

Summaries

Astrid Messerschmidt: Remembering Colonial Experience in a Society related to the Holocaust – Criticizing Racism and Anti-Semitism. Discussing the consequences of colonialism in a society related to the Holocaust requires an analysis of and a distinction between racism and anti-semitism. This article reflects upon how the different histories of colonialism and National Socialism (NS) affect the social practice of discrimination and dominance in the German society. Acknowledging this fact necessitates the remembrance of colonial history and NS while at the same time by criticizing their repercussions in the present-day. Aspects of this two-sided perspective of remembrance related to the colonial and the NS experiences are developed.

Knut Rauchfuss: „The Tragedy starts, after the Crimes have ended“. A Culture of Impunity impedes the Rehabilitation of Severe Human Rights Violations Survivors. Reports from different countries and conflicts demonstrate that impunity is one of the key obstacles for stabilization and rehabilitation of severe human rights violations survivors. Impunity is not only the absence of legal justice but a social phenomenon, which includes incomplete truth finding, missing integral reparation, a lack of structural reforms, as well as the inability to overcome the legal protection of perpetrators assured by impunity laws. In this context survivors are hardly able to achieve the necessary integration of their traumatic experiences into their own biography, to accomplish the restoration of their destroyed life scripts and the rebuild self-confidence and self-determination. Mental health problems resulting from traumatic experiences can persist or be activated any time by certain daily events even years later. In particular, family members of the forcibly disappeared suffer from an incomplete mourning due to the uncertain fate of their loved ones. The ongoing search for the disappeared in an atmosphere of impunity places family members at high risk for retraumatization. Due to the global character of impunity there is expected to be only little evidence for the positive impact of justice on mental health. Nevertheless, such evidence does exist, showing that impunity not only creates a strong barrier to a sustainable recovery, but it prolongs and deepens the traumatic experience.

Anika Oettler: States Dealing with Mass Violence: Transnational Perspectives. During the past several decades, truth commissions and other instruments of „transitional justice“ have risen to prominence. Currently, the business of „dealing with the past“ is booming. This article explores the history of both, the creation and appliance of „past-beating-techniques“. While the 1990s were characterized by a certain euphoria that surrounded truth commissions, the 2000s saw a significant shift towards prosecution as well as the appliance of a diverse set of instruments. This paper focuses on the development of transnational norm-building networks that tend to be more and more institutionalized. Moreover, it shows the necessity of rethinking the debate on „transitional justice“: the debate should take into account that the emergence of powerful nodes within the network structure implies the concentration of resources and discursive power.

Nora Sausmikat: Escape from Remembering – The Biographical Shadows of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Since the birth of oral history research and biography research discussions on the epistemological value of these data sources has taken place. This paper discusses the knowledge, which could arise from the detailed analysis of autobiographical narratives. It will be shown how the memories of women who belong to the highly stereotyped and stigmatized generation of the so-called Zhiqing-Generation are influenced by different parameters like public discourse, individual sense-making („Sinnstiftung“), their different status and „class background“ during the Cultural Revolution and identity formation. Further, it will discuss whether the different ways of remembering the Cultural Revolution are proof that there is no „master story“ of the Cultural Revolution and instead will highlight what are the driving forces for the different types of stories.

Susanne Buckley-Zistel: Chosen Amnesia. The Social Dimensions of Remembering and Forgetting after the Genocide in Rwanda. Over a decade after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, local communities remain strongly affected by the experience of violence. This is, *inter alia*, apparent in the way the past is remembered or forgotten and what narratives people select to refer to it. What was uncovered while conducting fieldwork in the local provinces of Nyamata and Gikongoro was evidence of the fact that although the memory of the genocide as such was essential for all interviewees, the time before the genocide in which the conflict between the ethnic groups Hutu and Tutsi developed had disappeared into oblivion.

This article argues that this forgetting of the social cleavages before the genocide reflects less a mental failure than a coping mechanism. „Chosen amnesia“, the deliberate eclipsing of particular memories, enables people to avoid antagonism and to create a degree of community cohesion that is necessary for rural, impoverished life in Rwanda. The notion of „chosen amnesia“ is derivated from Vakim Volkan’s concept „chosen trauma“, which suggests that the act of remembering traumas creates collective identities. In contrast, I argue that that choosing amnesia about traumas can have the opposite effect, i.e. it can prevent the clear demarcation of identity groups such as Hutu and Tutsi. While this way of dealing with the past might be useful for local coexistence, it forestalls the confrontation of the social cleavages that facilitated the genocide and impedes the social transformation necessary to render ethnicity-based violence impossible in the future.

J. Olaf Kleist : The Australian History Wars and what belongs: Limits of Historical Recognition and Reconciliation. In the last two decades of the 20th century Australian society debated its self-identity in relation to the aboriginal history in the so-called History Wars. The author asks under what circumstances – if at all – Aboriginals could be part of Australian history and society. The article summarizes briefly first how Aboriginals were regarded in Australian historiography since the mid-19th century and then the frontier conflicts both as backgrounds for the recognition and subsequent reconciliation process since the 1970s. The article pays particular attention to the debates surrounding the Bicentennial celebrations, about the Mabo decision, and about the Stolen Generations. The article follows the shifting historical arguments and political aims of both sides of the History Wars and of aboriginal interest groups concluding

that all parties involved failed in their respective attempts, leaving the legacy of the History Wars and possibilities of reconciliation open.

Walther L. Bernecker: The belated coming to Terms with the Past: Spain between Amnesia and Political-Ideological Instrumentalization. For the past several years a passionate debate has been taking place in Spain about how to deal with its own past. In order to understand the bitterness and the arduous polemic of the different interpretative positions, the paper first looks back, into the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and into the first years of the democratization process after Franco's death. The article deals with the long period of time, more or less 70 years, from the Civil War (1936-1939) until today.

The first part of the text focuses on the subject the politics of memory and the „imposed memory“ during Francoism. The second section deals with the politics of memory in the transition to democracy (1975-1982) and with the aspirations of the Spanish society in the years before the political change from the Socialists to the Conservatives (1996). There are also mentioned alternative forms of the remembrance in Catalonia and the Basque Country. From 1996 onward, a revisionist interpretation of history invaded the public discussion and claimed an interpretation monopoly concerning the Civil War and Francoism. As a reaction, the left opposition has now „discovered“ the politics of the past as a fructiferous political arena, and the different views of the past have become more and more antagonistic. Furthermore, the civil society has played an increasing interpretative role with multiple activities and initiatives. Therefore, the third part deals with the „return of the past“ in the remembrance discourse and reaching up until the present-day. The text finishes with the discussion of the „Law of Historical Memory“, issued at the end of 2007, from which a huge polemic between the political opponents in the Parliament had arisen.

Eva Kalny: The „West“ and Human Rights. Parting from the Myth of Origin of an Idea. This article scrutinizes the idea that the concept of human rights has been developed exclusively in the West and then has been spread as a „gift of the West to the rest“. This perception includes the genealogical construction of a sequence of specific legal and philosophical documents, which are claimed to have directly led to the modern international human rights system. Contrary to this dominant conception of human rights history, human rights activists from different cultural backgrounds are motivated by local problems and refer to a diverse range of cultural values in order to argue for their activism. The author comes to the conclusion that the basis for the claim of the Western origin of human rights is indeed weak insofar as non-discrimination, which is at the core of human rights, has been repeatedly denied by Western philosophers, lawyers, and politicians. She concludes that it is not human rights in itself, which are Western, but that dominant forms of perceiving and historic remembrance are based on Western and especially Eurocentric prejudice.