



**Shared Memories?  
Politics of Memory and Holocaust  
Remembrance in the European Parliament  
1989-2009**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyses how the memory of the Holocaust has been addressed in the European Parliament from 1989 to 2009. I identify two major changes that occurred in the 1990s and after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union respectively. In the 1990s the war in Bosnia and the question of restitution universalised the memory of the Holocaust and made it present. The 2004 enlargement brought the memory of Soviet Communism into the Union and made it a central task to construct a community of memory that includes both the memory of the Holocaust and of Soviet Communism. The analysis also identifies what seems to be a political memory split between Left and Right; and it shows that the time might not be ripe for a shared European memory.

## INTRODUCTION

This working paper is one step on my way to writing a PhD thesis about how the European Union (EU), especially the European Parliament, has addressed the memory of the Holocaust from 1989 to 2009. In my thesis I analyse how the EU has used the memory of the Holocaust as a political tool for the (intended) construction of a European community of memory.

The paper is a first attempt to connect the theory and some of the source material used in the thesis. The primary focus will be the European Parliament, since there is no room for analysing the politics of memory of other institutions – in and outside the EU. Furthermore, the European Parliament is one of the more active institutions in the EU when it comes to debating the remembrance of the Holocaust. Thus, in the European Parliament the debates about the remembrance of the Holocaust can be observed and analysed.

The theory used will include works by Aleida Assmann and Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder who analyse how European memory, and the memory of the Holocaust in particular, has developed since 1989. Besides I will include Bernhard Giesen who also studies memory and concepts like victims, perpetrators, guilt and responsibility.

The source material will be eight resolutions and two declarations concerning the memory of the Holocaust, adopted by the European Parliament between 1989 and 2009. Besides the final resolutions and declarations the source material also includes the motions for a resolution tabled by the political groups in the European Parliament; the joint motions for a resolution that the groups agree on; potential amendments (oral and written); debates; explanations of votes; and votes.

After a very brief introduction to history and memory in Europe after 1989, as seen by Assmann, I will give a short introduction to the European Parliament and to their adoption of resolutions and declarations. Then I will define some concepts central to my study before I proceed to the analysis. Finally I will summarise and briefly discuss my findings.

The analysis will concentrate on how the history and memory of World War II and the Holocaust have been addressed in the European Parliament after 1989. I will identify two important changes that occurred in the 1990s and after the 2004 enlargement, respectively, and I will briefly discuss why these changes have come about.

### History and memory in Europe after 1989

The relation between history and memory has changed after 1989. Assmann characterizes the change in the following way.

After the long period of polarization, they [history and memory] are now considered as complementary, each one adding something that the other cannot supply. A new awareness of the interactions between history and memory was triggered by the profound political changes of the 1980s and 1990s, when new memories emerged and old ones were seen in a different light. After 1989, with the thawing of frozen memories and the opening of archives, both memory and history took on a new force that carried them into the center of the public arena. (Assmann 2008: 61)

The period after 1989 is thus characterized by what you could call the return of mem-

ories, especially the memory of the Holocaust, and a renewed interest in history and memory as interesting and usable tools in the redefinition of Europe after the end of the Cold War.

During the Cold War the memory of the Holocaust did not occupy a central role in Europe. Instead of remembering, Europe wanted to forget the victims of the war and move on. Moreover the political climate and the ideological contrast between Communism and Liberal democracies dominated. The desire to forget and the political climate meant that Europe and European politicians mainly focused on themes like economic stability, armament and on the political opponent on other side of the iron curtain. When the ideological contrasts disappeared, after 1989 and the end of the Cold War, Europe had to redefine itself according to the new situation in the world. In this redefinition process remembrance, history and memory, especially of the Holocaust, have come to play a central role as tools that could help construct a new identity and thereby a new basis for how to see the world. (Judt 2000; Diner 2003; Judt 2007: 803-831; Assmann 2008)

However, this change has not come about the same way everywhere in Europe. According to Assmann there is a difference between Western and Eastern Europe.

In Western Europe the national narratives have fallen apart after 1989. The official national narratives have been reinterpreted. Western Europe is looking beyond the national borders and has turned to Europe in order to construct a common historical awareness and a European community of memory based on World War II and the Holocaust. In Assmann's words a dual look, inwards and outwards, has emerged and caused the construction of inclusive

and complex national narratives in Western Europe.

In Eastern Europe the national narratives and their boundaries have been reconstructed. Eastern Europe has not turned outwards but inwards and "[h]ier macht das Geschichtsbewusstsein immer häufiger Halt an den Grenzen der Nation, die damit die Selbstbezüglichkeit nationaler Mythen aus der Phase vor den Weltkriegen wieder aufnimmt und weiterführt." (Assmann 2006b: 260-264, quote p. 262)

## THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

When the Coal and Steel Community was established in 1952, the so-called 'Common Assembly' was also set up. The Common Assembly later became the European Parliament established when the European Economic Community (EEC) was founded in 1957. Since then the European Parliament has changed both in character and size.

