

*Oversigt*

*Holocaust Memory*  
*in America and Europe*

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MARTIN ALM

It has been said that the only culture that Europeans have in common is American culture. Albeit an exaggeration, it contains a grain of truth. Is it true also of historical culture? One of the most important tasks of history is to build identities, in the last centuries above all national identities. The nation is seen as a community with a common historical destiny, and common historical experiences, or at least the notion of such experiences, are an important part of this identity. History is ultimately an existential endeavour. It tells us who we are and where we are going. We take an interest in it because it tells us something about ourselves.

This does not preclude the study of other nations and societies. They, too, contribute to the world wherein we live, and sometimes their history can teach us something we hold to be important. But we rarely adopt a transnational perspective on history or try to integrate the history of others with our own.

Since the 1990s, Holocaust memory has become part of attempts to build a European collective memory and a European community of values. Since the end of the Cold War, new conditions for European cooperation have been established but perhaps also a need for new uniting bonds. The Holocaust is being used in order to define the things that Europe must distance itself from: ethnical nationalism, intolerance, dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> The demand that new members of the European

<sup>1</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson, »The Holocaust as a Problem of Historical Culture: Theoretical and Analytical Challenges«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press

Union face their own Holocaust history becomes a means to integrate their national memory into a European memory.

Sociologists Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider have claimed that Holocaust memory is a new »cosmopolitan memory«, a cultural element in a process of globalisation. But they also note that this memory has hitherto manifested itself primarily as a common European memory. This memory provides a basis for a new global policy of human rights and in part originates from the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s, which conjured up Holocaust associations.<sup>2</sup> It may also be a way for the European Union, in competing with national loyalties, to find legitimacy through a project that should provoke little opposition.

But the effort to build a common European memory from above is not the only integrative force in the field of historical culture. Film and television are important mediators of history, and American products have occupied a strong position in these media. It is an interesting question what the global predominance of American film may mean to historical culture. How does it affect problems of identity? Is the historical perspective of one nation promoted as the perspective of all? The media productions commonly recognised to have been the most influential mediators of Holocaust images are of American origin: the television series *Holocaust* (1978) and the film *Schindler's List* (1993), both referred to as landmarks in the history of Holocaust consciousness. Thus, much of the Holocaust culture that characterises Europe is created in the United States of America. In the words of Levy and Sznaider, Holocaust memory has been adopted by Europeans in an »Americanised« form.<sup>3</sup>

»The Americanisation of the Holocaust« refers to the integration of the Holocaust into American historical culture. According to Alvin Rosenfeld, the darker and more brutal sides of the Holocaust are played down or denied. In their stead, emphasis is placed on heroes and on

2003, pp. 18-20, and »Introduction«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *The Holocaust – Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Sekel: Malmö 2006, p. 9. Johan Öhman (Dietsch), »From Famine to Forgotten Holocaust«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, p. 224. Johan Dietsch, »Ukraine and the Ambiguous Europeanisation of the Holocaust«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *The Holocaust – Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Sekel: Malmö 2006, p. 301.

2 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, »Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory«, *European Journal of Social Theory* 2002:1, pp. 88-92, 97f and 100. Klas-Göran Karlsson, 2003, p. 21.

3 Levy and Sznaider, p. 100. Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, »Holocaust and the Decline of European Values«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Holocaust Heritage: Inquiries into European Historical Cultures*, Sekel: Malmö 2004, p. 88.

happy, or at least hopeful, endings and on the ability of the individual to control his or her own destiny. This happens because a tragic view of life is alien to American mentality. To this is added a great eagerness to derive lessons from the Holocaust so as to make it useful to as many groups in society as possible. Rosenfeld maintains that the Holocaust is relativised and abstracted in this process.<sup>4</sup>

Alan Mintz concurs but views Americanisation as inevitable. To make the Holocaust relevant to Americans, it must be presented in a form that is compatible with American culture. Americanisation, says Mintz, is universalisation: the Holocaust is made to represent universal dilemmas such as oppression and persecutions in general.<sup>5</sup>

Michael Berenbaum presents Americanisation as something of positive value: all people in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural American society must be able to feel that the Holocaust is relevant to them.<sup>6</sup> And Americanisation appears to have been rather successful. In a 1993 opinion survey, a strong majority of Americans thought it very important that all Americans know and understand the Holocaust. Another survey in 2005 showed Americans to have a more positive attitude towards Holocaust education than others.<sup>7</sup>

### *Point of Departure*

The purpose of this article is to examine the role of the United States and American historical culture in the European reception of the Holocaust. Is it possible to distinguish between an »American« and a »European« representation of the Holocaust? What relations exist between their historical cultures? In order to approach an answer to these questions, I shall give a brief exposition of the development of American Holocaust memory, followed by a discussion of what an Americanisation of this memory might entail and, finally, of what

4 Alvin H. Rosenfeld, »The Americanization of the Holocaust«, in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust after Half a Century*, Bloomington and Indiana: Indiana University Press 1997, pp. 122-125, 130-135 and 140.

5 Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press 2001, pp. 34f, 80-82, 90f, 97-102 and 149-153.

6 Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, New York: Columbia University Press 2001, pp. 49 and 255.

7 Jennifer Golub and Renae Cohen, *What Do Americans Know about the Holocaust?*, Working Papers on Contemporary Anti-Semitism, New York: The American Jewish Committee 1993, p. 3. Tom W. Smith, *The Holocaust and Its Implications: A Seven-Nation Comparative Study*, New York: The American Jewish Committee 2005, p. 6.

consequences this Americanisation might have for European Holocaust memory.

In the last twenty years, a body of research has been produced on the Holocaust in American society and culture. Representations of the Holocaust in American film, television, literature, art etc. have been studied. So far, however, the only larger study attempting to give a comprehensive overview of the role of the Holocaust in US cultural and political life is Peter Novick's partly provocative *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), which limits itself almost exclusively to American *Jewish* life and leaves out both the rest of American society and the rest of the world.<sup>8</sup>

This article is based in large part on earlier research in the field and attempts at synthesising this research in order to survey the place of the Holocaust in American historical culture and to discuss the relations of American historical culture to European Holocaust memory. Some original research has been done as well.

