

GERMANY AFTER 1945: A SOCIETY CONFRONTS ANTISEMITISM, RACISM, AND NEO-NAZISM

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An exhibition by

Germany after 1945: A Society Confronts Antisemitism, Racism, and Neo-Nazism

**An exhibition by the
Amadeu Antonio Foundation
(Catalog)**

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The Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ) was established in 2000, primarily to make payments to former forced laborers. The payments programs were completed in 2007. The Foundation’s capital of EUR 5.2 billion was provided by the German government and German industry. With the support of international partner organizations, by the end of 2006 the Foundation had managed to distribute EUR 4.4 billion to 1.66 million former forced laborers and other victims of the Nazi regime in almost 100 countries. The Foundation EVZ supports international programs and projects with approximately EUR 7.5 million per year in the following activity areas: a critical examination of history, working for human rights, and a commitment to the victims of National Socialism.




The Freudenberg Foundation was established in 1984 by members of the Freudenberg family. The Freudenberg Company was founded in the middle of the 19th century in Weinheim, Southern Germany, and now operates worldwide as a 100% family-owned group of companies. Because of their Jewish heritage, some members of the family were persecuted during National Socialism and had to flee Germany. The context of this history is part of what motivates the Foundation’s current funding practice. Thus, next to educational issues, the work against racism, antisemitism, and neo-Nazis is a central concern of the Freudenberg Stiftung that it has entrusted to its subsidiary foundation, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation. The Freudenberg Foundation allocates approximately EUR 2.5 million every year to the following four program areas: Integration Society, Youth between School and Work, Democratic Culture, Work for Mentally Ill Persons.



The Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship was created in 1998 by an act of the German parliament. The aims of the Foundation are: to contribute to a comprehensive reappraisal of origins and causes, history and impact of the communist dictatorship in the Soviet-occupation zone and East Germany between 1945 and 1989, to provide testimony to injustices committed by the SED regime and to recognize victims, to further the antitotalitarian consensus within Germany, and to strengthen democracy and German unity.



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Pia Gerber

Executive Director, Freudenberg Foundation

Dear readers,

the issues that the Amadeu Antonio Foundation stands for – promoting an open, democratic society and confronting right-wing extremism, racism and antisemitism – are of central importance to the Freudenberg Foundation as well. For this reason, the Freudenberg Foundation supported the creation of this exhibition from the beginning.

A nuanced and self-critical attitude to one’s own history is important in all democratic societies. Our work for a democratic culture confirms this again and again: the more concretely and openly a given society speaks about situations in the past in which injustice was done and individuals or members of certain groups were discriminated against, the more likely it is that people there in the present will feel responsible to speak out and act against contemporary forms of injustice. But in Germany, we are not dealing with just another form of historical injustice: Germany is responsible for the Holocaust and for the systematically organized persecution and murder of millions of people. This exhibition explores the possible connections between the history of National Socialism and the fact that after liberation from the Nazis, there were anti-Jewish sentiment, racism, and Nazis in both German states.

There has been little cohesive scholarly examination of this very complex set of questions and hardly any public discussion, either in Germany or in the United States. This makes this exhibition all the more important, so that these questions are raised in a dialogue between Germany and the United States as well. For a long time, Germany had difficulty confronting openly and critically its history of perpetration. Asking concrete questions like “What exactly happened? Who did what to whom? Who profited from it, who tolerated it?” activates to this day tendencies to deny and trivialize the acts of perpetration. The notion of a unified, ethnically homogeneous national community is still in place. This leads to the kinds of failure of state institutions and of society in general that was revealed when it became known in 2011 that a neo-Nazi terrorist group had been responsible for the murder of at least 10 immigrants. Previous attempts to solve the murder cases had tried to find the culprits among the victims and their families. Investigators did not consider the possibility that the murderers were racists who were acting out of hatred. In fact, investigators ignored voices from immigrant communities that indicated that the murderers were Nazis.

Societies are slow at learning. From the perspective of the Freudenberg Foundation we can learn a great deal from the stories presented in this exhibition and we can ask: what are the blind spots in our own history and how can we look at them critically? Divided Germany was good at placing blame on the other side of the Wall. Depending on where you were, the Nazis were always “on the other side.” In its work, the Freudenberg Foundation seeks to criticize and counter societal processes that lead us to look down on or put down those we mark as “others.” An inclusive, socially just society is only possible if we take a perspective on the past and the present that accepts diversity. That means that it is also important to acknowledge and support persons and groups who engage for a just and democratic society from a marginalized position. We wish this exhibition in the United States and beyond attentive visitors who may feel inspired to ask new questions and to get to know and to tell new stories.



Martin Salm,
Chairman of the Board of Directors,
Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ)

Dear readers,

in Germany we still often hear the sentence “I am not against foreigners, I am not against Jews, but...” It is a wicked sentence, since it is often the lead-up to the expression of prejudice, bigotry and hatred. In Germany, all kinds of Germans are assumed to be foreigners, assumed to not belong, simply because they are Black, or of Turkish extraction, or Jewish or Roma. These people are discriminated against for not being stereotypically German. Current studies show that there has been an increase in racist attitudes in Germany and that such attitudes are not restricted to marginal groups in society. What is more: racist violence has not been banished. At the same time, since the beginning of the 1990s, people in Germany have stood up against racist violence, against people being chased to death, against arson attacks on homes for asylum-seekers, against the desecration of Jewish cemeteries.



But it is not enough to stand up to the perpetrators of violence. This exhibition shows that there is a connection between those who carry out hateful acts of violence, those who show their approval of such acts or simply look on, craving for sensation, and those who want to have nothing to do with the violence but find “good reasons” for the racist disparagement of others. Antisemitism, racism, right-wing extremism are the subject of the exhibition catalogued in this publication. The exhibition shows the reality of these phenomena in contemporary Germany and asks about their history since the Second World War, at the time the Iron Curtain divided Germany.

In 2007, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation presented an exhibition entitled “We just didn’t have that! Antisemitism in East Germany.” The new exhibition, “Germany after 1945: A Society Confronts Antisemitism, Racism, and Neo-Nazism” expands on the previous exhibition by including West Germany as well as the topics of racism and neo-Nazism. This exhibition analyzes the development of bias and prejudice in the two Germanys up to the fall of the Wall as well as their contemporary manifestation. Here, once again, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation is calling for a more deeply democratic culture of respect and equality for all.

The Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility and Future” (EVZ) supports this endeavor of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation. It funded the conceptual development of the exhibition and its presentation in the United States because the connection between past and present is a central concern of the Foundation EVZ. In 2001, when the German parliament (Bundestag) created the Foundation in acknowledgement of Germany’s “political and moral responsibility for the victims of National Socialism,” it connected that history to action for human rights today. In this context, the Foundation EVZ hopes that the exhibition “Germany after 1945” will attract many visitors and provoke ample discussion.

Anna Kaminsky,
Executive Director,
Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship

Dear readers,

in 2011 the discussion about the causes of right-wing terror, especially in the eastern part of Germany, became heated once again. In the 1990s and 2000s there were pogroms and attacks against non-whites. At the same time, neo-Nazis have created regions in which they threaten all those who don’t fit in their racist, antisemitic worldview. The revelation in 2011 that a right-wing terrorist group was responsible for at least ten racist murders brought to the foreground questions about the causes of the violence and about the egregious failure of the investigating authorities.



Right-wing violence is not and has never been a phenomenon that was restricted to West Germany, despite what East Germany liked to claim. Nor is such violence a new phenomenon that came to the East from the West through unification. On the one hand, East Germany hushed up ultra right, antisemitic and racist attitudes and violence. On the other hand, it tolerated right-wing gangs that threatened alternative and oppositional youth groups, as the attack on a rock concert in a church in East Berlin in October 1987 exemplifies. Photos in the archives of the Ministry for State Security (Stasi) indicate how openly right-wing radicals showed themselves in public: the photos depict people doing the Hitler salute in well-frequented public places while nothing seems to have happened to those who so openly defied official attitude.

By the end of the 1980s, East Germany’s official self-image was one of a state committed to international solidarity and to the “fraternity of the peoples” and of a society that actually lived in accordance with these principles. Occurrences that contradicted such self-image were taboo. Thus, for example, Konrad Weiss’ list of antisemitic attacks and racist incidents was suppressed. According to state doctrine, the creation of a socialist society had eliminated the root causes of xenophobia, racism, and antisemitism in East Germany. From then on, such phenomena were said to exist only in capitalist West Germany. In other words, the tendency to look away from or trivialize racism and antisemitism clearly did not begin with German unification in 1989 through the power vacuum and the loss of state and ideological authority created by the downfall of East Germany.

Since the mostly peaceful revolutions of the years 1989-1991 in Germany and other states in Central and Eastern Europe, the development of democracy, market economies, and associated freedoms has been accompanied by an alarming degree of undemocratic attitudes, racism, antisemitism, authoritarianism, and right-wing violence. These developments are not restricted to the former East Germany or former East Bloc countries.

This exhibition shows that there were similar developments in Western democracies. People who are labeled as different, as not belonging, are not safe from hateful attacks based on prejudice. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation has recorded over 182 deaths from right-wing violence since 1990 for Germany alone, including the nationwide cases of the neo-Nazi terrorist group that were revealed in 2011. The official statistic is significantly lower.

This is not the first time that the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship deals with such difficult topics. Support for this exhibition is of a piece with a series of financial contributions to the creation of documentaries, teaching materials and exhibitions that aim at confronting these kinds of issues head-on.

A few years ago, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation created an exhibition, “We just didn’t have that! Antisemitism in East Germany,” that provoked trenchant discussion about the use of the term “antisemitism” to refer to the socialist government’s treatment of Jews and Jewish communities in East Germany. There was strong opposition to facing up to structural anti-Jewish activity within a state that had called itself antifascist. These discussions were very important in the public debate on what the core elements of a democracy are and on the role of the protection of and respect for the rights of minorities therein. This exhibition picks up this issue again and extends the perspective to include West Germany as well. The exhibition presents a broad perspective on racism, antisemitism, and right-wing extremism in their societal context.

I wish the exhibition all the attention it deserves, many visitors and plenty of lively debate.

An Exhibition about Nazis, Racism, and Antisemitism in Germany Today?

Anetta Kahane, Chair of the Board of Directors, Amadeu Antonio Foundation

Neo-Nazis have killed at least 182 people in Germany since its reunification in 1990. Neo-Nazis are represented in state parliaments and hundreds of far right gangs make themselves felt at the local level. According to polls, approximately a third of all young people agree with items of neo-Nazi ideology and almost twice as many show racist and antisemitic attitudes. As we see it, all this means that eighty years after Hitler came to power and two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, right-wing extremism is a significant problem in Germany today. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation has created an exhibition that traces the lines of development of antisemitism, racism, and neo-Nazism from the end of the War to the present in order to provide a perspective on the scale of these issues, to encourage open, informed debate on their causes, and to continue to elaborate with others adequate responses to them.



Germany: A Model Democracy with a Sinister Past

Nowadays Germany is one of the most important industrialized nations and a stable and well-developed democracy. The country is more powerful than ever and, internationally, this causes admiration rather than fear. The country that sparked two world wars and murdered millions of people in the Holocaust has been turned successfully into a peaceful, enlightened democracy. Precisely because Germany now counts as a stable democracy, the period between 1933 and 1945 tends to appear as an accident of German history, a dark period that came over Germany without warning and then, after its dramatic end, was simply over. This raises the question: what happened to Nazism, antisemitism, and racism after the end of the Nazi period? What is the situation today? How did this country deal with the Nazi crimes after the end of the Second World War? How does the nation deal with this legacy today?

The World Wars and the Holocaust clearly continue to have an impact on the present. This exhibition shows that Nazism, antisemitism, and racism did not simply disappear with the end of National Socialism. Here, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation has taken on a very knotty issue: we have put the appalling reality of contemporary extreme right-wing everyday culture in Germany in its historical context. Usually, most Germans deny a connection between the National Socialism of the past and current-day right-wing extremism. In 1945, the Allied Powers could put an end to the Nazi regime but not to the worldview that accompanied it. Allies and resistance fighters agreed that bringing about a change of attitude would be a long process. And it has been a very long process indeed. Confronting one’s history, especially if it is connected to a heavy burden of guilt, requires courage and equanimity.

