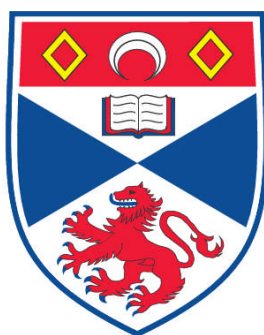


**MARTIN BROSZAT, SAUL FRIEDLÄNDER AND THE
HISTORICISATION OF THE THIRD REICH**

Daniël Rondags

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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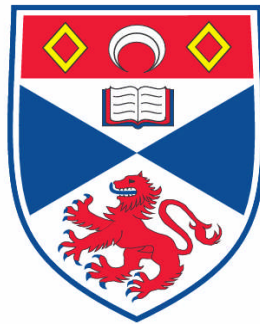
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Martin Broszat, Saul Friedländer and the Historicisation of the Third Reich

Daniël Rondags



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Abstract

In 1987, Martin Broszat (1926-1989) and Saul Friedländer (born 1932) debated the concept of “historicisation” in an exchange of letters. These letters were first published in the German premier journal *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Quarterly for Contemporary History) and were eventually reproduced in other publications and translated into English. Today, the exchange between Broszat and Friedländer is viewed as one of the classic controversies in the historiography of the Third Reich and the Holocaust and is occasionally referred to as the “historicisation debate.”

This thesis offers a historiographical analysis of the works of both Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer. The central aim of this thesis is to identify, contextualise and examine the major themes of the historicisation debate. The first chapter provides an introduction to, and a close reading of, the letter exchange and further identifies the three major themes that structure the following three chapters: identity; history, memory and narrative construction; and the centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past. Each of these three chapters is divided into two sections: the first half is devoted to Broszat, the second half to Friedländer. The conclusion offers a comparison between their historiographical positions.

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Introduction

In 1987, Martin Broszat (1926-1989) and Saul Friedländer (born 1932) debated the concept of “historicisation” in an exchange of letters. These letters were first published in the German premier journal *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* (Quarterly for Contemporary History) and were eventually reproduced in other publications and translated into English. Today, the exchange between Broszat and Friedländer is viewed as one of the classic controversies in the historiography of the Third Reich and the Holocaust, and is occasionally referred to as the “historicisation debate.”¹

Two years prior to the exchange, Broszat had published a “plea” in which he had called for the “historicisation of Nazism.” His article garnered much attention, as Broszat was one of West Germany’s leading experts in the history of the Third Reich.² He had authored several influential works on Nazi Germany and served as director of the renowned *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* (Institute for Contemporary History) in Munich from 1972 onward. Broszat was concerned that historians had not been able to convey the Nazi past to the wider public appropriately. In Broszat’s view, popular perceptions of the Nazi past were deeply influenced by simplistic “moralising” interpretations. “Historicisation,” he hoped, would lead to a more “authentic” representation.

Friedländer was one of Broszat’s most prominent critics during the 1980s. He was a respected Israeli historian who had taught in both Israel and Switzerland and had published various books and articles on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. He believed that Broszat’s historicisation would lead to a view of the Nazi past in which the

¹ E.g. Ulrich von Hehl, *Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft* (Munich, 2001), pp. 112-113; Klaus Hildebrand, *Das Dritte Reich* (Munich, 2003), pp. 322-324; Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems & Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, 2000), pp. 218-236.

² From here on I will use “Germany” when I refer to “West Germany.”

Holocaust would lose its central position in both historiography and popular perception. In response, Broszat invited Friedländer to exchange a set of letters in order to discuss their differences.

This letter exchange was followed with great attention by scholars in Germany and elsewhere. After all, “historicisation” had been one of the key concepts in the notorious *Historikerstreit* (Historians’ Dispute) sparked off in 1986. The Berlin historian Ernst Nolte had prompted the debate by publishing an article titled “A past which refuses to go away,” in which he had offered several radical reinterpretations of the Nazi past. Jürgen Habermas and several other critics launched a counteroffensive, resulting into hundreds of columns, articles and papers in which historians and other scholars argued about the role of the Nazi past in modern German society. Scholars from both sides of the political spectrum engaged in a heated debate about issues such as the origins of the Holocaust and whether historicisation was an appropriate method for writing about the Nazi past.³

Though Broszat saw himself, and was perceived by others, as a left-liberal scholar, his plea for a historicisation of the Nazi past was enthusiastically taken up by liberal-conservative historians. They viewed historicisation as a legitimate instrument for countering the “politically correct” historical interpretation supposedly offered by their left-liberal colleagues from “1968” onward. In the wake of Germany’s reunification, “historicisation” was embraced by a younger cohort of Germans who were active in the “New Right.” For the New Right, historicisation was a “liberating” concept that could be used to re-assert a “normal” German identity. One of the key exponents of the New Right, Rainer Zitelmann, was so enamoured by Broszat’s ideas

³ Jane Caplan, 'Introduction' in Jane Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 8-9.

that he used historicisation as the basis of his work. Citing Broszat he argued that not everything that had occurred in Nazi Germany was necessarily “evil” or “barbaric” and claimed that the Nazi regime had deliberately “modernized” German society. In his view, Hitler was a “social revolutionary.” Due to Zitelmann’s efforts, historicisation became intertwined with the long-running “modernisation debate.”⁴

From the mid-1990s onward, the term “historicisation” was adopted by scholars of all political persuasions, who worked on such diverse fields as literature, anthropology, urban history or East Asian studies. A search on scholarly databases reveals that there are now thousands of articles that feature the term “historicisation.”⁵ Few authors refer to Broszat, however, which indicates that the term has become part of the common lexicon of historians, with no direct link to the Broszat-Friedländer debate. Most often, “historicisation” now refers to treating the past as something “unfamiliar,” stressing the distance between the present and the past.⁶ This means that historians aim to understand past events in light of the historical context, without imposing any present-minded theories. In practical terms, “to historicise” means, for example, to analyze a certain concept by focusing on its shifting usages by contemporaries instead of defining this concept from the outset as an analytical tool, i.e. as a “timeless” entity constituted by certain features, structures and processes (e.g. class, nation, modernity /

⁴ See Uwe Backes, Jesse Eckhard and Rainer Zitelmann (eds.), *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit: Impulse zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1990); Rainer Zitelmann, 'Nationalsozialismus und Moderne: Eine Zwischenbilanz' in Werner Süß (ed.), *Übergänge: Zeitgeschichte zwischen Utopie und Machbarkeit* (Berlin, 1989), pp. 195-223; Rainer Zitelmann, 'Vom Umgang mit der NS-Vergangenheit' in Rolf Italiaander (ed.), *Bewußtseins-Notstand: Thesen von 60 Zeitzeugen* (Düsseldorf, 1990), pp. 69-79; Rainer Zitelmann, 'Die totalitäre Seite der Moderne' in Rainer Zitelmann and Michael Prinz (eds.), *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung* (Darmstadt, 1994), pp. 1-20. For an analysis, see Riccardo Bavaj, *Die Ambivalenz der Moderne im Nationalsozialismus: eine Bilanz der Forschung* (Munich, 2003), pp. 24-29.

⁵ The term was rarely used in German- and English scholarly literature before the mid-1980s.

⁶ Pavel Kolář, *Verfremdung und Vergegenwärtigung: Bedeutungsdimensionen und Traditionen der Historisierung*, 2010, <<http://docupedia.de/zg/Historisierung?oldid=75522>> [23-11-2010].

modernisation etc.). Hence, today's dominant understanding of the term differs considerably from Zitelmann's notion of historicisation.

The current appeal of "historicisation" can be explained in several ways. Most importantly, as a result of key publications by "postmodernist" scholars such as Hayden White, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Clifford Geertz, the influence that "classic" social sciences exerted on history waned. Instead many historians turned to fields such as linguistics and anthropology, but also looked to new trends in social philosophy.⁷ This led to the so called "cultural turn," as more and more scholars supported the position that things "that appear to be most natural to human society" were in fact "historical constructions," created by "human actors who in turn [were] reconstituted by the very products of their making." Consequently, "ahistorical and essentialist assumptions" about human nature, market economies, nations and other supposedly "timeless" or "natural" phenomena were challenged.⁸ As historicisation eschewed any grand theories and master narratives whose "end" had been declared by the postmodern philosopher Jean-François Lyotard,⁹ it is not surprising that the concept gained great popularity from the mid- and late-1980s on. Furthermore, the appeal of historicisation can also be viewed as a reaction against traditional narratives of nation-building. This is especially true for Central and Eastern Europe, where the fall of the Communist system heralded a return to old fashioned national narratives. In this regard, historians have employed the concept of historicisation to provide a subtle alternative to the official, state-sanctioned view.¹⁰

⁷ Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Back and beyond: Reversing the Cultural Turn?' *The American Historical Review* Vol. 107 (2002), p. 1483.

⁸ Ibid. pp. 1484-1485.

⁹ The German translation of Lyotard's postmodern manifesto was published in 1986: Jean-François Lyotard, *Das postmoderne Wissen: Ein Bericht* (Graz, 1986 [French 1979]).

¹⁰ See Kolář, *Verfremdung und Vergegenwärtigung*.

While there are significant differences between today's dominant usages of the term "historicisation" and the notions articulated during the "historicisation debate", there are several reasons that justify a scholarly examination of this debate. First, a study of the letter exchange underscores the important role that "memory" plays in today's historical writing. While "memory studies" was relatively new historiographical terrain in the mid-1980s, it has now become a broad and popular field of study.¹¹ The "historicisation debate" featured an important discussion on the appropriate use of testimonies and whether historians should allow their own experiences to influence their work. As a result of the exchange, Friedländer decided to write a history of the Holocaust that incorporated victim testimonies on an unprecedented scale. His work won several prestigious awards, including a Pulitzer Prize and the *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* (Peace Prize of the German Book Trade).

Second, an investigation of the historicisation debate sheds light on the intellectual atmosphere of Germany in the 1980s. The fact that the term "historicisation" caused such a stir in German academia remains remarkable. The exchange between Broszat and Friedländer can be seen as representative of certain tensions within German society and, more specifically, the academic world as to how the Nazi past and the Holocaust should be interpreted.

Third, a close reading of the debate will allow for a more nuanced and less polemic evaluation of Broszat's and Friedländer's positions. For example, Dutch historians have recently debated the issue of "historicising" the occupation period

¹¹ The boundaries of the field of "memory studies" are rather blurred, however. For a critical analysis see Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies', *History and Theory* Vol. 41, No. 2 (2002), pp. 179-197.

(1940-1945).¹² Participants from either side invoked the arguments of Broszat and Friedländer to support their claims, taking certain passages out of their context or re-interpreting them in ways that ran counter to the authors' intentions.

Fourth, the letter exchange highlights certain issues that remain highly pertinent to the historiography of genocide to this day: Is it possible to write a history from the perspective of victims, which adheres to the traditional scholarly standards of objectivity and impartiality? Can one "understand" the motives of perpetrators without, inadvertently, exculpating them? Is it possible, and analytically fruitful, to empathise with historical actors when they were involved in mass murder? Lastly, should historians keep a dispassionate "distance" from the subject even though it demands a clear moral judgement?

Martin Broszat's *Nachlass* (personal papers), unfortunately, is held privately and his official correspondence is unavailable to researchers. As of yet, the Institute for Contemporary History has not processed any archival material that stems from the period of Broszat's directorship. Currently, the papers of Broszat's predecessor, Helmut Krausnick, are being processed. The Institute does hold, however, a sizable collection of newspaper clippings as well as television and radio transcripts, which is open to the public.

Saul Friedländer's private correspondence is not available either. However, in January 2010, Professor Friedländer generously granted me the opportunity to interview him twice. Friends and former colleagues of Broszat, Professors Hans Mommsen

¹² For some of the contributions to this debate see Evelien Gans, 'Iedereen een beetje slachtoffer, iedereen een beetje dader', in *Groene Amsterdammer*, 28-01-2010; Chris van der Heijden, *Een Grijs Verleden: Nederland en de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Amsterdam, 2008); Barbara Henkes, 'De Bezetting revisited: Hoe van De Oorlog een 'normale' geschiedenis werd gemaakt die eindigt in vrede', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden / The Low Countries Historical Review* (BMGN/LCHR) Vol. 125 (2010), pp. 73-99.

(Bochum/Feldafing) and Norbert Frei (Jena/Munich) were equally generous with their time. I am also indebted to Gabriele and Tilmann Broszat for sharing their memories of their father. Regrettably, Dr. Elke Fröhlich-Broszat was not available for comment.

For this thesis I have primarily relied on the published writings of Broszat and Friedländer, and I have made extensive use of the press collection and library holdings of the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich. Many of the newspaper articles cited in this text were found in the archives of the Institute. However, archival details will only be indicated regarding documents that are exclusive to the Institute's collection.

No comprehensive biographies or detailed historiographical analyses have been published so far on either Broszat or Friedländer, but I have been able to consult several monographs and essay collections dedicated to their work. As Broszat's life and career is not accessible through "ego-sources" as yet, I had to rely on secondary sources and interviews. A conference volume was published in commemoration of Broszat two years after his death, in 1991. It contains several articles that provide valuable background information and biographical details.¹³ The extensive obituaries on Broszat, which were published in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* in 1990, also contain a wealth of information. Particularly helpful in making sense of Broszat's oeuvre were several articles by the Dutch historian Chris Lorenz.¹⁴ However, with the exception of Lorenz' articles, most contributions generally describe rather than analyse Broszat's work.

¹³ Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Claudio Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit: Martin Broszat, das Institut für Zeitgeschichte und die Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1991).

¹⁴ Chris Lorenz, 'Is het Derde Rijk al geschiedenis? Martin Broszat als historicus en pedagoog', *Oorlogsdocumentatie '40-'45* Vol. 8 (1997), pp. 236-252; Chris Lorenz, 'Martin Broszat' in Kelly Boyd (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing, 1* (London, 1999), pp. 143-144.; see also Chris Lorenz, 'Border-crossings: Some Reflections on the Role of German Historians in Recent Public Debates on Nazi Germany' in Dan Michman (ed.), *Remembering the Holocaust in Germany, 1945-2000* (New York, 2002), pp. 59-94.

The details of Friedländer's life and career are better known, as Friedländer had published his childhood memoirs to much critical acclaim in the late 1970s. Moreover, as one of the most prominent historians of the Holocaust, Friedländer has attracted a great deal of attention among the quality press. There are also a fair number of interviews available and several monographs that focus on Friedländer's work. Most of them, however, are limited to a specific book, article or aspect of his writing.¹⁵

More recently, the Jena Centre for 20th-Century History published two small conference volumes on Broszat and Friedländer, which both offer valuable insights.¹⁶ The Broszat volume offers a variety of conflicting interpretations and highlights the controversial nature of Broszat's oeuvre.¹⁷ The Friedländer volume, on the other hand, mainly contains translated or slightly revised articles and chapters drawn from Friedländer's books. Its discussion section is only of limited value, as it largely shies away from offering any critical viewpoints. Similarly uncritical is a recent essay collection entitled *The Years of Persecution, The Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies*.¹⁸

¹⁵ See especially Steven E. Aschheim, 'On Saul Friedlander' in Steven E. Aschheim (ed.), *In times of crisis: essays on European culture, Germans, and Jews* (Ann Arbor, 2001), pp. 171-194; Wulf Kansteiner, 'Success, Truth and Modernism in Holocaust Historiography: Reading Saul Friedländer Thirty-Five Years After the Publication of *Metahistory*', *History and Theory* Vol. 47 (2009), pp. 25-53; Karolin Machtans, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und autobiographischem Projekt: Saul Friedländer und Ruth Klüger* (Tübingen, 2009).

¹⁶ Norbert Frei (ed.) *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007); Saul Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben: Auf dem Weg zu einer integrierten Geschichte* (Jena, 2007).

¹⁷ E.g., Hans Mommsen dismisses Broszat's historicisation plea and focuses on his structuralist interpretation, whereas Nicholas Berg sees Broszat primarily as representing a particular generation of German historians who naïvely believed in the supposedly rational and objective nature of their scholarship. Norbert Frei's view of Broszat is situated somewhere in the middle: he holds that some of Broszat's arguments are flawed, but he also emphasises Broszat's positive contributions to the historiography of the Third Reich. See the contributions to Frei (ed.) *Martin Broszat*., as well as: Interview with Hans Mommsen, 5-7-2010; Interview with Norbert Frei, 16-3-2010.

¹⁸ Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Extermination, Years of Persecution: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London, 2010). Dan Stone is one of few contributors to this volume who offer some critique of Friedländer's magnum opus. However, he mixes praise and criticism in ways that are fairly confusing and contradictory at times. See Dan Stone, 'Nazi Germany and the Jews and the

This thesis, then, offers primarily a historiographical analysis. Its aim is to identify, contextualise and examine the major themes of the historicisation debate. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to, and a close reading of, the letter exchange. It also identifies three major themes that structure the following three chapters: 2) identity, 3) history, memory and narrative construction, 4) the centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past. Each of these three chapters is divided into two sections: the first half is devoted to Broszat, the second half to Friedländer. The conclusion offers a comparison between their historiographical positions.

1 An exchange of letters

1.1 A plea

In 1985, Martin Broszat published an article in the German journal *Merkur* in which he called for a “historicisation” of the Nazi period.¹ It was not purely a work of scholarship, but indeed contained the seeds of an intellectual agenda. Broszat, one of the most prominent historians of the Third Reich in the Federal Republic, believed that historical scholarship on the Nazi period had exhausted itself and had fallen into the trap of merely repeating comforting clichés. He therefore called for a “historicisation” of the Nazi period. Since he conceived of historicisation as an unavoidable and unstoppable process, his aim was primarily to accelerate the speed of historicisation.²

Broszat’s plea can be divided into four main arguments. First of all, he argued that it was time to lift the current “moral blockade” the Nazi period “in favour of a moral sensitivisation of history.”³ He believed that the Nazi period had become an isolated era in German history and that the history of these twelve years had not been subject to the same rules that governed the historical scholarship of other eras. The Nazi past should not remain isolated forever: by keeping it quarantined, this period served as an alibi for the restoration of the more “healthy” areas before and after. He feared that German nationalism might be rekindled by referring uncritically to the Frederick the Great, the Wilhelmine Empire or the economic miracle of the Federal Republic.

¹ Martin Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', *Merkur* Vol. 39 (1985), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 266-281.

² Undoubtedly for rhetorical and polemical reasons, he simplified matters a great deal and simply called for a historicisation as if it was a purely methodological choice. See Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 36 (1988), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, p. 82.

³ Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 281.

Second, Broszat contended that the history of the Third Reich should not be written from a teleological perspective. He claimed that scholarship on the Third Reich had been unfairly dominated by horrors of the final few years of the regime. Although many specific studies had pointed towards a more complex image of the Third Reich with tensions and contradictions in high politics, ideology and everyday life, most comprehensive accounts focused only on this catastrophic end and used this end to explain, *a posteriori*, all that occurred before. In Broszat opinion, the popular image of the Nazi regime remained one of systematic and calculating evil, relentlessly driven forward by the Machiavellian plans of the all-powerful leader, Adolf Hitler.⁴ He campaigned against what he saw as simplistic and deterministic accounts that claimed, for example, that the Holocaust had been set in motion the moment Hitler had taken on the chancellorship.⁵

Broszat's third point was that "not everything that happened in the Nazi period and that was of historic significance served only the tyrannical and inhumane goals of the regime."⁶ Many themes, he argued, had not been studied carefully enough or had not been set within their proper context. For instance, the social security policy of the Third Reich could not be reduced to a mere instrument of Nazi ideology. The origins of these changes to the social security system came from an earlier period and had little to do with the intentions of the regime. Rather, it was *despite* Nazi meddling that a strangely progressive social policy was formulated.⁷ In essence, Broszat tried to create a space in which parts of the history of the Third Reich could take their place without being seen as functional to the political aims of the Nazi regime. This was peculiar, however, considering that in his earlier work Broszat had

⁴ Ibid. p. 274.

⁵ This point related closely to the debate between intentionalist and structuralists, where the former argued that Hitler had "intended" and planned the Holocaust and other atrocities and where the latter (including Broszat) claimed that instead the internal structures of the Nazi state had led to an increasing radicalisation.

⁶ Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 280.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 277-278.

been a convinced structuralist and had thus been accustomed to see everything as functions of larger processes.

Lastly, Broszat wanted to decrease the distance between the author and the Nazi period and, as a consequence, between the author and his readers. He lamented that historians had lost all “pleasure” in narrating this period of history. Authors would distance themselves from the subject and produce what Broszat saw as “pedantically required reading” (*Pflichtlektüre*).⁸ Instead, he wanted historians to recapture some of the “pleasure” of narration which would allow them to write a history that would appeal to a wider audience. He was not just concerned with scholarly trends, but also with how the image of Nazi past was conveyed to the German public and thereby how it would ultimately be remembered by Germans. An important element for Broszat was the language used to describe people or events. Instead of resorting to platitudes or clichés, a more nuanced description would in the end lead to a more convincing moral judgement of the Nazi era.⁹

Broszat was not unaware, of course, that his plea contained elements which could become problematic if they were not handled in the right way. Despite his calls for historicisation, Broszat still believed that the criminal policies of the Nazi regime were essential to understanding the history of this period. “The difficulty of historicising the Nazi period still consists above all in seeing together and at the same time keeping apart the coexistence and interdependence of the capacity for success and criminal energy, of the mobilisation of social forces and destruction, of participation and tyranny.”¹⁰

⁸ Ibid. p. 268.

⁹ Ibid. p. 266.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 273.

1.2 Friedländer's critique

Saul Friedländer's article titled "Some Reflections on the Historicisation of National Socialism" was a direct response Broszat's plea in *Merkur*.¹¹ In this article he examined and criticised Broszat's arguments.

Friedländer viewed Broszat's use of the concept of "historicisation" as a dilemma. On the one hand, Friedländer believed that a historicisation understood as the attempt to use all methods available to the historian when approaching the Nazi period, without considering any subject forbidden or taboo, was self-evident.¹² Historicisation as a more precise historical analysis was therefore indeed simply an ongoing and necessary process.¹³ However, the only way that a true historicisation could be completed, in Friedländer's opinion, was if the crimes of the Nazi regime were solidly integrated into a complex historical framework.¹⁴ Broszat had exactly *neglected* to provide a clear conceptual framework which meant that his concept was so open to interpretation that it could easily be misused and lead instead to a relativisation of the Nazi crimes.¹⁵

While Broszat had not made it clear what the result of historicisation was supposed to be exactly, he had argued that it should *not* lead to the return of a traditional historicism, i.e. the identification and empathy with the supposedly "healthy" periods before and after the Nazi era. Despite this claim, Friedländer believed that Broszat's concept of historicisation would unintentionally lead to the search of "healthy" areas *within* the Nazi period and thus to a return of the same historicism he had censured.¹⁶

¹¹ Saul Friedländer, 'Überlegungen zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus' in Dan Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zur Historisierung und Historikerstreit* (Frankfurt, 1987), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, pp. 56-77. The original text was published in English in the *Tel Aviver Jahrbuche für Deutsche Geschichte*. However, Broszat later referred back to the German translation, which is why I will be using this version instead.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Aside from these general concerns, Friedländer identified three particular problems within Broszat's text. First, he feared that a shift away from the traditional focus of 1933-45 to long-term trends and continuities might lead to a relativisation of the traditional framework that emphasised the political, ideological and moral aspects of the period. He argued that "[o]ne can clearly acknowledge continuities, especially with regard to the time before 1933 and the Third Reich, without at the same time thereby pushing aside the decisive and far reaching significance of the turning points of 1933 and 1945."¹⁷ Friedländer conceded that many social processes had origins that went much deeper than the twelve years of Nazi rule and their effects could likewise be felt a long time after 1945. These elements were part of the modernisation process to which all nations were subjected. Recent scholarship had therefore been so concerned with general questions on modernisation that as a result the political and ideological features of the Nazi regime—those features that in his view constituted the essence of this period—were being obscured and perhaps relativised.¹⁸

Second, Friedländer believed that it was not possible to do away with the "wholesale distancing" to the Nazi period, as Broszat had demanded.¹⁹ Friedländer feared that this would lead to an uncritical empathy with aspects of the Nazi past. Even though Broszat was right in that many areas of life were at least *partly* untainted by the Nazi stain, the reverse was also true: *most* aspects of German society were to some extent involved in the criminal policies of the regime.²⁰ Friedländer criticised Broszat for believing there could be "neutral" or "objective" guidelines that one could consult in order to know whether it would be appropriate to distance oneself from the subject or not.²¹ In his view, this choice was based purely on a personal judgement.²² Abrogating the distance between this era and the historian

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

²¹ Italics in original. Ibid., p. 66.

²² Ibid., p. 74.

could therefore lead to the return of a traditional, Rankean historicism and its naive identification and empathy with the past.²³

The third problem was that the past was still far too present—for both German and Jewish historians—to contemplate a comprehensive historicisation.²⁴ Even though Broszat had assumed that it was now time to finally treat the Nazi period like any other period in history, the Nazi era simply *could not* be treated as, say, 16th century France. For Friedländer, the Nazi crimes had attained some theoretical “outer limit” when they decided, as Hannah Arendt had phrased it, “who should and who should not inhabit this earth.”²⁵ This outer limit was reached only once in history, according to Friedländer: the Nazi era therefore retained some very singular traits.

However, Friedländer’s main objection remained that Broszat had not made it clear what he meant by historicisation and that as a consequence his plea could be interpreted in many different ways. Here Friedländer referred to the work of the German historian Andreas Hillgruber, who had borrowed the concept of historicisation to examine life of the common German soldiers on the Eastern Front. His account went from mere neutrality to empathy with the soldiers, which Friedländer found worrying because these same soldiers were allowing the extermination process to continue by keeping back the Soviet armies—a dimension which was ignored by Hillgruber.²⁶ The work of Hillgruber, Friedländer claimed, could very well be defended by appealing to the concept of historicisation *as defined by Broszat*: of course, this did not make it any more desirable.²⁷

²³ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁶ Nolte and Hillgruber’s work will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.4. See Ibid., p. 71.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 71-72.

1.3 A turning point?

Broszat's plea and Friedländer's response were indicative of important changes taking place in the political culture of Germany in the 1980s and in corresponding trends in historiography. Both articles had been written during a period of strong polarisation in Germany, which had pitted left-liberals and liberal-conservatives against each other in a debate about German history and how the Federal government should deal with the national past. Left-liberal intellectuals had gradually gained influence from 1968 onwards and this was reflected in the organisation of many museums, schools, universities and media outlets. However, during the early 1980s, there was a strong backlash against this perceived "hegemony of political correctness."²⁸

Part of the reason for this backlash was that in 1982 the Christian Democrats returned as the predominant power in national politics where they would stay for the next 16 years. After the CDU/CSU won the election, the new chancellor, Helmut Kohl, wanted to break decisively with the previous Social-democrat/Liberal coalition and declared that this transition of power would mark an "intellectual and moral turning point"²⁹ in German history. Kohl advocated a return to more traditional and conservative values, after the tumult of the late 1960s and 1970s. This meant a combination of such diverse ideological elements as the Christian idea of man, the principle of subsidiarity, the promotion of family values, a liberal market ideology and, of course, the concept of German national identity.³⁰

The debate about the German nation, its role in Europe and the identity of its citizens had never really disappeared from public discourse. The early 1980s did, however, see a shift in emphasis. After several decades of clear support for the European project, more and more liberal-conservative intellectuals in Germany started to qualify the German commitment to this common project. The successes of the "economic miracle" and the long years of selfless

²⁸ A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 219-220.

²⁹ Geistig-moralische Wende.

³⁰ Andreas Rödter, *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969-1990* (Munich, 2004), p. 78.

dedication to the European Community had made them more aware of Germany's own interests and perceived rights. Several historians and intellectuals argued that the Federal Republic should forge a more assertive, power-conscious foreign policy as befitted its position as the economic leader of Europe.³¹

The debate on foreign policy was closely linked to the idea of a strong German national identity. A German identity laden down with guilt and negative emotions about the Nazi period would create a weak, divided society that would be highly susceptible to external pressures (i.e. the Soviet Union) and could fragment from within if no steps were taken. Liberal-conservative historians and intellectuals therefore wanted to reinvigorate the concept of a national identity, but an identity to which German citizens could relate, rather than feel embarrassed about. The hope was that Germans would finally be able to feel and exhibit roughly the same kind of unproblematic patriotism that citizens in other Western countries took for granted.³²

The idea of a supposedly “unproblematic” national identity, with only weak, if any, references to the Nazi period made left-liberal intellectuals and commentators outside of Germany especially anxious.³³ Was it really possible for Germans to feel proud of their country without whitewashing the Nazi past or at the very least turning it into a mere accident of history?³⁴ One Israeli journalist, at least, was sure of the answer: “Full acceptance, for Helmut Kohl, means to bracket the Nazi era out of history, to make it appear as some act of nature, in which there are only victims, not victimizers.”³⁵

In liberal-conservative eyes, then, a revival of the idea of a “German nation” could provide a powerful integrative force, especially after the bitter generational and intellectual

³¹ Stefan Berger, *The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany Since 1800* (Providence, 1997), p. 89.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

³³ Florian Roth, *Die Idee der Nation im politischen Diskurs: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland zwischen neuer Ostpolitik und Wiedervereinigung (1969-1990)* (Baden-Baden, 1995), pp. 245-248.

³⁴ Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995*, trans. Brandon Hunziker (Oxford, 2006), p. 215.

³⁵ Meir Merhav, 'Honouring Evil', in *Jerusalem Post*, 3-5-1985.

division that was the result of the student revolt of the 1960s. The focus on the historical consciousness of common Germans was clear: without a proper past, a nation could hardly be said to exist.³⁶ Michael Stürmer, advisor to chancellor Kohl, was convinced that “in a country without a history, the one who supplies the memories, coins the concepts and interprets the past, wins the future.”³⁷

The new *Vergangenheitspolitik*³⁸ of the Kohl government consisted of two major strategies. The first strategy was to tighten the cultural and political bonds with the West.³⁹ The second strategy was for the Kohl government to juxtapose images of the Nazi period with more recent elements of German history that would allow for a positive identification with the Federal Republic.⁴⁰

Two projects of the Kohl government were especially regarded with suspicion by progressive and liberal intellectuals. First were Kohl’s admittedly clumsy attempts at symbolically burying the wartime past by staging official reconciliations with the former Allies. His first probe was immediately rebuffed: Kohl was emphatically not welcome to join D-Day commemorations in Normandy in 1984. Perhaps as a kind of compromise, there was to be a smaller memorial service with the French president François Mitterrand at the battle site of Verdun.⁴¹ Made bold by this success, Kohl sought an even more impressive gesture by inviting the American president, Ronald Reagan, to join him for a memorial service at the German military cemetery in Bitburg on the anniversary of Germany’s defeat in World War II. This already proved to be a decisive difference: Verdun was a site of World War I, a conflict that had mostly faded from living memory and was unburdened by the murder of great numbers of civilians and prisoners. When it was discovered that the military cemetery in

³⁶ Roth, *Die Idee der Nation im politischen Diskurs*, p. 254.

³⁷ Michael Stürmer, 'Geschichte in geschichtslosem Land' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 36.

³⁸ Memory politics.

³⁹ Rödter, *Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1969-1990*, p. 91.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁴¹ Raul Hilberg, 'Bitburg as Symbol' in Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, 1986), p. 16.

Bitburg did not only contain the graves of members of the regular German army, but was also home to the remains of forty-seven members of the notorious SS, the furore was complete.⁴²

Concerned commentators both in Germany and abroad were dead set against this upcoming ceremony. Especially Jewish scholars and journalist, both in Israel and the US, were repulsed by the idea that an American president would visit this cemetery and participate in what they perceived to be a “redemption ritual,” knowing that amongst its dead were people who had belonged to an organisation that had contributed enthusiastically to the murder of the European Jews.⁴³ Despite these concerns, Reagan and Kohl went ahead with their ceremony regardless. However, what could perhaps have been a powerful symbol of German and American reconciliation and cooperation had instead turned into a rather bitter and embarrassing episode for all sides involved. As Geoffrey Hartman explains: “Bitburg was meant to be significant, was meant to create a symbolic occasion, and therefore relied on image-making and the media—on the very forces that exposed a flawed thinking.”⁴⁴

A second point of controversy was the Kohl government’s decision in 1982 to establish two new museums of German history: one in Bonn and one in West-Berlin. Bonn, the capital of the Federal Republic, would house the *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*,⁴⁵ whereas West-Berlin would host the more broad-scoped *Deutsches Historisches Museum*.⁴⁶ This was immediately perceived by Kohl’s opponents as an attempt to rewrite the official narrative of the Federal Republic. Various historians argued about the potential merits of creating a national museum; about the fears that it would “canonise” recent German history; whether or not the people in charge were truly representative for the historical profession; whether the Nazi era was given enough attention;

⁴² Ibid., p. 17.

⁴³ For some contemporary analyses and reactions, see 'About Cemeteries', in *Wall Street Journal*, 19-4-1985. and Lance Morrow, "'Forgiveness to the Injured Doth Belong'", in *Time*, 20-5-1985.. Especially insightful about Jewish reactions is 'The Commemorations', in *Washington Post*, 6-5-1985.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Hartman, 'Introduction: 1985' in Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, 1986), p. 11.

⁴⁵ The House of the History of the Federal Republic of Germany.

⁴⁶ German Historical Museum.

and so on.⁴⁷ The real question was who would ultimately control the museum's exhibits and displays and who would thus be in a position to shape this identity.⁴⁸

1.4 The Historians' Dispute

In this general climate of liberal-conservative self-assertion, there were also a number of German historians became more bold in their claims. In 1986, the Berlin historian Ernst Nolte published several articles on the need to view German history in a new light.⁴⁹ Nolte especially wanted to establish a link between Nazi atrocities and those committed by the Bolsheviks after the Russian Revolution of 1917. In these articles, he argued that the Bolshevik atrocities not only predated Nazi crimes, but that Hitler was in fact *reacting* against these "Asiatic deeds."⁵⁰

In the same period another German historian, Andreas Hillgruber, referred to above, had published a small volume titled *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des deutschen Reiches and das Ende des europäischen Judentums*.⁵¹ In two separate sections, Hillgruber dealt first with the German defence on the Eastern front during the last year of the war (an article derived from a lecture Hillgruber had given earlier on a commemorative event), and second with the extermination of the Jews of Europe. On the advice of his publisher, Hillgruber had bundled these essays together. While his account of the extermination of the Jews was adequate though perfunctory, Hillgruber wrote passionately about the burden of the German soldiers defending their homeland from the advancing Soviet troops. In an effort to show how the normal German soldiers dealt with this, Hillgruber applied the method of

⁴⁷ Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium 1982-1990* (Munich, 2006), p. 487.

⁴⁸ H. Glenn Penny, 'The Museum für Deutsche Geschichte and German National Identity', *Central European History* Vol. 28 (1995), p. 368.

⁴⁹ The two most important articles were Ernst Nolte, 'Zwischen Geschichtlegende und Revisionismus?' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 13-35. and Ernst Nolte, 'Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 39-47.

⁵⁰ Nolte, 'Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will', p. 45.

⁵¹ Dual Demise: The destruction of the German Reich and the end of the European Jewry

empathy in order to describe their plight in detail and showcase them not as fanatical Nazis, but rather as people who simply tried to defend their homeland.⁵² The contrast between the two sections was therefore stark.

The essays by Nolte, Hillgruber as well as Michael Stürmer (quoted above) were cause for the philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas, the most prominent member of the Frankfurt School, to write a scathing polemical retort. Even though Habermas was no historian, he was a well-known intellectual and his essay opened the floodgates of the debate. He accused Nolte outright of trying to relativise the crimes of the Nazis and accused Hillgruber of deceitfully shifting the focus away from them.⁵³ According to Habermas, Nolte wanted to undermine the idea that the Nazi crimes were a singular event in history. In order to accomplish this, Nolte turned the Bolshevik atrocities into a causal nexus. In this way Nolte could shift the focus away from the Holocaust by arguing that the Germans had merely added a new “technical” dimension to mass extermination (i.e. gas chambers). The overall blame for the increasing barbarisation could be put at the feet of the Soviet Union who conveniently happened to be on the wrong side of the Cold War.⁵⁴

Friedländer did not take part in the debate itself, but he was in fact involved in the early stages of the controversy, when he was a visiting professor at the *Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin* in 1986. During this stay in Berlin, Friedländer had been invited as the guest of honour at a small academic dinner arranged by Nolte, who held a position at the Free University of Berlin. Nolte had chosen this opportunity to confront Friedländer with the argument that when the president of the World Jewish Congress had declared in 1939 that Jews should fight for the Allies this had been “a declaration of war” and that Hitler had therefore been justified in deporting the Jews (though of course not in killing them). Astonished by this treatment,

⁵² Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (Oxford, 1996), p. 71ff.

⁵³ Jürgen Habermas, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 64, 68.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

Friedländer had lost all appetite and called for a taxi.⁵⁵ This story was later quoted by Habermas as an example of Nolte's incredulous behaviour.⁵⁶

Habermas' involvement in this debate set off a discussion of gigantic proportions in Germany that focused mainly on the historical significance of the Nazi past for German historical identity and on the singularity of the Holocaust. Different sides started to take shape, with liberal-conservative historians initially rallying to the defence of Nolte and Hillgruber and with left-liberal historians showing support for Habermas.⁵⁷ For almost two years, the *Historikerstreit* was fought in various periodicals and newspapers. Over twelve hundred separate articles were published and many of the most important essays were made available in household newspapers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Zeit* and were thus read by a wide audience of non-specialists.⁵⁸

While the debate had covered a wide range of topics Helmut Fleischer, a philosopher and historian from Darmstadt University, argued that Broszat's plea was the *actual* focus of the debate.⁵⁹ Nolte himself apparently believed he was working within the framework of Broszat's plea. He had set down three postulates that sounded very similar to what Broszat had argued. First of all, the history of the Third Reich should be taken out of its isolation and put within a proper context. Second, the Third Reich should not be "instrumentalised" (i.e. used by people for specific political purposes). And third, the demonization of the history of the Third Reich could not be accepted.⁶⁰ Hillgruber likewise argued that he was following Broszat's example:

⁵⁵ Klaus Pokatzkv, 'Pavel, Paul, Shaul: Erfahrungen mit der deutschen Verdrängung: Ein Historiker aus Tel Aviv in Berlin', in *Die Zeit*, 16-05-1986.

⁵⁶ Habermas, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung', p. 69. There had been no name in Friedländer's anecdote, but it was obvious from the description that it had indeed been Nolte.

⁵⁷ See Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 127.

⁵⁸ Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television and Politics after Auschwitz* (Athens, 2006), pp. 57-58.

⁵⁹ Helmut Fleischer, 'Die Moral der Geschichte: Zum Disput über die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 126.

⁶⁰ Nolte, 'Zwischen Geschichtlegende und Revisionismus?' pp. 33-34.

“In my essay...I have sketched the events from the point of view of the population and the fighting German army, not from the perspective of Hitler’s control room or the victorious Red Army... This attempt to portray matters from the view of those directly involved goes hand in hand with the efforts of my colleagues (Hans Mommsen or Martin Broszat, for example), in order to relive this experience from the perspective of the majority of the suffering population...”⁶¹

Broszat did not participate in the *Historikerstreit* except for one contribution. In this article he strongly condemned the work of Nolte, but he also rebuked Habermas for his attack on Hillgruber. Although Hillgruber’s essay was certainly no work of genius, Broszat felt that it was hardly as scandalous as Habermas had tried to portray it.⁶² Beyond these remarks he did not directly engage with the way his concept had been used or perhaps abused by other historians.

Habermas was quite positive about Broszat’s plea, even though he immediately called attention to the difference between Broszat on the one hand and Nolte and Hillgruber on the other. Habermas believed that the former assumed that a “historicising distance” would lead to a more reflective kind of remembrance which in turn could lead “to a more autonomous handling of the past and its ambivalent legacy”; and that the latter simply wanted to write a revisionist history that was supposed to “revitalise a conventional identity by invoking the national past.”⁶³ In a later article, Habermas again confirmed that historicisation—and the difference between proper historicisation and mere revisionism—was one of the key issues of the debate.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Andreas Hillgruber, 'Für die Forschung gibt es kein Frageverbot' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 234-235.

⁶² Martin Broszat, 'Wo sich die Geister scheiden' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 190.

⁶³ Habermas, 'Eine Art Schadensabwicklung', p. 73. He uses “historicising distance” in the opposite way that Broszat had intended, possibly as a way to keep Broszat in his camp.

⁶⁴ Jürgen Habermas, 'Leserbrief an die "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", 11 August 1986' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 95-96.

Yet apart from Habermas, hardly any left-liberal seemed to have engaged with Broszat's concept of historicisation. Robert Leicht was one of the few who argued that a "historicisation" as defined by Broszat could be undertaken, but added a strong warning that this should only be done if one was acutely aware of all the dangers. Leicht believed it was all too easy to fall into the trap of coming up with interpretations that implicitly argued that "to understand all is to forgive all."⁶⁵ Habermas' opponents, on the other hand, enthusiastically embraced Broszat's plea and used the "historicisation" concept as their first line of defence against accusations of revisionism or apologetics.