The theoretical and methodological concepts of this article are adopted from the research project *Echoes of the Holocaust* at Lund University, Sweden.<sup>9</sup> An important concept is historical culture, understood both as a structure and as a process. As a structure, historical culture means those artefacts, contexts and arenas where history is being represented in a society. As a process, it consists of those activities whereby history is being communicated and used in society. Historical culture is analysed by means of different uses of history. A *scientific* use of history aims at establishing facts, explanations and credible interpretations. An *existential* use, which is often of a more private nature, finds expression in a need to remember the past and be conscious of one's roots to orient oneself in life. An *ideological* use of history legitimates a society, a regime or a policy by pointing towards general historical trends. On a lower level of abstraction, we find the *political-pedagogical* use of history, where individual actions or phenomena are directly compared to and identified with historical phenomena so as to be justified or dismissed. A *non-use* of history designates a special case of the ideological use involving a deliberate suppression of history in order not to compromise a system, a regime or a policy. The *moral* use of history is in some respects the opposite of

8 Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company 1999.

9 This article was originally intended for a concluding anthology from this project, a book that however never came to be.

the ideological use: it points to previously forgotten groups, events or phenomena in a way that challenges an established political or social order. Historical culture is in its turn a manifestation of the historical consciousness of a society, i.e., the process whereby people in a society orientate themselves in time. Historical consciousness binds together the past, the present and the future to a meaningful whole. Another relevant concept here is collective memory. In contrast to historical consciousness, collective memory merely looks backwards in time. It is conditioned more directly by historical-cultural representations and is more closely related to the political sphere and its fights over the image of the past.<sup>10</sup>

An additional important concept is Americanisation, which indicates that something or someone becomes like that which is American. It conjures up an image of a force flowing from America to other societies and cultures, supplanting their indigenous traits with American ones. This has given rise to an »Americanisation discourse«, which identifies everything bad (low, vulgar, superficial) in culture with America.<sup>11</sup>

»Americanisation« has mainly been given three different scholarly meanings. In the first sense, Americanisation is a consequence of American dominance. Being the most powerful nation in the world, the United States exports its culture to others. Terms like »McWorld« and »Coca-Colonisation« are frequently used to describe this process.<sup>12</sup>

A second definition of Americanisation claims it to be not a matter of American influences but rather of a parallel development. This development is usually identified as the emergence of modern consumer society, said to have been identified as American simply because it became visible in the USA earlier than elsewhere. Thus, »Americanisation« is simply a misleading denomination for a broader trend of modernisation or globalisation.<sup>13</sup>

10 Klas-Göran Karlsson, 2003, pp. 30-49.

11 Tom O'Dell, *Culture Unbound: Americanization and Everyday Life in Sweden*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 1997, pp. 19-22. Amanda Lagerkvist, »The Gender of 'Americanization' in Swedish Media 1945-65: Theoretical Sketches«, in Anja Hirdman, Amanda Lagerkvist and Gunilla Muhr, *Arbetstexter – Journalistik, medier och kommunikation* 1999:1, p. 3.

12 Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949*, London 1989, pp. 10, 31f and 100. Reinhold Wagnleiter, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*, Chapel Hill 1994, pp. 1-7. Heide Fehrenbach and Uta G. Poiger (eds.), *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations: American Culture in Western Europe and Japan*, New York: Oxford University Press 2000, p. xiv. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*, London: Corgi Books 2003, pp. xii, xviii, xxv, 16f, 60f, 68, 84, 90-99 and 101.

13 Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural*

The third and presently perhaps most common application of the concept refers to the mediation of values, ideas, images and products from the United States to other cultures. But these loans are not integrated into the recipient cultures in an unaltered form but are adapted in the process. The recipients are not passive but do something with what they receive; they can, at least to some degree, choose what they borrow. Richard Pells asserts that the Americanisation of Europe is a myth. Western Europe has adapted its cultural loans from America to its own needs and traditions, »Europeanising« what it has received from the United States.<sup>14</sup> James Gilbert has called attention to the fact that some American popular culture of today is produced for an international audience; notably this is the case for the American film industry. This view of Americanisation derives from a stronger focus within cultural studies on reception and interpretation. People are not passive recipients of culture but interpret, select and discard elements in accordance with their own norms and needs. Similarly, some scholars speak of »globalisation« instead of »globalisation«; even global cultural phenomena are integrated into and altered by local contexts. Still, this does not mean that globalisation or Americanisation is without significance altogether. Popular culture, it has been said, might not determine *how* people think, but it is of great importance to *what* they think *about*. Cultural patterns might be open to different interpretations but still have recognisable features in common. All three meanings of the concept of Americanisation may be relevant to a discussion of the place of the Holocaust in European historical culture.

Americanisation has been seen by many as a threat to their cultural heritage. European conservatives have a history of castigating American popular culture for displacing national high culture, whilst the European left has criticised the USA for harbouring world capitalism and for »imperialist« interventions around the globe. This phenomenon

*Relations with Europe, 1919-1933*, Ithaca 1984, p. 22. Duncan Webster, *Looka Yonder! The Imaginary America of Populist Culture*, London 1988, p. 179. Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization*, Berkeley 1993, p. 4. O'Dell, pp. 26-35. Fehrenbach and Poiger, pp. xiii. James Gilbert, *Explorations of American Culture*, Uppsala: Uppsala University 2000, p. 105. Ulf Hannerz, »Networks of Americanization«, in Rolf Lundén and Erik Åsard (eds.), *Networks of Americanization*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell 1992, p. 10. Steinar Bryn, »The Americanization of the Global Village: A Case Study of Norway«, in Rolf Lundén and Erik Åsard (eds.), *Networks of Americanization*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell 1992, pp. 31f.