East Germany claimed that it existed as a result of the confrontation with the Nazi past. The country thought it had overcome “fascism” simply by being a socialist country without capitalism and an ally of the Soviet Union. In this version of history, international finance capitalism and imperialism were responsible for the more than 60 million war dead. Hitler and the SS were seen merely as criminal puppets of capitalism in class struggle. According to communist ideology, racism and antisemitism were capitalist inventions meant to befuddle the working class, to distract the workers through prejudice in order to prevent them from organizing the revolution. In other words: the German people were victims of deception and

manipulation, the working class was oppressed and the Jews were a kind of collateral damage in the great carnage of the war against the Soviet Union. East Germany did not need to face a shameful past, since the Nazis were supposedly all in the West and the German people had been their victims.

West Germany had other close partners. In contrast to the Soviet Union, the United States had not experienced the devastation of war in its own territory. The U.S. acted in West Germany as a helper in the effort to rebuild the nation. Helping West Germany to make a quick financial recovery was a clever strategy in the Cold War. The “economic miracle” and the democratic system bestowed on West Germany helped people there make rapid economic progress. In the process, a confrontation with the Nazi past was repressed and delayed. Former Nazis occupied key positions in politics, in the economy and the media. They were everywhere, even as teachers in schools and universities. Only in the 1960s did confrontations, protests and trials against the former perpetrators increase. Public debate on this issue began slowly and sluggishly in the 1970s. As the debate was becoming more vigorous in the 1980s, the Berlin Wall came down.

After the peaceful revolution in East Germany, the country was united in 1990. This could have been the moment to talk openly and compare the different experiences and difficulties of working through the past in East and West. But that hardly happened. Unification was more important; there was much to be done. A second post-War era began and the shared past was disregarded. Many Germans took the re-unification of Germany as a sign that the mortgage of war and Holocaust had been paid off.

Connecting the Dots between Past and Present

Two years after unification a mob in the city of Rostock attacked a building where foreign workers and refugees lived. It was 1992 and for four days and nights people rioted against Roma asylum seekers and Vietnamese workers, putting buildings on fire to the applause of neighbors and onlookers. Thus, already twenty years ago, a problem became evident that is still with us today: the growing right-wing extremism in Germany. In unified Germany it became obvious that right-wing extremists were numerous, violent, and by no means a thing of the past. That was a short time after unification. And today? The terror acts of the “National Socialist Underground,” a group that acted unhindered for years, killing ten people and injuring many more in the first decade of the 21st century, the network of violent far right gangs, and the fact that the threat of racist violence has kept most immigrants out of the eastern part of Germany shows the gravity of the situation today. How could it come to this? Some blame capitalism for the problem, citing unemployment, economic factors and the like. Some point to the backwardness of East Germans, to their racist attitudes, and their lack of experience with democracy. Some East Germans contradict this vehemently and some West Germans claim that things are just as bad in the West. Only rarely will you find a German who says that this has anything to do with the German past. On the contrary, in most reporting, the Nazis of today seem to have literally come out of the blue. From the schnitzel to the cuckoo clock, you will find a tradition in Germany for just about anything. The experience that is passed on from one generation to the next is taken very seriously in Germany and everything has a significant cultural history. Everything, that is, except for right-wing extremism.

That is the kernel of our problem: that things in this respect are covered up, made invisible, turned into taboos. Yes, there were differences between East and West Germany, but since unification Germans seem to have joined together in ignoring some unpalatable facts. Those who look at this exhibition may find continuities between past and present and may notice that it is harder for right-wing extremists to gain influence in places where people have consciously and openly confronted the legacy of the Nazis than in places where the past is cov-

ered up. The task of combating right-wing extremism in Germany today requires an open and honest assessment of the history of National Socialism and of post-War history.

In this exhibition, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation describes German society’s path from the end of the War and through the division to unification and up to the present. We tell stories that exemplify the situation at a particular time. And: we are not comparing East and West. We prefer to leave that up to you, the readers. On the whole these are very weighty topics for such a small exhibition. Some would even say that the exhibition is tiny, and this may be true in terms of its physical dimensions but is in inverse proportion to the magnitude of its contents. We want to achieve a great deal with this exhibition, and thus it has to be portable and easy to set up.

We have created this exhibition in English because we want to show it outside of Germany. We are not doing this to ruin Germany’s reputation. On the contrary: you gain credibility if you face your own history with poise. Germans often worry about the image others might have of their country. But up to now, the exhibition has generated a sense of respect since it shows Germans taking their history seriously and doing something about it. People say that Germany should serve others as an example. But we are not coming as role models. That would be hubris, as if we were saying: first commit the greatest crime in history and then present yourselves as the world champions in confronting your own shameful past. No, that is not the point of this exhibition. With this exhibition we are pointing to global problems that do not diminish German responsibility just because you will find racism and antisemitism all over the world.

In this exhibition we bring together three complex phenomena, racism, antisemitism, and right-wing extremism and view them in the historical context of German history. These three phenomena have a curious connection to one another. Apart from the fact that all three provoke denial, in Germany they are often named together but their interconnectedness hardly ever thought through. Sometimes they are thought to be identical, which is not the case, sometimes they are thought to be completely unrelated, which is also not true. Our exhibition shows the inner logic of these three phenomena and their development after the defeat of Nazi Germany. To do this, we proceed chronologically and describe the developments alternating between East and West Germany. Thus at some point we come to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the post-unification era and the present. We also describe the efforts by politicians and civil society to combat racism, antisemitism, and right-wing extremism. Our hope is that without whitewashing or being overly critical we may come to a realistic perspective on Germany, a pluralistic perspective while moving with poise from the past to the present through the stories we tell.

Working Through the Past in a Multicultural Society

Michael Rothberg, *University of Illinois*

On November 6, 1959, ten years after returning to West Germany in the wake of the Nazi period and Holocaust, the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno addressed teachers from the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation with a lecture whose central question continues to echo more than a half-century later: “What does working through the past mean?” Underlining the need to confront the persistence of fascist structures within postwar democracy, Adorno argued powerfully against the desire in the German society of the 1950s to “close the books on the past and, if possible, even remove it from memory.” The potential for a relapse into catastrophe was all too real, according to Adorno. The exhibition “Germany after 1945” helps us to understand just how prescient Adorno’s reflections were: he gave his lecture on the eve of an outbreak of antisemitic actions that began at the end of 1959 and swept across the Federal Republic less than fifteen years after the liberation of Auschwitz and other Nazi camps had seemed to mark the end of the fascist nightmare.

“Germany after 1945” demonstrates the continuing relevance of Adorno’s diagnosis of the threats to democracy posed by authoritarian structures, but we should also understand that much has changed in the last fifty years. Adorno’s argument that post-totalitarian justice requires “seriously working upon the past” has been affirmed globally as part of a new human rights regime, even if that affirmation rarely leads to the honoring of such rights. In Germany itself, confrontation with National Socialism and commemoration of the Holocaust have made their way to the center of the official identity of the unified nation. Although the path has most definitely been a twisted one and the centrality of the Holocaust continues to be contested, German memory of the Nazi past is today considered by many a model to be emulated. Indeed, there is much to admire about a country that seeks to place its own crimes at the center of collective consciousness – and even at the center of public space in the nation’s capital, as is evidenced by the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (2005) and now also the much-delayed memorial to Sinti and Roma victims of the Nazis (2012). It is difficult to think of any other country that has confronted its own recent dark history so forthrightly, although the spread of truth and reconciliation commissions around the world is starting to change that as well.

Yet, as “Germany after 1945” reminds us again and again, the story of the postwar Germans – East, West, and unified – is much more complicated than the one that most Americans know. The litany of violent acts and the persistence of racist attitudes documented in this volume teach us that Adorno’s argument about the need to confront the persistence of the past in the present remains more relevant today than one would have hoped. In the face of the incontestable problems narrated here, we cannot naively maintain the progressive story of a slow, but steady triumph of memory and morality in the post-Holocaust Federal Republic of Germany. Rather, we come to see, there have always been two competing tendencies in postwar German societies – one that sought to put the past behind it as quickly as possible and demonstrated little desire to draw out the contemporary consequences of Nazism’s racist and antisemitic crimes; and one that sought to keep those crimes present in memory and to work through their implications for the reestablishment of a national identity.

Understanding postwar German history as caught between these two tendencies makes it less of an exceptional case and brings it closer to the histories of other nations – like that of



the United States – which are also caught between contradictory impulses when it comes to confronting difficult pasts. Consider the US officer cited in the section on “Racism in West Germany” who observes the stigmatization of “mixed-race” children shortly after the war and concludes that postwar “Germans did not forget the race theories of the National Socialists.” While we might share this conclusion and the condemnation it implies, the officer’s words – and the irrefutable evidence of ongoing racist violence in post-Holocaust Germany that the exhibition mounts – should not distract us from the persistence of similar racial theories in the officer’s home country. It is important to remember that when that judgment of German racism was made schools and other public spaces remained segregated in the US; indeed, anti-miscegenation statutes remained on the books until the 1971 landmark Supreme Court decision in *Loving v. Virginia*. While the German case has many specificities – and the Holocaust remains an unprecedented genocide in fundamental ways – there are no grounds for self-righteousness when it comes to addressing racism and antisemitism: these phenomena are far too prevalent in the US and elsewhere. The history recounted here should stand as a warning – and as an opportunity to ask difficult questions about our own societies.

Any thinking and feeling person will find the story told here depressing. We want to believe that societies can learn from their errors and their crimes. As a society, Germans have learned a great deal, but this exhibit seeks to bring some balance to our assessment of that learning process by drawing attention to disturbing episodes and troubling continuities that are less well known and that, shockingly, do continue up to the present. But there is yet another side to the story beyond the conflicting attempts of mainstream German societies before and after unification to confront or evade the National Socialist past: how minorities and migrants have responded to that tension-filled history. This is not the topic of “Germany after 1945,” but it is a significant part of the history of Germany in the postwar period.

Besides being the victims of racist and antisemitic attacks, minorities in Germany have also been agents actively confronting the history presented in this exhibit. They have organized in groups that – from positions both inside and outside the mainstream – have sought to counter ongoing violence, claim civil and human rights, and build a zone for surviving and flourishing despite an often-unwelcoming social climate. From the *Central Council of Jews in Germany* and the *Central Council of German Sinti and Roma* to the Afro-German activists of the *Initiative of Black People in Germany* and the immigrant-led collective *Kanak Attak*, the agency of minority groups reminds us that the legacies of National Socialism will only be overcome when our notion of “Germanness” loses its racialized connotations and our understanding of “Germany after 1945” expands to include the histories of immigrants and others not usually perceived as part of the national collective.

The post-Holocaust history of Germany is also the history of the emergence of new communities of Germans: from the descendants of the labor migrants of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s – themselves a heterogeneous group from across Europe and beyond – to the hundreds of thousands of refugees from all over the world who have made their home in the Federal Republic. By necessity, these new Germans – whatever their citizenship status – have also had to confront the National Socialist past and find their place in Germany’s complex negotiation of its haunting legacies. While it is impossible to generalize about how minorities and migrants have interacted with this history, striking examples of creative engagement exist that deserve greater attention when we talk about how people in Germany have responded to the Holocaust. There are groups of immigrant and refugee women, like the *Neukölln Neighborhood Mothers*, who visit Holocaust memorial sites and meet with survivors of the genocide; there are activists like Doğan Akhanlı, who have developed new ways of addressing Germany’s transnational, “relational histories”; and there are Turkish-German writers like Zafer Şenocak and Hakan Savaş Mican, who depict German-Jewish history as well as migrant history in their

literary texts. In such forms of engagement, we find new approaches to working through the National Socialist past: ones that do not relativize the Holocaust, but, rather, suggest how we can maintain its specificity while understanding the genocide in dialogue with other traumatic histories of extreme violence that are also present in German society. For Turkish-Germans like Akhanlı, Şenocak, and Mican, for instance, entering into this dialogue has sometimes also meant confronting their own implication in difficult pasts: namely, the Armenian genocide. The history of this confrontation, too, is part of Germany after 1945.

Like the United States, Germany is not only a country with persistent exclusions based on race and religion. It is also a multicultural country with a heterogeneous population that resists those exclusions and helps work through the legacies of multiple tainted pasts in the name of a common future that remains to be constructed.