Central to all their arguments was the assumption that historical scholarship should not be impeded by political concerns. The Munich historian Thomas Nipperdey wrote that he believed in the necessity to "historicise" the Nazi past, just like Broszat. In his eyes, true history was beyond party politics and any contribution, no matter what its motivation, would essentially be able to shed more light on that actual past.⁶⁶ For Hildebrand as well, it was all about historical professionalism. He suggested that scholars had a duty to revise current knowledge and that nothing should stand in the way of this. Ideological opposition or vested interests from whichever side should be ignored when the goal was to uncover the (historical) truth. Only in this way, Hildebrand claimed, could research on the Third Reich truly progress. However, even if Habermas and others continued to oppose it, the historicisation of the Third Reich would continue regardless.⁶⁷

Joachim Fest was very much in agreement with Hildebrand here. He too believed that the process of historicisation could not be stopped by anyone.⁶⁸ In fact, Fest sounded very much like Broszat when he complained that whenever the subject of the Hitler period was

⁶⁵ Robert Leicht, 'Nur das Hinsehen macht uns frei: Wir und unsere Vergangenheit: Die deutsche Geschichte läßt sich nicht retuschieren' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 365.

⁶⁶ Thomas Nipperdey, 'Unter der Herrschaft des Verdachts: Wissenschaftliche Aussagen dürfen nicht an ihrer politischen Funktion gemessen werden' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 216.

⁶⁷ Klaus Hildebrand, 'Wer dem Abgrund entrinnen will, muß ihn aufs genaueste ausloten: Ist die neue deutsche Geschichtsschreibung revisionistisch?' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 281.

⁶⁸ Joachim Fest, 'Nachwort, 21. April 1987' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), p. 390.

broached, the tone of the debate changed instantly. All debate, Fest lamented, ended either in empty confessions of guilt or in moral denunciations. Anyone who asked pointed questions was immediately suspected of apologetics.⁶⁹ Fest stressed that what Nolte and others did was nothing more than what Broszat had argued for in his plea. That the most interesting achievements had not come from the man who had coined the phrase (Broszat) was as interesting as the fact that “the enlighteners of the past were now playing the role of censor and mythologist,” Fest added acidly.⁷⁰

1.5 On the Historicisation of Nazism

After the publication of Broszat’s plea and during the early stages of the *Historikerstreit*, it was Friedländer who had proved to be the most vocal critic of Broszat. Friedländer had argued earlier that the scholarly language used to describe the events of the Holocaust in a certain way “neutralised” the past as well. Although the events were extraordinary and almost unbelievable, the language used to describe them remained the same, whether one was describing the relocation of a military unit to another district or the mass shootings of all women and children in a Jewish village. Friedländer had quoted a passage from Broszat’s work on the Holocaust in order to analyse this kind of writing. Although he admitted that this was “a text many of us could have drafted” and that “the historian cannot work in any other way,” there was nonetheless an implicit criticism here, perhaps not so much of Broszat’s work in particular, but rather of the kind scholarship it represented (Friedländer did not offer a particular solution, though).⁷¹

⁶⁹ Joachim Fest, 'Die geschuldete Erinnerung: Zur Kontroverse über die Unvergleichbarkeit der nationalsozialistischen Massenverbrechen' in Ernst R. Piper (ed.), *Historikerstreit* (Munich, 1989), pp. 100-101.

⁷⁰ This was not an outright attack on Broszat, but more a defence of Nolte, who had been criticised strongly by Broszat himself. See Fest, 'Nachwort, 21. April 1987', p. 390.

⁷¹ Saul Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death*, trans. Thomas Weyr (New York, 1993 [French 1982]), pp. 89-92. The original French publication was released in 1982, but both an English and

When Dan Diner asked Broszat in 1987 to republish his plea together with Friedländer's critique in a forthcoming volume he would edit,⁷² Broszat had been aware of Friedländer's work for some time.⁷³ However, Broszat declined to be part of Diner's book, arguing that he was not interested in appearing in what he saw as "yet another one-sided compilation of articles relating to the *Historikerstreit*."⁷⁴ Which compilations he was referring to was not clear. The two main compilations of articles related to the *Historikerstreit* that appeared in 1987⁷⁵ did not seem to have ignored any important articles: the selection incorporated both left-liberal and liberal-conservative historians in equal measure and Broszat's own piece appeared in these two volumes as well. Diner's volume was indeed more one-sided, as most of its publications were solidly left-liberal.⁷⁶ Perhaps Broszat had anticipated this, which might explain his reluctance to include his plea in this volume: he had after all criticised Habermas for being unnecessarily harsh to Hillgruber.

Whatever his exact motives, Broszat preferred to discuss the issue with Friedländer personally and contacted him with this idea. Broszat and Friedländer then agreed to exchange three sets of letters which would then be published in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, the quarterly journal of the Institute for Contemporary History. In September 1987, Broszat sent the first letter to Friedländer, who was in Tel Aviv at the time. Each time Friedländer replied a few weeks later. This exchange went back and forth until Friedländer sent the last letter on the 31st of December. The letter can be thematically divided into three broad categories, although the subjects discussed in each section will necessarily overlap to some

German version were already on the market in 1984. It was also translated into Hebrew and Japanese and has been quoted widely not only by historians, but also literary critics, anthropologists and other social scientists.

⁷² Dan Diner, 'Struktur ist Intention' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), p. 181.

⁷³ Interview with Norbert Frei.

⁷⁴ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 78-79.

⁷⁵ See Reinhard Kühnl (ed.) *Vergangenheit, die nicht vergeht: Die "Historiker-Debatte": Dokumentation, Darstellung und Kritik* (Cologne, 1987); Ernst R. Piper (ed.) *Historikerstreit: Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung* (Munich, 1987).

⁷⁶ Its contributors included, amongst others, Hans Mommsen, Wolfgang Benz, Lutz Niethammer and Ulrich Herbert. See Dan Diner (ed.) *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zu Historisierung und Historikerstreit* (Frankfurt, 1987).

extent. The four themes I felt were most important were those of identity; history, memory and narrative construction; and the centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past.

1.5.1 Identity

An important part of the exchange centred on the interlinked notions of German/Jewish identity and generational identity. Friedländer accused Broszat of being part of a generation that was still so involved with the history of the war that in no way they could claim to be more rational or objective than their Jewish counterparts. Although undoubtedly a genuine sentiment, it served effectively as a strategy to delegitimise Broszat's plea. Would this kind of personal history not influence their own supposedly rational analysis just as much as that of the victims?⁷⁷ Everyone was, in some way, caught up in a web of personal memories, social conditioning and professional knowledge, Friedländer argued. True historicisation was therefore both psychologically and epistemologically based on an illusion.⁷⁸

Broszat countered that his experiences as a member of the Hitler Youth were exactly the reason why he had felt the need to confront the Nazi past so critically after 1945. He believed that while his generation had been too young to bear political responsibility, its members had nonetheless been old enough for their emotions and intellectual development to be tied up with the Nazi movement. When at the end of the war it had become clear what the Nazi regime had really done, their worldview had collapsed. As a result, he claimed, this generation had produced both the most committed democrats and the most determinedly investigative scholars. In an academic sense these scholars were supposed to be both freer

⁷⁷ Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer, 'A Controversy about the Historicization of National Socialism' in Peter Baldwin (ed.), *Reworking the Past* (Boston, 1990), p. 110. Friedländer replied to Broszat in English, I have therefore chosen to use the English version of the exchange when quoting Friedländer's letters

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

than their mentors and more motivated than their own students to dedicate themselves to the lessons of this period.⁷⁹

This generational self-conception was, in a way, a means to legitimise a political and scholarly agenda and Broszat was certainly not the only one who had adopted this self-identification. Most of the important German historians who worked on the Third Reich were from the same generation of Broszat: they had either been enrolled in the Hitler Youth or had served as young soldiers in the army. Roughly speaking, the supposed boundaries of this generation would include those born in the early 1920s until the middle of the 1930s.⁸⁰ In their own recollections, members of this generation stressed that they had been young enough to start over. Their most important objective was of course to investigate the causes and origins of this “German catastrophe.”⁸¹ Even though they were not in an institutional position to personally challenge long-established professors and scholars, they nonetheless critically examined German cultural traditions that might have had a part in the rise of Nazism in their doctoral and habilitation theses.⁸² Broszat’s own doctoral thesis on anti-Semitism in Wilhelmine Germany was certainly part of that tradition.⁸³

In fact, for Broszat, part of his generational self-identification (and justification) consisted of a reaction against an earlier cohort of historians. He saw their work as a “morally impotent history of the Nazi period, which distanced itself from the past in an indiscriminate manner.”⁸⁴ In Broszat’s view, the scholarly accomplishments of the 1950s and 1960s, the works of his mentors, were dominated by “demonological” interpretations of National Socialism that he considered to be more attempts at “exorcising demons” than about

⁷⁹ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 108-109.

⁸⁰ Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, p. 55f.

⁸¹ For some examples, see Ibid., p. 57.

⁸² Ibid., pp. 65-66.

⁸³ Ian Kershaw, 'Martin Broszat (1926-89)', *German History* Vol. 8, No. 3 (1990), p. 310.

⁸⁴ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', p. 81.

establishing historical explanations.⁸⁵ Broszat was especially concerned with the works of Gerard Ritter, Friedrich Meinecke and also Hans Rothfels.⁸⁶

These three were some of the most influential historians after the end of the war. According to Chris Lorenz both Ritter and Meinecke had spent the early years after the war attempting to “rescue” modern German history from the Nazis. Their chief aim had been to re-establish the normality and legitimacy of the German nation, so that the Nazis appeared as an aberration. They had made liberal use of such charged concepts like “the German catastrophe” or the “demonic power” of Hitler.⁸⁷ Rothfels was a more complicated case, as he had served as a mentor of sorts to Broszat himself.⁸⁸ Despite his forced emigration in the 1930s, Rothfels was nevertheless a strong supporter of the German state. He was very much an anti-Communist and saw the Soviet Union as the biggest threat to the Western world. Most importantly, his positive evaluation of the conservative German resistance against Hitler was later severely undermined by Broszat and Hans Mommsen.⁸⁹ Broszat especially blamed Rothfels for granting the conservative resistance to Hitler a moral respectability they did not deserve.⁹⁰

However, Friedländer did not understand why Broszat was so concerned with these historians. Their work had been criticised extensively during the 1970s and 1980s and was currently not all that relevant. Friedländer simply did not see any evidence of the moralising interpretation that Broszat believed dominated German historiography. After Karl Dietrich Bracher’s book on the Weimar Republic (1955) had been published, German historians had approached the Nazi era in a reasonably detached, non-moralistic way. Thousands of studies had examined the Third Reich from many different angles. Friedländer could not detect any

⁸⁵ Ibid. pp. 81-82.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 113.

⁸⁷ Lorenz, 'Border-crossings', p. 68.

⁸⁸ Rothfels was one of the founders of the IfZ. See Interview with Hans Mommsen.

⁸⁹ Jan Eckel, *Hans Rothfels: Eine intellektuelle Biographie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005), pp. 326-327.

⁹⁰ Martin Broszat, 'Das Dritte Reich als Gegenstand historischen Fragens' in Martin Broszat and Norbert Frei (eds.), *Das Dritte Reich im Überblick: Chronik - Ereignisse - Zusammenhänge* (Munich, 1999), p. 18.

great moral blockade that would have limited the development of a normal scholarly investigation nor did he believe scholars had been neglecting the ambiguous and complex nature of events in favour of moral fables.⁹¹

In order to make sense of Broszat's arguments, it is important to realise that he was far more concerned with the popular perception of the Nazi period than with its expert historiography. Reading between the lines, one can see that he believed that the paradigms established in the works of historians such as Ritter and Meinecke still dominated popular historical consciousness.⁹² His aim was to allow younger generations of Germans to understand their own national past better and, in a way, make it their own. A historicisation of the Nazi past would allow this generation to engage with their own past and reintegrate the Nazi past into a larger framework of historical identity.⁹³

This debate about identity revolved almost entirely around Broszat. Friedländer's own identity was not discussed, let alone examined critically. Although Friedländer was Jewish, Broszat never made any mention of this. While they did label the exchange as a German-Jewish dialogue, Broszat was very quick to separate scholars from non-scholars and so managed to avoid the issue of Friedländer being a *Jewish* scholar. Of course it might have been highly controversial and politically incorrect for Broszat to harp on this, but the telling silence does reveal the political conventions of the debate. Broszat was in essence testing the boundaries of what one was allowed to say.

Interestingly, Friedländer had noticed Broszat's defensive posture and asked him to adopt "a measure of openness:" this would be the only possible basis for a fruitful German-Jewish exchange.⁹⁴ In reply, Broszat admonished Friedländer for his own role in obstructing such an open debate. The constant remarks Friedländer made about potential trivialisation,

⁹¹ As an example, he mentioned his own work from the 1960s on Kurt Gerstein which dealt with exactly the ambiguities of individual responsibilities. See Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', p. 108.

⁹² Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 81-82.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 82.

⁹⁴ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', p. 121.

about Broszat's Hitler Youth background or about his "delight" in historical narration all served to constrain the debate. These remarks were not so much "pensive and reflective", Broszat felt, but were instead "pressing and constraining." Perhaps, he argued, Friedländer had also built a wall around himself that did not allow him such a measure of openness.⁹⁵

Where Friedländer had mentioned Broszat's Hitler Youth background to delegitimise his arguments, Broszat now questioned Friedländer's attitude in order to counter this criticism. Broszat had tried to steer the discussion in the direction of pure scholarship, rather than questions of German or Jewish identity. As a German historian, Broszat obviously felt restrained by the problems of German guilt and atonement, particularly when these needed to be linked to the standards of historical scholarship. His reference to the supposedly "mythical" memory of Jewish survivors, discussed further below, rather upset Friedländer.⁹⁶ As a result, Broszat had to emphasise that he made no distinction between Germans and Jews, but only between scholars and non-scholars. The whole issue of identity was therefore moot for Broszat—and if it played any role at all, it was a positive one, since Broszat's own generation had felt such a strong need to examine the Nazi period critically.

1.5.2 History, memory and narrative construction

The second point of debate revolved around Broszat's problematic notion of historical scholarship. He insisted on a clear distinction between history (historical scholarship) and memory (mythical remembrance). He argued that victims of the Nazi regime had created such a "mythical memory" of the Holocaust in order to give their experience some sort of meaning. Even though he admitted this was understandable, he nevertheless maintained that the aim of historical scholarship was to give rational explanations. Scholars, both German and Jewish,

⁹⁵ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 107-108.

⁹⁶ Martin Doerry and Klaus Wiegrefe, 'Interview with Israeli Historian Saul Friedländer', in *Der Spiegel Online*, 10-08-2007.

should focus on writing a rational, scholarly history of the Nazi period and leave the commemorations to others.⁹⁷ Broszat did add, however, that historical scholarship was not the exact opposite of memory: although they were removed from each other he allowed there could be a fertile creative tension between the two.⁹⁸

Calling the memory of the victims “mythical” was certainly problematic and Friedländer was not convinced that this was an accurate description or even that there was a fundamental difference between this “scholarly history” and “mythical memory.” Friedländer of course agreed that the historian was not the “guardian of memory” and that a critical approach was always necessary.⁹⁹ However, as mentioned above, he argued that German historians were just as much influenced by their experiences and that a completely rational, objective approach to history was impossible precisely because everyone was still so involved with the events.

Broszat’s attitude was not necessarily reprehensible, but for Friedländer it did reveal a dangerous naivety.¹⁰⁰ Imagining that rational scholarship would always progress towards the truth or deliver a more refined historical representation ignored the reality that historians approached their subject with their own political, ideological and moral concerns. Broszat himself had criticised those liberal-conservative historians who had tried to use the history of Prussia or the German Empire to revive a sense of patriotism. Because he had labelled these attempts as “historist,” it is very surprising that Broszat would then employ the term “historicisation” in his plea, as they obviously shared linguistic and philosophical roots. In fact, Friedländer was not at all sure whether there even was a fundamental difference between Broszat’s historicisation and the concept of historicism: Hillgruber’s essay in particular had

⁹⁷ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 83-84.

⁹⁸ Ibid. pp. 109-110.

⁹⁹ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', pp. 107-108.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 109.

convinced Friedländer that historicisation could very well lead to a new and uncritical historicism.¹⁰¹

Besides arguing for a new methodology, Broszat also advocated a different approach to narrative itself. He voiced his concern that historians had “distanced” themselves indiscriminately from the entire Nazi period and that this “distancing” precluded a more nuanced—and thus more convincing—engagement. He felt as if German historians considered this period the history of a foreign people: “we still wrote this history only in the third person and no longer as “we” and thereby failed to express the feeling that this history was our history.”¹⁰² So much attention had been given to a mandatory discussion of the political and moral aspects of the regime’s policies that as a result, Broszat held, the history of the Third Reich was still told as a black-and-white story rather than as a true multidimensional history. Part of the aim of historicisation was therefore to restore a sense of life and empathy to the narration, to bring back the “pleasure in narration.”¹⁰³ Language played a critical part in that the historian had to choose his terms and phrases to describe events or persons. For example, instead of employing a Nazi official as a mere symbol or type, the historian should be able to create a lifelike image by using “three-dimensional” (*plastisch*) language.¹⁰⁴

It is not entirely clear whether Broszat included his own work in this comprehensive critique of German historiography. There are only a few hints that he felt that his previous projects were more or less in line with the historicisation approach. Most obvious was his use of several examples drawn from the project *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* (Bavaria in the Nazi Period) to illustrate how *Alltagsgeschichte* could contribute to a historicisation of the period.¹⁰⁵ Broszat was convinced that the six volumes in this series had not only documented “normal”

¹⁰¹ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', p. 101.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 94.

¹⁰³ Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 268.

¹⁰⁴ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 112-113.

¹⁰⁵ The full title of the project was *Bayern in der NS-Zeit: Widerstand und Verfolgung* (Bavaria in the Nazi Period: Resistance and Persecution).

life, but had also managed to raise the question whether life really had been that “normal.” In his view, the project had successfully been able to portray the criminal elements of the regime in a novel way by taking very concrete examples and bringing them to life for the reader.¹⁰⁶

Broszat singled out the comprehensive accounts of German history by Golo Mann and Gordon Craig, but also the *Gebhardt Handbuch* series on German history as examples of “indiscriminate distancing.”¹⁰⁷ However, he did not limit his criticism to purely scholarly projects, as he seemed mostly concerned with the way in which the Nazi period was interpreted by a wider German audience. He had repeatedly voiced his criticism about the history of the Nazi period as it was taught in schools or used as a form of political education.¹⁰⁸ A moralistic history might induce people to feel properly ashamed of their history, but it would be *only* shame and would lack any critical engagement. For Broszat, this was no solution at all.¹⁰⁹ Historicisation would be a method to save the history of the Nazi period from being employed as a mere “pedagogic” tool, which produced an array of “moral lessons and tableaux” which the members of younger generations mistook for the *real* history of the period.¹¹⁰ This problem could be solved easiest, Broszat felt, when the past was given concrete form via *Alltagsgeschichte*. Although there might be areas within the Nazi period that could not be subjected to an approach like this, Broszat felt it would be unfair to deny the possibility outright, especially when the real purpose of his approach was restore a sense of “authenticity.”¹¹¹

What Broszat understood exactly by “authenticity” is again not explained in any of his work. The only real hint he gives is that “authenticity and concreteness” were the two

¹⁰⁶ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', p. 111.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?' *Historische Zeitschrift* Vol. 247 (1988), p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ IfZ, ID 34, Vol. 8, Martin Broszat, 'Empfehlungen zur Behandlung des Widerstandes in der NS-Zeit im Geschichtsunterricht', 17-4-1980; Martin Broszat, 'Was kann das heißen: Konservative Wende? Zeitgeschichte, Wissenschaft, Tagespolitik', in *Die Presse*, 30/31-8-1986.

¹⁰⁹ IfZ, ID 34, Vol. 20, Transcript of interview with Martin Broszat in "Lesezeichen", Bayerischer Rundfunk, 8-10-1986.

¹¹⁰ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', p. 114.

¹¹¹ Ibid. pp. 112-113.

concepts which were supposed to distinguish his historicisation from “neo-conservative” attempts to twist history.¹¹² Authenticity is again a term which corresponds closely to a traditional kind of “historism” and it is perhaps not strange that Friedländer took issue with this theoretical “naivety.”

While Friedländer did not denounce *Alltagsgeschichte* as such, he still felt that a narrative of the Nazi period constructed on the basis of this method would shift the focus away from political elements. Friedländer saw the ideological and political features of the Nazi regime as the *essence* of this twelve year period. *Alltagsgeschichte* might be able to provide new insights, but it was not the appropriate heuristic device to come to grips with the Nazi past as a whole.¹¹³ Moreover, since so many facets of public and private life in the Third Reich were at least partly influenced by the regime’s criminal ideology, he remained highly doubtful whether one could truly rediscover the “pleasure” of narrative when writing about this period. Any kind of empathy with the regime (or areas highly influenced by it) would be enormously inappropriate.¹¹⁴

Moreover, for Friedländer, Auschwitz was a “boundary event...something not singular but as of yet unprecedented.”¹¹⁵ While he did not explain what this meant exactly, it tied in with what he would later call the “limits of representation.” When dealing with the Holocaust, language might simply not be able to convey what had really happened. As a result, the historian sometimes had no other choice than to distance himself “indiscriminately” from his subject. Certain historical events were so horrific and inexplicable that they could only be described in the tersest manner possible and in some cases it might even be preferable to let the documentation speak entirely for itself.¹¹⁶ “When we approach the immense domain of Nazi criminality, the duty of the historian may well be to forego the attempt to visualize,

¹¹² Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 273.

¹¹³ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', pp. 116-117.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 118.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 133.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 131-132.

precisely so that he can fulfil his task in terms of documentary precision and rendition of the events. This paradox may reveal from an unexpected angle what may well be one of the difficulties of historicisation as we understand it in our exchange.”¹¹⁷

1.5.3 The centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past

The final theme dealt with Broszat and Friedländer’s fundamental disagreement about the position of the Holocaust in the historical narrative of the Third Reich. Broszat argued that the Holocaust should not serve as the framework of the history of the Third Reich. In his opinion, “Auschwitz” could not be used retroactively to explain the history of the entire period without it falling into the trap of pre-determining events and thus creating a false teleological narrative. Broszat believed that Auschwitz did not figure large in the life of contemporaries, exactly because it was not openly referred to during the war and was kept hidden from the general public.¹¹⁸ A nuanced account of the Nazi period could not therefore make everything revolve around the Holocaust without propagating an essentially unhistorical perspective.

Strangely, Friedländer agreed with Broszat that the Holocaust had indeed become the central theme of the history of the Third Reich, although he obviously did not believe this was in need of correction. This is remarkable because detailed research on the Holocaust only gathered momentum in the 1990s. While “Auschwitz” played a central role in the *Historikerstreit* and in various popular presentations of the history of the Nazi period, it was employed mostly as a “cipher:” as an unsubstantiated, abstract concept. Actual research on the Holocaust was still relatively unsophisticated at the time of their letter exchange.¹¹⁹ Only in the late 1980s and 1990s did historians start looking towards continuities in German society

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

¹¹⁸ Broszat and Friedländer, ‘Um die “Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus”’, p. 97.

¹¹⁹ Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective* (London, 2003), p. 96.

before, during and after the Holocaust.¹²⁰ The end of the Cold War and the opening of the Polish and Soviet archives in particular opened up new avenues for research.¹²¹ In addition, postmodernism changed the way the Holocaust was discussed, with scholars examining the concept of modernity in relation to the Holocaust. This had the result that the Holocaust was integrated into the larger narrative framework of the 20th century and the modern age.¹²²

While Friedländer thus agreed that Auschwitz served as a focal point, he nonetheless conceded to Broszat that not everything that happened in this period could be considered from its catastrophic endpoint. There were indeed many developments within Germany which did not lead directly to Auschwitz. However, Friedländer emphasised that the historian “*knows the end*” and has to share this with his readers.¹²³ Even though contemporaries might not have been aware of the extermination process,¹²⁴ this does not mean that the historian cannot see that it was in fact the most important development within this period. The historian has to make choices as to what constitute the central elements of the Nazi era and he has to build his narrative around this, especially when attempting to write a comprehensive account of the entire period. This argument again highlights Friedländer’s emphasis on subjectivity in scholarship: it was not so much what *could* be done and as what *should* be done.

Broszat in turn admitted that the Holocaust deserved special emphasis, but he also cautioned against it eclipsing everything else, in particular when considering the great amount of non-Jewish victims who deserved their own recognition. Moreover, older generations of German historians had so often written about the demonic Hitler who had plotted the Holocaust far in advance, that the image of the Third Reich in popular consciousness was dominated by the erroneous notion that everything that had happened under the Nazis had

¹²⁰ Dan Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust* (London, 2003), p. 22.

¹²¹ Paul Betts and Christian Wiese, 'Introduction' in Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London, 2010), p. 5.

¹²² See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 1989).

¹²³ Emphasis in original. Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', p. 119.

¹²⁴ He qualifies this statement by insisting that the knowledge was far more widespread than was generally assumed up until then. See *Ibid.*, p. 120.

indeed been part of a master plan that aimed at the physical extermination of the Jews. Instead of these teleological explanations, Broszat felt it was important to offer a more rational, differentiated historical account. The ideology of the Nazis, however vile, did not lead automatically or immediately to extermination, which is why the historian needed to uncover the processes operating in the background. Historicisation in this case would be nothing more than the application of normal historical methods.¹²⁵

1.6 Questions

It is now possible to ask several focused questions on the three themes discussed above in order to clarify and contextualise the position of both Broszat and Friedländer.

Identity

Why was Broszat so concerned about public engagement with the history of the Third Reich?

What role did Friedländer's identity play in his academic work?

History, memory and narrative construction

What did Broszat understand by rational scholarship and "mythical memory"? What was the role of memory in historical writing according to Friedländer?

The centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past

How did Broszat deal with the Holocaust in his work on the Third Reich? How did Friedländer construct the history of the Holocaust?

¹²⁵ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', pp. 113-114.

2 Identity

2.1 Broszat

Why was Martin Broszat so concerned about the public engagement with the Nazi past? In order to determine the answer to this question, it is necessary to examine Broszat's personal experiences, his professional career and, what I think is most important, his response to the 1979 TV-series "Holocaust." The following sections trace Broszat's engagement with the history of the Third Reich in roughly chronological fashion. First I will be examining how Broszat's own childhood experiences during the war contributed in to his decision to study the Nazi past. Secondly, I will look into Broszat's early career as a historian and investigate how concerned Broszat was about the Nazi past in public consciousness during this period. In the third section I will be examining Broszat's reaction to the TV-series "Holocaust," which I consider a turning point in his perception of the public engagement in Germany with this historical period. In the last section, I will analyse how his reaction to this series lead to his plea for a "historicisation of Nazism."

2.1.1 Hitler Youth experiences

Martin Broszat was born on 14th August 1926 in Leipzig, a city in the eastern half of Weimar Germany. Broszat was just six years old when Hitler took over power and he was seventeen years old, almost an adult, when the Third Reich was violently brought down. His father had been a post-inspector who had settled with his family in Großdeuben, a suburb in the southern part of Leipzig. The Broszat family had come from Poland to Germany with Broszat's grandparents, but had no known relatives living in Poland.¹ Broszat grew up in a society that was dominated by the Nazi Party. His parents, however, were deeply devoted Protestant

¹ Interview with Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat, 5-7-2010.

Christians who were not particularly sympathetic to the regime and distrusted what they perceived as its anti-Christian rhetoric.²

Broszat had nonetheless joined the Hitler Youth as a teenager, while attending the classically-orientated *Gymnasium*. Attendance of the Hitler Youth was not technically compulsory until March 1939, but a system of peer pressure and official encouragement meant that by that time 82 per cent of the eligible boys and girls were already member of one of the many cohorts of the Hitler Youth.³ Although not everyone was equally enthusiastic about being drafted into this organisation, both Broszat and his older brother Gottfried were apparently devoted members of the Hitler Youth.⁴

In 1944 Broszat was old enough to be drafted into the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*⁵ and was then transferred to the *Wehrmacht*, the regular army, where he served in the 108th Reserve Mechanised Infantry battalion. After some basic training, he followed a course for reservist officers and was then sent to the Eastern front until Germany's surrender in May 1945. He was never actively involved in combat, although he had seen some of the results of the war with his own eyes.⁶

Some controversy exists over whether Broszat willingly joined the Nazi Party during the last year of the war. The young historian Nicolas Berg had uncovered Broszat's application file from the archives and published his findings as an indictment against what he perceived as Broszat's "life-long lie."⁷ For Berg, this piece of evidence was damning proof that Broszat had been an enthusiastic sympathiser of the Nazi regime. In Berg's opinion, this discredited much of Broszat's later work, which he saw as emblematic for a larger trend in the

² Kershaw, 'Martin Broszat (1926-89)', p. 310.

³ Jill Stephenson, 'Inclusion: building the national community in propaganda and practice' in Jane Caplan (ed.), *Nazi Germany* (Oxford, 2008), p. 110.

⁴ Interview with Norbert Frei.

⁵ *Reich's Labour Service*

⁶ Interview with Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat.

⁷ Nicolas Berg, 'Die Lebenslüge vom Pathos der Nüchternheit: Subjektive jüdische Erinnerung und objektive deutsche Zeitgeschichtsforschung? Joseph Wulf, Martin Broszat and das Institut für Zeitgeschichte in den sechziger Jahren', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 17-7-2002.

German historiography of the 1960s and 1970s which sought to “neutralise” the Nazi past by insisting that history was driven by anonymous structures.⁸

While it is certain that there was an application submitted in Broszat’s name, some friends and sympathisers dispute that he had volunteered for membership or that he was even aware of this fact.⁹ Norbert Frei in particular maintains that Broszat had always been candid about his admiration and support for the Nazi regime as a young man and that a major part of his motivation for researching the Nazi period consisted of being able to explain how so many people had come to think like he had. There would have been no need for Broszat to hide the fact of his party membership.¹⁰ Ian Kershaw further pointed out that Broszat had never been a formal member of the party, since other documentation showed that there had never been an entrance ceremony.¹¹

In light of his subsequent career at the Institute of Contemporary History and his work on Nazi persecution and the Holocaust, his condemnation of right-wing extremism or perceived apologetics, the issue of Broszat’s party membership seems to be more of a red herring than anything else. At the very least, drawing a comparison to Stasi-membership in postwar East Germany, as Otto Köhler has done, is both highly misleading and inappropriate.¹² Even if Broszat had indeed volunteered for membership, which is certainly not impossible or inconceivable, this does not mean that the decision of an eighteen year old in time of war necessarily reflects on his entire postwar career and turns everything into a “lie.” Neither is there any evidence indicating that later in his life Broszat had any sympathy

⁸ Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen, 2003), p. 568ff.

⁹ Norbert Frei, 'Hitler-Junge, Jahrgang 1926: Hat der Historiker Martin Broszat seine NSDAP-Mitgliedschaft verschwiegen – oder hat er nichts davon gewusst?' in *Die Zeit*, 11-9-2003.

¹⁰ Interview with Norbert Frei.

¹¹ Ian Kershaw, *Beware the Moral High Ground*, 2004, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=418&type=diskussionen>> [23-8-2010].

¹² Otto Köhler, 'Was die Akten sagen, was sie nicht sagen: Ein Versuch zu vergleichen, was nicht zu vergleichen ist', in *Der Freitag*, 19-9-2003..

for (neo-)Nazi ideals. Whether the structuralist approach he and others employed was inherently apologetic is a different question altogether (see chapter 4).

All friends and colleagues agree that Broszat's interest in the Nazi period stemmed from his personal experiences during the war and that he believed that his generation was best equipped to deal with this.¹³ His personal experiences with the Third Reich turned him into a historian of the Nazi past, who was later on also concerned with public attitudes towards Nazism in the Federal Republic. His own fascination as a teenager with Hitler and the Nazi movement made him all the more determined to investigate the reasons behind the success of this movement. He was so single-mindedly devoted to this era that he was never particularly interested in the history of any other period.¹⁴

3.1.2 *Historian and administrator*

Broszat did not immediately take up the study of Nazism. First of all, he was too young and still had to complete his education, which had been delayed by the war. Secondly, the events were still so recent that a real academic engagement had not yet taken place. With the war over, Broszat started his studies at Leipzig University, where he studied not only history, but also German, English and philosophy.¹⁵ He did not stay in Leipzig for long, since in 1949 he decided leave the Soviet Zone to head west to study in Cologne.¹⁶ At Cologne University, Broszat focused solely on history, but even then his doctoral dissertation, completed in 1952, was on Wilhelmine Germany, rather than the Nazi period. This dissertation, titled *Die*

¹³ Kershaw, 'Martin Broszat (1926-89)', p. 310; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*; Christian Meier, 'Nachrufe auf Martin Broszat', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 38 (1990), p. 25.

¹⁴ Late in his career Broszat tried to write a book about Adenauer, but the subject simply could not keep his attention. See Interview with Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat.

¹⁵ 'Note on the contributors', in *Politischen Studien*, Sept. 1958.

¹⁶ Horst Möller, 'Der Geschichte neue Richtungen erschlossen: Zum Tode von Martin Broszat, Direktor des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18-10-1989.

antisemitische Bewegung im wilhelminischen Deutschland,¹⁷ was nonetheless made particularly relevant because of the violent anti-Semitism of the Nazis.

His supervisor in Cologne was Theodor Schieder, one of the most influential historians in Germany in the 1960s and 70s. Many of his students, including Broszat but also Hans-Ulrich Wehler, managed to secure important positions when Schieder's generation retired. In 1997, however, Schieder's reputation suffered a severe blow when it was revealed that he had been an active Nazi supporter. He had, for example, helped write a report on the supposed "overpopulation" in Eastern Europe. In this report, filled with Nazi jargon, Schieder and others argued that the native Poles should be driven off the land in order to re-Germanise certain areas and that it was best if Jewish villages and communities were simply "removed."¹⁸ After the war, Schieder's writing remained influenced by a *Volkisch* kind of nationalism. He dismissed all post-nationalist ideas in the Federal Republic and focused instead on reconstructing the continuity of German national history. In his view, Nazism had nothing to do with the Prussian traditions that formed the basis of German culture, since Hitler had been an Austrian and the movement had originated in Bavaria.¹⁹

It is not easy to say if Broszat was influenced by Schieder's ideas on German history. In Broszat's obituary for Schieder, his comments remain pleasantly vague: Broszat praised Schieder's as a teacher who pushed his students to commit themselves to their work, but mentioned few specifics.²⁰ On the one hand, Broszat's critique of other older historians such as Ritter, Meinecke and even Rothfels (who had been Schieder's supervisor) could just as well have been applied to Schieder. It is of course possible that he never singled out Schieder in his criticism simply because of the personal connection between them. On the other hand,

¹⁷ The Anti-Semitic Movement in Imperial Germany

¹⁸ *Die Volksgeschichte der NS-Zeit: Vorläuferin der Sozialgeschichte der Bundesrepublik?* Werner Conze und Theodor Schieder in der Diskussion, 1997, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=1939>> [27-8-2010]; Lorenz, 'Border-crossings', p. 64.

¹⁹ Berger, *The Search for Normality*, pp. 84-85.

²⁰ Martin Broszat, 'Nachruf auf Theodor Schieder', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 32 (1984), pp. 689-690.

Broszat's plea for a historicisation nonetheless contained some elements that could be traced back to Schieder: especially Broszat's preoccupation about continuity in German history might have been influenced by Schieder's thinking.

One unambiguously important result of his connection to Schieder, however, was the opportunity to participate in a large project funded by the *Bundesministerium für Vertriebene, Flüchtlinge und Kriegsgeschädigte*.²¹ This project, led by Schieder himself, was titled "Documentation of the Expulsion of the Germans from East-Central Europe" and was to take almost ten years to complete.²² For the first time Broszat worked directly on the themes that would occupy him for the rest of his life: National Socialism and its policies of conquest, occupation and annihilation, especially in relation to Eastern Europe. The nature of the material was mostly oral, since not many documents survived to tell about the expulsion of the Germans. Broszat was thus confronted with problems of methodology, especially those related to eyewitness accounts (see chapter 3).²³ More practically, Broszat also experienced the problems and opportunities of large-scale collaborative projects, preparing him for the project-based research he would later direct at the Institute.

After completing his PhD, Broszat spent about a year teaching at Cologne University before being taken on board by the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich in 1955. The Institute had been founded in 1949 under the name "German Institute for the History of the National Socialist Period."²⁴ Already in the formation process of the institute, it was decided that it would not only have a research purpose, but would also collect documents and literature related to the Nazi period.²⁵ It was an unusual organisation because it was funded by the German government and dedicated to documenting a very recent period of history. The

²¹ The Federal Ministry for Expellees, Refugees and War Victims

²² Kershaw, 'Martin Broszat (1926-89)', p. 310.

²³ Mathias Beer, 'Martin Broszat und die Erfahrung der Dokumentation der Vertreibung' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), pp. 46, 52.

²⁴ *Deutsches Institut für Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Zeit*

²⁵ Horst Möller, 'Das Institut für Zeitgeschichte und die Entwicklung der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung in Deutschland' in Horst Möller and Udo Wengst (eds.), *50 Jahre Institut für Zeitgeschichte: Ein Bilanz* (Munich, 1999), p. 8.

only comparable institution in the Western world founded at roughly the same time was the *Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*,²⁶ which was committed to collecting all material related to the German occupation of the Netherlands.²⁷

The biggest hurdle to the young Institute's efforts was the widespread distrust of the idea of *Zeitgeschichte*²⁸ among many established German historians. The first article in the very first volume of its quarterly journal, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, was a defence of the concept of contemporary history. The head of the journal's board, Hans Rothfels, tried to counter the charges of "presentism" and referred to the practical role contemporary history would have in raising German self-understanding.²⁹ For the next few decades, the various directors of the Institute were always keen to emphasise that it was quite possible to research recent history in a scholarly manner and that the proximity of the events to the researchers was not detrimental to their ability to do research objectively.³⁰

Broszat spent most of his time at the Institute compiling technical reports that would be used in court, which of course increased the pressure to produce purely "objective" reports. Initially, the goal of the Institute had been to conduct scientific research on the Nazi period and then to make available the results of its research in individual papers or encompassing overviews. However, the Institute's resources were increasingly used for judicial purposes. Since the question of compensation for Nazi persecution was raised soon after the war, the German authorities and courts saw themselves faced with an array of complex legal cases. The court felt that they had to ask the help of historians in order to make

²⁶ National Institute for War Documentation. In 1999, it was renamed the Dutch Institute for War Documentation or *Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie*.

²⁷ For a contemporary comparison of the two institutes, see Dieter Thoma, 'Nur wenig Geld für harte Wahrheit: Die Zeugen sterben aus: Der Hürdenlauf des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte', in *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 30-05-1959.

²⁸ Contemporary history

²⁹ See Hans Rothfels, 'Zeitgeschichte als Aufgabe', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 1 (1953), p. 5.

³⁰ See, for example, 'Gespräch mit dem neuen Leiter des Münchner Instituts für Zeitgeschichte: In Vorbereitung: ein "Who is Who" der Emigranten: Dr. Martin Broszat will sich nicht nur auf Nazi-Forschung festlegen', in *Münchner Merkur*, 30-07-1972; Helmut Krausnick, 'Zur Arbeit des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* Vol. 196 p. 90.

adequate judgements.³¹ The researchers at the Institute were therefore called upon to answer a wide range of questions, some of which could be answered with a simple yes or no and others which ended up as complex analyses spanning dozens of pages.

In the Institute Broszat was the expert for German policies in Eastern Europe. He had become familiar with this subject because of his work on the expulsion of the Germans from the East under Schieder. His family's Polish origin and his general interest in the affairs of countries in the Soviet Bloc might have led him into this direction as well.³² He wrote several long reports on the persecution of the Jews outside of the German Reich. His report on the situation on Romania, for example, was over eighty pages long and discussed in great detail the policies that were implemented and the number of victims that followed.³³ Considering the legal background of most of these reports, it is unsurprising that these were rather technical, although the great wealth of documentation and detail remains impressive. For a broader audience, Broszat wrote two volumes on Poland, one on the German occupation during World War II and one on the Polish policies of Germany over the last two hundred years, but these also stayed close to the original source-material and were more documentations than histories.³⁴

In 1972, Helmut Krausnick resigned as director of the Institute and Broszat was voted his successor. Broszat had made a name for himself as a very active and engaged historian and the Institute was everything for him.³⁵ As director, Broszat launched several new projects, the most important of which was *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* (hereafter referred to as the Bavaria project). However, some of the other projects were more traditional, such as the indexing and

³¹ Paul Klucke, 'Vorwort', *Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 1* (Munich, 1958), p. 9.

³² Broszat maintained good contacts with many scholars in Eastern Europe and also travelled privately throughout the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia. See Interview with Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat.

³³ Martin Broszat, 'Das Dritte Reich und die rumänische Judenpolitik', *Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 1* (Munich, 1958).