The Common Assembly started out with 78 members from six countries in 1952 and the European Parliament had 785 members from 27 countries, when the sixth parliamentary term ended in 2009. However, the European Parliament has not only grown in size. Its power has also increased considerably since its formation in 1952.

For a long time the parliament was primarily a consultative assembly, but since the mid-1980s it has gained authority in various areas. For example it has acquired budgetary competences, it has the power to make the Commission resign, it must approve a new Commission, and it must be consulted when appointing a new president of the Commission.

The European Parliament has been organised in transnational and ideologically-based political groups since March 1953. Since 1979 its members have been elected through direct elections held in the member countries every five years. (Hix et al. 2003; Hix et al. 2007: 12-31; European Parliament 2011)

The work of the parliament takes place in the political groups, in the plenary assembly and in a number of committees, which are set up according to policy areas.

The so-called Conference of Presidents is taking care of the practical aspects of the parliament's work, e.g. scheduling the plenary agenda and deciding the composition and powers of the committees. The Conference of Presidents is made up of the president of the European Parliament and the chairs of the political groups.

The Bureau is managing the administrative and internal tasks of the parliament. (Kelstrup et al. 2008: 90-93; European Parliament 2011) The procedure for adopting resolution and declarations will be elaborated below.

The political groups can be characterised according to two dimensions: the traditional left-right dichotomy and a dimension that can be characterised as an integration-independence dichotomy.

Even though the number and composition of the political groups vary, it is possible to identify six main groupings that can be characterised according to the traditional left-right dichotomy. Three of these groupings – the Socialists, the Christian Democrats (Centre-Right) and the Liberals – have existed since the formation of the political groups in the European Parliament.

The Socialist group has been the most stable group and in the first four parliamentary terms it was also the largest group in the parliament.

The Centre-Right includes members of Christian Democratic and Conservative parties. It has been split into various political groups, often because national members of the European Parliament have created their own groups. However, after the 1999-elections most of these national groups joined the main group 'European People's Party-European Democrats' (PPE-DE).

The third of the original groupings – the Liberals – is located between the Socialists and the Centre-Right. It includes members from various Liberal and Centrist parties.

The fourth of the political groupings is the Radical Left, situated to the left of the Socialists and including amongst others the Communists.

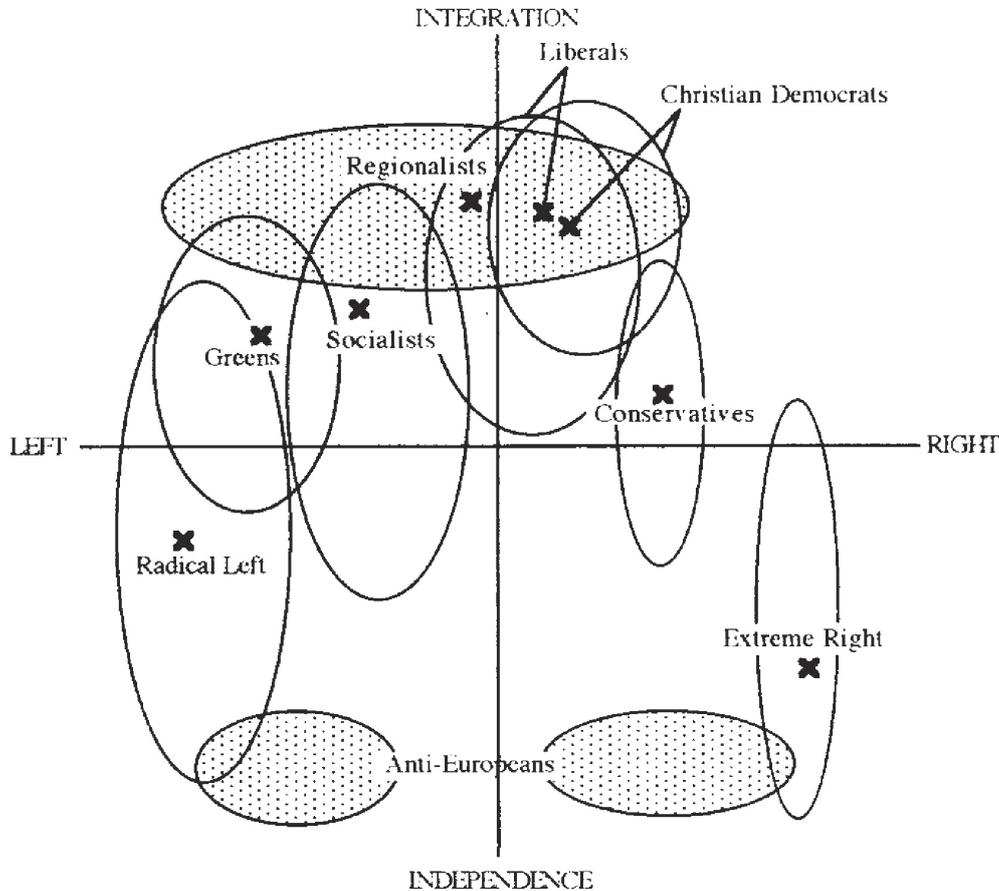
The fifth political grouping is the Greens, ideologically situated between the Radical Left and the Socialists.