14 Gilbert, pp. 101f, 106 and 109. O'Dell, pp. 34-39. Fehrenbach and Poiger, pp. xiv and xxvi-xxviii. Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II*, New York: Basic Books 1997, pp. xivf.



is commonly labeled »anti-Americanism«.<sup>15</sup> But anti-Americanism, too, is a problematic concept. Some define it as a systematic opposition to America as a whole. In this sense anti-Americanism is very rare; it is uncommon even for avowed critics of the USA to attack everything American.<sup>16</sup> Others see it as equaling criticism of the USA but then risk including pro-Americans who may be critical of some aspect of American life or policy.<sup>17</sup>

### *American Holocaust Memory*

Americans were hardly aware of the Holocaust when it took place. They knew that Jews were amongst the victims of Nazism but did not single them out. Instead, the dissident or resistance fighter was often pictured as the typical victim.<sup>18</sup> Peter Novick and others maintain that the Holocaust, or what would become known as the Holocaust, was hardly mentioned in American debate before 1965.<sup>19</sup> Several explanations are given for this: the celebration of the American triumph over the enemy left little room for an unfathomable tragedy like the Holocaust; the survivors had difficulties speaking of their trauma; as the Jews became more accepted in American society after 1945, they were eager

15 Alexander Stephan, »Cold War Alliances and the Emergence of Transatlantic Competition: An Introduction«, in Alexander Stephan (ed.), *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, New York: Berghahn Books 2006, pp. 14f. Richard J. Golsan, »From French Anti-Americanism and Americanization to the 'American Enemy'?«, in Alexander Stephan (ed.), *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, New York: Berghahn Books 2006, p. 44. Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, »Anti-Americanisms«, *Policy Review* 2006, <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policy-review/article/7815>, retrieved 16/01/2011.

16 Marie-France Toinet, »Does Anti-Americanism Exist?«, in Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik and Marie-France Toinet (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, Houndmills: The MacMillan Press Ltd. 1990, pp. 219f.

17 Katzenstein and Keohane. Toinet, pp. 220f. Marcus Cunliffe, »The Anatomy of Anti-Americanism«, in Rob Kroes and Maarten van Rossem (eds.), *Anti-Americanism in Europe*, Amsterdam: Free University Press 1986, pp. 26f.

18 Novick, pp. 19-27 and 64f. Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film*, 2nd edition, Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press 2002, pp. 30f and 43-45. Jeffrey C. Alexander, »On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama«, *European Journal of Social Theory* 2002:1, pp. 6-9 and 13.

19 Novick, p. 103. Hilene Flanzbaum, »Introduction: The Americanization of the Holocaust«, in Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, p. 1. Rosenfeld, 1997, p. 124. Pirjo Ahokas and Martine Chard-Hutchinson, »Introduction«, in Pirjo Ahokas and Martine Chard-Hutchinson (eds.), *Reclaiming Memory: American Representations of the Holocaust*, Åbo: University of Turku 1997, p. 9f.

to integrate.<sup>20</sup> In addition, victimhood at this time did not confer any status, wherefore Jews rather identified with the brave soldiers of Israel than with the helpless victims of the Holocaust. Furthermore, with the advent of the Cold War the Russians replaced the Germans as the representatives of evil. Totalitarianism theory, popular in the 1950s, emphasised the similarities between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, placing the focus on persecutions of political dissidents rather than of Jews.<sup>21</sup>

Sociologist Jeffrey Alexander maintains that during and after the Second World War a »progressive« narrative of the war and of Nazism was established first in the United States and then in the rest of the Western world. Nazism was identified as an evil which had been overcome by the kind of liberal modernity that the USA represented. The Holocaust was a confirmation of Nazi evil but was of little interest in itself.<sup>22</sup> From 1945 to the 1960s the progressive narrative was dominant, and debate on unpleasant things in the past, such as the Holocaust, was muted.

This attitude changed in the 1960s. The change began with the Eichmann trial in 1961, which was watched on television by a large part of the American public and was the first time that the Holocaust was presented as a distinct event. It was also in the 1960s that Hannah Arendt, Bruno Bettelheim and Raul Hilberg started publishing research on the Holocaust.<sup>23</sup>

Novick explains this change essentially by two factors. One was the wars between Israel and Arab states in 1967 and 1973. These wars made Israel appear vulnerable and isolated and induced many American Jews to draw parallels to the plight of the Jews during the Holocaust. The other was the emergence in the USA in the 1960s of »identity politics«. Blacks, women, homosexuals, Native Americans and other groups called for recognition of their specific identities and for their right to live in accordance with them. These groups mobilised through a sense of deprivation and victimhood. American Jews learnt from this mobilisation. The Holocaust enabled them to portray themselves as victims as well. An additional factor was a decline of religious practise and an increasing incidence of mixed marriages in the American Jewish population which made the Holocaust the remaining basis for a Jewish identity in the USA.<sup>24</sup>

20 Doneson, p. 52. Alexander, pp. 21-24.

21 Novick, pp. 85-98, 109f and 121. Mintz, pp. 5 and 8. Doneson, p. 65.

22 Alexander, pp. 16f and 19f. See also Novick, pp. 110-112.

23 Novick, pp. 128-135 and 139f.

24 Novick, pp. 148, 152, 170f and 188-191.



Novick explains the spread of Holocaust memory outside the American Jewish group by the influential role played by Jews in American mass media: in Hollywood, in television and in the newspaper, periodical and book businesses. Jews wanted to influence American attitudes towards Israel and towards themselves by promoting Holocaust consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

However, Novick's narrative has been questioned. A metaphorical use of the Holocaust was beginning to spread already by the late 1940s. Dalton Trumbo, one of »the Hollywood ten«, likened the communist hunt performed by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to Nazism and the concentration camps as early as 1947. A number of documentaries on Nazi crimes were televised from the late 1940s onwards, although they did not separate the Holocaust from other crimes. In a similar vein the Holocaust was addressed in a number of television dramas. Already by 1960, the Holocaust and the founding of the state of Israel could together stand out as the corner-stones of American Jewish identity.<sup>26</sup>

