two members of the elite “Friedrich Engels” Guards Regiment were stationed outside of Neue Wache to guard the memorial. In 1962, the GDR also instated compulsive military service in the National People’s Army (NVA).

¹⁵³ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁵⁴ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 146. Originally quoted in Laurenz Demps, *Die Neue Wache: Entstehung und Geschichte eines Bauwerkes* (Berlin: Militärverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1988), 171.

¹⁵⁵ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 146.

gas-fed eternal flame replaced the granite altar. According to Pickford, the eternal flame was a symbolic tradition in the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁶ Fifteen urns were also buried beneath the eternal flame inside Neue Wache. The urns contained dirt from five concentration camps and eight battlefields, as well as the remains of an unknown resistance fighter who died during an April 1945 evacuation march and the remains of an unknown German soldier who was killed in April 1945 near Görlitz.¹⁵⁷ With the inclusion of these urns, which were referred to as “sacred relics,” Neue Wache “functioned as a cemetery bringing together the memory of resistance fighters and the GDR military.”¹⁵⁸



Fig. 30 Interior of Neue Wache by architect Lothar Kwansnitza, circa 1966.

Blending elements of German tradition, within the Soviet context, helped to infuse the communist system with the existing social structures, which provided “a means of legitimating the socialist state in everyday life,” wrote Karen Till.¹⁵⁹ The German Democratic Republic intentionally manipulated Neue Wache, like many of their predecessors, in order to influence the development of a cohesive national identity, solidify their position of power in society, and

¹⁵⁶ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 146.

¹⁵⁷ The concentration camp soil was taken from: Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Natzweiler, Dachau, and Buchenwald. The battlefield soil was taken from Moscow, Leningrad, Stalingrad, Normandy, Italy, Norway, Prague, and Berlin. Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁵⁸ Till, “Staging the Past”: 262.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 262.

associate their government with a historical narrative more in line with their visions for the future. During the 1950s, the East German government sought to create an anti-fascist war memorial that was dedicated to the victims of fascism and which also “that communicated the message ‘never again!’ to German citizens.”¹⁶⁰ Later in the Cold War, the East German reinterpretation of Neue Wache emphasized the role of high-ranking socialists as the “moral leaders of Germany,” which was justified by their actions as communist resisters during the Nazi regime. GDR era war memorials reflected the Soviet propaganda which claimed that the state was a creation “dedicated to fighting fascism in all its forms, from Nazism to capitalism.”¹⁶¹



Fig. 31. Visitors to Neue Wache, circa 1979.

Associating fascism with capitalism allowed the Soviets to portray themselves as morally superior in comparison to their western counterparts, which was especially important to their ideas of self-representation during the Cold War.

In contrast to the German Democratic Republic’s repurposing of Neue Wache, the Federal Republic of Germany initially failed to create a national war memorial that inspired introspection, was appropriate for national commemorative ceremonies, or aided in the formation of a singular national identity or official historical narrative. West German President Heinrich Lübke attempted to remedy this in 1961, when he commissioned a committee to design a national war memorial for Bonn, the Federal Republic’s capital. The solution was a bronze plaque, dedicated in 1964 “To the Victims of Wars

¹⁶⁰ Till, “Staging the Past”: 260-261.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 261.

and of the Rule of Violence.” However, this simple memorial plaque, located near downtown Bonn, soon proved inadequate as a backdrop for national events; in 1980 the plaque was relocated to a Bonn cemetery and placed in front of a tall cross dedicated to the soldiers of World War I. In the early 1980s, Chancellor Helmut Kohl enlisted the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge* (German War Graves Agency, abbreviated VDK)¹⁶² to develop a national memorial for West Germany. In May 1983 the VDK responded with an “Aide Memoire” that outlined their recommendations, which focused on honoring all the dead while still cautioning future generations about the horror of war. Additionally, the VDK emphasized the need “to work against the anti-historical tendencies of our time and contribute to the identity of our people.” To accomplish their lofty goals, the VDK proposed a national memorial for the center of Bonn that “unites the commemoration of all war-dead of our people,” which specifically referred to fallen soldiers, prisoners of war, displaced persons, and victims of violence or of their homeland. “The projected national memorial should thus unite the victims and the sacrificed in reconciliatory commemoration,” concluded the VDK’s Aide Memoire.¹⁶³ Although Chancellor Kohl initially supported the VDK’s recommendations, he later changed his stance in 1993, when he too altered the dedication and symbolism of Neue Wache in an attempt to represent reunified Germany.

In 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification initially had little impact on Neue Wache. With the exception of the removal of the GDR crest, the interior of Neue Wache

¹⁶² Abbreviated VDK, this agency was founded by Siegfried Emmo Eulen, a former army officer, in 1919. Eulen formed the VDK as an organization separate from politics. This group, supported through donations and volunteers, and was able to successfully establish connections with foreign nations, which was a crucial step towards an agreement to work within their borders. Despite early success, the Second World War interrupted the VDK’s efforts and caused lingering tensions postwar. Every year the VDK is responsible for maintaining the graves of fallen German soldiers both domestically and in 45 foreign nations, and recovers the remains of over 40,000 German soldiers killed in action to rebury them in one of their 825 war cemeteries. Currently, the VDK is responsible for maintaining 2.5 million war graves which are listed on an online database. For more information on the VDK, see “Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK): Formation of the Volksbund,” and Kirchmeier “Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge.

¹⁶³ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

remained unchanged, although also reportedly vacant. On January 27, 1993, Chancellor Kohl stated that Neue Wache would become the “central commemorative site of the Federal Republic of Germany.”¹⁶⁴ Kohl was instrumental in pushing the federal government to approve quickly a redesign of Neue Wache, which included replicating much of Tessenow’s original design; however, this led to protests from German citizens who resented “the lack of public and government discussion” regarding the future of the memorial.¹⁶⁵ Christoph Stölzl, the director of the German Historical Museum and a Kohl-appointee, published an open-letter in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* in an attempt to defend Kohl’s unilateral decision on Neue Wache. Stölzl wrote:

The federal government has decided about the design of a commemorative site of great political symbolism. The government did not take the path of public discourse (hearings, competition, jury) but decided to return to tradition. This is not as unusual as it seems to many critics. The selection of other state symbols of the Federal Republic, like flags and hymns, was also made this way.¹⁶⁶

The renovations to Neue Wache were scheduled to be completed in eleven months, because the site was intended to be the location for the 1993 Volkstrauertag events.¹⁶⁷ Similar to their GDR predecessors, Pickford wrote that the reunified German government “rebuilt and ‘rebaptized’ the Neue Wache before any other official building in Berlin.”¹⁶⁸ Creating a singular space for Germans to mourn their wartime losses appears to be a priority for governments as these memorials have the ability to influence citizens beyond addressing their grief. Neue Wache once again was used to legitimize governments, political leadership, state ideology, and national identity.

¹⁶⁴ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 148.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 148-9.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 149. Original source: Christoph Stölzl, “Die Trauer der Mutter: Plädoyer im Denkmalstreit um die Neue Wache: sprechendes Mitleid statt sprachlosem Stein,” in *NW*, 195-7, 195.

¹⁶⁷ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 148.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 148.

The issues concerning the memorialization of German soldiers did not end with reunification, and the desire to form Neue Wache into a national war memorial became especially important to the new German government after Chancellor Kohl and United States President Ronald Reagan controversially visited Bitburg military cemetery, which contained the graves of several SS soldiers. Kohl hoped that a national war memorial would provide a neutral site for foreign diplomats and leaders to pay their respects to the German war dead. Neue Wache was chosen as an acceptable location, but with one significant flaw – the dedication chosen by Kohl’s government failed to distinguish between the victims and perpetrators of World War II. Neue Wache was initially dedicated “To the Victims of War and Tyranny,” who could potentially encompass the majority of wartime casualties; the message and symbolism of Neue Wache seemed to equate all of the war dead. The terminology used to describe or classify the victim groups to whom Neue Wache was dedicated was so vague, that practically every casualty of World War II could be included within the defining criteria, meaning Jews, resistance fighters, civilians killed during air raids, Wehrmacht soldiers, and even the SS could be considered a “victim.”¹⁶⁹ The all-inclusive nature of Neue Wache’s dedication led to misunderstandings and debate as German citizens did not interpret the new text and symbols uniformly.

In 1993, Kohl attempted to clarify the wartime victims Neue Wache sought to memorialize; he suggested creating a national war memorial dedicated to the “victims of war and the rule of oppression.” However, this new dedication also proved controversial because some believed it “encompassed through semantic subterfuge both the victims of the Holocaust and – potentially – their executioners killed later in the course of war.”¹⁷⁰ To dispel some of the controversy and clarify the victims that Neue Wache commemorated, two bronze plaques were

¹⁶⁹ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 47.

¹⁷⁰ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 91.

placed on the outside wall of the memorial. The plaques were added due to pressure from opposition leaders, such as Ignaz Bubis, who was the head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. One plaque outlined the history of Neue Wache; the other listed the victims to whom the memorial was dedicated. The dedication plaque's text was based on a speech given by Bundespräsident Richard von Weizsäcker in May 1985. The plaque intended to clarify Neue Wache's dedication read:

The *Neue Wache* is a place of remembrance and commemoration of the victims of war and tyranny.

We remember all nations/peoples who suffered in war. We remember their citizens, who were persecuted and lost their lives. We remember all of the innocent people who lost their lives in war and because of the consequences of war at home, in captivity, and during the expulsion.

We remember the millions of murdered Jews. We remember the murdered Sinti and Romany Gypsies. We remember all of the people who were killed because of their ancestry, their homosexuality or because of sickness and disability. We remember all of the murdered whose right to life was denied.

We remember all of the people who had to die because of their religious or political convictions. We remember everyone who became a victim of tyranny and went innocently to death. We remember the women and men who sacrificed their lives in the resistance against the tyranny. We honor everyone who preferred to go to their death than compromise their conscience.

We remember the women and men who were persecuted and murdered because they resisted the totalitarian dictatorship after 1945.¹⁷¹

Historian Michael Prince believed this additional text “did little to solve the underlying problem and in truth only underscored the impression that the memorial made victims of all who had suffered or died in wartime.” The groups classified as a victim ranged from concentration camp inmates, Gypsies, and homosexuals, to ethnic Germans expelled from the east and “all nations/peoples who suffered in war.” The dedication of Neue Wache “promoted a culture of public memory that reflected German popular sentiment—though not a sense of historical

¹⁷¹ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 153.

justice,” wrote Prince.¹⁷² The interpretation of historic events and their portrayal in memorials and public memory can often widely vary; Harold Marcuse believed these discrepancies were reflective of society. “The symbolic amalgamation of victims reflects the reality of the West German collective psyche from 1945 until the early 1990s,” he wrote.¹⁷³

The majority of criticism surrounding Neue Wache centered on the misuse of the term “victim” as suggested by the dedication “To the Victims of War and Tyranny.” In spite of the debate, the renovated Neue Wache was officially unveiled November 15, 1993. While Kohl and other dignitaries joined in the ceremonial events, demonstrators protested outside and chanted “German murderers are not victims!” and similar slogans. The week prior to the dedication, “several dozen” demonstrators were arrested after chaining themselves to Neue Wache and chanting “German murderers are not victims!” Other critics, such as the Culture Minister of Berlin Ulrich Roloff-Momin, chose to show their disapproval by boycotting the event. Roloff-Momin, along with more than fifty other public figures, signed a statement which questioned, “Should it now be considered in Germany that those who voluntarily wore swastikas were the same as those who were forced to wear yellow stars with the word ‘Jew’?” Essayist Reinhart Koselleck recommended changing the inscription to designate more specifically who qualified as a victim. His proposal read, “To the Dead: Fallen, Murdered, Gassed, Died, Missing.” Koselleck wrote that in its current state, the Neue Wache’s dedication “disguises what happened and ignores the brutal and absurd truth of our history.” Despite the controversy, Kohl defended the memorial as well as the universal list of commemorative victims.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Prince, *War and German Memory*, 48. Prince was summarizing an argument from Peter Reichel, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland: Die Auseinandersetzung mit der NS-Diktatur von 1945 bis heute*, Originalausg ed., (München: C.H. Beck, 2001), 196-201.

¹⁷³ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁷⁴ Stephen Kinzer, “Berlin Journal; The War Memorial: To Embrace the Guilty, Too?,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1993.

Kohl's controversial redesign of Neue Wache was not limited to the dedication plaque's text; he also removed the East German crest and inscriptions from the interior, as well as the glass cupola from the skylight. Additionally, the marble floor tiles were replaced with materials that more closely adhered to Tessenow's original design. Despite these changes, the remains of the unknown resistance fighter and unknown soldier were left inside the memorial. Additionally, Kohl replaced the black granite altar and eternal flame with a replica of Käthe Kollwitz's *Pieta* and added the dedication "To the Victims of War and Tyranny" at the base of the sculpture.¹⁷⁵

The statue by German artist Käthe Kollwitz depicted a mother mourning over the body of her dead son. This grief was

familiar to Kollwitz who was a mother to two sons who fought in the First World War. Her youngest son, Peter, was underage when he volunteered for the military and therefore needed the permission of his



Fig. 32. Käthe Kollwitz's *Pieta* sculpture in Neue Wache.

father, Karl, before he was eligible to join. Kollwitz was influential in persuading her husband to allow Peter to fight with the German army.¹⁷⁶ In her diary, Kollwitz described "a sense of duty and responsibility toward the Fatherland," which helps explain her support for Peter's enlistment.

¹⁷⁵ Pickford, "Conflict and Commemoration": 149.

¹⁷⁶ Bärbel Jäschke, "Die Pieta der Käthe Kollwitz als Sinngebung des Sinnlosen: Eine Collage aus Tagebuch-, Briefzitate und Presseschlagzeilen [The Pieta of Käthe Kollwitz as giving meaning to the meaningless: A collage of diary, letter quotes and press headlines]," in *Nationaler Gedenksttte--die Neue Wache: Eine Streitschrift u r en tralen Deutschen Gedenksttte* [National Cult of the Dead- the New Guardhouse: A polemic for the central German memorial], 1. Aufl. ed., ed. Thomas E. Schmidt (Berlin: Kramer, 1995), 119.

However, Kollwitz soon regretted this, because within one month of joining the military, Peter was killed while fighting in Flanders.¹⁷⁷

Kollwitz sculpted the *Pieta* in 1937, twenty years after her son's death. She described this sculpture in her diary, and wrote, "The mother sits and has the dead son lying between her knees. It is no longer pain, but reflection." In another entry, Kollwitz wrote, that her *Pieta* shows a mother, "But the mother is not religious. . . . She is an old, lonely and darkly reflecting woman."¹⁷⁸ Although Kollwitz died just prior to the end of World War II, Kohl believed the inclusion of her *Pieta* was appropriate because Kollwitz's experiences during the two world wars were similar to those of other Germans—Kollwitz not only lost her youngest son in the First World War, but also her grandson in the Second World War.¹⁷⁹ The fact that Kollwitz had suffered personal tragedies during both wars was provided as evidence that her sculptures could represent the collective grief and wartime experiences of German citizens.

Jay Winter, a history professor at Yale University, described Kollwitz's art as representative "of the impossibility of forgetting and the impossibility of letting go of the guilt; for the responsibility of the old, for the sacrifice of the young." Winter believed Kollwitz's art demonstrated the fact that grieving is a slow process, and "[b]ereavement is not something that ends in two weeks, two years, maybe even twenty years." The loss and grief Kollwitz depicted in her art would have been familiar to German civilians in the aftermath of the two world wars, and demonstrated "that the fundamental problems of war and peace were not resolved into victors and vanquished – only into the living and the dead."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Pickford, "Conflict and Commemoration": 149-150.

¹⁷⁸ Jäschke, "Die Pieta der Käthe Kollwitz," 119-125.

¹⁷⁹ Kinzer, "Berlin Journal; The War Memorial: To Embrace the Guilty, Too?"

¹⁸⁰ Jay Winter, "Käthe Kollwitz- Symbol of Letting Go," PBS, accessed February 28, 2013, http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/historian/hist_winter_20_kollwitz.html.

Despite Kohl's endorsement of the *Pieta*, this statue was controversial for several reasons. First, the subject matter and title are reminiscent of Christian sculptures which depict Mary mourning over the dead body of her son Jesus; however, the connection to Christian Pietas was not intentionally implied by Kollwitz. Nevertheless, due to the connections with a Christian theme, critics claimed the memorial sculpture in the center of Neue Wache excluded the wartime suffering of Jewish victims.¹⁸¹ Secondly, critics, such as Reinhart Koselleck, claimed that since the *Pieta* was a mother and son, it could also represent a mother and soldier. Regardless of whether the sculpture depicted a mother and child, or the more politically charged mother and soldier, it was still accused of excluding fathers or other male mourners as well as female victims. The third issue concerning the *Pieta* was that Kollwitz's sculpture was created as a memorial to the war dead of the First World War, and not as a response to the events of World War II. Harold Marcuse responded to these criticisms and argued that the inclusion of a World War I era statue was fitting for a memorial like Neue Wache, because the origins of World War II were found in its predecessor. "Why not go back to the origins to commemorate a history that is so horrifying that many claim it is unique, unimaginable, and inexplicable?"¹⁸²

However, other historians disagreed with Marcuse's interpretation and considered the inclusion of a *Pieta* in this national war memorial misguided. Art historian Katherin Hoffmann-Curtius favored the inclusion of a different statue that would not connote "the inescapable necessity of suffering and sacrifice," which she believed was suggested in the image of Mary mourning over the body of her dead son.¹⁸³ Although Kollwitz had intended to sculpt a grieving mother and son to represent her personal feelings, many viewers interpreted her sculpture in a religious context, possibly demonstrating the power of symbolism in the development of war

¹⁸¹ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 47.

¹⁸² Marcuse, "German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial."

¹⁸³ Kinzer, "Berlin Journal; The War Memorial: To Embrace the Guilty, Too?."

memorials. The mother-son dynamic was viewed as generally representing loss of life, but still exclusively Christian grief. “The purpose of choosing this statue is to use the image of a suffering mother to promote national unity,” Hoffmann-Curtius said. “Perpetrators and victims are gathered into her lap.” According to Hoffmann-Curtius’ interpretation, the image of the Pieta was inappropriate because it allowed both victims and perpetrators to be grieved equally.¹⁸⁴ The equating of all wartime victims, and the misappropriation of this status, became one of the most controversial elements of Neue Wache – as well as other German war memorials — during the 1990s.

Opponents to the creation of a national war memorial were generally divided into two categories: one faction considered a national war memorial unnecessary, the other agreed with the idea of a memorial in theory, but disapproved of one “that homogenized victims and used false symbolism.”¹⁸⁵ The debate concerning the application of the term “victim” and the appropriate method of remembrance or memorialization of World War II era soldiers led to lingering disputes between members of the German government, public, and especially the Jewish community. In 1993, just prior to the ceremonial dedication of Neue Wache, Kohl’s cabinet along with other political representatives, agreed to create a separate memorial in memory of the Jewish victims of World War II. This decision was considered a compromise and was intended to quell the controversy that was surrounding Kohl’s redesign of Neue Wache; however, allowing one specific victim group a memorial created issues when others began to demand recognition of their own, unique suffering.¹⁸⁶

As a professor of German history, Harold Marcuse had the unique opportunity to speak at a government hearing in Bonn concerning German memorial practices. Although Marcuse

¹⁸⁴ Kinzer, “Berlin Journal; The War Memorial: To Embrace the Guilty, Too?.”

¹⁸⁵ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁸⁶ Pickford, “Conflict and Commemoration”: 152.

initially had reservations concerning the proposed renovations of Neue Wache, he eventually concluded that the redesign represented a compromise between the opposing groups. He wrote:

In the mid-1980s I had become an expert of sorts on post-1945 German memorials and monuments commemorating the “victims” – civilian, military, and Holocaust – of the Nazi era. I compiled a traveling photographic exhibition of my research for the History museum in Hamburg, where I was studying, in early 1985, just as Bitburg was breaking into the headlines. The exhibition was timely and successful. It was shown in over 30 West German cities, including Bonn, where it was the background of a public hearing in July 1985. After that hearing the government finally abandoned the Aide Memoire. I testified there on the use, actually abuse, of the term “victim” in German memorials. I spoke of “Opferbrei,” a kind of “victim soup” of indistinct and indistinguishable victims. All of the Bonn projects under discussion were ill-conceived, and I was very much against them. When the *Neue Wache* project was proposed, I was against it as well, on principle. But then I started to examine it in detail, and to my own surprise, I came to the following result: it is quite acceptable. . . . [W]hat is integration if it does not mediate between the two groups in some way? . . . Might one not accept the *Neue Wache* as a lowest common denominator between these two groups.¹⁸⁷

When saying “integration,” Marcuse was referring to the compromises between the various segments of German society, which included Holocaust victims, World War II veterans, politicians, and civilians. Each of these groups had biases, experiences, and emotions which they wanted to see acknowledged within the national war memorial. Appeasing everyone was obviously impossible, which meant concessions had to be made. Marcuse acknowledged that the renovated Neue Wache did not resolve every issue or fully satisfy anyone, but he believed that was the natural result of compromise. Marcuse wrote that Reinhart Koselleck “criticized this solution with the [*Pieta*] sculpture as ‘mediocre’—is that not the defining characteristic of a solution acceptable to all sides?”¹⁸⁸

Despite the criticism, supporters for Kohl’s plan, such as art historian Sergiusz Michalski, approved of the non-militaristic style proposed for Neue Wache. “The one positive aspect of Kohl’s vision lies in the new, predominately civilian character of the Neue Wache – a tendency

¹⁸⁷ Marcuse, “German National Monuments and the 1931 Berlin National Memorial.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

epitomized by the Pieta motif, the abrogation of military pageantry and the continued banishment of the statues of the Prussian generals,” wrote Michalski.¹⁸⁹

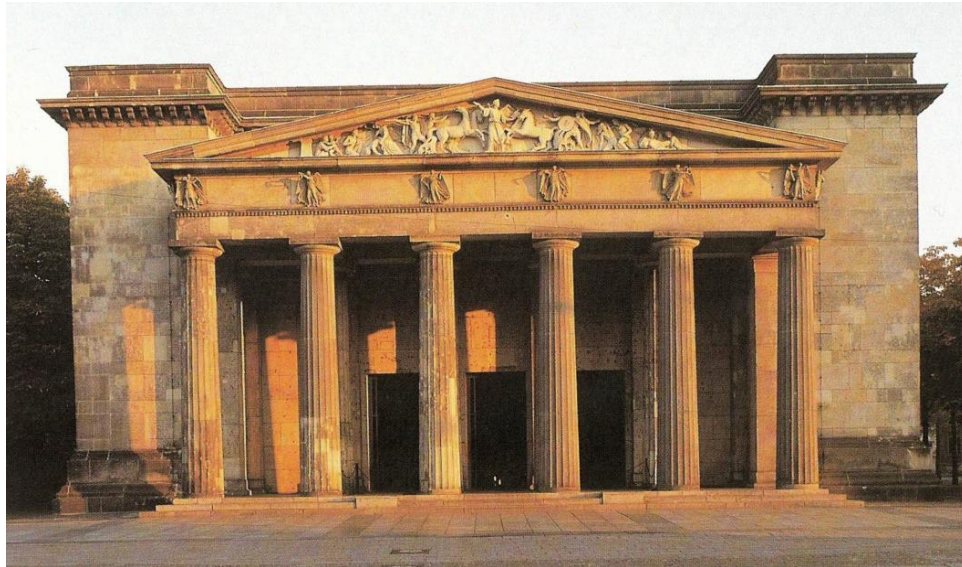


Fig. 33 Neue Wache post-1990.

On Volkstrauertag in November 2010, German President Christian Wulff and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle commemorated the day by laying wreaths at Neue Wache. Their ceremonial events were held in remembrance of those killed during both world wars and for the victims of the Nazis. Both Westerwelle and Wulff stated that “the lesson of the wars was to strive for peace.” These comments were reminiscent of the pacifist sentiments expressed by Otto Braun at the initial unveiling of Neue Wache as a war memorial in 1931. Despite nearly 80 years of appeals for peace, Westerwelle cautioned those present that “Our world is not a peaceful one.” As evidence, he warned of a rising European nationalism.¹⁹⁰

Neue Wache visually demonstrated the transitions which occurred throughout the German government and society from 1815 to 1990. This building, originally commissioned to

¹⁸⁹ Michalski, *Public Monuments*, 92.