³⁴ Martin Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik, 1939-1945* (Frankfurt, 1965 [1961]); Martin Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Frankfurt, 1972 [1963]).

³⁵ Köhler, 'Was die Akten sagen, was sie nicht sagen'; Möller, 'Der Geschichte neue Richtungen erschlossen'.

photographing of the OMGUS³⁶ documents which the Institute had been safeguarding,³⁷ and an ambitious reconstruction of the scattered documents of the Party Chancellery.³⁸ Broszat also expanded the Institute's research into the immediate postwar period.³⁹

For most of the 1970s, then, Broszat simply continued to work on the Nazi period as he had before. His position as director certainly changed the means available to him, but the projects he set up were not necessarily designed to shake the historical profession. Up until 1979, Broszat simply did not seem to be very interested in shaping the public view of the Nazi past, either personally or in his capacity as director of the Institute. He gave the occasional lecture and hosted the seminars of the Institute, but these were small affairs and usually rather technical.⁴⁰ He played a minor role in the 1964 Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt as he had compiled one of the reports that was used by the court.⁴¹ However, all the attention went to the trial rather than to the Institute or the individual researchers who came to testify. After Broszat became director, he initiated various new projects, as discussed above, but while these might have been significant for the rest of the academic community, not much effort was made to bring these to the attention of a larger public. The only exception was the Bavaria project, which received attention from the local Bavarian press.⁴²

In general, however, Broszat's role was that of researcher and administrator. His predecessors, Mau and Krausnick, had already managed to deflect most of the criticism to *Zeitgeschichte* and had thus secured a position for the Institute in the academic landscape of the Federal Republic. Broszat was more concerned with widening the scope and depth of research at the Institute rather than ensuring that it reached a wider audience.

³⁶ Office of the Military Government, United States

³⁷ Werner Röder, Hermann Weiss and Klaus A. Lankheit, 'Das Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte' in Horst Möller and Udo Wengst (eds.), *50 Jahre Institut für Zeitgeschichte: Ein Bilanz* (Munich, 1999), p. 117.

³⁸ Michael Ruck, 'Akten der Parte-Kanzlei der NSDAP: Metamorphosen eines editorischen Grossversuchs' in Horst Möller and Udo Wengst (eds.), *50 Jahre Institut für Zeitgeschichte: Ein Bilanz* (Munich, 1999), p. 221.

³⁹ See Broszat's comments in 'Publizistik 1945-50', in *Tageszeitung*, 30-10-1974.

⁴⁰ E.g. *Wissenschaftsfreiheit und ihre rechtlichen Schranken: Ein Colloquium* (Munich, 1978).

⁴¹ 'Mitleid mit KZ-Häftlingen war verboten: Dr. Broszats Gutachten im Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess', in *Der Mittag*, 22-2-1964.

⁴² E.g. 'Bayern erforscht "kleine Widerstände" gegen Hitler', in *Münchener Merkur*, 10/11-12-1977.

2.1.3 “Holocaust”

The broadcast of the American mini-series “Holocaust,” produced by NBC, proved to be a turning point for Broszat’s view on the engagement of the German public with the Nazi period. The series had been released in the US in 1978 and was broadcasted in Germany by the national channel ARD in January 1979. The show followed the fictional German-Jewish Weiss family before and during the Holocaust. It turned out to be an enormously effective presentation of a highly sensitive topic. In West Germany alone, there were over 20 million viewers, and worldwide that number reached almost a quarter of a billion.⁴³ “Holocaust” can be considered significant for two main reasons. First, the series provoked intense discussion about the guilt of the perpetrators, the dignity of the victims, the long-term causes of the Holocaust and other related topics. Second, and even more importantly, it *popularised* scholarly debates on the Holocaust like no other publication or show had managed before.⁴⁴

Wulf Kansteiner has argued that this TV-series established an entirely new set of collective memories for West Germans and came to define the suffering of the Jews for an entire generation of American and European viewers. Even though it was essentially a melodrama, the series nonetheless engaged seriously with the perspective of the victims as well as the perpetrators and gave both sides faces and names with which the audience could identify.⁴⁵ In popular and academic circles, the series helped spread the notion that the Holocaust was a unique and singular event, which perhaps explains why this point was so heavily debated during the *Historikerstreit*.⁴⁶

⁴³ Wulf Kansteiner, *Populäres Geschichtsfernsehen vor "Holocaust": Die Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus und des Zweiten Weltkrieges in drei Erfolgssendungen des ZDF*, 2004, <<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/md=FSHolocaust-Kansteiner>>.

⁴⁴ Edgar Lersch, *Vom "SS-Staat" zu "Auschwitz": Zwei Fernsehdokumentationen zur Vernichtung der europäischen Juden vor und nach "Holocaust"*, 2004, <<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/md=FSHolocaust-Lersch>>.

⁴⁵ Wulf Kansteiner, 'Losing the War, Winning the Memory Battle: The Legacy of Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust in the Federal Republic of Germany' in Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, 2006), pp. 124-125.

⁴⁶ Wulf Kansteiner, 'Nazis, Viewers and Statistics: Television History, Television Audience Research and Collective Memory in West Germany', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2004), p. 587.

The series caused so much stir that for several months after it had been broadcasted, all major German newspapers and weeklies carried articles and columns about “Holocaust,” discussing either the show itself or the reactions of the German audience.⁴⁷ Heinz Höhne of *Der Spiegel* partly blamed German historians for having failed to translate their scholarly research into works that could engage the public with this subject.⁴⁸ In a reaction to Höhne, Broszat tried to defend the German historical profession from some of the fiercest criticism, while at the same time admitting that something had to be done about the gap between scholars and the public.⁴⁹

Broszat had serious reservations about using dramatised television to convey historical knowledge. First of all, he was critical of the supposed historical message in “Holocaust:” although the story was engaging in an emotional way, the series never managed to *explain* the (political or ideological) chain of events that led to the Holocaust.⁵⁰ Second, the series presented an unrealistically “clean” or “safe” image of events. There were, for example no scenes depicting the various death camps that could have effectively demonstrated how “degrading, depersonalising and dehumanising” these places had been in reality.⁵¹ Third, and perhaps most importantly, the series had oversimplified and carefully edited the actual history of the period, which had been far more morally complex than what was shown in this Hollywood drama.⁵²

In addition, Broszat found the accusation against German historians exaggerated. He pointed out that the Holocaust had featured prominently in the history of the Third Reich. Many articles had been published on this subject both in scholarly journals and the topic had

⁴⁷ Jens Müller-Bauseneik, *Die US-Fernsehserie "Holocaust" im Spiegel der deutschen Presse (Januar – März 1979): Eine Dokumentation*, 2004, <<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/md=FSHolocaust-Mueller-Bauseneik>>.

⁴⁸ Heinz Höhne, 'Schwarzer Freitag für die Historiker. „Holocaust“: Fiktion und Wirklichkeit', in *Der Spiegel*, 29-1-1979.

⁴⁹ Martin Broszat, 'Holocaust' und die Geschichtswissenschaft', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 27 (1979), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, p. 102.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 105.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 106.

⁵² Ibid. pp. 106-107.

been incorporated in more general surveys of the Nazi period as well.⁵³ Broszat asserted that the Holocaust was dealt with in hundreds of different lectures or seminars on the history of the Third Reich in universities all over West Germany. In these classes, the persecution of the Jews was not shunned as a subject, although he admitted that in most cases it was not covered in enough depth.⁵⁴ Frank Bösch is right in pointing out, however, that the works Broszat referred to mostly consisted of either Jewish testimonies or wide-ranging evaluations of the entire Nazi era that usually included only a few pages about the Holocaust. Similarly, by far the majority of the lectures and seminars dealt with topics like Hitler's foreign or domestic policy rather than the extermination of the Jews.⁵⁵ It is therefore doubtful whether the Holocaust was really as well represented in the German history curriculum as Broszat claimed.

This TV-series had nonetheless shaken Broszat's belief in the ability of historical scholarship to transmit its message to a wider audience. Since Broszat dealt with this part of history on a daily basis, it was shocking for him to realise that the rest of society did not have this same engagement with the past.⁵⁶ He also realized that even the most popular academic work could only reach several hundred thousands of readers, but a Hollywood production could draw an audience that numbered tens of millions. Scholars simply could not compete with this.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Broszat gathered from the reactions to "Holocaust" that German scholarship had obviously not been able to engage their audiences critically with the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust in particular.⁵⁸

While Broszat remained sceptical about the usage of drama in order to spread historical knowledge, he seemed fixated on the consequences of "Holocaust." In 1980 he

⁵³ Ibid. p. 113.

⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 115-116.

⁵⁵ Frank Bösch, 'Versagen der Zeitgeschichtsforschung? Martin Broszat, die westdeutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und die Fernsehserie "Holocaust"', *Zeithistorische Forschungen, Online-Ausgabe* Vol. 6, No. 3 (2009), p. 3.

⁵⁶ Interview with Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat.

⁵⁷ Broszat, 'Holocaust' und die Geschichtswissenschaft', p. 107.

⁵⁸ 'Filmwoche über das "Dritte Reich"', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 5-2-1981; Broszat, 'Holocaust' und die Geschichtswissenschaft', p. 116.

published a follow-up article, examining the changes in literature after “Holocaust.” Most visibly, the series had created a strong demand for all kind of books dealing with the Holocaust. Several volumes that had barely sold any copies before had now sold tens of thousands in a few months. The quality of the work varied considerably, however. Broszat was very critical of some compilations that merely repeated the old cliché that most Germans had not known what was going on. More heartening for Broszat was the sale of books written by Jewish authors, some of them survivors of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust-film has increased people’s awareness; the frequently dominating presentation of the Nazi persecution of the Jews was based on official German documents and therefore shown from the perspective of former Nazi-actors. It often failed to depict the actual history of the Jewish catastrophe with the Jews remaining pale shadows, statistical objects. The reproduction of the “Final Solution” which informs our memory of this historic event is presented from the point of view of German sources and is also the result of thoughtlessness. It is all the more pleasing that after the series Holocaust, Jewish authors with a Jewish perspective had a greater opportunity to make their voice heard.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, Broszat admonished one writer for apparently not having learned anything from the criticism after “Holocaust.” He claimed this author had lost the art of interpreting and writing for a wider audience and was only able to publish highly specialist work that would remain unread.⁶⁰ In general, however, he saw this new “Holocaust-boom” not only in the light of new kinds of historical films—spawned by the success of “Holocaust”—but argued that this new interest was also the result of an increased

⁵⁹ Martin Broszat, 'Holocaust-Literatur im Kielwasser des Fernsehfilms', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* Vol. 31, No. 1 (1980), p. 22.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 24.

“receptiveness for German history in general and for the Nazi past in particular” which was progressively determined by “*historical distance and historical curiosity*.”⁶¹

2.1.4 Towards historicisation

After 1979, Broszat started publishing more and more articles that focused not on history itself, but on the way historians and laymen approached the Nazi period. For Broszat’s 60th birthday in 1988, his colleagues decided to collect his most influential articles and published them as a special collection titled *Nach Hitler*.⁶² Of the 28 articles, only four were published before “Holocaust.” Broszat had already been in the highly influential position as director of the Institute for Contemporary History since 1972, but his scholarly activity before “Holocaust” was focused more on the (relatively mundane) concerns of the various projects at the Institute. In fact, just after taking up the position of director, he had argued that writing about the Nazi period would necessarily become easier over time. At that time he believed that the Nazi past had already turned into “dead” history that was only of interest to academics like himself.⁶³

This is not to suggest that “Holocaust” was the sole reason why Broszat embarked on this intellectual campaign, since some of the arguments in his plea date back to his rejection of the historiography of the 1950s and 60s. Moreover, in the second half of the 1970s, there had already been an increase in the number of questions the Institute had received from concerned students and teachers, asking for more information on the persecution of the Jews and whether there had really been extermination camps.⁶⁴ This might have made Broszat more aware of the lack of engagement with the Nazi period. However, these concerned

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 29. Italics in original.

⁶² Martin Broszat, *Nach Hitler: Der schwierige Umgang mit unserer Geschichte* (Munich, 1988).

⁶³ 'Gespräch mit dem neuen Leiter des Münchner Instituts für Zeitgeschichte'.

⁶⁴ 'Münchner Historiker starten neues Projekt: Besatzungszeit unter Lupe der Wissenschaft', in *Münchner Merkur*, 2-8-1978.

questions had more to do with an increased activity of neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers during the 1970s, than with a concern about the way scholars were handling the history of the Holocaust.⁶⁵

Broszat's strong response to the TV-series suggests that "Holocaust" played a crucial role in changing his perception. After "Holocaust" Broszat diversified his publications and started writing more articles in mainstream newspapers and journals which were read by an audience other than historians. He even appeared in several radio and TV-shows, both in Germany and Austria. The range of topics he discussed varied widely: a new TV-programme on the German expulsion from the East;⁶⁶ literary fiction and the Nazi period;⁶⁷ the forged "Hitler Diaries;"⁶⁸ or the new museums for national history in Bonn and West-Berlin.⁶⁹ Broszat had an opinion on all subjects that he also wished to spread to a wider audience.

Broszat's emphasis shifted, however, from a concern about the way the Holocaust was treated in German historiography to a more general concern about how the entire Nazi period was dealt with by the majority of the Germans. In his plea and the resulting letter exchange with Friedländer, Broszat obviously tried to show how historicisation would also lead to a moral condemnation of the Nazi regime that would be more widely supported, but his claims always seemed like an afterthought rather than a major goal in their own right. His first concern was to reintegrate the Nazi past into the wider German history; only after that could a more nuanced (and thus convincing) moral evaluation take place.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Martin Broszat, 'Zur Kritik der Publizistik des antisemitischen Rechtsextremismus: Vorbemerkung zu der Untersuchung von Ino Arndt und Wolfgang Scheffler', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 19 (1976), p. 23.

⁶⁶ Martin Broszat, "Dokumentation "Flucht und Vertreibung"", 2. Programm, aired 8-2-1981 on Bayerische Rundfunk, transcript reprinted in *Nach Hitler*., pp. 185-188

⁶⁷ Martin Broszat, 'Literatur und NS-Vergangenheit: Vortrag auf einer Veranstaltung des P.E.N.-Zentrums Bundesrepublik Deutschland in der Akademie der Künste, Berlin, anlässlich des 50. Jahrestages der Bücherverbrennung, 9. Mai 1983', (1983), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 216-227.

⁶⁸ Martin Broszat, "Die Hitler-Tagebücher: Original oder Fälschung?" *Club 2*, aired 3-5-1983 on Österreichischen Rundfunks, transcript reprinted in *Nach Hitler*., pp. 235-241

⁶⁹ Martin Broszat, 'Zur Errichtung eines "Haus der Geschichte des Bundesrepublik Deutschland" in Bonn: Schriftliche Stellungnahme zum Gutachten der von der Bundesregierung im November 1983 eingesetzten Sachverständigen-Kommission, 16-5-1984', in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 256-262.

⁷⁰ Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 268.

Broszat's reaction to Holocaust was typical for his style as a historian. What set Broszat apart from other historians was his emphasis on opposition: Broszat saw *Zeitgeschichte* primarily as *Oppositionsgeschichte*.⁷¹ Almost always, his ideas developed as a reaction to a (perceived) dominant model. He was most fiercely opposed to what he saw as the "monumentalisation" and "pedagogisation" of history by other historians.⁷² His criticism had focused on three major themes.

First of all, in the 1950s and 60s, Broszat had turned away from the "demonological" interpretations provided by Meinecke and Ritter.⁷³ This effort culminated in *The Hitler State*, published in 1969, which provided a highly detailed and nuanced interpretation of the inner workings of the Nazi regime that undermined the idea that Hitler had controlled everything. Second, with the Bavaria-project, Broszat attempted to deconstruct the heroic image of the German resistance by introducing the concept of *Resistenz* (from the biological concept of "resistance;" not to be confused with political or armed resistance). This concept was used to analyse how normal people had unheroically and in their own idiosyncratic way resisted the efforts of the regime to control their behaviour and ideas.⁷⁴ Third, he was extremely critical of the competing theories of "totalitarianism" and "fascism." Instead of picking one or the other, Broszat felt that *both* approaches were inadequate because of their political origins (i.e. the anti-Marxist theory of totalitarianism and the Marxist theory of fascism). A good look at the history of the period would reveal that neither theory fit the facts.⁷⁵

His plea for a historicisation therefore neatly fits into this line of reasoning and could be considered the fourth and maybe most important theme to occupy his thoughts. Broszat

⁷¹ Christian Meier, 'Der Historiker Martin Broszat' in Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Claudio Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit: Martin Broszat, das Institut für Zeitgeschichte und die Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1991), p. 15.

⁷² Lorenz, 'Is het Derde Rijk al geschiedenis?' p. 238.

⁷³ Meier, 'Der Historiker Martin Broszat', pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ Martin Broszat, 'Der Bedeutungswandel eines Begriffs der Zeitgeschichte', in *SZ am Wochenende*, 22/23-11-1986.

⁷⁵ See his comments in *Totalitarismus und Faschismus: Eine wissenschaftliche und politische Begriffskontroverse* (Munich, 1978), pp. 32-38.

polemically denounced all current historiography, because it had failed to engage the German public.⁷⁶ From another angle, Broszat's plea can be seen as another reaction to the supposedly dominant media presentation of the Third Reich. Even his insistence that one cannot view "Auschwitz" *a posteriori* as the central event of the Nazi period could be explained as a response to the important role Auschwitz had started to play in popular perception after the broadcast of the series "Holocaust" and its imitators.⁷⁷

As a result, Broszat was very much afraid that if German historians did not provide an adequate and compelling answer themselves (via historicisation), future generations would only learn this history through the simplified and undifferentiated lenses of the media.⁷⁸ He feared that television especially would resort to historical "reconstructions" when there were no authentic images available. These reconstructions of historic events posed serious problems: no matter how meticulous the research had been, television could never hope to explain the complexities of a case purely through images, but at the same time, it was impossible for the historian to compete with this "magic of detailed reconstruction and the suggestive powers of television."⁷⁹

2.2 Friedländer

What role did Friedländer's identity play in his academic work? Broszat had admitted that his Hitler Youth experiences had in some way driven him to write about the Nazi period. Friedländer was born six years after Broszat, but was even more deeply influenced by the war. Why did Friedländer choose to investigate this period as a professional historian? In what

⁷⁶ Some of Broszat's own work could fall into that category, but Broszat never openly reflected on this. He only made clear that his work on the Bavaria project was in line with his demand for historicisation because it focused on individual cases that people could relate to more easily. Broszat and Friedländer, "Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"", p. 94f.

⁷⁷ See my comments on the supposed centrality of the Holocaust in chapter 2.

⁷⁸ Interview with Norbert Frei.

⁷⁹ See Broszat's comments in 'Das Streiflicht', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21-12-1984.

ways did his childhood play a role in this respect? In the second section I will analyse how Friedländer tried to combine or separate his work on politics and his work on history. In the final section I will analyse how Friedländer developed his ideas on identity and subjectivity as a result of the letter exchange with Broszat, as Friedländer has repeatedly stated that Broszat's comments caused him to write his magnum opus *Nazi Germany and the Jews*.

2.2.1 From Pavel to Saul

Friedländer's life would be determined by events in Nazi Germany, but he himself was born outside Germany, in the Czechoslovakian capital of Prague on October 11 1932. The name given to him by his parents Hans Friedländer, a lawyer, and Elli Glaser, was not Saul, but Pavel: the Czech version of the name Paul. As Friedländer remarked in his autobiography, he was born a Jew at the worst time possible. Hitler's seizure of power in Germany was a mere four months away.⁸⁰ With consternation the Friedländer family followed Hitler's meteoric rise. Friedländer and his family remained in Prague, though, until March 1939, when it became clear that Hitler was going to take over Czechoslovakia. Their first plan was to flee across the Hungarian border by car, but they were stopped in their tracks by the Germans, who had already occupied the border regions. For Friedländer, the two motionless German sentinels close to the border would serve as his first and perhaps strongest impression of the Third Reich.⁸¹

Friedländer's father and maternal uncle had both fought as artillery officers in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I and, as with other well-integrated Jews in Germany and Austria, considered themselves to be German. German was therefore the language Friedländer and his family spoke at home.⁸² In fact, most Western European Jews

⁸⁰ Saul Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York, 1979 [French 1978]), p. 3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

believed that they had managed to integrate themselves into their respective national communities. The realisation that this sentiment was not shared by their fellow countrymen was a disillusionment of the highest order, something which many Jews never really accepted even at the very end. In his work, Friedländer comes back time and again to this theme of disbelief, undoubtedly because his own parents—and their entire generation—had so much difficulty accepting how fast things had changed in such a short amount of time. Many Jews did not really identify with Judaism but were also denied any possibility to identify with their countries of birth.⁸³

After being turned away from the Hungarian border, Friedländer and his parents emigrated to France instead. While in Paris, Friedländer's parents tried to acquire visas for Canada and other places, but to no avail. As a result, Friedländer was put into a home for Jewish children near Paris while his parents were looking for work and tried to obtain visas out of France. When the Germans overran France much faster than anyone had been able to anticipate the Friedländer family was trapped in occupied territory. Two years later, in July 1942 the Germans, in collaboration with the Vichy regime, started rounding up the foreign Jews in France. Friedländer's parents gave up the hope that they would be able to escape, but were determined to try everything so that their son should be safe. Jewish institutions were now obviously out of the question, so they decided to give Friedländer up to a Catholic sodality that ran a boarding school at Saint-Béranger. This was a completely different world from the one Friedländer had known until then: strictly Catholic, pro-Pétain and even anti-Semitic. The sodality accepted the risk of harbouring a Jew on the condition that Friedländer would be raised a true Catholic. Pavel Friedländer thus became Paul-Henri Ferland not only in order to hide his background, but to start an entirely new life.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid., p. 56.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

While Friedländer became accustomed to the life of a devout Catholic, his parents tried to escape to Switzerland in a final desperate move. However, they were apprehended at the border and eventually handed over to the Germans, who ensured they were sent to Auschwitz where they were murdered in 1942. Friedländer only learned about the death of his parents after the war from a kindly priest.⁸⁵ He had earnestly adopted Catholicism by then and simply tried to fit in. He recalled, for example, being genuinely concerned for the welfare of Petain, the *maréchal*, and being dismayed about his fall.⁸⁶ When he learned of his origins and his parents' fate, he gave up his desire for a clerical career and left his Catholic environment with a renewed belief in his identity as a Jew.⁸⁷ In 1948 he decided to emigrate to Israel. He lied about his age, forged his identity card and was smuggled via ship into Israel where he eventually secured citizenship.⁸⁸

Jewishness was something indefinable for Friedländer. He disagreed with the idea, formulated by Sartre, that it was anti-Semitism that created the Jew. Friedländer pointed to three thousand years of Jewish history that could not be reduced to the events of World War II. However, he admitted that for a minority of assimilated Jews, including himself, Sartre's words were accurate.⁸⁹ He did not consider his interest in Zionism in an emotional way, but rather considered it the result of logical argument, "a simple line of reasoning that nonetheless in those days seemed to me to be a compelling one."⁹⁰

After his arrival in Israel, Friedländer was taken in for a short time by an uncle and changed his name from Paul to the more Jewish-sounding Shaul (or Saul). He eventually went back to France, to study international relations, at the *Institut d'études politiques* in Paris until

⁸⁵ Johanna Adorján, 'Friedenspreisträger Saul Friedländer: Was ist das eigentlich: jüdisch?' in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14-10-2007.

⁸⁶ Saul Friedländer, 'An Extraordinary Catholic Childhood', *Commentary* Vol. 67 (1979), p. 64.

⁸⁷ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 138.

⁸⁸ Mary Rourke, 'His Life's Work', in *Los Angeles Times*, 23-6-1999.

⁸⁹ Adorján, 'Was ist das eigentlich: jüdisch?'

⁹⁰ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 160.

1955.⁹¹ In 1956, Friedländer briefly moved to Sweden in order to stay and work with his uncle Hans in the Swedish town of Tulsa. His uncle's library influenced him greatly, especially when he started reading the books of Martin Buber on Jewish folklore. These books made Friedländer realise that there was a significant difference in his feelings for Israel and his more basic identification as a Jew. This Jewishness started to take on larger, almost mystical—though not religious—dimensions.⁹²

In Tulsa, Friedländer became acquainted with two Germans who were also working there. One was too young to have experienced the war, but the other was older and had actually fought on the Eastern front. At Friedländer's farewell dinner, the wine flowed more freely than normally and so did tongues. "Half-nostalgic, half-tortured" the older German eventually told Friedländer that he had served in the *Waffen SS*. Friedländer left the room immediately. Looking back on it, he realised that the evening had been like "a brief, violent blow, a warning and an urgent summons to turn toward this chapter of history, for nothing could be forgotten yet, and in fact nothing was over..."⁹³

The events of World War II obviously had an enormous impact on Friedländer's life and his identity. Without the Nazis, Friedländer would have most likely remained a secular Jew much like his father, without any interest in Zionism or a desire to examine his Jewish roots. As he mentioned, his Jewish identity was almost pressed upon him by the Nazis. Whereas this change is rather straightforward, Friedländer did not show any particular interest before his stay in Tulsa to examine the history of this period in a scholarly way. Of course he had a deep personal interest in the history of this period, but it was the shock of being confronted with this past so suddenly that made Friedländer realise he had been trying to avoid dealing with it.

⁹¹ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 1), 17-01-2010.

⁹² Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 103.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

2.2.2 History and politics

Friedländer did not immediately decide to devote his life to the history of the Nazi period and the Holocaust. It was a series of gradual steps in this direction that started with Friedländer's stay at Harvard University shortly after his time in Tulsa. At that time, Friedländer's aim was still to work for the Israeli Foreign Office. Soon after leaving Harvard because of financial difficulties, Friedländer managed to obtain a position as a political secretary to Nahum Goldmann, the president of the World Zionist Organisation and the World Jewish Congress. After this, Friedländer was introduced to Shimon Peres, the Deputy Defence Minister of Israel. Peres took a liking to Friedländer and hired him as his assistant. Although Friedländer worked on several projects he considered important, he realised after a year or so that he was indeed not interested in a bureaucratic career, whether at the World Zionist Organisation or the Israeli Government, and decided to go back to academia.⁹⁴

In 1961 Friedländer managed to secure a fellowship at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, where he quickly completed his PhD in political science, rather than history. He wrote his thesis on the foreign policy of the Third Reich *vis-à-vis* the United States. Although the thesis was technically a political science venture, it was in essence a historical work. "Through the shifting prism of eyewitness accounts, stories, documents in archives, I tried to grasp the meaning of a period and re-establish the coherency of a past, my own."⁹⁵ Though the subject of his dissertation was rather far removed from the extermination of the Jews, the basic link to this period had been laid.

It was impossible to put aside his identity and his own experiences for this project completely, no matter how neutral the wording of final result would eventually appear. This was best exemplified by Friedländer's frequent panic attacks when he to travel to Bonn and

⁹⁴ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 1).

⁹⁵ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 144.

other places in Germany in order to do archival research.⁹⁶ During one of his research trips in Germany, Friedländer had come down with the flu and had to visit a German doctor. When the doctor wanted to create a file for Friedländer and asked him about his parents (whether they were still alive and, if not, what they had died of), Friedländer got so agitated he simply had to get up and leave the office.⁹⁷ An interview with Admiral Dönitz, Hitler's official successor in the last days of the Third Reich, left him similarly unsettled. Without hesitation Dönitz swore on his word of honour as an admiral that he had known absolutely nothing about the extermination of the Jews. Friedländer admitted he felt tired in advance about all the denial.⁹⁸

With his PhD completed, Friedländer managed to secure a place at the same institute he had studied. In 1965, he became an associate professor in Contemporary History and two years later took up a second position in Israel, first in Jerusalem and then in Tel Aviv, dividing his time between the two countries. In the meanwhile, he had published his PhD thesis under the title *Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939-1941* but he had kept his comments strictly confined to an analysis of the "political and military logic."⁹⁹ His next project was a documentary compilation on the wartime pope, Pius XII.¹⁰⁰ As he had once been a staunch catholic due the efforts of the sodality that hid him in France, this subject must have been close to his heart. He had abandoned his dreams of becoming a priest and his Catholic faith when his Jewish origins were revealed to him after the end of the war. Although individual Catholics had indeed helped Jews, like Friedländer, to hide, there had been no official condemnation of the extermination process from the Catholic Church or the pope.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Martin Doerry and Klaus Wiegrefe, 'Interview with Israeli Historian Saul Friedländer', in *Der Spiegel Online*, 10-08-2007; Mark Ehrman, 'It Can't Happen Here (Again): Saul Friedlander receives a peace prize at the Frankfurt Book Fair', in *LA Weekly*, 15-11-2007.

⁹⁷ Pokatzkv, 'Pavel, Paul, Shaul'.

⁹⁸ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 146.

⁹⁹ Saul Friedländer, *Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939-1941* (London, 1967), p. 310.

¹⁰⁰ Saul Friedländer, *Pius XII and the Third Reich: A Documentation*, trans. Charles Fullman (London, 1966 [French 1963]).

¹⁰¹ Pokatzkv, 'Pavel, Paul, Shaul'.

Friedländer's first few books were still relatively traditional works that fit within the established canon of historical scholarship.¹⁰² There was an obvious engagement with themes that were close to his own history, but he always made sure his works adhered to the standards of critical historical scholarship. These earlier works were mostly based on traditional diplomatic sources. His book on Kurt Gerstein¹⁰³ was the first exception to this, but it was fifteen years, with the publication of *Reflections on Nazism* in 1982, before Friedländer published another book that dealt with such an ambiguous topic in a comparable unsettling narrative style.

Most of his other work during this period was instead political rather than historical. One book was written shortly after the end of the Six Day War and discussed the problems of the Israeli state, but also included some comments on Jewish identity and anti-Semitism in Europe and the Arab world.¹⁰⁴ The other was an edited transcript of a dialogue between Friedländer and two Arab intellectuals who went under the single pseudonym of Mahmoud Hussein. Friedländer acted as a representative of those liberal, intellectual Israelis who were willing to engage in a dialogue and Hussein represented a new cohort of young, communist Arab intellectuals.¹⁰⁵ In a political sense, Friedländer was therefore not afraid to showcase his identity. He was actively involved in Middle Eastern politics and during the debate with Mahmoud Hussein openly carried himself as representative of the liberal Zionists in Israel.¹⁰⁶ Friedländer saw himself primarily as a Jew, although one without any religious beliefs.¹⁰⁷

In his early career, Friedländer did not allow his wartime experiences or his Jewish identity to influence openly the way he wrote history, although these did form the basis for his

¹⁰² Machtans, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und autobiographischem Projekt*, p. 39.

¹⁰³ Saul Friedländer, *Counterfeit Nazi: The Ambiguity of Good*, trans. Charles Fullman (London, 1969 [French 1967]).

¹⁰⁴ Saul Friedländer, *Réflexions sur L'Avenir D'Israël* (Paris, 1969), p. 149f.

¹⁰⁵ The debate had originally been broadcasted on television, but was then reworked into book form with an added postscript by the participants. For the recording see *Arabes et Israéliens*, 1975, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/CPB89005481/arabes-et-israeliens.fr.html>> [29-08-2010].

¹⁰⁶ Judith Miller, 'From Dialogue to Deadlock', *Journal of Palestine Studies* Vol. 6 (1976), p. 123.

¹⁰⁷ Ajay Singh, *10 Questions with Saul Friedlander*, 2007, <<http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=79667>> [30-08-2010].

political works. The topics he chose were of course related to his personal interests, but as Edwin Tetlow wrote in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Friedländer “practices the self-effacing zeal of the scholar in letting the facts and documents speak for themselves... All is related carefully and dispassionately. Perhaps the most eloquent tribute one can pay to the author is that unless the reader were told, he would never guess from the book that Saul Friedländer's father and mother were caught by the Nazis in 1942 and killed in Auschwitz.”¹⁰⁸

2.2.3 Subjectivity as method

Friedländer's clash with Broszat was slow in coming. During the 1980s, Friedländer had abandoned his more political work and had started to research the Holocaust in more depth. He had become especially concerned with the future of Holocaust historiography.¹⁰⁹ He was particularly afraid that new approaches in history would leave out the Holocaust entirely from historiography. He referred explicitly to structuralism as one of those approaches.¹¹⁰ His first target, however, was not Martin Broszat. Instead, Friedländer directed his criticism to the British historian Geoffrey Barraclough who, while not an expert on German history, wrote a series of articles on German historiography in the influential *New York Review of Books*. Barraclough believed that German historians should turn away from the political and ideological aspects and focus on the structural changes within German society. For Barraclough, the Holocaust was not an intelligible event and so instead of incorporating it into a new framework to *make* it intelligible, it was simply to be left out as a “singularity:” in no need of explanation and apparently “far less important than some aspects of social mobility

¹⁰⁸ Edwin Tetlow, 'Of Diplomatic Thrust and Counterthrust', in *Christian Science Monitor*, 15-12-1967.

¹⁰⁹ Machtans, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und autobiographischem Projekt*, p. 44.

¹¹⁰ However, he did not identify himself as a pure “intentionalist” either. See Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933-1939: The Years of Persecution* (London, 1998), p. 336.

within contemporary German society.”¹¹¹ The thrust of Barraclough’s idea could very well have come from Broszat, however.

In 1982, Friedländer voiced his concern about Broszat’s narrative of the Holocaust in Broszat’s famous rebuttal of David Irving.¹¹² While Friedländer had only chosen Broszat’s text as an example, this choice nonetheless served to increase the tension between the two of them. In addition, Friedländer repeatedly criticised the structuralist interpretation of the Holocaust that Broszat and Hans Mommsen advocated.¹¹³ While neither of them denied Hitler’s hatred of the Jews, they dismissed the ideological and political elements in favour of more structuralist causes.¹¹⁴ In Friedländer’s opinion, Broszat and Mommsen gave too much weight to the absence of a direct order by Hitler for the extermination of the Jews and ignored the internal logic of the Nazi ideology, which even Broszat had described as deeply anti-Semitic.¹¹⁵ Friedländer saw the extermination of the Jews as fundamental to the Nazi war aims, although he conceded that bureaucratic radicalisation might have played some role in the process.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile Broszat had published several articles that contained the gross of the arguments he would use in his plea. As a result, Friedländer clashed with Broszat in person, most notably during a conference on the Holocaust in Stuttgart in 1984.¹¹⁷ Here, Broszat voiced his belief that the Jewish fear for a “relativisation” of the Holocaust was irrational. Broszat felt that these “emotional” issues had no place in proper scholarly discourse.¹¹⁸ The

¹¹¹ Saul Friedländer, *Some Aspects of the Historical Significance of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 6-7.

¹¹² See chapter 2.5.3 For Broszat’s article, see chapter 5 and Martin Broszat, 'Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung": Aus der Anlaß der Thesen von David Irving', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 25 (1977), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 45-91.

¹¹³ See Philippe Burrin, 'Hitler dans le iiiie reich: Maître ou serviteur? Martin Broszat et l'interprétation fonctionnaliste du régime nazi', *Vingtième Siècle: Revue d'histoire*, No. 16 (1987), p. 38.

¹¹⁴ Saul Friedländer, 'Vom Antisemitismus zur Judenvernichtung' in Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung* (Stuttgart, 1985), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, pp. 24-27.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹⁶ Aschheim, 'On Saul Friedlander', p. 178.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2), 25-01-2010.

¹¹⁸ Saul Friedländer, 'Ein Briefwechsel, Fast Zwanzig Jahre Später' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), pp. 190-191.

confrontation with Broszat, which culminated in the letter exchange, therefore came to represent an important development in Friedländer's own work.

He had become steadily more aware of the problems in current historiography, not only with structuralism but with all other approaches that failed to incorporate the history of the Holocaust and—more importantly—its victims into a larger historical framework. Broszat's comments on rational scholarship versus “mythical” memory had only underlined the urgency to establish an “integrated history of the Holocaust,” as Friedländer came to call it. Therefore, as a direct consequence of the letter exchange Friedländer decided to write this comprehensive, integrated history of the extermination of the Jews by himself.¹¹⁹ In effect, he had reversed Broszat's arguments and was determined to use his own subjectivity and identity as guidelines for his work, instead of denying that it had any influence over him.

Friedländer made the crucial decision to rely on his own reactions to the Jewish diaries and letters that had become available during the 1990s as a consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the resulting wave of translations from Yiddish, Polish and other relatively obscure languages. The sense of unease and amazement that struck Friedländer when he read these accounts made him realise that his personal reaction should not be dismissed as “emotional” or “sensational.” Instead of neutralising the emotional impact, he believed that historians should use these feelings of “unease” and amazement” when writing about the Holocaust. One of the main aims of his work *Nazi Germany and the Jews* was therefore to include the perspective of the Jewish victims in what would be a scholarly work on the Holocaust.¹²⁰

Friedländer claimed that his own experiences enhanced his sensitivity to the material, which would allow him to write a truly integrated history of the Holocaust. Dominick

¹¹⁹ Saul Friedländer, 'An Integrated History of the Holocaust: Possibilities and Challenges' in Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London, 2010), p. 21.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

LaCapra argues that this subjective approach would not lead to any kind of “narcissism or endless self-reflexivity,” but would be able to effectively emphasise the limited nature of the inquiry and the problems that exist for representing and understanding an event such as the Holocaust.¹²¹ Furthermore, Wulf Kansteiner has pointed out that while Friedländer does not examine the motives of the perpetrators in the same way as the victims. However, he adds that “it does not make much political or moral sense to tell the survivor Friedländer, who has written the first truly victim-centred comprehensive history of the holocaust, that he has failed to understand the perpetrators—that, in essence, he lacks historical empathy for the thousands of German and non-German murderers who perhaps held no anti-Semitic views before they embarked on their careers as mass murderers.”¹²² If such an approach would ever be undertaken, that task would belong to someone else.¹²³

In essence, Friedländer decided to write *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, a gargantuan undertaking, because he could see no non-Jewish historians who would be committed enough to write a history of the Holocaust from a Jewish perspective. In fact, non-Jewish historians would perhaps not be able to treat the material with the same sensitivity. This explains why Friedländer so often emphasised the subjective nature of scholarship: the historian is always driven by his personal experiences and motivations. The idea that history could be completely objective was an illusion that could be dangerous if an author never reflected on his own background.¹²⁴ However, Friedländer did not advocate a kind of historical relativism in which the history of a particular group could only be understood and analysed by those on the inside.

¹²¹ Dominick LaCapra, 'Lanzmann's "Shoah": "Here There Is No Why"', *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 23 (1997), p. 242.

¹²² Kansteiner, 'Success, Truth and Modernism in Holocaust Historiography', p. 50.

¹²³ Arguably, Christopher Browning's book *Ordinary Men* could be considered a prototype of such an approach. See Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (London, 2001 [1992]).

¹²⁴ Irmtrud Wojak, *Das Dritte Reich und die Juden. Die Jahre der Verfolgung 1933–1939: Ein Gespräch mit Prof. Dr. Saul Friedländer*, 1998, <http://www.fritz-bauer-institut.de/texte/gespraech/gespraech_friedlaender_9-98.htm> [7-5-2010].

He always cautioned that historians should muster enough self-critical insight to restrain their own bias.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Saul Friedländer, 'Eine integrierte Geschichte des Holocaust', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 14/15 (2007), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, pp. 7-8.

3 History, memory and narrative construction

3.1 *Broszat*

What did Broszat understand by rational scholarship and “mythical memory”? The dichotomy Broszat proposed was perhaps the most controversial element in the Broszat-Friedländer exchange. Friedländer was certainly offended by what he considered to be the dismissal of Jewish memories.¹ Broszat was careful, however, to emphasise that he did not make a distinction between German rationality and Jewish mysticism, but between rational scholarship and mythical memory in general.

In this chapter I will examine Broszat’s notions of both memory and history. Broszat’s conception of memory can be traced back to professional experiences with testimonies and memoirs, but why was Broszat so dismissive of testimonies? In the two sections following, I will analyse Broszat’s views on historical scholarship. For my purposes, Broszat’s scholarly work can be divided into roughly three periods: from the start of his career until the early 1960s, from the 1960s to 1979, and finally until his death in 1989. The first period was centred on factual investigation, the second one on explanation and the third on popularisation. There are notable changes in his work, but there are also continuities: in particular, his critique of German historicism is present throughout all three phases. I will first outline these phases, then discuss his critique of historicism and finally examine how Broszat’s own work compared to the historicism he opposed.

¹ Doerry and Wiegrefe, 'Interview with Israeli Historian Saul Friedländer'.