Lawrence Baron argues that Novick underestimates the impact of several important works on Nazism and the Holocaust published in the 1950s. Several memorials to the European Jews were also created in the United States already in the late 1940s. Kirsten Fermaglich demonstrates that some influential Jewish American scholars and intellectuals in the late 1950s and early 1960s, such as historian Stanley Elkins, writer Betty Friedan and psychologist Stanley Milgram (famous for his experiments on obedience), worked out analogies between Nazi concentration camps and American society. In Fermaglich's opinion this was due to a lingering sense of being outsiders, their successful personal careers notwithstanding.<sup>27</sup>

Given these findings, it seems reasonable to say that the Holocaust was not forgotten before the 1960s, but nor did it occupy the same position as it would from the late 1960s onwards. Before the 1960s, the Holocaust was seldom perceived as a particularly Jewish concern but

25 Novick, pp. 207-214.

26 Doneson, p. 63. Kirsten Fermaglich, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965*, Hanover: University Press of New England 2006, p. 3. Shandler, pp. 1, 23-25 and 42-68. Sara R. Horowitz, »The Cinematic Triangulation of Jewish American Identity: Israel, America, and the Holocaust«, in Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, p. 154.

27 Fermaglich, pp. 2f, 24-157 and 165f. Lawrence Baron, »The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945-1960«, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2003:1, pp. 63, 66-72 and 75-78.

was universalised. The multiplicity of victim groups was emphasised, and the relevance of Nazi crimes was extended to include all kinds of human suffering. The Holocaust was employed to discuss principal problems such as the consequences of intolerance or the nature of evil. The event was put in relation less to anti-Semitism than to prejudice, social injustice, alienation and conformism in modern mass society. An early example of this universalisation was the scene and film versions of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, where Anne Frank's more specific Jewish traits were downplayed.<sup>28</sup>

The »progressive« narrative which separated Nazism from Western modernity was replaced in the 1960s by the Holocaust as a »trauma drama«, writes Alexander. The civil rights movement and the Vietnam War called attention to injustices in America. People ceased looking upon their own society as an ideal. As a »trauma drama«, the Holocaust is not separate from our modernity but exists as a potentiality in all of Western civilisation, perhaps even in basic human nature. The Holocaust thus becomes a reason to be on guard against our own society as well.<sup>29</sup> However, two remarks are in their place.

Firstly, it is not clear that the Holocaust is ignored by being integrated with Nazism. Nor is it a fact that every comparison between Nazism and communism must have this effect. Rather than to belittle the evil of Nazism this may stress the danger of communism. In a review of Novick's book, Stephen Whitfield writes that in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), Hannah Arendt treated Nazism and communism together at the same time that she devoted much space to anti-Semitism and the fate of the European Jews. Rather than marginalising the former, the abhorrence of Nazism and of communism could unite.<sup>30</sup> Even today, we do not always differentiate strictly between the Holocaust and Nazism. Holocaust memory is intimately associated with Nazi imagery and symbols. The important change that has taken place is not separating the Holocaust from Nazism but rather no longer viewing Nazism as an antithesis of modernity but as a form of modernity, even though a bad one. Many today see neither the Holocaust nor Nazism as the

28 Horowitz, pp. 148-153. Novick, pp. 115f. Shandler, pp. 133-154. Doneson, pp. 60f, 74 and 82f. Fermaglich, pp. 3f, 13, 157 and 167. Rosenfeld, »Popularization and Memory: The Case of Anne Frank«, in Peter Hayes (ed.), *Lessons and Legacies: The Meaning of the Holocaust in a Changing World*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 1991, p. 252, and 1997, pp. 124f.

29 Alexander, pp. 16-25, 29-32 and 39-41. Mintz, pp. 10 and 109f.

30 Stephen J. Whitfield, »Reflections on Peter Novick's Holocaust in American Life: Two Perspectives«, *Judaism* 22/9 2000.

unfortunate result of a German *Sonderweg* but rather as a consequence of tendencies inherent in all of Western modernity.

Secondly, the »judaisation« of the Holocaust in the 1970s was not the end of universalisation but rather meant the development of new forms of universalisation. Whereas Nazi persecutions were previously seen as directed against a number of groups, the Holocaust was now identified specifically with the Jews. But whilst the American public before had not been expected to identify with the Jews, this identification now became essential. The victims became Jewish, but the Jews were made to represent others as well.

Some scholars have supported Novick's thesis that identity politics plays a significant part in the cultivation of Holocaust memory. A new interest in ethnicity and multiplicity emerged in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s. Jews started taking an interest in their own family histories. The TV series *Holocaust* was in part inspired by the series *Roots* from 1977, which tells about the suffering of the African-Americans. *Holocaust* may be said to portray the suffering of the Jews at the same time as the attention of non-Jews is called this suffering.<sup>31</sup>

Other developments in the late 1970s also contributed to giving the Holocaust its prominent place in American culture. In 1978, President Carter appointed a commission to create a federal American memorial to the Holocaust; its work eventually issued in the creation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. A decision in the American congress made 28-29 April the »Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust«. In 1979 the US Justice Department established an »Office of Special Investigations« to track down and deport war criminals from World War II living in America. The Holocaust continued to be dealt with in a number of American films and television series. A summit was perhaps reached in 1993-1994, called »the year of the Holocaust«, featuring a series of Holocaust-related arrangements such as the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Museum and the release of *Schindler's List*.<sup>32</sup>

31 Flanzbaum, pp. 11-13. Henry Greenspan, »Imagining Survivors: Testimony and the Rise of Holocaust Consciousness«, in Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, pp. 45 and 57. Shandler, pp. 83-132 and 158. Ahokas and Chard-Hutchinson, p. 10. Linenthal, p. 12. Mintz, pp. 11f, 16-22 and 26. Doneson, p. 143. Alexander, pp. 34-37.