¹⁹⁰ Jean-Baptiste Piggini, “Interest wanes in war graves, German memorial commission says,” *Dpa (Hamburg, Germany)*, November 14, 2010, accessed January 31, 2013, *November Source Plus*, EBSCOhost, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=n5h&AN=2W62056675851&site=eds-live>.

house the Kaiser's palace guards, underwent multiple renovations throughout the decades. Each successive government reinterpreted the memorial in a manner that best suited their ideology and future plans, which was reflected in changes within Neue Wache's decorations, symbols, and ceremonial role. Neue Wache was transformed into a memorial to the victims of war and tyranny in the aftermath of the Cold War and German reunification; however, the convoluted arguments concerning who to classify as a victim, and the debates concerning postwar memorialization, were not resolved during the decades immediately following World War II or after reunification, and still continue today.

CHAPTER THREE

Setting the Memory of Soldiers in Stone: Gerhard Marcks' Memorial Sculptures

In the immediate postwar years, German citizens were confronted with a narrative of World War II which associated their military with horrific war crimes and genocide and allowed for no individual examples of bravery or decency.¹⁹¹ The result of this was that the deaths of the men who served in the Wehrmacht were perceived as meaningless and misguided because their sacrifices were in the name of a murderous, and ultimately failed, cause. However, Michael Prince believed this “barren senselessness” would inevitably be recast in the public memory, because the fact that “the sum of so much death could be so insignificant was more than Germans could bear.”¹⁹² German civilians began to develop a version of history in which the Nazis and SS were a separate entity from the majority of the population, including their soldiers, during the Third Reich.

Almost immediately after the war, German civilians began to identify themselves as victims of the Nazi regime, claimed ignorance of the concentration camps, and extolled their numerous acts of perceived resistance. Moreover, although most Germans admitted horrific war crimes were committed during the Second World War, it was common for them to refuse to acknowledge that their family members could be among the perpetrators. The result of this denial was that events, such as the Holocaust, transformed into “crimes without perpetrators.”¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ For a recent evaluation of published documentation regarding Wehrmacht attitudes towards the treatment of enemy combatants, civilians, military leadership, combat missions, and their role in the perpetration or observation of war crimes, see Jan Fleischhauer “Rape, Murder and Genocide: Nazi War Crimes as Described by German Soldiers,” translated by Christopher Sultan, *Der Spiegel Online*, August 4, 2011, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/rape-murder-and-genocide-nazi-war-crimes-as-described-by-german-soldiers-a-755385.html>.

¹⁹² Prince, *War and German Memory*, 44.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

From this denial of guilt or Nazi affiliations came a peculiar postwar development concerning the German's interpretation of the conclusion of World War II. Some Germans claimed that at the end of the war they were "liberated" from the Nazi regime as opposed to a defeated nation; this claim led to the belief that the Germans could also consider themselves victims. The historical interpretation that implies Germany was liberated from the Nazi regime benefits the larger German population and creates an alternative collective memory and history for the nation; however, this version also undermines the role and sacrifices of German soldiers by implying they were aiding an unwanted oppressor. This reinterpretation of history influenced the design of memorials in the post-war years.

Critics of the movement to term the German defeat "liberation" were offended by "the implied insult to the memory of German soldiers that this interpretation suggested." They questioned how this interpretation accounted for the sacrifices made by German soldiers during the war, and said the German claim of liberation "was a violation of the historical record and made a mockery of personal experience."¹⁹⁴ Appropriating the postwar liberation to include all German citizens was not only inaccurate, it diminished the suffering of other Third Reich victims by attempting to equate their wartime experiences. "Speaking of liberation insinuates a kind of ease with and a kind of equality among everyone in this very concrete and unequal historical moment," wrote journalist John Vinocur.¹⁹⁵

In 1985, German President Richard von Weizsäcker declared that on May 8, 1945 Germany was liberated from the Nazis. With this historic speech, Weizsäcker attempted to end the debate surrounding the reinterpretation of German history—and in particular the end of

¹⁹⁴ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 49.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 52. Originally quoted in John Vinocur, "Politicus: Just Whose Liberation Was Begun On June 6?," *New York Times/International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 2004, accessed March 9, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/01/news/01iht-politicus_ed3_.html.

World War II. Weizäcker gave credibility, not to mention authority, to the idea “that the vast majority of Germans had been captive victims of their own regime rather than willing participants in its actions.” Crucial details, such as the defense of Berlin in the waning days of the Third Reich, had to be overlooked if not completely forgotten. However, the distortion of historical facts was not necessarily Weizäcker’s intent. Historian Michael Prince believed that Weizäcker’s message was misinterpreted by German citizens. He wrote, “The reinterpretation was not meant to be backward-directed toward events prior to Germany’s defeat, but forward-oriented, toward Germany’s postwar future.”¹⁹⁶

Moreover, as part of the German postwar restoration, people attempted to repair the reputation of the Wehrmacht, which was tarnished “both by defeat and by the stain of Nuremberg.” Prince argued that despite the fact that the Nuremberg courts rejected the application of collective German guilt, the “popular perception in Germany was that the trials had cast a broad blanket of blame on Germans in general—including, in particular, on its soldiers.” The solution arrived at was to separate the majority of the Wehrmacht from the SS. To distinguish these groups, Germans “shunted aside all the unpleasant aspects of the Wehrmacht’s history and ignored evidence of its collusion in the murderous policies of the Nazi regime.” The SS, like other criminal elements of the Third Reich, was isolated from the majority of German society with the creation of “a mental wall.” This barrier separated the Nazi regime from “the millions of men fighting on its behalf.” Prince believed that most German civilians viewed their World War II veterans as similar to the soldiers of any other nation, and “the myth of the ‘untarnished’ Wehrmacht” resulted.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 50.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

The perception that the Wehrmacht remained “untarnished” by the war crimes that were attributed to the Nazis and SS persisted for decades; however, this belief has been challenged with recent research and the availability of new source material. For decades, it was common for German citizens to equate their soldiers with those of other nations or wartime victims. This belief that the German military was either the victim of circumstances or “serving a higher morality” allowed German sculptor Gerhard Marcks to sculpt controversial memorials dedicated to all wartime victims as well as commemorations for soldiers who participated in the resistance.

Gerhard Marcks was born in Berlin in February 1889. He worked as an artist until the outbreak of the First World War, during which he briefly served in the German military.¹⁹⁸ He fought on the frontlines in Flanders before returning home seriously ill in 1915.¹⁹⁹ On September 1, 1914, Marcks sent a letter to his wife Maria. “I do not know how I am still alive,” Marcks wrote, as he described an attack on his unit in which led to many casualties, including several of his comrades who drowned in a mud pit. Marcks was fortunate to survive the attack and he was awarded the Iron Cross.²⁰⁰ Later in the war, Marcks worked as an advisor to the VDK (German War Graves Commission). He was unable to continue his artistic career until the war ended in 1918; however, this would not be the only time war would intervene and disrupt Marcks’ art.²⁰¹

During the interwar years, Marcks worked in the famed Bauhaus School in Dessau, Germany; he was appointed the artistic director of the ceramics workshop by Walter Gropius in 1919. Marcks worked at the Bauhaus until 1924, after which he worked as assistant director of the institute of art in Halle and participated in numerous art exhibits, such as the 1926

¹⁹⁸ “Bronze Statue at the Town Hall: The Town Musicians in Bremen,” Bremen tourism, accessed July 25, 2013, <http://www.bremen-tourism.de/bronze-statue-at-the-town-hall>.

¹⁹⁹ “Gerhard Marcks – Biografie (1889-1981),” Gerhard Marcks Haus: das bildhauermuseum im norden, accessed March 5, 2014, <http://www.marcks.de/biografie.aspx>.

²⁰⁰ Ursula Frenzel, ed., *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981: Briefe und Werke* [Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981: Letters and Works] (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1988), 30.

²⁰¹ “Bronze Statue at the Town Hall: The Town Musicians in Bremen.”

Internationale Kunstausstellung Dresden (International Art Exhibition Dresden). Marcks became well-known for his memorial sculptures, which he began creating after the First World War. However, it was his memorials dedicated to all the war dead, resulting from both world wars, which became a significant theme later in Marcks' artistic career, in the aftermath of World War II.²⁰² His notoriety increased during the 1920s and 30s—until the Nazis' rise to power.

Hitler approved Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels' proposal for the creation of a *Reichskulturkammer* (Reich Chamber of Culture), which was founded with the First Decree of the Implementation of the Reich Chamber of Culture Law, on November 1, 1933. This decree stated that the Reich Chamber of Culture was formed “to promote German culture on behalf of the German *Volk* and Reich, to regulate the economic and social affairs of the cultural professions, and to bring about a compromise between [the groups] belonging to it.”²⁰³ In order to regulate artistic production, the Reich Chamber of Culture relied on censorship and threats. In 1933, as a result of the Nazi's policies, Marcks was removed from his teaching position and banned from teaching at any other universities.²⁰⁴ This action was merely the start of the struggles Marcks encountered during the Third Reich and Second World War.

In 1933, the Bauhaus school closed after several tumultuous years which included financial issues and a hostile political climate, both of which were generated by the Nazis.²⁰⁵ These events prompted many of Germany's leading artists and architects to flee the country.

²⁰² Martina Rudloff, ed., *Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981: Retrospektive* (Munich: Hirmer, 1989), 275.

²⁰³ Alan E. Steinweis, *Art, Ideology, and Economics in Nazi Germany: The Reich Chambers of Music, Theater, and the Visual Arts* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 44.

²⁰⁴ “Gerhard Marcks,” Bauhaus Online, accessed July 26, 2013, <http://bauhaus-online.de/en/atlas/personen/gerhard-marcks>.

²⁰⁵ Alexandra Griffith Winton, “The Bauhaus, 1919-1933,” in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007), accessed July 26, 2013, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/bauh/hd_bauh.htm.

Walter Gropius²⁰⁶ immigrated to the United States in 1937 to continue his influential architectural career.²⁰⁷ In the early 1930s, painter Paul Klee returned to his native country, Switzerland, where he died in 1940. Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky chose to take refuge in Paris where he survived most of the war, but died in the French capital in December 1944.²⁰⁸ Despite the flight of many of his colleagues, Marcks remained in Germany throughout the war.

Adolf Rieth wrote that Marcks did not emigrate “because he and his art were rooted too deeply in his own country.”²⁰⁹ However, the policies of Hitler’s government dramatically altered Marcks’ life.

In 1937, Marcks’ sculptures were deemed “degenerate” under the Reichskulturkammer’s strict artistic and cultural policies. Some of his works were displayed in the infamous “Degenerate Art Exhibition” (*Entarte Kunst*), which featured art by a variety of modern artists, Jewish artists, and others deemed racially or culturally inferior by the Nazi government. Additionally, twenty-four of Marcks’

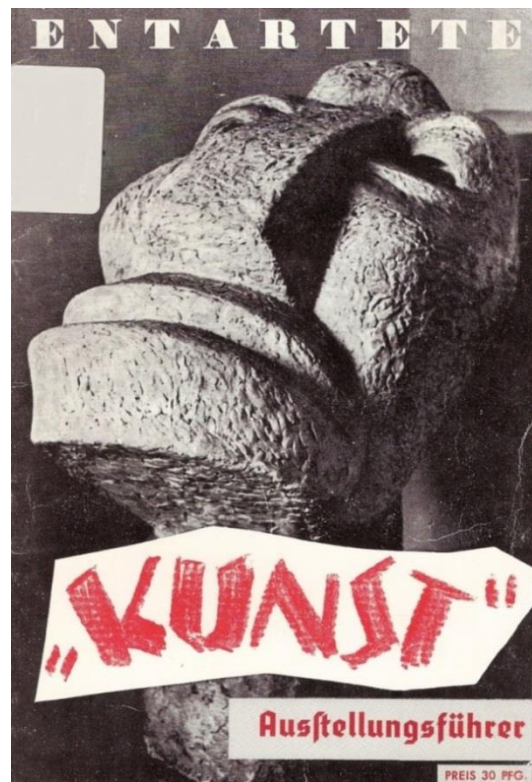


Fig. 34 Catalog for the “Degenerate Art” Exhibition.

²⁰⁶ Walter Gropius is credited as founding the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany in 1919. In 1924 the school moved its location to Dessau and continued to operate under Gropius’ direction until 1928. The building was destroyed during World War II, but was restored multiple times beginning in 1976. The original Bauhaus building was classified as a World Cultural Heritage Site in 1996. For more information on the history of the Bauhaus, see: “The Bauhaus Building by Walter Gropius (1925-26),” Bauhaus Dessau, accessed July 26, 2013, <http://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/the-bauhaus-building-by-walter-gropius.html>.

²⁰⁷ “Walter Adolph Gropius, 1883- 1969,” Industrial Designers Association of America, January 28, 2010, accessed July 26, 2013, <http://www.idsa.org/content/walter-adolph-gropius-1883-1969>.

²⁰⁸ Albert Schulze Vellinghausen, “Art as Evidence of Freedom: Contemporary Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture,” in “Perspective of Germany,” *Atlantic Monthly*, (March, 1957): 32.

²⁰⁹ Adolf Rieth et al., “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich,” *The Massachusetts Review* 2, no. 3 (Spring, 1961): 538-40.

sculptures were confiscated, and several were reportedly melted down to use for producing munitions.²¹⁰ Marcks was likely targeted by the Nazis due to his connections to the Bauhaus Academy and, possibly more significantly, because he made “a chivalrous attempt to protect a Jewish woman who was a potter at his school.” The latter led to Marcks’ immediate dismissal.²¹¹

Despite continuous antagonism from the Nazi government, Marcks continued to produce sculptures from a studio which belonged to a fellow sculptor and was located in the *Klosterstrasse* in Berlin. However, in November 1943, his home and studio, along with much of his early work, were destroyed in an air raid.²¹² Along with the Allies’ bombs, Marcks stated that “Nazis and plunderers” added to the destruction, which continued through 1945.²¹³ According to Rieth, Marcks’ friends hid 17 crates of his early work in the city of Halle which, although surviving the war, “were plundered and their content destroyed” in the aftermath.²¹⁴ Marcks lamented the destruction of his sculptures and contemptuously wrote, “After withstanding exposure to the Nazis, war and the ‘blessed’ rain of bombs, these works, with the exception of a very few, were destroyed in 1945 by the good people of Halle, because art is always an object of suspicion to the simple-minded.”²¹⁵ Despite the destruction of his artistic works, Marcks seemed to remain confident that the impact of his art would not cease, and he wrote:

Before God every genuine work of art is eternal because its creation is a divine gift. Once it is set in material and the act of creation is completed, it can be left to the process of decay. Any loafer can destroy a work of art but he cannot undo the intellectual act.²¹⁶

This statement was a direct criticism of the censorship and discrimination that Marcks encountered during the Third Reich. He believed his ideas, once formed in stone, had the

²¹⁰ Rita Hausammann et al., “Gerhard Marcks on His Life and Work,” *The Massachusetts Review* 2, no. 3 (Spring, 1961): 518-38. And Rieth, “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich”: 538.

²¹¹ Rieth, “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich”: 538.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 539 and 540.

²¹³ Hausammann, “Gerhard Marcks on His Life and Work”: 518-38.

²¹⁴ Rieth, “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich”: 538-40.

²¹⁵ Hausammann, “Gerhard Marcks on His Life and Work”: 518.

²¹⁶ Rieth, “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich”: 538-40.

potential to continually influence society as people interacted with his works. It was this influence, however, that most likely prompted the Nazis, among others, to destroy and confiscate his sculptures.

In addition to the destruction of his sculptures, Marcks also encountered other, possibly more intense, personal tragedies. In May 1940, Marcks wrote to his friend, architect Erich Consemüller, “The flowers bloom, the birds sing—and in the west is murder and mayhem [literal translation: “blood and thunder”] and Herbert [is] right in the middle of it.”²¹⁷ The following year, Marcks wrote a letter to artist Felix Weise, in which he expressed pride in his son Herbert’s accomplishments, although he also felt concerned for his son who was fighting in the German campaigns across northern Europe and Russia. He wrote, “Let us hope, that we do not outlive our boys.”²¹⁸ Despite Marcks’ hope, his son, a twenty-five year old sergeant in the Wehrmacht, was killed on January 27, 1943 in Wolchow, Russia.²¹⁹ Albert Schulze Vellinghausen stated that Marcks was “hard hit” by his son’s death.²²⁰ However, in 1945, Marcks seemed to take some comfort from his son’s death after witnessing the return of Germany’s defeated soldiers. He wrote a letter to painter Charles Crodel, and stated “When I see the destroyed grayish-yellow returnees, I no longer wish that Herbert was among them.”²²¹ This image of Germany’s veterans of World War II was reflected in the interviews with German civilians that Henry Ries, a German émigré, conducted interviews with Germans over a forty year interval. In Ries’ first series of interviews, which occurred in the aftermath of World War II, one German citizen stated that he “was taught to believe that the soldier (along with the civil servant) was ‘the backbone of

²¹⁷ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 104.

²¹⁸ Semrau, *Durchs dunkle Deutschland*, 60.

²¹⁹ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 9. And Vellinghausen, “Art as Evidence of Freedom”: 128.

²²⁰ Vellinghausen, “Art as Evidence of Freedom”: 128.

²²¹ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 121.

the Fatherland.’ But now, in 1945, ‘the soldiers are defeated, beaten, begging’.” This perception of German soldiers became a popular motif in German postwar culture.²²²

Throughout his wartime correspondence, Marcks discussed the destruction of Germany due to the Second World War, and wrote that he feared his “nerves” could not withstand the destruction of his hometown, Berlin, or other German cities most affected by the war.²²³ Despite Marcks’ fears, his fellow German artist and longtime friend Käthe Kollwitz, who he met while working in his Klosterstrasse studio in Berlin, was impressed by his resilience. In 1944, Kollwitz and Marcks met in Berlin. Afterwards, Kollwitz wrote that Marcks’ “strength” was “almost incomprehensible” to her. “Not only was his son killed in the war, but his work is destroyed, everything is gone, and yet this man is starting a new life,” she wrote. “Where does all this strength come from?”²²⁴

After the destruction of his home in Berlin, Marcks relocated to the town of Niehagen, along the Baltic coast,²²⁵ where he carved several wooden reliefs. These sculptures represented the suffering of German civilians and in some ways were an early memorial for the sacrifices of the home-front as they mourned the death of friends and family as well as the loss of their homes. In 1941 Marcks wrote that “[a]ll families have to mourn the dead, it must be approached like 1914.”²²⁶ Rieth wrote that the “horrid theme” of these artworks. . .

. . . reflects the terror of the time just before the end of the war: the Slaughter of the Innocents; Saturn, who consumes his own children; and a shocking one, to which he gives the title ‘Hope,’ where he shows a sorrowfully reflecting woman for whom there is nothing left but the bare skeleton of house and home.²²⁷

²²² Prince, *War and German Memory*, 33. Originally quoted in: Ann Stringer and Henry Ries, *German Faces* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1950), 28. Author’s note: Ries published his 1985 interviews in his book *Abschied meiner Generation* (Berlin: Argon, 1992).

²²³ Semrau, *Durchs dunkle Deutschland*, 79.

²²⁴ Rudloff, *Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981*, 318.

²²⁵ Rudloff, *Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981*, 278 and Vellinghausen, “Art as Evidence of Freedom”: 128.

²²⁶ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 107.

²²⁷ Rieth, “Gerhard Marcks and the Third Reich”: 540.

Following Germany's defeat in World War II, Niehagen became part of the Russian occupation zone.²²⁸ The wartime destruction of Germany created long-term struggles in Marcks' life that lingered throughout the subsequent decades of foreign occupation and reconstruction. Marcks noted that between 1943 and 1945, he "produced only small figures under difficult circumstances;" however, over the next four years multiple German cities commissioned Marcks to create large-scale sculptures both as part of their reconstruction efforts and as a method to document their recent history.²²⁹ Postwar Marcks also returned to his teaching career, which included a professorship at the *Landeskunstschule* (State Art Academy) in Hamburg in 1946. Four years later, in 1950, Marcks retired from teaching and moved to Cologne, where he continued to sculpt on a freelance basis.²³⁰

Gerhard Marcks created several memorials post-World War II which were "the embodiment of the Federal Republic's official commemoration concept, according to which all war dead were to be memorialized without distinction."²³¹ Daniel Koep, an art historian, wrote that "Marcks' style was anti-heroic and, at first sight, non-classicist," although Marcks did maintain the figurative approach to sculpture which was debated in the FRG due to its similarities with the Nazi and Soviet aesthetics.²³² Gilad Margalit believed that Marcks was the first German artist to propose a memorial to commemorate all of the victims of World War II. In Margalit's opinion, "Marcks's artistic activity in this field made him one of the most important monument designers in West Germany's war commemoration and memorial culture of the 1950s."²³³

²²⁸ Rudloff, *Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981*, 278 and Vellinghausen, "Art as Evidence of Freedom": 128.

²²⁹ Hausammann, "Gerhard Marcks on His Life and Work": 518.

²³⁰ "Gerhard Marcks," Bauhaus Online.

²³¹ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 109

²³² Koep, "Modernity and tradition," 4 and 86.

²³³ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 109 and 113.

The issue of memorializing the German soldiers who died fighting in World War II was especially personal to Marcks due to the death of his son Herbert. This loss shaped Marcks' view that war memorials should recognize the entirety of the war's victims, including the military; however, this view was diametrically opposed to the Soviet and GDR position which was to memorialize only "those who had fought against fascism and had been persecuted by the Nazis."²³⁴

In 1946, Marcks contacted Gerhard Strauss, a "functionary" in the GDR's Central Administration for Public Education, and who was responsible for fine art within the Soviet occupation zone. Marcks sent him a proposal to create large memorial in Berlin.²³⁵ Marcks envisioned a pile of rubble that would stand 40 to 50 meters (approximately 130-165 feet) high along the River Spree near the Reichstag. Additionally, an angel of death would stand at the top of a 12 meter high flight of stairs, beckoning visitors towards a chapel.²³⁶ Marcks wrote a letter to Strauss that described the concept behind his memorial design. "The shapes of the chapel are related to those of Romanic churches, not as a matter of stylism but rather as a result of their function: silence, solemnity, worship." However, Strauss did not approve of Marcks' design, and his proposal "remained among Strauss's personal documents."²³⁷

As a result of this rejection, Marcks wrote a letter to a friend in which he criticized the Soviet artistic policies. He wrote: "And who can seriously take part in these party memorials for the O.d.F [victims of fascism]? How I would have liked to make a memorial to all the dead (soldiers included!). But no – it shall not be."²³⁸ Although this memorial was not erected in

²³⁴ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 109.

²³⁵ Koep, "Modernity and tradition," 104. Marcks' letter to his friend Felix Weize, June 4, 1946, was originally printed in Semrau, *Durchs Dunkle Deutschland*, 165-73.

²³⁶ Koep, "Modernity and tradition," 87.

²³⁷ Ibid., 87 and 104.

²³⁸ Koep, "Figuration and Abstraction," 104. Marcks' letter originally appeared in Semrau, *Durchs Dunkle Deutschland*, 165-73.