Germany after 1945: A Society Confronts Antisemitism, Racism, and Neo-Nazism



*On May 1, 2010, thousands joined protests and blockades against a neo-Nazi demonstration in Berlin, among them was Wolfgang Thierse (2nd from left), Vice President of the Bundestag.
Photo: Sarah Schulz*

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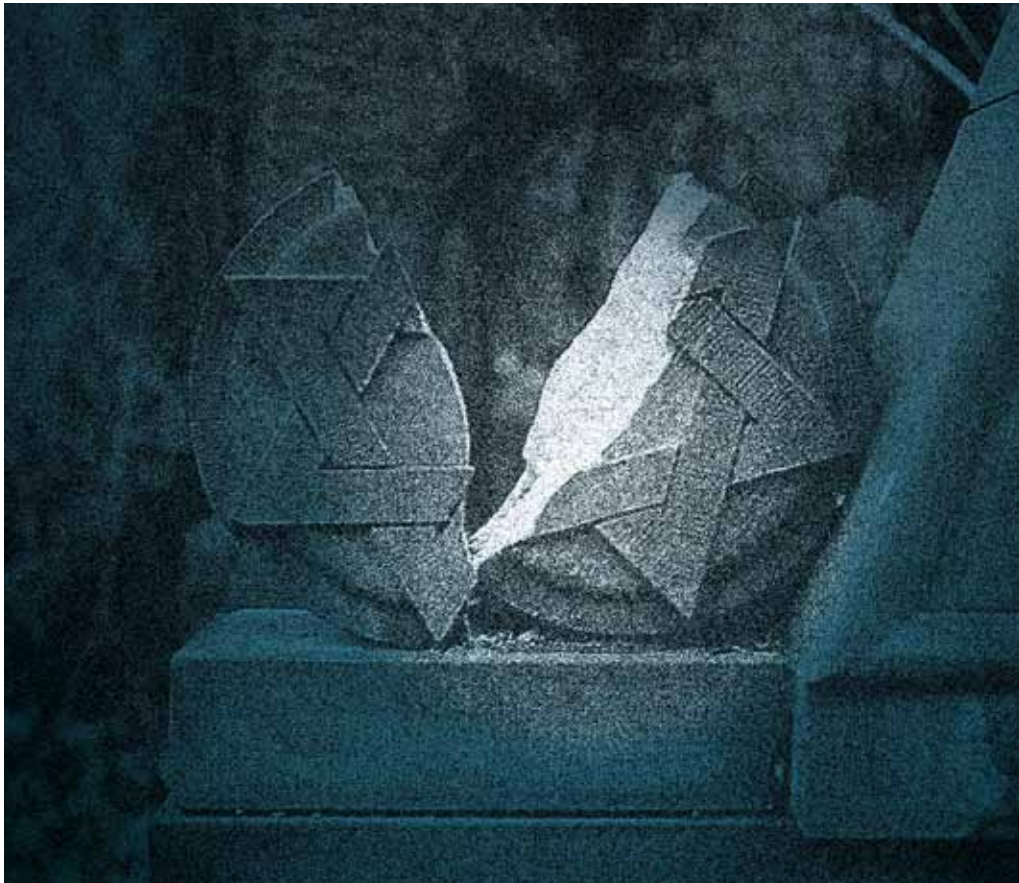
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Introduction

Neo-Nazis have killed over 180 people in Germany since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This official statistic however is certainly only a small fraction of the crimes committed by neo-Nazis in contemporary Germany. While there are organized neo-Nazi groups in many areas of the country, the number of neo-Nazis is very small: in 2010 official estimates counted 25,000 right-wing extremists in an overall population of nearly 82 million people. More problematic than the number of neo-Nazis is the overlap between neo-Nazi ideology and mainstream thinking, for example, when people “forget” that Jewish, Muslim, Black and Roma people as well as a great variety of immigrants and their descendants are an in-

tegral part of German history and of life in Germany today. This exhibition is about the repeated, willful “forgetting” and its consequences. It is about antisemitism, racism, and neo-Nazi ideology, things that many of us wished didn’t exist. Why then tell this story? In order to complete the picture, to add to the more commonly told stories of the successes of postwar German democracy, and of the rich diversity of life and culture in contemporary Germany. Looking at this bleak side of postwar German history may help us think about the fatal effects of bigotry in other societies as well, and reminds us of the continuing need to actively oppose bigotry everywhere.



Nazi Germany sought to establish an empire with a strict racial hierarchy through the oppression, enslavement and mass displacement of populations. The Nazi racial order had no place for Jews or Roma (pejoratively known as Gypsies): they were to be murdered. The mass murder of millions of Jews, commonly referred to as the Holocaust, and the killing of millions of others thought of as “lives unworthy of living” are still the Nazis’ most shocking legacies. Hundreds of thousands of ordinary Germans participated directly, millions indirectly, in the establishment of the new racial order.

The German surrender in May 1945 concluded the Second World War in Europe and put an end to Nazi rule there. After the war, two states were established: West Germany (officially: the Federal Republic of Germany or FRG) and East Germany (the German Democratic Republic or GDR). Both states claimed to have overcome Nazi ideology and each state justified its existence by presenting itself as an antidote to Nazi Germany.

West Germany pointed to the establishment of government structures based on Western

models of parliamentary democracy, with its system of checks and balances, and its close connections to the U.S. and West European countries. Eventually, it would showcase its efforts to confront the Nazi crimes. East Germany claimed to continue the anti-fascist legacy of Communist resistance fighters who had risked or lost their lives opposing the Nazis. It emphasized its allegiance to the Soviet Union, which had born the brunt of the effort in the war against Hitler’s Germany. In East Germany, overcoming capitalism was thought to eliminate the root causes of fascism.

However, antisemitism and racism were part of German culture already before the Nazi state was established, and continued to shape thinking and behavior after 1945. The treatment and perception of Jews, refugees, immigrants, Roma, Black Germans and others marked as “different” in East, West, and united Germany reveal continuities as well as discontinuities in German society’s understanding of itself as a racially homogeneous community.

Antisemitism in West Germany

“Here there is a task for all of us...”



*Desecration of the funeral hall at the Jewish cemetery in Giessen, October 12, 1981
Photo: Alfred Diamant, Center for Research on Antisemitism (Berlin)*

National Socialism may have been vanquished in 1945, but antisemitic attitudes persisted in the German population. In studies carried out between 1946 and 1952, one third of the population showed strongly antisemitic attitudes, while another third exhibited partially antisemitic tendencies. The younger generations, molded by their experiences during the Nazi period, were found to be most stridently antisemitic.

In the years following the end of the Nazi era, antisemitism was expressed openly and at times violently, particularly against Jewish survivors gathered in occupied Germany in Displaced Persons Camps. 200 of the 400 Jewish cemeteries in West Germany were desecrated between 1945 and 1950. Politicians generally avoided making antisemitic statements and few of them addressed the issue

directly in public. It was not rare for West German civil servants, many of whom were ex-Nazis, to ignore or impede regulations aimed at improving the welfare of Jewish survivors. Only a few left-wing or Christian leaders and some small groups worked actively against antisemitism.

This social climate began to change noticeably only after the newly restored synagogue in Cologne was defaced with swastikas and the slogan “Juden raus” (Jews get out) on Christmas Eve 1959. This event unleashed a countrywide wave of antisemitic actions. Over 700 incidents were recorded. Out of concern for Germany’s reputation abroad, all democratic political parties, trade unions, media representatives and the churches then engaged in a public repudiation of antisemitism. In an address to the parliament Carlo



*Desecration of the Jewish cemetery in Frankfurt am Main/Rat-Beil-Street, Easter Sunday, March 31, 1975
Photo: Alfred Diamant, Center for Research on Antisemitism (Berlin)*

Schmid, then Vice President of the Bundestag, reflected on the need to confront antisemitism: “Here there is a task for all of us...” From that point on, openly antisemitic attitudes encountered more vehement criticism. The Nazi past and the extermination of the Jews became topics that were given increasing importance in the media, schools, historical research and cultural activities. By the end of the 1980s, only 5% of the West German population was blatantly, and over 15% considerably, antisemitic. Attitudes in Germany were thus statistically in line with average West European populations. From now on, the younger generations proved to be the least antisemitic.

Nevertheless, the desire to exonerate Germans from Nazi guilt exacerbated latent antisemitic attitudes in all generations, including

the younger ones: In 1990 two thirds of the population was of the opinion that it was time to put the Nazi past behind them “once and for all” and that one should not “talk so much about the Nazi past.” 21% believed that Jews bore “partial responsibility for the hatred and the persecution they had suffered,” and almost half of the population was of the opinion that “many Jews seek to take advantage of the past, forcing the Germans to pay for it.”



Photo: Bundesarchiv

Film director Veit Harlan (1899-1964), made several films for the Nazis, including the notoriously antisemitic movie "Jud Süß." In 1949 he faced charges that he had collaborated with the Nazis, but was acquitted in court by a judge who had served as a state attorney under the Nazis. The photo above shows Harlan being carried out of the courtroom by his friends and supporters. A few years later, in 1952, smaller groups protested against Harlan's continued activity in the film industry. The picture below shows a protest in Göttingen against his movie "Hanna Amon." The 100 protesters were met by 300 counter-protesters shouting "Jewish minions," "take them off to the work camp" and "Jews get out." Nevertheless, the protests led to the cancellation of the film showing in various cities.



Source: City Göttingen / Göttinger Tageblatt

Antisemitism in East Germany

"All Jews in the Soviet zone fear a repeat of the pogroms of 1938"

Following the Second World War, many of those who had been active against Nazism in exile, or underground, or had survived the concentration camps, headed to the Soviet occupation zone. They all shared the common goal of creating a better Germany – a socialist state in which racism, exploitation and genocide would have no place. Established as a socialist state in 1949, the German Democratic Republic saw itself as the antidote to Nazi dictatorship and regarded what it called "monopoly capitalism" as the root cause of Nazism. The antisemitism enthusiastically championed by wide segments of the population in the Nazi period was ignored and thus left unaddressed.

In the 40 years of East Germany's existence, antisemitism manifested itself in a variety of ways. The government carried out an antisemitic campaign in the early 1950s that prompted hundreds of members of the Jewish community to flee to West Berlin (see caption to the right). There was state-controlled anti-Israeli propaganda that used old antisemitic stereotypes. There were antisemitic attitudes in the population at large as well: many Jewish cemeteries were desecrated and, in the 1980s, a neo-Nazi scene developed. However, in the 1980s the government became more favorable towards the Jewish communities, making projects such as the reconstruction of the synagogue in Berlin's Oranienburger Street possible for the first time. The desolate state of the economy motivated this shift: in antisemitic logic, some individuals in the government believed that a friendlier attitude towards the Jewish community would make trade relations with the US easier. Following the political upheaval of 1989, the first and only freely elected parliament of East Germany apologized and acknowledged responsibility for antisemitic

persecution in East Germany and for the government's propaganda against Israel.



Julius Meyer
Photo:
LArch Berlin,
C Rep. 118-01, Nr. 4816

"All Jews in the Soviet zone fear a repeat of the pogroms of 1938." Thus spoke Julius Meyer to the press after fleeing to West Berlin in January 1953 as an antisemitic campaign was spreading throughout Eastern Europe. On the heels of political purges in several Eastern-bloc countries, the East German secret service arrested and questioned Jews and imposed restrictions on the Jewish community. Jewish survivors of the camps, who had received help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, were accused of espionage for "US imperialism" and of damaging "German national wealth" in connection with restitution claims on stolen property. The secret services made lists of Jewish community members. Many Jews were fired from positions in the public service sector or expelled from the Communist party and persecuted. Jews taken into custody were insulted with antisemitic slurs. Several hundred members of the Jewish community fled to West Berlin in 1953. Only Stalin's death in March 1953 prevented an imminent show trial from taking place.



There were desecrations of Jewish cemeteries in East Germany throughout the decades of its existence. The authorities mostly ignored such desecrations. Only in rare instances were incidents reported and there were few convictions. The so-called anti-Fascist state showed no interest in confronting the problem of antisemitism, an indifference that was evident in the judicial sphere.

Photo: Archive of the Hanseatic City of Rostock



Starting in the 1950s, East Germany took on an increasingly pro-Arab position. It cooperated with the PLO in what it called a “common struggle against imperialism and Zionism.” East Germany provided military technology to the Palestinian terrorist groups and supported terrorists like Abu Daoud and Abu Nidal through logistical assistance, safe passage, and medical care. The group around Abu Nidal, for example, was responsible for attacks against Jewish institutions internationally, facts that were well known to the East German state security. East German media, under tight state control, demonized Israel as an “imperialist spearhead against the Arab peoples” and repeatedly drew parallels between Israel and the Nazi state. Reporting on Israel was ridden with antisemitic stereotypes.