32 Alexander, pp. 45f. Linenthal, pp. 17-38 and 255-266. Ahokas and Chard-Hutchinson, p. 12.

*The Americanisation of the Holocaust*

What has »the Americanisation of the Holocaust« meant, then? In representations aimed at an American audience the victims of the Holocaust are often similar to middle-class Americans, which facilitates identification.<sup>33</sup> Besides this, universalisation takes place by means of personalisation: history is illustrated by the fate and the actions of individuals, families and friends. Through personalisation, the audience can identify with the victims, whose plight becomes universal. Perpetrators can also become universal, their national or ideological origin rendered immaterial, as in Stanley Milgram's experiments on obedience or in Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. The Holocaust becomes a metaphor of contemporary evil, and the lessons derived from Jewish suffering become applicable to our time.<sup>34</sup>

Rosenfeld has underlined an element of idealism as an American theme, for instance in the emphasis on Anne Frank's belief in the good in man. *Schindler's List* has also been criticised for stressing the good in man and focusing on the courage and moral strength of individuals instead of on the evil that made the genocide possible. American optimism demanded a happy or at least a hopeful ending and a belief in the capability of the individual to master his or her own fate. The focus placed on rescuers and survivors, who are at the centre of the film, is also interpreted as manifesting an American predilection for heroes.<sup>35</sup>

The Holocaust can enter into a self-affirmative as well as a self-critical American historical narrative. According to analyses of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, the museum impresses the value of American democratic and egalitarian ideals, which are presented as the antithesis of the Holocaust. The memory of the crimes committed by another people in another part of the world is drawn upon in order to bring out what is seen as the fundamental values of the American nation. American virtues are favourably contrasted with Nazi Germany, and the celebration of the United States' role in the defeat of Germany

33 The script writer of *Holocaust*, Gerald Green, has said that the makers of the series chose to make the Weiss family, around which the plot revolves, into assimilated German middle-class Jews in order to facilitate the identification of the viewers with them. This choice was made even though Jews of this kind were not the most typical victims of the Holocaust. Zander, 2003, p. 275.

34 Novick, pp. 235f. Doneson, pp. 144, 148 and 190f. Alexander, pp. 37-39.

35 Rosenfeld, 1991, pp. 249-251, and 1997, pp. 136-143. Ilan Avisar, »Holocaust Movies and the Politics of Collective Memory«, in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust after Half a Century*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997, pp. 48 and 50-53. Doneson, p. 215.

is part of many »Days of Remembrance« ceremonies. The Holocaust demonstrates what it means *not* to be an American. Unlike blacks and Native Americans, the Jews did not suffer in the USA but can see it as the place of their rebirth, which makes Holocaust memory less suited for criticism of this country than the memory of the sufferings of these other groups. Hereby, critical voices claim, Americans are able to externalise evil and confirm their own heroic self-image.<sup>36</sup> An expression of this self-confirmation is found in Michael Berenbaum's presentation of America's Holocaust Museum, *The World Must Know*: »The history described here cuts against the grain of the American ethos«. <sup>37</sup> The foremost lesson of the Holocaust is that America must not abandon its ideals:

For Americans, confronting this European event brings us a new recognition of the tenets of American constitutional democracy: a belief in equality and equal justice under law; a commitment to pluralism and toleration, particularly at a time when our society is becoming more diverse than ever before in our history; a determination to restrain government by checks and balances and by the constitutional protections of inalienable rights; and a struggle for human rights as a core national value and a foundation for foreign policy.<sup>38</sup>

The endeavour to derive moral and ideological lessons from the Holocaust is also a way to universalise the Holocaust and make it relevant to the entire American nation.<sup>39</sup> In a speech at the remembrance of Holocaust victims in 2002 President Bush's national security advisor Condoleezza Rice stated that the Holocaust serves to remind the USA of its obligation to defend liberty. In 2003 the director of the Holocaust

<sup>36</sup> James E. Young, »America's Holocaust: Memory and the Politics of Identity«, in Hilene Flanzbaum, *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, pp. 71-74. Alan E. Steinweis, »Reflections on the Holocaust from Nebraska«, in Hilene Flanzbaum, *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, pp. 178f. Rosenfeld, 1997, pp. 127f. Doneson, pp. 151-154 and 192. Detlef Junker, »Die Amerikanisierung des Holocaust. Über die Möglichkeit, das Böse zu externalisieren und die eigene Mission fortwährend zu erneuern«, in Ernst Piper and Usha Swamy (eds.), *Gibt es wirklich eine Holocaust-Industrie? Zur Auseinandersetzung um Norman Finkelstein*, Zürich: Pendo, 2nd edition, 2001, pp. 150f and 159f.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, Washington: United States Holocaust Museum 2006, p. xx.

<sup>38</sup> Berenbaum, pp. 220f and 226 (quote).

<sup>39</sup> Mintz, pp. 31f and 157.

Memorial Museum, Sara Bloomberg, emphasised that the American people already in the 1930s felt that the *autos-da-fé* of Nazi Germany violated American values.<sup>40</sup>

But the Holocaust has not been used merely to affirm American values and deeds. From the start there has been a tendency in America to use the Holocaust as a metaphor in all sorts of contexts. In the 1960s the situation of America's black population was often compared to the Holocaust. Films like Sidney Lumet's *The Pawnbroker* (1965) drew a parallel between the Holocaust and racism and violence in America's cities. Critics of the Vietnam War also drew upon the Holocaust as a simile of American actions. Many young Americans, particularly Jews, mentioned the Holocaust as part of the moral paradigm which induced them to become radical political activists.<sup>41</sup>

As Alan Steinweis has noted, there appears to be no uniform American use of Holocaust memory. Different individuals and groups adopt their own religious, ethnical and ideological perspectives on the subject. In other words, there are both homogenising and heterogenising forces at play: popular culture promotes similar attitudes amongst Americans, whereas ethnical, ideological and cultural factors produce differences between groups and regions within the country.<sup>42</sup>

Nowadays the Holocaust serves as a metaphor for anything considered evil. AIDS, the slave trade, the treatment of Native Americans, child abuse, discrimination against women and homosexuals and maltreatment of animals have all been likened to the Holocaust. Anti-abortionists have spoken of an »abortion Holocaust«.<sup>43</sup> Radical leftists like historian Howard Zinn have compared the failure to control famine and diseases in the Third world to the Holocaust. The UN sanctions against Iraq after the Gulf war have been compared to the Holocaust. The resort to Holocaust metaphors is found all over the political spectrum.<sup>44</sup>

40 »Remarks by Condoleezza Rice, assistant to the President for National Security Affairs« 10/4 2002, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020410-8.html>, retrieved 16/01/2011. Michael J. Bandler, »America Observes 'Days of Remembrance' of Holocaust«, 11/5 2003, <http://usifo.state.gov/utills/printpage.html>, retrieved 30/12 2006. Document no longer available.