3.1.1 Testimonies and memoirs

As a historian, Broszat dealt with “memory” mostly in the form of testimonies and memoirs. His generation was the first to deal with testimonies of this kind on a large scale. Traditionally, historians had mostly relied on government documents and diplomatic correspondences. Oral history as a field did not exist before the 1940s and only gained widespread attention from the 1970s onward. Theodor Schieder’s project on the German expulsion from the East, on which Broszat worked after completing his PhD, relied on the testimonies of Germans who had been driven from their lands during and shortly after the war. According to Mathias Beer, Broszat’s experience with these testimonies had left him with little confidence in people’s memories.² Broszat did not believe that the subjective experiences of one person would automatically be of “historical importance.”³ Only in great numbers could testimonies provide useful information and even then Broszat cautioned that many of the witnesses had been so affected by their ordeal that they “lacked the distance necessary to compose a sober and factual testimony.”⁴ Besides, since the testimonies were usually taken several years after the events, most witnesses were not able to describe events accurately and therefore mixed up places, dates and names.⁵

As a result of his work on the reports which the Institute provided to German courts, Broszat’s distrust of subjective accounts was further increased. In interviews with former Nazi officials or party members, Broszat became tired of their self-serving denials.⁶ The most spectacular case that Broszat dealt with was the autobiography of the

² Beer, 'Dokumentation der Vertreibung', p. 47.

³ Martin Broszat, 'Massendokumentation als Methode zeitgeschichtlicher Forschung', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 2 (1954), p. 205.

⁴ Ibid. p. 206.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 208-209.

⁶ Interview with Norbert Frei.

commander of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höß (which Broszat published for a wider public). Höß' memoir revealed how people could distort their memories and their perception of events.⁷

In fact, Broszat criticised William Shirer's history of the Third Reich on similar grounds. Shirer had been an American correspondent in Germany before and during the war and had experienced most of the events from a short distance. While Shirer's book was certainly not a memoir, Broszat felt that Shirer failed to provide critical scholarship and had let his experiences determine explanations. Shirer frequently used the impressions from his time as a reporter to construct his arguments. For example, he used his personal judgements on "national characters" as historical explanations: the Germans were "naturally" militaristic, while the Poles had deep flaws in their national psyche that contributed to their quick defeat.⁸ Broszat argued that Shirer's proximity to the events and the strong impression they had made on him had clouded his judgement⁹ and accused him of using official documents only to confirm "what he already knew."¹⁰

Broszat insisted that *Zeitgeschichte* could not allow the history of Nazism to be dominated by the subjective memories of its contemporaries or the "legends" they had created.¹¹ In fact, Broszat thought that the lack of consensus on the Nazi period as a whole could be attributed to the various "myths" that had been created by those who had lived through events and were still shocked by their "incomprehensible and

⁷ See Broszat's introductory remarks in Martin Broszat (ed.) *Kommandant in Auschwitz: Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen des Rudolf Höß* (Munich, 2008 [1958]), p. 7ff. Höß had been more forthcoming about admitting mass-murder than most Germans involved, which perhaps made Broszat question the testimonies of the other Nazi officials all the more.

⁸ Martin Broszat, 'William Shirer und die Geschichte des Dritten Reiches', *Historische Zeitschrift* Vol. 196 (1963), pp. 115-116.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 122.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 116.

¹¹ Martin Broszat, 'Grenzen der Wertneutralität in der Zeitgeschichtsforschung: Der Historiker und der Nationalsozialismus: Vortrag im Rahmen der Ringvorlesung "Ethos und Verantwortung in der Wissenschaft" der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 14. Juli 1981', (1981), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, p. 162.

traumatic” experiences.¹² These myths precluded a rational investigation of this period. Essentially, Broszat was wary of *any* kind of testimony or memoir, regardless of whether these were provided by Jews or Germans.

He claimed that testimonies were not reliable or accurate enough to support a thorough historical investigation. Testimonies could still be useful in situations in which traditional sources were either not available or not comprehensive enough.¹³ However, he did not consider them as useful or reliable as government documents. Memoirs were even more distorted, since they were often censored by the author. He believed that a cunning author would always be able to twist the material in such a way that it served his own needs, even if he ostensibly used archival documents to support his case.¹⁴

Although Broszat was careful not to dismiss Jewish memories of the Holocaust outright, he nonetheless believed that such personal accounts were necessarily influenced by emotions rather than critical reflection, in particular when the experiences had been so brutal. Furthermore, his work with testimonies and memoirs had convinced him that anyone who was close to the events would always try to alter their story to suit current needs, consciously or unconsciously. Broszat admitted that personal “myths” might have been necessary as a form of emotional and psychological self-defence, but he argued that these “myths” also prevented a critical examination of the facts.

¹² Ibid. p. 163.

¹³ Broszat, 'Massendokumentation als Methode zeitgeschichtlicher Forschung', pp. 203-204.

¹⁴ See Broszat's critique of Albert Speer's use of official documents in the latter's memoirs. Martin Broszat, 'Zwiespältige Distanz zur Vergangenheit: Der Mitakteur als Geschichtsschreiber: Das Ringen von Wirtschaftsführern und Parteibefehlshabern im Dritten Reich', in *Die Zeit*, 8-5-1981.

3.1.2 Investigation, explanation, popularisation

Broszat's opinion on historical scholarship is perhaps even more multifaceted, although his ideas changed significantly over time. Until the early 1960s Broszat was mostly concerned with factual investigation rather than analytical explanation. As already mentioned, Broszat spent most of his time investigating subjects in which the German courts were interested. Some of the reports Broszat wrote were published in scholarly journals,¹⁵ but their primary function was to serve as evidence in official trials. Since the fate of the accused was sometimes determined by the reports of the Institute, all evidence needed to be presented "rationally and dispassionately."¹⁶ Even when massive atrocities were involved, the courts demanded facts and not evaluations.¹⁷ As a result, for most of the 1950s the energy of the Institute was channelled into preparing these reports, meaning there was little time left for other research.¹⁸

Broszat's articles during this period were mostly limited to documentations. Even his book-sized publication on Poland during the Nazi occupation was presented as a "documentation" rather than a scholarly monograph.¹⁹ Broszat's comments on methodology were limited and mostly restricted to affirming that history should eschew emotionality and sensationalism and focus on providing rational explanations.²⁰

In the early 1960s, however, Broszat's work began to transcend mere factual investigation. During this period he focused on the explanation of larger themes. His

¹⁵ See Rothfels' introductory comment in Martin Broszat, 'Die memeldeutschen Organisationen und der Nationalsozialismus 1933-1939', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 5 (1957), p. 273.

¹⁶ Helmut Krausnick and Martin Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State*, trans. Dorothy Long and Marian Jackson (St Albans, 1973), p. 15.

¹⁷ Möller, 'Das Institut für Zeitgeschichte', p. 5.

¹⁸ Hans Buchheim and Hermann Graml, 'Die fünfziger Jahre: Zwei Erfahrungsberichte' in Horst Möller (ed.), *50 Jahre Institut für Zeitgeschichte: Ein Bilanz* (Munich, 1999), p. 72.

¹⁹ See the section "Über dieses Buch" on the second page of Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*.

²⁰ E.g. Broszat, 'Massendokumentation als Methode zeitgeschichtlicher Forschung', pp. 205-206; Martin Broszat, 'Zum Streit um den Reichstagsbrand: Eine grundsätzliche Erörterung', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 8 (1960), pp. 278-279; Broszat, *Nationalsozialistische Polenpolitik*, p. 9.

first major work that tried to accomplish this was a study of Nazi ideology. In the preface to the English edition of the book, Peter Merkl made it clear that Broszat would not discuss the specific political events that led to Hitler's rise to power, but that he aimed to uncover the essential characteristics of the Nazi movement and use those as an explanation for the success of the movement.²¹

Ideology, however, was not a major factor in Broszat's explanation. He believed that the Nazi ideology was almost wholly opportunistic as well as nihilistic and thus lacked real explanatory value. He followed up on this argument in his most influential work published during this period, titled *The Hitler State*. In this book, he sought to explain how the decision-making process in the Third Reich functioned by analysing its internal structures.²² Again, Broszat questioned the idea of the Nazi state as a monolithic, ideology-driven entity. He believed that the internal power-struggles of the various Nazi organisations and ministries could explain the changes in Third Reich better than the Nazi ideology or the role of Hitler. Some of these ideas found their way into the collaborative project on resistance in Bavaria during the Nazi period, which Broszat co-ordinated. Although the aim of the project was ostensibly to explain the behaviour of common people, Broszat introduced the concept of *Resistenz* in order to explicate further the limited nature of Nazi power and influence.²³

After 1979 and the television series "Holocaust," (see chapter 2) Broszat became convinced that detailed examinations of the Nazi past were not enough: the history of this past needed to be popularised. He realized that the presentation of historical

²¹ Martin Broszat, *German National Socialism, 1919-1945*, trans. Kurt Rosenbaum and Inge Pauli Boehm (Santa Barbara, 1966 [German 1960]), p. 4.

²² Martin Broszat, *The Hitler State: The foundation and development of the internal structure of the Third Reich*, trans. John W. Hiden (London, 1981 [German 1969]), pp. ix-x.

²³ Martin Broszat and Elke Fröhlich, *Alltag und Widerstand: Bayern im National-Sozialismus* (Munich, 1987), p. 49.

scholarship was nearly as important as its findings, were they to have any meaning outside academia. Broszat believed that historicisation would increase the public engagement with the Nazi past. Instead of treating the history of the Third Reich as a depository of “moral lessons”, he wanted to create a nuanced view of the period that would not depict the various historical actors as caricatures, or reduce events to parables. For that reason, Broszat decided to adapt his writing style, relying more on traditional narrative structures and less on abstract analyses. Volker Berghahn described one of Broszat’s last books, which dealt with Hitler’s ascension to power, “deliberately move[ing] away from the high-level structural analyses, so typical of much of modern German scholarship” at the time.²⁴

3.1.3 Historicisation and historism

One major element of continuity in Broszat’s career was his criticism of the German historian tradition.²⁵ Instead of “historism,” the term “historicism” is usually preferred in English-language literature. However, in the English language, historicism refers to two very different approaches: the first claims that history is working toward a particular end or according to predetermined laws. The other approach, represented above all by the 19th century German historian Leopold von Ranke, aims to understand all historical events within their own context. Following Stefan Berger, I will label the first approach “historicism” and the latter “historism.”²⁶

²⁴ From the foreword by Berghahn. Martin Broszat, *Hitler and the Collapse of Weimar Germany*, trans. Volker R. Berghahn (New York, 1987 [German 1984]), p. viii.

²⁵ His earliest criticism can be found in Broszat, 'William Shirer und die Geschichte des Dritten Reiches', p. 123. and his latest in Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?' p. 2ff.

²⁶ Berger, *The Search for Normality*, p. 3.

Historism contains the belief that a historical interpretation is derived from the past itself. Coaxing the “accurate” interpretation from the events becomes the goal of historical scholarship, essentially unifying factual investigation and analytical interpretation.²⁷ Ranke famously argued that history was the study of the “wie es eigentlich gewesen.” This last phrase has been translated as “how it actually was” or how it essentially was.”²⁸ However, Berger emphasises that historism may encompass various, if related tenets. First, it may hold that a given society can only be understood by examining its historical development. Second, it may posit that “empathic understanding” is the only basis for grasping historical developments. Third it may conceive of history as consisting of evolutionary developments, which could not be judged normatively. Each period in history was “immediate to God” and could only be understood in its own terms.²⁹

As a result, many historian scholars in the late 19th century, especially in Prussia and the German Empire, focused on the history of the victors and discarded the perspective of the “losers” as irrelevant. Their approach depended on empathic understanding and identification and was usually associated with narratives of state building and foreign policy.³⁰ Broszat’s criticism of “historism” was specifically targeted at the 19th century German version of historism. He believed that this “historism” could only lead to an uncritical glorification of the German past. He was

²⁷ Chris Lorenz, *De constructie van het verleden: Een inleiding in de theorie van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam, 2002), p. 252.

²⁸ In the former sentence the emphasis is put on objectivity, in the latter on interpretation. See G.G. Iggers, 'Introduction' in G.G. Iggers and K. von Moltke (eds.), *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis, 1973), pp. xli-xlii.

²⁹ Michael Bentley, 'Approaches to Modernity: Western Historiography since the Enlightenment' in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 2006), p. 419f; Berger, *The Search for Normality*, pp. 3-4; Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History* (London, 2008), p. 293f.

³⁰ Most famously associated with Heinrich von Treitschke. See Jane Caplan, 'The Historiography of National Socialism' in Michael Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 2006), p. 546.

particularly concerned with the influence of historism in the wake of the election of the Kohl government in the early 1980s.³¹

By the time Broszat wrote his plea for historicisation, historism in its various forms had typically been represented by liberal-conservative historians such as Andreas Hillgruber, Klaus Hildebrand, Golo Mann, Konrad Repgen and Thomas Nipperdey. They were not a homogenous group, but agreed on three principles. First, they argued that from the 1960s onward left-liberals had imposed their own paradigm of political correctness on the historical profession and threatened academic freedom. Second, most of them saw history as distinct from other academic subjects and advocated the need to draw a line between history and the social sciences; particularly because they wanted to limit the advance of Marxist paradigms from social sciences such as sociology, economics and political science. Lastly, and related to these previous points, they were imbued by the ideal of scholarly objectivity, emphatically drawing a line between historical scholarship on the one hand, and the political attitudes of its producers on the other.³²

In the first phase of Broszat's work, until the early 1960s, Broszat laid much emphasis on an unemotional, sober analysis that would run counter to the role of empathy in his understanding of "historism." This insistence on professional behaviour was intended to create a division between traditional German historians such as Gerhard Ritter and Friedrich Meinecke on the one hand, and, on the other, the young discipline of *Zeitgeschichte*. To dissociate himself from these well-established elder historians, Broszat argued that *Zeitgeschichte* was the direct opposite of "historism."³³ Where the

³¹ See the extensive quote of a speech by Broszat in Hartmut Pankus, "'Mitten in Europa'" Einbändige Deutsche Geschichte bei Siedler: Man trägt wieder deutsche Geschichte', in *Börsenblatt*, 9-11-1984.

³² Berger, *The Search for Normality*, p. 78.

³³ Meier, 'Der Historiker Martin Broszat', p. 13.

former was critical and analytical, the latter was merely empathetic and descriptive. Broszat, for example, criticised Ritter for his biography of the mayor of Leipzig, Carl Goerdeler, who had spoken out against the Nazis in 1937. In Ritter's work Goerdeler represented the conservative resistance to Hitler. Broszat argued that this image of the "other Germany," supposedly uninfluenced by Nazism, was highly deceptive. Before 1937, Goerdeler had in fact actively supported the expulsion of the Jews from public life and enthusiastically endorsed the Nurnberg Laws.³⁴

There is no clear philosophy that guided Broszat through the second phase, apart from his continued opposition to what he saw as "incorrect" interpretations, which were either advanced by traditional historians such as Ritter but also Hans Rothfels, or informed by general theories of fascism and totalitarianism.³⁵ His critical commentary in this phase consisted mostly of disproving specific arguments and methods.³⁶ Though Broszat made no clear statement on the nature of history or scholarship, his main line of thought seems to be that the history of the Nazi past should be examined in a careful and nuanced manner rather than relying on theoretical models.³⁷ He believed that the specifics would always disprove sweeping theories, which made him question the value of large interpretative frameworks.³⁸

While his own work has been classified as "structuralist," Broszat never saw himself as belonging to any particular school of thought: rather, he believed that

³⁴ Broszat, 'Plädoyer für eine Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', p. 278.

³⁵ Lorenz, 'Is het Derde Rijk al geschiedenis?'

³⁶ E.g. correcting the idealised image of the conservative German resistance. See Martin Broszat, 'Resistenz und Widerstand: Eine Zwischenbilanz des Forschungsprojektes "Widerstand und Verfolgung in Bayern 1933 bis 1945"' in Martin Broszat, Elke Fröhlich and Anton Grossmann (eds.), *Bayern in der NS-Zeit, Band 4: Herrschaft und Gesellschaft im Konflikt* (Munich, 1981), p. 691f.

³⁷ E.g. Broszat, *German National Socialism, 1919-1945*, pp. 4-5; Martin Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung des Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 18 (1970), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 12-13; Broszat, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik*, p. 18; Broszat, *The Hitler State*, p. xif.

³⁸ *Totalitarismus und Faschismus: Eine wissenschaftliche und politische Begriffskontroverse* p. 32f.

explanations could be found in the material itself.³⁹ In his mind, historical scholarship had little to do with theoretical models. He was in fact disinterested in theory.⁴⁰ His articles included few footnotes or citations in which theoretical problems were outlined. In his prefaces or introductions, he sometimes mentioned previously published work on the subject, but his comments remained on a relatively superficial level.⁴¹ He could therefore examine the high politics and machinations of the Nazi leadership in one work and switch to an analysis of everyday life in Bavaria in his next project, without seeing any contradiction or clashes of interpretation.⁴² The concepts that he did develop, such as *Resistenz*, mostly fed on an intuitive understanding of the material.⁴³ This and Broszat's clear preference for official documents suggests he might have been closer to the historicist position than he realised. Indeed, his criticism was essentially focused on just one particular tent of historicism, perhaps best represented by the work of the Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke. Broszat never explicitly reflected on his methodology or explained what his definition of "historicism" actually entailed.

From 1979 onwards, Broszat came to believe that historians could be allowed to have an "empathic identification ... with the victims, but also with the wrongly invested efforts and virtues in this 'dark' chapter of German history" without compromising

³⁹ Interview with Norbert Frei.

⁴⁰ Several of his colleagues emphasise this. See Interview with Hans Mommsen; Interview with Norbert Frei; Meier, 'Der Historiker Martin Broszat', p. 34.

⁴¹ E.g. he discussed the work of Fraenkel, Neumann and Arendt in the preface to the English edition of *The Hitler State*, but his remarks were confined to only two paragraphs and remained rather generic. Broszat, *The Hitler State*, p. xii.

⁴² However, Hans Mommsen argues that in both cases Broszat was interested in the underlying processes rather than in a real *Alltagsgeschichte*. Interview with Hans Mommsen.. Mommsen's comments are partially supported by Michael Wildt, who has pointed out that Broszat was quick to abandon any talk of "history from below" in favour of a defence of the concept of *Resistenz* and a deconstruction of the concept of totalitarianism. See Michael Wildt, 'Das "Bayern Projekt", die Alltagsforschung und die "Volksgemeinschaft"' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), p. 122.

⁴³ Interview with Norbert Frei.

critical understanding.⁴⁴ Broszat referred to his idea that there were many developments within the Nazi period that were not necessarily influenced by the Nazi regime or its ideology. Some historical developments could therefore be “saved” and perhaps even dissociated from the overall negative judgement. He argued that so much time had past since the end of the war that there was no reason to “hold back” any longer from identification with this past. This would allow historians to “narrate” the history of the Nazi past as “authentically” as possible.⁴⁵ Essentially, Broszat called for Germans to “identify” with the Nazi past again, though he was careful to stress that this identification was by no means meant to entail a positive value-judgment.⁴⁶

Broszat advanced his own idea of a nuanced “identification” through historicisation as an alternative to the naïve identification that he believed was presented by “historist” scholars.⁴⁷ He feared that historians were falling back on 19th-century historicism, once again donning the vestments of “secular priests” (*säkularer Priester*) who served the needs of the state.⁴⁸ He saw his concept of historicisation as offering a convincing alternative to “historist” interpretations, suitable to avoid the mistakes that were built in the “moralistic” and “pedagogic” interpretation of the Nazi past. Broszat was searching for a historical “identification” that, contrary to historicism, would preserve a “critical sensibility.”⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Martin Broszat, 'Eine Insel in der Geschichte? Der Historiker in der Spannung zwischen Verstehen und Bewerten der Hitler-Zeit', in *SZ am Wochenende*, 7/8-5-1983.

⁴⁵ Martin Broszat, 'Der Despot von München: Gauleiter Adolf-Wagner – eine Zentralfigur der bayerischen NS-Geschichte', in *SZ am Wochenende*, 30/31-3-1985.

⁴⁶ , Transcript of interview with Martin Broszat in "Lesezeichen".

⁴⁷ Broszat, 'Eine Insel in der Geschichte?'; Martin Broszat, "Wem gehört die deutsche Geschichte?" *Kulturkommentar*, aired 5-10-1986 on Bayerischer Rundfunk, transcript reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, p. 310.

⁴⁸ Martin Broszat, 'Die Ambivalenz der Forderung nach mehr Geschichtsbewußtsein', *Vortrag bei den 13. Römerberg-Gesprächen in Frankfurt am Main zum Thema "Politische Kultur - Heute?"*, 6. Juni 1986 (1986), p. 287.

⁴⁹ Broszat, 'Was kann das heißen: Konservative Wende?'

Despite Broszat's repeated insistence that his understanding of historicisation was opposed to "historism," historicist scholars had embraced Broszat's historicisation concept so enthusiastically that Friedländer questioned whether there was any significant difference between the two.⁵⁰ First of all, in his plea for historicisation Broszat had called for an end to the "indiscriminate distancing" as well as a return to a narrative style in which the author could take "delight." These demands could easily be read as a return to empathy and narrative as guiding principles for historical writing. Secondly, Broszat had opposed the "moral blockade" of the Nazi past and condemned the "moralising" interpretations that he believed dominated popular consciousness. It is not very surprising that historicist scholars saw in this argument a rejection of left-liberal paradigms and a call to end political interference in scholarly research.

Evidently, Broszat had failed to dissociate his historicisation plea from the historicist tradition he meant to eschew. Not only did his opponents adopt his arguments, he also alienated some of his left-liberal colleagues and friends because they felt uncomfortable with his plea. Hans Mommsen, Ian Kershaw and Lutz Niethammer all thought that the plea was not typical of Broszat's thinking. They believed that his plea was an anomaly in the continuum of his historical writing.⁵¹ This argument is hardly sustainable, however, as Broszat repeatedly outlined the basic features of his plea from 1979 onwards.⁵² More importantly, he even published an article *after* his exchange with Friedländer in which he restated most of his arguments, only slightly modified.⁵³ Broszat's friends such as Mommsen, Kershaw and Niethammer apparently consider the

⁵⁰ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus"', p. 101.

⁵¹ See the discussion in Frei (ed.) *Martin Broszat*, p. 195.

⁵² E.g. Broszat, 'Eine Insel in der Geschichte?'; Broszat, 'Was kann das heißen: Konservative Wende?'; Martin Broszat, 'Probleme der Hitler-Forschung: Einführung zu Ian Kershaw, Der Hitler-Mythos: Volksmeinung und Propaganda im Dritten Reich', (1980), reprinted in *Nach Hitler*, p. 121f; Broszat, 'Grenzen der Wertneutralität in der Zeitgeschichtsforschung'.

⁵³ Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?'.

author of *The Hitler State* and the director of the Bavaria project as the “real” Broszat. They have either not followed, or have failed to take into consideration, or indeed have failed to realize the rationale, of Broszat’s line of thinking from 1979 onwards.

Admittedly, Broszat’s notions of historical writing were rather confusing at times, and the terms he used were often ill-defined. In particular, he never sufficiently defined the term “historicisation.” The choice of the term itself remains a mystery. He used it in several articles from 1979 onwards, but Broszat never explained his choice of wording. This is all the more mystifying considering the term’s close relationship with the historiographical strand(s) of “historism”—which, after all, Broszat had consistently criticised from the 1960s onwards. Unfortunately, Broszat’s personal papers have not been made accessible to the public as yet. Once these have been processed and made available for research, historians might be able to shed more light on this matter.

3.2 Friedländer

What was the role of memory in historical writing according to Friedländer? “Memory” is often mentioned in his work and features particularly prominently in his *Nazi Germany and the Jews*. Friedländer was particularly troubled by Broszat’s seeming disregard for the memories of the victims.⁵⁴ However, his own views on memory and its relation to historical scholarship were never discussed in the letter exchange. In order to clarify Friedländer’s position and his reaction to Broszat, I will first examine Friedländer’s general ideas on the dichotomy between history and memory. The second section is devoted more specifically to Friedländer’s use of testimonies in his academic work. The memories of the victims play a key role in *Nazi Germany and the Jews* and

⁵⁴ Doerry and Wiegrefe, 'Interview with Israeli Historian Saul Friedländer'.

Friedländer has acknowledged that he wrote this book as a direct response to Broszat. In the last section, I will explain how Friedländer's experiences during the war influenced his use of testimonies and the way he constructed the historical narrative in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*.

3.2.1 *Memory vs. history*

Friedländer believed that history and memory were essentially antithetical, but argued that they nonetheless formed a continuum. "Dispassionate" scholarship was situated on one end of the spectrum and "public-collective memory" on the other, but all historical writing fell somewhere in between these two poles. "Dispassionate scholarship" dealt with the areas of history that had lost immediate relevance to the present and was mostly debated by a small group of interested individuals, such as professional historians. "Public-collective memory," on the other hand, was of high relevance to the present, as it consisted of rituals and symbols that referred to the collective past of a group, often forming the basis of that group's self-identification. However, when professional historians wished to interpret and understand the collective identity of a larger group, such as a nation or an ethnic community, their work would invariably contain elements of both scholarship and public memory,⁵⁵ creating a synthesis which Friedländer called "historical consciousness." Historical consciousness was not based on pure professional scholarship, but neither was it wholly an emotional or symbolic approach towards the past. The work of influential writers and filmmakers that tackled

⁵⁵ Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, 1993), p. viii.

sensitive issues in the recent past also contributed to the creation of this historical consciousness.⁵⁶

Friedländer did not, however, believe that the historians were therefore the “guardian of memory.”⁵⁷ He maintained that, at least in theory, the aim of historical writing was to provide rational explanations, just as Broszat argued. Yet although historians should *aim* for rational explanations, Friedländer claimed that this could not always be achieved in practice, just as the maxim of complete objectivity and neutrality; especially not when dealing with the history of mass atrocities.⁵⁸

Friedländer believed that “when the past and present remain[ed] interwoven, there [was] no clear dichotomy between history and memory.”⁵⁹ As a consequence, Friedländer argued that there could be no major historiographical change without corresponding shifts in public memory: in fact, the *Historikerstreit* provided an excellent example on how the past could still influence present academic debates. To begin with, public memory was not something that could be controlled or manipulated by any single person, no matter how influential.⁶⁰ Friedländer also argued historians were just as much influenced by public memory as anyone else. Historians engaging in critical scholarship and academic debates necessarily interacted with the public memory of their own societies, consciously or not.⁶¹ As a result, Friedländer’s conception of historical scholarship was somewhat paradoxical. The historian’s influence was both

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. viii-ix.

⁵⁷ Saul Friedländer, 'History, Memory, and the Historian: Dilemmas and Responsibilities', *New German Critique*, No. 80 (2000), p. 13.

⁵⁸ Friedländer, *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, p. x.

⁵⁹ Saul Friedländer, 'A Conflict of Memories? The New German Debates about the "Final Solution"', *Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture* (1987), reprinted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, p. 38.

⁶⁰ Saul Friedländer, 'The End of Innovation? Contemporary Historical Consciousness and the "End of History"', *SubStance* Vol. 19 (1990), p. 31.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 30; Saul Friedländer, 'Martin Broszat und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus' in Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Claudio Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit: Martin Broszat, das Institut für Zeitgeschichte und die Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1991), p. 168.

limited and restrained by public memories but was at the same time “central” to changing the perception of the past—and thus public memory.⁶²

Despite these reservations, Friedländer set out to influence the public memory of the Holocaust by writing a comprehensive and integrated history of the extermination of the Jews. He lamented that the Holocaust had not been integrated into an overall framework: only the perspective of the perpetrators had been critically examined and had become part of German historical consciousness.⁶³ He wanted to let the voices of the victims become part of both the historiography and the public memory of the Nazi past.⁶⁴ This led to his most famous work, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, which was published in two volumes: the first one in 1997 and the second one ten years later in 2007.⁶⁵

3.2.2 Testimonies

Nazi Germany and the Jews was characterised by the testimonies of victims that repeatedly narrowed the “distance” between the reader and the events of the Holocaust. In a remarkable parallel to Broszat, Friedländer feared that the history of the Holocaust had been reduced to empty rituals, intended to offer solace and perhaps redemption.⁶⁶ But where Broszat aimed to narrow the distance between younger Germans and the history of the Nazi past, Friedländer attempted to disrupt the “domestication” (i.e. “to

⁶² Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, p. 1.

⁶³ Saul Friedländer, 'The Shoah in Present Historical Consciousness', *The Daniel E. Koshland Memorial Lecture* (1990), reprinted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, p. 2.

⁶⁵ The German version of the second volume was actually released in 2006 even though the original was written in English. For details see Machtans, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und autobiographischem Projekt*, p. 64f.

⁶⁶ Friedländer, 'The Shoah in Present Historical Consciousness', p. 48.

preserve the jarring dissonance of human history”⁶⁷) of the Holocaust and “puncture” the “smug detachment” of the scholar.⁶⁸ In order to reintroduce genuine concern and engagement with the history of the Holocaust, Friedländer felt that the reader should be confronted with some of the most harrowing testimonies from the victims of the Nazi regime.⁶⁹

In order to accomplish this goal, Friedländer had to rely on a great variety of diaries, letters, testimonies and memoirs. Many of the testimonies that Friedländer used had languished in obscurity either because they had not been translated or had lain forgotten in an attic. Only a few exceptional testimonies and diaries had reached a wider audience, with Anne Frank’s diary being the most famous example. In *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Friedländer focused on the diaries and letters of authors that had not survived the war or who had never meant to publish them. Friedländer was afraid that in memoirs, written after the events, authors had succumbed to the temptation of reorganising experiences and events in a way that allowed the construction of a coherent personal account. Even though the less eloquent testimonies and diaries were not always accurate in their descriptions of events or places, Friedländer believed this could sometimes be interpreted as a sign of their authenticity, both in the sense that they were not fabricated, but also in that they accurately reflected the emotions and development of the author.⁷⁰

In memoirs or diaries that had been altered after the war, conflicting descriptions, unclear ideas and frequent changes in emotion or opinion were often altered after the

⁶⁷ Betts and Wiese, 'Introduction', p. 10.

⁶⁸ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York, 2008), p. xxvi.

⁶⁹ Friedländer, 'History, Memory, and the Historian', p. 5.

⁷⁰ Deborah Lipstadt, *Dr. Deborah Lipstadt Interviews Dr. Saul Friedländer*, 2009, <<http://www.hdot.org/en/learning/podcasts/friedlander>> [7-5-2010].

events. Changes like these created a more coherent narrative, but also obscured the immediate impressions that betrayed a sense of chaos and the victims' uncertainties—a central aspect which Friedländer sought to include in his historical narrative.⁷¹ He believed that the historian should combat attempts at closure and resist the temptation to write a comforting, healing epilogue to the Holocaust.⁷² The historian's role was to reintroduce “complexity, ambiguity and indetermination” into what Friedländer saw as “simplified representations of the past.”⁷³ Moreover, he argued that the voices and memories of the victims would need to “puncture” the “normality” of everyday life. Friedländer considered this especially important for the early years of the Nazi regime when large parts of everyday life could still be considered relatively “normal.”⁷⁴ In essence, he wanted to offer an alternative to the type of *Alltagsgeschichte* that Broszat had advocated.⁷⁵

Although Friedländer pioneered the use of Holocaust victim testimonies, he nonetheless treated all the various diaries, letters and memoirs as regular historical sources. Just as with any other document, they had to be examined carefully and their veracity established before they could be used as evidence.⁷⁶ As he pointed out in the interview that I conducted in January 2010, he did not think that “ego-sources” differed in any significant way from other sources of historical scholarship and should be treated with the same critical professionalism.⁷⁷ Furthermore, although testimonies formed

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Saul Friedländer, 'Die "Endlösung": Über das Unbehagen in der Geschichtsdeutung' in Walter H. Pehle (ed.), *Der historische Ort des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1990), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, p. 152.

⁷³ Friedländer, 'History, Memory, and the Historian', p. 14.

⁷⁴ Saul Friedländer, 'Trauma and Transference', *History and Memory* Vol. 4 (1992), reprinted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews*, p. 132.

⁷⁵ Friedländer believed that Broszat's view of *Alltagsgeschichte* was exemplified in Edgar Reitz's TV-series *Heimat*. See Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

⁷⁶ Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 15.

⁷⁷ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

perhaps the most important element in Friedländer's work, their application was necessarily limited. A great part of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* is thus based on more traditional source-material. For example, victim testimonies could rarely be used "to explain the inner dynamics of Nazi persecutions and exterminations," which meant that Friedländer had to rely extensively on the standard perpetrator-oriented documents.⁷⁸

He did not, however, attempt to include the perspective of the perpetrators in the same way as he had dealt with the testimonies of the victims. He often quoted the words of Hitler, Goebbels, Heydrich and other Nazi functionaries in order to clarify the decision-making process in the Third Reich, but he consciously veered away from an in-depth analysis of their psychology or motivation. In fact, Wolf Gruner claimed that Friedländer attributed the persecution of the Jews to an "abstract anti-Jewish force" but often did not mention "concrete institution[s] or people."⁷⁹ In Gruner's view, Friedländer had not been able to provide a compelling framework in which the diverse motives of the perpetrators could be embedded.⁸⁰

3.2.3 *Memory and narrative*

Friedländer's usage of testimony in his integrated history of the Holocaust has been widely acclaimed as groundbreaking. Certain techniques applied to *Nazi Germany and the Jews* could already be seen in Friedländer's memoirs (titled *When Memory Comes*). Both works essentially use memory as a mechanism to disrupt a linear narrative. The

⁷⁸ Friedländer, 'History, Memory, and the Historian', p. 15.

⁷⁹ Wolf Gruner, 'The History of the Holocaust: Multiple Actors, Diverse Motives, Contradictory Developments and Disparate (Re)actions' in Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London, 2010), p. 325.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 326. Gruner did not exactly criticise Friedländer, but rather argued that this was an area which was not covered in *Nazi Germany and the Jews* and would need to be explored in more depth in future publications.

use of testimonies did not only emerge from Friedländer's concern with the remembrance of Holocaust on a societal level, but was also influenced by his remembrance of his experiences during the Second World War.

Friedländer made several attempts over the years to transform part of his childhood memories into a book, but he was never satisfied with the results until he finally finished his book in 1978. He was determined to resist the temptation of writing a coherent story about his experiences. Leon Wieseltier has argued that, apparently, "dissolution triumphs" in Friedländer's book: "The pieces of memory do not cohere. ... Friedländer's life remains disrupted, despoiled of its dreams; not least because of the honesty with which he has attempted to discover what the death of the Jews might mean."⁸¹

Friedländer's memoirs not only contained a description of events, but also a reflection of the essential nature of his childhood memories.⁸² Memory, in Friedländer's memoirs, was neither continuous nor something that could easily be shared. To begin with, there was a clear cut between the memories of his childhood and his later experiences: he did not feel as if the two were connected. Furthermore, he believed that it was almost impossible to gain insights from the remembrance of his experiences during the war. For example, he was not able to comprehend the behaviour of his parents during the war. He could not put himself in their place nor could he understand why they acted as they did.⁸³ Lastly, he held that certain memories could not be shared, because there was an enormous gap between the meaning it had for him and what others might see in it. The meaning was not transferable.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Leon Wieseltier, 'Between Paris and Jerusalem', in *New York Review of Books*, 25-10-1979.

⁸² Machtans, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und autobiographischem Projekt*, p. 67.

⁸³ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

However, Friedländer did not believe that his views on memory have played a role in his academic work. In the 1970s Friedländer was still unsure about the role which the remembrance of his experiences during the Second World War could have in his historical writing. In a revealing scene in his memoirs, Friedländer described his reflections on his role as a historian and an educator:

What are the values that I myself can transmit? Can an experience as personal, as contradictory as mine rouse an echo here, in even the most indirect way? I am not sure. But must I limit myself to the neutral indifference of the technician, or alternatively, pretend that I have roots, play at normality, and return to clear thoughts, those which help one to live and, perhaps, to die? Isn't the way out for me to attach myself to the necessary order, in the inescapable simplification forced upon one by the passage of time and one's vision of history, to adopt the gaze of the historian?⁸⁵

Thirty years later, when I interviewed him in January 2010, Friedländer confirmed that he had indeed chosen the role of the historian. He emphasised that he is careful not to include anything overtly political in his lectures at the university, and while he has been invited to speak on many occasions, he has sought to keep his comments restricted to a few important issues, such as his plea for an integrated history of the Holocaust.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Friedländer denied any link between the dissonance he felt when examining his memories of events during the Second World War and his perspective as a historian. When writing a historical work, Friedländer does not rely on his personal memory or his sense of empathy. Therefore the problems he had in analysing his own childhood (such as his incomprehension about the actions of his parents) simply had no

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 144.

⁸⁶ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 1).

relation to the problems a historian might have understanding the behaviour of individuals in the past.⁸⁷

Though Friedländer denied that his personal memories influenced his thinking on his academic conception of “memory,” there is nonetheless an important stylistic connection. Doris Bergen already noted the similar narrative structures present in *Nazi Germany and the Jews* and Friedländer’s autobiography.⁸⁸ This becomes obvious when examining two examples. First, in his memoirs, Friedländer recounted a debate in Geneva on the situation in the Middle East. One of the participants was a Palestinian who “knew all about life in Israel and many things about Jewish history as well ... everyone present had the feeling that there was a beginning of possible contact, a first step toward brotherhood.”⁸⁹ Friedländer did not hear from him again for two years, until the murder of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972, when it was revealed that this Palestinian had in truth responsible for planning the massacre.⁹⁰ Friedländer undeniably chose to present this story because of its emotional impact, but he offered no answers, no analysis nor a personal reflection on this story. He was unable to understand the Palestinian or interpret his actions in a meaningful way. There were also no clear lessons to be learned from this incident.⁹¹ For Friedländer it was impossible to say, based on the actions of this Palestinian, whether his hopes for a true Israeli-Arab dialogue were an illusion. The reader is presented with a strong emotional impact, but is left without any analysis.

⁸⁷ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

⁸⁸ Doris L. Bergen, 'No End in Sight? The Ongoing Challenge of Producing an Integrated History of the Holocaust' in Christian Wiese and Paul Betts (eds.), *Years of Persecution, Years of Extermination: Saul Friedländer and the Future of Holocaust Studies* (London, 2010), p. 289.

⁸⁹ Friedländer, *When Memory Comes*, p. 35.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

⁹¹ Friedländer’s writing confirms to the classical form of satire as defined in Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1975), pp. 10-11.

Second, in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Friedländer approached the memories of the victims in much the same way. In one poignant example, Friedländer quoted a Polish diarist, Elisheva, who had begun to realise that the Germans were changing their tactics in 1942. Graves were being dug, the handicapped were killed first and then others were led to the killing sites. During the chaos, Elisheva asked “Is being alive after the war worth so much suffering and pain? I doubt it. But I don’t want to die like an animal.” The diary ended shortly after this passage. Friedländer’s only comment was that “the circumstances of Elisheva’s death are not known. Her diary was discovered in a ditch along the road leading to the Stanislawów cemetery.”⁹²

He did not attempt to analyse Elisheva’s diary entry; neither did he offer any further explanation of her situation. Just as in his memoirs, Friedländer ends with a section break. Elisheva’s words were left to stand for themselves. Through this method Friedländer emphasised the inadequacy of our understanding of the victim’s perspective, but also emphasised the inadequacy of the history he wrote. Friedländer quoted a famous passage by Primo Levi to underline this fundamental impasse:

We, the survivors, are not the true witnesses. ... We survivors are not only an exiguous but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prefabrications or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did so, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they're the "Muslims," the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose deposition would have general significance. They are the rule, we are the exception.⁹³

⁹² Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. 386-387.

⁹³ Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 70. I have used the English translation from Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (London, 1988 [Italian 1986]), pp. 83-84.

No chapter of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, not even the final one, ended with a clear analytical message. There was no mention of the lessons that should be learned or how such a catastrophe could be avoided in future.⁹⁴ Friedländer's memoirs similarly lacked any kind conclusion or postscript, leaving the reader with strong emotional impressions but without a guidance offered by the author on how to interpret the events. *When Memory Comes* also used the same techniques as *Nazi Germany and the Jews* to disorient the reader and retain a certain ambiguity. In fact, all other works of Friedländer contain some sort of closure in the form of a postscript, some final remarks or a conclusion. Even Friedländer's biography of Kurt Gerstein, which was thematically similar, ended with a brief analysis of Gerstein's life and some concluding remarks about the role he played.⁹⁵ *When Memory Comes* and *Nazi Germany and the Jews* remained unique in this respect.

⁹⁴ Kansteiner, 'Success, Truth and Modernism in Holocaust Historiography', p. 34.

⁹⁵ Friedländer, *Counterfeit Nazi*, pp. 224-228.

4 The centrality of the Holocaust in the Nazi past

4.1 Broszat

How did Broszat deal with the Holocaust in his work on the Third Reich? In the exchange with Friedländer, Broszat had explicitly questioned the central position of Auschwitz in the historiography of the Nazi past. Broszat's critics have accused him of marginalising the Holocaust in his work or even of offering an apologetic interpretation. In the first section I will analyse how Broszat wrote about the Holocaust. In the second section I will examine Nicolas Berg's criticism of Broszat's treatment of the Holocaust.

4.1.1 Broszat and the study of the Holocaust

During the first half of his career, Broszat had been considered an expert on the Holocaust. To begin with, his doctoral thesis had focused on anti-Semitism in the Wilhelmine Empire. In this thesis he examined how anti-Semitism had been transformed into a political concept.¹ At the Institute for Contemporary History, Broszat had worked mostly on Eastern Europe and the persecution of the Jews outside the German Reich. He wrote several reports on German activity in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In these reports he had primarily examined how Hitler had forced or encouraged the governments of these countries to deal with the "Jewish problem."² Broszat's expertise was valued high enough that he was assigned to write a report for

¹ Sybille Steinbacher, 'Martin Broszat und die Erforschung der nationalsozialistische Judenpolitik' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), p. 138.