The Abu Nidal group attacked the check-in counter of the Israeli airline El Al on December 27, 1985 at the airport in Rome. Simultaneous attacks in Vienna and Rome killed 20 people and heavily injured 120. Photo: ullstein bild



Equating Israeli politician Moshe Dayan with Hitler, September 6th, 1967

Source: Die Analyse (VEB Gärungschemie Dessau), no. 16 (1967)



Equating the Lebanon War with the Holocaust

Source: Freiheit, August 3, 1982

Racism in West Germany

“It seems the Germans did not forget the race theories of the Nazis”

Long before the Nazis came to power, race theories were widespread in Germany and already shaped lawmaking there. For instance, German parents passed on their citizenship to their children, but this was not the case if a German person had a child with a (non-white) subject of the German colonies. In general, foreigners living in Germany were not expected to take on German citizenship, regardless of length of residence or place of birth. Instances of foreigners acquiring German citizenship were expected to remain the exception. This principle remained unchanged until 2001. For this reason, there are people in Germany today who, although they were born there and in some cases their parents were born in Germany too, still count as “foreigners.” In the Nazi era, racism was state doctrine. Jews, Ro-

ma, East Europeans and people who were not white were portrayed as “inferior” and as a “threat to the Aryan race.” After 1945, the children of white German women and Black occupation soldiers were immediately considered to be a “problem.” The mothers were insulted as “traitors” and “whores,” were attacked violently, and were discriminated against in the distribution of food ration cards. German authorities attempted to have the children be given away for adoption in the U.S. or made plans for their later emigration. They justified these policies by arguing that the children would suffer from the weather conditions and from a hostile attitude in the population. Most often, however, the decisive motivation was the notion that “mixed-race” children would present a danger to the general population. As a US-officer



In 1983, 250 Roma demonstrated against the police’s profiling of their group. West German courts and police forces kept special “Gypsy files” on Roma, frequently using information from data collection, reporting and sentencing by authorities in the Nazi period.

Photo: Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma

remarked: “it seems the Germans did not forget the race theories of the National Socialists.” Gradually in the 1950s, policy shifted to the decision to educate the German population and to promote a tolerant attitude. Both the biographies of these children and statistical data show that non-white people were often not accepted as “real Germans”; they were treated in a patronizing manner, insulted, discriminated against, and were at a disadvantage in the job market. Ignoring the fact that the Nazis had sought to eliminate the Roma population, German courts after the War passed sentences denying that the Nazi internment of Roma represented an injustice. After 1945, Roma continued to be discriminated against and to be treated as if they were criminals. The enduring stereotype was that “Gypsies,” as the minority was pejoratively called, were unwilling to work and roamed around stealing. When a crime was committed, Roma were often the first to be suspected, a suspicion that some-

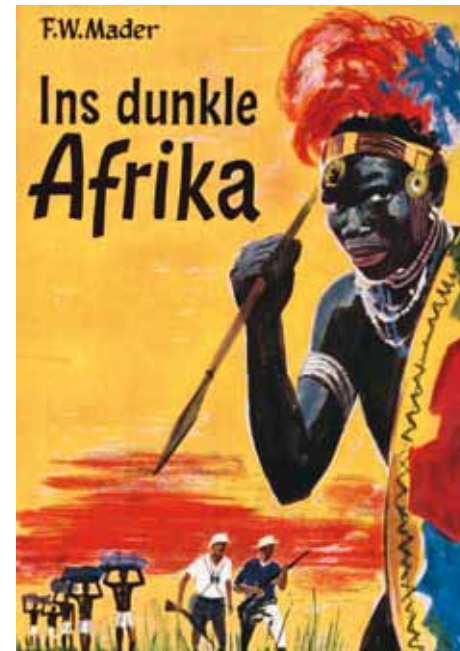
times led to pogroms against Roma populations. Whenever possible, Roma were deported out of the country since many of them were not German citizens and were denied the possibility of becoming naturalized. Roma children faced discrimination in schools. Because of a labor shortage, German officials recruited workers from Mediterranean countries in the 1960s. The original plan was that these workers should return home after a short period. However, they were needed long-term as workers and they remained. German law stipulated that their children and grandchildren were “foreigners” even if they were born in Germany. These so-called guest workers faced massive discrimination. Public discussion made their presence into a threat of “being overrun by foreigners.” Later on, immigrants from Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece were accepted as “Europeans.” For “the Turks” this is still not the case, even if they were born in Germany.



The film “Toxi” premiered in 1952 as a larger group of Afro-German children were entering first grade. The film intended to “promote in a humorous way understanding and love for all Toxis.” Like many other publications from the period, however, the film emphasized that these children were “different” and confirmed prejudices instead of breaking them down. The film ends with the child’s American father taking her “home.” Source: Beta Film GmbH



Some foreign workers were housed in camps like this one in Braunschweig well into the 1970s. As the name “guest worker” shows, their integration was not welcome; instead, they were segregated. There were repeated attacks on buildings that housed “foreigners.” Photo: Manfred Vollmer



After 1945, positive and negative stereotypes about “other races” abound in German children’s literature. The racist impetus in most of these texts is to emphasize the “difference” of the others as a general and unchanging characteristic, as does the book cover of “Into Dark Africa” from 1961. Source: Bären-Verlag

Racism in East Germany

“In the GDR we remained forever alien...”



Contact between workers and the local population was strictly controlled and limited to the work place and to occasional official ceremonies. The photo above for instance was taken for official purpose. Neither East Germany nor the sending nations wanted contract workers to get used to the host country. Source: Elena Demke and Annegret Schüle, eds., *Ferne Freunde – Nahe Fremde: Ausländer in der DDR*. Berlin, 2006.

Officially, there was to be no racism in socialist East Germany. State propaganda produced an ideal image of the equality and fraternity of all socialist countries. However, foreigners were not treated as equal members of an international socialist community but rather as guests who were being tolerated by an ethnically homogenous nation. All who were seen as “different” and “foreign,” that is, for example, Black Germans, Roma, Jews, and foreign workers, faced discrimination. Racism and anti-Slavic stereotypes that hailed from the Nazi era were directed at Soviet soldiers stationed in East Germany. In order to cope with a labor shortage, the East German government established contract-worker treaties with various socialist

states in 1967. Initially, workers came from other East European countries, and after 1974 primarily from Angola, Mozambique, and Vietnam. The training and employment of contract workers was portrayed officially as an act of East German solidarity towards “socialist fellow countries.” In reality, contract workers were used primarily to pay off the state debt of the sending country and to increase industrial productivity in East Germany. The population as well as the state discriminated against contract workers in a variety of ways. People hurled racist slurs at them; restaurants refused to serve them; youths beat them up. Police officers would downplay such incidents, often imposing curfews on those who had been attacked “for

their own protection” or accusing them of having provoked the attackers. If contract workers did not comply, they would be deported to their home country. A former contract worker from Vietnam summed up the experience of segregation and discrimination: “In the GDR we remained forever alien...”

Whereas in West Germany the segregation of foreign workers decreased over the years and “guest workers” were able to live in regular apartments, exclusion and segregation remained part of the everyday life of contract workers until the demise of the GDR. East Germany never allowed family members to join contract workers. In 1989, 4.8 million immigrants lived in West Germany, making

up 7.7% of the population; in East Germany, there were 191,000 immigrants who constituted 1.1% of the population.

Roma also faced racial discrimination. Although the Nazi state had systematically discriminated against and ultimately decimated the Roma population, the East German authorities refused to grant them the status of having been persecuted by the Nazis, thus denying them social benefits. Police departments continued to use files on Roma created by the Nazis. GDR administrators restricted the Roma’s possibilities for work and required of those Roma who were nomadic that they should take a permanent place of residence.



Contract workers had no choice as to the place of work or housing. They lived in dormitories, with up to four persons in a room. Each worker had 50 sq. ft. and no privacy. The dormitories were separated by gender: not even married couples were allowed to live together. If a woman became pregnant, she would be given the choice to terminate the pregnancy or would be deported back to her home country. Many workers tried to supplement their income by working in their dormitories, for instance by sewing.



Photo (above): Thi Van Anh D./DOMiD-Archiv, Cologne.
Photo (left): Reistrommel e.V., Berlin

The memorial plaque installed in East Berlin in 1988 commemorates German Roma (here called Sinti) who were interned by the Nazis in a camp nearby and later on deported to Auschwitz. The inscription reads: "From May 1936 until the liberation of our people through the glorious Soviet Army, hundreds of members of the Sinti suffered in an internment camp nearby. Honor to the victims." In this text, the Germans, "our people," do not include the German Roma. Furthermore, instead of committing the Nazi crimes, Germans here are simply waiting to be liberated from Nazism.

Photo: Jakob Huber



The World Festival of Youth and Students was organized starting in 1947 by left-wing youth organizations. These events were very important in the Eastern Bloc countries. They served as a vehicle for ideology and propaganda. The poster above shows the Communist idea of the fraternity of nations, which seemed to include only working class members of the countries that were part of the Communist bloc.

Photo: BArch PlakY 3/666



Racism in United Germany

"Racism was used to restrict asylum"

After the opening of the East German border to the West in 1989, the existence of the East German state was put into question. There were democratic and economic arguments for a unification of both German states, but there were also nationalistic ones. Politicians and intellectuals called for a "new German self-confidence;" some even dreamed of recovering territories that had been lost with the defeat of the Second World War. The expression "reunification" seemed to refer to a Germany from before 1945. Right-wing extremists sought to capitalize on this nation-

alist wave. At the same time, the fall of the Iron Curtain brought along new fears. Many Germans worried about their wealth, which they thought was threatened primarily by refugees from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Germany's largest-circulation newspaper, BILD, ran a series of articles in September 1991 with the title: "Asylum seekers in Berlin! Who should pay for all this? And what happens next?"

In the Nazi era, many Germans had tried to save their lives by fleeing into exile. Many of them did not manage to do so. Partly as a



Starting in the 1980s, "xenophobia" also targeted people seeking political asylum in Germany. Although asylum seekers might face torture or death if sent back to their country of origin, many politicians called for quick deportations. One example: Cemal Altun was a young social democrat who fled from persecution by the Turkish military dictatorship and applied for asylum in Germany. While the asylum hearing was going on, he jumped out of a window in despair, killing himself. At the time, German courts argued that torture was "customary" in Turkey and thus should not count as a reason for asylum. Cemal Altun was granted asylum belatedly, after he had already died. More than 150 people have killed themselves in the past two decades in order to avoid being deported back "home." The picture shows a demonstration following the burial of Cemal Altun.

Photo: Manfred Kraft/Umbruch Bildarchiv

lesson from that history the right to asylum was guaranteed by the West German constitution. Asylum was granted primarily to people from communist countries. Recognition for asylum was significantly more difficult for people fleeing from dictatorships that were allied with the West. Conservatives had been criticizing the asylum laws as “too generous” since the 1980s. After 1989 a campaign started claiming that the asylum regulations were unnecessary and dangerous. The “problem of asylum” was turned into the most important political issue in the beginning of the 1990s. At that time, very few refugees were being granted asylum since the criteria for admittance were practically impossible to fulfill (4.2% of applicants were granted asylum in 1992, 3.2% in 1993). At the same time, since many of them would have

faced persecution, torture or death, international contracts often made it impossible to deport them. Conservatives and right-wing extremists claimed that the high number of rejections meant that the asylum laws were being misused and spoke of “bogus asylum seekers,” warning of a “flood” of “economic refugees.” There was a wave of racist violence in Germany in 1991 and 1992. For example, in Rostock in August 1992, neo-Nazis, who had traveled there, as well as neighbors attacked buildings where Roma refugees and Vietnamese contract workers lived with stones and explosives. The attacks continued for five days to the applause of several thousand local onlookers. Lacking police protection, the fire department could not put out the fires. The police let the mob have its way but arrested people who were protesting against the racist



Arson-attacks on a building housing Vietnamese workers in the East German city of Rostock from the 22nd to the 25th of August 1992. Young German residents and neo-Nazis who had traveled there threw the firebombs. Thousands of onlookers cheered them on.

Source: A still from “The Truth Lies in Rostock,” © www.spectacle.co.uk

rioting. As a reaction to these events, a majority in the parliament decided to support a severe tightening of asylum laws. As reasoning for this action, people spoke of the “mood” in the German population (3/4 of Germans supported a tightening of the asylum laws) and of the danger for the refugees. After the change in law in 1993, only persons

who had reached Germany directly without traversing other European countries were to be granted asylum: that is practically impossible. Looking back, Anetta Kahane, Chair of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, noted: “The racism of the population was not confronted, instead, it was used to restrict asylum.”