41 Horowitz, pp. 153f. Shandler, pp. 82 and 149f. Mintz, pp. 107-114. Doneson, pp. 88f, 90 and 109. Linenthal, p. 10. Fermaglich, pp. 139-150.

42 Steinweis, 1999, pp. 170 and 179f.

43 Rosenfeld, 1997, pp. 122 and 130-135. Steinweis, 1999, p. 173. Shandler, pp. 211f. Junker, pp. 152f.

44 Fermaglich, pp. 173f. Howard Zinn, »Respecting the Holocaust«, in *The Progressive* 1/11 1999, p. 16. David Cromwell, »The Unreporting of Iraq: A hidden Holocaust«, <http://emanzipationhumanum.de/english/WTO033.html>, retrieved 16/01/2011. James Taranto, »Karen Finley Liberals«, 10/6 2005, <http://mushroomgeeks.com/forum/showthread.php?t=21299>, retrieved 19/1 2011.



American Holocaust memory is associated with several different uses of history. A scientific use of history is very well represented; the United States has led the way in Holocaust studies. Raul Hilberg is often considered the grand old man of the field with his *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961). In the 1970s, Holocaust Studies became a sub-discipline of its own. Many view a purely scientific use of history as the only acceptable one when the Holocaust is concerned. Any attempt to »aestheticise« the Holocaust or to put it to political or ideological use is looked upon as a violation. But the very fact that scholarship on the Holocaust expanded so greatly in the 1970s suggests that even scientific interest was not wholly independent of the social climate or current debates.

In the case of American Jews one may speak of an existential use of history connected to the Holocaust: it is a way for them to define their identity by remembering their history. Only a minority of American Jews are Holocaust survivors or descendents of such, but nevertheless many of them have had relatives in Europe, and in any case, history need not directly involve one's own family in order to be perceived as relevant. The Jews are also an »imagined community«, and events involving some members of this community may turn into common memories. As mentioned, Jews can also make a moral use of the Holocaust, calling attention to their sufferings.

Jewish and non-Jewish Americans alike can make ideological and moral use of the Holocaust. We have already seen examples of an ideological use when American values and American society are contrasted with the mass murder of the Holocaust. On the other hand, the Holocaust may also be utilised in order to question the fidelity of the USA to its own ideals: through a failure to welcome the oppressed of the world and through repression of its own blacks, Native Americans and other minorities. As Levy and Sznajder assert, use of the Holocaust is often coupled with critical historical narratives of one's own nation.<sup>45</sup> The loss of faith in America in the 1960s brought about the introduction of the Holocaust as an element in a new, critical narrative of the USA. In the history discipline, a »Neo-Progressive school« portrayed American society as largely repressive and unjust. Here was room for a moral use of history and of the Holocaust.

Yet the progressive narrative has not been completely superseded by the critical. Many Americans have continued to adhere to a positive

<sup>45</sup> Levy and Sznajder, p. 103.

view of their history. After the radical currents of the 1960s and 1970s had waned, part of the traditional belief in America and an American mission in the world was restored. As will be shown below, the survival of the progressive narrative is evidenced by its reappearance in the war rhetoric of the George W. Bush administration.

A second ideological use of Holocaust memory serves to justify Israel and to urge American support of this country. As mentioned before, Novick thinks that the Israeli-Arab wars in 1967 and 1973 were triggers of the new Holocaust consciousness amongst Jewish-Americans.<sup>46</sup> Even non-Jewish Americans seem to a considerable extent to associate the Holocaust and Israel with each other. In the self-endorsing narrative, the United States thinks of itself as the liberator of the Jews and continues to play this role by supporting Israel. The connection between Holocaust consciousness and a favourable opinion of Israel seems to be stronger in the USA than in other countries.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps it is because the Holocaust was universalised already before the 1960s that it has had such success in American historical culture. It has been perceived as pertinent by more groups than the actual victims to a much higher degree than the fate of Black Americans or Native Americans. The Holocaust might not have become integrated into American collective memory as easily, had it from the beginning been presented as a tragedy for the Jews alone.

A visible and controversial use of Holocaust history is the political-pedagogical use, the categorisation of other events as similar or directly comparable to the Holocaust. A political-pedagogical use of history serves to justify or to condemn concrete actions. A large number of different domestic as well as international events and phenomena have been compared to the Holocaust.

In a 1999 opinion survey, Americans in general restricted Holocaust analogies to phenomena that in significant respects resemble the original event: mass murder or conflicts that concern collectives based on race, ethnicity, religion or territory, not on class, gender, sexual preference etc. The comparisons accepted were largely congruent with the UN convention on genocide, which in its turn is based on the Holocaust. The most important difference from the convention was that a considerable portion especially amongst non-white Americans

46 Horowitz, p. 146. Mitchell G. Ash, »American and German Perspectives on the Goldhagen Debate: History, Identity, and the Media«, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 1997:3, p. 405.