The sixth and last grouping, which can be characterised according to the left-right dichotomy, is the Extreme Right. They rarely have enough members to form an actual group and instead become non-attached members. However, the 'European Right' (DR) qualified as a group in the second (1984-89) and the third (1989-94) parliamentary terms.

In addition to the six left-right groupings it is also possible to identify two political groupings that can be characterised according to an integration-independence dichotomy. First, there is a group of Anti-European or Anti-Integration parties. Second, there is the so-called Regionalists that support increased European integration. (Hix 1999; Kreppel & Hix 2003; Hix et al. 2007).

The figure below illustrates how the political groups are placed in a political space characterised according to the dichotomies mentioned above.

Figure 1. The party families in the European Union political space (Hix 1999:79)



The above characterisation of the political groups is based on research in empirical material from the period before the 2004 enlargement. However, research based on more recent material indicates that the enlargement has not changed the picture substantially. (Bailer 2009; Schmitt & Thomassen 2009; Voeten 2009; Lindberg et al. 2010)

**Resolutions and declarations<sup>1</sup>**

Resolutions and declarations are non-binding statements. They can be characterised as symbolic or value-based political statements. The European Parliament often uses them if it wants to express its position on a certain sub-

ject. Either towards the Council and/or the Commission or towards other interest groups within or outside the framework of the EU.

The European Parliament does not occupy the same position in the EU as a national parliament does in a national context. Thus, it does not consist of a government and an opposition that must jostle for position in relation to each other. On the other hand the European Parliament must often jostle

<sup>1</sup> The making and the status of resolutions and declarations is not a well-researched field. Therefore the text on resolutions and declarations is very much based on my own observations made when working with the empirical material. I have also consulted the following (Hix et al. 2007: 112; Europaparlamentets informationskontor i Danmark 2010/1/11; EU-oplysningen 2011; European Parliament 2011)

for position in relation to the Commission or the Council. Hence, it can feel a need to position itself and make its opinion heard, for instance through resolutions and declarations, which the parliament can adopt on its own initiative.

Resolutions are adopted by the European Parliament on the initiative of one or more individual members of parliament. The Conference of Presidents decides if the resolutions can be placed on the agenda.

Initially the political groups table a motion for a resolution. Then they usually agree on a joint motion for a resolution that is debated in the plenary assembly. Finally the resolution is put to the vote and adopted by way of simple majority.

Up to five members of the European Parliament can submit a declaration of not more than 200 words. Then the members of parliament have the opportunity to sign the declaration and if the majority has done this within three months the declaration is adopted. (European Parliament 1999/8/2: rule 51; 2005/2/15: rule 116)

Thus, declarations are not debated in the European Parliament and the political groups are not tabling their own motions. This means that the only available material is the final declaration and the list of signatories.

## CENTRAL CONCEPTS

### **Collective memory – or communities of memory**

The phenomenon ‘collective memory’ is often ascribed the same characteristics as individual memory, the only difference being that the term describes groups instead of individuals. However, such a transfer implies certain

ambiguities and confusions in terms of defining collective memory. For instance, the term can imply that a (collective) memory exists detached from the individuals in a group.

The term collective memory implies so many problematic connotations that it seems reasonable to use another term.

James E. Young prefers the term ‘collected memories’. The term indicates that you cannot speak of one collective memory but several individual memories, and that memory cannot be detached from the individual. (Young 1993: xi f)

Anette Warring suggests the term ‘imagined communities of memory’ [forestillede erindringsfællesskaber] that is inspired by Benedict Anderson’s term ‘imagined communities’. (Warring 1996: 226-228; Anderson 2006)

I will use the term ‘communities of memory’.

Communities of memory will refer to groups of individuals who each possess a unique personal memory but who also share certain memories, experienced as well as non-experienced. An individual is part of several communities of memory at the same time, for instance family, friends and colleagues. Besides, through a lifetime a person is also part of different communities of memory, such as school and different workplaces.

Communities of memory choose, consciously or unconsciously, certain memories that form a coherent narrative. The narrative presents the group in accordance with its self-perception or as it would like to be seen by outsiders. Hence, memory and identity are closely connected. Communities of memory and their narratives are constantly changing. New members are coming whereas others are disappearing and the narrative is constantly renewed

and adjusted depending on time, place and purpose.