Demonstration for the right of residence. In 2002 several hundred refugees and immigrants demonstrated against deportation and for a permanent right of residence.

Photo: Christian Ditsch/version-foto



May Ayim was a poet, educator, and a founding member of the Afro-German movement.

Photo: Orlanda Verlag

In an interview, May Ayim talked about the atmospheric change after the fall of the Berlin Wall: “At first I was happy. At the same time, there was a very odd atmosphere. For the first time I had really negative experiences in Berlin. To be abused in the streets, to hear strange things, to hear them from friends, too. Or to be told about experiences, by a friend of mine who is from Ghana: his little ten year old brother was pushed out of the subway, so there was room for a white German. I had the feeling that suddenly people dared to say things they only would think before.” In 2009, a street in Berlin was named after May Ayim. Up until that point, that street was named after the founder of a German enclave in what is now Ghana that had been part of the transatlantic slave trade.

Racism in United Germany

“Germans first”

Questions about the nation and national belonging have taken on increasing importance since the merging of the two German states in 1990. Slogans such as “Germans first” or “I am proud to be a German,” earlier the kind of thing only right wing extremists would say in Germany, are now commonplace. Polls from the last few years show: over 80% of Germans are proud to be German. In 2010, more than 13% of Germans thought that Germans were “naturally” superior to all other people, 22% agreed partially with this view. Studies have shown that this kind of heightened sense of national pride corresponds with a more tenuous commitment to democratic values. That racism and bigotry are a problem right at the center of German society became clear

most recently with the 1992 riots in Rostock, during which regular citizens participated in racist pogroms or cheered them on. Almost half of all Germans believe that there are too many “foreigners” living in Germany. In representative polls, close to a third of respondents agree with the idea that immigrants only come to Germany to abuse the welfare state. Since the end of the 1990s there have been increasing public debates about immigration. As the possibility of allowing double-citizenship was being considered in 1999, there were angry protests with racist undertones. And there is a growing fear in mainstream society of being “overrun by foreigners,” a fear that does not correspond to the actual number of “foreigners” living in



The Nazi salute in front of the German flag during the Soccer World Cup 2010. Although Germany's flag symbolizes a democratic and republican tradition, at times certain people show Nazi symbols during patriotic celebrations – even though such symbols are banned. Photo: © peter-juelich.com

Germany. Connected to that fear are campaigns that promote a “German core culture,” that is, the idea that there is an inherently German culture that all immigrants need to adapt to. At the same time, there is the notion that German culture is only accessible to ethnic Germans, that is, that non-Germans are inherently incapable of partaking in that culture, no matter how long they have lived in Germany – even if it is for generations. Racism research has summed up this attitude in the paradoxical sentence: „We don't want you to be like us, but you must not be different.“

Since 9/11 Muslims have been increasingly portrayed as a threat. In 2006, three quarters

of poll respondents thought that “Muslim culture” does “not at all” or “not quite” fit with “our Western culture.” A book published in 2010, “Germany is Abolishing Itself,” garnished massive attention. In it, author Thilo Sarrazin argues that Muslims are less intelligent than non-Muslims and that this is genetically determined. He argues as well that higher fertility rates among Muslims and the underclasses are leading to a general “dumbing down” of the country. With over a million copies sold, the book was the bestseller of the decade for political non-fiction. All this creates an atmosphere of permanent discrimination and marginalization for many.



Right-wing populists use demonstrations against the building of mosques to promote their agenda. This is a demonstration on 8 May 2009 in Cologne.

Photo: Kölner Stadtanzeiger/Krasniqi



“Germany is Abolishing Itself” quickly became a bestseller. The fears of the “doom of civilization” exemplified in the book have a long tradition in Germany and almost always blame minorities for the dangers they evoke. After the controversy surrounding the publication, author Thilo Sarrazin was forced to resign from the Executive Board of the German Federal Bank, but he remains a high-ranking Social Democrat.

Photo: Michael Kappeler/ddp images



Photo: Neuschäfer

The Neuschäfer family lived in Rudolstadt, a small town in the southern part of the former East Germany, from 2001 until 2007. After six years, the family gave up and returned to the western part of Germany. The reason for this was the everyday racism they experienced in Rudolstadt: People stared at, spat at, taunted, or insulted both mother and children. Schoolmates beat up the oldest son at school. One of the young Neuschäfer children reacted to the racist insults and to hearing “You don’t belong in Germany!” by trying to scrub off the color of his skin in the shower. The parents tried to talk with other adults about the daily racism the family was experiencing, but people were not open to hearing about it. The family eventually went public, seeking support, but it was to no avail. Neighbors, community leaders, local journalists, and even the local church, Neuschäfer’s employer, blamed the family for the trouble they were confronting and denied there was any racism. In the region, the Neuschäfers were accused of painting a negative picture of eastern Germany. Only in the national press were there carefully researched reports on the plight of the family.

Antisemitism in Germany Today

“Here, we have become accustomed to...”



Soccer stadiums in Germany give some indication of the extent of antisemitic attitudes. In December 2005, fans of Energie Cottbus decorated their banner with the yellow badge, used by the Nazis to identify Jews, in order to taunt the opposing team, Dynamo Dresden, with the implication that they are “Jews” and thus inferior. Especially in the lower leagues, many spectators regularly hurl racist, antisemitic, and homophobic slurs at their opponents. Black players are greeted with ape noises and referees called “homo.” Crowds often chant antisemitic phrases: “Dirty Jew, give gas!” or “We’ll build you a subway line, from Chemnitz to Auschwitz.”

Photo: Flickr

In united Germany, antisemitism is a serious problem. Jews are perceived as outsiders, foreigners. Attitude surveys have shown that antisemitism appears in a great variety of guises. There are the traditional stereotypes, like the assumption that Jews are greedy, rich, or that they are guilty of the death of Jesus Christ. Additionally, conspiracy theories about Jewish power are widespread. Polls taken in 2002 and 2004 showed that 40% of those questioned thought that Jews have too much in-

fluence on world affairs. There was also a large incidence of antisemitism “because of Auschwitz”: 68% of respondents said they resented that Germans are still held responsible for the Nazi crimes against Jews. People also drew parallels between Israel and Nazi Germany in order to exonerate themselves from the Nazi crimes. 51% of respondents agreed with the claim that Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is not different from the way the Nazis dealt with Jews. 68% was of the



Jewish institutions have around-the-clock police protection in Germany. Here, a police tank in front of the synagogue on the Oranienburger Street in Berlin. “Here, we have become accustomed to Jewish institutions looking like fortresses...” Heribert Prantl, journalist for the national daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2004. Photo: Leon Kahane

opinion that Israel is carrying out a war of extermination on the Palestinians. “War of extermination” is a phrase often used to refer to the Nazi crimes. In schools in Germany, the phrase “You Jew” is a frequently used insult. Besides insults and other offensive behavior, there are threats. A 6th grade Jewish girl in Berlin found her seat painted over with six “Jewish stars” and the phrase: “only for Jews.” Her desk read: “Death to the shit Jew.” In another example from

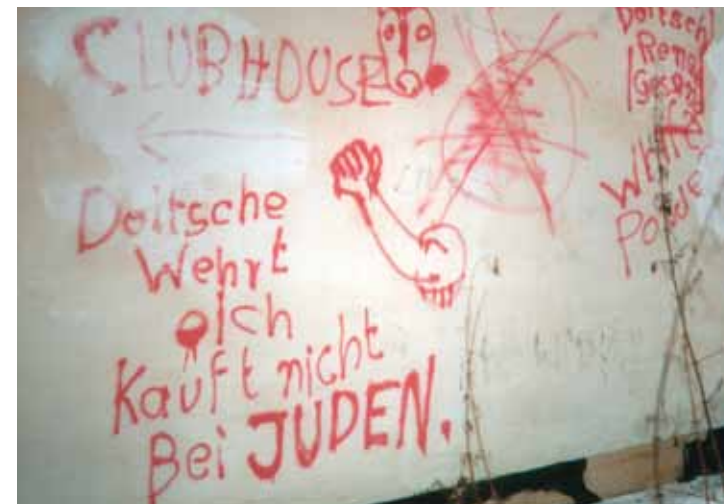
2006 in Berlin, schoolmates taunted, insulted and threatened a Jewish girl with antisemitic slurs over a long period of time. After an incident in which she was chased and injured, police officers eventually escorted her on her way to school. The Jewish student later changed schools to attend the Jewish high school that receives a considerable number of students who confronted antisemitic attitudes in their previous schools.



Banner on a demonstration: USA + Israel = Child Murderer. At so-called “peace” demonstrations, signs at times portray Israel as a child murderer, as in this pro-Palestinian demonstration in Berlin in 2002. This harks back to old anti-Jewish accusations of blood libel. Photo: Ralf Fischer



“Judah Perish, SS.” The Nazis used the phrase “Jude verrecke” [Judah perish]. This anti-Jewish slogan was sighted in the eastern German city of Wurzen shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Photo: Cordia Schlegelmilch



“Germans, protect yourselves. Don’t buy from Jews!” This graffiti echoes Nazi propaganda and was found in 1999 near Zwickau, in Eastern Germany. Photo: Marina Stroisch

Antisemitism in Germany Today

“It seems like they forgot to gas your parents and grandparents!”

Germany has seen an increase in antisemitic violence since 2002. The following examples give an impression of the kinds of attacks people have experienced:

- In April 2002 in Berlin, two men asked a 21 year-old woman if she was Jewish. As she said yes, the men ripped the necklace with a Star of David that she was wearing and hit her on the face. They also hit the woman's mother as she tried to help her daughter.
- In August 2004 in Frankfurt am Main, four men harassed an orthodox Jew, telling him: “It seems like they forgot to gas your parents and grandparents!” and pushed him around until he fell.
- On June 19th, 2007 at a street fair in Hannover, some children and youths insulted a Jewish dance group and threw rocks at the group until the dancers left the stage. One of the youths used a megaphone to say: “Jews, get out.”



The Memorial for the Victims of the Death Marches 1945 in Wöbbelin, in Germany's North East, was heavily damaged in 2002. The heads and arms of the sculptures representing concentration camp inmates during the death marches were removed. On the column, a swastika was painted with the words “Jew” and “lie.” A pig's head was placed on the memorial. The culprits were never found. Restoration was completed in May 2003. Photo: Volker Oesterlin



There are also antisemitic attacks against Jewish cemeteries, synagogues, and memorials that commemorate the Holocaust. Since the 1990s, there has been an average of one cemetery desecration per week. Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said 2001: “We don't even comment any more the almost weekly desecrations of Jewish cemeteries.” The number of desecration increases whenever media reports focus on Holocaust commemoration and history. Jewish institutions and congregations receive more antisemitic calls, e-mails, and letters whenever Israel is in the news. Photo: Ruhr Nachrichten/Maren Volkmann



Graffiti spotted in November 1991 in Halle (former East Germany): “Russians, get out!” and “Gas the Jews.” The district failed to remove the graffiti for nine months. Photo: Marina Stroisch



On the night of October 6th, 2000, unknown persons destroyed several windowpanes of the Synagogue on the Fränkelufer in Berlin. Photo: Christian Ditsch/version-foto

How the Victims of the Nazis Were Treated

"...the whole nation is balking"

The first relief measures for liberated Jewish concentration camp inmates began immediately after the war. In East Germany, these measures led to a welfare law passed in 1949 for people who had been persecuted by the Nazis. The law divided those affected into two categories. When the persecution was thought to have been politically motivated, victims were qualified as "combatants against fascism". Those whose persecution was racially or religiously motivated were deemed "victims of fascism." Those in the first category had a better social standing and usually enjoyed better material provisions. The Western Allies contractually obligated West Germany to compensate individuals for

damages caused by Nazi persecution. West Germany passed a personal indemnification law in 1953. Despite their considerable ideological differences, both German states excluded the same groups of people from receiving restitution. Both countries delayed as much as possible any recognition of the persecution suffered by the Roma. Homosexuals, those who had avoided military conscription and military service, people with disabilities, beggars, homeless persons, people who had been forcibly sterilized and others were not recognized as victims of the Nazis for decades. It was only in the year 2000 that a law was passed to indemnify the millions of foreigners the Nazis used as slave laborers.