47 Smith, pp. 6, 17 and 21.

also made comparisons with ethnical, religious and racial conflicts more in general.<sup>48</sup>

Some clear instances of a political-pedagogical use of history are found in foreign policy rhetoric. Historian Göran Rystad maintains that Americans in general want their ideals to put their mark on their foreign policies. This is sometimes done by non-involvement in order not to compromise these ideals and sometimes by intervention in order to reshape the world in the American image. Alan Steinweis writes that Americans have an inclination to view international situations as struggles between good and evil.<sup>49</sup>

Journalist Samantha Power describes in her *»A Problem from Hell«* how at least from the 1970s the Holocaust was invoked by American debaters in several cases where they wanted the USA to intervene abroad: the genocide in Cambodia in 1975-1979, the chemical warfare against the Kurds of Iraq by Saddam Hussein in 1988 etc.<sup>50</sup>

This use of Holocaust analogies was most unabashed in the Balkan wars of the 1990s. One reason for this was the end of the Cold war, which could no longer be used to explain European conflicts. A second reason was the occurrence of a large-scale ethnical cleansing, stirring up memories of the Nazi era. Holocaust analogies became widespread in American mass media. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and spokesman for Holocaust victims enjoying great moral authority in the USA, at the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington in 1993 directly exhorted President Clinton to intervene in Bosnia.<sup>51</sup> The Holocaust analogy was also diligently employed in the NATO intervention to put an end to Serbian ethnical cleansing in Kosovo in 1999. Steinweis identifies this as the case where the analogy has had its greatest political importance so far.<sup>52</sup>

According to Göran Rystad, US foreign policy thinking during much of the Cold War was informed by a *»Munich analogy«*: the

48 Only 3% av those questioned made spontaneous comparisons between abortion and the Holocaust. However, when this comparison was made and presented to them, 19% thought it to be a good comparison. Katherine Bishoping and Andrea Kalmin, *»Public Opinion about Comparisons to the Holocaust«*, in *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1999:4, pp. 492-494 and 503f.

49 Göran Rystad, *Dream and Reality: The United States in Search of a Role in the Twentieth-Century World*, Lund: Lund University Press 1999, p. 48. Alan E. Steinweis, *»The Auschwitz Analogy: Holocaust Memory and American Debates over Intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s«*, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2005:2, pp. 276f.

50 Samantha Power, *»A Problem from Hell«: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York: Basic Books 2002, pp. 127-130, 203 and 216f.

51 Shandler, pp. 240-252. Power, pp. 277-279, 288 and 432-434. Alexander, pp. 47-49. Linenthal, pp. 262f. Steinweis, 2005, pp. 277-281.

52 Steinweis, 2005, pp. 281-285.

actions of communist regimes were interpreted by means of analogies with Nazi Germany. Totalitarian states were inherently aggressive and expansionist, and there must be made no concessions to them as Great Britain and France had done in the Munich agreement in 1938, for this would merely encourage them to go even farther. According to Steinweis, the Munich analogy of the Cold War has now been replaced by an »Auschwitz Analogy«.<sup>53</sup>

Still, this is a qualified truth. It would be more accurate to say that the Munich analogy and the Auschwitz analogy have combined. The Munich analogy was present in the Balkan wars alongside the Auschwitz analogy.<sup>54</sup> As mentioned, contemporary political rhetoric seldom makes a clear distinction between Nazism and the Holocaust. Both represent ultimate evil and must be fought. From an American point of view, the Second World War is commonly conceived of as a »good«, just war, and after the demise of communism as the main enemy, an America accustomed to thinking of international conflicts as moral crusades harked back to the archetypical evil, nazism (as it had in fact already been doing in the Cold War by means of the Munich analogy and totalitarianism theory).

The struggle against Nazism has been invoked in both wars against Iraq. In the Gulf war in 1990-91 Saddam Hussein was compared to Hitler and Kuwait to the Sudetenland or the Rhineland, and the importance of not conceding anything to evil was underlined. References to the Holocaust were part of this discourse. President George Bush referred in 1990 to the Nuremberg trials. A caricature in *New York Times* from the same year drew Hussein as Hitler, speaking of »a Middle East Final solution«.<sup>55</sup>

References to the Holocaust have been present in »the war on terror« and in the second war against Iraq as well. In her aforementioned speech at the remembrance of Holocaust victims in 2002, Condoleezza Rice remarked that the events of September 11 2001 bore witness to the continuing relevance of the Holocaust and that the slogan »Never

53 Göran Rystad, *Prisoners of the Past? The Munich Syndrome and Makers of American Foreign Policy in the Cold War Era*, Lund: CWK Gleerup 1982, pp. 19f, 31-33. 39f and 44. Steinweis, 2005, p. 277.

54 Shandler, p. 242. Linenthal, pp. 264-266. Power, p. 453.

55 Philip M. Taylor, *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War*, 2nd edition, Manchester: Manchester University Press 1998, pp. 5f. Riika Kuusisto, *Western Definitions of War in the Gulf and in Bosnia: The Rhetorical Framework of the United States, British and French Leaders in Action*, Helsingfors: Finska Vetenskaps-Societeten och Finska Vetenskapsakademien 1999, pp. 135-137. Power, p. 480. Steinweis, 2005, p. 288. *New York Times* 11/12 1990.

again!« applied here too. At the time of the 2003 war against Iraq, Saddam Hussein was again compared to Hitler. Nonetheless, the Holocaust did not become a dominant theme here, which leads Steinweis to speculate that Holocaust interest in America may have decreased since 1999.<sup>56</sup> References to both the Holocaust and Nazism did appear in the political debate, though. Republican Senator Bob Bennett stated in 2003 that the USA had stopped an ongoing »holocaust« (with a lower-case h) in Iraq. According to a 2003 article on Deputy Minister of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, whose family had been affected by the Holocaust, he observed a fundamental similarity between the crimes of Hitler and of Saddam Hussein. The war on terrorism was to be the third great struggle of the United States against totalitarianism after the fights against Nazism and communism.<sup>57</sup>

Facing the congressional election of 2006, the Bush administration began using Holocaust and Nazi references more frequently. George W. Bush himself, Vice President Dick Cheney and Defence Minister Donald Rumsfeld drew parallels between the fight against Nazism and the war against Saddam Hussein, Usama bin Laden and international terrorism. The enemies of the USA were characterised as supporters of »Islamofascism«, and it was stressed that America must learn from both the Munich agreement and from the Holocaust to put an end to evil in time. Islamofascism was placed on a par with Nazism and communism.<sup>58</sup> Here the Holocaust served to strengthen an extended version of the totalitarianism theory.