² See Broszat's contributions to *Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 1* (Munich, 1958); *Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. 2* (Munich, 1966).

the famous Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt in 1964.³ Helmut Krausnick, the director of the Institute, focused on the persecution of the Jews, while Broszat traced the development of the concentration camp system from the early 1930s until the end of the war. Because of this division of labour and the fact that Broszat did not deal with the extermination camps, his report only contained a few lines on the persecution of the Jews.⁴ In his contribution, he emphasised that even late in the war many developments could be attributed to “wild” improvisation by local commanders and officials rather than orders from above; an argument he would develop in his later works.⁵

Broszat had been familiar with the history of Auschwitz as he had edited the autobiography of its commander Rudolf Höß.⁶ The publication attracted much attention, with major German newspapers printing full page articles on the book.⁷ The book became an enormous success, selling about 138.000 copies.⁸ Broszat's remarks were praised as being suitably sober: “The commentary is limited to the necessary clarification of facts and the correction of grievous errors. It rightly avoids giving an opinion on the matter at hand ... This book truly speaks for itself.”⁹ Broszat was aware that allowing the commander of the largest extermination camp to “speak for himself”, albeit posthumously, was a thorny issue.¹⁰ However, he felt that Höß' memoirs gave

³ 'In rassische “Wertungsgruppen” eingeteilt: Historiker referieren im Auschwitz-Prozess über die Versklavung der Polen', in *Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, 29-2-1964; 'Mitleid mit KZ-Häftlingen war verboten: Dr. Broszats Gutachten im Frankfurter Auschwitz-Prozess'.

⁴ Krausnick and Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State*, p. 248. Broszat's report on concentration camps for the court also provided impetus for the Institute to publish a series of comprehensive studies on German concentration camps a few years later. See Martin Broszat (ed.) *Studien zur Geschichte der Konzentrationslager* (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 7-9.

⁵ Krausnick and Broszat, *Anatomy of the SS State*, p. 143.

⁶ Broszat (ed.) *Kommandant in Auschwitz*.

⁷ E.g., 'Transcript of interview with Martin Broszat in "Lesezeichen"'; Broszat, 'Holocaust-Literatur im Kielwasser des Fernsehfilms'.

⁸ Möller, 'Das Institut für Zeitgeschichte', p. 3.

⁹ Broszat, 'Literatur und NS-Vergangenheit'.

¹⁰ Broszat (ed.) *Kommandant in Auschwitz*, p. 7.

such a unique insight into the psychology of Nazi perpetrators that he deemed a publication necessary.¹¹

While Broszat never published a monograph on the Holocaust,¹² he still discussed anti-Semitism and the persecution of the Jews in several of his works. He argued that anti-Semitism was at the heart of Nazi ideology, which he otherwise believed to be almost entirely opportunistic and nihilistic. Hitler's anti-Semitism was so extreme and implacable that Broszat called it, in his book *German National Socialism* from 1960, a "negative religion."¹³ While reminiscent of Raymond Aron's concept of a "secular religion," Broszat's notion of a "negative religion" should not be overstated. To be sure, he had been influenced at first by Hannah Arendt's views on totalitarianism. In the late 1960s, however, he distanced himself from the concept of totalitarian dictatorship, instead adopting Ernst Fraenkel's and Franz Neumann's ideas on the fragmentation of power in the Nazi regime.¹⁴ While he continued to view anti-Semitism an important feature of Nazism, he believed that the role of ideology in the Third Reich was very limited.

Broszat further developed his ideas on Hitler, the Nazi party and Nazi ideology in his book *The Hitler State* (1969). Broszat's main argument was that most political decisions in the Third Reich were the result of conflicting bureaucratic interests rather than the consequence of Hitler's will. While he analysed in detail the antagonistic relationship between the Nazi regime and, for instance, the Socialist and Communist underground opposition, the relationship with the Jews was left largely unexamined

¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹² Broszat did publish several of the reports he wrote for the Institute that dealt with the persecution of the Jews. E.g. Martin Broszat, 'Von der Kulturnation zur Volksgruppe: Die nationale Stellung der Juden in der Bukowina im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert', *Historische Zeitschrift* Vol. 200 (1965).

¹³ Broszat, *German National Socialism, 1919-1945*, p. 51.

¹⁴ See Broszat, *The Hitler State*, p. xii.

throughout the bulk of the text.¹⁵ Only in the conclusion did Broszat scrutinize Hitler's anti-Semitism and how this had spread throughout the Nazi movement.

In line with his earlier book *German National Socialism*, Broszat claimed that the ideology of the Nazi movement was essentially limited to purely negative elements, such as the fight against "Bolshevism" and the "Jewry."¹⁶ He acknowledged that Hitler's anti-Semitism was unfeigned, but claimed that the Nazis initially utilised the "Jewish issue" mostly for propaganda purposes. As a result of this unceasing propaganda, however, anti-Semitism became so institutionalised and systemised within the Nazi movement that it gained a momentum of its own. He argued that "the mass murder of the Jews was no more planned from the outset than the preceding and progressive use of legal discrimination against Jews."¹⁷

Even so, Broszat emphasised that Hitler viewed World War II primarily as a "race war." He claimed that the war provided Hitler with the opportunity to push for harsher racial policies such as the killing of invalids, the summary execution of "anti-socials" and the deportation of Poles and Jews.¹⁸ In this case, the structure of "the Hitler state"—the special organisations only responsible to Hitler, the widespread use of "secret orders" and the contempt for formal rules and laws—did not hinder the implantation of a central strategy, but instead made it easier for the murders to be carried out in secrecy and without opposition.¹⁹

There was a tension in Broszat's argument: a tension between highlighting the limitations of Hitler's power on the one hand and, on the other, describing the efficiency with which the extermination process was carried out. Broszat did not attempt to resolve

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 70.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 354.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 357.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 322-323.

this inconsistency until the late 1970s, when he published an article entitled *Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung"* (Hitler and the Genesis of the "Final Solution"). The article was a reply to the British historian David Irving, who had claimed in 1977 that Hitler had been entirely unaware of the extermination of the Jews.²⁰ Irving's defence of Hitler had been published in the midst of a wave of Holocaust denial, and the Institute had been approached by several concerned teachers, students and other citizens.²¹ In response to these concerns, Broszat and his colleagues tried to counter the allegations of the Holocaust deniers in various publications.²²

The first part of Broszat's article was an extensive rebuttal of Irving's thesis. He denounced Irving as an apologetic Hitler-sympathiser and offered various pieces of evidence which made it clear that Hitler had known about the extermination process and had approved of it.²³ In the second part of the article, Broszat offered his own interpretation, which minimised the role of Hitler in the bringing about the Holocaust, thereby partly affirming some of Irving's claims. Broszat argued that Hitler had promoted anti-Jewish measures and was therefore morally responsible, but he also claimed that the actual implementation of the Holocaust was largely the result of a chain of "improvisations" that became ever more radical.²⁴

²⁰ David Irving, *Hitler's War* (London, 1977).

²¹ 'Münchner Historiker starten neues Projekt: Besatzungszeit unter Lupe der Wissenschaft'.

²² E.g. Ino Arndt, Wolfgang Scheffler and Martin Broszat, 'Organisierter Massenmord an Juden in nationalsozialistischen Vernichtungslagern: Ein Beitrag zur Richtigstellung apologetischer Literatur', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* Vol. 24 (1976), pp. 105-112. In 1979 Broszat also acted as an expert witness for the prosecution in the trial against the chairman of the "Kampfbundes deutscher Soldaten", Erwin Schönborn, for Holocaust denial. See 'Ein Professioneller Volksverhetzer beschäftigt seit Jahrzehnte die Justiz: Einem Strafantrag sehe ich gerne entgegen', in *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt*, 13-5-1979.

²³ E.g. Broszat, 'Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung"', p. 49.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 67, 85; IfZ, ID 34, Vol. 17, Eberhard Büsem, 'Transcript of "'Hochkonjunktur der Hitler-Apologeten?": David Irving's These zur Judenvernichtung" in *Das Aktuelle Studio* on Bayerischen Fernsehen', 30-8-1977.

Broszat built on the arguments he had already presented in *The Hitler State*. First, he repeated that he did not believe that Hitler, prior to the war, had developed a “master-plan” for the extermination of the Jews. Rather, the war provided the opportunity and the means for new and ever more vicious anti-Jewish measures, which, if not directly ordered, were at least sanctioned by the higher Nazi echelons.²⁵ Second, the competing organisations in Hitler’s empire all aimed to increase their own power. This rivalry contributed to the radicalisation of “solutions to the Jewish problem” as each department tried to outdo the other. Rather than following a master-plan or a direct order issued by Hitler, the Holocaust was essentially caused by the structure of the “Hitler state.”²⁶ Even more strongly than in *The Hitler State*, Broszat highlighted the unplanned and improvised nature of the Holocaust.

Broszat’s appraisal of Hitler’s role in the Holocaust remained ambiguous. On the one hand, he carefully tried to avoid apologetic arguments by repeatedly emphasising Hitler’s ultimate responsibility. On the other hand, he maintained that Hitler’s actual role in implementing specific policies was minimal. While Hitler provided the initial motivation to deal with the “Jewish problem,” he argued that the extermination process was essentially brought about by the structural chaos of the “Hitler state.” A host of regional military and civilian officials were involved in various ways and were thus as much responsible for the Holocaust as Hitler or other high-ranking Nazi officials like Himmler or Goebbels.²⁷

Despite Broszat’s attempts to create a coherent theory of the origins of the “Final Solution,” he was not able to resolve the tension that had been present in *The Hitler State*. Broszat moved further into the direction of a purely structuralist explanation in

²⁵ Broszat, ‘Hitler und die Genesis der “Endlösung”’, pp. 86-87.

²⁶ E.g. Ibid. pp. 66-67.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 86-87.

which Hitler's presence faded into the background. *Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung"* was discussed vehemently by historians during the late 1970s and early 1980s, because of the Broszat's "structuralist" interpretation (even though Broszat never used the term). While many of Broszat's arguments could be traced back to the 1960s, *The Hitler State* had barely caused a stir because the persecution of the Jews had only played a marginal role in that work. When Broszat used his arguments from *The Hitler State* to explain the origins of the Holocaust in 1979 his approach was perceived as new, provoking a heated debate that carried over into the early 1980s. In fact, Broszat's article was one of the main subjects of discussion at the Stuttgart Holocaust conference in 1984, to which Friedländer had also been invited.²⁸ In his opening address to the conference, Friedländer criticised Broszat and Hans Mommsen's structuralist interpretations for not considering ideology as a driving force in its own right.²⁹

4.1.2 Nicolas Berg's criticism

Friedländer, however, was not the only one who criticised Broszat's views. Broszat's treatment of the Holocaust had already been criticised during the 1970s and '80s. The Bavaria project, for example, had not dealt with the persecution of the Jews in much detail. In the first volume, published in 1977, only one article examined the lives of the members of the Jewish community in Bavaria. The scope of this article was further limited due to the lack of material on those Bavarian towns that had housed a substantial Jewish population. Indeed, it was the limited space devoted to Jewish life under Nazism

²⁸ See Eberhard Jäckel, 'Allgemeine Schlußdiskussion' in Eberhard Jäckel and Jürgen Rohwer (eds.), *Der Mord an den Juden im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Entschlußbildung und Verwirklichung* (Stuttgart, 1985), pp. 225-247; IfZ, ID 34, Vol. 156, Heiner Lichtenstein, 'Wer befahl den Holocaust? Bericht über eine Historiker-Tagung in Stuttgart', 18-5-1984.

²⁹ Friedländer, 'Ein Briefwechsel, Fast Zwanzig Jahre Später', p. 190.

that aroused fierce criticism amongst historians. The Jewish émigré historian Egon Larsen, for example, lamented that “[t]he documents which do appear in this fat volume are of such ridiculous unimportance and of such banal parochialism, compared to the tragedy of the Holocaust, that their publication is almost an insult.”³⁰ Broszat’s views on the origins of the Holocaust were criticised equally sharply in the early 1980s, after his publication of *Hitler und die Genesis der “Endlösung”*. Critics argued that Broszat’s “structuralist” interpretation made it impossible to assign individual responsibility and erroneously separated practice from ideology. Yisrael Gutman, head of Holocaust Research Centre at Yad Vashem, complained that Broszat’s explanation would leave the door open to “the more absurd views of neo-Nazis, who deny the Holocaust took place.”³¹

Yet the most significant critique of Broszat came after his death. In a number of publications in 2002 and 2003, the young German historian Nicolas Berg attacked Broszat for his focus on impersonal structures. Berg argued that this was a deliberate strategy to eschew the confrontation with individual guilt (such as Broszat’s own guilt), which shifted the attention away from the individual responsibility of Nazi perpetrators.³² Berg relied particularly on a correspondence between Broszat and the Jewish historian Joseph Wulf. In his history of the Warsaw ghetto Wulf had chosen Wilhelm Hagen (a German doctor and official in occupied Poland) as a typical example of a perpetrator without strong ideological ties to the Nazi party who nonetheless

³⁰ Egon Larsen, 'Bavaria under the Nazis', in *Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) Information*, February 1979.

³¹ 'Bids to 'whitewash Hitler' to be countered', in *Jerusalem Post*, 21-3-1983.

³² Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker*, p. 614. See also Nicolas Berg, 'Zeitgeschichte und generationelle Deutungsarbeit' in Norbert Frei (ed.), *Martin Broszat, der "Staat Hitlers" und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* (Jena, 2007), pp. 169-172.

participated in the extermination process without a qualm.³³ In 1963, Hagen had asked the Institute for Contemporary History to clear his name. Broszat disagreed with Wulf's interpretation and defended Hagen, sparking off a heated correspondence between Broszat and Wulf. Even as Wulf uncovered decisive proof for his accusations, Broszat was ambiguous in his reply. He admitted that the new material was important but he maintained that Wulf's "snappy" judgement of Hagen had been inappropriate.³⁴ As Wulf did not consider this a satisfactory response, Broszat finally declared that he did not view Hagen as a perpetrator, but as a man essentially uninfluenced by Nazi ideology, whose entanglement in the tyrannical apparatus had been unavoidable.³⁵

For Berg, Broszat's defence of Hagen highlighted the problematic elements inherent in "structuralism." He argued that Broszat's approach allowed Hagen to view himself as "a most helpless individual German, who had been completely at the mercy of a 'functionalist' [i.e. structuralist] causal context."³⁶ This critique of Broszat was indebted to arguments advanced by the so-called intentionalists in their protracted quarrel with their structuralist opponents.³⁷ Intentionalists such as Dan Diner and Eberhard Jäckel argued that Hitler and the Nazi elite played the most significant role in the implementation of the Holocaust. They also maintained that Hitler had planned the Holocaust at a relatively early stage, although they disagreed about the exact date of Hitler's decision to exterminate the European Jews. In the intentionalists' view,

³³ Josef Wulf, *Das Dritte Reich und seine Vollstrecker: Die Liquidation von 500,000 Juden im Ghetto Warschau* (Berlin, 1961).

³⁴ Quoted from Nicolas Berg, *The Invention of "Functionalism": Joseph Wulf, Martin Broszat, and the Institute for Contemporary History (Munich) in the 1960s*, trans. Bill Templer (Jerusalem, 2003), pp. 29-30.

³⁵ See *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁷ See Richard Bessel, 'Functionalists vs. Intentionalists: The Debate Twenty Years on or Whatever Happened to Functionalism and Intentionalism?' *German Studies Review* Vol. 26 (2003), pp. 15-20.

historians who focussed on impersonal structures removed human agency from history and thereby eliminated the question of individual guilt and responsibility.³⁸

Berg's critique of Broszat, however, went beyond an attack on Broszat's methodology. After Berg discovered Broszat's application to the Nazi party in the archives, he concluded that Broszat's academic career had been based on a "life-long lie."³⁹ Berg therefore saw Broszat's emphasis on objectivity, rationality and "soberness" (*Nüchternheit*) as a smokescreen to hide his own participation in the Nazi movement.⁴⁰ While he focused his fiercest criticism on Broszat, Berg found fault with almost the entire field of *Zeitgeschichte*. He argued that Broszat's correspondence with Wulf and Friedländer revealed the "blind spot" that was present in most of the works of postwar German historiography. Berg claimed that Broszat's juxtaposition of the supposed rationality of German historiography with the "mythical" memories of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust was representative of the attitude of many German historians.⁴¹

However, there are problems with Berg's critique. He correctly pointed out that shortly after the war most "mainstream" historians in Germany had marginalised the Holocaust in their histories of the Third Reich. Other Nazis crimes were discussed openly: Hitler's aggressive foreign policy was roundly condemned, and the harsh treatment of German dissenters was covered in great detail. The lack of attention paid to the Holocaust was therefore noteworthy. Yet Berg's theory cannot explain why historians in other countries also hesitated to engage with the history of the Holocaust,

³⁸ E.g. Dan Diner and Rita Bashaw, 'Hannah Arendt Reconsidered: On the Banal and the Evil in Her Holocaust Narrative', *New German Critique*, No. 71 (1997), p. 184.

³⁹ Berg, 'Die Lebenslüge vom Pathos der Nüchternheit'.

⁴⁰ Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker*, p. 615.

⁴¹ Berg, 'Zeitgeschichte und generationelle Deutungsarbeit', p. 176. Friedländer acknowledged that he often encountered a similar attitude when the issue was discussed by other German historians. See Doerry and Wiegrefe, 'Interview with Israeli Historian Saul Friedländer'.

since Berg focused on the personal histories of West-German historians to support his arguments.⁴²

Marxist historians dismissed Nazi racism as irrelevant and bought into the theory of fascism instead. In the Marxist interpretation, fascism was the final stage of capitalism and Hitler no more than the puppet of “big business.” In the Soviet bloc in particular the persecution of the Jews was downplayed for political reasons, so that the suffering of the communist and socialist “resistance fighters” could be emphasised.⁴³ Proponents of the theory of totalitarianism, represented in universities of the “Western world,” likewise dismissed Nazi racism, though for different reasons. As the model of totalitarianism focused on the similarities between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, specific anti-Semitic measures in Germany had to be explained in more general terms. The Jews were nothing more than a scapegoat: a convenient internal enemy that the cynical party leadership exploited for political purposes. The totalitarian state was supposed to be based on widespread fear and repression and the persecution of the Jews was merely one feature of totalitarian terror among many others. When historians aimed to highlight the similarities between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, they had to gloss over the exact logic and development of Nazi anti-Semitism.⁴⁴

Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain, as Berg did, that “structuralism” was inherently apologetic. He claimed that German historians adopted structuralist methods in order to disguise or de-emphasise the issue of personal guilt. However, researchers all over the world enthusiastically adopted structuralist methodology during the 1960s and 1970s. The *Annales* school in France, for example, was internationally renowned for its

⁴² E.g. Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker*, pp. 616-621.

⁴³ See Fulbrook, *German National Identity*, pp. 28-35.

⁴⁴ Hehl, *Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft*, pp. 54-57; Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, pp. 36-40.

structuralist histories.⁴⁵ The popularity of structuralism all over Europe and North America cannot be explained by factors that were specific to postwar West Germany. Both in France and Germany, a number of young historians tried to set themselves apart from their predecessors, in part by adopting what they saw as exciting and innovative methods.⁴⁶ Broszat, for example, deliberately contrasted his work with that of older historians such as Rothfels and Meinecke. He reacted against what he perceived as the outdated model of an older generation.⁴⁷

Broszat's reaction to Wulf was a different matter, however, and Berg was certainly right in emphasising that Broszat's dealings with Wulf appeared irrationally antagonistic. Nonetheless, Berg's argument that Broszat used impersonal structures to evade the question of his own guilt (or that of other "ordinary" Germans such as Hagen) is hard to sustain. First of all, Broszat's emphasis on structures can be defended in several ways. Structuralist scholars argued, for instance, that the "structuralist" interpretation implicated a far larger segment of the population than Hitler and his henchmen.⁴⁸ Moreover, Broszat undermined the apologetic litany of "orders are orders" by pointing out that many local commanders and officials had taken the initiative in the extermination process.⁴⁹ His role in various war crime trials indicated that he supported the idea that individuals could be tried and convicted for the crimes they committed during the war, even if they had been sanctioned by state or army.

Second, Broszat had shown a remarkable engagement with the Holocaust already in the 1950s, with the publication of *Kommandant in Auschwitz*. His

⁴⁵ The *Annales* school of course changed its approach over the years. The most famous proponent of structuralism in the *Annales* school was Fernand Braudel. See for example Fernand Braudel, *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (London, 1980).

⁴⁶ For the French case, see François Dosse, *New History in France: The Triumph of the Annales*, trans. Peter V. Conroy (Urbana, 1994).

⁴⁷ Lorenz, 'Martin Broszat', pp. 143-144.

⁴⁸ Kershaw, *Nazi Dictatorship*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Lorenz, 'Is het Derde Rijk al geschiedenis?' p. 246.

contributions to the study of the Holocaust compares favourably with the standards of the time. Even late in his career, Broszat was still considered an expert on the Holocaust and was, for instance, asked to sit on the advisory council of the Piper Holocaust encyclopaedia.⁵⁰ Of course, it is true that most of the Broszat's work did not focus on the experiences of the Jewish victims.

Third, there is no evidence that Broszat harboured secret Nazi sympathies or held anti-Semitic views. Colleagues such as Ian Kershaw and Norbert Frei have stressed that he had always been candid about his admiration for the Nazi regime as a young man and that this had provided the motivation for his research.⁵¹ However questionable Broszat's attitude was, his disagreement with Wulf cannot be viewed as conclusive proof that he believed in a clear divide between Jewish and German historians. In the exchange with Friedländer, Broszat repeatedly stressed that he did not believe such a divide existed. The dichotomy he constructed was between historians and eyewitnesses. Furthermore, when Friedländer and Broszat met in Los Angeles, there was no trace of a fundamental animosity. They still held different opinions on certain subjects, but both acknowledged that they had changed some of their views as a result of the exchange. According to Friedländer, they parted as friends and continued their correspondence until Broszat's untimely death.⁵²

Broszat's work could be criticised on a number of levels: one could, for instance, argue that his "structuralist" methodology had the effect of exculpating certain perpetrators or that his work did not engage with the Holocaust in sufficient depth or that he neglected the Jewish perspective. Yet questioning the very foundations of

⁵⁰ Uri Salm, 'Piper verlegt die große Holocaust-Enzyklopädie', in *Börsenblatt*, 23-3-1989.

⁵¹ Frei, 'Hitler-Junge, Jahrgang 1926'; Kershaw, *Beware the Moral High Ground*.

⁵² Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2); Saul Friedländer, 'Blicke in die dunkelste Epoche: Deutsche Geschichte zu verstehen gesucht: Zum Tode von Martin Broszat', in *Die Zeit*, 20-10-1989.

Broszat's motivations and beliefs or his integrity as a scholar goes too far. Time and again, Broszat emphasised that any apologetic interpretation was unacceptable. There is no indication—let alone conclusive proof—that Broszat's work had been a “life-long lie.”

4.2 Friedländer

How did Friedländer construct the history of the Holocaust? Friedländer had expressed his concerns about Holocaust historiography as early as the 1970s, but only after the exchange with Broszat did he decide to write a comprehensive history of the Nazi persecution of the Jews. In the first section I will examine Friedländer's scholarly views of the Holocaust which he articulated after the letter exchange with Broszat. In several articles he argued that a history of the Holocaust would need to have a comprehensive analytical framework and that historians would need to include critical and self-conscious “commentaries” in any history of the Holocaust. I will then examine whether Friedländer succeeded in following his own guidelines in *Nazi Germany and the Jews*. Finally, I will evaluate how close *Nazi Germany and the Jews* came to Broszat's notion of “historicisation.”

4.2.1 Representing the Holocaust

In the 1980s Friedländer doubted whether a historical event as exceptional as the Holocaust could be represented in the same way as any other historical phenomenon.⁵³

In the letter exchange he described the Holocaust as a “boundary event” that was not

⁵³ Saul Friedländer, 'The "Final Solution": On the Unease in Historical Interpretation', *History and Memory* Vol. 1 (1989), reprinted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, p. 113.

necessarily “singular,” but nonetheless “unprecedented.”⁵⁴ However, he did not offer a clear alternative as to how to write about the Holocaust. He was uncertain about the ways in which to integrate the Holocaust into a broader historical framework. Broszat’s plea for a historicisation of the Nazi past provided Friedländer with the impetus to examine the possibility of an “integrated history” of the Holocaust more closely, which resulted in the publication of several influential articles that appeared between 1987 and 1992.

Friedländer believed that the Nazi persecution and extermination of the Jews was a unique event in history, presenting historians with specific problems.⁵⁵ First of all, the Holocaust called into question the “project of modernity.” The technological and bureaucratic characteristics of the extermination process indicated that the Holocaust presented the “ultimate stage” of modernity, rather than being the negation of “reason” and “rationality.”⁵⁶ Second, the systematic murder of millions of human beings occurred in remote parts of Eastern Europe while people who were not victims went on with their lives and either did not know of events or let them pass by almost unnoticed. Friedländer argued that the dissonance between the “apocalypse” that the victims experienced and the relative “normality” of life in areas behind the frontlines made a historical representation of the Holocaust so difficult.⁵⁷ Third, he claimed that there was a fundamental “uneasiness” inherent to the events of the Holocaust, as even the Nazi

⁵⁴ Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', p. 133.

⁵⁵ Friedländer, 'The Shoah in Present Historical Consciousness', pp. 48-49.

⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 50-51.

⁵⁷ Friedländer argued that many survivors of the Holocaust sensed this dissonance themselves, which influenced their choice (or lack) of commemoration. See Ibid. p. 51.

elite had doubted whether they would ever be able to justify the extermination of the Jews to the rest of the German population.⁵⁸

In 1990 Friedländer decided to host a conference devoted to the Holocaust and the “limits of representation.”⁵⁹ In his contribution, he argued that the Holocaust could be represented and interpreted as any other historical event. He still believed, however, that the Holocaust tested “traditional conceptual and representational categories,” that it was an event “at the limits.”⁶⁰ Obviously, these statements contradicted each other, and Friedländer left his ambiguous stance towards this issue unresolved. He continued by pointing out that there were “limits to representation which *should not be but [could] easily be transgressed*.”⁶¹ Friedländer insisted on the need for establishing the historical “truth” of the Holocaust and evoked one of the basic principles of traditional historical scholarship.⁶²

In his view, postmodernism presented the biggest challenge to this need for truth. Historians such as Hayden White argued that all historical narrative was based on the aesthetic principles and political beliefs of historians. When confronted with competing interpretations, historians could not refer to the factual objectivity of “events” as events did not have any inherent “meaning.”⁶³ Since it was impossible to establish which

⁵⁸ Friedländer, 'The "Final Solution"', pp. 102-116. See also Wulf Kansteiner, 'From Exception to Exemplum: The New Approach to Nazism and the "Final Solution"', *History and Theory* Vol. 33, No. 2 (1994), p. 150.

⁵⁹ The conference volume was read not only by historians, but also by linguists, philosophers and others. For example, see Sander L. Gilman, 'Review of Probing the Limits of Representation', *The American Historical Review* Vol. 98 (1993); Jeffrey Mehlman, 'On Theory and Genocide', *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* Vol. 5 (1993); Irene Tucker, 'Forming the Holocaust', *Poetics Today* Vol. 17 (1996).

⁶⁰ Saul Friedländer (ed.) *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 2-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. Italics in original.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987), p. 74. White does not consider himself to be a postmodernist, but his position in this particular case is very close.

analysis was “more true,” postmodernists argued in favour of a multiplicity of interpretations, or “readings,” that were equally valid.

Friedländer thought that postmodernism led to a “historical relativism” which undermined the valid assumption of a historical truth. In the early 1980s, when publishing his book *Reflections on Nazism*, he had analysed how postmodernist attitudes fed into an “aesthetic representation” of the Nazi past. In his view, Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s film (*Hitler, A Film from Germany*) betrayed an unsettling fascination with the symbols of power, destruction and death present in Nazism.⁶⁴ For Friedländer the problem was that

attention has gradually shifted from the reevocation of Nazism as such, from the horror and the pain ... to voluptuous anguish and ravishing images, images one would like to see going on forever. It may result in a masterpiece, but a masterpiece that, one may feel, is tuned to the wrong key ... Some kind of limit has been overstepped and uneasiness appears.⁶⁵

Yet Friedländer did not dismiss postmodernism entirely. He believed that the Holocaust challenged conventional techniques of historical analysis and conceded that postmodernist approaches might have the potential to overcome some of the problems of representing the Holocaust.⁶⁶ He acknowledged that his decision to use testimonies of victims in *Nazi Germany and the Jews* was influenced by postmodern views.⁶⁷ In the

⁶⁴ Hence the sub-title of Friedländer’s book “An Essay on Kitsch and Death.” See Friedländer, *Reflections on Nazism*, p. 18. For an analysis of Friedländer’s review of Syberberg’s film, see Guido Goossens, *Verloren zonsondergangen: Hans Jürgen Syberberg en het linkse denken over rechts in Duitsland* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp. 184-186.

⁶⁵ Friedländer, *Reflections on Nazism*, p. 21.

⁶⁶ Friedländer (ed.) *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 11.

⁶⁷ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

end, however, he believed that the “reality” and “significance of modern catastrophes” prompted the search for new methods of representation – not the other way around.⁶⁸

In the aftermath of the conference, Friedländer laid down what he believed were the essential requirements for an “integrated history” that would keep within the limits of representation. In addition to his plea for an inclusion of the “voices of the victims” (as discussed in chapter 4), he formulated two main requirements. First, an integrated history would need to provide a “theoretical framework” that could incorporate the multiple aspects of the Holocaust. The study of Nazism had been fragmented into many specialised sub-fields, and the danger of this intellectual fragmentation, he argued, was an increasingly narrow view of the Nazi past.⁶⁹ He did not really explain what he meant by “theoretical framework,” except for pointing out that it would have to be able to incorporate the seemingly “unbearable” history of the Holocaust.⁷⁰

Second, he argued that instead of presenting a seamless narrative, historians should insert their own comments into the text to “disrupt the facile linear progression of the narration.” They should introduce “alternative interpretations,” question certain conclusions, and “withstand the need for closure.”⁷¹ For Friedländer, “closure” was a state in which the past was accepted and no further questions were deemed necessary. An integrated history would have to avoid the temptation of providing all the answers and should allow for a certain amount of ambiguity, uncertainty and plurality of interpretations.

⁶⁸ Friedländer (ed.) *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 10.

⁶⁹ Saul Friedländer, 'Trauma, Erinnerung und Übertragung in der historischen Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus und des Holocaust', *Die Juden in der europäischen Geschichte* (Munich, 1992), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, pp. 146-147.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷¹ Friedländer, 'Trauma and Transference', p. 132.

4.2.2 Nazi Germany and the Jews

In several articles Friedländer had argued that an integrated history would have to address major theoretical problems, but he finally chose to present his work, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, as a “chronicle.” Many commentators were surprised by his choice, since the chronicle was the most basic form of narrative.⁷² In the second volume of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* Friedländer explained that he had decided against using a single “conceptual framework,” because too many comprehensive theories had already been developed, each of which had been challenged, discarded and then rediscovered decades later.⁷³ This, of course, contradicted his earlier remark that the history of the Holocaust had been fragmented, but it is difficult to say when exactly, and why, he changed his mind on this matter. He did not use the term “chronicle” in the first volume of *Nazi Germany and the Jews* nor did he openly state that this book would reject a comprehensive framework.⁷⁴ He most likely abandoned the idea of an analytical framework because *The Years of Extermination* turned out to be much wider in scope than *The Years of Persecution*, both geographically and thematically.⁷⁵ He admitted that reading so many testimonies had helped him to grasp the “non-linear conception of history.”⁷⁶ As a result, he decided to combine various levels of documentation, resulting in what he called a “multifaceted and multi-voiced and multi-layered narration.”⁷⁷

Instead of providing an all-encompassing framework, Friedländer used a range of smaller middle-range theories that would help to explain different aspects of the Holocaust. To account for the origins of the Holocaust, he mainly relied on two theories:

⁷² See Bergen, ‘No End in Sight?’ pp. 289-290; Stone, *Constructing the Holocaust*, p. 162.

⁷³ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. xv-xviii.

⁷⁴ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, pp. 4-5.

⁷⁵ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, p. xi.

⁷⁶ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

the “crisis of liberalism” and the “redemptive anti-Semitism” of the Nazi movement.⁷⁸ He argued that in the first half of the twentieth century, liberalism had come increasingly under attack from both the left and the right. The Jewish community in Europe had been able to prosper because of the widespread acceptance of liberal values such as political and legal equality and participation based on citizenship rather than ethnicity. The decline of liberalism therefore affected the Jewish community in particular.

While the “crisis of liberalism” explained the general lack of resistance to the segregation and demonization of the Jews, Friedländer argued that Hitler’s branch of “redemptive anti-Semitism” provided the specific motivation to move to extermination.⁷⁹ He claimed that redemptive anti-Semitism was the most virulent form of anti-Semitism – a form that contained pseudo-religious characteristics. According to this worldview, “the Jew” was seen as an “active” enemy of not solely the German people but the entire human kind. In contrast to “passive” enemies such as the Slavs or gypsies, the Jews supposedly manipulated world events in order to ruin Germany – and the world.⁸⁰ Friedländer attached great importance to Hitler’s “prophecy” that the Jews would rue the day they tried to foil German plans as they had supposedly done in the First World War.⁸¹ In Hitler’s twisted logic, the failure of the Russian campaign was proof that the Jews had once again sabotaged the German war effort.⁸² When the Russian campaign of 1941 fell apart and defeat became a real possibility, Hitler

⁷⁸ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁷⁹ E.g. Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, pp. 324-325.

⁸⁰ Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 29.

⁸¹ E.g. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, p. 132.

⁸² Especially because Hitler equated Soviet Bolshevism with “international Jewry.” See *Ibid.*, pp. 286-288.

reasoned that even if Germany was destroyed, humanity could still be “saved” by exterminating the Jewish population.⁸³

Friedländer’s views were similar to those advanced by intentionalists, as he stressed the ideological origins of the Holocaust. He hesitated, however, to label his own position “intentionalist.” For he acknowledged that Hitler often gave leeway to his subordinates and was not always directly involved in the detailed planning and implementation of the measures of extermination.⁸⁴ Moreover, he accepted that there had been no master plan to exterminate Europe’s Jews before 1941. According to Friedländer, the decision to murder the European Jewry was finally taken in late 1941, with the Russian campaign well under way.⁸⁵

A closer analysis of Friedländer’s work reveals several inconsistencies between his avowed intentions and the work he eventually published. As *Nazi Germany and the Jews* was cast in the form of a chronicle, Friedländer’s “authorial voice” was absent throughout most of the text. Most chapters had no concluding remarks and Friedländer did not provide any formal conclusion, postscript or epilogue to the book. Only in the introduction to both books and in a few select passages did he explicitly engage with larger themes or historiographical controversies.⁸⁶ The amount of authorial commentary was minimal.

Friedländer, however, did disrupt the flow of narrative through the use of testimony. Most reviewers of the two volumes focused on this element.⁸⁷ Yet when Friedländer used testimonies in order to make a point, he did so indirectly. In most cases,

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 478-479.

⁸⁴ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, p. 336.

⁸⁵ E.g. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. 188-189.

⁸⁶ In the endnotes Friedländer was obviously more outspoken. However, the sheer amount of notes and the fact that these were attached to the end of the book rather than embedded at the bottom of the page makes it doubtful whether most readers engaged with them.

⁸⁷ E.g. Klaus-Dietmar Henke, 'Die Stimmen der Opfer', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4-9-2006.

he did not comment on or analyse them but left it to his readers to draw their own conclusions. For example, Friedländer described Jacques Helbronner, president of the central representative body of Jews in France, as a patriotic Frenchman who was extremely hostile to the newly-arrived Jewish refugees even after France had been occupied. In 1943, Helbronner had a change of heart, but Friedländer merely noted that “the Nazis [had] caught up with him as well: In October of that year he was arrested, deported to Auschwitz with his wife, and murdered.”⁸⁸

Moreover, not all critics agreed that Friedländer’s method of using testimonies to “puncture” the narrative was effective. Amos Goldberg, for instance, accused Friedländer for failing to integrate the “voices” of the victims into a larger analytical framework. He argued that the voices of the victims were “simply there, somehow piercing or punctuating the narrative. ... Thus, while the perpetrators have a narrative and a history, the victims have only experiences and voices.”⁸⁹ Goldberg’s criticism, however, is not entirely fair. Friedländer followed several diarists over the course of both volumes, most notably Victor Klemperer. Because Klemperer had kept an extensive record of his experiences from 1933 up until the end of the war, Friedländer was certainly able to establish a cohesive narrative of Klemperer’s life, from the petty harassment of the early Nazi years to the deportations which Klemperer narrowly escaped.⁹⁰ Klemperer, however, was one of very few diarists that survived the war.⁹¹ Many diarists had left barely more than snippets, often in form of a few journal pages hidden in an attic. Against this background, Friedländer can hardly be criticised for

⁸⁸ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, pp. 220-221.

⁸⁹ Amos Goldberg, 'The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History', *History and Theory* Vol. 48 (2009), p. 222.

⁹⁰ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. 661-662.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 662-663.

failing to provide these diarists with a narrative of their own.⁹² Excluding these fragmentary records from the history of the Holocaust in favour of a more consistent narrative would have led to a more perpetrator-oriented account – something that Friedländer, as well as Goldberg, wanted to avoid.

4.2.3 Friedländer and historicisation

In *The Years of Persecution* Friedländer acknowledged that he had accepted some of Broszat's insights and that this had inspired him to write an *Alltagsgeschichte* of the Holocaust. He also made it clear that he hoped to avoid some of the pitfalls of “historicisation” by focusing on the experiences of victims rather than those of bystanders and perpetrators.⁹³ Friedländer did not specify which “insights” he had adopted and which “pitfalls” he wished to avoid. A closer examination of *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, however, reveals two important differences between Friedländer and Broszat.

First of all, Friedländer had indeed written an *Alltagsgeschichte*, but in contrast to Broszat, who wanted to highlight the relative “normality” of everyday life under the Nazis,⁹⁴ he focused on Nazi atrocities. He argued, for instance, that many more Germans had known about the killings than Broszat had assumed.⁹⁵ Moreover, Friedländer found fault with the work of Broszat and other historians who tended to portrayed the victims as “static and abstract elements of the historical background” rather than actors in their own right:

⁹² E.g. *Ibid.*, pp. 387, 430, 470, 599.

⁹³ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, p. 335.

⁹⁴ Broszat focused more on themes such as social mobility, demographic changes and female emancipation. See in particular Martin Broszat, Klaus-Dietmar Henke and Hans Woller (eds.), *Von Stalingrad zur Währungsreform: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Umbruchs in Deutschland* (Munich, 1988).

⁹⁵ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

There is something at once profoundly disturbing yet rapidly numbing in the narration of the anti-Jewish campaign that developed in the territories newly occupied by the Germans ... History seems to turn into a succession of mass killing operations and, on the face of it, little else ... All there is to report, it seems, is a rising curve of murder statistics...⁹⁶

To prevent the history of the Holocaust from being reduced to a mere summary of statistics, Friedländer wanted to evoke a sense of “bewilderment” by including the “voices of the victims.”⁹⁷ He did not want the horrors of the past to be “domesticated:” readers should be enabled to “sense” the enormity of the events, to feel the full impact of the atrocities.⁹⁸ Instead of an *Alltagsgeschichte* that highlighted the supposed “normality” of everyday life, Friedländer’s work focussed on the traumatic experiences of victims.⁹⁹

Second, while Broszat had argued that historicisation would lead to a more “authentic” depiction of the Nazi past, Friedländer repeatedly stated that his work did not contain the “entire truth,” as the “entire truth” could never be known. In the opening pages of the book, he affirmatively quoted Stefan Ernest, a Jewish diarist: “No, this is not the truth, this is only a small part, a tiny fraction of the truth ... Even the mightiest pen could not depict the whole, real, essential *truth*.”¹⁰⁰ In a later section, he turned to another witness, Richard Lichtheim, who—in Friedländer’s opinion—“conveyed his

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 2, 240.

⁹⁷ Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 26. He had used the terms “unease” or “disbelief” in other texts, but the underlying meaning was the same.