In February 2007 in Berlin, a Jewish kindergarten was attacked overnight. They spray-painted swastikas and slogans like "Juden raus" (Jews get out), smashed in a window and threw a smoke bomb into the building, which did not go off. Photo: Jewish kindergarten Berlin



Photo: Ralf Maro/version-foto

The Jewish grocer Dieter T. had expanded his range of products to include kosher goods. He had decorated his Berlin store with Stars of David and an Israeli flag. Shortly thereafter, neo-Nazi youths began to insult him and his clients. A few weeks later, youths with an Arab background took over the taunting. They insulted the customers and spat on the food. In the morning, Dieter T. would often find the store windows sullied with spit and urine. Later on, one store window was smashed; the chances of finding the culprits were very slim. The grocery store lost more and more customers. Neighbors did not offer their solidarity. A little time later, Dieter T. closed his store and left the country.



During Easter 1980, twelve Sinti (German Roma) began a hunger strike at the Church of the Reconciliation on the grounds of the former concentration camp Dachau. They sought the moral rehabilitation of their minority, indemnification for the injustices suffered under the Nazis, and an end to the continuing discrimination they faced in West Germany. The hunger strike drew the attention of European media. A "hardship fund" was established in 1981, but it offered very minimal compensation. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt received a delegation from the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma in 1982 and officially recognized the Nazi crimes perpetrated on the Roma as a genocide. In 1992, the German Federal Government decided to erect a memorial in Berlin to honor the European Roma murdered under the Nazis. As of 2012, the memorial is yet to be completed.

Photo: Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

In 1952, following difficult negotiations, West Germany signed a compensation agreement with Israel and the Conference on Jewish Claims against Germany. East Germany, in contrast, refused to engage in any compensation talks.

In West Germany, the population generally opposed compensation claims and opposed, at times fiercely, the return of Jewish property. The US Military government passed a restitution law in 1947. Owners of property that had been expropriated from Jews organized themselves against any restitution attempts and, frequently invoking antisemitic arguments, portrayed themselves as victims of expropriation. Only in 1957 did West Germany pass a law regulating the return of Jewish property. Still, West German courts and ad-

ministrative departments treated property claims by Jewish victims with utmost recalcitrance – in a number of cases, the same personnel who had overseen the “Aryanization” were now responsible for the return of expropriated Jewish property.

East Germany did not return Jewish property except to a few selected Jewish congregations. With specious arguments that included antisemitic undertones, the governing Socialist Unity Party refused to return property. A few proponents of a modest restitution within the party coalesced around Paul Merker in the years 1952 and 1953 but were politically persecuted and accused of being agents of “Jewish capitalists.” Any return took place after the demise of the East German state.



Photo: BArch, Bild 183-NO214-0316/unknown

Paul Merker (1894-1969), had been a member of the German Communist Party since 1920. From 1946 until 1950 he was a member of the Politburo of the (East) German Unity Party. He was one of the few party members who favored a return of expropriated Jewish property. For this reason, the party’s executive committee accused him publicly of acting as an agent of “monopoly capitalism” and as an “enemy of his own nation.” He was imprisoned and sentenced to eight years in jail because of his “Zionist tendencies.” During the process of de-Stalinization, Merker was released from prison in 1956 but was never politically rehabilitated.



West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (3rd from right) and Moshe Sharett, Israel’s Foreign Minister (3rd from left) signing the Reparations Agreement between Israel and West Germany. Only 11% of the West German population supported the agreement without objections, 44% of the population thought it was unnecessary. The agreement could only be ratified in the West German Parliament with the support of the opposition Social Democratic Party. Members of the governing coalition, including Adenauer’s Finance Minister, refused to vote for it. Franz Böhm, the Christian Democratic leader of the West German delegation threatened to step down because of the harsh opposition he faced at home, complaining: “What are we to do if the whole nation is balking?”
Photo: Bundesbildstelle

How Society Dealt with Nazi Perpetrators and Crimes

“Yearning for normality”

After defeating Germany, the Allied Powers put Nazi perpetrators on trial and began denazification, the process of removing former Nazis from positions of influence.

In East Germany, denazification was swift; the new regime established itself by occupying all the important posts. At the same time, the governing party rewarded the “small people” who had been, in their rhetoric, “seduced by the Nazis.” If they joined the effort to establish socialism, their tainted past was forgotten. Publicly, the nation presented itself and its citizens as inheritors of the Communist resistance to the Nazis. Commemorations emphasized the role and suffering of left-wing political opponents and generally portrayed “the German people” as having been oppressed by the Nazis. Denying the centrality of antisemitism was one way to downplay the complicity of most of the German population with Nazi anti-Jewish policy.

In the West, denazification was soon halted because of the need for qualified personnel and the growing unwillingness of Germans to go along with it. The majority of Nazi functionaries were integrated into the democratic system. The first postwar decade saw little public discussion of Nazi crimes: more common were complaints about the hardships suffered by Germans (implicitly: non-Jewish Germans). Starting at the end of the 1950s, however, the number of trials against Nazi perpetrators increased and critical public discussion of society’s Nazi past gained momentum. A number of scandals ensued, some of which led to the resignation of federal ministers because of their Nazi involvement. Still, it seemed easier to establish reminders of the suffering caused by the Nazis than to speak about the perpetrators: the first memorials invoked human tragedy, but most remained mute or vague as to who had been

responsible for the suffering. Starting in the late 1970s, the Nazis’ Jewish victims received increasing attention. Despite earlier efforts, two institutions that focus on the perpetrators were established only in the 1990s: the Memorial House of the Wannsee Conference, where the implementation of the mass murder of the Jews was coordinated, and the Topography of Terror, the former headquarters of the SS and the Gestapo.

The extent of the German confrontation with the Nazi crimes has led some to speak of Germany as a “world champion” in facing a shameful past. However, the current situation is the result of years of heated controversy and is more complex than its best-known examples would make it seem. A public willingness to face up to society’s crimes is often at odds with a widespread “yearning for normality” and a private refusal to admit, for example, one’s own family’s possible or actual involvement in the society that enabled the Holocaust.

Particularly problematic are enduring tendencies to depict the Nazis as a tiny minority clearly separate and distinct from the majority population and to emphasize German victimhood. In some cases, Germans see themselves as victims of their shameful history, which supposedly deprives them of a “normal” sense of national pride that, by this logic, should be rightfully theirs. A further, complexly problematic legacy is that Germans continue to be imagined as a homogeneous ethnic group. Such an ethnic imagination excludes from society people who live in Germany and are likely German citizens but are permanently addressed as not belonging, be it because they are Jewish or Muslim, or have ancestors who are not ethnic German or because they are not white.



Lawyer Hans Globke (1898-1973) worked as Senior Legal Advisor in the Ministry of the Interior during the Nazi period and was involved in drafting numerous antisemitic laws. Together with his immediate superior, State Secretary Wilhelm Stuckart, he wrote the first legal commentary to the Nuremberg Racial Laws in 1936. In 1953, Globke (left) became State Secretary and Head of the German Chancellery, which made him one of West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer’s (right) closest advisors. Although criticism of Globke’s Nazi past intensified at the end of the 1950s, he only left his position at the end of Adenauer’s term in office in 1963. Photo: Bundesbildstelle/Egon Steiner



In his “scientific” writings and, after 1937, as a secret agent of the German army (the Wehrmacht), agronomist Theodor Oberländer (1905-1998) had proven himself a zealous proponent of the superiority of the German race, the Germanization of Eastern Europe and the “elimination of Judaism.” In 1953 Oberländer became West German Federal Minister for Displaced Persons, Refugees and War Victims in Adenauer’s cabinet. Growing criticism of Oberländer because of his Nazi past included several demonstrations, such as one on November 12, 1959 in West Berlin, during which hundreds of protesters demanded that Oberländer leave West Berlin immediately. The criticism led to his resignation in 1960. His successor, Hans Krüger, was forced to resign in 1963 because of his Nazi past: he had participated in Hitler’s attempted coup in 1923 and had been involved in several death sentences passed by special Nazi courts. Photo: BArch, 183-68855-0001/Drowski



The “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” large and centrally located in Berlin, has become a major tourist attraction since its inauguration in 2005. This memorial is internationally recognized as a symbol of German society’s earnest confrontation with the Nazi crimes. Photo: Jakob Huber

Right-Wing Extremism since 1945

“The battle for the streets, the minds, and the parliaments”

In West Germany, there were attempts to rebuild Nazi organizations underground already a short time after the War ended. There were also attempts to infiltrate democratic parties. Other extreme right-wingers, like the German Party, which was in all governing coalitions until 1957, sought to connect to supposedly unencumbered ultra right traditions dating back to the age of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic.

The Socialist Reich Party, which placed itself in the tradition of the Third Reich, was founded as soon as Allied political control ended in 1949. It was elected into a number of state parliaments until it was banned in

1952. Since then, there have been ultra-right parties in one or several state parliaments every single decade.

Until the mid 1970s, it was primarily former members of the Nazi party that convened in ultra-right parties. Their main goals were to downplay the crimes and glorify the achievements of the Nazi era and to fight against the stationing of Allied troops in Germany. This changed in the 1980s: the right-wing extremist movement became younger, more militant, and more up-to-date. The neo-Nazis started recruiting members from youth scenes such as soccer fans and skinheads. Beyond party conventions and election cam-



A group of “national socialists” killed nine immigrants and one non-immigrant policewoman between 1999 and 2010. There was significant evidence pointing to the existence of this “national socialist underground,” as the group called itself, but police departments and the secret services simply ignored the evidence. Instead, the police investigators repeatedly insinuated that the victims had been involved with some “foreign” mafia. On 9 June 2004, the group detonated a bomb filled with nails on the Keup Street in Cologne. The street is a busy part of the city where many immigrants live. The bomb injured 22 people, some of them very seriously. Photo: dpa - Fotoreport



In the first decade of the 21st century, more and more neo-Nazis have started families, giving their children a racist and antisemitic upbringing. Whereas in the 1990s right wing extremism was often connected to youth scenes in the form of skinhead culture, nowadays it is not easy to identify neo-Nazis. They nevertheless propagate their ideology, for instance, as neighbors, as parents in pre-school groups, or as social workers. Also in the 21st century, the number of women active in the neo-Nazi scene has been growing

Photo: Recherche Nord

paingning, the right-wing extremists resorted to provocative events, demonstrations, concerts, ideological training, and violence against left-wingers, gays and lesbians, Jews, and immigrants.

An independent neo-Nazi scene also arose in East Germany in the 1980s. Because of their embrace of authoritarianism, right-wing extremists seemed to fit in. Thus, authorities were at a loss as to how to react to the scene or simply ignored these developments.

With German unification came a strong upsurge in right-wing extremism in East and West. Militant ultra-rightists tried to profit from the transition. In the 90s the NPD, Germany's leading far-right party, began a "battle for the streets, the minds, and the parliaments." Besides gaining recognition through getting elected into state parlia-

ments, groups of extreme right "comrades" set about establishing "national liberated zones." In such "zones," neo-Nazis threaten and attack people they reject. Particularly in some parts of former East Germany, neo-Nazis are a regular part of society and they recruit through sport clubs, fire departments, driving schools and more. They are using Internet social networks more and more. They often do not show themselves as violent neo-Nazis but talk about issues of concern to conservatives. With a talk of "good neighbors" and "the national family," they reach out to the general public. Meanwhile, they continue to terrorize and murder political opponents, homeless people, and members of minorities.



Vigil for Algerian refugee Farid Geuendoul, who went by the name of Omar. Right-wing youths chased him to his death in Guben on the night of 13 April 1999. As he fled from the youngsters, he tried to enter a building. Since no one would open the glass door for him, he tried to run through it, injuring himself badly. The youths and neighbors left him to bleed to death. At least 180 people have been killed in hate crimes since 1990.

Photo:

Christian Ditsch/version-foto

One resident of the housing for contract workers reports about the racist riots in Hoyerswerda in 1991: "Neighbors always gathered at 2 PM. Two hours later the skinheads joined them. They were drunk and making a racket. This went on for four days. The neighbors cheered them on. And they beat up girls who had been to see us. Even earlier they used to call out: 'Nigger, go back to the bush!'"

Photo: © www.bettinaflitner.de



Hitler's deputy Rudolf Hess, who received a life sentence at the Nuremberg Trials, was acclaimed as a "martyr" while he was still alive. Since his death, neo-Nazis of all sorts hold parades in Wunsiedel in Bavaria, where he lies buried. With such actions, neo-Nazis seek to show their strength, to intimidate their opponents, and hope to get their message across.