Berlin, its “monumental proportions” were later scaled down and it was constructed for the city of Cologne. Koep wrote,

As a political monument the *Cologne Angel* pointed to the responsibility of a higher, divine power and offered a quiet consolation, affirming a whole, unfractured (German) identity. Non-classicist in style and anti-heroic in posture and installation, this monument displayed a clear break with totalitarian National Socialist aesthetics. It represented a ‘good German tradition’ and was one of the earliest post-fascist public monuments in West Germany.²³⁹

In 1947, the Hamburg Cultural Council approached Marcks about sculpting a memorial to the Nazis’ victims. The Council likely hoped, and assumed, that Marcks would create a memorial for the residents of Hamburg who were devastated by the Allies’ firebombing in the summer of 1943. However, Marcks agreed to create a memorial “that will not be dedicated explicitly to those who died in the concentration camps, and as such serve a political idea, but will rather simply be a common monument for all victims of the Nazi regime, in other words, also for the victims of the war.” Not surprisingly, Marcks’ implication that he intended to include soldiers within this memorial led the Council to reject his offer.²⁴⁰

Prior to the proposed commission for Hamburg, Marcks was contacted by Leopold Reidemeister, the former director general of Cologne’s museums, in November 1946. Reidemeister visited Marcks while the artist was working in his Hamburg studio. Marcks was attempting to fulfill his vision of a memorial dedicated in honor of all the wartime dead, which was an especially important, and personal, undertaking for Marcks, because he was “motivated by the war death of his son.” Reidemeister, with support from German art collector Josef Haubrich, returned to Cologne hoping to convince the city council to approve of Marcks’

²³⁹ Koep, “Modernity and tradition,” 88-89.

²⁴⁰ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 109 and 111. Quote originally from: HH Hamburg-Denkmalsschutzamt 39-430.308.1 Kulturrat der Hansestadt Hamburg an den Senat, July 7, 1947.

memorial concept.²⁴¹ The Cologne city council approved of Marcks' memorial design, which was dedicated to "all the dead," but only after some modifications.²⁴²

On December 20, 1946, Marcks wrote a "blessing" had befallen him after other German cities accepted his proposals to design memorials in honor of all the war dead that resulted from World War II, despite the fact that these monuments had "no place" in the Soviet occupation zone.²⁴³ In Cologne, Marcks' design involved sculpting a "large angel of death" which would

function as a memorial "for all the dead of this time [period]."²⁴⁴ In a letter written to Liesbeth Caesar, a museum assistant, on June 29, 1949, Marcks described his progress on Cologne's memorial. He wrote that he was working on the sculpture "from dawn to dusk."²⁴⁵ His sculpture, entitled *Die Trauerende* (literally translated as "The Mourner" or "The Griever," but often referred to as the "Grieving Woman") was completed five months later, in November 1949.

The *Trauerende*, which stands in front of St. Maria im Kapitol, a Catholic



Fig. 35 *Die Trauerende* by Gerhard Marcks.

cathedral in Cologne, was 2.95 meters (slightly over 9.5 feet) high and constructed from white

²⁴¹ Rudloff, *Gerhard Marcks, 1889-1981*, 318.

²⁴² Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 111.

²⁴³ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 126.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

limestone. This memorial was placed atop a pedestal in the cathedral's courtyard. Koep described Marcks' sculpture as "raised above the ground to the level of the sacred space of the chancel."²⁴⁶ The figure for this memorial was "modeled" from a 1935 sculpture by Marcks, a *Grabengel* (cemetery angel), that was destroyed.²⁴⁷ The memorial's dedication, inscribed on the base of the sculpture, read: "*Den Toten*" (To the Dead). Gilad Margalit believed that Marcks' *Trauerende* was the first West German memorial created for all the victims of World War II.²⁴⁸

At the unveiling ceremony the mayor of Cologne as well as Moritz Goldschmidt, the first chairman of Cologne's Jewish community, both underscored the widespread sorrow occurring throughout Germany as a result of the Third Reich and war. The Cologne municipality prepared a draft for the mayor's speech, which read:

A host of the dead stands accusing before our eyes. Not only those who fell outside [i.e., soldiers], but also the workers for whom death's blow came in their workplaces; women, mothers, and children, who died unnatural deaths in the ruins of our beloved city; those persecuted for political, racial, and religious reasons, who fell victim to racist madness; the poorest and most stricken among us, whose death saved them from hunger and illness. Our thoughts at this hour are with them, all of them. And with them also are our hopes that the sacrifice they were forced to make will not be in vain. We remember with grief the dead, so that we may better serve the living and the generations to come, so that we may avert for them the suffering that we had to endure.²⁴⁹

Goldschmidt acknowledged the Jewish victims of the Nazi persecution, but stated that his intention in this was not to condemn others. "At this moment I do not wish to accuse anyone," Goldschmidt said. "Because in grief and death all are equal."²⁵⁰ Margalit believed that many Germans shared his views on collective loss, because every citizen had experienced hardship and grief due to World War II. This explains the delay in commemorating the deaths of various

²⁴⁶ Koep, "Modernity and tradition," 87.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 87.

²⁴⁸ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 109.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 111. Original document available from: Historisches Archiv, Stadt Köln: Acc. 177 Nr. 69.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 111. Quote originally appeared in: Becker-Jakli, Barbara. *Ich habe in doch so geliebt: Lebensgeschichten Jüdischer Fraueninnen und Männer*. Köln: Volksblatt Verlag, 1993.

groups of Nazi victims, which occurred after the Germans were able to come to terms with their own losses.²⁵¹

In 2008, historian Jeffry Diefendorf published an article in which he questioned whether Marcks' *Trauerende*, which he referred to as "Angel of Death,"²⁵² was able to maintain the same message from the time of its unveiling through the present. Diefendorf suspected the memorial "probably means little to the present generation," because the statue now stands next to the fully restored St. Maria im Capitol without any indication of its symbolism, purpose, or history. Visitors to the church's courtyard may fail to recognize the connections between the *Trauerende* memorial and Cologne's role in World War II. "The statue has become a piece of decorative art, except on those few occasions when someone lays a wreath," Diefendorf wrote.²⁵³

Although Marcks was eventually able to create his envisioned memorial in Cologne, he continued to criticize the artistic policies within the Soviet occupation zone. He stated: "But there [in Berlin] they are incapable of separating art from politics – in other words [to erect a monument] for all the dead."²⁵⁴ The frustration Marcks felt towards the GDR underscores the divergent systems of memorialization that developed between East and West Germany during the Cold War. According to Charlotte Benton, an architectural historian, "Where public sculpture in East Germany broadly followed the pattern of other countries in the Soviet bloc, in West Germany, despite a perceived need to dissociate itself from both the figuration of its Nazi past and the Socialist Realism of the East, the competing merits of figuration and abstraction were

²⁵¹ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 111.

²⁵² Gerhard Marcks' memorial in St. Maria im Kapitol is referred to as both "*The Grieving Woman*" and "*The Angel of Death*" in various sources. The former is more common, although some sources, such as Koep, utilize the latter because the memorial statue was reportedly based on Marcks' cemetery angel and a woodcut from 1946 refers to the sculpture as the Cologne Angel. For more information, see Koep, "Modernity and tradition," 87.

²⁵³ Jeffry M. Diefendorf, "Reconciling Competing Pasts in Postwar Cologne," in *Beyond Berlin: Twelve German Cities Confront the Nazi Past*, ed. Gavriel David Rosenfeld and Paul B. Jaskot, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 60.

²⁵⁴ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 111. Originally quoted: Semrau, *Durchs dunkle Deutschland*, 220.

hotly debated in the early 1950s.” She believed that Marcks’ popularity in the FRG was due to several factors, including his distinguished artistic career and anti-communist stances, as well as his “ability to deal with traditional Christian themes in the secular framework of Cold War politics and post-war reconstruction.”²⁵⁵

In West Germany, Marcks’ sculptures became increasingly popular after his *Trauerende* was unveiled. He was commissioned to design memorials for several cities, including: Hamburg (*Charon’s Boat*, 1951), Mannheim (*The Angel of Peace*, 1952), Bochum (*The Old Woman in Mourning*, 1955), Frankfurt

(*Hiob*, 1957), Lautlingen (*The Resurrected*, 1957).²⁵⁶ Marcks’

sculpture for Mannheim, the *Angel of Peace* (*Friedenengel*), was created as a memorial for all people who died as a result of the Nazi government and World War II, between 1933 and 1945. Hermann Heimerich,



Fig. 36 FRG Chancellor Konrad Adenauer speaking at the dedication ceremony of the *Angel of Peace* in 1952.

who was mayor of Mannheim during the memorial’s planning and construction, hoped “to create a place of public mourning and collective remembrance” for the residents of Mannheim.

²⁵⁵ Charlotte Benton, “Introduction,” in *Figuration/abstraction: Strategies for Public Sculpture in Europe, 1945-1968*, ed. Charlotte Benton (Burlington: Ashgate Pub Ltd, 2004), 4.

²⁵⁶ Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 111 and 177. And Rieth, *Monuments to the Victims of Tyranny*, 42-43.

Additionally, Marcks' sculpture was supposed to address Germany's history as well as present circumstances.²⁵⁷

The dedication ceremony for the *Angel of Peace* was held on November 16, 1952, which was Volkstrauertag, and was attended by Federal Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. The ceremony was intentionally held on this date in order to forge another connection with, or at least allude to, Germany's pre-Nazi past. In May, 1983 the *Angel of Peace* was relocated to another section of Mannheim where it now stands "in the shadow of the Jesuit church."²⁵⁸

As early as August 1946, Marcks discussed the idea of creating a memorial for the July 20th conspirators who had attempted to assassinate Hitler, the victims of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, as well as for others who lived and suffered under the Nazi regime.²⁵⁹ According to journalist Kristine Ziwick, Marcks' attitude towards Colonel Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg²⁶⁰ and his co-conspirators was unique in comparison to the majority of postwar Germans. She wrote that during the decade following the conclusion of World War II, many German citizens considered Stauffenberg "a traitor;" no memorials were commissioned in honor of the July 20 conspirators.²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ "Friedensengel [Angel of Peace]," Mannheim, accessed November 1, 2013, <https://www.mannheim.de/tourismus-entdecken/friedensengel>.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Frenzel, *Gerhard Marcks 1889-1981*, 125.

²⁶⁰ Stauffenberg was an officer in the Wehrmacht and participated in many of Hitler's military campaigns, including on the Eastern front and in North Africa where he was seriously injured, before he grew disillusioned by the atrocities he witnessed. In 1942 he joined a group that was conspiring to assassinate Hitler, Hermann Göring, and Heinrich Himmler in what became known as the July Plot. On July 20, 1944 Stauffenberg brought a bomb, concealed in a briefcase, to a briefing at Hitler's "Wolf's Lair" headquarters. During the meeting, he left the bomb beneath the table before excusing himself. Although the bomb exploded and killed four men, Hitler survived. The coup ultimately failed from a lack of coordination between the conspirators, the inability to maintain authority over the reserve army stationed in Berlin, and because the bomb did not kill Hitler. Within twelve hours, Stauffenberg and three other conspirators were executed in the courtyard of the War Ministry. Stauffenberg reportedly died while shouting "Long live free Germany." Source: "Claus von Stauffenberg (1907-1944)," The Jewish Virtual Library, March 8, 2014, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Stauffenberg.html>.

²⁶¹ Kristine Ziwick, "Germany Remembers Operation Valkyrie, the Plot to Kill Hitler," *Deutsche Welle*, July 20, 2011, 1, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/germany-remembers-operation-valkyrie-the-plot-to-kill-hitler/a-1271174>.

In 1957, Marcks completed a sculpture entitled “The Resurrected” for the Stauffenberg Memorial Chapel in Lautlingen, Germany. This bronze figure depicted a man with outstretched arms and a halo surrounding his head. The man appears to rise towards the sky, an effect heightened by the sculpture’s positioning on the chapel wall.²⁶² The chapel is in Lautlingen, the birthplace of Stauffenberg. The circular building is surrounded by the graves of soldiers who were killed during the two world wars. Marck’s sculpture on the interior of the chapel is flanked



Fig. 37 Gerhard Marcks, *The Resurrected*, 1957, Stauffenberg Memorial Chapel.

by two plaques. One plaque lists the names of Claus von Stauffenberg and his brother Berthold, who were executed for participating in the July 20 Plot. The second plaque states: “They withstood the enemies of their people and gave their lives, so that the law of God might not be extinguished.” Rieth wrote that the “dignity” of this quote “is complemented by the ascetic figure of ‘The Resurrected,’ who surmounted the sorrow of this world.”²⁶³

Johannes Tuchel, Director of the German Resistance Memorial Center in Berlin, stated that most Germans either actively or passively

supported Hitler, and consequently the number of those participating in the resistance movement were scarce. “After the war, Germany did not change its population,” he said. “Now we have a new generation, and they are interested in what happened on July 20, 1944.” Although

²⁶² Rieth, *Monuments to the Victims of Tyranny*, 43.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 21. Author’s note: Rieth stated that the quote was an excerpt from the Book of Maccabees; however, the exact phrase could not be located in any of the four Books of Maccabees.

Stauffenberg's motives for the attempted coup were questioned by those of the 1960s generation, as the 60th anniversary of the July Plot approached several films and books brought renewed attention to the conspirators. As a result, the perception of Stauffenberg and his accomplices began to shift. Critics of memorializing Stauffenberg question whether he acted in his own self-interest rather than in response to the Nazis' war crimes. Tuchel refuted this claim, and said "historical evidence proves that a growing disgust for Nazi war crimes was his [Stauffenberg's] primary motivating factor."²⁶⁴

Despite the fact that West Germany had initially attempted to create a form of memorialization and remembrance that was all-inclusive of the war dead, this attitude shifted over the next four decades. The memorialization of German soldiers became a controversial issue when the alleged distinctions between the SS and Wehrmacht became less clear, which occurred as the details of the Nazi crimes became more widely known. However, this increased scrutiny and broader attribution of guilt also led to demands for acknowledgment of Allied crimes, such as the bombing campaigns, and recognition of individual German soldiers who were not part of the Nazis' genocidal plans, regardless of their branch of service.

The idea that the Wehrmacht could be exonerated from guilt, or remained "untarnished," while the SS alone bore the responsibility for committing war crimes, was challenged in 1995, when the Hamburg Social Research Institute sponsored an exhibition, entitled "War of Extermination—Crimes of the Wehrmacht, 1941-1944," which was more commonly referred to as the "Wehrmacht Exhibition." The thesis for this study focused on the Wehrmacht's both "active" and "passive" roles in the perpetration of war crimes along the Eastern front. Rather than discuss this complex topic in general terms, the exhibition displayed the actions of individual soldiers. According to the Institute, the Wehrmacht Exhibition "demonstrates that the

²⁶⁴ Ziwica, "Germany remembers Operation Valkyrie."

war of annihilation did not occur in a realm governed by some abstract dynamic, but was characterized by various levels of decision-making and individual responsibility.”²⁶⁵ This exhibition exposed the horrific crimes committed in the east, which the Hamburg Institute believed “did not result from escalating violence in the course of the war but were an integral element of German war plans from the outset.”²⁶⁶

The reactions of visitors to the exhibition ranged from disgust, outrage, and denial, to acceptance, admittance, and acknowledgment of guilt. The Wehrmacht Exhibition proved highly controversial and sparked debates, and occasional violence, across Germany.²⁶⁷ The curators hoped the exhibit would generate open discussions of Germany’s wartime past and a realistic perception of the perpetrators, although they acknowledged that their intention was not to present a complete account of the Wehrmacht’s activities, stating “it is impossible to estimate the exact number of Wehrmacht soldiers and officers involved.”²⁶⁸ Critics of the exhibition “believed it painted with a broad brush” and interpreted it as an accusation that all Wehrmacht soldiers had participated in war crimes during the Second World War.²⁶⁹ According to Prince, the Wehrmacht Exhibition “was clearly meant to act as a provocation—as a means of undermining the myth of a Wehrmacht ‘unsullied’ by the crimes of the Nazi regime,” although the curators were ill-prepared for the public’s reaction.²⁷⁰

The impact of the Wehrmacht Exhibit was so far-reaching that in March and April of 1997, the *Bundestag* (German Federal Government) debated the message of the exhibit. The press reportedly “hailed” the first debate as “‘one of the few great hours of the parliament,’ with

²⁶⁵ Wehrmacht PDF, Accessed 10-14-13, http://www.verbrechen-der-wehrmacht.de/pdf/vdw_en.pdf.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 55. He was paraphrasing an argument from Detlef Bald, Johannes Klotz, and Wolfram Wette, *Mythos Wehrmacht, Nachkriegsdebatten und Traditionspflege* [Wehrmacht Myth: Postwar debates and the maintenance of tradition] (Berlin: Aufbau, 2001), 123.

²⁷⁰ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 54-55.

members relating the debate to their own personal family histories.”²⁷¹ The Bundestag concluded their debates by approving a statement about the Second World War, which they described as “among the most terrible tragedies of German and European history,” that claimed the lives of both soldiers and civilians. However, responsibility “for this tragedy and for the crimes committed during the war were placed squarely (and solely) on the ‘national socialist regime.’”²⁷² The conclusions of the Bundestag were in line with the opinion of most Germans, who acknowledged that war crimes had occurred; however, they believed the perpetrators represented a small minority of soldiers. The majority of Germans continued to promote the idea that most soldiers “had themselves been victims of their superior officers and generals, who were in turn victims of the political and state apparatus, with ultimate responsibility residing with just one man, Adolf Hitler.”²⁷³ According to Prince, the Bundestag’s debates “tended to underpin the interpretation of German soldiers as victims.”²⁷⁴

Opposition to the exhibit was largely the result of people’s belief that it universally, and without distinction, condemned all soldiers who had served in the Wehrmacht and also that it was biased. The charges that the exhibit was prejudiced were due to the fact that it focused on German war crimes while ignoring the Allied excesses or crimes committed during the war. To remedy this imbalance, visitors to the Wehrmacht Exhibit suggested showing examples of German resistance or displaying evidence of Allied crimes; Prince wrote that one visitor to the

²⁷¹ *Deutsche Welle*, Controversial Wehrmacht Exhibition Back On Show, 2001, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/controversial-wehrmacht-exhibition-back-on-show/a-338282>.

²⁷² Prince, *War and German Memory*, 56-7. Originally quoted in: Peter Schneider, “Der Bundestag wolle beschliessen. Zur Debatte über die Ausstellung ‘Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’” [The Bundestag decides: The debate about the exhibition ‘War of Extermination: Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 to 1944’], in *Eine Ausstellung und ihre Folgen: zur Rezeption der Ausstellung ‘Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’* [An Exhibition and Its Consequences: The Public Reception of the Exhibition ‘War of Extermination. Crimes of the Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944’], ed. the Hamburger Institute für Sozialforschung (Hg.) (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 112.

²⁷³ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 56.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

Wehrmacht Exhibit asked, “When will we see the exhibit: ‘Crimes of the Allies!’” Additionally, other visitors wanted recognition of the German wartime suffering, which resulted from the rape and pillage of the Soviet Army, the Allied bombing campaign, and the forced relocation of Germans. Despite the criticism, some visitors appreciated the Wehrmacht Exhibit’s attempt at confronting Germany’s recent history. While “congratulating Germany for dealing with its past so openly,” some visitors were left “wondering when other peoples would do the same with their own dirty pasts.”²⁷⁵

This controversial exhibit “became entangled with Germany’s struggle to find its place in the post-Cold War world—especially its military role in that world.” This became a critical factor after 1990, when the newly reunified Germany consolidated the FRG’s Bundeswehr²⁷⁶ and parts of the GDR’s National Volksarmee.²⁷⁷ With this new army “it became necessary to revive a certain military ethos and search for a military tradition that could underpin the Bundeswehr’s esprit-de-corps. Critics of the “Wehrmacht Exhibit” thought “the exhibit only undermined attempts to instill a new sense of purpose and pride in the military services.”²⁷⁸

A major debate post-World War II concerned the role of German soldiers in perpetrating the Nazi’s genocidal crimes. The resulting punishment or exoneration of these men centered on their claim of merely following orders, which relieved them of any responsibility for the outcomes of their actions. “As long as the soldier operates within the limits he considers necessary, he perceives his actions as legitimate,” wrote Fleischhauer. “This can easily

²⁷⁵ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 56. Quotes originally appeared in: Kulturreferat Landeshauptstadt München, Bilanz einer Ausstellung. Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Ausstellung, “Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht,” (Munich: Drömer Knauer, 1998), 122-25, 184, 213-23, 239-36, 255-67.

²⁷⁶ The Bundeswehr was formed in 1955 amid much debate. This was the same year West Germany was admitted as a member of NATO. The establishment of a post-WWII German military was likely influenced by the Cold War. For more information, see “German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr),” NATO.

²⁷⁷ “German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr),” NATO, accessed November 13, 2013, <http://www.nato.int/nrhc/database/germany.pdf>.

²⁷⁸ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 57. He was paraphrasing an argument from: Bald, *Mythos Wehrmacht*, 144-149.

encompass acts of extreme brutality.”²⁷⁹ The Nuremberg Trials did much to highlight and acknowledge the worst of the Nazi crimes against humanity and punished the leadership; however, the Allies were criticized for this international tribunal which convicted Nazi criminals for previously undefined war crimes.²⁸⁰

Despite the fact that Marcks, the curators of the Wehrmacht Exhibit, and even German citizens themselves, were examining the same events that transpired between 1939 and 1945, their interpretations and conclusions could vary drastically. The lack of consensus concerning the role of German civilians and soldiers during the Third Reich explains not only the vastly different approaches taken by Marcks and the curators of the Wehrmacht Exhibit in representing their soldiers, but also the responses to these depictions from the postwar German government and society.

While Marcks sought a form of memorialization that would be inclusive of soldiers, such as his son, the wider implications of his memorial sculptures became troublesome. Not clarifying which persons or groups are victims of the Nazi regime, or to what extent, led to the misuse and abuse of this designation. The term “victim” could now be applied to almost anyone who suffered injuries or loss during the war. This mentality allowed myths, such as the “untarnished Wehrmacht,” to develop.

The death and destruction that Marcks encountered due to World War II were shared by many throughout Germany. In order to heal their ravaged cities and families, an interpretation of the Nazi era was developed that allowed German citizens to mourn their losses. Memorials were erected to remember or honor all the war dead, who were now often classified as victims of the Nazi regime with disregard to their role in the Third Reich. This process allowed the millions of

²⁷⁹ Fleischhauer, “Rape, Murder and Genocide.”

²⁸⁰ Marshall Dill Jr., *Germany: A Modern History*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 423.

German soldiers and civilians who were left behind to rebuild their lives, and also participate in the alliances and politics that governed Cold War era Europe. Unfortunately, these postwar narratives of universal suffering and individual guilt led to distortions of historical facts.

CHAPTER FIVE

Commemorating the Criminal: The Impact of SS Graves on Military Cemeteries as Memorial Spaces

The small town of Bitburg, located in the Rhineland-Palatinate state near the Luxembourg border, has a current population of 13,446, of which more than 5,000 are United States citizens.²⁸¹ Bitburg was thrust into the international spotlight after West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and United States President Ronald Reagan made a very public, and highly controversial, visit to Kolmeshöhe cemetery, Bitburg's local military cemetery.²⁸² In an article written 25 years after this event, journalist Dagmar Schommer described this city as "the symbol of a piece of unresolved past."²⁸³ Although many of the postwar struggles that immediately confronted Bitburgers were shared throughout Germany, the controversy regarding the memorialization of the soldiers interred within their local military cemetery was unique. Bitburg cemetery provided a case study into the issues mass burial and memorialization of German soldiers encountered due to the legacy of the Third Reich. The controversy surrounding Reagan and Kohl's visit to Bitburg demonstrated that although the creation and function of military cemeteries were initially innocuous, they became problematic in the aftermath of World War II.

²⁸¹ "Bitburg (Bitburg-Prüm)," City Population, March 31, 2014, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.citypopulation.de/php/germany-rheinlandpfalz.php?cityid=07232018>. Author's Note: The 2012 population estimate was based on the 2011 census. However, during the mid-1980s the ratio of Americans to Germans residing in Bitburg was even greater. In 1985 the number of Americans in Bitburg was reported to be 10,600 compared to 12,500 Germans. For more information, see James M. Markham, "In Town of Bitburg, Good Will Binds Germans, U.S. Airmen," *New York Times*, April 19, 1985.

²⁸² Kolmeshöhe cemetery is more commonly referred to as "Bitburg cemetery" in English language sources.

²⁸³ Dagmar Schommer, "Damals, als Ronald Reagan Bitburg besuchte [Back When Ronald Reagan Visited Bitburg]," *Volksfreund*, May 6, 2010, 1, accessed March 7, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/bitburg/aktuell/Heute-in-der-Bitburger-Zeitung-Damals-als-Ronald-Reagan-Bitburg-besuchte;art752,2436858>.