⁹⁸ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

⁹⁹ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, p. 335.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. viii. Italics in original.

anguish in sentences that, decades later, can sear the reader's mind."¹⁰¹ When Lichtheim was requested in 1942 to write a short article reviewing the situation of the Jews in Europe, he responded that he was not able to write such a report: "I am bursting with facts ... but I cannot tell them in an article of a few thousand words. I would have to write for years and years ... Nobody will ever tell the story—a story of five million personal tragedies every one of which would fill a volume."¹⁰² For Friedländer, the "limits of representation" included the historian's inability to penetrate the "opaqueness" of the Holocaust.¹⁰³ He conceded that he was only able to offer partial interpretations, despite using victim testimonies in a way and on a scale which no one before him had done.¹⁰⁴

In other respects, however, Friedländer's approach was very similar to Broszat's. While he did not share Broszat's intuitive distrust of grand theories, he nonetheless abandoned his aim to "make sense" of the Holocaust on the basis of a coherent analytical framework. His chronicle-like arrangement of primary sources amounted to a skilful collage rather than a comprehensive scholarly interpretation. Indicatively, Friedländer published a small collection of essays in 2007 that was entitled "describing the Holocaust" (*Den Holocaust beschreiben*) – not "analysing" or "explaining" it.¹⁰⁵ This approach was not very different from the one that Broszat pursued in the Bavaria project.¹⁰⁶ Seen from this angle, Friedländer and Broszat were both rather conventional historians who primarily deviated from traditional scholarship by broadening the source base instead of offering new explanatory models. Neither Friedländer's notion of

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 466-467.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 467.

¹⁰³ Friedländer (ed.) *Probing the Limits of Representation*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ E.g. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. 662-663.

¹⁰⁵ Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁶ Although not a documentation or a chronicle, the Bayern project nonetheless relied heavily on extensive quotations from primary sources. E.g. Broszat and Fröhlich, *Alltag und Widerstand*, pp. 424-481.

“redemptive anti-Semitism” nor Broszat’s concept of “resistance” (*Resistenz*) provided elaborate theories.

Furthermore, Friedländer deliberately avoided writing “moralising” history. He agreed with Broszat that there were indeed certain areas of Nazi history, which could neither be depicted “white” nor “black”.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, he sometimes highlighted the opacity and even ambiguity of the perpetrators’ motives.¹⁰⁸ He plainly rejected Daniel Goldhagen’s claim that German society had been thoroughly suffused by “eliminationist anti-Semitism” that demanded the physical annihilation of the Jews.¹⁰⁹ Ideology naturally played an important role in Friedländer’s interpretation of the origins of the Holocaust, but he offered several alternative explanations for the actions of perpetrators besides anti-Semitism, such as the looting for Jewish possessions and the “institutionalised struggles for power.”¹¹⁰

Friedländer has remained ambiguous, however, about the overall purpose of historicisation. He doubts the desirability of “domesticat[ing] disbelief” and of “explain[ing] it away” – the mechanism and effect of what he associates with historicisation.¹¹¹ While certainly considering himself a professional historian,¹¹² he emphasizes that his own work is intended to delay the process of historicisation – a process that he views as inevitable.¹¹³ He deems it necessary to resist the “domesticating” influence of historicisation when dealing with “extreme events” such as the Holocaust.¹¹⁴ While most historians are striving for a historicisation of the

¹⁰⁷ E.g. Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. 254-255.

¹⁰⁸ E.g. Ibid., pp. 482-483, 508, 556-557.

¹⁰⁹ Friedländer, *The Years of Persecution*, p. 394.

¹¹⁰ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, pp. xx-xxi. Friedländer clearly echoed Broszat in this passage.

¹¹¹ Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2); Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, p. xxvi.

¹¹² E.g. see Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, pp. 103-104.

¹¹³ See Interview with Saul Friedländer (part 2).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Holocaust, he is adamant to stem the tide. For all his rapprochement to Broszat's historicisation plea and despite the ambiguity of some of his historiographical statements, he seems to have held on to the conviction articulated in the letter exchange that the Nazi past cannot be treated as any other past after all.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Ibid; Friedländer, *Den Holocaust beschreiben*, p. 104.

Conclusion

This thesis argues that Broszat and Friedländer's dispute on the historicisation of the Nazi past was not primarily grounded in theoretical and methodological differences. Instead it mainly fed on differences between their biographies and cultural identities. In this conclusion I will first outline the historiographical and ideological similarities of both historians, then discuss the nature and rationale of the core differences of their historical writing, and finally highlight the value of the letter exchange for today's historians.

Both Broszat and Friedländer conceived of themselves as professional scholars rather than "guardians of memory". For the most part, they operated on the ground of similar basic historiographical assumptions such as scholarly objectivity and critical rationality. They did not hold "unconventional" views on the evolution of historical knowledge and the epistemological nature of history. Broszat's penchant for "structuralist" explanations, which was partly a reaction to the historianist allegiances of conservative historians, was never based on a deeper theoretical awareness. While Friedländer showed a cautious interest in postmodernism, he wrote his magnum opus as an unassuming "chronicle." Both Broszat and Friedländer stressed the importance of primary sources and solid archival work. As for oral testimonies, they primarily disagreed over the relative merits of using them as historical evidence, rather than quarrelling over the question whether testimonies could be considered proper source material in principle.

Both Broszat and Friedländer were highly critical of some political and historical-cultural developments that followed the change of government in 1982. For

most of his career, Broszat had defined himself in opposition to the German historicist tradition. In 1982, he feared that the new government, led by the conservative CDU, could usher in a political era where German history would once again be harnessed for nationalistic purposes, as it had been the case in the nineteenth century. He was adamantly opposed to the Kohl government's "memory politics"¹ and thought that "historicisation" would make for a non-nationalistic alternative to generate interest in contemporary German history within the German public, especially among the youth. Friedländer was equally critical of what he saw as the Kohl government's attempts to lay the past to rest symbolically.² He feared a historical relativisation of the Nazi past and saw his fears confirmed when during the *Historikerstreit* some scholars questioned the centrality and uniqueness of the Holocaust.

The letter exchange itself was characterized by a remarkable civility. Broszat and Friedländer regarded each other as colleagues instead of ideological enemies—quite unlike the attitude displayed by various scholars in the *Historikerstreit*. Both of them tried to diffuse the tension by avoiding overtly polemical remarks. For example, even though Friedländer was extremely critical of Broszat's plea, he still pointed out its legitimacy as a valid contribution to scholarly discourse. Broszat, on his part, admitted that his plea had been written as a polemic, which was probably lacking in differentiation at times. As a result, both scholars parted on good terms, respectful of each other's opinion.³

¹ E.g. Martin Broszat, 'Zur Errichtung eines "Haus der Geschichte des Bundesrepublik Deutschland" in Bonn: Schriftliche Stellungnahme zum Gutachten der von der Bundesregierung im November 1983 eingesetzten Sachverständigen-Kommission, 16-5-1984', in *Nach Hitler*, pp. 252-262.

² E.g. Saul Friedländer, 'German Struggles with Memory' in Geoffrey H. Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington, 1986), reprinted in *Memory, History and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*, pp. 1-21.

³ Friedländer, 'Blicke in die dunkelste Epoche: Deutsche Geschichte zu verstehen gesucht: Zum Tode von Martin Broszat'.

The crux of the debate was hardly a fundamental disagreement about methodology and the nature of historical scholarship. Nor was it a battle between different ideological agendas. Rather, the debate was defined by different cultural identities. At the centre of the debate was the importance of the historical representation of particular experiences: the experiences of non-Jewish Germans on the one hand, and the experiences of German and European Jews on the other. Hence, the letter exchange can primarily be viewed as a “German-Jewish” dispute. Indeed, this specific quality of the historicisation debate was acknowledged by Broszat and Friedländer themselves at the time⁴ and was further emphasised by Friedländer in later publications.⁵

Obviously, both historians operated in very different academic, cultural and political environments. As director of one of Germany’s most influential research institutes, Broszat mainly contributed to debates that took place in his own country. Many of his articles were solely concerned with the way in which the Nazi past was interpreted and represented within the confines of West Germany’s academic and public sphere. While he maintained relations with scholars from other countries, he was above all a German scholar concerned with German issues. Implicitly, Broszat did not seem to consider Jewish experiences under the Nazi regime as a “German issue.” This might partially be explained with a certain subliminal longevity of a more or less clear-cut and diversely articulated distinction between “Germans” and “Jews” in postwar Germany. Broszat certainly did not hold any secret Nazi sympathies or was insensitive to experiences of Jews, but like many Germans, he unconsciously still seemed to think in patterns of perception that had been established before 1945. Moreover, Broszat’s emphasis on “German issues” also has to be seen in the wider context of the relatively

⁴ E.g. Broszat and Friedländer, 'Controversy', p. 121.

⁵ See e.g. Friedländer, 'Ein Briefwechsel, Fast Zwanzig Jahre Später', pp. 188-194.

parochial nature of German historical scholarship before the 1990s. Not just Broszat but many other German historians (e.g. Wehler and Nipperdey) predominantly focused on the history of the German nation-state.

Broszat's historicisation plea was triggered by "domestic concerns" as well. He had been jolted by the emotional outburst within the German public that followed the broadcast of the television series "Holocaust." The reaction of the German public shook Broszat's belief in the ability of historians to transfer their knowledge to a wider audience. Because the average German citizen had apparently not become better informed about the history of the Third Reich—by way of extensive research on the Nazi past—he reasoned that historians needed to change both their methods and their way of presenting their material if they wished to have an impact beyond the narrow confines of the academic world. He believed that "historicising" the Nazi past would allow a wider audience to engage with this part of German history, and he thought that the goal of reaching a wider audience could best be achieved by focussing on the everyday life of "ordinary Germans". Following his notion of "everyday life," the Holocaust did not feature particularly prominently in his investigations. He claimed that the Holocaust had barely exerted a greater impact on the lives of most German civilians, as the great majority of the killings took place in Eastern Europe and was carried out relatively secretly.

Compared to Broszat's personal background and professional context, Friedländer's career was far more international. He studied and worked in different European countries as well as in Israel, eventually emigrating to the United States. His work was usually published first in French or Hebrew and then translated into English and German within one or two years. It reached audiences in many parts of the world.

He explicitly did not identify himself with any particular country, not even with his adopted homeland, Israel.⁶ Nonetheless, he did identify with his Jewish roots, which clearly influenced his concerns about the historical and cultural representations of the Holocaust.

Friedländer approached the public process of coming to terms with the Nazi past from the perspective of a concerned observer who only slowly became involved in German academic debates.⁷ As a Holocaust survivor, he had always been highly sensitive to possible anti-Semitic motifs in popular culture and scholarly publications.⁸ In the debates about the Holocaust, he was predominantly concerned with the centrality of the Holocaust and the experiences of Jewish victims. He feared—and rightly so—that Broszat's approach of *Alltagsgeschichte* would highlight the relatively "normal" aspects of life under the Nazi regime, while the criminal and disturbing aspects would be neglected. Nevertheless, Friedländer understood that Broszat's approach, in itself, was not without scholarly merit. The solution he developed after the letter exchange was to focus on the everyday experiences of the Jewish victims, instead of the "normal" life of German civilians. This way, historicisation would entail neither a vindication of "ordinary Germans" nor a marginalisation of Jewish victims.

While the Broszat-Friedländer debate can be historicized as a dispute between two distinct cultural identities, it raises historiographical issues that are still pertinent to historians of Nazism and the Holocaust nowadays. To begin with, there is the question of "empathy" versus "distance." At first glance, it would appear that Friedländer applied

⁶ Saul Friedländer, "'Der Judenhaß steckt tiefer, als man denkt': Gespräch mit Martin Doerry" in Martin Doerry (ed.), *"Nirgendwo und überall zu Haus": Gespräche mit Überlebenden des Holocaust* (Munich, 2006), reprinted in *Nachdenken über den Holocaust*, pp. 168-179.

⁷ Although Friedländer became an established participant in these debates from the 1980s onward, he did not actually remember how to speak German fluently before 1985. Only when he stayed in Berlin as a visiting scholar did he reclaim his mother tongue. See Pokatzkv, 'Pavel, Paul, Shaul'.

⁸ E.g. Friedländer's work *Reflections of Nazism* was entirely devoted to an analysis of the modern-day fascination with the Nazi movement. See Friedländer, *Reflections of Nazism*.

Broszat's idea of "critical empathy" to the history of the Holocaust by including victim testimonies. Friedländer, however, did not believe that empathy had any place in critical scholarship in general. Historians could perhaps tease out certain aspects of the victims' mindset, but one would actually never be able to understand their thoughts or actions—which explains why he left their stories largely uncommented. Yet his presentation of deeply personal passages from diaries, letters and memoirs was clearly intended to elicit an emotional, empathetic response from the reader. This begs two questions: First, in what ways can empathy be employed as a narrative tool in historical accounts of Nazi victims if their "actual" thoughts and deeper motivations must ultimately remain opaque? Second, should historians use similar kinds of sources in ways comparable to Friedländer's methodology when dealing with perpetrators? Indeed, Jonathan Littell's novel *The Kindly Ones* caused an enormous uproar for its deeply personal presentation of the thoughts and motivations of a fictional SS officer.⁹ Would it be ethically appropriate to present a highly personal and intimate picture of the beliefs and motivations of mass murderers in scholarly works?

Then there is the question of striking the right balance between representing and exploring the everyday experiences under Nazism of "ordinary Germans" and Jews. That this remains a concern highly relevant for modern historians can be illustrated by the recently-published third volume of Richard Evans' comprehensive history of the Third Reich¹⁰ On the one hand, Evans highlights the everyday experiences of "ordinary Germans" and their complex and sometimes ambiguous attitudes towards the regime and the war, pointing out that there were many informal limits to Nazi influence. He backs up his claims by drawing strongly on the Bavaria project and other publications

⁹ Jonathan Littell, *The Kindly Ones*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York, 2009 [French 2006]).

¹⁰ Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich at War: How the Nazis led Germany from conquest to disaster* (London, 2008).

of Broszat. On the other hand, Evans deals more extensively with the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities than previous general accounts have done. The Holocaust is certainly the single largest theme discussed in the book. Although Evans' account is more perpetrator-oriented than *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, he has gone to great lengths to incorporate a sizable amount of material from victim testimonies. Friedländer's influence is clearly visible in his emphasis on Nazi atrocities and his use of victim testimonies. On the whole, Evans appears to strike a good balance between the two perspectives, although experts will undoubtedly disagree about many of the specifics.

Thus, while the historicisation debate can be studied for gaining insight into the academic and political culture of the Federal Republic in the 1980s, as well as for exploring the life and work of the two protagonists, it can still be read as a reflection on issues that remain pertinent to historians of the Third Reich and scholars who investigate the histories of mass atrocities in general.

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Appendix I: Interview Saul Friedländer

17-01-2010 & 25-01-2009, via phone

(Part 1)

DR: How did you make the switch from political science in which you did your PhD to history? What prompted this?

SF: Eh, it was... it was really not an intended switch. At least, I mean, my political science had always had an essentially historical dimension. My dissertation, which I completed at the Institute in Geneva, Graduate Institute of International Studies in 1963, was actually a work in the history of international history. You know, Hitler and the United States... *A Prelude to Downfall: Hitler and the United States*, of course it was written in French, but you probably have seen the title of that book in English, right?

DR: Yes, yes, my French is not that great, I'm afraid.

SF: And, so actually, I also then started at that same place where I completed—don't forget we're speaking of the sixties, where opportunities were much, I mean, you could, you had a lot of open positions at that time, as you know, so... They asked me first to be, to teach, to replace somebody and kept me. And actually I never wrote anything that was political science in the sense that you understand it today except for some articles here and there, but even that was usually with a co-author—I really had no interest in political science. And, so the first book was really on Hitler's perception of the United

States from '39 to '41, which brought me very close already to my domain that is Nazism, historically. And then the second one was Pius XII, of which you may be aware.

DR: Yes, yes I've read it.

SF: And which was even more of a documentation, a historical documentation, that anything else, so. And then the third book, if I remember correctly now, was the Kurt Gerstein, which again... so it went in a straight line. I never published a book in political science, but this was possible because in Geneva, where I was at the Graduate Institute, which was an Institute of International Affairs or Relations, still is, and... there you had three major sections: one was international history—history of international relations, that was my—that was where I taught. The second was international economics. The third was international law. And only much later that you had really political science in the, in what we would understand as political science today. So I <inaudible> into the traditional and traditionalist framework of the institute and the books I published or the articles I published in the history... well, it was, the history of Nazi politics or reactions to Nazi politics or things like that, was a theoretically at least in the line of what they demanded. So I was not a kind of intellectual pariah.

DR: I had another question for you for your career. I think it was actually a little bit before that, but... What exactly, just very briefly, was your job as head of the scientific department for the Israeli Defence force, what did it actually entail?

SF: <Laughter> Well, let me try to explain the general context. I, I came to Israel in '48 from France, right? Then I left again in '53 to go and study political science indeed in Paris, that is Institute d'Études Politiques, which is today, still today, the school of political science. And there again, I took the *section* <inaudible> *histoire internationale* which was essentially, well, it was also, there I also studied international law, a little bit of international economics and mainly history. Or international relations with teachers the names you may know or not, <list of French names I can't make out> and people like that. And did very well there. I came out first. Because they have a ranking system in France, in this kind of haute école. But during my studies I worked at the Israeli embassy as a local employee in order to finance myself. And when I completed my school I remained one more year at the embassy, not studying anything, but just working there and then left for Sweden to visit an uncle, and work there—you may have seen that in the memoirs—with the children there and then went on actually, to Harvard. Where I... where I enrolled in the department in government, which you may call political science, but I... I studied, eh, I started studying and Hamid Amgebtu <?> came from Oxford and all kinds of luminaries in Middle Eastern Studies—I studied Arab and so on—with the idea of entering eventually the Israeli Foreign Office... which I never did, but I went close to it. So... because I, you know, had to make a living from something and I certainly liked travelling. So... But I left it, I left the Harvard--because I had no money and B, I didn't like it to tell you the truth, why I couldn't even figure out today... and started working with somebody whose name you may or may not know: Nahum Goldmann, he was the president of the World Zionist Organisation and of the World Jewish Congress at that time and later on. And I worked as his, in New York, as

his political—it was called political secretary. And travelled with him from New York to Jerusalem and back, he had these two offices. The one in Jerusalem and the one, the Jewish Agency, in New York. And in '59 I married, for the first time—I am remarried now. And I... it was simply impossible to continue this shuttle between Israel and New York so I looked around and a friend of mine at the time very well-known also in journalist in Israel <name of newspaper?> who was a good friend of Shimon Peres and introduced me to Shimon Peres who asked me to work with him as an assistant. The title was purely—whatever it meant. But I worked in his office on various matters which were and remain important but didn't spent much time there, after a year or so, I recognised I had no inclination to become an official in any kind of organisation be it a Zionist organisation or be it the Israeli Defence Ministry. And I decided to put an end to that and to move to a place where I could get a fellowship and I got one in Geneva and that's how I—and to work on my dissertation, on my doctorate. Because what I did in Paris completed in '55, was a kind of MA. In any case, it was recognised as such, so I was allowed to enter graduate studies and go quickly for my dissertation. So that explains my being, my working with Nahum Goldmann and then with Shimon Peres. But it was really, it was in itself certainly... worthwhile—but—and I learned things—but only <inaudible> and this was not what I wanted to do.

DR: Yeah. Because what I hear from it, you've been moving around a lot of times. What exactly motivated you to go back to Israel again after being in Switzerland for so long?

SF: I went back to Israel again—you mean in '67? Because I came back first, my appointment at the Hebrew University was in '69.

DR: Yes, that's what I meant.

SF: I came back in '67 to—I was asked—I was offered a replacement... you know the name of Jacob Talmon?

DR: Yes, I do.

SF: A very good historian, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* and so on. He passed away fifteen years ago, I think—or twenty years ago. But in any case, he at that time had been invited to the institute in Princeton and he asked me. I had published a pile of <twelve?> and a dissertation and various articles and he asked me whether I would want to replace him during the time he was in Princeton. I said yes. And as I—so I came actually into the department of history, but as I arrived Shmuel Eisenstadt, whose name you again may or may not know—well-known sociologist at the Hebrew University, now he must be nearing ninety. But very famous in his day and even well-known today, *System of Empire* and things like that. The *Axial age*. Kind of sociology which maybe today is less *a la mode*, but still. He was dean of social sciences and asked me whether I would agree to re-organise—that is to re-open, it had been closed—the department of international relations. I, in my naïve stupidity, agreed. Because it took an enormous effort and time. And I really couldn't work much—but I, then I was appointed full professor there at a relatively early age. And moved, didn't move completely to Jerusalem, but remained—summer semester was actually a quarter, a trimester in Jerusalem and was a full semester in Geneva, so I travelled between—well I taught two trimesters in Jerusalem, one then in Geneva. Which led to my having to leave Jerusalem

after a few years, because they said that this was a precedent, a double appointment and they didn't want—they wanted me to either be there or... not to be there. So I said, I prefer then not to be there... and went to Tel Aviv where they accepted this kind of arrangement. With a few professors.

DR: If I'm correct, you're still then, have a position at the University of Tel Aviv, right?

SF: No no no, I am retired. That is... I am an emeritus. But I'm retired. In Israel you can't teach beyond 68. As in several European countries, I think Germany and so on. You can teach, but you're not paid anymore. I mean, you know, you can teach as a—on a kind of arrangement, but you're not member actively of the faculty. You are... emeritus.

DR: Do you still have a house in Israel?

SF: In Israel? No no. My ex-wife lives in Tel Aviv. But my house now is in Los Angeles. I am retired from Israel, from Tel Aviv for almost more than ten years.

DR: You also plan to stay then in the United States, I assume?

SF: No no. I go back and forth to see my children, my grandchildren and so on. But not, I don't live there. My address is really here.

DR: Yeah yeah, okay. Um... to come back to—actually, it's a completely different issue. You mentioned that you are actually completed agnostic—

SF: <Laughter> Completely?

DR: Well, you mentioned it quite strongly... but you have of course an attachment to your Jewish identity...

SF: To that... yeah, but for me that's totally different from Jewish religion. That is, I feel very Jewish in the sense of—I would not never try to hide the fact that I am Jewish that I feel part of something which is very hard to define and, um, but essentially that is the only identity I can point to, strangely enough, because I don't feel Czech of course. I never did. I was a small child when I left and I speak a little bit Czech... but I wouldn't want to reclaim my German cultural identity, of course. I feel very much linked to... French culture. And French is the language I speak... best. But I don't feel French, I don't feel American, I don't feel Swiss. So when the Spiegel once asked me—you know, it's a German periodical. Where I belonged to? Well, I said nowhere, but also everywhere. That is I almost... all these countries I'm familiar with, I speak the language pretty well and, um, I don't have difficulty living well. Here in this country, that is the United States, it's pretty common you have people coming from all over, certainly Los Angeles. So it's nothing out of the way, to be, to have a chequered itinerary. But I don't feel this is my home in terms of roots. But when you ask me where my roots are then, I'm Jewish. And I certainly feel—I'm very critical of Israel's policies, but that's beside the point—but I certainly feel a kind of emotional attachment to it, but

not in a particular desire, apart from being close to my children and grandchildren, to live there.

DR: Okay, thank you for that. Now to go to a completely different topic. I read in an interview with you and Deborah Lipstadt about the problems most Holocaust survivors have to talk to their children about their experiences. And you mentioned that when the grandchildren sort of come into the picture, that most people start to feel the need to start telling their story. Of course, you have been professional involved with this topic for most of your academic career...

SF: That is true.

DR: But I also recall that you said that you never discussed this with your own children, or liked to discuss this. But did this change for you when you had your own grandchildren?

SF: No, I, eh, well... it never happened that they asked me anything. And I would never on, my own, suggest it to them or talk to them about it. My eldest grandson, who lives in Paris, with my—with one of my kids. My kids? My eldest son will be fifty. <laughter>. So the son who lives in Paris is 45, so kid... But his son, Tom, once told me, very sweetly, he was here a few years ago and said that he read, tried to read my memoir, but he was sorry, each time he read part of it, he forgot what had happened before, so he was then I think thirteen when he said that. Today he is seventeen, so... You know, if they are—if *they* come and ask me questions, I will of course answer.

Carefully though. Not to, you know, create a syndrome of the children or grandchildren of Holocaust ... I myself have a kind of—I dislike this kind of phenomenon. So... they never asked, the grandchildren I mean. And I would not take the initiative of trying to teach them something which they may acquire on their own and then if I am around to answer: fine. And my children also. They read. But... very moderately. I mean, the three of them of course read the memoir, but beyond that there are no conversations on the topic or something like that.

<digression>

DR: Okay. I wanted to move on now to some sort of more general questions... First of all, this is a very broad question, you can answer as you like, but what do you think is actually the role of the historian in society and public discourse? What should he do?

SF: Well... <chuckle> I would say that there is a complete difference in my mind, a distinction, between the role of the historian as... qua-historian, that is however we want to define it: science, art... art and science. Never mind now. And the public person. The public intellectual. I mean, I was very involved in Israeli politics when I was... steadily living in Israel and teaching there and so on. Now I don't do it, because I don't feel the right to express myself as an Israeli, let's say, when I'm American as well and don't live there, you see. That—I dislike people not living in Israel and having all kinds of opinions. So I did, here and there, use my historical knowledge to explain my positions, but... but not mainly so. I really referred to my own interpretation, which at the time was very much liberal-left. Peace Now at the time was a very active movement,

today less so, but I would have belonged to the left of the centre, that is. But I—I completely, I make a complete difference between the profession, the vocation of historian and the intervention in the public domain. <Occurs?> simply, the one doesn't—the two activities are completely different.

DR: Do you—I mean. But what do you think then is the goal of the historian in an academic institution? Simply to... how to say that... come up with new knowledge?

SF: Yes, first of all. But also to teach, of course. And then the way you teach, you instil some—I mean, I speak very generally, because I don't see that very often—but at least you hope to instil some... general principles, let's say, into the minds of those who listen to you, the students that is. But not—never would I—it's really something that I think is still not acceptable—would I express directly my opinions, about current political issues in class or after class. Never.

DR: Okay. Coming back to that, because you were talking about intellectuals, etc. Of course, you've been giving a lot of guest lectures and won a lot of prizes, but do you consider yourself an intellectual—

SF: Excuse me, I didn't hear the question.

DR: Oh sorry! Do you consider yourself an intellectual? And if so, what do you mean by that?

SF: <Laughter> I... not really. I mean, I do my best to know what I know and that is my domain. And I'm working on Kafka you—that is, I really left the domain of history to deal with—in the years that I still have—with literature, which was always my favourite domain. So that is, literature, not writing. But... devoting time to understanding a great writer. So you see, in that sense I move between fields. But no, to define oneself as an intellectual is pretty ridiculous, I think

DR: <Laughter> But still, I—I assume you... in your many prizes, you always give a lecture and you can give some points and discuss what you think is important.

SF: I mean, I... when I think a topic is close to my heart then I try to say something about it. But that's the limit of my self-declaration.

DR: Oh okay, that is clear. I have a completely different question, more to do with your academic career, but... what did you hope to accomplish by founding this journal History and Memory?

SF: *History and Memory*? Yes, which I—I established actually two journals, one called—one which you would not know, because it's only in Hebrew—Tel Aviv's University's *Zmanim*, which means “Times”, very original. But it's doing well. I mean, it brings to the Israeli—to the Hebrew reading public good history. Not, I mean, you know... a little bit like *Past and Present*. I mean, it's not the level of *Past and Present*, but it's good. It's even... some, well, quite a lot of the articles are refereed and so on, so it's a serious thing. But mainly for the wider intellectual public in Israel, Hebrew-

reading public. And *Memory and History... History and Memory*. Was established actually... the aim of the donors was something else, but I turned it into what it has become, a forum for the debates about—let's call it about historical consciousness, a mixture of course of knowledge and commemoration. I mean, the issues which today are all over. But this was established I think in eighty...

DR: Eighty-something. Yeah, I can't remember.

SF: Yeah, exactly.

DR: Okay. May I ask... what was the reason you gave up the editorship for that journal? Was it because you moved to the United States?

SF: What was the...?

DR: The reason you gave up the editorship of this journal.

SF: Oh, eh... the reason really was, if I'm not mistaken, there was no conflict or anything of the kind. But I was more and more present here and I asked then that I be replaced by somebody, because I felt that I couldn't really continue doing serious work with the journal and be absent most of the time.

(Part 2)

DR: I read from several comments that you have an interesting in postmodernism in histori—

SF: Yeah, good point, yes.

DR: Do you—is this correct? Do you--

SF: That is correct, yes. But that came when I edi—when I was in charge, put myself in charge of a conference on the limits of representation, which you may have seen. And got familiar—more familiar, I had already been slightly—with the work of Hayden White and related work. But his... postmodernism as an approach to history mainly or a tentative approach. And from there of course I could not of course but to look at the literary side of it. I even attended a seminar led by Derrida in Irvine which is south of Los Angeles. He used to come every year. But that's in a way the limits what I invested in this domain. You may find an echo of this in the structure of *The Years of Extermination*, that is the voices of the victims puncturing in a way or even subverting the historical narration. In that sense, yes, I am aware and here and there even influenced by it, but I'm not so sure—I would suggest you read an article written by Wulf Kansteiner. Are you familiar with the name?

DR: Yes, I know his name.

SF: He published in *History and Theory* in May 2009. There he argues that Hayden White and myself are really adepts of high modernism. You will see his arguments; very long article, a very good one.

<digression>

DR: In your memoirs, you structured your account in such a way that the observations you made from the present (which was then the 1970s I think) they intermingle with your childhood events very much. Can you tell me what your intent was in structuring your accounts this way?

SF: That is, you're asking why I did that or...?

DR: Yes.

SF: Well, it indeed is again—this time post—not postmodernist, but I... those things are hard to explain as as a... it was not a method, it was a sense of the right thing to do. That is, to link past and present when I wrote it in '78 or '77 even—if I remember correctly. It was first published in French, you know, as most of my writings and then translated. I was under the impact of course of the Sadat visit and of the events—the Sadat visit to Israel and in a way the peace process with Egypt that followed. That gave me hope, although I've been very pessimistic about peace ever being achieved and... <ironic laughter> I suppose I am right now, but of course I had been hopeful in the late seventies, eighties and then Oslo and so on. But, so I sensed those things very strongly

and also there is no logical reason for my intermingling events with the childhood... it was a sense that past and present, in that case, right, of a Jewish child who was in the Shoah and then came to Israel, that this was not something that was irrelevant. I didn't calculate it: it was an instinctive way of structuring the narration according to what I felt. And the word "I felt" is the best way of putting it, was right, in terms of narration.

DR: There is another thing in your memoir that I thought was very significant, is that you emphasise several times the discontinuities in your memory and in your life. Like, for example, not being to identify with the adults around you as a child even later on. Do you think this inability to bridge the gap between your own memory or even that of other people is a problem for writing history, for writing, you know, scholarly history?

SF: Not really. I mean, it is a problem for writing a memoir but it is not a problem for writing history, because... I do not rely on my memory for writing history, but I rely first and foremost on documents. I may be using documents which are different from the standard, let us say in the case of the Shoah, the German documents or so. I use them, of course, but... also the diaries and so on. In any case, I use documents and the fragmentation is to—helped in a way to grasp, again, the non-linear, if you wish, conception of history in the sense that I intermingled levels of documentation, though, which... gave this impr—the result of a kind of multifaceted and multi-voiced and multi-layered narration. But my own difficulty... or my own... un—disconnection at times, didn't—I *think*—didn't have a direct impact on the writing of history, which ultimately I could always achieve by reading the documentation, whichever documentation now we're speaking of.

DR: Okay. I am going to skip now to the letter exchange with Martin Broszat. Because this letter exchange has become very famous right now for everyone who's doing historiography of Germany... but how important was this letter exchange for your intellectual development?

SF: For my...?

DR: For your own intellectual development.

SF: Very much so, very much. Well... it came, I must add, and you may have seen that in the book published by Norbert Frei, *Historikerstreit: Die Historisierung Zwanzig Jahre Später* oder so etwas. Whatever the title was, you which book I am alluding to, right? No, you should really look at it. It's a book by Norbert Frei in 2009, I think, or 2008. The result of a conference which took place at Jena university and where people met to discuss the... twenty years later, Broszat's work or his exchanges or his position and you had Ian Kershaw on the Führer Binding. You know what I'm alluding to?

DR: Yeah, I've read the volume.

SF: You have the volume or you read it?

DR: Yes, I have both.

SF: Yeah. What I pointed out in my own contribution there was that the exchange with Broszat came after several prior exchanges with him, particularly at the conference in Stuttgart in 1984 I think... Yeah or '83, '84. Where already there was an atmosphere of tension, let's put it mildly, between him and myself. And it only grew after he published his *Plädoyer für eine Historisierung* and so on in *Merkur*, which I read when it was published in *Merkur*... I felt then the need, because we were also in the midst, on the eve, on the eve of the *Historikerstreit*, the atmosphere in Germany was one of a new wave of, let's call it "national affirmation" and... we are speaking now of '85, '86. And you had Broszat's article in *Merkur*, but you had of course Nolte's article in... first in the book by Koch, the Third Reich seen from the perspective... whatever the title was, you will find it, I refer to it in my own work. That's where the first article by Nolte—in English—was published. It was—I had read it, but most people hadn't yet noticed it. Then you had, of course, somewhat later, and that was also a kind of preparation or... the articles by Nolte in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and so on, we are speaking now of '86. The various answers, but also you had Hillgruber... I mean, you know all that. I was... before—or as I was writing the retort to Broszat's article, which I first published, I think, in the... German, the Centre for German History in Tel Aviv. Then it was published somewhere else. I was already, I mean the whole atmosphere was one of growing, let's call it intellectual tension. So when he challenged me to... exchange those letters, it was a challenge—I mean it was written to me *as* a challenge. That is, "you have criticised my work, let us now exchange these letters in quick succession." ...he insisted that it should be done quickly and then they will be published in the *Vierteljahrshefte*. The quick succession was of course... he was convinced that I would not be able to find the arguments or the whatever—lose my

stride, because of the rapidity of the exchange and he was head of a big institute so he could appeal to the help of whomever for any material he needed and I of course was limited in that sense. I was sitting... it's true, I had arrived in Los Angeles, but that didn't change the fact. So all that took place before and then there was the exchange and it is—I mean it's before and during the exchange that I really felt that in order to do justice in a way to the history of the period as I understood it I had to contribute my own perspective, which was that of, as he said himself, that—as he called it—the mythical memory of the victims. My point was this was not a mythical memory and that indeed there was a way of looking at things, integrating the victims, which certainly was not detrimental, at least that's what I thought, to the writing of that history.

DR: Yes... By the way, did the revelation that Martin Broszat had been a member of the Nazi party, after he died, did that change your interpretation of his arguments?

SF: No, I mean I knew he was a member of the Hitler Youth, also that I *guessed*, I didn't know it. But given the age, given the—of course, everybody had been—Habermas and Mommsen and Broszat, everybody—so that was not in a way... then when this information came out, I was astonished. Because to put it—to put the whole thing together, I met Broszat after the event, that is I may have told you that last time, but after the letter were published and the reactions came or no reactions came or whatever, I invited Broszat to come to—I knew he was coming to the States to a conference, too. That's were Goldhagen—and when Broszat was at Harvard he asked him some very, let us say, direct questions based on this exchange. Then Broszat came to UCLA and he lectured according mainly—according to his well-known positions,

mainly about *Resistenz* and the absence of any use in resistance; you understand the difference. And in that sense he was wrong, because a year later the communist system in East Germany and so on collapsed because of some kind of resistance, not because of *Resistenz*—but that's besides the point. It was very much criticised here by colleagues of mine; I chaired the meeting, because of course he was my guest at UCLA, I had invited him. But afterwards, you see—the arguments were known for both sides—and afterwards I took him for a walk, his wife and daughter had gone to Disneyland, and I took him to walk along the, what is called here Venice Beach, which is—I don't know how far you know of the area or not...

DR: I've heard about it, yes.

SF: Yeah, but it's a kind of crazy place. Which, you know, on a nice sunny day it can be pleasant and you have bodybuilders and fortune tellers. A kind of... one of the sights you take visitors to visit. And we talked for hours, I mean, we walked, we sat, we talked. And he told me a lot—not about himself, but about his worries, about his institutes, that it would get into the wrong hands and, he was ill already and mentioned it to me, and his earlier fights against the right-wing historians group in Germany in the fifties and sixties—Gerhard Ritter was the name he mostly mentioned. It was not new what he said, but we established some kind of—or re-established or established—some kind of human contact, which certainly was missing before. So we parted in a way as, in a very good atmosphere and when he died *Die Zeit* asked me to write the obituary, which I did. So it was not a kind of hostility which lasted beyond this exchange in a kind of

growing—this kind of hostility certainly lasts to this day with Nolte, but Nolte was a very different type of, *is* a very different type of, how could I say, story.

DR: Yes. You also—one of the things you really disagreed with Broszat about in the exchange was the issue of Alltagsgeschichte. But, you changed your thinking about this later on...

SF: Yes, yes. Because I understood that—how can I say... what I think would still be my criticism, would be an *Alltagsgeschichte* of the nation only, that is of the Germans and the National Socialism. That is how can one look at, that is the German nation—I mean, he really tried to salvage the nation, the ordinary Germans if you wish, in their mass from being participants or ideologically motivated participants in the regime. He really—if one looks at his view of *Alltagsgeschichte* it was the ordinary—you know the series *Heimat*?

DR: Yes, I've seen part of it

SF: The Edgar Reitz series... which is the daily life of a little town, a little village in West Germany, before the Nazis, under the Nazis, after the Nazis. I don't know if you are aware of it, but that was exactly the expression of Broszat's views in film or in television series—a wonderful television series by the way. That is that ordinary—that the nation, the people had not been touched almost at all by the aims or the ideology of the regime and lived their life—and of course because of their energy and their need for social improvements, they did support the regime without even willing it, but by the

very fact of their enthusiastic rise in a new, in an atmosphere of social change and opening for everybody. So in that sense I... didn't like that nationally oriented or nationalistically oriented *Alltagsgeschichte*, but of course the Alltag of the—if he had introduced in a more massive way, the Alltag of the victims, but... he could have said like Hilberg [sic] did, you know, the point of view of the victims is not the German point of view. You remember the Hilberg—the Hilgruber argument, you know. I know the victims were dying as long as the Wehrmacht was holding the front, but I cannot see this history from the viewpoint of the victims, you may remember that in the Hilgruber *Zweierlei Untergang* and so on. So that—I did in my answer to Broszat, I several times called attention to his proximity to Hilgruber who was very conservative, very right wing, and Broszat didn't like that in the exchange, you may remember that, but pretty upset about his linkage. So I... his arguments, let's say, came from the left, but nonetheless he was... yes, he, in my view at the time in any case, and today I am rather indifferent, but at the time I sensed he was also trying to say, well, the Nazis were the Nazis, but that was the political level or the ideological level, the criminal level of course, with whom the bulk of the German population had nothing to do, or very little to do, except for the fact that they carried it by their own work and enthusiasm for work and what not. And social mobility, which indeed existed so much under the Third Reich. And he argued also that most Germans had no idea what was going in the various criminal policies of the Nazis, of course no idea about the extermination of the Jews. I—and that only during the last two years or something of the war—you may remember that in one of his letters, the last one I think—where they did become aware of it and that it of course was too late. We know in the meantime that this is a pretty false assessment of what people knew and there has been so many monographs about it in the

meantime and that people knew much and much earlier what was going, in any case they knew about all the criminal activities, so... the Alltag including the victims or including the knowledge, if you wish, if the victims are away, including the knowledge of their fate would have been a totally different *Alltagsgeschichte* and that of course is the one I very much favour.

DR: I have one last question to round it all up. You, of course, disagreed with Martin Broszat about the historicisation and that the Nazi period couldn't be treated in the same way as 16th century France or some other period. But do you think that with the passing of time and the changing of generations that historicisation is also an actual outcome in the end...

SF: Yes, I understand your question and I agree that it is a... that is a... in itself of course, this is the goal of every historian, with extreme events you have to find a way of historicising which nonetheless wouldn't completely domesticate the past. And not only regarding the Shoah, but regarding histories of genocides of very, very extreme persecution, you must be very careful, that would be my—to historicise on the one hand, but to find a way of narrating the events which would also give the full sense of a... give the reader the full dimension of the event. The Gulag and so on, if you wish, to compare. Of course, with time historicisation progresses necessarily and with time also people will be less concerned about a narrative that would keep a kind of presence of the enormity, let's say, of the events. It's unavoidable. But at least I try my best to keep it in my own work.

<END OF FORMAL INTERVIEW>

Appendix II: Interview Norbert Frei

16-3-2010 in Munich, Germany

DR: Right then, I think maybe it's easier to just start with the beginning. How did you get to know Martin Broszat?

NF: I was a student at the University of Munich and studied, obviously, history and wrote a piece on the Nazi press system, because this was something that interested me, because I wanted to become a journalist. All of a sudden my professor told me that I got a letter from the director of Institute für Zeitgeschichte. They are looking for people who would be interested to work on a project called Bayern in der NS-Zeit. In that time it was still called Widerstand und Verfolgung: Bayern 1933-1945. And so he kind of recommended me to Broszat and this how I met him in... 1974, I think it was.

DR: And how did you sort of develop your relationship?