Photo: Marek Peters

Right-Wing Extremism since 1945

“We should have a Führer again”

Right-wing extremism is dangerous and has lethal consequences. At least 180 people have been killed in hate crimes since 1990. Even though right-wing extremists are a very small group in terms of political parties, their hateful message has an impact. This is a fact that mainstream society prefers to ignore.

Extreme right-wing ideas are much more common than one would think from looking at voting patterns. In the early 1980s researchers found clearly extreme right-wing attitudes in 13 percent of West Germans polled. The title of the study published in 1981 put this succinctly: “Five million Germans say: ‘We should have a Führer again...’”

For unified Germany, the same percentage applied twenty years later: 13 percent had “extreme right-wing attitudes” in 1998. In 2010, 23.6% were in favor of a one-party system, 13% wanted to have a “Führer”, and 10% thought that National Socialism had had its good sides too.

Right-wing extremists are interested in the politics of history. Because they want to establish a system similar to that of the Nazis, they are interested in denying, minimizing, or justifying the crimes of the Nazis. From the start, at the center of these efforts has been the denial of the historical facts of the Holocaust. With pseudoscientific arguments



A march by members of the Action Front of National Socialists with signs with donkey masks and signs reading “I am an ass and believe...” in Hamburg on 20 May 1978. Denying the Holocaust and calling it a “Jewish lie” is part of the standard strategy of German neo-Nazis. Holocaust denial is a crime in Germany. In 2010, 60 people faced sentencing for Holocaust denial, but only two of them were given prison terms. Photo: Alwin Meyer

they tried to cast doubt on the method of killing and on the number of victims. Only right-wing extremists engage in outright Holocaust denial, and they do so without much public approval. But many Germans express a longing to feel proud of Germany and its history. 61% of those polled said that they were tired of hearing about the German crimes against Jews again and again. Another strategy is to speak of genocides perpetrated by other nations in order to make

the crimes of the Nazis seem “normal” and thus to be able to promote a positive view of German history. Right-wing extremists protest consistently against depictions that show that German society as a whole was involved in the murderous actions of the Nazis and not just a small group. Many people find this knowledge uncomfortable because it raises questions about what their grandparents and great-grandparents did in the Nazi era.



Neo-Nazi demonstration in Dresden in 2005 commemorating the Allied bombing of Dresden. Even today, many in Germany regard the “Allied bombing war” as a war crime. Not only right-wing extremists equate the bombing of Dresden to the Holocaust.



Noël Martin grew up in Jamaica and England, where he established a successful handicraft enterprise. Business also brought him to Germany. On 16 June 1996, neo-Nazis attacked him in the East German town of Mablów, where he was working, leaving him paralyzed. He now dedicates himself to working against racism and has established the Noël- and Jacqueline-Martin-Foundation.

Photo: Loeper Literaturverlag



Neo-Nazi demonstration against an exhibition showing, for the first time to the public at large, the participation of regular German soldiers in genocide. Some conservatives joined in the protest. The exhibition was attacked with explosives in 1999. Photo: Apabiz



In the 21st century, the number of women in the neo-Nazi scene has been growing. They are active as campaigners and street-fighters, musicians, mothers involved in child-care institutions, in the social professions, or on the Internet. Photo : Recherche Nord

Civil Society

“Things only changed very, very slowly...”

Nationalist tendencies increased in wide segments of the population nationwide with the demise of East Germany and unification. Immigrants were the first to feel this: even those who had lived in Germany for over 30 years were treated increasingly as “foreigners,” “strangers” and stigmatized for “not belonging.” Profiting from the surge in nationalist discourses, neo-Nazi groups gained new adherents, particularly in the former East. The former East Germany experienced a much higher rate of neo-Nazi crimes. Before unification, both German states had seen neo-Nazi activities, but in West Germany, civil society reacted more strongly against

such developments. In the West, a process of democratization gained momentum in the 1960s, when numerous civic initiatives and citizens’ associations were created and a public debate culture ensued that focused in part on discussions about Nazi crimes. There was no comparable development in East Germany. Politicians, law-enforcement agencies, and journalists were slow to realize that there was a significant problem of racism and right-wing extremism in the former East Germany from 1990 on. Neo-Nazis were often active members of fire departments. It was necessary to recognize and deal with the problem of



In 2012, Amadeu Antonio (above) would have turned 50 years old. Twenty years after local white youths murdered him, an NGO (left) is seeking to name a street after him as a sign that the town is confronting its history. It is unclear whether the town council will approve this initiative. Photo: MOZ/Sergej Scheibe

racism and right-wing extremism in order to ensure the safety of all inhabitants, including immigrants. People were hesitant to organize themselves in political groups; an active democratic culture emerged only very gradually. The town of Eberswalde in the state of Brandenburg, north of Berlin, is a good example of these developments. On the evening of 24th November 1990, a group of local white youths carrying baseball bats went through the town looking to “beat up some Blacks.” They found Amadeu Antonio, a Black man from Angola who had been living there as a contract worker since 1987. They beat him until he fell into a coma while two other Black men managed to escape the attack. Amadeu Antonio died from the beating on December 6th. There were reports about the murder in the national media, but the local press downplayed the incident. The town’s mayor and other town representatives did not take the problem of racism seriously, pretending it was not an issue. Neo-Nazis threatened or attacked immigrants living in Eberswalde on a daily basis, but only a very small group of activists sought to support the immigrants. The situation changed only bit by bit. The state of Brandenburg created a program to promote tolerance in 1998. Churchgoers, activists from the former East-German demo-

cracy movement, environmentalists, and those engaged in cultural work formed a network against right-wing extremism. Also in 1998, the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, a private NGO operating at national level, was founded to promote a bias-free democratic culture and to fight right-wing extremism. The Amadeu Antonio Foundation was very active in Eberswalde, for example: it organized publicity events such as hip-hop concerts to raise awareness about neo-Nazi violence, trained educators to confront racism and antisemitism, and helped establish a community foundation dedicated to promoting democratic conflict resolution. All these activities contributed to a shift in the atmosphere of the town. Today, there are neo-Nazis in Eberswalde, but they do not set the tone. There are people who actively oppose neo-Nazi violence.

Much like in Eberswalde there has been a process of democratization in many places in the former East Germany. Grass roots organizations and a more active, democratically oriented civil society that takes on responsibility for the community have developed. Work against antisemitism, racism, and right-wing extremism remains necessary in the former West as well.



A concert as part of the campaign “Stand Up Against Right-Wing Violence.”

State Action

“an uprising of people of decency...”



After an arson attack on a synagogue in Düsseldorf, the then German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called for “an uprising of people of decency...” On November 9th, 2000, a demonstration in Berlin brought together around two hundred thousand people. Politicians led the demonstration that took place under the slogan “We are standing up for kindness and tolerance.”

Photo: ullstein bild – CARO/Marc Meyerbroeker

Because of its Nazi past, the German state considers it an obligation to support civic education generally and the work against right-wing extremism in particular. Politicians often acknowledge the country’s responsibility to confront anti-democratic tendencies. Thus German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called for an “uprising of people of decency” in 2000 in response to an arson attack on a synagogue in Düsseldorf. Shortly thereafter, some parliamentarians began considering the creation of a federal program against right-wing extremism. In 2008, the German parliament approved unanimously a declaration calling for renewed efforts to combat antisemitism.

In the early 1990s, the federal government funded smaller publicity campaigns to raise consciousness about the problem of right-wing extremism. In the new federal states (the former East Germany), police officers and teachers received training aimed at helping them to recognize racism and neo-Nazis and to become more proactive in taking on the task of protecting persons who become victims of hate crimes. Starting in 1996, state-wide prevention programs were created with federal funding. In the beginning the work focused on “violence and aggression” among “youths with an extreme right-wing orientation.” From 2000 on, the focus has been on projects promoting a (more) democratic

civic society. At the behest of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, a federal program provided funds for the establishment of counseling centers for victims of hate crimes. In 2010, the new governing coalition shifted the focus of funding. Besides funding to fight right-wing extremism, money is being provided to combat left-wing extremism and Islamism. There have been repeated attempts to cut the funding for projects against right-wing extremism. However, right-wing extremism remains a grave threat to Germany's

democratic culture. This became clear once again in 2011, for instance, when the activities of a right-wing terrorist group became publicly known that had systematically murdered immigrants for over a decade without detection. Currently, programs administered through the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth as well as the Federal Ministry of the Interior provide 42 million Euros in funding for work against right-wing extremism.

Bibliographical References for the Exhibition

The following list contains bibliographical information for citations that are not included in the exhibition panels reprinted above.

p. 16

In 2010 official estimates counted 25,000 right-wing extremists in an overall population of nearly 82 million people.

Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, "Rechtsextremistisches Personenpotenzial," http://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/arbeitsfelder/af_rechtsextremismus/zahlen_und_fakten_2010/zuf_re_gesamtuebersicht_2010.html (accessed July 24, 2012).

Antisemitism in West Germany

p. 18-19

In an address to the parliament Carlo Schmid, then Vice President of the Bundestag, reflected on the need to confront antisemitism: "Here there is a task for all of us..." ["Hier liegt für uns alle eine Aufgabe..."]

"Daß die Gespenster weichen...: Carlo Schmid's Erklärung vor dem Bundestag." Zeit Online, <http://www.zeit.de/1960/04/dass-die-gespenster-weichen> (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 19

By the end of the 1980s, only 5% of the West German population was blatantly and over 15% considerably antisemitic.

Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, *Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Ergebnisse der empirischen Forschung von 1946-1989* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1991), 60-61.

p. 19

From now on, the younger generations proved to be the least antisemitic.

Werner Bergmann, *Antisemitismus in öffentlichen Konflikten: Kollektives Lernen in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik 1949-1989* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1997), 476.

p. 19

In 1990 two thirds of the population was of the opinion that it was time to put the Nazi past behind "once and for all" ["Schlußstrich"] and that one should not "talk so much about the Nazi past." ["nicht mehr so viel über die NS-Vergangenheit reden"] 21% believed that Jews bore "partial responsibility for the hatred and the persecution they had suffered" ["Mitschuld der Juden an Hass und Verfolgung"], and almost half of the population was of the opinion that "many Jews seek to take advantage of the past, forcing the Germans to pay for it." ["viele Juden versuchen, aus der Vergangenheit einen Vorteil zu ziehen und die Deutschen dafür zahlen zu lassen"]

Werner Bergmann, "Der Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in *Der Antisemitismus der Gegenwart*, ed. Herbert A. Strauss, Werner Bergmann, and Christhard Hoffmann, 155/159 (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1990).

Antisemitism in East Germany

p. 21

“All Jews in the Soviet zone fear a repeat of the pogroms of 1938.” [“Alle Juden in der Sowjetzone befürchten eine Wiederholung der Pogrome von 1938.”] Thus spoke Julius Meyer to the press after fleeing to West Berlin in January 1953 as an antisemitic campaign was spreading throughout Eastern Europe.

Neue Zeitung. “Moskauer Antizionismus in der DDR: Interview mit geflüchtetem Leiter der Jüdischen Gemeinde der Sowjetzone.” January 24 1953.

p. 21

Jewish survivors of the camps who had received help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee were accused of espionage for “US imperialism” (1) and of damaging “German national wealth” (2) in connection with restitution claims on stolen property.

1) “Als Vorwand für Bespitzelungen, Verhöre und Verhaftungsdrohungen habe dem SED-Zentralkomitee die Verbindung jüdischer Gemeindemitglieder zu der als “amerikanische Agentenzentrale“ verschrienen jüdischen Hilfsorganisation “American Joint Distribution Committee“ gedient [...]“

Neue Zeitung. “Moskauer Antizionismus in der DDR: Interview mit geflüchtetem Leiter der Jüdischen Gemeinde der Sowjetzone.” January 24 1953.

2) “Preisgabe deutschen Volksvermögens“

Zentralkomitee der SED. “Beschluß ‘Lehren aus dem Prozess gegen das Verschwörerzentrum Slánský“ in Dokumente der SED, vol. 4 (Berlin, 1954), 208.

p. 22

It cooperated with the PLO in what it called a “common struggle against imperialism and Zionism.” [“im gemeinsamen Kampf gegen Imperialismus und Zionismus“]

Vereinbarung zwischen der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands und der Palästinensischen Befreiungsorganisation für die Jahre 1973/74. Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), MfS HA II Nr. 18652.

p. 22

East Germany provided military technology to the Palestinian terrorist groups and supported terrorists like Abu Daoud and Abu Nidal through logistical assistance (1), safe passage (2), and medical care (3).