While the Nazi terror did not endure for the Thousand Years envisioned by Hitler, its legacy left a devastating wake. Bitburg, like many German cities, suffered massive losses during the closing days of World War II.²⁸⁴ On Christmas Eve, 1944 American bombers leveled the city so completely, that German Army dispatches reported the area was “administratively dead.”²⁸⁵ An estimated 85 percent of Bitburg was destroyed during this single air raid.²⁸⁶ This destruction was later corroborated in Bitburg’s official history, which stated that when the United States’ military occupied the town two months after the raid “only 60 survivors remained amid the rubble.”²⁸⁷ The Allies’ bombing campaigns caused significant damage that continued to affect German citizens for decades.²⁸⁸ American Robert L. Dain was a navigator for one of the planes that participated in the Christmas Eve bombing mission over Bitburg. Nearly 66 years after the air raid, Dain recalled looking down towards Bitburg as the city burned. The impact of that image lingered within Dain’s memory, because in 2010 he returned to Bitburg to place a wreath in Kolmeshöhe military cemetery. Although the article detailing Dain’s visit seemed to dismiss the Christmas Eve bombing mission by writing “it was war,” the veteran reportedly “expressed

²⁸⁴ Ernst Nolte, a conservative German historian, likened the Allied bombing campaign during World War II to the crimes committed by the SS. During the post-war years, many Germans focused on the devastation caused by the Allies’ indiscriminate, or at least imprecise, air raids. Historian Gilad Margalit described the mindset that formed the basis for Nolte’s opinions, as well as many other Germans, and wrote that Nolte equated the air raids to SS crimes and “even used the Nazi term for the bombings, which the Communists had adopted during the Cold War.” Additionally, Nolte reportedly felt that both German civilians and SS soldiers could be counted among the victims of World War II, as both were victimized by “a criminal policy.” According to Margalit, Nolte’s perceptions regarding the actions of the Allies and SS were supported by many Germans prior to the 1960s. For more information, see Margalit, *Guilt, Suffering, and Memory*, 223.

²⁸⁵ Tyler Marshall, “‘We Remember Those of All Nations,’ German Mayor Says: Bitburg Confused over Cemetery Furor,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-20/news/mn-21732_1_german-army.

²⁸⁶ Nathanael Callon “World War II Fighter Unearthed 65 Years Later,” Spangdahlem Air Base, March 26, 2010, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123196887>.

²⁸⁷ Marshall, “‘We Remember Those of All Nations.’”

²⁸⁸ On February 24, 2010 an American P-47D Thunderbolt was discovered near Bitburg by German engineers who were inspecting a site in preparation for the construction of a housing complex. These inspections are necessary due to the Allied bombing campaign. Although it is considered relatively common to find unexploded ordinance or fragments from World War II, discovering the fighter plane was unusual. The United States relinquished ownership of the plane to the German landowners, Volksbank Bitburg. The bank planned to restore parts of the plane for exhibition at a local museum. For more information, see Callon, “World War II Fighter Unearthed 65 Years Later.”

regret over the victims of the bombing and destruction” as well as the resulting suffering of civilians.²⁸⁹

This devastating raid on Bitburg occurred during the Battle of the Bulge, which took place in December 1944 through January 1945 and was Germany’s last major offensive of World War II. In total, 100,000 German soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured. Additionally, many areas of Germany, including Bitburg, were destroyed.²⁹⁰ The majority of the German soldiers killed during the Battle of the Bulge were buried where they fell. However, in the late 1950s Gerda Dreiser, a former Red Cross nurse who lived in Bitburg during World War II, headed a program to rebury the bodies of the fallen German soldiers scattered across the Eifel region. Dreiser’s group reinterred nearly 2,000 soldiers²⁹¹ in Kolmeshöhe cemetery, which was formally established in 1959.²⁹²

Bitburg cemetery, which was described as a “commemorative site” for the fallen of the two World Wars, sits atop a hill overlooking a small valley near the residential section of the city.²⁹³ This scenic location represented VDK chief architect Robert Tischler’s mission for the

²⁸⁹ “Große Geste nach 65 Jahren: US-Veteran besucht Bitburg [Great Gesture after 65 Years: U.S. Veteran Visited Bitburg],” *Volksfreund*, May 21, 2010, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/bitburg/kurz/Kurz-Gro-223-e-Geste-nach-65-Jahren-US-Veteran-besucht-Bitburg;art753,2450522>.

²⁹⁰ Mark Heinrich, “Bitburg Mayor Protests Row Over Cemetery,” *AP News Archive*, April 18, 1985, 1, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1985/Bitburg-Mayor-Protests-Row-Over-Cemetery/id-6808446c145d6121881ba6c27e049b12>.

²⁹¹ The exact number is disputed in several sources. The estimates ranged from 1,887 to 1,983. For more information see: Markham, “In Town of Bitburg,” and Times Wire Services, “Outrage Forces Reagan to Seek 2d German Site to Visit: May Pick Camp or Synagogue,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1985, 1, accessed March 18, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-15/news/mn-13949_1_state-visit.

²⁹² *Volksfreund*, “Bitburg erinnert sich [Bitburg Remembers],” January 17, 2010, 1, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/bitburg/aktuell/Heute-in-der-Bitburger-Zeitung-Bitburg-erinnert-sich;art752,2325265>. Marshall, ““We Remember Those of All Nations’,”; and James M. Markham and John Tagliabue, “SS Unit’s History Overlooked in U.S. Plan on German Visit,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/28/world/ss-unit-s-history-overlooked-in-us-plan-on-german-visit.html>.

²⁹³ Marshall, ““We Remember Those of All Nations’”; Heinrich, “Bitburg Mayor Protests Row Over Cemetery”; and “Cemetery Kolmeshöhe,” Stadt Bitburg, accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.bitburg.de/cgi-bin/cms?_SID=f52df0cc3b315f3f64cfec472c8229afe0a398bb00140542302412&_sprache=de&_bereich=artikel&_aktion=detail&idartikel=100667.

burial of fallen soldiers in military cemeteries. Tischler,²⁹⁴ who became chief architect for the VDK in 1926, developed a form of memorialization that would require little up-keep. He focused on creating minimalist memorial landscapes that “would blend in with the natural features of the local area.”²⁹⁵ The simple headstones that lay flat across the ground throughout Bitburg cemetery were described as being “obscured” by grass only a few inches high.²⁹⁶ The majority of the grave markers listed the fallen soldiers’ name, rank, and date of birth, although some merely designated the deceased as “a German soldier” or “an unknown soldier.”²⁹⁷ In the center of Bitburg cemetery stands a tall monument that was erected in 1934 in honor of those killed while fighting in the First World War. James Markham, a journalist, wrote that Bitburg cemetery was “dominated” by this memorial, which he described as “a squat stone tower.”²⁹⁸



Fig. 38 Bitburg Cemetery Memorial Tower, date unknown.

²⁹⁴ Tischler, who reportedly felt “uneasiness about identifiable, individual graves,” preferred military cemeteries with centralized monuments and mass graves. Therefore, he would represent the fallen with a group of large crosses, and inscribe the soldiers’ names on a “separate memorial wall or pillar.” According to Mosse, Tischler’s favored cemetery designs were the *Totenburgen* (Fortresses of the Dead), which demonstrated “the dominance of the nation over the individual.” Additionally, Mosse believed these commemorative sites, reportedly also “favored” by Hitler, revealed the “right-wing sympathies” of the VDK. The preference for mass forms of commemoration emphasized the complex role of fallen soldiers in German society, who “were not only comrades but above all members of the nation rather than individuals.” For more information on Tischler or *Totenburgen*, see Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 85-86.

²⁹⁵ Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers*, 85-6. And “Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK).”

²⁹⁶ Marshall, “‘We Remember those of all nations’.”

²⁹⁷ Markham, “In Town of Bitburg.”

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

Bitburg cemetery contained approximately 100 graves from the First World War,²⁹⁹ to which nearly 1,800 to 1,900 German soldiers killed in World War II were added.³⁰⁰

According to VDK member Adolf Barth, of the more than 2,000 soldiers

buried in Bitburg cemetery, the majority were reportedly killed during

the Battle of the Bulge.³⁰¹ Included among the soldiers interred in Bitburg were 47 members of Hitler's SS combat divisions,³⁰² although supposedly only 41 tombstones feature SS symbols.³⁰³

Initially, the inclusion of these graves was not controversial as many Bitburgers, such as Mayor Hallet, viewed these men as ordinary soldiers who were pressured into military service towards the end of World War II, rather than fanatic Nazis or participants in genocidal war crimes.³⁰⁴

Additionally, of the deceased who were affiliated with the SS, 17 were under the age of 20.³⁰⁵



Fig 39 Headstone with SS markings in Bitburg Cemetery. The soldier was 17 when he died.

²⁹⁹ According to Markham's article "In Town of Bitburg" there are 100 World War I graves in Bitburg Cemetery; however, other sources, such as Marshall, "We Remember Those of All Nations," estimated 1,000 World War I graves. The estimate of 100 was used in the main text because it seems more accurate when combined with other reports regarding the total number of soldiers buried in Bitburg Cemetery.

³⁰⁰ Marshall, "We Remember Those of All Nations." And Markham, "In Town of Bitburg."

³⁰¹ *Time*, "Beneath the Headstones," April 29, 1985, 22. Markham, "SS Unit's History Overlooked in U.S. Plan on German Visit."

³⁰² Marshall, "We Remember Those of All Nations." Other sources claimed the number of SS graves to range from 47 to 59. The 47 graves was the number reported by Bitburg Mayor Theo Hallet, while Stadt Bitburg listed 59 on its website. However, after consulting 29 sources, the majority (16) wrote that 49 SS men were buried in Bitburg, while 9 sources reported that 47 were. The discrepancy likely resulted from the fact that only 41 headstones were marked with the "SS" insignia, and among those is Sergeant August Kuchar who was mistakenly identified as a member of the SS, although he was a soldier in the Wehrmacht. For more information, see Dennis Phillips, "Most Ruthless Buried at Bitburg."

³⁰³ Dennis Phillips, "Most Ruthless Buried at Bitburg," *Chicago Tribune*, May 5, 1985, accessed September 09, 2013, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-05-05/news/8501270676_1_bitburg-hitler-youth-records.

³⁰⁴ Heinrich, "Bitburg Mayor Protests Row over Cemetery."

³⁰⁵ Phillips, "Most Ruthless Buried at Bitburg."

This fact led Hallet to conclude sympathetically that some of the fallen soldiers “were just children.”³⁰⁶

Despite being enemies during the Second World War, the Americans and Germans built an enduring friendship and alliance in postwar Bitburg, starting with the construction of an air force base in 1952.³⁰⁷ The United States Air Force converted a former tank staging area, which was previously used by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge, into an American military base.³⁰⁸ This revitalized military base brought both a significant increase in population as well as economic stability to the city. Postwar, Bitburg reportedly survived economically due to the popularity of its Bitburger Pils beer and the revenue generated by the American Air Force personnel and their families. As evidence of this relationship, the local Volvo dealership reportedly displayed the prices in terms of dollars, not German marks.³⁰⁹ Additionally, the air base was for decades the largest employer in Bitburg; over 700 Germans worked alongside the American military personnel.³¹⁰

In 1959, just fourteen years after the conclusion of World War II, the community of Bitburg gathered for the first time to lay a memorial wreath at Kolmeshöhe cemetery. This ceremony became an annual tradition to “remember those of all nations who died in the war,” Hallet said.³¹¹ Despite the fact that Bitburg cemetery contained the graves of several SS men, attendees included German, American, and French representatives, both military and civilian.

³⁰⁶ Heinrich, “Bitburg Mayor Protests Row over Cemetery.”

³⁰⁷ This base, which covered 1,200 acres of land, had 450 buildings as well as multiple runways. The initial cost to acquire the base was in excess of \$100 million, but by 1980 its “estimated replacement cost” had increased to almost \$400 million. In February 1981 F. Clifton Berry, Jr., a writer for *Air Force Magazine*, published a report on the strategic importance of Bitburg Air Base. “[The] Primary mission of the 36th is air superiority in central Europe, and it maintains four F-15s on air defense alert at all times,” Berry wrote. “They are ready to go, capable of scrambling in less than five minutes.” For more information, see F. Clifton Berry Jr., “Generating Sorties: How to Keep Them Flying,” *Air Force Magazine*, February 1981, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.airforcemag.com/MagazineArchive/Pages/1981/February%201981/0281sorties.aspx>.

³⁰⁸ Marshall, “‘We Remember Those of All Nations’.”

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Markham, “In Town of Bitburg.”

³¹¹ Marshall, “‘We Remember Those of All Nations’.”

According to American sources, “the presence of the SS graves was commonly known” and therefore was not a deterrent to their memorial services. In 1985, American civil servant Victoria Bills, who was responsible for the air force base publicity, explained the rationale behind the American participation and said, “The thinking was that we are all allies now and we’re working together.”³¹² The commander of the United States Air Force’s 36th Tactical Fighter Wing would join the mayor of Bitburg in this annual wreath-laying event at the cemetery, which was held on Volkstrauertag. This memorial day commemoration became an enduring tradition among the multinational residents of Bitburg, and this symbolic ceremony continues to represent their prosperous postwar recovery and friendship.³¹³

In spite of the postwar reconciliation and progress of Bitburg, memorializing German soldiers who fought and died in World War II remained a contentious topic. This became painfully obvious after the seemingly idyllic landscape of Bitburg became the backdrop for an international controversy in May 1985, when West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and United States President Ronald Reagan visited the cemetery.

The controversy began when Chancellor Kohl was excluded from the Allies’ ceremonies to commemorate the 40th anniversary of their successful D-Day landings. The reactions among contemporary German citizens ranged from feelings of rejection and sadness, to anger.³¹⁴ This exercise in post-World War II Allied commemoration highlighted significant issues of the continuing separation of Germans within the postwar alliances. This event reportedly left

³¹² Marshall, “‘We Remember Those of All Nations.’”

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ For example of contemporary reactions, see James D. Markham, “D-Day Ceremonies Vex West Germans,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1984, accessed September 9, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/07/world/d-day-ceremonies-vex-west-germans.html>.

Chancellor Kohl feeling “miffed” and resentful. However, it also galvanized Kohl’s desire for a public display of solidarity and recognition from his Western Allies.³¹⁵

On November 30, 1984, United States President Reagan met with his “good friend & solid ally” West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. During this meeting, Kohl expressed concerns to Reagan regarding the impending celebrations to commemorate the end of World War II in Europe, which excluded the Germans. Kohl hoped future commemorations could highlight the West German commitment to peace, friendship, and reconciliation.³¹⁶ In an interview on May 6, 1985 with journalist William McWhirter, Kohl claimed he informed the American president that “this May 8 would be a very difficult time for us, when we would look back to our own liberation from the Nazis, but also to a day that was the revelation of national shame.” Kohl said he invited Reagan to participate in a memorial ceremony, “to commemorate the day as one of remembrance,” not to deny the crimes committed by the Nazis, but rather “to do everything to see that they may never occur again.”³¹⁷

As a symbolic gesture, Chancellor Kohl invited Reagan, who he reportedly referred to as “Ron,” to remain in West Germany as an official state guest following the conclusion of the 1985 Economic Summit Meeting of the Heads of State and Government in Bonn.³¹⁸ Although seven heads of state were attending the Summit, Kohl’s invitation to remain as a guest of West Germany was exclusive to Reagan.

Kohl proposed that he and Reagan visit several sites in West Germany that related to the Germans’ role in World War II. In order to recognize West Germany’s recent commitment to

³¹⁵ Ed Magnuson, Laurence I. Barrett, and William McWhirter, “V-E Day: A Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds,” *Time*, April 29, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1048301,00.html>.

³¹⁶ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 283.

³¹⁷ William McWhirter, “Helmut Kohl: My Objective Was Reconciliation,” *Time*, May 6, 1985, 1, accessed September 9, 2013, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,967530,00.html>.

³¹⁸ Karl Hugo Pruys, *Kohl, Genius of the Present: A Biography of Helmut Kohl* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1996), 205.

peace, democracy, and postwar progress, Reagan accepted Kohl's invitation. Sources dispute exactly which locations the two politicians discussed as potential memorial sites. Journalist Ed Magnuson wrote, "There is no doubt that Kohl made an emotional appeal for the President to join him in appearing at a German military cemetery." Magnuson claimed the German Chancellor "mentioned Bitburg" as a possible site for reconciliation, to which Reagan agreed to "in principle," although the president did not commit to visiting that cemetery at that time.³¹⁹ Markham wrote that it was understandable why Kohl may have found Bitburg a suitable location to demonstrate postwar German-American friendship and reconciliation. He believed the destruction of the town by Allied bombers and then its subsequent reconstruction with the American airbase, spoke to the close relationships forged in Bitburg.³²⁰ Additionally, Bitburg Mayor Hallet initially welcomed Reagan and Kohl's visit to the cemetery in Bitburg because "he saw it as a great opportunity to put his town on the map."³²¹

Although it remains unclear as to why the military cemetery near Bitburg airbase was ultimately chosen, several possible explanations were frequently cited. First, Bitburg was located near a NATO airbase which would allow easy and safe travel for the United States president and West German chancellor. Second, it was located in Kohl's home district, which was considered politically significant as an election occurred just one week after the politicians' visit. Third, American military personnel were stationed nearby which allowed joint American-West German participation in the events. On February 19, 1985, Horst Teltschik, the department head of foreign and security policy in the FRG chancellery, met with Reagan's long-time aide and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver for "a weeklong advance planning survey."³²²

³¹⁹ Magnuson, "Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds."

³²⁰ Markham, "In Town of Bitburg."

³²¹ Marshall, "'We Remember Those of All Nations'."

³²² Magnuson, "Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds." And Pruys, *Kohl, Genius of the Present*, 204.

After the German and American representatives finalized the itinerary for Reagan's West German tour, the details were released to the public. The two heads of state "realized too late that they had trusted their colleagues too blindly," when a journalist researching the cemetery quickly discovered that SS men were buried among the other graves.³²³ A media firestorm ensued. It is unclear why the U.S. and FRG representatives were unprepared for the controversy that developed around the visit to Bitburg cemetery, because the inclusion of the SS graves was well-known among those living and working in Bitburg. Additionally, the SS men were signified with markings on their grave stones and their rank, unit, and years of service were listed in the official cemetery records. Both the West Germans and Americans gave explanations (often opposing) as to how the oversight occurred.

Members of Reagan's administration claimed to be unaware of the soldiers' identities prior to accepting Kohl's invitation, which they attempted to explain with a medley of excuses. For example, the American delegation initially blamed their West German counterparts for not explicitly stating that SS men were among the deceased interred in Bitburg cemetery. Moreover, they claimed that snow was covering the headstones during their tour, and therefore the "SS" markings were not visible. Because of this, the Americans relied on assurances from the West German representatives and Chancellor Kohl that nothing "embarrassing" was in the cemetery. Lastly, Deaver's health problems were widely viewed as a contributing factor for the American's incomplete and poorly researched advance planning; he was an experienced member of Reagan's staff, but unable to fully dedicate himself to this West German visit due to an illness for which he was later hospitalized.³²⁴

³²³ Pruys, *Kohl, Genius of the Present*, 203.

³²⁴ Magnuson, "V-E Day: A Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds."

Additionally, when Reagan's travel plans were announced, White House Spokesman Larry Speakes informed reporters that he "thought" both American and German soldiers were buried in Bitburg cemetery, though where he received that impression and whether Reagan shared it was never clarified.³²⁵ Journalists later discovered that no U.S. soldiers were in the cemetery, but members of the SS were. After World War II, all American soldiers killed in action were returned from Germany to the United States for burial. This policy ensured that no Americans could be buried in Bitburg cemetery and calls into question the preparations made prior to the visit as well as the sources on which Reagan's aides were reliant.³²⁶

Despite the American claims of ignorance, West Germans refused to accept blame or full responsibility for the planned itinerary. Representatives of Chancellor Kohl pointed out that American delegation failed to ask for a list of the men buried in Bitburg, which Mayor Hallet later corroborated. Additionally, they stated that the Americans only researched one potential massacre against American soldiers that was known to have been perpetrated by the SS, the Malmedy Massacre, and did not fully investigate the other divisions who fought in the region.³²⁷

³²⁵ On November 11, 2008, Staff Sergeant Anthony "Tony" Zaso, was buried with military honors in Bitburg's Kolmeshöhe Cemetery. The Brooklyn, New York native was a decorated veteran of World War II who served more than twenty years in the military before retiring. He worked at Bitburg Air Base as a civilian and lived in the city over thirty years before passing away November 2, 2008. For more information, see Andrea Knudson, "Local World War II Veteran Remembered," Spangdahlem Air Base, December 12, 2008, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123127760>.

³²⁶ Magnuson, "V-E Day: A Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds."

³²⁷ Markham, "SS Unit's History Overlooked." The American advance planning team focused their researched on the Waffen SS divisions responsible for the Malmedy Massacre, in which 71 American POWs were shot and killed following their capture. This event took place in Belgium, but only forty miles northwest of Bitburg. Although some of the men interred in the cemetery had belonged to these SS divisions, the individuals were not associated with these war crimes as many died prior to their perpetration. Additionally, an article in the *New York Times* reported that "some SS buried in Bitburg maybe participated in a massacre in Oradour." The massacre that occurred in Oradour-sur-Glane, a French village, killed 642 victims. This massacre was later proven to not have been perpetrated by the men buried in Bitburg cemetery. In January, 2014 a former member of the SS named in court documents only as "Werner C." was charged with 25 counts of murder and hundreds of counts of acting as an accessory to murder. The 88 year old German was alleged to have participated in the Oradour massacre. If the Cologne court decides to take the case to trial, there is a possibility that Werner could be charged in a juvenile court because he was 19 years old at the time of the murders. For more information, see *Time*, "Beneath the Headstones." And *Deutsche Welle*, Murder Trial of Ex-Nazi Officer Siert Bruins Closed Without a Verdict, January 8, 2014,

A FRG official criticized the American planning team, and said, “You can't just walk over the ground covered with snow and say this is a nice landscape. We should know history even better than the Americans, but the Americans also have a responsibility toward the President. They must also check on the history that is beneath the ground.”³²⁸

A series of meetings between the United States president, West German chancellor, and international press were held prior to the ceremonies at Bitburg cemetery. Historian Karl Pruys wrote that by the end of April, the meetings between Teltschik and Deaver, and American Ambassador Arthur Burns and Kohl “started to resemble crisis management.”³²⁹ Reagan and Kohl apparently hoped that by explaining their decisions concerning the travel itinerary they could convince the public to agree that their message was one of peace and reconciliation, but this did not occur. Much of the international criticism was due to the fact that Reagan immediately accepted Kohl’s invitation to pay his respects at a military cemetery that included graves of SS soldiers, but refused to attend an additional location that acknowledged the crimes and suffering that the SS organization had unleashed. Reagan was reportedly invited to Dachau concentration camp by the district governor; however, Reagan felt it would be inappropriate for him, as a visitor to the West German state, to “take off and go someplace and, then, run the risk of appearing as if I was trying to say to the Germans, ‘Look what you did,’ and all of this when most of the people in Germany today weren’t alive or were very small children when this [the Second World War] was happening.”³³⁰

accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/murder-trial-of-ex-nazi-officer-siert-bruins-closed-without-a-verdict/a-17348290>.

³²⁸ Magnuson, “V-E Day: A Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds.”

³²⁹ Pruys, *Kohl, Genius of the Present*, 205.