NF: And then we agreed that I could work on a master, magister arbeit, on the development of the Nazi press system in Bavaria. Because this was part of this huge regionalgeschichtlicheforschung on Bavaria. And well, I mean, while I was working on it, it basically started to get bigger and bigger and finally I never ever wrote master, but just a dissertation, which at that time was still before Bologna, before everything, was still possible to do this. So this PhD dissertation was basically completed in 1978 and at that time Broszat was looking for a, a mixture of a new collaborator at the Institute and member of the Institute and someone who would also work as a personal assistant to the

director. Not to Broszat, but to the director. So to speak in this institutional... way. And he asked me to apply for this position and finally I got it and at that time I told him I do this for another two or three years, because I definitely want to become a journalist at the end and... here we are.

DR: <Laughter> Twenty years later.

NF: Well, thirty years.

DR: Thirty years by now. So that didn't work out as expected, but... You stayed until 1996 or something?

NF: 1997 yeah, well. In between I was two times away, one year in Harvard and one year at the Wissenschaftskollege , but basically I stayed for 19 years. I mean, in the period that was covered, it was 19 years.

DR: As an assistant to the director or...?

NF: No, this was only for the first... three, four years. Actually, when I took this Kennedy fellowship in Harvard, in 1985... 1985, then more or less, this assistants position had ended and I became a... when I came back, I was a normal member of the institute.

DR: Uhm, now let's just ask you a little bit more about Broszat himself. As you knew him, of course. The impression I get from reading his articles and also what other people wrote about him, is that... they call him a "Bohemian"...

NF: Yes. A very lively person. Oh yeah.

DR: And, how to say, not afraid of getting into debates...

NF: No, not at all. There was no debate, there was no discussion which he sought to avoid. I mean, he really was, among German historians, I think, one of the foremost public intellectual historians, I think. A few others of his generation, but he was certainly one of them.

DR: But at the same time, that's what struck me, is that he was also very reserved. I mean, I think in the conference in Italy, Rome, one of the articles... and I can't remember who wrote it... But that he mentioned was so surprised that Broszat for once actually spoke about himself, I mean not on a topic he was interested in, but about his personal beliefs or experiences.

NF: Well, I mean, this might be for, true for a general audience, and it might be true when it comes to his work as a historian, that in public he was not talking about himself, about his personal experiences. But this was not at all true within the Institute. Just to the contrary. I got a very good sense of his upbringing in Leipzig and his brother, strong protestant background. He himself sometimes called it "begott." His mother and his

father must have been very traditional and very observing protestants. So... no, I mean, he also actually made it quite clear to everybody at the Institute who was interested, who was talking to him on a personal basis, that he for instance was a devoted Hitler Youth member, that he loved it, that he was as... we call it, he was a “glowing” little Nazi and... to the surprise, or to the... anger of his family. Obviously the family was not very supportive for this. And even more glowing, probably, was his brother, his brother Gottfried, who was a couple years older than him. So both of them. But this was a rather typical story, that in this protestant, young generation, you have this... you will find that the Hitler Youth movement, the Nazi movement, as a youth movement, was very attractive. And I would always argue that his interest into looking for the social attractiveness, for the appeal of the Nazi regime and the Nazi movement was rooted in personal experience of a young men. And I consider it together with Ian Kershaw, completely the same opinion in this, his article on *Soziale Motivation und Führerbindung des Nationalsozialismus* as his most, probably his most brilliant piece. I mean, given the time when it was written.

DR: But, I mean, I was also not so much interested in his Nazi history or whatever, but more... Did he consider it sort of the duty of the, of you know, his profession, as director or as historian to be very impartial or objective, not to talk about himself in his...

NF: Well, I mean, I think he didn't consider it as important what his personal experience was. I mean, after coming back from the *Reichsarbeitsdienst* and the brief period as a soldier, he became a scholar. So there's nothing really important in this

personal history. But... and this might result some sort of hesitation to be... talkative about his person and personality. But this is something I would consider as a teil of the habitus of his generation and of intellectual of his kind. They wouldn't talk about in public very much about personal feelings. On the contrary, in a smaller community of colleagues and friends, he would do. I mean, we knew... he made no secret about his public—personal life, his way to look at the world, and he invited people at home. He was a very, yeah, he liked to have people in his house for dinner and he liked to take part in parties and he was interested in what younger people would do. So he was not at all a reserved person. But. There was this strong belief of his generation and you've read about this, I assume, in a lot of contributions, of this idea of a scholarly... objectivity. I mean, this is the core of the debate between Friedländer and him. So in that sense, he was... yes... he was, at the end, a true believer in this invention of scholarly objectivity as... which in mine view was kind of a necessity of this young field, this young sub-discipline of Zeitgeschichte, to pave its way. One has to take into consideration, the aggressiveness, the animosity, which this field earned, in let's say, the 1950s and even early 1960s. So they had to invent themselves as a true German Wissenschaft. As a true scholarly approach to this youngest field of history.

DR: Actually... since you mentioned, I wanted to take a small sideways... but when you talked about Broszat's family, his parents... did they actually survive the way?

NF: Yes, I... They lived in Leipzig, as you know. Or close to Leipzig. In... I forgot what it is... a suburb, yeah, but it's easy to find. Yes. I don't know how long his parents lived.

DR: Did they stay in the DDR?

NF: Good question... Yeah, they stayed in Leipzig, this is for sure. But probably. Yeah, they died before the wall came—before the wall was build. But that I am not sure about. Well, I doubt he was too often... when he became member of the Institute he had his young family here in Munich. Maybe his parents came over here instead of he going to Leipzig, But in the early 1950s, I understand, that he was still commuting quite a while. Actually, he was befriend with Hermann Mau, the first general-secretary. There was a whole, as they perceived themselves, there was a whole Leipziger mafia in the Munich Institute. Hermann Mau, Helmut Heiber, Martin Broszat, the Buchheims, were from... also from Leipzig, yeah, the Buchheim family. Actually, it was kind of a group of people from East Germany and particularly from Leipzig.

DR: Did he carry an interest in the DDR?

NF: Oh yes! I mean, if you look at the, his work in his very last years. This attempt to write together with some colleagues from the GDR about the German elites and the warfare and the Nazi war. And how bitter he was, when this in the very last stage, kind of exploded. Because Hager, the chief ideologue of the GDR regime, kind of asked his people to get out of this. So he was very angry. And he wrote about this, about his angriness. No, he was always interested and I remember quite well, in a very last days, when I saw him the last time on his deathbed, he was fascinated about what was going on his hometown. Heldenstadt Leipzig. I mean, the uproar and the... he was pretty sure

that... he died on October 14th, right? So, I mean, it was only two—three more weeks before the wall came down and the whole process was very, something that probably helped that he lived another week and another week, because he was so fascinated by that.

DR: Actually, did he... because of his parents, did he have some religiosity himself. Or did he go completely against that?

NF: Well, I mean, he... at the end, I know he was talking to a protestant priest, I think. At least he talked to a priest. And he had an, as he called it, as he told me, he had a very nice relationship to this person who came, in the last couple of months, to his house and he had conversations. So yes, he in a way came back to his protestant roots, but I would never call him a religious person or... I mean, he was, as most intellectuals probably of his generation and other generations kind of, they know they have this Christian Protestant background, but there is not... I mean, he was not a person who would engage like Weiszacker or Sontheimer in the Evangelische Kirchentag or something like this. This was not his cup of tea.

DR: And what about his political side? Was he a strong supporter of any political party?

NF: He understood himself always as a sozial-liberaal. I would guess that he voted, most of the time, for the SPD. But... actually, we never ever talked party politics. We spoke a lot about politics and actual, recent politics. But not in the sense... I mean he never understood himself as a party man of the SPD or something like this. He kind of,

this social-liberalism, this was his belief and his position. But some conservative elements at some points, but, yeah... He was a supporter of Willy Brandt and the neue Ostpolitik and things like that. Yeah.

DR: I saw a statement signed by Martin Broszat. So he was sometimes politically active, but not particularly strongly.

NF: No, and not in a way as a party politician.

DR: Or as an intellectual.

NF: Yeah.

DR: Uhm... actually before I go on to my next question, a very simple question, but... what was the illness that he had actually?

NF: Pardon?

DR: What was the illness that he had?

NF: Oh, he had a terrible sort of cancer. And he got his—and it was a complex kind of... cancer starting in the stomach. And actually, he got a prognosis at first which was half a year or something like that and he lived with it for four years. He... I think he

ended even up as some kind of case in medical literature. But that you would have to check out. But... but I'm quite sure he was—

DR: For four years.

NF: Yeah, he... I mean, most of the time it was hidden to a broader audience even at the Institute. I knew when I came back from—he became ill when I was in Harvard or just before I left for Harvard. No, he became ill in late 1985 and when I came back he told me more about his illness. But most of the people didn't know how serious it was until it was not to oversee anymore.

DR: He continued working until the very end, right?

NF: Oh yeah, like a bulldog.

DR: It was interesting, because I had an interview with Saul Friedländer as well—

NF: Yeah. When did you see him?

DR: Uhm, I talked to him on the phone.

NF: Ah yeah. He's a good friend of mine, you might know.

DR: It was very interesting to hear from him as well what he thought about this. But one of the things that struck me when he was talking about when he Martin Broszat at a conference in LA, actually. I think Broszat was already ill at that time.

NF: Oh yeah, he was. It was in '87 I think. No, it was kind of a reconciliation between the two of them.

DR: So he mentioned that they took a walk and talked about all kinds of things, but what he mentioned and I didn't ask more about it, because it was about Broszat, but... that he was, Broszat was very worried what would happen to the Institute after he was gone. What were his worries exactly?

NF: Eh... He always... He experienced it once that there was an attempt to, well, to end his period as a director after his first term and to install somebody from the conservative side. And this is was his basic fear, that the conservatives could take it over, which in a way happened. With Horst Möller.

DR: He's... at the end he was very against the whole museum in Bonn, Haus der Geschichte.

NF: Yeah, well, I mean, this was—not only he—but this social liberal intellectuals and I was personally also convinced that when Helmut Kohl came into power in '82 and this whole concept of geistig-moralische wende and then the idea to build this museum in Bonn and to build another one in Berlin. That this was an attempt to kind of rewrite

German history and to get rid of the tradition of critical, self-critical, enlightenment about the Nazi past. This is how we—I can say we at that time—perceived the danger. It became different obviously and the museum in Bonn is now a more or less meaningless, nice museum of the old Federal Republic. But you never knew. Given the background of the experience of the sixties and seventies, this konservative-tendenz-wende as it was called, was a threat and it was perceived as a threat.

DR: To come back to Saul Friedländer, but... why did he, did Broszat, want to exchange letters with Friedländer? I mean, I assume he wasn't the only critic of Broszat's plädoyer.

NF: No, actually, there was a very precise background to this. I think his first—I mean, since when they knew each other, but as you know Saul started as an empirical historian writing on Pius and Gerstein and all that in the sixties. So they must have known each other, but—you should ask him—earlier, but then they ran into each in Stuttgart at the Schlossbildungskonferenz in, when was it, '84. And earlier on—when did Saul publish *Kitsch und Todt*?

DR: Oh, the exact date I don't know, but it must be early eighties—

NF: Maybe it was at that time—and there is this remark on Broszat, whom he quotes as one of the eminent empirical historians on the Nazi regime and not particularly because it was Broszat or so it goes. And actually I just re-read it in a Spiegel review, that the review of Saul's book mentioned this in his review, the critique on this kind of

soberness, inappropriate or problematic soberness when it comes to writing about the Holocaust, which at that time was not called the Holocaust. And maybe it was only then that Broszat came across this book, but that I don't know. That would probably be easy to find in his papers. In any case, so he knew Saul Friedländer was criticizing him in a way or he took it as criticism. And then there came the *Plädoyer für ein Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* and... an invitation by Dan Diner to be part of this book which was published by Dan in the Fischer Schwarze Reihe. And then, where they wanted to kind of discuss Broszat's argument and Saul Friedländer would renew his critique and Broszat said no, I don't want to be part of this volume, I'd rather prefer—I don't know if he wrote this to Dan Diner, but he simply made clear to me he wouldn't be part of this book. Then, I remember the scenery quite well, I told him well, why don't you want to be part of this—well, I rather prefer to have an exchange with Saul Friedländer directly. And this is actually how the idea of this letter exchange—which was rather an unusual format, given the traditional—started. And then he wrote his first letter without showing it to me and only when Saul replied for the first time... I think, I read already his first reply. Or his second... Then I would have to try to find out again. But in any case, they were already in the midst of the exchange when I became involved. Because he gave me his letter and Saul, whom I at that time only knew by reputation. And all of a sudden I was in the midst of it. Because I was immediately struck by his way of insisting that there is a possibility to be an objective scholar. This was completely against my belief and what I learned at the university. Wertneutralität and all of this... Objektivität als regulative idee, yes of course, but as a regulative idee, not as something we can achieve. So in that respect I found it immediately awkward how he... positioned

himself. But yeah, at that time, this position was... I mean, he couldn't withdraw from it. This was the weakest point of his side in this exchange, if you ask me.

DR: How important was it for him, this exchange?

NF: It was very important for him. He was, no he... emotionally and intellectually it was a very intense experience, for both of them. I remember these phonecalls from Saul Friedländer to me, because well, there was a question of translation. How precise would the translation be, he was so—I was the editor at the Vierteljahrhefte für Zeitgeschichte and I tried to smooth stylistically things—not in the content—to find tiny little corrections and things like that. And he was very cautious to control every detail, Saul Friedländer, and on the other hand also Martin Broszat. So they were both emotionally very involved.

DR: Very engaged... Do you think then, was Broszat's... this exchange, was it unusual for Broszat to do this?

NF: Well, for both of them—

DR: I'm sorry, I mean the position he took. It fell within his normal...

NF: It was the position actually he developed over the years. The first article I would quote here in this series was probably this 1983, I think, thing on Eine Insel in der Geschichte, against der Verinsellung des Nationalsozialismus. Which was only a

newspaper article in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*. And then, developing over the pladoyer. Well, my theory, I think I made it clear already in the—or hope I made it clear in the Jena conference—and I spoke about this, a lot of times, with Saul also... His main focus, his main concern was actually not the discrepancy between the German the Jewish memory, collective memory, but his impulse, the starting pulse of his work in that direction, was that he feared that the seriousness of research, of thinking, of critical reflection about the Nazi past, would, could come to an end, because of the primitiveness of the media and the way it was dealt with by journalist, by a broader public, by the media industry. Also in school, by teachers, who are strong in opinions but weak in knowledge. And, I mean, I think he had a point here. This kind of moralising instead of intellectually reflecting about the Nazi period. This was his starting concern on the one side; on the other side, he was arguing of course against Nolte and all these people. So he was trying to keep the position of what he perceived as he said in one famous quote: *die selbstkritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit als eine des besten Elementen politischen Gesittung*. Using this old fashioned word „Gesittung“ I mean.

DR: I actually don't know what it means.

NF: Look it up in a dictionary. *Gesittung*. It's hard to describe... *Gesittung* means... a position. If you know “sitzen”... so proper behaviour. *Gesittung* is kind of intellectual behaviour. *Als eine des besten Elementen politischen Gesittung*, in order... political belief, norm. That kind of thing.

DR: Position.

NF: Position, yeah.

DR: Actually, one of the things at the Jena conference that I found so remarkable was when there's talking about the letter exchange... Hans Mommsen, Ian Kershaw, Niethammer, they're all very critical of this letter exchange with Broszat. Hans Mommsen thought it was very untypical of Broszat—or no, an unworthy article.

NF: I'm not sure, if he goes that far, but... He's... I mean, there's some, first of all, the intellectual flaws on the side of Broszat are evident, and I think he realised that at the end, by himself, if you read his last letter, you get a sense of that he knows that it's not that easy. And in a way, he revokes from part of his former stronger statements. But, in one sense it is true that this was not typical for Martin Broszat, because I always arguing here that he was an intellectual historian. In a way, this is true. On other hand, he was not at all a theoretical historian.

DR: That's one of the things I was going to ask you about later. Because that's what struck me most when you, you mentioned that—because on the one hand he's very famous for The Hitler Staat, the Bayern Project, which are pioneering research—or at least very innovative. He's always writing these articles in Suddeutsche Zeitung or FAZ about history and at the same you say that he's also not really interested in—

NF: No, he comes from the subject. In German one would say, er kommt immer von der Sache her. Not from a theory. He wants to achieve something for his project, which is critical enlightenment about the past. And he's interested in theory only if it helps his argument or... I think in your questionnaire you were talking about Foucault and--... He never wrote—read a line of Foucault. No, he was not at all interested in theory as theory. I mean, he read a little a bit about charismatisches Fuhrertum by Weber and then he had his background as a student of the 1950s or so. But in his work, he never referred to theory. Given the fact that, in the 19—basically all through the 1970s—there was a strong strand of theory, writing theoretically about the writing of history, in Germany, given... this has vanished, but in the 1970s this was actually a strong strand. Given that, I mean, he was just not interested. He was... He took what he needed from political science, from sociology, wherever, but not... and you would look for, I think, completely in vain, for any theoretical footnote in his work. I've never done it, but... I've never checked it, but take a look at it. I mean, he's even for instance critical about Hannah Arendt when it comes to her attempts to get a higher level of explanation through theory. And then his answer—the same is true for Hans Mommsen, who is also completely theoretically disinterested.

DR: But then, how do you explain the, for example, the Bayern Project. He wrote, you know, articles about Resistenz and how this is a new concept.

NF: It comes all out of himself. I mean, he's a self-thinker, yeah? He thinks about a way to organise material, to... he learns from his sources, he reflects on it and there's one other particularly interesting and in my view likeable part of his personality, which is,

even after thirty or forty years in this business writing about Nazi history and he did not much aside of this. He never was satisfied with his own explanations. I mean, the moment something which he had actually written became kind of common knowledge, he was, he was already somewhere else and he was critical about this. Actually, he was criticising himself. And he was always very unquiet when younger colleagues at the Institute started to refer too much or even to learn by heart what he has written, had written before. I mean, he wanted new ideas. He wanted new impulses. Actually, he asked—this is why he was such a team leader, because he made people think on their own and think things further and not keep with something which was allegedly achieved.

DR: Actually, what was your reason for organising this conference in Jena, apart from the fact that it was his 80th birthday?

NF: Yeah, well, this was the first and foremost reason. I kind of sensed they wouldn't do anything for him in the Institute, which I found appalling. And there would be no recognition of him at the Institute, so I thought, well, it's worth to get these people together. And you will find that despite they were invited, nobody from the Institute came.

DR: So there's a huge change after the directorship—

NF: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

DR: But, I mean, what do you think that was also sort of the value of talking about Broszat and his work 30 years later?

NF: Uh...

DR: Or do you think it still carries, you know, for people who study about Nazi history?

NF: I think so, otherwise you wouldn't be so interested in it, eh? No, I mean, some of the questions still unsolved and probably are not solvable. Although, I mean, I think... we have achieved something since his death. Also in terms of including perspectives of the victims, as Saul demonstrated so masterly, in the narrative. And also, kind of, writing a narrative which brings the voices from the victims and the voices from the perpetrators and bystanders closer together and to have it in one narrative. This is an ideal which I think we are still working—in the direction we are still working. Plus, I mean, if you think about the inflation of eye-witness history since then, I think he kind of sensed that this could come, but... It would be interesting to hear him arguing or judging about this today.

DR: Yeah. He wasn't very keen on including too many eyewitnesses or subjective—

NF: No, I mean, this is his starting point. *Zeitgeschichte* in the 1950s had to defend itself against the permanent insistence of the eyewitness, eyewitness, to know it better and to know the real truth and everything. So there was a general distance towards eyewitnesses. Plus, they had their own experiences. They started doing some interviews

with former Nazi officials in the early 1950s, the so-called Zeugenschriftumsprojekt, you might have seen it in the archive. Zeitzeugen—what is it, Zeugen—ZS is the abbreviation of the collection. Zeugenschriftung, Zeugenschriftung. And in a way people like Heiber, Buchheim and also Broszat, they—at a certain point they were fed up with it, they were fed up with the lies. So. And from that background, from the necessity to define contemporary history as a scholarly, as a scientific field, which is not to be mixed up with memoirs of whomever. He would have been probably kept his reserve until today. But this is pure speculation.

DR: Actually, speaking about narrative... He didn't really write very traditional narrative at all. There's I think one book about the fall of the Weimar Republic, which more or less has some kind of—

NF: Machtergreifung.

DR: Yeah. Machtergreifung.

NF: Yeah, because this was the part and the plan of this series, in which I published the follow-up volume... the whole idea was to start with a narrative, with a story, and then kind of explain it, yeah. And so in his case, I think there are even a couple of stories that begin. There's this on the Goebbels attack on the Remarque film. He has kind of couple of these stories in the beginning. While I decided to write just about the Rohm affair.

DR: In general, his works are very—

<remark about time remaining>

DR: He... his narrative approach is very, I mean, most of his work is very analytical, very structuralist. And not concerned at all with trying to tell a story, so to speak.

NF: Yeah. This was a development probably of his later years. That he saw and understood that we now can start to, should start to write stories again. And actually he wrote one piece on... I think it was Gauleiter Wagner, for the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*. Which I found terrible. I was so angry with him. I, at that time, I thought this was a helpless attempt to write a narrative. It was even, it could even be misunderstood as apology, which he never ever had in mind. I mean...

DR: It was very clear in the introduction and conclusion, but indeed, in between it was not so...

NF: But I think yes, he... he never ever—he was so atheoretical, that he never ever understood himself as a structuralist. I mean, these names were given to them and him from outside. This was his perception of it. And that it turned out to be a debate between intentionalist and structuralists, this was nothing... I think both sides did not start in thinking of themselves as structuralists and intentionalists, but it was particularly true for him. He always thought that his... The only convincing and scholarly acceptable approach and I'm looking for that and I'm not taking an option, I'm not opting for intentionalists or—

DR: This is just the way it is.

NF: Yeah, this is the way it has to be, yeah. But not, I'm not opting here, I'm part of this school or I'm leading this school or an interpretational strand. This was not his way of thinking.

<END OF FORMAL INTERVIEW>

What follows are relevant items from the informal discussion afterwards:

DR: I think he, in the end, had a lot of respect for Broszat or they got along well, but... in the beginning, there was a certain—I mean, he talked about Broszat challenging him with his letter and it was not just a friendly exchange or anything. So he was mentioning as well that he insisted on sending these letters in a sort of a quick way, because, well, he had the Institute who could work for him, but Friedländer was alone, so...

NF: This is how Saul perceived it. In the end, I can tell you, he was as alone as the other one. He never—he, as I told you, he just wrote on his own—sitting on his side desk and writing by hand these letters. And he did not draw on expertise of anybody. He should have, but he didn't.

DR: That was very interesting. He saw it as a glove thrown down. But I think in the end, they sort of managed to get a bit of a human contact.

NF: Oh yeah. I mean, this visit in Los Angeles was, I think, for both of them, was very important.

<...>

NF: I think it's remarkable what Saul told us in Jena again. I mean, this sense of somebody who survived as a child in France and looking in the, from Geneva, where he then was teaching, looking at these German professors. You know this part of his statement in Jena? This was also a revelation to me. How... how strong this German *Zeitgeschichte* was perceived by a person like Saul at that time and at least if I'm taking here while—since I'm talking, as long as I talk about Broszat—he was not at all at any time a person who pretended to be self-confident or something like that. Just the opposite. He was always questioning and insecure about his ideas, about his beliefs. Trying them out in a discursive way. So I mean, in a way he was the opposite of what you would expect from a German professor in the '60s or even still in the 70s. Yeah. Plus, he—there was a distance between the university and those people at the Institute. I mean, this was still the case when I arrived there. That, I mean, Broszat himself never—or he had to get his connection to the university in order to have his habilitation accepted. He had to go to Konstanz. Why? Because in Munich they wouldn't do it. There was still the distance between the university and a kind of political Institute, as the Institute was. Those were the times, yeah. There was no *Zeitgeschichte* at the University of Munich at the time. There was no *Lehrstuhl* for *Zeitgeschichte* at—it was only when Hans Günter Hockerts came.

DR: That's quite remarkable, actually.

NF: Yeah, so I mean, when her—in order to understand him and his generation, one has to take in mind the societal framework and the academic framework

DR: But Broszat did get an honorary professorship...

NF: An honorary professorship. I mean, what happened later on when Horst Möller came? Immediately, I mean, he was on the conservative side, immediately they gave him a full professorship. First not in Munich, but in Regensburg, but then in Munich. I mean, things had changed, but also these were people who were closer to the conservative establishment at that time.

DR: So the Institute was in a bit of a strange position?

NF: Yeah, I mean, it was perceived—and this was the charm of the Institute and this caused so many people to come to public debates or to events, social events at the Institute—because it was conceived as a left, somewhat left-liberal, politically liberal, island in this rather conservative intellectual Munich society. We are talking here about the sixties and the seventies.

DR: Now it's not anymore?

NF: I think it's not at all a societal... it has no societal attractiveness anymore? I mean, they have probably even more events there now than twenty or thirty years before, but it's just one place of events as many others. It's also part of the development of the field and the development of society and, I mean, the *dolus* of this Nazi experience is of course also... getting weaker.

Appendix III: Interview Hans Mommsen

5-6-2010 in Feldafing, Germany.

DR: Well, maybe first of all, how did you get to know Martin Broszat? Did you meet him at the Institute für Zeitgeschichte?

HM: I was at the Institute in the 60s and that's how we got friends. And he was... at that time Krausnick was the director and Broszat was <inaudible> what was going on. At that time, too. he had at that time, 60s, projects and so on, and I think he was one of the most busy people in the Institute.

DR: Did you do the same kind of work?

HM: Yes, at that time I worked first, I was only writing and writing expertises for the Institute, what they do there, what I had to do there. I was a specialist for Yugoslav... But then I worked, stood under his influence, as he gave the advice to write on the civil service, which I did. Because that was in connection with Broszat's plan, to write a history of the Third Reich and on the Hitler State, as he did. And in so far he was occupied also with the development of the civil service at that time, that was quite new. In the late 50s.

DR: But you said Martin Broszat was already a figure in the 1950 in the Institute?

HM: Yes, what is important? He was a very active man, but he was not a specialist... he was not the man who led the Institute later on, he did that.

DR: So how did he become director then?

HM: He was elected, but I don't know who did that. But he was at that time, when Krausnick has to retire, I think he was the most qualified successor, because also Buchenheim at that time went to Mainz at the University. But I am not a specialist for that, you should look into the documents of the Institute. You know that book about the jublieum?

DR: Yes, I've read it.

HM: Well, yes, it's rather bad you know.

DR: Why is that?

HM: Well, many things... It's wondrous that I am not mentioned in the whole book—or almost not mentioned. Although I made a house planning for the building where are now, but they didn't allow... But Horst Möller hates me. Please don't go to the Institute with a recommendation from my person, that's not very helpful.

DR: Okay, what was the problem then between you, Broszat and Horst Möller?

Different interpretations?

HM: I was already gone when that changed, I was at Heidelberg. But according to my... it was quite clear that Möller was not qualified, he was already the second director like that and certainly he was selected by the direct influence of the former chancellor, Kohl. It was a political decision. He was not... He is still not qualified in the history of the Third Reich. That's certainly... there was already a strong rivalry between, on the side of Möller against Broszat.

DR: I heard there was an attempt, after Broszat's first directorship, to not allow him to continue being director. Was that also this kind of situation?

HM: Yes, I don't know the details, but it's very interesting and very symptomatic. How do you know, I'm wondering about that.

DR: Norbert Frei told me.

HM: He was a student of Broszat at that time, later on he distanced himself a little bit, which I think is wrong.

DR: But maybe... to go back to the beginning of the Institute... what was it like to work at the Institute in the 1950s and 1960s? Did you... was there a lot of animosity or ill-will against the Institute for documenting these things of the Third Reich?

HM: I don't know, the problem was certainly that the ordinary universities didn't like that institute and there was a lot of resentment against what we called *Zeitgeschichte*. It took I think another fifteen years in a way, to get really accepted by the university field.

DR: Why was that though?

HM: I guess I haven't look at both sides... after fifteen years, they took us serious. It was a problem at that moment to get that recognition, of an ordinary field.

*DR: Why were most German historians so skeptical of *Zeitgeschichte*?*

HM: If you know a little bit about German historiography, you know, that there is on the hand the *historist* tradition, telling us we couldn't do anything which is *Zeitgeschichte*, that means recent history and secondly, most German historians were more to the right and didn't want to have Nazi studies.

DR: Because it reflected on themselves, or?

HM: That's your field. There's certainly a lot of history written about that.

<interruption>

DR: As for you personally, and for Martin Broszat, was it difficult to work at the Institute? Was it... or did you enjoy the job?

HM: Well, you know, it depends you know. I wasn't too long there, I had I think three parts of my business there was first to write on these so-called Gutachten, what I already mentioned. Second was that I worked as an unofficial secretary of the director and looked for all the correspondence and so and I was really intimate with what was going on, also on external pressures and influences. And the third one, I think was, to do real research.

DR: Was that also important? Or was that really the last thing you had to do? The research field at that time?

HM: Nobody was looking after me or didn't care.

DR: When you left the Institute, did you keep in contact with Broszat?

HM: All the time, I kept contact with him. But we were never too close.

DR: A good colleague but not friends?

HM: We were, methodologically, we were near together. All the time there was some sort of understanding, no problem. But when I went to Heidelberg I had to do other things, to teach and so on. I wasn't too much integrated in the research and the different projects which were pushed forward by Broszat.

DR: But of course you still heard about them.

HM: Certainly. I was quite well informed, yes.

DR: Do you know, apart from sort of purely academic debates, did Broszat involve himself in more public debates about policy or politics?

HM: From the start. Yes, from the start. You know, when you entered that job you had also to do something in order to get the acceptance of the rather critical German public and public opinion and also of the journalists. And certainly then a lot of immediate political issues... It was also the problem of the juridical aspect, so in the Third Reich and the... There were relations at that time already with the Ludwigsburgerzentralstelle, you know what that is?

DR: I've heard about that, but I can't remember.

HM: That was founded in order—the problem is, according to German law, the courts were responsible for the localities where the people did their deeds or... But there were no courts for Russia, no courts for Poland, where the crimes happened. And in order to change that, they created this so called Zentralstelle in Ludwigsburg. And that was certainly one of the—pushed to do that were the Nürnberger prozessen. Certainly also the Eichmann process in Israel.

DR: Of course, that was very different in setup from the German trials.

HM: Yes, clear. But there was a push in order to do something in that field, because in general German politicians at that time tried to avoid to do deal with the legacy of the Third Reich.

DR: And how was Broszat involved with this...?

HM: Certainly he would support all the pushes to open the history of the Third Reich to the German public and certainly also he would put the trials against war criminals.

<digression>

DR: I mean, Broszat was of course involved in the trials and about the... But did he also engage in political activity or was that something he...

HM: I don't see that he was a member of one of the parties. Maybe, I don't know.

DR: I heard he was a SPD-voter.

HM: Yes, but he wasn't active in politics.

<digression>

DR: Do you know, what did Broszat think about the work of Karl Dietrich Bracher? The Machtergreiffung and Die Deutsche Diktatur, for example?

HM: Oh, I don't know. Die Deutsche Diktatur, it was not very interesting, because that was a very general... of which... didn't have a specific interpretation. The basic difference, and in this case I am on the same line as Broszat, that we were opponents of the tendency to put everything to Hitler. We were against that Hitlerism. And that you see the Deutsche diktatur <inaudible> that's not good. It's... we already had such an approach. Secondly, when the first book, there were two books, about the Weimar Republic and the seizure of power... we in the Institute were a bit envious, that we hadn't done that. Also, I made a critical review of the book on the Weimar Republic. Which was a bit too critical. But in a way, it was certainly a breakthrough, possibly a breakthrough which no longer tried to idealise the Weimar republic and to describe National Socialism as something which came from the heaven as a... in the book of Meinecke. National socialism entered German history. But there is certainly the improvement by Bracher considerable.

DR: Was that also then, how to say that, a reason for you and Broszat to look into this in more detail and to write more about this?

HM: We weren't too much interested in the <inaudible> We were in Munich, there was not much contact at that time. I don't think we had a debate with Bracher. And we certainly had a different approach, methodologically. The problem is that you're looking back. Bracher then become the great hero in the field, but at that time it was not the case. They have two individual books and then the corrective on the Machtergreifung was a breakthrough. And then he was regarded as outstanding. But he is still unto today complaining that he never got a historiker chair.

DR: He's a political scientist, right?

HM: Well, he was a political scientist, yes. But that was also typically, he was very progressive, in the Berlin atmosphere, but he was certainly also in the eyes of the ordinary faculties, he was still an outsider. He was not very different from Broszat and later on myself was.

DR: When you were in Bochum—Heidelberg as well, was this a problem for you? That you were still an outsider?

HM: Not in the group in Heidelberg and not in Bochum, were we build up a new faculty. There these issues then disappeared.

DR: But was the—were all these communities, in Berlin, in Munich, in Heidelberg, did he have not much contact with each other? In their own world, so to speak?

HM: Well, I wouldn't overestimate their contact. The extent isn't too big. And these areas you talk about the 60s, you know.

DR: What about Munich then? I think it was mostly a conservative city, right?

HM: The university?

DR: Yeah, the university.

HM: Yes, certainly.

DR: And the Institute was...

HM: I didn't have any—we didn't have any contact with the Munich university. You must be aware that Broszat did not have the right to give lectures at the Munich university. That he had to go to Regensburg, that was quite a difference to today, with Möller today.

DR: And in Konstanz as well, right?

HM: Oh, certainly.

DR: But didn't he get an honorary professorship from Munich?

HM: Well, that was the least they could do, you know.

DR: But they didn't want him to be more involved with the university?

HM: Don't think that it was personal. It was directed against these illegal Zeitgeschichte. And this illegal institute, which in a way was founded outside of the University field.

DR: But for you personally, but also for Broszat then, what made you write those histories of the Third Reich? It was... was there any particular reason you went into this direction.

HM: That was the influence of Rothfels, that was... student of Rothfels. And because I didn't find a better job I went to the Institute für Zeitgeschichte where I had to work on National Socialism. I did my dissertation, as you possibly know, on the Austrian labour movement in the 19th century. And then I started to enter the field, what Rothfels called at that time Zeitgeschichte.

DR: So you and Broszat both were very influenced by Rothfels?

HM: Certainly, yes. But Broszat, I think he came from Schieder. But Schieder was very closely related to Rothfels, because [Schieder] was a student of his. All these people, also Krausnick, all these people who were running the Institute in the first years were in this or that way influenced by Hans Rothfels.

DR: So he was very influential?

HM: In a way, yes. Also by editing the Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte. That's what he did, theory work up to this day. And nothing appeared which he didn't approve.

DR: So he had a very powerful voice in the Institute then?

HM: Yes, certainly. He was in the Beirat and the Kuratorim. At that time they had a lot of power.

DR: Do you think Broszat took over these, about writing Zeitgeschichte, that Rothfels had?

HM: Partially. We also... this generation which he also belongs, certainly we were clever enough to realise that we are not sporting all the years of Hans Rothfels, but yet to develop our own... historiographical approach. You know, what was decisive in the changes... in 1967, the German akten became accessible. By that you have a change from these many books on the Nazi period which relied on the Nurnberg Trials or relied on individual biographies and memories. But then we are starting in using the official materials, the akten. That is also true for the historical... by Broszat. That's quite decisive. That it changed from this very personalistic approach, which is certainly decided from the biographical elements and the structure from what we called Geschäftsgriftgut... Normal papers who come into being from a ministry, we would call that. You know, in the Aktenkunde, you make the distinguish between Geschäftsgriftgut—papers that are written normally—and... Rechtsverbintlichedokumenten. And that's the model that changed in the Zeitgeschichtlicheforshung which occured in the late sixties. And Broszat is one of the leading men in that change.

DR: How important for him was it for him to have all these projects on the Akten der Parteikanzelleri etc., to organise all these?

HM: That's not a very good example. Because they had no Akten.

DR: He had to reconstruct them, right?

HM: It's not to reconstruct. You see the difference. The Akten, that is all the material that comes into being by activities of the government. Or the public administration. And there are specific rules, but that is also to be found in the normal archives. What is with the NSDAP very difficult, because they destroyed their archives and that's only partially surviving. But at that time, in the 60s, it was far more important to look into the Geschäftsgrift and not in the party documents. And if you analyse the book of Martin Broszat, *Der Staat Hitlers*, then you see what he is looking, what is his material that he quoted in there. And that's to a certain extent, that was new, because he was no longer relying only on this writing on memoirs and something or juridical documents as the Nurnberg documents, but then by using the ordinary Akten, they called. Documents in English.

DR: So it was just because they were suddenly available that you have this change in—

HM: They became available because the Americans gave them back. They had brought them to Washington and then examined them and given them back to the German government.

DR: Were these accessible before in America?

HM: Well, you know, it was accessible for American historians, certainly for some few who at that time could afford to go into the States, but it was not officially used by non-Americans. Although people like Weinberg, you know the name? He's a very famous specialist on Nazi foreign policy. He started his career by commenting the German—the captured documents. And that's the so-called “yellow box”, where you could see what is in them and at first we only had the books where we could see which documents do exist. And Weinberg, he did that and he was also the man who knew—who had the best knowledge, most intensive knowledge of the German documents. But try to learn this aspect, because in a way it is the basis for the historical—historiographical importance of Broszat.

DR: That he managed to use these—

HM: That he managed to use the official documents.

DR: But nobody else was interested?

HM: Well, it was starting at that time. He was something like a <pariah?> at that time.

DR: Okay. But why was that? Wouldn't it be logical for other people to also look at these documents?

HM: Indeed, but that took some time and some people had to do that first and it's not so easy to use Nazi documents because they are certainly partially... falsified. Difficult at that time.

DR: Did you also because of this change go into the structuralist history of the Nazi period?

HM: Yes, that was the reason, yes. I am one of the few surviving structuralists, yes. Today everybody criticises—which is nonsense.

DR: Actually, I was wondering... Did you and Broszat ever consider yourself to be structuralists?

HM: We were! Certainly.

DR: But it was not—let me... But was it something other people said about you or something you consciously adopted?

HM: No no, at the moment—I can't really recollect how Broszat did... describe his procession [sic]. But certainly it was our procession and we used it too. Yes, there was a mixture between the structuralists or... the functionalists, which is possibly more correct.

DR: But where did this structuralist idea or sort of concept come from? Is that something you developed while researching the documents?

HM: Why not? What else?

DR: A certain kind of philosophy or—

HM: No, that was quite a difference. We were working with the Akten and we were not a theoretician or use some... ideological background. If you take Eberhart Jäckel, he is quite the opposite of that. Have you seen what Eberhart Jäckel has written?

DR: I have not personally, I have only—

HM: You should look, see the difference. Because he is still on the basis of primary intellectual history or history of ideologies. And certainly... and Hitlerism had a strong connection with this ideological and intellectual approach. And our task was to just to overcome that. In a way, we were successful.

DR: Was that the result of what you did or was that the intention from the beginning?

Did you write these books with the idea we're going to...

HM: That's a question, I think, which is decidedly theoretical. One can say we did that and later on we came to the conclusion that there was a specific new element. But you

wouldn't do that from the start. We were mainly interested in understanding the historical process. That was our starting point.

DR: The historical process of the Nazi regime?

HM: Of the Nazi regime and of the Nazi state. All the different aspects of the Nazi party.

DR: How do you actually think that Broszat's work on Alltagsgeschichte, Bayern in der NS-Zeit... do you think that's the logical step from the Hitler State?

HM: Could you repeat that?

DR: Do you think his work on Alltagsgeschichte—

HM: Which work?

DR: Bayern in der NS-Zeit.

HM: But that's not Alltagsgeschichte.

DR: It isn't?

HM: No.

DR: I thought that's what everybody calls it.

HM: That's nonsense.

DR: Why is it not?

HM: Look, Martin got into contact with the Bavarian government. And they wanted to have a very strong resistance movement in Nazi Germany. Martin was clever enough not to reject the money. But then he changed that into the mentality of different aspects of the German population under the NS-regime. Certainly, there was also some resistance, but not as the Munich ministry wanted: now we have a strong anti-Nazi force in the German population. That concept is not related to Alltagsgeschichte. Das ist einfach nonsens.

DR: Because Broszat himself described it as Alltagsgeschichte?

HM: Later he may have, but <inaudible> is not that. And you can talk with the... Elke Frölich, she was mainly the author of the five volumes. But when they started, the Alltagsgeschichte was not—nobody was talking about that. That was a later development.

< digression>

HM: He did not buy into the Alltagsgeschichte as a principal approach or <inaudible>. He just used it in order to overcome that gap between the expectations of the Bavarian government and the historical truth. But he didn't want to create a new discipline.

<digression>

HM: You have to see how that developed and how he analysed the substructure of the Nazi state. Because Alltagsgeschichte is necessarily a de-politicised approach.

DR: Why is it de-politicised, though?

HM: Well, because Alltag is interesting, but it does not have a specific political ingredients or consequences or so on. The Alltag is neutral in relation. And that wasn't Broszat. He also did political history.

DR: Do you also think then that his concept on "Resistenz"—he didn't develop it himself but he promoted it—was that also...