The narrative can, generally speaking, be constructed in two ways. The members of the community of memory can gradually construct a narrative. This process can be called a bottom-up process and could for instance take place in a family. The narrative could also be constructed by leading figures in a community. This process can be called a top-down process and an example could be political communities of memory.

The construction of a narrative and the definition of a group also imply a definition of who is not part of the group. Thus, the identity formation is both including and excluding and implies the construction of both 'us' and 'them'. (Halbwachs 1967: 1-33; 1992: 37-40; Warring 1996; Anderson 2006: 5-7; Assmann 2006b: 21-61)

Forgetting is an important part of remembering since no person or community of memory can hold or remember every experience. An experience can be forgotten, but it will never get lost. It is stored in a reservoir of memories from which it can later become an active part of memory.

Assmann distinguishes between 'Speichergedächtnis' and 'Funktionsgedächtnis'. She believes that the construction of narratives is a result of their interaction. The Speichergedächtnis is a passive reservoir of memories and experiences, whereas the Funktionsgedächtnis is the functional memory. The Speichergedächtnis forms the basis for the Funktionsgedächtnis that is constantly renewed and adjusted when forgotten memories from the Speichergedächtnis are made an active part of the functional memory. Thus, the Speichergedächtnis is "[...] eine Grundsätzliche Ressource der Erneuerung kulturellen Wissens und eine Bedingung der

Möglichkeit kulturellen Wandels." The Funktionsgedächtnis on the other hand is legitimizing and identity-constructing, which is one of the central functions of memory. (Assmann 2006a: 133-142, quote p. 140)

### **Politics of memory**

Communities of memory are constructed and upheld in a process where different elements interact. Generally speaking, the interacting elements come from below or from above. The latter often originates from the political level that might want to keep or influence an existing community of memory or construct a new in order to gain political legitimacy.

Such political initiatives or decisions can be very different, ranging from days of remembrance, teaching materials or cultural initiatives with a broader aim. The common denominator is that they are politically initiated and aim at affecting people's perception of the world and thereby their self-perception and identity. The terms 'politics of identity' or 'politics of memory' are often used to describe this type of politics. However, the terms are rarely explicitly defined. They are often seen as an undefined sub-aspect when speaking of collective memory.

However, Richard Ned Lebow defines what he calls 'institutional memory' as "... efforts by political elites, their supporters, and their opponents to construct meanings of the past and propagate them more widely or impose them on other members of society." (Lebow 2006: 13) Assmann on the other hand conceives the term collective memory as an umbrella term that amongst others includes 'political memory'. Assmann sees political memory as a type of memory "... grounded on the more durable carriers of external symbols and representations." Furthermore political memory is "... designed for long-term

use to be transmitted across generations.” (Assmann 2008: 55f) Jan-Werner Müller addresses the relation between memory and power. He states that “‘High politics’ understood as presidential speeches and other symbolic gestures by national representatives, ... matters enormously for memory.” (Müller 2002: 21) Moreover he conceptualizes memory as “... a kind of ‘symbolic power’ ...” (Müller 2002: 25) that is used for legitimising policies. Finally he underlines that even though politicians have power over memory, memory on the other hand also has power over the politicians. (Müller 2002; for the relation between memory and power see pp. 25-31 in particular)

I will use the term ‘politics of memory’ because I want to indicate that the memory is central to the formation of identity. As described above memory is a central element in defining individuals as well as groups, which means that memory is a central element in the formation of identity.

Politics of memory will refer to political initiatives or decisions that use history and the memory of it as a tool to shape or construct a community of memory. This political use of history and memory also aims at influencing the identity and memory of the individuals that constitute the particular community of memory.

### **Places of memory**

In order to maintain a certain memory it is crucial that the memory is externalized. This often happens via ‘places of memory’. Thus, places of memory are important for communities of memory because they maintain and transmit the memory and thereby the identity of the community.

Places of memory are not necessarily concrete physical places. Instead they must be

seen as places in a figurative sense. Places of memory can be many things such as a monument, a photo, a historical site or a day of remembrance. They can be concrete physical places as well as objects, places of memory or acts of memory. Hence, places of memory are not defined by what they are but by the purpose they fulfil. (François & Schulze 2001: 15-18)

No matter if you speak of places, objects, days or acts, places of memory are externalizing and thereby maintaining (one or more) memories by giving them a physical expression. Places of memory are connecting the past and the present because the observer is presented to a representation of the past. Places of memory and memory are thus closely connected and the one cannot exist without the other.

The connection between past and present is strongest when the place of memory is a historical site with material remains from the past. In that case the observer can see the material remains in their original surroundings, which can vitalize and materialize the past. However, a place of memory must not be mistaken for the past itself, since the place of memory will always be a representation of the past. (Assmann 2006a: 298-339; 2006b: 217f)

Places of memory are constructed in order to fulfil present needs and a certain function in a community of memory. The construction of a place of memory, such as a day of remembrance or a monument, can for instance stem from a need for political legitimization.