³³⁰ “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Regional Editors and Broadcasters April 18, 1985,” *The Public Papers of President Ronald W. Reagan*, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, accessed February 26, 2013, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/41885d.htm>. Author’s note: Reagan was reportedly exaggerating a statement made by Kohl, in which the Chancellor stated “60% of the present German population had

While these appeals ultimately led to the inclusion of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on the West German tour, it seems unlikely that selecting another military cemetery would have had a different or well-received result. Theo Hallet, who was mayor of Bitburg during the 1980s, said, “Everybody knows that there is not a single military cemetery in Germany without tombs of SS soldiers.”³³¹ Hallet said the presence of the SS graves in Bitburg cemetery should have been clearly stated to the American advance planning team from the start, because it is common for German military cemeteries to contain the remains of both SS and Wehrmacht soldiers. However, he wondered aloud, “Where else should they have been buried?” Hallet reportedly thought it was “irrelevant” to try to categorize these men “into good, better or worse soldiers” decades after their deaths.³³²

Some of the most strident opposition to Reagan and Kohl’s plan to lay a wreath in Bitburg cemetery came from United States citizens. In an opinion poll published April 24, 1985, Americans were asked if they supported or opposed Reagan’s scheduled visit to Bitburg cemetery. Of the 1,119 respondents, 51 percent opposed the visit, 39 approved, and 10 percent had no opinion.³³³ In contrast, a survey published three days later of West German citizens’ opinions reported that 72 percent were in favor of Reagan visiting Bitburg cemetery.³³⁴ In Bitburg, the calls for Reagan to cancel his trip or select another location had a more personal impact. According to journalist Tyler Marshall, the American opposition “has shaken the faith of many citizens here, people who are openly proud of the hospitality they offer servicemen from a

been born since the war.” For more information, see Magnuson, “V-E Day: A Misbegotten Trip Opens Old Wounds.”

³³¹ *Time*, “Beneath the Headstones.”

³³² Markham, “In Town of Bitburg.”

³³³ Associated Press, “51% in Survey Oppose Regan Cemetery Visit,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-24/news/mn-7201_1_visit-cemetery-survey.

³³⁴ Marshall, “Bonn Rejects Congress’ Appeal on Cemetery Visit.”

country they believed was their closest ally.”³³⁵ The extreme American opposition surprised many in West Germany, especially in Bitburg where locals were apparently “left dumbfounded and more than a little resentful.”³³⁶

Elizabeth Pond, a journalist, wrote that with the exception of the Green Party, the trip was approved by all other Bundestag parties. Additionally, she reported that polls demonstrated that “a majority” of the West German public “support the gesture as a signal that West Germans have finally been rehabilitated by their allies and may now mourn ordinary German war dead without reproach.”³³⁷

Many non-Germans appealed to Bonn to release Reagan from his obligation to visit Bitburg, or to at least add another location to their itinerary. Between April 18, 1985 and April 26, 1985, the United States’ House of Representatives passed six non-binding resolutions imploring that Reagan not visit Bitburg cemetery.³³⁸ However, the Senate indefinitely postponed the vote on the cancellation on May 15, because the resolution was received and placed on the Legislative Calendar on May 5, the day of the memorialization events in Bitburg.³³⁹

The results of the House resolutions, which overwhelmingly favored the cancelation of the Bitburg visit, were shared with the West German government in Bonn. Even though the Federal Republic stated that they “took seriously” the requests made by the American government, they nevertheless refused to remove the wreath laying at Bitburg cemetery from the

³³⁵ Marshall, “‘We Remember those of all nations’.”

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Elizabeth Pond, “Germans Approve Reagan Trip -- Including Bitburg. Most Germans See Bitburg as Welcome Effort at Reconciliation,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 2, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1985/0502/orive.html>.

³³⁸ The House passed “A concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress with respect to the President's visit to the Federal Republic of Germany in May 1985” (H.CON.RES.130), 390 for cancelation and 26 against. For more information, see “Bill Summary & Status Search Results,” The Library of Congress, accessed December 10, 2013, <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/?&Db=d099&querybd=@FIELD%28FLD001+@4%28National+socialism%29%29>.

³³⁹ “Bill Summary & Status Search Results,” The Library of Congress.

official itinerary. Peter Boenisch, spokesman for Chancellor Kohl, said that although the memorial ceremony was widely opposed in the United States, the West German Bundestag had voted 398 to 24 against removing Bitburg cemetery from the schedule. “It is in keeping of the duties between democratic nations that they take each other seriously and that means, just as we take a letter from 257 congressmen seriously, so must these congressmen take a vote of the German Bundestag seriously,” Boenisch said.³⁴⁰

On April 29, the West German Bundestag reportedly “rejected warnings” that their schedule for Reagan’s state visit “would profoundly damage relations with the United States.” The government refused to change the itinerary at the last moment, and “said that the American leader would lay a wreath at a German military Sunday as scheduled.” Peter Boenisch said the West German Government “welcomed the idea of a possible Presidential stop at Remagen,”³⁴¹ but only as a supplement to the other locations. The same day, Mayor Hallet confirmed that he spoke to White House officials who “confirmed that Mr. Reagan would lay a wreath at the Kolmeschohe [*sic*] cemetery while a band played the traditional German soldiers’ marching song, ‘The Good Comrade’.”³⁴²

The harsh criticism surrounding the politicians’ visit was due to the fact that some people perceived these actions as legitimizing the status, or approving of the actions, of the SS and Nazi war criminals. This perception of the wreath-laying ceremony at Bitburg was likely exacerbated by comments made by Kohl and Reagan. For example, on April 18, 1985 Reagan defended his

³⁴⁰ Marshall, “Bonn Rejects Congress’ Appeal on Cemetery Visit.”

³⁴¹ Remagen, which is located south of Bonn, was captured by American troops on March 7, 1945. This was significant as it was the only bridge still standing by which to cross the Rhine River. For more information, see James M. Markham “As Bitburg visit nears, Kohl, under fire, says it will go on,” *New York Times*, April 30, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/30/world/as-bitburg-visit-nears-kohl-under-fire-says-it-will-go-on.html>.

³⁴² Markham, “As Bitburg visit nears, Kohl, under fire, says it will go on.”

stop at Bitburg cemetery by equating it to the visits made by foreign leaders from Germany, Italy, and Japan to the United States' Arlington National Cemetery.³⁴³

Moreover, in that same interview, Reagan equated the German soldiers buried in Bitburg cemetery to other victims of the Third Reich. He claimed that “those young men” interred in the cemetery were “victims of nazism [*sic*] also, even though they were fighting in the German uniform, drafted into service to carry out the hateful wishes of the Nazis.” Reagan continued, and said, “They were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.”³⁴⁴ According to President Reagan, Chancellor Kohl said his “remarks about the dead soldiers being the victims of Nazism as the Jews in the Holocaust were had been well received in Germany.”³⁴⁵

This mentality had created significant controversy when attempting to erect memorials, because Jewish victims were often offended by the equating of their wartime experiences with those of the German soldiers, regardless any mitigating factors concerning the soldier's age or rank. Reagan's view, that soldiers could be blameless victims, equal in status to both American servicemen and Holocaust victims, was highly contentious among non-Germans. Whereas his assertion sparked demonstrations and outrage among various groups in America and Jewish organizations worldwide, they provided a comforting narrative by which West Germans could move forward and participate in the democratic international community. Kohl told Reagan that his solidarity with West Germany throughout the Bitburg controversy “won the heart of

³⁴³ “Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Regional Editors and Broadcasters April 18, 1985.”

³⁴⁴ Ibid.

³⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 317. The reaction to this comparison was much different among the Jewish community; approximately 25 of the 55 Presidential appointees voted to in favor of sending a telegram to Reagan that stated "We were shocked to learn that a President of the United States could utter such a distortion of what took place during the Holocaust," while others recommended a mass resignation. Additionally, Elie Wiesel was reportedly debating whether to accept the Congressional Medal of Honor that Reagan was presenting him the following day. For more information, see Francis X. Clines, “Reagan's Remarks Stir New Debate,” *New York Times*, April 19, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/19/us/reagan-s-remarks-stir-new-debate.html>.

Germany by standing firm on this.”³⁴⁶ Although Reagan’s perception of the extent to which German soldiers can be considered a victim, especially in comparison to concentration camp inmates, was in itself controversial, it nevertheless partially formed the basis for his justification of visiting Bitburg cemetery.

According to Menachem Z. Rosensaft, General Council of the World Jewish Congress and a law professor, Kohl had attempted to “rehabilitate and destigmatize as many Germans who had served in the Third Reich as possible.” He accused the West German chancellor of representing members of the Waffen-SS as “simple soldiers” who merely carried out the orders that they were forced to follow. Additionally, Rosensaft wrote that it was Kohl’s government that removed Waffen-SS veterans groups from a list of right-wing extremist organizations monitored by the government and that Kohl “blocked repeated demands” from the Social Democrat party to ban reunions among Waffen-SS veterans. In light of Kohl’s actions, Rosensaft concluded that “Reagan’s willingness to ignore the Holocaust while in Germany was like manna from heaven for Kohl.”³⁴⁷

Rosensaft’s beliefs concerning the SS and Kohl’s seemingly lax response to its surviving veterans was widespread, as was the perception of all SS men as perpetrators of genocide and other war crimes. The different branches of the SS were assigned various functions within the Third Reich, a fact emphasized by many supporters of Reagan and Kohl’s visit to Bitburg.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 321.

³⁴⁷ Menachem Z. Rosensaft, “Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg 27 Years Later” (transcript excerpted from speech at 60th anniversary of the dedication of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp’s memorial site, Bergen-Belsen, Germany, December 3, 2012), accessed March 18, 2014, http://www.worldjewishcongress.org/ru/news/12733/menachem_z_rosensaft_bergen_belsen_and_bitburg_27_years_later?print=true.

³⁴⁸ One consequence of Reagan and Kohl’s visit to Bitburg cemetery was that it seemed to embolden veterans of the SS. James Markham, a journalist, reported that “Otto Ernst Remer, a retired major general in the Waffen SS and leader of an SS veterans’ group, has told reporters that he intends to send telegrams to Mr. Kohl and Mr. Reagan complimenting them for their gesture to the SS.” Veterans of the SS Death’s Head Division, whose members facilitated the Holocaust by administering the concentration camps, held a reunion in Bavaria. For more information,

Despite any fine distinctions between the functions of the SS, the general perception of the organization as an instrument for genocide remains pervasive, an attitude which was likely crystalized with Article 9 of the International Military Tribunal Charter. Article 9 declared the SS a criminal organization based on its history, formation, and the actions of its members.³⁴⁹

Although it is possible that some of the outrage surrounding Kohl and Reagan's visit to Bitburg cemetery was due to a lack of understanding concerning the potentially varied roles the SS men served in the Nazi military, the more critical factor seems to be the public's impression of the SS. Markham seemed to comprehend how the perception of the SS as a whole was more influential than the actions of a single individual, which was evidenced in the controversy surrounding the Bitburg visit. In April 1985, he wrote, "Since the SS is associated—in deed and in symbol—with the most heinous crimes of the Third Reich, the 47 graves have been associated with perceptions of insensitivity to the past."³⁵⁰ To those opposed to the wreath-laying ceremony at Bitburg cemetery, the SS and all its members represented a criminal organization.

Reagan reportedly agreed to tour West Germany with Kohl in order to demonstrate the decades of West German-American peace and friendship. However, this was not how the majority of outsiders interpreted their actions. Critics saw this wreath-laying ceremony as an attempt to rewrite history in order to distance the majority of Germans from the Nazi movement, or worse as attempting to rehabilitate the reputation of former SS members. While the politicians may not have intended to fuel this debate, their actions nevertheless did. Burying and memorializing German soldiers with disregard to their military service record, in a manner such

see Markham, "As Bitburg visit nears, Kohl, under fire, says it will go on." And Pond, "Germans approve Reagan trip—Including Bitburg."

³⁴⁹ Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 273.

³⁵⁰ Markham, "In Town of Bitburg."

as Bitburg cemetery, not only equated the SS and Wehrmacht soldiers, it also “symbolically equated the war dead of both sides.”³⁵¹

The presence of the SS members’ graves in Bitburg cemetery sparked an intense global debate, and headlines from around the world on May 5 focused on the controversial visit to Bitburg Cemetery. “Bitburg: Wreath hails the SS” declared the British *Guardian* newspaper. Among German newspapers, the desire of Bitburgers to disassociate their city from Nazism took center stage, as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* featured an article regarding the portrayal of Bitburg as a “Nazi Nest” and the residents’ “fight for the reputation of their city.”³⁵² Even the Soviet Union weighed in on the controversy. *Pravda*, the newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party, wrote “Who better than Kohl should know that unrepentant Nazis are not only still alive in the FRG (West Germany) but are still actively pushing fascism and revanchism,” the article stated. A West German newspaper, *Bild*, published a response to the article in *Pravda*, which it referred to as “an infamous slander.” The German newspaper claimed the soldiers buried in Bitburg cemetery “certainly wanted neither war nor suffering; they were victims, not perpetrators.”³⁵³

At a time when Reagan needed Kohl’s support as a NATO ally and to implement certain American foreign policies, such as utilizing the FRG as a base for American missiles and for the Star Wars Missile Defense System, the two politicians faced intense pressure from their fellow

³⁵¹ “Erinnerungspolitik und Erinnerungskultur- kein Ende der Geschichte [Memory politics and culture of memory- not the end of history],” in *Eine Ausstellung und ihre Folgen: zur Rezeption der Ausstellung “Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944”* [An Exhibition and Its Consequences: The Public Reception of the Exhibition “War of Extermination. Crimes of the Wehrmacht between 1941 and 1944”], ed. Hamburger Institut Fur Sozialforschung (Hg.) (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), 293-94.

³⁵² *Volksfreund*, “Beifall und Pfiffe [Applause and Catcalls],” May 4, 2010, 1, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/rheinlandpfalz/rheinlandpfalz/Heute-im-Trierischen-Volksfreund-Beifall-und-Pfiffe;art806,2434665>.

³⁵³ Times Wire Services, “Pravda Condemns Reagan Plan to Visit German War Cemetery,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, http://articles.latimes.com/1985-04-15/news/mn-13995_1_german-war. “Revanchism” was the Soviet term for the demands of German groups that eastern territories lost after WWII be returned.

countrymen as well as from foreign nations. The visit to Bitburg cemetery posed several challenging dilemmas. First, cancelling due to the public outcry would potentially perpetuate the idea of guilty Germans accountable for the crimes of World War II, but going through with the visit was focusing renewed attention on the crimes of the SS. Second, canceling the visit to Bitburg could further damage the international reputation of the Federal Republic and Chancellor Kohl, although hosting the wreath-laying ceremony with President Reagan could damage relations with their American ally. Ultimately, Kohl decided that preserving the honor of himself and his country was most important; therefore, Reagan had to choose between appeasing his political allies at home or abroad. Reagan said Kohl “was emphatic that to cancel the cemetery now would be a disaster in his country & an insult to the German people,” to which Reagan assured him that he “would not cancel.”³⁵⁴ In the months preceding the highly publicized visit, Mayor Hallet was bombarded by interviews. On April 29, Hallet reportedly on “his twelfth interview” of the day, sat in the local town hall drinking beer and spoke with members of the press. Hallet was quoted as saying, “I stress with deep earnestness, that I am not willing to denazify German soldiers forty years after their death.”³⁵⁵ Hallet believed the soldiers should not be criminalized after death, which he made clear on April 27, 1985, when he stated “When someone is dead, the fact that they were the enemy should be forgotten,” because the fallen soldiers “have no defense lawyers.”³⁵⁶ Erich Wiedemann, a journalist for *Der Spiegel*, wrote, “Whether or not we the German nation like it,” Mayor Hallet “articulated” their conscience throughout the controversial spring, 1985.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 317.

³⁵⁵ Erich von Wiedemann, “Herr Bürgermeister [Mister Mayor], We Love You so Much,” *Der Spiegel*, April 29, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13513919.html>.

³⁵⁶ Marshall, “Bonn Rejects Congress’ Appeal on Cemetery Visit.”

³⁵⁷ von Wiedemann, “Herr Bürgermeister, we love you so much.”

When Reagan arrived in Bonn on May 1, 1985 to attend the Economic Summit, an estimated 4,000 people flocked to Neustadt, Germany where rock bands performed and speakers condemned the summit, arms race, and United States' policy in Nicaragua.³⁵⁸ However, this was not the only demonstration organized as a result of Reagan's West German itinerary. Representatives of the Jewish community, both in the United States and West Germany, "declared that they do not regard the belated insertion into Reagan's schedule of a visit to the site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as adequate compensation for the implied honoring of 49 SS men." As a form of protest, several Jewish organizations planned ceremonies that coincided with Reagan's visit to West Germany. These commemorative events were held at sites deemed appropriate for the American president to visit and memorialize: Dachau concentration camp and the graves of the White Rose student group.³⁵⁹

Rosensaft led a group of Jewish protestors into Bergen-Belsen "to reconsecrate the memorial site" after the politicians' departure. He believed that Reagan should "have to confront survivors and their children at Belsen," because he did not cancel his visit to Bitburg cemetery. "Let him pass in front of us there and look into our faces, I said, and perhaps then, at last, he would understand the enormity of the outrage which he is perpetuating," Rosensaft later wrote.³⁶⁰

Rosensaft addressed the crowd of protestors gathered in the camp and said, "Reagan and Kohl have embarked on a macabre tour, an obscene package deal, of Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg." Rosensaft, like many other critics of the itinerary, believed the two politicians "can either honor the memory of the victims of Belsen or they can honor the SS," but that these

³⁵⁸ Kenneth Jautz, "Reagan Visit Stirs Deep Emotions, Protest, Bitterness with PM-Reagan RDP, BJT," *AP News Archive*, May 6, 1985, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1985/Reagan-Visit-Stirs-Deep-Emotions-Protest-Bitterness-With-PM-Reagan-Rdp-Bjt/id-1050a4b4f57cb811075479e632475cd1>.

³⁵⁹ Pond, "Germans Approve Reagan Trip-- Including Bitburg."

³⁶⁰ Rosensaft, "Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg 27 Years Later."

actions must be distinct. The demonstrators were mainly comprised of the children of Holocaust survivors, to whom Rosensaft could personally relate. Rosensaft was born in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp; his parents had been sent to Auschwitz in 1943 and were at Bergen-Belsen when the camp was liberated two years later. In 1946 his father, Josef Rosensaft, dedicated the Jewish monument at Bergen-Belsen which serves as a memorial for the Holocaust victims buried in the concentration camp's mass graves.³⁶¹ In November 2012, Rosensaft reflected on Reagan and Kohl's controversial visit, and wrote:

On May 5, 1985, almost 10 years after my father's death, I stood beside the Jewish monument to denounce a desecration of memory that had just taken place at Belsen. Less than half an hour earlier, President Ronald Reagan and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had delivered speeches before leaving for the Kolmeshöhe military cemetery near the city of Bitburg in western Germany where they would pay tribute to the German soldiers buried there, including 49 members of the Waffen-SS.³⁶²

Despite the months of controversy, when Reagan and Kohl arrived in Bitburg they received a warm welcome. "Here the people were jamming the streets – most friendly but some demonstrators," Reagan wrote.³⁶³ A military band accompanied the politicians from the time of their arrival at the Bitburg Air Base through their tour of the cemetery.³⁶⁴

At Bitburg cemetery, Reagan and Kohl were joined by two veterans of World War II, American General Ridgeway and German General Steinhoff; the inclusion of the generals during the Bitburg visit was



Fig. 40 Reagan and Kohl with Generals Ridgeway and Steinhoff at Bitburg Cemetery.

³⁶¹ Rosensaft, "Bergen-Belsen and Bitburg 27 Years Later."

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 323.

³⁶⁴ Weinraub, "Reagan Joins Kohl in Brief Memorial at Bitburg Graves."

intentionally withheld from the press.³⁶⁵ Ridgeway was ninety-one at the time of the wreath-laying ceremony, and therefore had the distinction of being the “last surviving top World War II leader.” Steinhoff was shot down during the war and suffered severe injuries, his “face had been rebuilt by an American army doctor.” These men were chosen to help represent the German-American postwar reconciliation.³⁶⁶



Fig. 41 Reagan and Kohl, along with their wives, laid a wreath in Bitburg Cemetery.

Bernard Weinraub, a journalist with the *New York Times*, reported on President Reagan’s visit to Bitburg cemetery. He noted that Reagan spent eight minutes at Bitburg but “did not glance at the graves,” while the visit proved more emotional for Chancellor Kohl who had to wipe away tears. The crowd was quiet as a trumpeter played “I Had a Comrade,” which is “a melancholy German soldiers’ song” that “mourns fallen soldiers.” As this commemorative pomp was occurring, Weinraub noted that Reagan was standing “a few feet from two graves with SS markings.”³⁶⁷ Nancy Reagan later reflected on her feelings regarding the visit to Bitburg. “We were indeed only at the cemetery a few minutes, but to me it seemed like an eternity,” she

³⁶⁵ Weinraub, “Reagan Joins Kohl in Brief Memorial at Bitburg Graves.”

³⁶⁶ Pruys, *Kohl, Genius of the Present*, 208. Originally quoted in Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 383.

³⁶⁷ Weinraub, “Reagan Joins Kohl in Brief Memorial at Bitburg Graves.”

wrote.³⁶⁸ Neither politician gave a speech while at the cemetery; however, they spoke at the last destination on their tour, Bitburg Air Base.

At the military base, thousands of people gathered to hear the president and chancellor speak. The crowd was comprised of both German and American soldiers and civilians. Kohl was grateful that Reagan both kept his word and visited Bitburg, but also that he stood by his West German allies. During his speech at Bitburg Air Base, Kohl thanked the president for his symbolic gesture. “I thank you, Mr. President, both on behalf of the whole German people, and I thank you very personally as a friend, for visiting the graves with me.”³⁶⁹ In his speech, Kohl said:

A few minutes ago, the President of the United States of America and I paid homage in the military cemetery to the dead buried there and thus to all victims of war and tyranny, to the dead and persecuted of all nations. Our visit to the soldiers' graves here in Bitburg was not an easy one. It could not but arouse deep feelings. For me it meant first and foremost deep sorrow and grief at the infinite suffering that the war and totalitarianism inflicted on nations, sorrow and grief that will never cease. Stemming from them is our commitment to peace and freedom as the supreme goal of our political actions. And the visit to the graves in Bitburg is also a reaffirmation and a widely visible and widely felt gesture of reconciliation between our peoples, the people of the United States of America and us Germans, reconciliation which does not dismiss the past but enables us to overcome it by acting together. Finally, our presence here testifies to our friendship, which has proved to be steadfast and reliable and is based on our belief in shared values. . . . You, the members of the U.S. forces in the Federal Republic of Germany, serve your country, the United States of America, and our republic alike. The security of the Federal Republic of Germany is closely linked to the partnership and friendship of the United States of America. . . . Let me assure you that you are welcome guests in our country, in the Federal Republic of Germany. Do not let a small and insignificant minority give you a different impression. We sincerely welcome you here as friends, as allies, as guarantors of our security. Relations have developed over many years between the U.S. armed forces and the Bundeswehr and are closer than ever before. I should like to thank you, the American and German soldiers, for this partnership we almost take for granted. It strengthens our joint determination to defend peace and freedom of our nations, and this

³⁶⁸ Fritz-Peter Linden, “Nancy war dagegen [Nancy was against it],” *Volksfreund*, February 16, 2004, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/bitburg/aktuell/Heute-in-der-Bitburger-Zeitung-Nancy-war-dagegen;art752,356900>.

³⁶⁹ Weinraub “Reagan Joins Kohl in Brief Memorial at Bitburg Graves.”

partnership - as I wish expressly to state here at Bitburg -thus is a source of mutual understanding of our peoples, generating many personal friendships. . . .³⁷⁰

This exercise in post-World War II Allied commemoration created significant issues by highlighting the continuing separation of Germans within the postwar alliances. According to journalist Saul Friedländer, Bitburg represented numerous issues concerning the memorialization of German soldiers in the aftermath of World War II. Friedländer wrote:

Bitburg came to symbolize all the dilemmas of forgetting and remembering, for Germany and its victims, for the victorious allies and the vanquished enemy, for those who lived through the war and those born after 1945: the second generation and, by now, the third. For Germans and Jews, more than anybody else.³⁷¹

Moreover, although the West Germans were crucial to western democratic nations as a strategic base during the Cold War, their status within this alliance was often minimized. West Germans wanted to move forward as equals, not continue to pay for the crimes committed by their predecessors. Forty years after the conclusion of World War II, they questioned at what point guilt or culpability ends for the German citizens left behind to deal with the consequences of the Third Reich.