HM: That was an artificial approach on account of the Bavarian money. He would have... pressed upon him and that's what the funds are for. But he made it quite clear that this is not resistance. And that's important.

DR: But I remember in the letter exchange with Saul Friedländer—

HM: Saul Friedländer doesn't understand anything about Martin Broszat.

DR: What does he misunderstand then?

HM: First of all, he has taken that article on the historicisation. You've learned in the meantime that Broszat didn't want to reprint that. But his colleagues, in this case Christopher Browning—help me, the Holocaust special who mentioned him? You mentioned him? Saul Friedländer. I like him very much. In a way, it's a friend of mine, but he was not polite to push this one article which he didn't want to reprint. And the same is mister Diner. He made a lot of noise with that article. I made a comment <inaudible>. In Jena. I said they shouldn't do that. But the problem is that a man like Broszat is an excellent historian, but he was not a theoretician. And he made the mistake in the concept of the—in that historicisation article, it's quite different from what then Friedländer tried to read into that. His idea was... we are doing a lot of things in order to promote Zeitgeschichte. And the problem is that our specialisation leads to the direct that is becomes an interesting element within the German historical inheritance, but nobody would look at that. It would become isolated and forgotten by the next generation. That's why he was thinking about historicisation. It was quite an opposite motive which is found by Christopher Browning oder Dan Diner. It's important you know? It's fake to say that Broszat was a... strong... supporter of historicisation in that sense. But he had thought about what he can do in order to avoid that he had a special field that appears to be very interesting but will be accepted by the general public and will be an element of the German Geschichtsbild.

DR: But then why did he go and have this discussion with Saul Friedländer in the—

HM: It was pressed upon him.

DR: By whom?

HM: By Friedländer! Yes. And Friedländer, you know—you know him, he at least was very important and he couldn't reject that and so on. But it was in a way he shouldn't have done that. Originally, he didn't want to reprint the article. And then it was Friedländer who started that... these two texts that, one of the two Friedländer and one of the two Broszat. What is in that? It's very difficult. In a way, a bad text. It's not understandable in a way. But everybody talks about it. All these people who didn't understand what the background of Broszat's intentions was. And you have to ask Elke Frölich, she will tell you that he wrote under some pressure an article for the FAZ or something like that. And later on he didn't want to accept that. And it was pressed upon him unto the present, here, to stand into that problematic article.

DR: Who pressed him then?

HM: The public! He had to answer to Friedländer.

DR: But did he have to go into the debate with Friedländer... I think it was an invitation by Dan Diner to write something for a series—a book—

HM: Yeah, but that was before the Friedländer intervention.

DR: But then Friedländer and Broszat instead of doing that decided to have this letter exchange.

HM: Yes. It was very unsymptomatic for Broszat's historical, historiographical worth.

DR: Do you know what he himself thought of that exchange? Broszat? Did he mention it at all?

HM: He wasn't happy with that.

DR: He was not happy with the results either?

HM: No no no... well... Why should he denounce his own texts? But he didn't like that thing. And you see that if you analyse the Broszat text, it is quite clear that this is not the territory in which he is very strong. And then you have also the problem that Nicolas Berg then took up the whole issue. Also in a way, in a problematic way.

<digression>

DR: Did Broszat ever talk about his wartime experiences? Was it important to him? Or not at all?

HM: You know, we were not in the age to talk about what they remembered, we had the Second World War. We were relatively young people who looked into the future. We wouldn't talk about that too much. You know... that is the next generation that was interested in finding out what happened with these people before 1933.

DR: So if the historicisation was not so important then, what do you think was Broszat's most important work? Was it Der Staat Hitlers? Or Soziale-motiven und Führerbindung?

HM: The <inaudible> the Führer-mythos, that was important, but what gave in a way an important push into the research was Der Hitler Staat or the Polish foreign policy. And he gave a new, I think, viewpoints and methodological approaches in the whole field.

DR: Why do you think—Broszat has been a little bit forgotten in current, you know, we don't get his books in current history classes anymore—why do you think that is?

HM: He is not forgotten.

DR: Not forgotten, but he... how to say... Der Hitler Staat was of course in the 70s in every—every history student would read it, right?

HM: Today, I would say, many <elder?> students would read it also. But there's a next generation of historians, who have a father-son conflict. And relative the position of Broszat. I had the same experience. I would—I would not listen very much to the ideas

that nobody is not [reading] my books. They do! But not the historians discuss it. They say: well, the whole debate between structuralists and functionalists [sic] <inaudible> is gone. Now it's the... intentionalists have got through. And they are outmoded. And as we, for instance, Uli Herbert, who have more important positions than this generation of historians—what we have is the discrepancy between the more functionalist approach, looking at state, at legislation, looking at the political implementation of the Nazi programme... and that typical ideological approach who doesn't look in a way for where the incentive is for the political radicalism. The de-politicisation of the present generations of Zeithistorians is very symptomatic.

DR: Do you think that is a problem?

HM: It is. Well, I always... it's not a problem in England and not a problem in the United States, it's a German problem, where they try to get rid of the functional approach in order to have an own position. Mr. Wildt is a classical example of this.

<digression>

DR: What would you say then is the essence of Martin Broszat's methodology then?

HM: Well, he has not a specific methodology in a theoretical meaning. But certainly he opened the historical view, approach to what is going on to the political process. If you could—if you look at the many books before the 60s, they had everything in that: personalities and certainly Hitler, the elements of terror and so on, but it didn't describe

the historical process, the political... that was, I think—which was done mainly by Broszat, but also by people as Hans Buchheim and the whole group in a way. They were all influenced by...

DR: But when you mean... what do you mean exactly by political process?

HM: The process within political systems. And how do things occur. And as you know, many of the present historians made the impression that they have the picture of a pre-determined process by Hitler's ideology. But the determination has to be proved by studying the political system. One has to say who did that and how that came into being and so on.

<END OF FORMAL INTERVIEW>

Appendix IV: Interview Gabrielle and Tilmann Broszat

5-6-2010 in Munich, Germany

DR: Maybe, just to start off with, for someone who's never met him, how would you describe him?

GB: Extrovert. Yeah.

TB: Curious. Very, yes, engaged in other people's lives.

GB: Also with a political instinct, regarding the situation in Germany, but also regarding the situation in the Institute. He was also... not *too* in-depth, but also technical person, but it was not the most important, but he was able to act diplomatic.

DR: So he had a good way with people?

TB: Yeah, he could communicate, let's say. He also liked parties a lot. I think he was the only one who regularly organised parties at the Institute. So every year there was a big party and I think it was always his initiative to do it.

GB: Yeah, but it was interesting for is. Because, when had that been, two years or so ago, there had been a kind of anniversary of the Institute and we've been invited too. And all these old colleagues of his, whom we never saw them, ten or twenty years or

something like that, and they always said to us: oh the parties of your father! That was always the most important for them. They never, they don't exist any longer.

DR: So, was he someone—well, I guess he cared very much for his work—was he... would you say, was he a workaholic?

GB: Yes, definitely yes.

TB: I would say so.

GB: In our childhood I remember, we only had a desk in our living room and we were forbidden to enter this room the whole weekend, because he had to write there. We had to be very silent.

DR: And it was mostly for his professional work?

GB: Yeah yeah.

DR: And, actually, did you still experience your grandfather, your grandparents?

GB: Yes, a little bit. Because his father died when I was six and his mother when I was ten or something like that, when I was a little bit older. So for us they were kind of... cliché grandparents.

TB: Yeah, they really looked liked it, both of them.

GB: Both of them, yeah.

DR: You visited them sometimes or?

TB: Yes, they had been living in Eastern Germany...

DR: In Leipzig, yeah. Or near to Leipzig.

TB: So this was not a usual trip. It was not easy in this time. But I would say two or three times or so.

GB: Three times we've been there I think. And then the mother came here too for the last five, six years of her life. Because her husband had died and then she transferred here, this was...

DR: Still before the wall?

GB: No no, this was allowed. Because elder people, after sixty-five, could leave Eastern Germany if they had family here.

DR: So did he have a good relationship with his parents, or?

TB: I think he was very—yes, I think he was very close to them.

GB: Yes, he also had an older brother and a sister. They were also very close.

DR: I know he had a brother, Gottfried, right?

GB: He still lives, but also very old now. 85 or something like that.

DR: What was the name of his sister?

GB: Eva.

DR: Never heard that he had a sister.

TB: She was also living in Eastern Germany. Until the moment she got very ill, then she was also allowed to come here.

DR: So, did your father still travel to Eastern Germany then, regularly?

TB: Yes, he did. Also for professional reasons, he was often there.

DR: Do you think he felt any kind of connection with Eastern Germany?

GB: Yes, of course. Very much. Not only with Eastern Germany, but also with Poland.

DR: Why, why with Poland, for example?

GB: Family reasons I guess. The rest of the family, one generation before—no, I think his grandfather—his father was a young boy when they came from...

TB: Today it's Eastern Poland, these days it's *Masuren*...

GB: They came from there. The whole family came from there.

TB: So this was a kind of—yeah, but I don't know what it—I mean this Polish thing it was also politically interesting for him, I think.

DR: Yeah, I mean he wrote several works on Poland. Do you think it was also partly motivated because his family background, that he was interested in what was going on there?

GB: We don't know.

TB: Maybe not.

GB: I think it was the most interesting point for all this... conflicts in the Second World War that was...

DR: But he didn't have any family connections still there?

GB: No, no.

TB: And Poland was I think the most open of all these Eastern European countries. Communication was the most easiest, maybe with Poland.

GB: I remember that we had Polish scientist in Munich for guests before the frontier fell. And this was not the case with—some Hungarian also—but no Russian, no Czech people. It's interesting.

DR: Anyone from the DDR?

GB: No, this was the most forbidden.

DR: Why was that?

GB: No, they don't let their people go.

DR: Oh of course, in that sense.

GB: But he went there—

TB: There have been some exchanges.

GB: Yes, but very official, never kind of private exchange or. We couldn't invite them. He tried to, but he never succeeded.

DR: So he still followed the news from Leipzig and Eastern Germany?

TB: Yes, I think he was always connected to it, because of his family...

DR: Was there still family there after his parents passed away?

GB: His sister.

DR: Oh yes, his sister.

GB: She was the last to come out.

DR: So he still had contact with her?

GB: Yes, yes, of course.

DR: Was it easy to have contact across the border after the wall was build. For him, could he freely travel to Eastern Germany?

TB: Not in the beginning I think. Not in the beginning, because I think in the first year after he came here, he could not go back. I think it was always a question if it was really not dangerous or something. But at a certain moment it was obviously not anymore.

DR: Do you have any idea why he actually moved away from Leipzig, in 1949 I think?

GB: Yeah, to study in Cologne.

DR: Did he also have—I mean, was he trying to get away from Eastern Germany or was it simply?

TB: Yes, also. It was his feeling that this was not the right place to stay.

DR: Did he go with some family or friends or was he completely alone?

GB: I don't know if they went together, he and his brother, or if he went alone. I think he went alone, because his brother was in the military somehow, and his brother came back later, to Western Germany.

DR: And then, I mean, do you know why he went into the field of history? Did he ever talk about that?

GB: Yes, he studied for teacher first, German and history. And then he made some contact to, he studied with [Theodor] Schieder and then he made some contacts with Mr.

Mau, Hermann Mau exactly. And he asked him to come to Munich for this Institute and so he decided that this would be more adventurous than to become a teacher, a German teacher.

DR: I think Hermann Mau was actually also from Leipzig.

GB: Yeah, maybe at that time there were all kinds of connections, but I don't know exactly.

DR: One of his colleagues called it—

GB: But I don't think so, because he was a pupil before.

DR: No, but apparently at the Institute there were a lot of people from Eastern Germany, especially from Leipzig. Don't know if that's interesting or not. But... his career in history, was it a fascination or an obsession or was it a job in a sense? In the beginning perhaps

GB: Some old colleague I talked about him, Mr. Gramml, I don't know if you know him. They had been colleagues for fifteen, thirty years. And I once talked with him and my father had already died. And he said all this generation was excited by the question how could this happen. And I think this was the main impetus.

TB: And he also said, he would never have been a historian for the Middle Ages or something. This was his topic. It was... kind of occupying his brain and heart.

GB: So they were young, but they were not young enough not to think about what happened, so it was the first generation that could think about all the Nazi stuff and I think they took their chance.

DR: Yeah, for the rest of their lives... He kept his interest in the Nazi past for the rest of his life, but did he also have any other periods he was interested in or any other subjects?

GB: In his late years he tried to write a book about Adenauer, but it didn't really occupy him, I think. It was a kind of duty. For me the most astonishing thing is, when I think about it, this was the first generation that established the whole term of *Zeitgeschichte*. Before it didn't exist, I think.

DR: Yeah, not in an academic sense.

GB: They insisted to look at this things at this moment. Normally as a historian you would say, oh let's wait for forty years and then we'll have a look at the papers and so on. But they insisted to do it now. Immediately afterwards. This was an interesting point.

TB: I think it was very much connected with... to do it in a scientific way on the one hand and to... how do you call it, *Aufklärerisch*, enlightenment?

DR: Do you think maybe it was sometimes difficult for him to really deal with this topic all the while? Personally, having read a lot about it, it can get quite depressing.

GB: I know from his second wife, that she is somehow, was somehow depressed to deal all the time with that. Because she made an edition of the Goebbels diaries and... but from him, really I never heard anything about it. You're perfectly right, because if one imagines to read all the time these cruel things... But this only favoured his party life—this party feeling. I think this was a contrast for him. He tried to pick himself up out of this depression.

TB: But I think this was a protection also of us. To say, okay, to be normal towards us.

DR: But did he ever discuss sort of his own wartime experience? Because he even fought as soldier, right, still?

TB: He was a soldier I think for half a year. As he said some not very, little bit on a <inaudible>

GB: All I know is that I once asked him—and I was twelve—I asked him, did you kill someone? And then he told me no, but actually his most terrifying situation in the war would have been that he sat besides a young soldier, and he polished his gun and made jokes and shot himself, directly beside him. That was something he answered me for this little girl question.

DR: But you don't get the impression it was something he dealing with—it was just a—he didn't have a very, how you say that, terrifying experience or something?

GB: We're not quite sure.

TB: We don't know. I had this experience also with other people with this experience who don't talk about it. I mean, not because they did something wrong maybe, but maybe they just... they wanted to put it away. It was such an extreme experience. Want to keep it, how to say, make it part of—reconstruct a normal life.

GB: We don't know where he has been in this half year.

TB: It was on the East.

GB: Yeah, it was on the East front, yes, but not exactly what happened there in this half year.

TB: But he wasn't really on the front. He said sometimes he never had really contact with the enemy or something.

GB: It was somewhere behind the lines.

DR: Did he also try to teach you anything special about history or what he thought you should know or how you should think about it. Did he take any special interest—especially because it was...

TB: Somehow, always yes.

GB: All the time, yeah.

TB: And we was also somehow had a little bit special distance to these questions, because it was...

GB: Yeah, we have a knowledge we don't know what we have, but... Because it was normal daily life, somehow. But still a task, too.

DR: I'm just curious if he was someone who also, sort of, took his work home. I mean, not only to work in his study room, but also to...

TB: No, I mean, he discussed a lot...

GB: And he had all these friends and colleagues over for dinner and they discussed and we weren't look as children.

TB: And later on we discussed things—I mean, this was a period in '68. We were fourteen, fifteen then and these were very political times. He as well, so... The political

topic was very much on the agenda, also for our generation. So it was a lot <inaduable>, of discussion.

DR: And he seriously engaged you as well with these topics?

TB: Yeah...

DR: He was not, how do you say that... authoritarian or you should follow this line or...

TB: No. I mean not in this topic. I mean... he was...

GB: He said do the laundry, but not...

TB: But not concerning his profession. And as a person he was not more or less... how do you say it? Authoritarian... as fathers in this period.

GB: Rather less than more.

TB: Rather less.

GB: I think we've had a liberal education.

TB: Because he was... his parents were quite... heavy.

DR: Very religious right?

TB: Yes, they were quite religious and also very strict. So he really had to follow...

DR: Was he religious by the way? Or did he...

GB: Yes, I think so.

DR: A little bit or?

GB: A little bit, yeah.

DR: But not in a... he didn't really discuss it or...

TB: No, it was more kind of, I got the feeling, a kind of sentiment. Maybe it was more even, but... But I mean, he never went to church. But for Christmas. But more a kind of ritual he followed.

GB: But he was very angry when I didn't want to get confirmed. I tried to, but I couldn't succeed.

DR: Sorry, I couldn't...

GB: Confirmiert. If you're a protestant, when you're fifteen you have to absolve a kind of confirmation, we call it.

DR: Ah yeah. I'm personally, I mean, I'm not catholic, but I come from a catholic region, so I'm not very familiar...

GB: So in a protestant church it's later. So... and I wanted to refuse that. So that was not a good idea. Then he became a little bit authoritarian. So, when in later years when I talked to him, I sometimes—of course, if death is near you, you become more religious than before and all that—when we discussed, he sometimes said something like, that also the Nazi time... is not... explainable. If people would have believed in god or something like that. He called it a “godless time” or something like that. But...

DR: But not something he openly carried or...

GB: No, no.

DR: Was he then—was he politically active? I mean, I know he was an SPD voter, but...

GB: Yeah. Voted <inaudible>, but he sympathised with Willy Brandt, of course, this was his direction.

DR: Why Willy Brandt especially?

GB: Because he also had the courage to change a little bit in a libertarian way the German Republic. And I think this was something he liked very much.

TB: Yes, and of course the Eastern policy—the policy to Eastern Europe, which was a kind of... against the Cold War attitudes, which were very prominent here. So this was very...

DR: But he never really—he was not a party man or...

TB: No. I mean, he had some SPD connections, but he never was...

GB: He was asked I think if he wanted to enter in this and he said no. I remember some discussion also about this, but...

TB: <Folie> was a former mayor in Munich. There was some connections... they knew each other. He never... there were some approaches from their side, but he never really... I think he felt he should be independent or something, in terms of his job. Because this was kind of... Because in Munich we have this city government which is mostly SPD and the...

GB: And in Bavaria the other way around.

TB: So the Institute was funded, I think, it was more funded by the state, so... I think he felt it maybe...

DR: Prudent not to...

TB: I don't know if this was really a motivation for him, but I can imagine it was. But, I mean, he never made a secret of his political opinions.

DR: I believe in his youth he was involved with the Ost-CDU, but he never carried any of this through?

TB: We don't know.

DR: Okay. It seemed a minor detail, but... Did he, besides his area of expertise, of course, did he ever engage in any debates or was guest in any programme or lecture series. Besides sort of the Nazi period, did he---you know, general concerns, issues about...

GB: I think... I don't know... he accompanied someone and I cannot remember, to Moscow, but I don't know who.

TB: You mean a politician?

GB: Yeah. Or has been invited and this didn't take place. It's something I can't remember exactly.

TB: I mean, there were always aspects which were leading outside of his strict profession, like this schoolbook commission work. I mean, he was part of it, but it was more than just this scientific job, it was somehow a political job. And I think, yes, he had also some connections to some intellectuals, which had nothing to do with...

GB: Yes, there was a journalist from the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* here and so people more from the cultural part of town... pen-club and...

DR: He knew these people, but he wasn't himself, how do you say that, as a sort of public intellectual who speaks about more than...

GB: No, this would have been said too much I think. But of course he was a little bit...

TB: And he was invited for a lot of discussions, but always mostly to this topic, yes.

GB: But privately he was very much interested in literature, too. He read a lot.

DR: What kind of literature then?

GB: Oh, classics and <diaries?> of Johnsson Graus. Literature which came out here in the 70s and 80s and 60s. <Lenz and Waltzer> of course already.

TB: Even in paint... I mean, you remember this big one painting, you know. So he was also interested in modern art.

DR: He also tried to give you some of this education? Sort of a broad education or?

TB: He was never saying, this is the way how to do it. But he just lived before our eyes what he did. So this was the best education.

DR: With all these guests coming.

TB: Yeah. So it was a very open house.

GB: We also travelled a lot as children. And so this also was kind of educational. Which was not normal at that time. So if I tell my friends from this generation that we have been in the 60s in Yugoslavia they—no one has been there in that time. So I recognise that we have been in regions that it was not normal to go as a tourist at that time.

DR: This was because of his good contacts with...

GB: No, he was adventurous in his private life.

DR: Oh, so this was his private life?

GB: Yeah, he was curious also and adventurous.

TB: Very curious. This was something new and...

GB: Go where no one went.

DR: He also spent a year or so in Oxford... Did you also go with him, or?

GB: No, no. We had to be too small to go. Also in America he's been half a year.

DR: Yeah, where was that?

GB: There he met Kissinger. At Harvard, yeah. And then he later he had a profess— professor, wie heißt dass, in Konstanz. He was at the university, so he switched also between Munich and he had a little room in Konstanz.

DR: I heard he was—or I'm not sure, but Hans Momssen told me this, but he was somehow disappointed that the University of Munich didn't give him an opportunity to teach there or have a professorship...

TB: If he was disappointed, he would not have told us, I think. But it came only in my mind later that he was never offered something.

GB: I think it's more he... I think his pupils like Norbert Frei are in the... backview are angry about that. But at that time, I can't really remember he had been disappointed or... I think it's more a kind of review to think "why hadn't he been?" But at that time his job was serious enough to be the director of this Institute. But maybe that this Konstanz job was—

TB: As far as I remember he was—when he went to Konstanz he got the title of professor. And it was important for him, it was not... nothing. It was something.

DR: I thought he also taught for a time in Regensburg or...

TB: I don't remember...

DR: Before Konstanz I think.

GB: Don't know.

TB: Of course there were also periods we were not—of course, as long as we lived in the family we were quite close and of course then there were periods we did not see each other.

GB: At this time we had been children, before Konstanz. What time, do you know it?

DR: No, I can't remember off of the top of my head. I think it was probabl... in the seventies. I'm not entirely sure. No, it's as you said, people have made a big deal out of it, but I don't know what he was thinking, whether it was a big deal to him or not. But do you think—Munich of course has a SPD government etc., but the climate in Munich, intellectually speaking, was it more conservative at the time?

GB: In university, yeah, very much.

DR: Did he try to engage with that or change it somehow?

TL: He was not in this university life that much, I think, because the Institute was somehow really apart from the university and it's only now that it's connected somehow.

GB: He also sometimes talked ironically about all these professors. I think it was a little bit... it was not his taste somehow. Conservative, I guess, too conservative.

TB: And he as student, when he started, it was exactly against this...

GB: Dust in the coats of the professors, it was called. But he had some friends, for example professor Sontheimer was a politician...

TB: Political scientist.

GB: He was a good friend of him. And he was—had friendship with Nipperdey, also a professor. Some people...

DR: Oh, didn't know that.

GB: Some people entered our home. But not too much. Only some. He had also contacts with an American university which has been here from the occupation. Maryland. How was it called, here in Munich in the concern. Kind of small American university.

DR: Yeah, this is like a, how to say it, a dependence or...

GB: And he had also some friends from that.

DR: Did he feel at home in Munich, in general?

GB: Yes, I think so.

DR. It was no problem to... stay here for such a long time?

GB: No, I don't think so.

TB: He was really rooted here, I think.

DR: And how important was the Institute for him? Was it everything?

TB: It was his life.

GB: Most important, yes. More than important than us.

TB: I mean, it was... his whole professional life was this Institute.

DR: Do you also know before he became the director... what his role there was? I heard from Hans Mommsen he was one of the most active people there.

GB: Yes, he was engaged I think.

TB: He was head of to-do business and I think it happened in his career—this was the Gutachten. This was basically where he started.

GB: But he was also conscious of his career. He wanted to start a career. This was completely clear. Because he had also some friends which studied and studied and studied and some day he got very innerved by these kind of friends so he wanted to get rid of them and start his career. So his patience was not too...

TB: I think with his colleagues he had no so much patience.

GB: If they studied too long and didn't care about the politician side, only sat in their rooms writing their books, made him very nervous.

TB: But even the colleagues in the Institute, like Gramml, who worked for ten years on one project. It was not his cup of tea.

GB: He liked them and he liked them, but it was not his part.

TB: His way of working.

DR: So he also, how to say that, more interested in the administrative things?

GB: No, he didn't like that. In the politician side, in the position which he gets from this position as the director. This was the most importing thing for him, I guess.

DR: Did he still have time to really work on these projects after he became director? Or was it mostly—

GB: Yes, but not too much. He started projects for the younger scientists. But it's normal I think to start delegating your work. But he was very stronger than them. So he could make great discussions with them when they wrote what he didn't like. He watched their work. He did not tell them to do what you like, but they had a lot of discussions.

DR: Discussions or was he telling them what to do?

GB: Yes, he was telling them what to do, of course. If he taught something was stupid what they wrote, he told them.

DR: Bluntly?

GB: Yeah. But in a kind of discussion... I agree with you, I think, some of the younger ones couldn't stand this kind of hard discussions and they found him too dictatorial somehow. But others not, as Norbert Frei, so...

DR: But he had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do and where he wanted to go?

GB: Yeah, I think so.

DR: All these different topics, all these projects he said up. You mentioned he didn't want to be stuck studying the same topic for ten years? Was this also—all these different projects, was this also partly because he wanted something new, something exciting?

TB: I think he felt that time changes very quickly and then to say I worked from... he wanted to... not lose his context to the changing times. I mean, this was his...

GB: This was part of the decision to start this Bavarian research work, I think. NS Zeit in Bayern.

DR: Was this special for him because it was Bayern? Did he have any connection with Bayern in general? Was he still a Leipziger at heart?

GB: I think the important thing for him in this study was that to have a look at the view of normal people.

TB: Real life situations.

GB: Whether this was Bavaria or Saxonia.

TB: It was just easier to do it here.

DR: Yeah, it was just practical.

TB: Maybe he got some funds from politicians.

DR: That as well actually, it was the Bavarian state who gave that money, so. Couldn't do what he wanted, but... You mentioned in the beginning that you also read that letter exchange with Saul Friedländer? Was that at the time, was that a topic he discussed?

GB: Yeah.

DR: Was it important to him?

GB: It was very important to him.

DR: What did he say about it? Or why was it important?

GB: Yeah, it's a good question. I asked it myself. I don't know really know his connection all this, his personal connection to the question of the Jews. I know that was in Israel and I remember some remarks when he came back and the next thing I remember is his contact with Saul Friedländer, so I'm not quite sure if he dared to go too much in depth at the time already, in the dispute between Israeli historians and Germans. I think he hoped to be the first who dared to do this or something like that. I'm not quite sure if this impression is correct, but...

TB: As far as I know, the background was this... it started already with these Gutachten. Survivor... witnesses... this was always a big question. Are they independent witnesses or are they too involved? From this whole point this was this question of how can... how is the Jewish history of the Holocaust and what is the German history of the Holocaust. This was from the beginning I think very...

GB: I think it was kind of artificial as well that he tried to establish with Saul Friedländer to come to this dispute. I think they agreed both to have different positions and argue in a public life about that. This was kind of an inner agreement between them, I think. And... yeah, it was not easy for him, no.

DR: Why?

GB: He was afraid.

DR: Of making a mistake or...?

TB: He made his mistakes.

GB: He made all mistakes, yeah. What was his fear...

DR: Or of saying the wrong things?

TB: I would not be able to say whether he had this fear, but maybe you know it more than me.

GB: I think he had a shy to touch the integrity or something like that. He was much not sure if this was adequate to initiate a kind of dialogue like that at all. This was a little bit... I think his fear in this was also the reason he made so many mistakes, because he walked like on eggs, I don't know how to say in this English. It was another time, also.

DR: But also after this exchange, do you think it changed his perception somehow, did he change his opinions? I know he visited Saul Friedländer in the United States, he was invited for a lecture there. Apparently he had a very friendly parting there with...

GB: Maybe that he got really conscious what guilt at that time, in this letter. Also this personal guilty feelings. Maybe this was something which happened there. Because it was personal contact with this Saul Friedländer and you cannot escape that moment. Of course, before he also knew about Auschwitz, he has been there and all and he never said it hasn't happened or something like that. But in a scientific way you can always have a little distance and this distance perhaps was broken in this contact... maybe.

TB: But Saul Friedländer told me in this meeting in Jena that he just... he was, they spoke of this exchange also on this podium. And he was still quite critical about it, about my father. But after this meeting he told me he had a... about the walk they had in California.

DR: Yeah, in Los Angeles.

TB: Yes, in Los Angeles. That they had a kind of last conversation and he was very moved by this, he told me.

GB: But you don't know the content...

DR: No, Saul Friedländer told me about what he said. He mentioned that Martin Broszat was also explaining his worries his concerns. How he found it difficult dealing with kind of early 1950s and 60s historians who, how to say that, saw Hitler just as the demon who fell out of the sky and how... And his concerns for the Institute and the conservative takeover, if you want to call it.

GB: All this has happened.

DR: Yes. Those were questions that occupied him the last ten years, I guess.

GB: It was also a strange time in the late 80s and also in the middle 80s. There was a kind of revival of this conservatism here and before the fall of the wall. So his concerns were realistic.

DR: I heard after his first term of director, there was an attempt to replace him by somebody else, someone more conservative.

GB: In the first years?

DR: After this first sort of term, I think, seven year term or something.

GB: Yeah, he had some fights. But I don't know who was... I think it was a homemade story. Of course there had been a lot of historians envious and wanted this job. But he also had to fight very much with this Bavarian...

TB: State, because he was partly independent in this Institute.

GB: Yeah, because they don't want him there, because they knew he was a liberal social-democratic and this was absolutely...

TB: This is what I remember.

GB: Yeah, this was more the fight. Not another person who wanted this, but to stay against this political frontier.

TB: He could only say... I mean, he could only work on the professional level, but the others worked on the party level and so... but he was in no party, so...

GB: Yeah, to do this he had to fight a lot. And these were personal fights, because there was this one person I don't remember his name, he was in this... board from the Bavarian, this trust... It was a ministerial. He was sixteen years or something ten years

and he complained about him all the time, always shot against him. He had to make great attention to keep the personal contact with this person okay and this took a lot of effort. I don't know how he did it, but this was very important, I remember.

DR: Actually, you mentioned before the whole question of witnesses etc. Somehow I got the impression he was very sceptical about this whole idea of people having observed it and then knowing it better than the historian.

TB: Yeah, but these are questions I think... I don't know that much by him. He also had a little bit...

GB: It's more kind of...

TB: Maybe reading a little bit more on this topic, for me, made some things clear for me.

GB: Because all this questions about this oral history didn't happen before he died. This was all later. We don't have any statements from him.

DR: No, I got the impression, for example, he was... he didn't have much faith in eye witness accounts because, especially after the war they had to deal with all these Nazi officials...

GB: Of course. I remember always when he told us an explanation of how the scientific work functions for children: if you don't have three sources, don't believe it. This was

something he told us, for example. So you're right, he wouldn't have believed something like in which someone had told him.

DR: I also got the impression he was very... he firmly believed in the scientific approach, Wissenschaft, of Zeitgeschichte of course.

TB: Yeah, this was his thing, we can only deal with this in a scientific way or these moralic things have to come later. This is a second step. But first we have to make a scientific research and before we start to...

GB: It comes from the experience of so much propaganda. This is a normal reaction I think to say I don't believe anything, because the Nazis had so much propaganda. This generation... this was the last they would...

TB: But of course there was this American democratisation in Germany was also kind of... I mean, everybody was happy about it and nobody said something bad about it, but... To look at it now, it also had a big impact.

DR: A re-education. Made a big impact on him, I guess. But I mean, you mentioned he was involved in the schoolbook commission etc. Was he... did he consider himself to be an educator?

GB: Yes, I think so.

DR: Did he actually teach a lot in Konstanz or only every now and then?

GB: He had a fixed term there.

TB: For some years, yeah.

GB: I think... two or three years. No, but this was also this impetus of him. He started to become a teacher, this was also a side, a part of him. And he was interested to get this topics in the school in the younger generation.

TB: And the TV discussions.

GB: Not only to discuss with the other historians, but to go to other people with his knowledge. This was very important yeah.

DR: Besides this school book commission, what did he do for that? Was he involved in any other educational movements?

TB: Not that. Not really I would say, he was not.

GB: But I can remember that all our history teachers knew him. So this was his...

DR: Did he correct them?

<laughter>

GB: No, we don't like to learn too much.

TB: Even today. So... for the teachers of him, they knew him somehow. I could only reconstruct that he obviously was on the agenda for the curricula for the teachers.

DR: He didn't involve himself with your history homework?

GB: No.

DR: Like, this was not how it should be or—

TB: He was not involved in any institutions or...

GB: But he wrote also in newspapers, so that also shows that he wanted to come out.

TB: More on the level of a being an intellectual in general rather than a specific direction.

DR: Was there a particular drive why he wanted to write these articles for these newspapers, rather than for scientific...

GB: Yes, of course, there was the motto “let this never happen again.” This was a self-obligatory...

TB: I mean, there were public question—questions in public life, for example, this film about the Holocaust... he always wanted to take part in this discussion about what is this way of the approach to the Holocaust in this film and what his scientific approach and the differences...

GB: Also when they found this imaginary Hitler diaries, he involved and said no, this is nonsense, so he would always get very excited, personally, when something like that happened and he could not... He had to say something also in public when something like that happened. I think in the 80s they had this history museum from Helmut Kuhl. In Berlin I think. This was the last thing he was very angry about.

DR: Yeah, I've read that, I've read his comments. Not very mild. But... actually, did he... I got the impression at least, that after the TV series Holocaust was it, late 70s I think? From that moment onwards he started to write more and more about, you know, how to do deal with this topic educationally. Do you think this was some kind of thing that made him realise, you know, because there was such a huge reaction, publically, that he realised suddenly, wait, we have to—

GB: Say something to the students, yes.

TB: Before it was...

GB: I think before it was, at least the impression I got, correct me if I'm wrong, before they all dealt with the Nazi period on a day to day basis, they worked with it, they wrote about it, but they didn't realise that the rest of Germany society didn't have this connection and—

TB: Yeah, of course, there came this wave. I think there were several waves. You always had a big topic and then it became a big topic again with Steven Spielberg and so. I think it was in this moment he realised that this debate was totally different from what they do. And then he got very interested I think also in this mediation of... how this is dealt with in the media, this topic. To bring his point of view.

DR: Did you watch it together or were you still too young.... No, not too young.

GB: We didn't live at home at that time.

TB: We were not at home anymore. But of course we spoke about it.

GB: We talked about it, yeah.

DR: Also other events like dealing with the historiography of the Nazi period... he talked about it with you? Whenever there was some new kind of wave...

GB: Yes, about the period of the Nazis you mean?

DR: Yeah, about Holocaust or the museum or all these debates, the Historikerstreit for example.

GB: Yes, of course the Historikerstreit of course.

TB: Yes, this was a big topic.

GB: Also if he had conflicts with, public conflicts with his colleagues. Yes, there was this... In Berlin, this historian.

DR: Nolte.

GB: Nolte, yeah. This was a topic always.

DR: Yeah, he was a very “interesting” man. No, but... especially during the Historikerstreit, did it—he kind of tried to stay away from it if I’m correct, he didn’t really involve himself very deeply.

GB: No, not very deeply, but...

TB: I think it was the second step when he became, somehow, but... He also used his work now and this was somehow misinterpreted...

GB: This was a continuation of the Historikerstreit, from his side, he tried to explain...

DR: Was he, would you say, a polemicist? Did he write angry letters or was it more...

GB: I don't think so. Not in public. In private, that's okay, but in public, no. He was not polarising. Or, not too much, of course a little bit, but...

TB: I think he was always regarded to be... when others stayed in the academic field he was always regarded as making one step further and then to move on a field where you have perhaps more scientific legitimation to do so. This was something he did more than others.

DR: There's one historian, Chris Lorenz, who argued that Martin Broszat was someone who very much reacted against others, when he saw something that he thought was not right, then go against it twice as hard, maybe exaggerating it a little bit, going a bit too far, but... does that stroke with his personality?

TB: Yeah, yeah.

GB: Yeah, but I think it was his fun to have discussion. He liked that very much. He took every opportunity...

TB: He wanted to provoke reactions.

DR: Was he also someone then who came back later and said, well, maybe what I did before was.... A bit too much.

GB: No. I think he thought that everyone has to be adult enough to get that.

DR: Yeah, so it was a tactic and not his real opinion or...? I mean, in the sense that... His debating strategy was different from what he really thought. Did he try to provoke people a little bit more then...?

GB: Maybe.

TB: I think he was... if I remember looking at him on tv, I remember him always somehow... he had a great credibility, even for me, it somehow looked... okay.

GB: <inaudible> in public he was not too much confronting. Smaller subjects.\

TB: He was good in this communication on TV. I remember his colleagues sometimes looking very pale and...

DR: He enjoyed doing that kind of wider... beyond the academic sphere.

GB: Yes.

TB: Yes, there was this moment... he told me once. Said someone had written about him that he's going more into literature than into science and he, I think he liked it.

<laughter>

GB: I think this was kind of a problem with his own identity in the last years. He wasn't quite sure whether he was such a good historian, in the end. Because he was more interested in this kind of public discussion and in the later years he felt pretty criticised... he criticised himself for not remaining on the ground of pure doctrine or... because it's very dangerous of course, when you're so open to the public with your opinions and you want to be a historian with his three sources. This was a kind of inner conflict. He couldn't make it all the time, I think.

DR: So, sometimes also critical about his own work?

GB: His person more than his work, because in the last few... what was his last book? A long road? The last ten fifteen ten fifteen years. Essays, smaller works...

DR: I think the book about the Weimar Republic. It was more... narrative, you know, a step back from his very technical work. I don't know if you about this, but a colleague told me that in his later years he tried to experiment more with writing narratives, writing more about stories, was there a reason behind it? Did he enjoy it more? Or do you think he wanted to reach a wider audience?

GB: Yeah, I think so. The last one. And maybe the film about the Shoah was where he switched...

DR: "Holocaust" or "Shoah"?

TB: I remember the Shoah discussion. I discussed it with him, about the Shoah. Which was before, right?

GB: It was before, it was the first one. What do you think was Holocaust?

DR: The TV-series. American.

TB: Yes, that was the most seen. That one... This was also TV, this Shoah?

DR: Well, a documentary.

GB: You remember the time?

DR: <Laugh> No, it was a bit before my time. No, okay... I think it was already 80s, maybe 82 or so.

GB: This Shoah. And Holocaust?

DR: 78 or 79, I think. So actually earlier.

GB: So we remember the first of these TV-films as the cut in his view perhaps, there happened something, also in his writing...

<END OF FORMAL INTERVIEW>

The following are relevant sections from the informal discussion after the interview:

DR: I think he still very angry about this conference with the East German professors, that the East German government pulled the plug and told them not to show up anymore.

GB: When has it been?

DR: I think really the last year or something. I think was on the elite in Weimar Germany and how Hitler came into power and it was a cooperation between East and West German historians.

TB: Ah yeah!

DR: And the East German government pulled the plug and told them to come back. I think he was furious about it.

GB: I remember in his last years he made a lot of effort to get into contact with these East German historians. More than before. Before he had more contact with Polish, but in the last years, he also organized or... here also in Munich, in the Catholic academy or something like that, there was a convent between Western and Eastern historians I remember, he was very excited. And perhaps after this event we talked about... or before?

DR: I think after.

GB: After. I got the impression that he felt now that he could tell what he wanted to tell.

<laugh> If they came here and he didn't have to go there, like that.

DR: I heard he also still followed the beginnings of the fall of the wall.

GB: Yeah, but unfortunately he died before.

DR: But he...

GB: Yeah, he recognized it. I think it was the last two days we... the demonstrations in Leipzig. This was great fun for him. He died smiling about that.

<...>

DR: How did he actually experience the '68 student revolt at that time? Was he in any way personally...

GB: No, in any way. He was not attacked. I think his friends were, sometimes, they had to suffer more than he, but this for him also... he accompanied what happened to his friends around him.

TB: Yeah, but he also... he was always a bit more open. Maybe not that... targeted as established academics.

DR: He was not shocked by what was going on?

GB: No, because he had us before.

<laughter>

DR: He knew what was coming.

GB: You're right, then, sometime before then, it was very conventional, he changed during this experience and this was not the case with our father.

TB: And I would say that this whole idea of... everyday history, this was only outside of the student movement, this was not mentioned during that time.

DR: Did he have a lot of... passion, for this Alltagsgeschichte? Or was it just another project?

TB: No, there was a passion.

GB: No, I remember he went to Ebermannstadt and he been there very, very often. And when he came he indeed was moved by what he found there. He told me some little stories that he found.

TB: I think he was really moved by what he... he was really engaged with this idea that this is another kind of history and what the people are saying. And I think this whole conceptual thing, about the resistance, was more a legitimation to do this rather than...

DR: Yeah, it was the Bavarian State government who funded this project and they wanted something... The concept itself was important to him?

GB: I think he was astonished to find that he people did not engage too much in Nazi... and could survive in some kind of silent... I think he was, after studying 20 years, this cruelties, he was astonished that this was possible, you know. Perhaps if you read too much you get a different view.