A place of memory has not got any inherent meaning. The observer ascribes the meaning to a certain place of memory and interprets the place in accordance with his/her own memory and the context in which he/she sees the place. Thus, the meaning of

a place of memory can change depending on the time and place. (Young 1993: xii f, 1-8; Nora 1996: 14-19)

### **Victims and perpetrators, guilt and responsibility**

Concepts like victims, perpetrators, guilt and responsibility have been important in the construction of European communities of memory after World War II and the Holocaust. Especially after 1989 where their meaning and their use also have changed.

The victim concept has more meanings. A victim can be an acting hero or martyr (in the meaning sacrifice) or innocent and passive (in the meaning victim). (Giesen 2004: 58-60, 71f; Assmann 2006b: 72-81)

According to Assmann and Levy and Sznajder the use of the concept has changed after 1989 and it is now primarily used in the latter sense. (Assmann 2006b: 72-81; Levy & Sznajder 2007: 221f, 226, 241-243) With the words of Giesen this change has meant that the focus, and thereby the basis for constructing communities of memory, changed from triumph to trauma. In other words, communities of memory are no longer based on narratives about triumphant heroes but on narratives about traumatized and suffering victims. (Giesen 2004)

The victim and the perpetrator concepts have also been universalised. Hence, the concepts no longer denote a person with a face and a voice but refer to more or less indefinable groups. For instance, when speaking of the Holocaust we no longer refer to Jews and Germans but to "... Menschen und Menschheit." (Giesen 2004: 48-54; Levy & Sznajder 2007: 11-13, 221f, 241-243, quote p. 12)

The increased focus on victims and perpetrators has led to a political struggle for

recognition in which the victims of the Holocaust have gained a leading position. (Giesen 2004: 68; Assmann 2006b: 259f)

The victim and the perpetrator concepts are closely connected to concepts like guilt and responsibility that have also become important when speaking of the construction of communities of memory after 1989. Guilt and responsibility are closely connected, but there are also certain differences.

I regard guilt as determined by an illegal act, legally or morally speaking. Thus, it is connected to the perpetrator and to concepts like justice, forgiveness and reconciliation between victims and perpetrators.

Responsibility is not determined by direct involvement in the crime (legally or morally defined) and it is possible to accept responsibility for an act without being directly involved in it. Responsibility is connected to the bystander, because accepting responsibility often originates from a moral obligation to do so and a feeling of not intervening in order to prevent the crime (when one should have done so).

After 1989 there has been an increased focus on publicly acknowledging guilt, accepting responsibility and apologizing for complicity or lack of intervention, for instance in the Holocaust or other crimes. In other words, guilt and responsibility concern not only the parties directly involved. (Giesen 2004: 141-153; Assmann 2006b: 112-116; Levy & Sznajder 2007: 155-248)

According to Assmann and Levy and Sznajder, the increased focus on guilt and responsibility means that it has become central to reconcile victims and perpetrators in order to construct a community of memory that include both. This also implies overcoming potential asymmetries or conflicts about

memory in order to put the memories on the same footing. Thus, it has become important to remember the past together instead of forgetting it together. (Assmann 2006b: 70-72, 112-116; Levy & Sznajder 2007: 155-248)

However, the victim struggle mentioned above raises the question if several excluding and competing victim-communities of memory are developing. Rather than one including victim-perpetrator-community of memory.

## **CHANGES IN HOLOCAUST MEMORY POLITICS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

In the period from 1989 to 2009 the European Parliament has adopted eight resolutions and two declarations concerning the memory of the Holocaust. The resolutions and declarations can be classified in three groups according to their theme: remembrance days, concrete physical places of memory and restitution.

The first group, remembrance days, counts four resolutions and the two declarations. They call for an annual day of remembrance and/or are adopted in connection to a day marking an anniversary of a historical event. The group encompasses the following resolutions: 'Resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust' adopted June 1995 (European Parliament 1995/7/3); 'Resolution on remembrance of the Holocaust, anti-semitism and racism' adopted January 2005 (European Parliament 2005/12/13); 'Resolution on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945' from May 2005 (European Parliament 2006/4/20); and 'Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism' from April 2009 (European

Parliament 2009). The group also encompasses 'Declaration on the remembrance of the Holocaust' adopted June 2000 (European Parliament 2001/4/24) and 'Declaration on the proclamation of 23 August as European day of remembrance for victims of Stalinism and Nazism' adopted September 2008 (European Parliament 2008).

The second group, concrete physical places of memory, encompasses two resolutions that both relate to former Nazi concentration and extermination camps. The resolutions are 'Resolution on European and international protection for Nazi concentration camps as historical monuments' from February 1993 (European Parliament 1993/3/15) and 'Resolution on Auschwitz' adopted April 1996 (European Parliament 1996/5/13).