1) The Abu Nidal group received three months of military training in the GDR in 1985.

Vermerk zu den stattgefundenen Lehrgängen mit der ‚Händler‘-Organisation auf dem Territorium der DDR. BStU, XV 36 90/82 “Händler“ 7116/91.

2) Abu Daoud enjoyed eased visa regulations, at times even a diplomatic visa.

BStU, MfS HA XXII Nr. 18613

3) After having survived an assassination attempt in Warsaw, Abu Daoud was brought to East Berlin for further medical treatment.

Telegram, August 12, 1981. BStU, MfS Abt. X 204.

Racism in West Germany

p. 24

“It seems the Germans did not forget the race theories of the National Socialists.”

Yara-Colette Lemke Muniz de Faria, *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung: Afrodeutsche „Besatzungskinder“ im Nachkriegsdeutschland* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2002), 36.

p. 24

The film intended to “promote in a humorous way understanding and love for all Toxis” [“warb humorvoll um Verständnis und Liebe für alle Toxis“]

Rosemarie K. Lester, *Trivialneger: Das Bild des Schwarzen im westdeutschen Illustriertenroman* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Heinz, 1982) 100.

Racism in East Germany

p. 27

“In the GDR we remained forever alien.” [“In der DDR sind wir immer fremd geblieben.”]

This statement was made at an event in Berlin commemorating the racist pogroms in Hoyerswerda 1991 “20 years later: Hoyerswerda revisited,” August 13, 2011.

Racism in United Germany

p. 29

Germany’s largest-circulation newspaper, BILD, ran a series of articles in September 1991 with the title: “Asylum seekers in Berlin! Who should pay for all this? And what happens next?” [“Asylanten in Berlin. Wer soll das bezahlen? Wie geht es weiter?“] (The series was part of nationwide media campaign: the name of the respective city of publication was inserted where here we read “Berlin”)

Margarete Jäger, “BrandSätze und SchlagZeilen: Rassismus in den Medien,“ in *Entstehung von Fremdenfeindlichkeit: die Verantwortung von Politik und Medien. Eine Tagung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung am 22. und 23. März 1993 in Potsdam*, ed. Forschungsinstitut der FES, 83 (Bonn: Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1993)

p. 30

At that time, very few refugees were being granted asylum since the criteria for admittance were practically impossible to fulfill (4.2% of applicants were granted asylum in 1992, 3.2% in 1993).

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, “Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl,“ http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/statistik-anlage-teil-4-aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl.pdf?__blob=publicationFile,10 (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 31

May Ayim: “At first I was happy. At the same time, there was a very odd atmosphere. For the first time I had really negative experiences in Berlin. To be abused in the streets, to hear strange things, to hear them from friends, too. Or to be told about experiences, by a friend of mine who is from Ghana: his little ten year old brother was pushed out of the subway, so there was room for a white German. I had the feeling, that suddenly people dared to say things they only would think before.“

Hoffnung im Herzen: Mündliche Poesie - May Ayim, DVD, directed by Maria Binder (1997).

p. 32

Polls from the last few years show: over 80% of Germans are proud to be German.

“83 Prozent sind stolz darauf, Deutsche zu sein.“ WELT online, <http://www.welt.de/politik/article3696088/83-Prozent-sind-stolz-darauf-Deutsche-zu-sein.html> (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 32

In 2010, more than 13% of Germans thought that Germans were “naturally” superior to all other people, 22% agreed partially with this view.

Oliver Decker, Marliese Weißmann, Johannes Kies, and Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010*, ed. Nora Langenbacher, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin (Bonn: Brandt GmbH Druckerei und Verlag, 2010), 73.

p. 32

Studies have shown that this kind of heightened sense of national pride corresponds to a more tenuous commitment to democratic values.

Julia Becker, Ulrich Wagner, and Oliver Christ, “Nationalismus und Patriotismus als Ursache von Fremdenfeindlichkeit.“ In *Deutsche Zustände 5*, ed. Wilhelm Heitmeyer, 131-149. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007.

p. 32

Almost half of all Germans believe that there are too many “foreigners” living in Germany. In representative polls, close to a third of respondents agree with the idea that immigrants only come to Germany to abuse the welfare state.

Oliver Decker, Marliese Weißmann, Johannes Kies, and Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010*, ed. Nora Langenbacher, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin (Bonn: Brandt GmbH Druckerei und Verlag, 2010), 78.

p. 32

And there is a growing fear in mainstream society of being “overrun by foreigners,” a fear that does not correspond to the actual number of “foreigners” living in Germany.

Oliver Decker, Marliese Weißmann, Johannes Kies, and Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010*, ed. Nora Langenbacher, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin (Bonn: Brandt GmbH Druckerei und Verlag, 2010), 74.

p. 33

“We don’t want you to be like us, but you must not be different.”

Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) 240.

Antisemitism in Germany Today

p. 35

Polls taken in 2002 and 2004 showed that 40% of those questioned thought that Jews have too much influence on world affairs.

“German attitudes toward Jews, the Holocaust and the US,” American Jewish Committee, <http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nl/content3.asp?c=ijIT12PHKoG&b=846741&ct=1032137> (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 35

There was also a large incidence of antisemitism “because of Auschwitz”: 68% of respondents said they resented that Germans are still held responsible for the Nazi crimes against Jews. People also drew parallels between Israel and Nazi Germany in order to exonerate themselves

from the Nazi crimes. 51% of respondents agreed with the claim that Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is not different from the way the Nazis dealt with Jews. 68% was of the opinion that Israel is carrying out a war of extermination on the Palestinians.

Aribert Heyder, Julia Iser, and Peter Schmidt, “Israelkritik oder Antisemitismus? Meinungsbildung zwischen Öffentlichkeit, Medien und Tabus,” in *Deutsche Zustände 3*, ed. Wilhelm Heitmeyer, 151 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

p. 39

Paul Spiegel, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said 2001: “We don’t even comment any more the almost weekly desecrations of Jewish cemeteries.” [“Wir kommentieren die fast wöchentlichen Schändungen schon gar nicht mehr.”]

Paul Spiegel, konkret, October 2001, 11.

How the Victims of the Nazis Were Treated

p. 43

Franz Böhm, the Christian Democratic leader of the West German delegation threatened to step down because of the harsh opposition he faced at home, complaining: “What are we to do if the whole nation is balking?” [“Was soll man tun, wenn ein ganzes Volk bockt?“]

Constantin Goschler, *Schuld und Schulden: Die Politik der Wiedergutmachung für NS-Verfolgte seit 1945* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 134.

How Society Dealt with Nazi Perpetrators and Crimes

p. 44

A public willingness to face up to society’s crimes is often at odds with a widespread “yearning for normality.”

Günther Hoffmann, “Sehnsucht nach Normalität,” *Zeit Online*, <http://www.zeit.de/1986/10/sehnsucht-nach-normalitaet> (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 44

The extent of the German confrontation with the Nazi crimes has led some to speak of Germany as a “world champion” in facing a shameful past.

The [Hungarian author and] peace prize laureate Peter Esterházy called the Germans ‘world champions of coming to terms with their past.’ [“Der Friedenspreisträger Peter Esterházy nannte die Deutschen ‘Weltmeister der Vergangenheitsbewältigung.’“]

Elena Stepanova, *Den Krieg beschreiben: Der Vernichtungskrieg im Osten in deutscher und russischer Gegenwartsprosa* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 17.

Right-Wing Extremism in Germany since 1945

p. 48

In the 90s the NPD, Germany’s leading far-right party, began a “battle for the streets, the minds, and the parliaments.” [“Kampf um die Straße, Kampf um die Köpfe, Kampf um die Parlamente“]

“NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) und JN (Junge Nationaldemokraten),“ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/41938/glossar?p=59> (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 49

“Neighbors always gathered at 2 PM. Two hours later the skinheads joined them. They were drunk and making a racket. This went on for four days. The neighbors cheered them on. And they beat up girls who had been to see us. Even earlier they used to call out: ‘Nigger, go back to the bush!’” [“Immer um 14 Uhr versammelten sich die Nachbarn. Zwei Stunden später kamen die Skinheads dazu. Voll mit Schnaps und haben Krawall gemacht. Vier Tage lang. Die Nachbarn haben applaudiert. Und die Mädchen, die bei uns waren, sind zusammengeschlagen worden. Schon früher haben sie uns zugerufen: ‚Neger, geh’ zurück in deinen Busch!‘“] “Nachbarn,” Works Flitner, http://www.bettinaflitner.de/essays_nachbarn_1.html (accessed July 24, 2012).

p. 50

The title of the study published in 1981 put this succinctly: “Five million Germans say: ‘We should have a Führer again...’” Martin Greiffenhagen, 5 Millionen Deutsche: „Wir sollten wieder einen Führer haben...“ Die SINUS-Studie über rechtsextremistische Einstellungen bei den Deutschen (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1981).

p. 50

For unified Germany, the same percentage applied twenty years later: 13 percent had “extreme right-wing attitudes” in 1998. In 2010, 23.6% were in favor of a one-party system, 13% wanted to have a “Führer”, and 10% thought that National Socialism had had its good sides too. Oliver Decker, Marliese Weißmann, Johannes Kies, and Elmar Brähler, Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010, ed. Nora Langenbacher, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Forum Berlin (Bonn: Brandt GmbH Druckerei und Verlag, 2010), 73-74.

p. 51

61% of those polled said that they were tired of hearing about the German crimes against Jews again and again. Aribert Heyder, Julia Iser, and Peter Schmidt, “Israelkritik oder Antisemitismus? Meinungsbildung zwischen Öffentlichkeit, Medien und Tabus,” in Deutsche Zustände 3, ed. Wilhelm Heitmeyer, 151 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).

State Action

p. 55

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder called for “an uprising of people of decency...” [“Wegschauen ist nicht mehr erlaubt. Wir brauchen einen Aufstand der Anständigen.”] taz. “Aufstand der Anständigen.” October 4, 2000.

Who we are

The Amadeu Antonio Foundation is an independent non-governmental organization founded in 1998 with the goal of strengthening a democratic civic society that actively takes a stand against neo-Nazism, racism, antisemitism, and all other forms of bigotry and hatred in Germany. To achieve this goal, the Foundation funds local projects and campaigns in civic education, structures of support for victims of racist violence, alternative youth cultures, and community networks. The most important task of the Foundation is to go beyond grant making in order to encourage projects to intensify their local work and to build networks and coalitions with other initiatives. In addition, the Foundation runs its own projects when it comes to drawing attention to neglected but important issues such as women in the neo-Nazi scene or the continuing effects of the different ways in which the Nazi past and the Holocaust were remembered in the two German states. The Foundation also initiates projects in order to set the tone for differentiated, informed discussion of thorny issues, particularly in situations where different forms of bigotry come into interplay such as the issue of antisemitism among young immigrants who face racism and discrimination in Germany in general.



EVERY YEAR the Amadeu Antonio Foundation...

- funds around 60 projects and initiatives against neo-Nazi activities with an average of 100,000 Euros from donations and revenues;
- gives financial support to at least 25 victims of racist violence to help them cope with the practical and psychic consequences of the attack;
- helps around 50 people to leave the neo-Nazi scene through the EXIT program;
- encourages projects on the Internet to create networks against neo-Nazi ideology and to draw attention to the Nazi activities online;
- runs its own projects on “gender and the prevention of right-wing extremism” in order to counteract the public’s negligence on the role of women in the scene;
- organizes several concerts and public events with celebrities to create awareness of the dangers of neo-Nazi violence;
- carries out a country-wide awareness campaign about historic and contemporary antisemitism;
- advises several schools and municipalities about standing up to neo-Nazi movements and implementing anti-bias and human rights’ agreements;
- constantly monitors the activities of the far right and informs the public about their strategies;
- organizes meetings for Community Foundations all over Germany in order to promote civic empowerment and a democratic culture.

Your donation helps support the work of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation!

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www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng

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This portable exhibition is available on loan. You are invited to show the exhibition at your institution or community: the German example provides a good starting point for discussions about confronting social prejudice and hatred in the past and the present.

The exhibit consists of eight double-sided presentation boards (each 22 in x 37 in) and an exhibition system that is light and easy to set up. It comes in two cases (each 47 in x 28 in x 8 in, 40 lb.) and requires around 130 sq ft of exhibition space. For additional material, support concerning programs accompanying the exhibition or to arrange to borrow it, please contact:

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Cover photo: Chawa Kahane

Protest against a neo-Nazi demonstration following commemorative events on occasion of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe on May 8, 2005.