An issue central to the West German's postwar memorialization seems to revolve around whether they were attempting to commemorate their fallen soldiers alongside their former enemies. Kohl's insistence that his former enemies "offer a symbolic sign of indulgence," led to falsifications and misrepresentations of the past.³⁷² Although a well-known adage states that time heals all wounds, in the case of post-World War II memorialization, time does not seem to be sufficient. Despite the fact that the former enemies were now allies, it was still difficult to

³⁷⁰ Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 256-57. For complete transcript of Kohl's speech, see Appendix F.

³⁷¹ Saul Friedländer, "Some German Struggles with Memory," in *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 27.

³⁷² "Erinnerungspolitik und Erinnerungskultur," Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hg.), 293-94.

construct a singular postwar narrative that would allow Germany “to undercut the judgments of existing cultural memory and replace them with a softer, more palatable and palliative narrative in which all suffering is alike and all dead equal victims of war.”³⁷³

Bitburg Air Base was closed in 1994. However, former base commander and 36th TFW commander Major General Peter Robinson returned to the city in May, 2010 to attend a ceremony that commemorated the wreath-laying by Reagan and Kohl twenty five years prior. Although Robinson was retired from the military and living in New Mexico, he still had many “fond memories” from his time at Bitburg, including the “good relationship” between the airmen and local citizens. The visit by the West German chancellor and United States president, however, remained a vivid image in his mind. “There was tremendous controversy at the time on whether the president should be visiting and doing those things in Germany,” Robinson said. “But it really was an historic event and had major implications.”³⁷⁴

On November 16, 2010, Spangdahlem Air Base featured a short news article with several photographs of the joint U.S.-German memorial services held on Volkstrauertag. The images showed soldiers, politicians, and local residents gathered to commemorate the sacrifices of the war dead. The memorial events included Bitburg cemetery, where both a German and American flag were raised near the World War I monument. The fact that this event went unnoticed seems to support those in 1985, who claimed that the controversy surrounding Reagan and Kohl’s wreath-laying at Bitburg was due largely to pressure from politically motivated groups.³⁷⁵

Claims by former Bitburg Mayor Theo Hallet that a person would struggle to locate a military cemetery in Germany that did not contain SS graves seems plausible when considering

³⁷³ “Erinnerungspolitik und Erinnerungskultur,” Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hg.), 293-94.

³⁷⁴ 52nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs, “Former Bitburg Air Base Commander Visits 52nd FW,” Spangdahlem Air Base, May 6, 2010, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123203335>.

³⁷⁵ Benjamin Wilson, “Airmen Recognize German National Day of Mourning,” Spangdahlem Air Base, November 16, 2010, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://www.spangdahlem.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123230990>.

that by 1945, nearly one million men had served with the SS.³⁷⁶ Despite this fact, Bitburg seems to have become a symbol for the postwar challenges confronting German citizens as they attempt to memorialize their fallen soldiers collectively in military cemeteries. Bitburg cemetery continues to function as a focal point in debates concerning the remembrance of soldiers, victims, and the Second World War. Its reputation as the location of both an American air base and several SS graves, though not unique or exclusive to Bitburg, reminds generations today that the legacy of World War II is still capable of provoking intense anger and pain, yet also friendship and reconciliation.

The creation and regulation of military cemeteries became problematic for Germany in the aftermath of World War II. During the twentieth-century, these cemeteries were considered memorials to the fallen and a crucial factor in the development of public memory. Despite its short existence, the Third Reich's legacy forms a context in which people frequently judge and evaluate German actions and history. The pervasive nature of this decade long event impacts our reading and understanding of the entirety of Germany's existence.

The tenuous balance between Bitburg cemetery's role as a place of contemplation and remembrance, versus the enduring impression that it pardons and equates the SS among other soldiers continues to reemerge. Almost 30 years after their historic, and controversial, visit to Bitburg, Reagan and Kohl remain linked to the memory of that cemetery.³⁷⁷ Their names are still mentioned alongside references to Kolmeshöhe, just as their actions and intentions are still debated. The lesson from May 1985 is not only how memorial practices can be used to celebrate

³⁷⁶ *Time*, "Beneath the Headstones."

³⁷⁷ In June, 2013 Kolmeshöhe cemetery was restored at a cost of 42,500 Euros. Bitburg Mayor Joachim Kandel said the improvements "will significantly help to ensure the long-term preservation of the cemetery," which continues to draw tourists partially because of Reagan and Kohl's visit in 1985. For more information, see *Volksfreund*, "Sanierung des Ehrenfriedhofs beendet [Renovation of the Honor Cemetery Completed]," June 17, 2013, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.volksfreund.de/nachrichten/region/bitburg/aktuell/Heute-in-der-Bitburger-Zeitung-Sanierung-des-Ehrenfriedhofs-beendet;art752,3559059>.

the transformation of former enemies into allies, but also how politicians and their agendas can hasten and manipulate this process. The impact of politics on memorials was evidenced by the debates concerning the potential damage to FRG-US relations that would result if Reagan declined to visit Bitburg, the West's need for a strong and united front against the Soviet Union, and the political trade-off between Reagan visiting the cemetery and Kohl supporting US foreign policies—all of which were born out of the aftermath of World War II. Reagan and Kohl's symbol of reconciliation seemed to have greatly misfired, becoming yet another bombshell left lingering from World War II, buried just beneath the German landscape.

CHAPTER SIX

The legacy of Lebensraum: Two German polders address their Nazi origins

According to historian Robert R. Taylor, “nationalist and *völkish* writers looked beyond individual buildings and cities to study the countryside and rural life; this led them to a consideration of the problem of ‘living space’.”³⁷⁸ To resolve their concerns regarding the shortage of living space (referred to as *Lebensraum*), Hitler focused on conquering the territories east of Germany. His plans involved claiming land from his Eastern European neighbors and also the sea. “Hitler launched an almighty digging effort to reclaim land from the sea,” Frank Trende, author of a book on Nazi land reclamation, said. “But the shovelling [*sic*] was an attempt to distract from his true intention: to dig millions of graves.”³⁷⁹

The Hermann-Göring-Koog and Adolf-Hitler-Koog are just two examples of “Koogs” or polders³⁸⁰ created during the Third Reich as a result of Adolf Hitler’s domestic policies. The dedication ceremonies for the polders were held only a few weeks apart and were attended by their namesakes.³⁸¹ According to an article published in the *Schleswig-Holstein Zeitung* [Newspaper], Hermann-Göring-Koog “like the Adolf-Hitler-Koog in Dithmarschen (today Dieksanderkoog) and the Bupheverkoog (Pellworm), was a model polder for the National Socialist blood and soil policy.”³⁸² These polders represented a manifestation of the Nazis’

³⁷⁸ Taylor, *The Word in Stone*, 87.

³⁷⁹ Rachel Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler's Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea,” *Der Spiegel Online*, November 8, 2012, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/museum-planned-to-document-nazi-land-reclamation-project-a-864515.html>.

³⁸⁰ The term “Koog” is translated as “polder” in English. Polders are areas of low-lying land that has been reclaimed either from the sea or a river through the construction of dikes.

³⁸¹ *75 Jahre: Tümlauer-Koog von 1935-2010* [75 Years: Tümlauer-Koog from 1935 to 2010] (Husum: Cobra Verlag, 2010), 48.

³⁸² *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag*, Wirbel um die 'Göring-Glocke' [Fuss about the 'Göring-Bell'], November 24, 2011, accessed March 19, 2014, <http://www.shz.de/nachrichten/seite-1/wirbel-um-die-goering-glocke-id1844306.html>.

“blood and soil” ideology, which idolized rural life and the Aryan race’s claims to *Lebensraum* (living space).



Fig. 42 Map shows location of Hermann-Göring-Koog in northern Germany.

The polder is signified with a box around its name.

Moreover, the Germans chosen to settle and populate these polders were selected based on their “racial purity” as defined by the Nazi’s pseudo-scientific theories. Due to their unusual distinction as having been created from land reclaimed during the Nazi Era, both Hermann-Göring-Koog and Adolf-Hitler-Koog have encountered controversy in the aftermath of World War II. Both polders have struggled to find suitable methods for addressing their unique, albeit troubling, histories. Although each polder approached the memorialization of their pasts differently, their challenges remain similar.

Hermann-Göring-Koog was located on the Eiderstedt peninsula in Schleswig-Holstein in the northern section of Germany. The polder was named in honor of Field Marshall Hermann

Göring, Reich Minister of the Interior and commander of the German Air Force during the Third Reich. The official name “Hermann-Göring-Koog” was published in the town’s register as early as November 3, 1934.³⁸³ The polder was inaugurated on a cold October Sunday in 1935, with a ceremony attended by Hermann Göring himself. A triumphal arch with the polder’s name inscribed across the top was erected for the occasion.³⁸⁴



Fig. 43 Triumphal arch erected for the polder’s dedication ceremony in 1935.

Hundreds of people reportedly gathered for the ceremonies, waiting hours for Göring’s arrival. He arrived with his entourage by car, and then had to walk through the crowd gathered in the grandstands to reach the podium for his dedication speech, which was “riddled with racial [ethnic] and Nazi propaganda phrases.” Göring’s remarks, though undoubtedly inflammatory to outsiders, were well received among the polder’s residents and “certainly may have contributed to his popularity with the people.”³⁸⁵

³⁸³ Tümlauer-Koog, *75 Jahre*, 48.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 49-50.



Fig. 44 This bell was cast in honor of Hermann Göring's visit to Hermann-Göring-Koog in 1935.

The local Nazi organization *Reichsnährstand* donated a large bell in anticipation of the inaugural visit by Göring. The bell was cast in metal then painted silver. It was also decorated with various symbols, which included “swastikas, Nordic runes, and the Imperial Eagle symbol.” An inscription on the bell read, “German farmers are the eternal blood source of the German people.”³⁸⁶ This inscription fits well with the speeches given during the polder's dedication ceremony, which also stressed the importance of agriculture within Nazi ideology. In his speech, Göring addressed his “dear settlers” and said:

Gratefully accept this land that was given to you, and remember the times a few years ago when there were millions of Germans still in need and despair, without work and without bread. When you cultivate this fertile soil that was sleeping for thousands of years, and has only now been lifted from the bottom of the sea into the light of the sun, remember that you have to wrest fruits from this ground which have to feed the German people.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁶ Björn Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls: Nazi Memorial Embarrasses German Community,” *Der Spiegel Online*, November 25, 2011, accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/for-whom-the-bell-tolls-nazi-memorial-embarrasses-german-community-a-800003.html>.

³⁸⁷ Tümlauer-Koog, *75 Jahre*, 50-51.



Fig. 45 Field
Marshal Hermann
Göring in the
polder, 1935.

Göring's speech was greeted with enthusiastic applause from the crowds of spectators. This visit by Göring was a significant day in the history of the polder as well as for its inhabitants. The Field Marshal toured the polder and met with many of the locals, stopping to have coffee with families and to sign local guest books. Göring and his entourage left "his polder" after a few hours, although this was not his last visit to the area. He returned to the town in 1938. In a letter dated August 1, 1938, a resident of the polder wrote, "Just think, the Field Marshall was really here in the polder."³⁸⁸

After the German defeat in 1945, Hermann-Göring-Koog was officially renamed Tümlauer-Koog; however, long after the name of the polder changed, the bell dedicated to Hermann Göring remained. The bell was originally housed in a wooden tower and was supposed to be rung as a warning in case of an emergency; in reality, the bell was reportedly used to announce the birth of children. After decades of use, the bell developed cracks in its metal and could no longer be rung. Christian Marwig, the mayor of Tümlauer-Koog, said the materials used to cast the bell was "not high quality, it was probably patched together from old metal

³⁸⁸ Tümlauer-Koog, *75 Jahre*, 51 and 55.

bathbubs.”³⁸⁹ In 2008, a new bell was placed in the tower and Göring’s bell was incorporated in the polder’s local war memorial. The *Schleswig-Holstein Zeitung* published an article which criticized Tümlauer-Koog’s memorial to the fallen of the Second World War because. . .

. . . the formation of the Tümlauer-Koog polder is explained without also mentioning the historical connection between the Nazi regime and crimes against humanity. In addition, a bell with a swastika and inscription commemorates the Reich Marshall Hermann Göring.³⁹⁰

The relocation of Göring’s bell to the more public memorial site was approved of “unanimously” by the polder’s local leadership.

“We do not want to hide our history,” Christian Marwig, Mayor of Tümlauer-Koog, said.

“Therefore, the community representatives had decided to set up the bell at this location.”³⁹¹ The bell was placed “on a pedestal of red brick as if on a throne” alongside stone slabs that listed the names of the local soldiers who were killed during World War II. An explanatory plaque was placed near the bell which was intended to clarify its



Fig. 46 Göring’s bell in the local war memorial.

purpose and history.³⁹² The plaque read:

The NSDAP (Nazi party) has ruled since 1933. Their ideology returned to the Germanic (Teutonic) and the blood and soil mentality and they claimed to be a people without space. The newly reclaimed polder was, in the eyes of the Nazis, a new home by the water, gained through the strength of the honest farmers. This idea is symbolized by the runes at the top and repeated by the saying at the bottom of the bell. After nearly 80 years we no longer follow this ideology, but we have to accept it as a part of our history. Reclaiming land for a polder is a great achievement and creates land and food. The

³⁸⁹ Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

³⁹⁰ “Wirbel um die ‘Göring-Glocke’,” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag*.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

ideological excesses should be understood within the context of the adversity of a certain era.³⁹³

The text was reportedly “written by a regional historian,” although this person remained unnamed. Additionally, the credentials or background of the plaque’s author were not provided.³⁹⁴ Although the plaque was intended to place the bell in its proper historical context, the word choice of the text has garnered much criticism. Specifically, the first line has proven misleading because it reads as if the Nazis are still in control of the German government. Björn Hengst, a writer for the German news source *Der Spiegel*, wrote, “The very first sentence is enough to raise eyebrows.” Additionally, Hengst summarized the failures of the explanatory text, which included no mention of the Nazi crimes, Holocaust, or Hermann Göring’s role in the organization of the concentration camps or the “final solution of the Jewish question.”³⁹⁵ Despite the questionable plaque, newspapers reported that “no one had complained” about the text or memorial for nearly three years.³⁹⁶



Fig. 47 Minister President Peter Harry Carstensen.

The bell’s inclusion in the local war memorial attracted little attention, until an anonymous visitor noticed it in November, 2011. A man from Norderstedt, a suburb of Hamburg, traveled to the polder while on vacation and reportedly “shuddered when he saw the bell.”³⁹⁷ The controversy spread all the way to Kiel, the capital of Schleswig-Holstein, when the tourist, who chose to remain anonymous, wrote a letter to Minister President Peter Harry Carstensen concerning the

³⁹³ Translation provided by author. For original German text, see Björn Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

³⁹⁴ “Wirbel um die ‘Göring-Glocke,’” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag*.

³⁹⁵ Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

³⁹⁶ “Wirbel um die ‘Göring-Glocke,’” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag*.

³⁹⁷ Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

memorial.³⁹⁸ He also included photographs of the bell and plaque with his letter. “I consider this memorial to be entirely inappropriate and request that you also share your opinion with me,” he wrote. Carstensen responded with letters to both the Hamburg resident and also Mayor Marwig. Additionally, the governor had “a very clear telephone call with the mayor.” Carstensen apparently agreed with the Hamburger’s concerns. He requested the



Fig. 48 Christian Marwig, Mayor of Tümlauer-Koog.

bell be removed and the plaque’s text amended. A spokesperson for Carstensen’s office said the plaque contained phrases which referenced the Nazi’s ideology, but failed to provide the “historical context of the NSDAP rule and its fatal consequences for Germany and Europe.” The governor’s office ultimately decided that the plaque was “in part historically inaccurate and misleading.”³⁹⁹

Christian Marwig was deputy mayor of Tümlauer-Koog in 2008, when the bell was moved from its tower to the war memorial. He supported the relocation to a more public area, because “nobody should have a guilty conscience about the bell.” Due to the fact that Marwig took part in the “unanimous” decision to relocate the bell, it is logical that he claimed to not understand “the fuss” over the bell, which he seemed to view more as a historic artifact rather than a monument to Göring. Marwig stated the bell represented the polder’s history and in itself “should be seen as a kind of memorial.” According to Hengst, Marwig “thinks the first sentence on the plaque is unfortunate,” although he does not believe it warrants taking steps “to more strongly distance itself from the National Socialist era or that more needs to be done to classify it

³⁹⁸ “Wirbel um die 'Göring-Glocke',” *Schleswig-Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag*.

³⁹⁹ Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

historically.” Marwig said the polder “would have to put up a lot of signs” in order to provide the complete historical context for their local connections to the Third Reich.

Marwig defended the local government’s decision to include the bell in the polder’s war memorial, and asked “Why should it [the bell] be auctioned, sold off or hidden away?” Despite his support for the bell’s more visible location, Marwig agreed to Governor Carstensen’s request and removed it; Göring’s bell was apparently placed in storage, where it remains. Marwig reportedly complied in order to prevent, or discourage, tourists from traveling to Tümlauer-Koog in order to photograph the bell.⁴⁰⁰

Marwig’s desire to “discourage tourists” reflected concern confronted by many memorials or locations related to the Third Reich, which is the pilgrimage of neo-Nazis to these areas. In November 2011, the *Schleswig-Holstein Zeitung* reported that the war memorial in Tümlauer-Koog had avoided becoming an attraction or gathering site for neo-Nazis, although this has proven a concerning issue. Neo-Nazi activities led the Bavarian town Wunsiedel to remove the grave and headstone of Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler’s secretary and deputy, in July 2011. This move resulted from years of neo-Nazi activity in which hundreds, or occasionally thousands, of people would march through Wunsiedel on August 17—the anniversary of Hess’ death. Although these marches were banned in 2005, local residents were still “tired of the embarrassment and trouble caused by the marches and pilgrimages to his gravesite” and decided to not renew the gravesite’s lease after it expired in October, 2011. The headstone, which read *ch hab’s gewagt* (I have dared), was removed and Hess’ body was cremated and reburied at sea.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Hengst, “For Whom the Bell Tolls.”

⁴⁰¹ “Preventing Neo-Nazi Pilgrimages: Town Removes Grave of Hitler Deputy Hess,” *Der Spiegel Online*, July 21, 2011, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/preventing-neo-nazi-pilgrimages-town-removes-grave-of-hitler-deputy-hess-a-775676.html>.

This controversial bell highlights several issues confronting German commemoration and memory postwar, especially regarding the individual interpretations constructed by German citizens. A small town had a bell dedicated to Göring for decades, and openly displayed it for several years, until a tourist from the metropolitan Hamburg area complained to government officials. This example suggests disparity, if not between the residents of urban and rural areas, at least in terms of local versus national identities or historical narratives. Additionally, this bell symbolized the different perspectives concerning the preservation of objects for their historical value compared to memorializing Nazi criminals.

The plaque situated next to the Hermann Göring bell was deemed historically misleading, if not intentionally inaccurate, which suggests that war memorials are not necessarily meant to function as objective records of history. Rather, these relics provide narratives and iconography that are designed to influence a viewer's perception of the subject, in this case, the origins of Tümlauer-Koog. If the bell was located in a museum, or properly situated within its historical context, the artifact could demonstrate the complexities of the implementation of the Nazi's policies as well as their legacy. This issue not only related to what items can be deemed historically valuable or relevant, but also highlights the importance of an individual's intentions with preserving an artifact.

The controversy surrounding Hermann Göring's bell gained international attention and sparked public debate. Several comments appeared on *Der Spiegel's* website regarding Björn Hengst's article, and the criticisms ranged from the desire to preserve the bell as a historical artifact, to others angered over its removal. One comment posted on November 26, 2011, from a person identified only as "Eleos," read:

One man is offended and complains. This sets off a cascade of embarrassment and concession. Never mind the opinion of the community in this so-called democracy, the

paper politicians know what has to be done to prevent the influential from breathing down their necks. The article is a classic piece of submission masquerading as indignation, with the mandatory mention of Holocaust to induce awe. Shame on you Governor Carstensen, shame on you Björn Hengst, and shame on you Der Spiegel.⁴⁰²

Eleos' belief that the removal of the bell was due to political maneuvering and a disregard for the democratic process or the polder's wishes was shared by other readers; however, some commentators had a much different perspective on the memorial. Another reader posted a response on November 27, 2011 that focused on the importance of historical preservation. The reader, identified as "agapetus1," commented:

It is time for Germany to move on and let the past go. The bell and many other memorials from the war are part of history, and should not be removed but preserved so people can learn from them. If you attempt to erase a part of history it will repeat itself. It is best to preserve that history and learn from it, so it is not repeated.⁴⁰³

The difference between preserving items for their historical significance and creating monuments to Nazi criminals can be slim, which was reflected in the public's reaction and interpretation of the memorial. The responses to the bell ranged from those who abhorred any reference to the Nazis, to often thinly veiled neo-Nazi supporters, and finally to those who were fatigued by the continual debate. This lack of consensus regarding the appropriate form of memorialization, historical context, and preservation of artifacts, underscores the difficulties confronting German memorialization post-World War II; however, these issues were not confined to the residents of Tümlauer-Koog. Adolf-Hitler-Koog encountered similar commemorative and preservation decisions in the postwar world.

⁴⁰² Hengst, "For Whom the Bell Tolls," reader comments, accessed June 2, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/for-whom-the-bell-tolls-nazi-memorial-embarrasses-german-community-a-800003.html#spLeserKommentare>.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.



Fig. 49 Entrance to Adolf-Hitler-Koog circa 1935.

Adolf-Hitler-Koog was established by the Nazis in 1935, the same year as Hermann-Göring-Koog, in the state of Schleswig-Holstein. This polder is approximately 41 miles south of Hermann-Göring-Koog. Adolf-Hitler-Koog was inhabited by 112 “ethnically clean” Germans, which meant the residents were able “to produce documentary evidence” that traced their “Aryan ancestry” back to 1800.⁴⁰⁴ By 1939, the polder was a “pilgrimage” for Germans with busloads of tourists arriving daily. This influx in tourism, which was supported by the Reich Propaganda Ministry, damaged the unpaved roads around Adolf-Hitler-Koog. After receiving numerous complaints, the Reich Propaganda Ministry used this opportunity to showcase the Nazi project. The polder was given the first paved roads along the western coast, and from its initial construction, the polder’s residents were provided with a central water supply and electricity. The outbreak of the Second World War ended much of this tourism, likely due to the reallocation

⁴⁰⁴ Rachel Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler’s Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea,” *Der Spiegel Online*, August 11, 2012, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/museum-planned-to-document-nazi-land-reclamation-project-a-864515.html>.

of natural resources and manpower that war necessitates. After the defeat of the Nazi regime in 1945, Adolf-Hitler-Koog was renamed Dieksanderkoog. Today the polder is part of the Friedrichskoog Municipality.⁴⁰⁵



Fig. 50 Exterior of Neulandhalle, date unknown.

In the center of this polder was a building known as the *Neulandhalle* (New Land Hall) which was the original community center. Journalist Rachel Stern described this building as “the architectural centerpiece” of the polder. Between 1971 and 2010, Neulandhalle was utilized as “a recreational facility” by the local Protestant Church; however, it stood vacant after 2010 because the church could not afford the maintenance costs. In 2012, historian Uwe Danker proposed a memorialization concept that would preserve the history of Dieksanderkoog through Neulandhalle by converting it “into a memorial and learning center.”⁴⁰⁶ Danker chose to convert Neulandhalle into an education center because of the polder’s unusual history. He wrote:

The Neulandhalle and its geographical situation is unique in two respects: The peaceful seizure of land as propagandistically staged at west coast foreboded the violent land seizures only very few years later. Also the whole project of the Adolf-Hitler-Koog was supposed to be an arrangement of the nationalsocialist [*sic*] idea of the "Volksgemeinschaft" on miniature scale and as such it was widely communicated. There are extremely few places where one of theses [*sic*] concepts can be seen architecturally manifest - and it is the only one where both concepts are to be experienced.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Horst Schübeler, *Landwirtschaft in Schleswig-Holstein, Bilddokumente Zur Agrargeschichte* [Agriculture in Schleswig-Holstein, image documents for Agricultural History], vol. 3, *Polders of the 20th Century*, Schriftenreihe des Norddeutschen Genossenschaftsverbandes e.V. [Series of the North German Cooperative Association e.V.] 5 (Self-published, 1999), accessed August 21, 2013, <http://www.geschichte-s-h.de/vonabisz/adolf-hitler-koog.htm>.