Finally, the third group, restitution, encompasses two resolutions: 'Resolution on the return of plundered property to Jewish communities' adopted December 1995 (European Parliament 1996/1/22) and 'Resolution on restitution of the possessions of Holocaust victims' from July 1998 (European Parliament 1998/9/21). These resolutions can be seen as the European Parliament's contribution to the Second World War's legal settlement and the efforts to return looted, mainly Jewish, property.

An analysis of the resolutions and declarations shows a number of tendencies in the way the European Parliament has addressed the memory of the Holocaust from 1989 to 2009.

### **The memory of the Holocaust becomes present**

The first change occurred in the 1990s and can be ascribed mainly to the war in Bosnia and the question about restitution of Holocaust era assets.

The war in Bosnia broke out in 1992 and ended in December 1995 with the signing of the Dayton agreement. The war in Bosnia caused a change in the way the European Parliament addressed the memory of the Holocaust. The change can be seen in a difference between the resolution from 1993 on European and international protection for Nazi concentration camps as historical monuments (European Parliament 1993/3/15) and the majority of the following resolutions and declarations.

The 1993 resolution does not contain the term ‘Holocaust’. However, this has changed in the next resolution from 1995 where the word is part of the title: Resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> (European Parliament 1995/7/3)

The war in Bosnia is an important factor in explaining this change. The war attracted great international attention and contributed to a revival of the memory of the Holocaust. Levy and Sznajder describe how the war in Bosnia and later also the Kosovo War (1998-1999) were associated with the Holocaust.

Levy and Sznajder are in particular emphasizing pictures of Serbian camps, which were brought in the world press in the summer 1992. The pictures aroused strong memories of Nazi concentration and extermination camps and contributed to an impression of the war in Bosnia that had strong parallels to the Holocaust: “Die Serben wurden zu Nazis und die Muslime zu Juden.” Regarding the Kosovo War the comparison to the Holocaust and World War II was an important reason for the NATO intervention in 1999. According to Levy and Sznajder the

comparison between the Balkan wars and the Holocaust and World War II meant that the memory of the Holocaust came to obtain a central position in Western and not least Western European politics and memory. Furthermore it meant that the memory of the Holocaust was universalised. (Levy & Sznajder 2007: 184-190, quote p. 187; for Kosovo see pp. 194-211)

The war in Bosnia did not attract a lot of attention during the debate held in 1995 when adopting Resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust. Only one member of the European Parliament refers directly to the war when saying: “... now before our very eyes we can see ethnic cleansing taking place in Bosnia ...” (European Parliament 1995/6/15: Barros Moura, PSE, Portugal). However, the resolution still marks a change not only in using the word Holocaust but also as a first sign of an increasing universalisation of the memory of the Holocaust.

Overall the majority of the resolutions analysed relates to remembrance days. In reality it is only the 1993 resolution that concerns concrete physical places of memory. The resolution from 1996 on Auschwitz is more about how to fight anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism than about Auschwitz as a place of memory, even though the latter also plays a certain role. The 1995 resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust is the first resolution concerning a remembrance day. This can be seen as a first sign of the above-mentioned process towards universalisation of the memory of the Holocaust – a process, which according to Levy and Sznajder, amongst others was caused by the Balkan wars.

The change of focus, away from concrete physical places of memory towards remembrance days, shows that the community of memory that the members of the European

<sup>2</sup>The word Holocaust is used in the following resolutions and declarations. Not included are Resolution on the return of plundered property to Jewish communities (European Parliament 1996/1/22), Resolution on Auschwitz (European Parliament 1996/5/13) and Declaration on the proclamation of 23 August as European Day of Remembrance for Victims of Stalinism and Nazism (European Parliament 2008).

Parliament want to construct becomes more abstract and universal, detached from time and place.

The tendency to universalise memories is more marked in later resolutions. An example is the 2005 resolution on the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945 and the commemorative sitting held in connection to its adoption. They both include three events and thereby three memories: 55 years since the Schuman declaration and the beginning of the EU on May 9; 60 years since the end of World War II in Europe on May 8; and one year since the accession of ten new member states on May 1. (European Parliament 2005/5/9; 2006/4/20)

By making one day of remembrance include several memories (that not even relate to the same date), the members of the European Parliament indicate that the actual event, as well as the place that might relate to it, are not that important for remembering. What is important is the symbolic value that remembering contains in itself. Remembering becomes a symbolic act that relates to a symbolic memory and not to a concrete event.

To sum up, the war in Bosnia reminded Europe that war, ethnic cleansing and genocide did not necessarily belong to the past, not even in Europe, and that the Holocaust might not be that far away. The memory of the Holocaust became present and returned with renewed force in a universalised shape.

Another aspect of the change that universalised and brought the memory of the Holocaust to the fore in the 1990s was the question about restitution of Holocaust era assets. The European Parliament adopted two resolutions, in 1995 and 1998 respectively, concerning this issue.

