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Lecture on “Germany and the Holocaust”

Bergen Community College, Institute for Learning in Retirement, December 18, 2018

Works and People Mentioned:


Konrad Adenauer, the Federal Republic’s first chancellor (1949-1963).

Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic (1949-1959).

Hans Globke, a leading Nazi jurist who had written the official commentary to the Nuremberg race laws. He later became Adenauer’s chief of staff for an entire decade:1953-1963.


Alfred Andersch’s 1957 novel *Sansibar, oder der letzte Grund* (Sansibar, or the Last Reason, trans. into English in 1961 as *Flight to Afar*).

Günter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (1959). There is also a very good (but controversial) film based on this novel. It won an Oscar for Best Foreign Film in 1980.

Fritz Bauer, an official in the justice department of the West German state of Hesse; two recent films about him are well worth watching: *The People vs. Fritz Bauer* (2015) and *Labyrinth of Lies* (2014). Both are available through popular streaming services.
Adolf Eichmann, the chief logistician of the Holocaust; Fritz Bauer was instrumental in his capture.

Peter Weiss’s play *Die Ermittlung* (The Investigation, 1965)—famous play about the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial.

Rolf Hochhuth’s controversial play *Der Stellvertreter* (The Deputy, 1963)—famous play about Pope Pius XII, who was the leader of the Roman Catholic church from 1939-1958.

Kurt Georg Kiesinger, West German chancellor from 1966-1969; he was a former member of the Nazi party.

Beate Klarsfeld, famous for having slapped Kiesinger in the face publicly.

Willy Brandt (Chancellor from 1969-74), visit to Warsaw on December 7, 1970: surprised everyone by falling to his knees in honor of the victims and fighters of the Warsaw Ghetto; creator of the so-called Ostpolitik of detente and reconciliation.

Helmut Schmidt (Chancellor from 1974-82), Brandt’s successor.

Hans Martin Schleyer, West German industrialist and former SS member who was abducted and murdered by radical left-wing terrorists in 1977 during the so-called “German Autumn”.

NBC television miniseries *Holocaust* (broadcast in Germany in 1979).


President Ronald Reagan, controversial visit to the German military cemetery at Bitburg in May of 1985, the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War Two

Jürgen Habermas, left-wing sociologist and philosopher, protagonist in the so-called “Historians’ Debate” (1986) arguing for the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

Ernst Nolte, right-wing historian and protagonist in the so-called “Historians’ Debate” arguing against the uniqueness of the Holocaust.


Philipp Jenninger, President of the German Bundestag, controversial speech in the Bundestag on November 9, the fiftieth anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom. He was criticized for showing too much understanding for Nazi anti-Semites.
German movie *Das schreckliche Mädchen* (The Nasty Girl, 1989), based on actual facts, tells of a German woman, Anna Rosmus, who explored the (not always pretty) history of her hometown Passau in Bavaria.

Anna Seghers, “The Excursion of the Dead Girls,” new translation by Helen Fehervary and Amy Kepple Strawser, *American Imago*, volume 74, number 3 (Fall 2017), pp. 283-306. One of the most important German-language short stories of the twentieth century. Seghers’s mother was herself killed in the Holocaust.

Anna Seghers, *The Seventh Cross*: bestselling novel, Book of the Month Club selection during World War Two, also a popular movie with Spencer Tracy.

Arnold Zweig, *The Axe of Wandsbek*, trans. Eric Sutton (London: Hutchinson International Authors, 1948). Zweig emigrated to Palestine but returned to Germany because he was homesick for the German language and German culture.

Erich Honecker, second paramount leader of the German Democratic Republic and incarcerated by the Nazis for a decade.

Hans Grundig, *Victims of Fascism* (painting).

Fritz Cremer, famous East German sculptor; created the monument at the Buchenwald concentration camp.

Bruno Appitz, *Nackt unter Wölfen* (Naked Among Wolves); also an excellent motion picture.

Bill Niven, *The Buchenwald Child* (about the real story behind the Jewish child who was saved at Buchenwald).


Frank Beyer, film based on *Jakob the Liar* in 1975.

Hermann Axen; member of the East German Politburo

Peter Eisenman: Berlin Holocaust memorial.

Daniel Libeskind: Berlin Jewish museum.

Günter Grass, “Writing After Auschwitz”, major statement on the meaning of Auschwitz for German culture; he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1999 and vehemently
opposed German reunification in 1990. His autobiography revealed that he had served in a Nazi military unit in the final months of World War Two.

Daniel Goldhagen’s book *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*—very popular in Germany in spite of (or because of) its discussion of what Goldhagen called German “eliminationist antisemitism”.