⁴⁰⁶ Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler’s Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea.”

⁴⁰⁷ Uwe Danker, emailed to author, September 30, 2013.

Danker envisioned Neulandhalle as a counterpoint to other German World War II memorials in that the building “would not just focus on the deadly consequences of National Socialism, but would also cover the active ideologies that led up to it in the first place.” The museum would focus on three facets of Nazi ideology: race, propaganda, and *Lebensraum*.⁴⁰⁸ To carry out his plan, Danker requested 4 million Euros, which was equivalent to \$5 million at the time. Danker had hoped to secure funding from a group established by the regional government that was responsible for the restoration of memorial

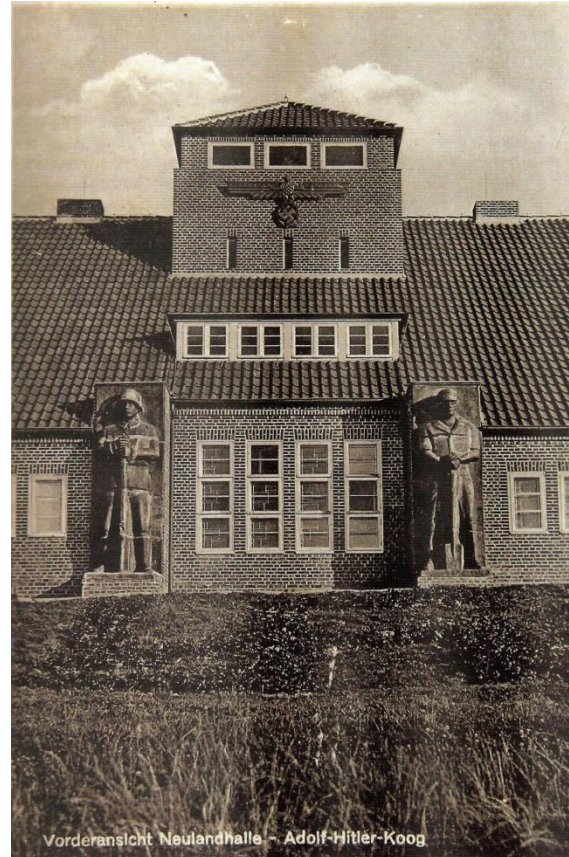


Fig. 51 Sculptures on the exterior of Neulandhalle.

sites in Schleswig-Holstein. The group’s first meeting was scheduled for November 2012.⁴⁰⁹ According to Danker, the regional government funded a “feasibility study” for the project, which his group completed in 2012, and assisted with “the rather complex process of developing a promising application for federal funding.” The government funds would comprise half of the project’s budgetary needs.⁴¹⁰

Construction is still anticipated to begin in the fall 2014 and to be completed within three years. “We expect to welcome the first guests at the learning center on September 1st, 2017,” Danker wrote.⁴¹¹ The plans for the transformation of Neulandhalle include the recreation of two

⁴⁰⁸ Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler’s Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea.”

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Uwe Danker, emailed to author, September 30, 2013.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

statues which were removed postwar; these statues depicted two men, one shown holding a rifle and the other a shovel. Inside the building, one of the many murals was preserved; it featured shirtless men shoveling soil, likely a reference to the construction of the polder. Additionally, the interior would feature original furniture, documents, and a model of the polder.



Fig. 52 Interior murals of Neulandhalle.

Despite the fact that Danker’s plan will openly acknowledge the polder’s Nazi era connections, he seems to enjoy support from residents, some of whom are descendants of the original 112 settlers.⁴¹² Danker wrote the locals are “very eager for the project to start.”⁴¹³ Frank Trende, a longtime resident of Dieksanderkoog, said, “The memorial of Neulandhalle is not only a place to come to terms with the past in Schleswig-Holstein, but all of Germany.” However, Danker’s plans for Neulandhalle could potentially be complicated by concerns about right-wing extremists. Neulandhalle was owned by the local Protestant church, and according to Provost Andreas Crystal, they were afraid that rightwing extremists would purchase the building if the opportunity arose.⁴¹⁴ According to Danker, the concerns about neo-Nazis were “not unfounded when you consider similar projects/sites,” although he did not believe these groups should

⁴¹² Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler’s Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea.”

⁴¹³ Uwe Danker, emailed to author, September 30, 2013.

⁴¹⁴ Stern, “Nazi Land Reclamation: Hitler’s Bid to Create Lebensraum by the Sea.”

influence the message that the renovated Neulandhalle would promote. “This must be taken into consideration but will not be the top concern,” Danker wrote. “It will play a role on a technical but not on a conceptual level.”⁴¹⁵

Preserving historically significant structures is a common practice in many societies. These artifacts often remind visitors of their cultural heritage and the events that have shaped their nation’s history. Additionally, these sites can invoke a range of emotions, from patriotism and pride, to sadness and regret. The tone invoked at each of these locations becomes even more significant in the context of the Third Reich, because visitors must be left with an understanding of the totality of this era. The Lebensraum policies not only led to the reclamation of land from the sea, it also meant the removal and deaths of millions of Eastern Europeans. When asked if the backdrop of the Third Reich presents unique challenges in the construction or interpretation of memorials, Danker responded:

Several aspects will have to be kept at equilibrium. An approach which has a developed conception of 'authenticity' especially regarding the different historical layers of the building is essential. Restoration as some sort of reenactment has to be avoided at all cost.⁴¹⁶

Recent concern from local government officials and citizens about creating pilgrimage sites for Neo-Nazis is merely a current manifestation of a long-term fear. Regardless of whether neo-Nazis are actually traveling to sites to commemorate Nazis, the worry still persists among some sections of German society. In 2009, *Der Spiegel* published an article which examined neo-Nazi crimes in Germany, specifically in the eastern sections of Germany, including the areas surrounding the polders. A report by the Federal Criminal Police Office (comparable to the American FBI) indicated attacks by these right-wing groups were at their highest levels since the end of World War II, although Schleswig-Holstein reported 16 crimes, which was a decrease of

⁴¹⁵ Uwe Danker, emailed to author, September 30, 2013.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

five from the year before. This decrease in right-wing attacks was attributed to greater coordinated efforts between citizens and the government in confronting neo-Nazi activity and prosecuting crimes.⁴¹⁷ The reality of these crimes, which frequently coincide with significant events or people in German history, could have contributed to the fears of creating neo-Nazi pilgrimage sites by allowing Göring's bell to remain in the center of Tümlauer-Koog or the Neulandhalle to be purchased on the real estate market.

Both the memorial bell dedicated to Hermann Göring and the Neulandhalle were controversial due to their unique distinctions as having been part of polders reclaimed during the Nazi era; however, their methods for addressing and integrating this history differ dramatically. Göring's bell was unable to successfully integrate into the postwar landscape, because the artifact required an explanation and context in which to view and understand it. Neulandhalle was more successful, at least in terms of intention, because it did not deny the connections between Nazism and the community, but rather attempted to demonstrate the history as well as the future of the town; this building demonstrated the possibility of preserving controversial artifacts for their historical value. Despite this, a serious concern which confronted the government leaders and residents of both polders was the fear that preserving these monuments could provide a pilgrimage site for neo-Nazis.

⁴¹⁷ Stefan Berg and Markus Deggerich, "Patriotic Duty": A German State Gains Ground Against Neo-Nazi Crime," *Der Spiegel Online*, April 6, 2009, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/patriotic-duty-a-german-state-gains-ground-against-neo-nazi-crime-a-628633.html>.

CONCLUSION

Prior to the end of World War II the Wehrmacht issued its final report, dated May 9, 1945. The report expressed hope that the German soldiers who fought in the Second World War would not only be remembered, but eventually commemorated for their service and sacrifices. It stated:

The German soldier has, true to his oath, given all for his people and thereby accomplished eternally unforgettable deeds. The home-front has lent him its fullest support under great sacrifice to the end. The recent accomplishments at the front and on the home-front will one day find lasting honor in a just reading of history.⁴¹⁸

This report demonstrated the German belief that their soldiers had fought for their country, not unlike their adversaries, even though their motivations may have differed. However, contrary to the expectations of German leadership, the war did not end in their favor. Adolf Hitler was so convinced of the certainty of a German victory, he commissioned his architectural vision for the future of Germany—two years before the war was over. Hitler envisioned a Germany rebuilt on the principles of Nazism and Germanic tradition; however, many of his plans would never materialize. The end of the war destroyed Hitler's grand architectural plans, as well as nearly 80 percent of all the historic structures throughout Germany.⁴¹⁹

In the aftermath of World War II, German citizens were concerned with rebuilding the infrastructure of their starved and bombed nation, which took priority over immediately constructing memorials. However, the nation eventually had to come to terms with its recent

⁴¹⁸ Prince, *War and German Memory*, introduction page.

⁴¹⁹ Romain Leick, Matthias Schreiber, and Hans-Ulrich Stoldt, "Out of the Ashes: A New Look at Germany's Postwar Reconstruction," *Der Spiegel Online*, August 10, 2010, accessed April 23, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/out-of-the-ashes-a-new-look-at-germany-s-postwar-reconstruction-a-702856.html>.

history as well as mourn its losses. The ruins that covered post-1945 Germany served as impromptu memorials to their suffering and devastation. Germans were surrounded by “a past that had failed, that had produced a course of destruction that had rebounded onto Germany with a force commensurate to that which Germany had unleashed.” With the rebuilding that ensued, many of the early reminders were “carted away and buried to make way for a future free of those nagging relics of error and evil.” Buildings were restored to their condition or style prior to the Third Reich or were completely demolished, which further removed physical reminders from the recent past.⁴²⁰

The sadness inherent within postwar German war memorials occurred in response to its participation in the wars of the twentieth-century and was not representative of the entirety of their commemorative practices. Sculptures by Gerhard Marcks and Käthe Kollwitz demonstrated this somber shift in tone and stood in stark contrast to other nations who were counted among the victors of World War II. The differences in style reflect the mentality of the society that constructed them and also issues occurring at the time. “The extreme behaviours provoked by war illustrate how an individual’s social being is determined by their relationship to the objects that represent them – how objects become metaphors for the self, a way of knowing oneself through things both present and absent,” Nicholas Saunders wrote.⁴²¹

If memorials function as reminders of the historical past, it is clear why few German war memorials would have been constructed in the aftermath of World War II, they were surrounded by reminders of the war. Germans wanted to heal and mourn their dead; they did not want to be associated with the crimes or guilt of the Nazi Party or Hitler. Michael Prince has written,

⁴²⁰ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 52-53.

⁴²¹ Saunders, *Matters of Conflict*, 6. He was paraphrasing an argument from J. Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People’s Lives* (London: Routledge, 1998), 195.

The collective past finds its counterpart in a collective future, with each working on the other in shaping identity. The way we memorialize ourselves – the identities we give ourselves as peoples—reflects not only our past but our future as well. It tells us and others who we were and who we would like to be. The objects associated with times and memories we would rather forget are consigned to the forgetfulness of decay or else refashioned to fit current needs in the hopes that the processes of selective memory will transform them, obliterating or covering over those things we would rather not carry with us into our collective future.⁴²²

The crimes and devastation attributed to the Nazis' left German citizens eager to distance themselves from that dark chapter in their history; however, other European civilians shared these same sentiments. A newspaper published by the Italian Christian Democrat Party implored readers to "Forget as soon as possible!" The communists gained support throughout Eastern Europe with "their promise to make a revolutionary new beginning in countries where everyone had something to forget – things done to them or things they had done themselves."⁴²³ Tony Judt wrote that in the aftermath of the Second World War, "there was much to be gained by behaving as though the past was indeed dead and buried and a new age about to begin." However, he wrote, to accomplish this required "a certain amount of selective, collective forgetting, notably in Germany. But then, in Germany above all, there was much to forget."⁴²⁴

German memorial sites, such as Bitburg cemetery, demonstrate the challenges faced when attempting to forget while also trying to commemorate soldiers in the aftermath of World War II. The situation was further complicated by the need to construct a shared national identity in the reunified Germany. Finding an appropriate form of memorialization required dramatic shifts in the citizens' perceptions regarding the role of the military and soldiers, traditionally, during the Nazi era, and then postwar. This change in attitude and perception of German soldiers is evident when viewing the memorials constructed, and deconstructed, throughout the decades

⁴²² Prince, *War and German Memory*, 52.

⁴²³ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005), 61.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

as well as in the public's interactions with these commemorative sites. Additionally, each form of memorialization was forced to confront or address the Nazi past as each was viewed within this context. The backdrop of the Third Reich made everything from military cemeteries to reclaimed land potentially controversial.

Trends in German war memorials closely related to the type of government in control as well as the result and perception of their most recent military engagements. Politicians frequently renovated war memorials because these commemorative spaces and objects were recognized as an important method of shaping public memory, national identity, and the perception of their government. The desire to change a memorial in order to represent a new government appears to be an almost universal drive; however, each individual government had a different ulterior motive for these symbolic transitions. The government might recommend renovating a war memorial to demonstrate their authority, associate them with a previous regime to suggest legitimacy, or portray themselves as saviors of the people. This could take the form of constructing an entirely new memorial or restoring an existing structure, such as Neue Wache, to an earlier version; the era chosen for a restoration was a significant indicator of the government's priorities. Michael Prince wrote that memorials

. . . have shaped German historical identity, given it a face carved from the rubble of raw experience. None of these markers are permanent—though some are meant to be. The weathering effects of time, changing circumstances and popular attitudes will reshape them, wearing away their finer details until only a featureless hulk remains, seemingly as unrefined as the stone from which it was cut.⁴²⁵

For the Kaisers, representing authority, monarchy, and a strong state was a priority. Their concerns involved insecurities regarding the recent unification of Germany and the need to establish their military presence on the European continent. Through their monuments, including Brandenburg Gate, they celebrated militarism, heroic glory and strong leaders. Additionally, the

⁴²⁵ Prince, *War and German Memory*, 37.

Prussian Junker aristocracy, who were known for their military expertise, enjoyed a privileged position within German society. A rigid social structure was enforced within both civilian and military interactions, which was visible when viewing the war memorials. Early German war memorials were typically either dedicated only to the military leadership or listed the battle casualties in order of rank.

In the wake of World War I, the new Weimar Republic sought to distance itself from the traditional, militaristic Germany. Their memorials focused on the horrors and destruction of war as a reaction to the losses suffered during their most recent military engagement. The memorials of this era reflected the democratic government's desire to prevent future warfare by demonstrating the fallen soldiers as an unnecessary waste of life. This attitude characterized the redesign of the interior of Neue Wache during the interwar years. A pacifist tone influenced their commemoration, which would again become popular decades later. The emphasis on suffering and anguish was a distinct break from previous monuments. Instead of triumphal arches and victory statues, these post-1918 memorials were designed to create a sense of emptiness and loss. The recent devastation seemed almost incomprehensible and the terrifying battles left veterans and civilians alike with an abhorrence of modern war.

During the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi era, the memorials were returned to a more traditional form that emphasized and celebrated military glory. However, several important distinctions separated these memorials from their imperial counterparts. For example, the Nazis emphasized heroism and loyalty to the state which was separate from the social hierarchy previously enforced. Hitler wanted glory and recognition to be accessible for all soldiers, not just officers. Ironically, this fascist state was democratic in terms of honoring their military veterans and casualties; medals and glory were available to all soldiers, which was evident in Hitler's

preference for bestowing the Iron Cross military honor. Every soldier had the opportunity to earn status and veneration within society.

After the defeat of Germany in World War II, the division of the country led to dramatic differences between the forms of commemoration and memorialization in West and East Germany. Reinterpretations of their recent history began almost immediately as the two German nations created “serviceable myths of anti-Fascism.” Tony Judt said this phenomenon occurred across Europe as various nations developed their version of history, which included “a Germany of anti-Nazis, a France of Resisters, or a Poland of victims.” He argued that this reinterpretation “was the most important invisible legacy of World War Two in Europe.”⁴²⁶ This rewriting of history influenced war memorials as Marcks created sculptures dedicated to all the war dead and resistance members including Stauffenberg, while the GDR sought to merge German history with Soviet ideology through the reinterpretation of Neue Wache. Judt credits this “collective amnesia” with facilitating “Europe’s astonishing post-war recovery.” However, he cautioned that “much was put out of mind that would subsequently return in discomfoting ways.” His warning seems to underscore the continuing issues faced by the residents of Dieksanderkoog and Tümlauer-Koog, who struggle to represent their town origins without misinterpretations or encouraging pilgrimages by rightwing extremists.

The communist East Germany focused on victims of the fascists as well as any – real or imagined – resisters. East Germany even went so far as to develop a postwar narrative that included “a noble point of origin, an invented tradition: the fabled and largely fabricated Communist ‘uprising’ in Buchenwald in April 1945.” However, the democratic West German government attempted to reinterpret history in such a way as to separate the Nazis from the

⁴²⁶ Judt, *Postwar*, 61.

majority of the population in order to classify civilians and soldiers as victims.⁴²⁷ “The entire founding of the Federal Republic occurred in the face of an incomprehensible and complete suppression,” Nico Hoffmann, producer of a German television miniseries on the role of German citizens in the Third Reich, said.⁴²⁸ Historian Neil Gregor added that many historians have interpreted the Germans’ treatment of the Third Reich as a reaction to situation in postwar Europe. Gregor wrote, the Cold War “made it inexpedient for both the new West German government and her former enemies in the West to place the crimes of Nazism at the centre [*sic*] of the Federal Republic’s memorial culture immediately after 1945-49; focusing on the crimes of a former enemy was not compatible with building her up against a new one –the Soviet Union.”⁴²⁹

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification of Germany, the new government had the daunting task to reconcile their divergent interpretations of the Nazi and post-war eras. This was difficult because their postwar experiences differed widely. These struggles and compromises were demonstrated in the reinterpretation of memorials, which included renovating some, such as Brandenburg Gate’s *Quadriga*, to earlier versions in their history. Torsten Wohler, the Press Spokesman for the Berlin Senate on Cultural Affairs, described the issues faced by the newly reunified government, and said:

When the two German governments negotiated the unification treaty in spring and summer 1990 they also had to tackle the cultural-political consequences of a unification process based on Article 23 of the German Basic Law. Although culture and the arts were seen as “foundations for the continuing unity of the German nation in the years of

⁴²⁷ Judt, *Postwar*, 61.

⁴²⁸ Romain Leick, “Our Mothers, Our Fathers’: Next-Generation WWII Atonement,” *Der Spiegel Online*, March 28, 2013, accessed November 4, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/zdf-tv-miniseries-reopens-german-wounds-of-wwii-past-a-891332.html>.

⁴²⁹ Neil Gregor, “Living with Loss, Dealing with Shame,” *History Today*, May 2005, accessed January 31, 2013, <http://www.historytoday.com/neil-gregor/living-loss-dealing-shame>.

division,” both sides were extremely aware of different cultural and cultural-political traditions in eastern and western Germany.⁴³⁰

Several trends emerge when viewing war memorials in post-World War II Germany, especially when arranged by decade. Through this method it is possible to identify shifts in government power as these were often accompanied by renovations or decorative changes on war memorials. Additionally, these changes represent the shifting values of German citizens and the diverse ways in which they view themselves. During the 1940s-1950s, West German war memorials were typified by sadness, loss, and the Germans’ perception of themselves as victims. Gregor believed that the West’s necessity of creating a West German ally during the Cold War contributed to the development of the Federal Republic’s postwar narrative and memorials which emphasized their suffering. Gregor wrote:

. . . they erected monuments to their own dead and missing soldiers, they commemorated the civilian victims of allied air raids, and, to a lesser extent, they focused on the suffering of the millions of ethnic Germans expelled from the East in 1945-46. The Jewish victims of the Holocaust, not to mention other victim groups such as forced foreign workers, were swiftly marginalized by a memorial culture in which ordinary Germans were deemed to have been the ordinary victims of an ordinary war, and in which the peculiar suffering engendered by Nazi racial imperialism was ‘suppressed.’ Only in the 1960s, as Cold War tensions subsided and a generation unencumbered by the burdens of the past came to the fore, could this situation be gradually challenged and a more critical engagement with the Nazi past fostered.⁴³¹

West German war memorials during the 1950s emphasized their suffering which resulted from the traumatic experience of World War II. In contrast, East German war memorials were preoccupied with presenting a postwar narrative that would easily reconcile the German role in World War II with Soviet communist ideology. The GDR reportedly developed “a sterile cult of ‘Anti-Fascism’,” which was intended to portray the East Germans as opponents to Hitler and the

⁴³⁰ Torsten Wohlert, “Particularly in Berlin,’: Cultural Policy in the Unified Capital,” *American Institute for Contemporary German Studies Transatlantic Perspectives* (October 2009): 1.

⁴³¹ Gregor, “Living with Loss, Dealing with Shame.”

former Third Reich, and therefore supporters of communism. According to Gregor, this “commemoration of the heroic Communist resistance and liberation by the Red Army went hand in hand with a similar marginalization of the memory of Jewish persecution.” He believed the East German’s memorialization “hardly changed” until German reunification, which ended the GDR.⁴³²

The memorials created during the 1960s through the 1970s demonstrate the influence of the Cold War in Germany. The symbols and emphasis of the memorials reflected the values of their occupiers. These decades of separation made reunification difficult, which German citizens attempted to rectify by emphasizing their shared traditions and cultural identity during the 1980s and 1990s. However, Gregor wrote that the 1980s also saw a continued conservative resistance towards efforts to preserve historically significant sites, such as the concentration camps, and the development of the theory that the Nazis’ crimes were morally equivalent to the Allies’ actions.⁴³³ Ernst Nolte, a conservative historian, believed the Nazis’ war crimes were no worse than the Allied bombing campaign or Stalin’s purges. “With his theory that the Soviet ‘Gulag Archipelago’ was more primal than the Nazis’ system of concentration camps, while the class murders of the Bolsheviks were the model for the Nazis’ racial murder of the Jews, Nolte qualified the German crimes almost to the point of moral indifference,” Romain Leick, a journalist for *Spiegel Online*, wrote.⁴³⁴

In the years immediately following reunification, German war memorials returned to symbolism which pre-dated the Nazi era. Additionally, they shifted their commemorative practices away from focusing on distinct groups of heroes and victims to portraying themselves as a safeguard against another rise in fascism. Atonement for past crimes and pledges to prevent

⁴³² Gregor, “Living with Loss, Dealing with Shame.”

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Leick, “Our Mothers, Our Fathers’.”

a recurrence in Nazism were frequent themes among memorials in the reunified Germany. However, this decade also witnessed renewed efforts to recognize German wartime suffering, which resulted from the bombing campaign, expulsion, and mass rape of civilians. Gregor wrote that this resurgence has led to concerns of “a resurfacing of the old languages of victimhood that characterized the 1950s, and a corresponding desire to relativize the crimes of the Third Reich.”⁴³⁵

The issues, controversies, and conflicts confronting German postwar memorialization did not end with reunification, but continued to shift and evolve. Movements to commemorate or address the suffering of all wartime suffering and victims, including German expellees and civilians affected by the Allied bombing campaigns, led to a redefining of victimhood and recognition of all losses. “Germany has no lack of ‘demonstrators of contrition’ (in the provocative words of French philosopher Pascal Bruckner),” Leick wrote. “It is dotted with monuments and memorials, and its history is lined with the major and minor anniversaries of horror.” As a result, Leick recommended Germans “put an end to guilt” although “not remembrance.”⁴³⁶ The continually expanding definition of groups that merit commemoration resulted in decades of prolific memorial construction throughout Germany; however, this movement has also created a form of monument fatigue, evidenced by some citizens’ requests to stop building memorials in order to focus on the future.