The first resolution from 1995 concentrates on the former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. It includes property stolen by the Nazis from Jews, Christians and others as well as property stolen by the Communist regimes. (European Parliament 1996/1/22) The latter resolution from 1998 on the other hand focuses on the return of property stolen from Holocaust victims by the Nazis, especially the values that were deposited in Swiss banks. (European Parliament 1998/9/21)

On an international scale restitution was among others addressed in two major reports, and at two conferences held in connection to their preparation. The reports were politically initiated and can be characterised as international politics of memory.

The so-called 'Bergier Report', initiated by the Swiss Parliament, mainly concentrated on the role played by Switzerland. The 'London Conference on Nazi Gold' held in December 1997 was part of the preparations for the Bergier Report. (Bergier 1998)

A commission set up by members of the US Congress and President Clinton prepared the so-called 'Eizenstat Report'. The commission mandate was "... to describe, to the fullest extent possible, U.S. and Allied efforts to recover and restore this gold and other assets stolen by Nazi Germany, and to use other German assets for the reconstruction of postwar Europe." (Eizenstat 1997: quote p. iii) However, the scope of the report was highly international and concerned a lot of countries worldwide. 'The Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets' held in November 1998 was part of the preparation for the Eizenstat Report. (Eizenstat 1998)

The question about restitution attracted a lot of attention during the 1990s and is according to Dan Diner an important aspect when explaining why the Holocaust "... has

shifted to center stage ... [and] has become the negative core event of the 20th century.” The return of memories after 1989, and especially the return of the memory of the Holocaust, did not only lead to an increased focus on memory. It also meant that restitution became a central political issue. Diner regards memory and restitution as related in the sense that restitution of property and the recovery of memory are interconnected. (Diner 2003: quote p. 43) Thus, material recovery and moral (or memorial) recovery are intertwined.

As described above, the memory of the Holocaust became present and was universalised during the 1990s in the European Parliament. Following Diner this change must also be ascribed to the question about restitution of Holocaust era assets. As well as to the Balkan wars.

### **The Holocaust and Soviet Communism after 2004**

The next important change occurred after the 2004 enlargement that brought eight countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (Cyprus and Malta also entered the EU)) from the former Eastern Bloc into the EU. The enlargement also brought new communities of memory into the EU and confronted the Union with a considerable challenge in terms of integration. Not only with regards to politics and economy but also with regards to history and memory.

The change is reflected in the topics treated in the resolutions and declarations adopted after 2004. Except the first resolution, adopted in January 2005, they all concern both the memory of Nazism and the Holocaust and the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism (some of the resolutions also include more memories). Thus, the memory of So-

viet Communism and Stalinism has attracted a substantial amount of attention in the European Parliament after 2004.

For instance, the majority of the speakers in a debate held in 2005 pointed to the importance of not forgetting Central and Eastern Europe and their memory of the communist era, if the construction of a common memory and the reunion of Europe are to succeed. (European Parliament 2005/5/11)

The tendency to focus on Central and Eastern European memory can also be observed in the 2009 debate. The majority of the speakers said that there is a need to recognise and come to terms with Central and Eastern Europe’s memory of Stalinism and communism, if Europe is to be reunited. (European Parliament 2009/3/25)

Herein lays an assumption that the EU ought to be based on one European community of memory that includes Nazism and the Holocaust as well as Soviet Communism and Stalinism. Furthermore, the focus on Central and Eastern European memory implies an assumption that it is necessary to overcome possible conflicts about memory, if the construction of such a shared memory is to succeed. An assumption that Assmann also raises on a more general level. Hence, the members of the European Parliament conceive the integration of memories as an important aspect of the integration process which started after 2004. Moreover they believe that the integration of memories must lead to the construction of an EU-based community of memory, where conflicts have been overcome and where no memories are assessed as being worth more than others.

Finally the tendency to focus on Central and Eastern European memory shows that the memory of the Holocaust is no longer the only traumatic memory that claims to be part of EU as a community of memory. In other

words, the new EU members from Central and Eastern Europe have made the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism part of EU's shared past.

The construction of a common community of memory can also contain an inherent risk of becoming a question of obtaining the best position in a hierarchy of victims. An example of such a victim competition can be seen in connection to the adoption of the Resolution on European conscience and totalitarianism in 2009. In that connection the Socialist group (PSE) proposed a new article Fb (article H in the final resolution) with the following text:

whereas the dominant historical experience of Western Europe was Nazism, and whereas the Central European countries had the added experience of Communism; whereas understanding has to be promoted for these countries' double legacy of dictatorship (PSE 2009/3/30; AM20; my underlining)

The underlined words were later changed to "have experienced both Communism and Nazism" and the second part of the article (after the semicolon) was changed to: "whereas understanding has to be promoted in relation to the double legacy of dictatorship borne by these countries". The Christian Democratic group PPE-DE proposed both changes. (European Parliament 2009/10/8: 40-42)

Especially the changing of "had the added experience of Communism" is interesting since it reflects a different attitude towards the Communist regime. The socialist PSE pictures Nazism and the Holocaust as the primary memory, whereas Communism and Stalinism are seen as an addition. The Christian Democratic PPE-DE on the other hand does not see Communism and Stalinism as an addition. Instead the PPE-DE places the two

regimes (Nazism and Soviet Communism) and the sufferings that they have caused on the same footing.