In 2007, journalist Petra Bornhöft wrote an article entitled “Commemoration Saturation,” which examined a proposed memorial designed to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall. Bornhöft wondered if “there is any room left” in the German capital, because the memorial would be located “in the area surrounding the Reichstag that is virtually overflowing with places

⁴³⁵ Gregor, “Living with Loss, Dealing with Shame.”

⁴³⁶ Leick, “‘Our Mothers, Our Fathers’.”

of remembrance.” According to Bornhöft, this “mania for commemoration” has been increasing due to several factors, such as the “discovery” of new victim groups, claims that Germans “want to be the world champions of remembrance,” and the desire of victims to have memorials that specifically represent their suffering. Bornhöft wrote, “there are already probably more than enough memorial projects in the center of Berlin. More than 20 different projects have either already been realized or are being planned to commemorate the horrors of the Nazi era alone.”⁴³⁷

Journalist Tyler Marshall wrote, “German historian Ernst Nolte once referred to World War II as the past that won’t go away, and the years have proven his point.”⁴³⁸ A general sense of the attitudes of citizens can be ascertained from their memorial design, symbolism, and dedication. However, this does not imply a general consensus as each memorial, whether a sculpture, cemetery, or commemorative event, encountered some form of controversy or critics. Despite this, war memorials are a useful indicator when assessing the long-term impact of war within a society as well as detailing how these are understood and modified over generations.

War memorials demonstrate a society’s efforts to make sense of their past and shape their future. The challenges faced are evidenced in the evolving character of memorials; they must be constantly renovated and reinterpreted to remain relevant to the needs of the society. Wohlert wrote that historian Eric Hobsbawm referred to the twentieth century as “The Age of Extremes,” which he agreed certainly be applied Germany, and specifically Berlin, due to “its historical sites and memorials dedicated to the Holocaust, Nazi-terror, resistance, communist dictatorship, and its elaborate concept to remember the city’s division during the Cold War.”⁴³⁹ However, even as early as 1898 the significance of Berlin was acknowledged. John Stoddard wrote several lectures

⁴³⁷ Petra Bornhöft, “Commemoration Saturation: Can Berlin Handle Any More Memorials?,” *Der Spiegel Online*, November 5, 2007, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/commemoration-saturation-can-berlin-handle-any-more-memorials-a-515733.html>.

⁴³⁸ Tyler Marshall, “WWII Casts A Long Shadow In Today’s Europe,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 21, 1993.

⁴³⁹ Wohlert, “Particularly in Berlin,”: 3.

regarding the bustling metropolis, which he described as a crucial aspect for anyone seeking to understand Germans. Stoddard wrote, Berlin

. . . is at once the brain and arm of that gigantic frame known as United Germany, and it is Berlin more than aught else which has transformed the Germany of peaceful legends and romantic ruins, into the greatest military power upon earth, -- the Germany of blood and iron, of cannon and of conquest, of Bismarck and Von Moltke.⁴⁴⁰

Due to the significant role of this European capital in shaping the history and future of the continent, it is unsurprising that its literal and symbolic repositioning in the postwar landscape would generate debate. The creation and interpretation of German war memorials speaks not only to their position as a major European power, but also conjures up attitudes and reminders from centuries past. The emergence of a unified Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, its division due to the defeat in World War II, and reunification with the end of the Cold War tensions underscores the significant role warfare and the military have played in German history. Due to the connections between their militaristic heritage and Germanic tradition, even contemporary war memorials are evaluated and understood within this broad historical context, which was further complicated by the Nazi Era.

Many of the issues surrounding the construction of war memorials in the aftermath of World War II are unique to Germany due to its role in the Third Reich; however, these questions are not exclusive to this country. For example, in 2012 a memorial was constructed in London to honor the aircrews that flew bombing missions over Germany during World War II. These bombing campaigns, which claimed the lives of an estimated 300-600,000 civilians, were hotly debated during the postwar years. The British government did not fund the memorial, rather private donors raised the nearly \$12 million needed for the project. This memorial to the air crews offended Germans who continue to seek recognition for their wartime suffering. Although

⁴⁴⁰ Stoddard, *Lectures*, 9.

the memorial's dedication states that it "also commemorates those of all nations who lost their lives in the bombing of 1935-45," it does not specifically mention the German casualties. Retired Air Commodore Malcolm White, who was Chairman of the Bomber Command Association which commissioned the memorial, said "extensive efforts were made to persuade the German government and Dresden city officials to send representatives to the [dedication] ceremony." The Germans declined the invitation, reportedly "citing the continued strong resentment in Dresden over the extent of its destruction."⁴⁴¹

Another controversial memorial was unveiled in Poland on October 17, 2013. The sculpture by Jerzy Bohdan Szumczyk depicts a Russian soldier, identifiable by his helmet, raping a heavily pregnant woman at gun point. The memorial, entitled "Komm, Frau," (Come, woman) was placed next to a Soviet-era tank, which remains in Gdansk as "a communist-era memorial to Red Army soldiers who liberated the city from Nazi forces in 1945." The sculpture was placed next to the tank without prior approval and the police removed it within hours. However, Russian representatives were quick to condemn the memorial and urged the Polish government to respond with an "appropriate reaction." Alexander Alexeyev, the Russian ambassador in Warsaw, said that Szumczyk "defiled by his pseudo-art the memory of 600,000 Soviet servicemen who gave their lives in the fight for the freedom and the independence of Poland." Szumczyk claimed he "wanted to depict the tragedy and 'the whole suffering' of rape victims." The widespread rape of women by Soviet soldiers has been widely documented, although *Spiegel Online* reported that "In Russia, discussing the crimes of the Red Army during World War II has remained largely taboo." Polish prosecutors are investigating whether Szumczyk is

⁴⁴¹ John F. Burns, "British Memorial Honors World War II Bomber Crews," *New York Times*, June 28, 2012, accessed January 31, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/29/world/europe/britain-honors-world-war-ii-bomber-crews.html?_r=0.

guilty of “inciting racial or national hatred” due to his memorial. If convicted, Szumczyk could be sentenced to two years in prison.⁴⁴²

Nearly seventy years after the end of World War II, this war continues to elicit strong emotions and controversy due to the complex nature of warfare, remembrance, and memorialization. Although examples of morally questionable actions can be found on all sides of the conflict, Germany continues to bear the brunt of postwar responsibility. Additionally, their role as vanquished continues to influence the development and interpretation of their war memorials and soldiers.

⁴⁴² *Der Spiegel Online*, “Pseudo-Art: Russian Ambassador Slams Wartime Rape Sculpture,” October 17, 2013, accessed November 4, 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/russia-slams-sculpture-of-soviet-soldier-raping-woman-in-gdansk-a-928492.html>.

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Schleswig- Holsteinische Zeitungsverlag
Seattle Times
Sunday Inter Ocean (Chicago)
Vermont Watchman and State Journal

APPENDICES

Appendix A

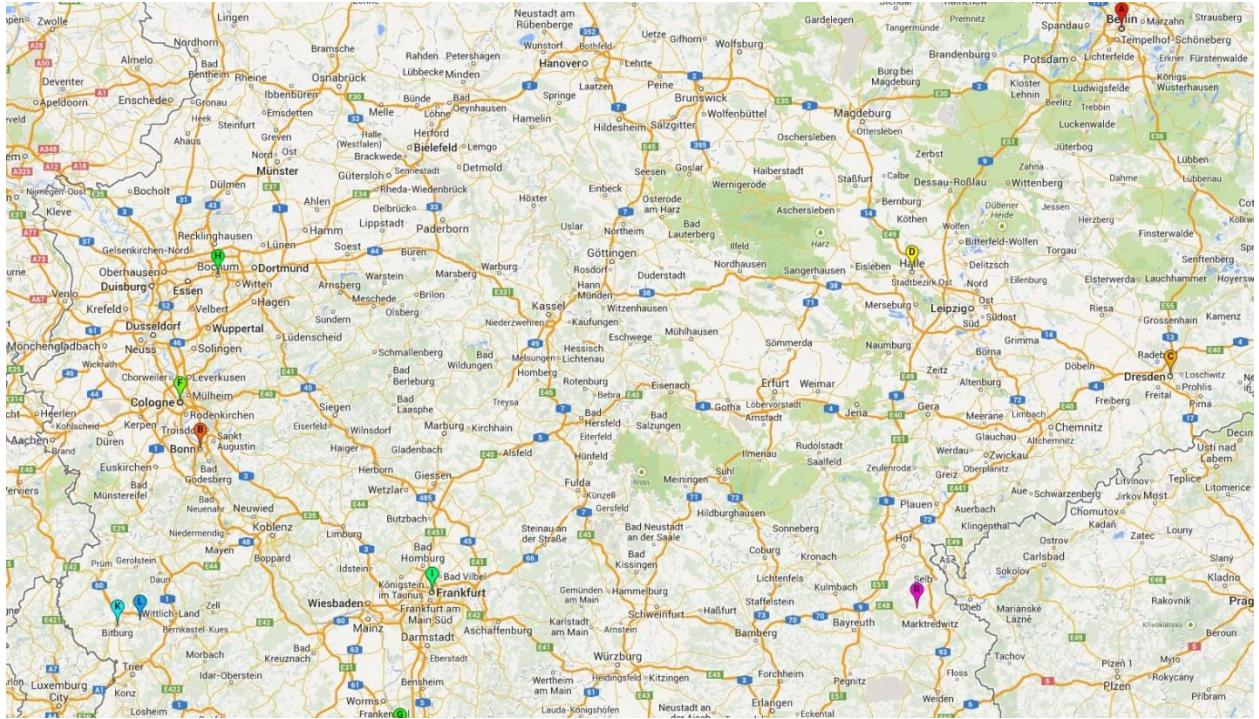
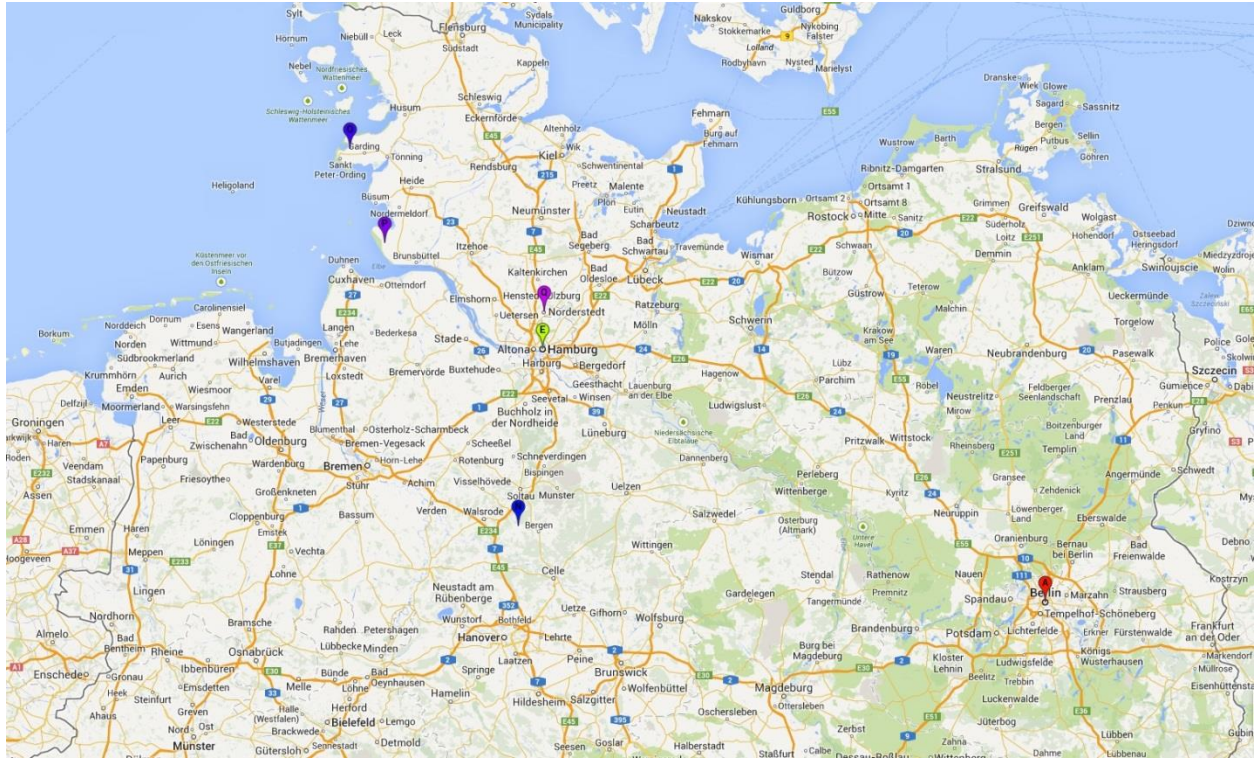


Appendix B.

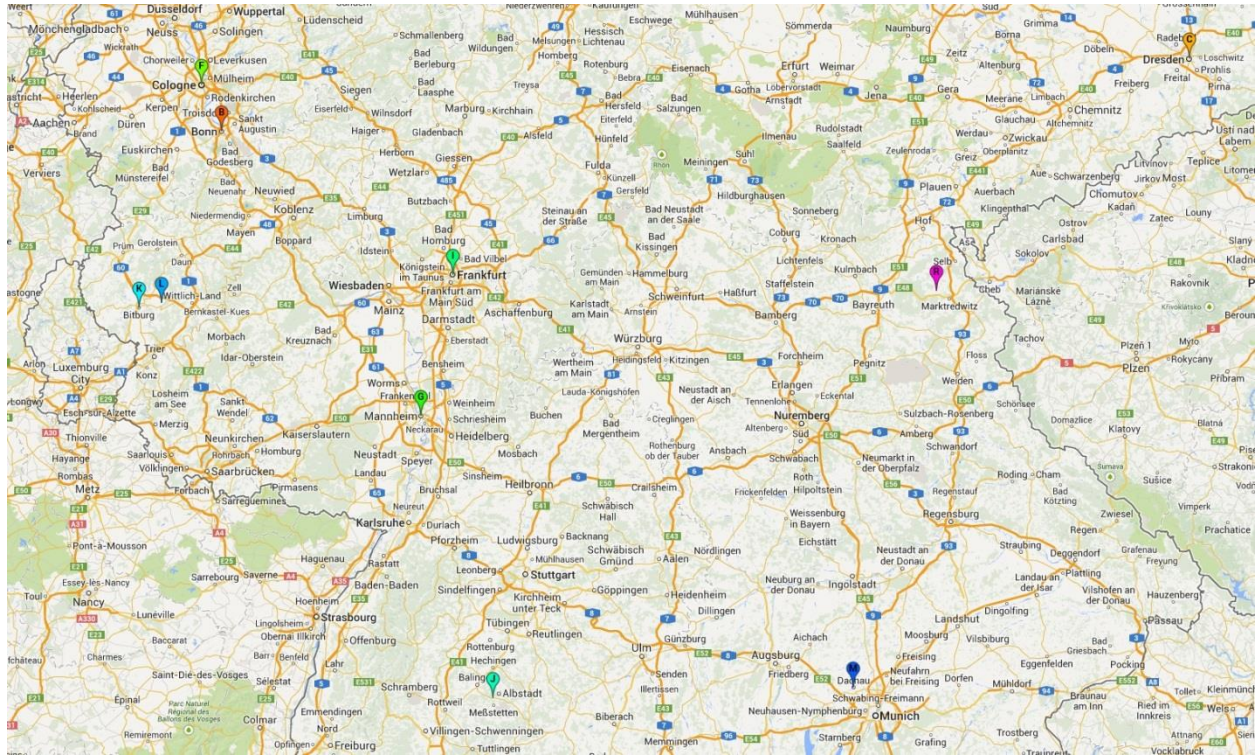
Map Key

- A. Berlin
 - a. Brandenburg Gate (*Quadriga* by Gottfried Schadow)
 - b. Neue Wache (*Pieta* by Käthe Kollwitz)
- B. Bonn
- C. Dresden
- D. Halle
- E. Hamburg
 - a. *Charon's Boat* by Gerhard Marcks
- F. Cologne
 - a. *The Grieving Woman* by Gerhard Marcks
- G. Mannheim
 - a. *Angel of Peace* by Gerhard Marcks
- H. Bochum
 - a. *The Old Woman in Mourning* by Gerhard Marcks
- I. Frankfurt
 - a. *Hiob* by Gerhard Marcks
- J. Lautlingen
 - a. *The Resurrected* by Gerhard Marcks
- K. Bitburg
- L. Spangdahlem
- M. Dachau
- N. Bergen-Belsen
- O. Tümlauer-Koog (Hermann-Göring-Koog)
 - a. Hermann Göring memorial bell
- P. Dieksanderkoog (Adolf-Hitler-Koog)
 - a. Neulandhalle (New Land Hall)
- Q. Norderstedt
- R. Wunsiedel
 - a. Former location of Rudolf Hess' grave and headstone

Appendix C

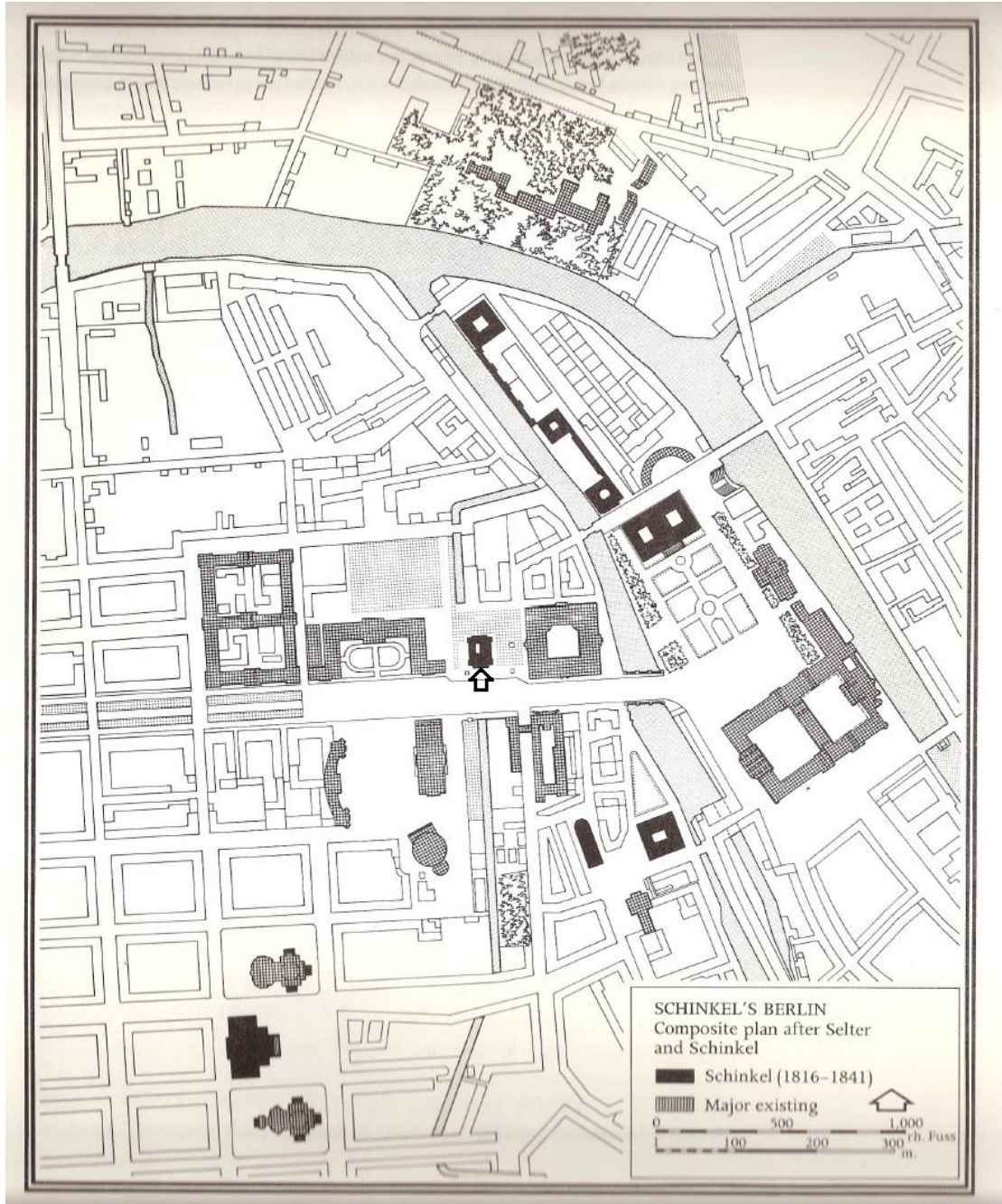


Appendix D



Maps created by author, March 17, 2014.

Appendix E



Map from Hermann G. Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin: A Study in Environmental Planning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972). Arrow added by author to denote location of Neue Wache.

APPENDIX F

Address by Chancellor Helmut Kohl to German and American Soldiers and Their Families at Bitburg, May 5, 1985

Mr. President,
Members of the U.S. Armed Forces,
Members of the Bundeswehr,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear American friends,
Fellow Countrymen:

It is not often that the link between the past, present and future of our country reaches as vividly as during these hours at Bitburg.

A few minutes ago, the President of the United States of America and I paid homage in the military cemetery to the dead buried there and thus to all victims of war and tyranny, to the dead and persecuted of all nations.

Our visit to the soldiers' graves here in Bitburg was not an easy one. It could not but arouse deep feelings. For me it meant first and foremost deep sorrow and grief at the infinite suffering that the war and totalitarianism inflicted on nations, sorrow and grief that will never cease.

Stemming from them is our commitment to peace and freedom as the supreme goal of our political actions. And the visit to the graves in Bitburg is also a reaffirmation and a widely visible and widely felt gesture of reconciliation between our peoples, the people of the United States of America and us Germans, reconciliation which does not dismiss the past but enables us to overcome it by acting together.

Finally, our presence here testifies to our friendship, which has proved to be steadfast and reliable and is based on our belief in shared values.

I thank you, Mr. President, both on behalf of the whole German people, and I thank you very personally as friend, for visiting the graves with me. I believe that many of our German people understand this expression of deep friendship, and that it forbodes a good future for our nations.

The town of Bitburg witnessed at first hand the collapse of the Third Reich. It suffered the year 1945. It was part of the reconstruction in the years of reconciliation. For 25 years now, Bitburg has been the site of joint ceremonies in which American, French and German soldiers and citizens of this town and region commemorate the victims of the war, and time and again affirm their friendship and their determination to preserve peace jointly. Here, close and friendly relations have evolved in a special way in these years between the U.S. forces and the German population.

Bitburg can be regarded as a symbol of reconciliation and of German-American friendship.

Members of the Bundeswehr, most of you have been born since May 8, 1945. You have not yourselves experienced the war and tyranny in this country. You grew up in the years in

which we built our republic, at a time when friendship re-emerged and developed between us and the American nation. You got to know our American friends as helpers, as partners and allies.

Days like this are a suitable way of reminding our people's young generation in particular that this development, so favorable for us, was not a matter of course and that the preservation of peace and freedom requires our very personal dedication.

You, the members of the U.S. forces in the Federal Republic of Germany, serve your country, the United States of America, and our republic alike.

The security of the Federal Republic of Germany is closely linked to the partnership and friendship of the United States of America. We know what we owe you and your families. We also know that serving overseas means sacrifice for many of you. Let me assure you that you are welcome guests in our country, in the Federal Republic of Germany. Do not let a small and insignificant minority give you a different impression. We sincerely welcome you here as friends, as allies, as guarantors of our security.

Relations have developed over many years between the U.S. armed forces and the Bundeswehr and are closer than ever before. I should like to thank you, the American and German soldiers, for this partnership we almost take for granted. It strengthens our joint determination to defend peace and freedom of our nations, and this partnership - as I wish expressly to state here at Bitburg - thus is a source of mutual understanding of our peoples, generating many personal friendships.

I wish the members of the U.S. forces, I wish our soldiers of the Federal Armed Forces, I wish for us all that together we make our contribution to peace and freedom of our country and of the

world—and may God's blessing be with us.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴³ Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 256-57.