The member of the European Parliament that suggested the phrase "have experienced both Communism and Nazism" expressed it like this: "... to Eastern European nations, nothing was 'added' by Communism: most of them had Communism first, then Nazism, and then Communism again." (European Parliament 2009/4/2: Kelam, PPE-DE, Estonia)

The differences in opinion also reflect what seems to be a difference in how the Left and the Right value the memory of the Holocaust and Soviet Communism. The two memories are often seen as representing two geographical parts of Europe. West representing the Holocaust, which has come to play a central part in this part of Europe. And East representing Soviet Communism, which the countries in Western Europe did not experience. However, as the examples above illustrate, the memories also seem to represent two political parts of Europe – Left and Right respectively.

An amendment from the Socialist PSE and the vote on it underlines this tendency. The amendment was tabled in 2009 and concerns article 16. In the final resolution the article reads as follows:

Is convinced that the ultimate goal of disclosure and assessment of the crimes committed by *the Communist* totalitarian regimes is reconciliation, which can be achieved by admitting responsibility, asking for forgiveness and fostering moral renewal. (European Parliament 2009: §16; my underlining)

According to the amendment tabled by the Socialist PSE the words underlined above were to be changed to:

Is convinced that the ultimate goal of disclosure and assessment of the crimes committed by *all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, including Communist dictatorships*, is reconciliation;

Furthermore the last part of the article was to be deleted: "... which can be achieved by admitting responsibility, asking for forgiveness and fostering moral renewal;" (PSE 2009/3/30; AM28)

Consequently the amendment, if accepted, would have generalised the need for reconciliation and played down the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism and the need for confronting it.

What is interesting in this connection is who voted for and against the amendment. The liberal ADLE; the anti-integration IND/DEM; the two Centre-Right groups PPE-DE and UEN; and the non-attached members, which are typically on the Extreme Right, all had a majority of no-votes. The Communist GUE/NGL; the Socialist PSE; and the Green (Verts/ALE) on the other hand had a majority of yes-votes. (European Parliament 2009/10/8: 102ff) Thus, the Right voted no to playing down the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism whereas the Left voted yes.

According to the examples above the Left represents the memory of the Holocaust and the Right represents the memory of Soviet Communism, including Stalinism.

## SUMMATION AND DISCUSSION

It is possible to identify two major changes in the way the European Parliament has addressed the memory of the Holocaust from 1989 to 2009.

The first change occurred in the 1990s and can be ascribed to the war in Bosnia and

the question about restitution of Holocaust era assets. These two issues universalised the memory of the Holocaust in Europe and made it present.

The next major change occurred after the 2004 enlargement, which did not only bring new members into the EU. It also brought new memories into the Union. The members from Central and Eastern Europe brought with them the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism, which challenged the memory of the Holocaust as the only traumatic memory in the EU.

The members from Central and Eastern Europe want their memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism to be recognised and put on the same footing as the memory of the Holocaust. It has thus become a central task for the European Parliament and the EU to integrate the new memories and construct one shared European community of memory.

According to the analysed material there seems to be a political difference between Left and Right regarding how they value the memory of the Holocaust and of Soviet Communism after 2004.

This could be interpreted as if both political wings find it difficult to disassociate themselves from a memory that represents their own political wing and find it easier to denounce a memory that is associated with their political opponents.

On the other hand it could also reflect that the new Central and Eastern European members taking part in the debates and votes of the European Parliament primarily are from Right wing parties.

Finally it could indicate that Europe has not yet come to terms with the memory of Soviet Communism and Stalinism in the same way as the memory of the Holocaust. Europe does not seem ready to commemorate Soviet Communism and Stalinism in the

same way as the Holocaust is commemorated. Nor to overcome conflicts about memory and construct a shared European community of memory that includes both memories and put them on the same footing.

Assmann, Levy and Sznajder might be right in claiming that it has become important to construct shared memories in Europe. However, one thing is ideals and desirable scenarios another is reality and what actually happens. According to the material analysed here the construction of a common European memory, containing both the memory of the Holocaust and of Soviet Communism, does not seem to be a straightforward process. The fight for recognition and the competition between victim groups will probably dominate for a while and the time for a shared European memory is yet to come. The question is for how long Europe has to wait.

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