The Munich and Auschwitz analogies became part of a rhetoric urging the spread of democracy and other American values to the Middle East and other parts of the world. The Holocaust was used to celebrate American values, vindicate American actions and stigmatise

<sup>56</sup> Steinweis, 2005, pp. 285f.

<sup>57</sup> »Defending the War in Iraq and D.C. School Voucher Pilot Program«, 29/9 2003, [www.senate.gov/~bennett/press/record.cfm?id=226201](http://www.senate.gov/~bennett/press/record.cfm?id=226201), retrieved 6/10 2006. Document no longer available. Thomas E. Ricks, »Holding Their Ground: As Critics Zero in, Paul Wolfowitz is Unflinching on Iraq Policy«, *Washington Post* 23/12 2003; [www.benado-rassociates.com/article/827](http://www.benado-rassociates.com/article/827).

<sup>58</sup> »President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address«, 31/1 2006, <http://georgew-bush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/01/20060131-10.html>, retrieved 16/01/2011. »President Bush Discusses Global War on Terror«, 5/9 2006, [www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/print/20060905-4.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/print/20060905-4.html), retrieved 30/12 2006. Document no longer available. Deb Riechmann, »Vice President Cheney Remembers Holocaust«, 27/1 2005, [http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show\\_mesg&forum=102&topic\\_id=1185089&mesg\\_id=1188450](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=show_mesg&forum=102&topic_id=1185089&mesg_id=1188450), retrieved 22/1 2011. Donald Rumsfeld, »Address at the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual American Legion National Convention«, 29/8 2006, <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1033>, retrieved 16/01/2011.

America's foes. The progressive narrative lived on; the United States was fighting to wipe out evil from the face of the Earth. Bush also delineated the gradual progress of democracy in the world, beginning with the victory of the USA over Nazism in 1945, a narrative with a clear sense of progression.<sup>59</sup> Since it can still be treated as part of Nazism rather than of modernity as such, the Holocaust can lend itself to a progressive narrative of good versus evil and to a theory of totalitarianism. Liberal American modernity, distinguished by freedom and democracy, is set up against different totalitarian alternatives, with Nazism as the paradigmatic example, followed by Soviet communism and, in our time, by Islamic fundamentalism. In the war against Iraq, the Auschwitz analogy served primarily to bestow a moral charge, capable of mobilising the American public, upon American policy. Given the Republican losses in the 2006 election, one might of course ask how successful this resurrection of the progressive, self-affirmative narrative has been. Perhaps it has difficulty asserting itself against the trauma drama that is the commonest form of Holocaust representation in our time. But it has certainly far from disappeared.

#### *Essentialism and Constructivism*

Part of the debate on the Americanisation of Holocaust representations revolves around the opposition between what Alan Mintz calls essentialism and constructivism. »Essentialism« is the stance that the Holocaust is an event of a gravity that renders all conventional understanding impossible. The Holocaust is unique; to compare it to any other event is to belittle it, and any attempt to make sense of it is an act of violation. Philosopher Theodor Adorno believed that the Holocaust cannot be treated with the categories of realism. Elie Wiesel, mentioned above, is a well-known representative of this opinion, and Lawrence Langer and Berel Lang are scholars associated with it. Students of the Holocaust should restrict themselves to »facts« and avoid all »interpretation« and not try to »make sense« of it. This may be a reason for the enormous respect shown to Holocaust survivors in America; only those who have a direct personal experience of the Holocaust know what it is about. The ways that popular culture deals with the Holocaust is the subject of heavy criticism from this quarter.<sup>60</sup>

59 »President Bush Delivers State of the Union Address«, 31/1 2006.

60 Harold Kaplan, »The Survival of Judgment«, in Pirjo Ahokas and Martine Chard-Hutchinson (eds.), *Reclaiming Memory: American Representations of the Holocaust*, Åbo: University of Turku 1997, pp. 28-30. Ilan Avisar, »Holocaust Movies and the Politics of Collective Memory«, in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust after Half a Century*,



Nonetheless, a »constructivist« point of view has gradually been introduced, inspired by developments in historical theory pointing to the necessity of reliance on narratives and argumentative structures which cannot be derived from the »facts« themselves.<sup>61</sup> Constructivism stresses the cultural contexts into which Holocaust memory is integrated. It may be that the Holocaust is an event without precedent, but people must nevertheless interpret it making use of their cultural resources. To scholars such as Alan Mintz, Judith Doneson and Hilene Flanzbaum, Americanisation is both necessary and defensible.<sup>62</sup>

The vigilance against inappropriate Holocaust representations is enhanced by an old distrust of popular culture. After the première of the television series *Holocaust* ensued an extensive public debate where critics found it improper to treat a topic like the Holocaust utilising the conventions of popular entertainment. Defenders of the series pointed instead to its possibilities of mediating Holocaust memory to the broad public. Both these positions have recurred on every occasion that a Holocaust representation in popular culture has attained commercial success.<sup>63</sup>

The debate also concerned popular culture in general. The media and conventions of modern popular culture are in large measure the results of an American development, and in European discussions on popular culture, »Americanisation« has been a frequent topic. Yet the front line has mostly been drawn between an intellectual establishment on the one hand and the broad public on the other (albeit neither side has been completely unified in its point of view), rather than between Europe and America. This is largely true of the debate on Holocaust representations as well. Speaking of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's controversial book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1996), Mitchell Ash notes that the debates in both the USA and Germany laid bare a gulf between the historians, who were generally highly critical of the book, and the laymen, who were mostly well disposed towards it. The decisive

Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997, p. 48. Amy Hungerford, »Surviving Rego Park: Holocaust Theory from Art Spiegelman to Berel Lang«, in Hilene Flanzbaum (ed.), *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1999, pp. 102-104. Shandler, pp. 183 and 190. Linenthal, p. 4. Mintz, pp. 38-41, 49-55.

61 See for example Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore 1973, and a large number of later philosophical and theoretical works.

62 Mintz, pp. 39f, 44-48, 72 and 79-83. Flanzbaum, p. 13. Doneson, pp. 154, 175f and 184.

63 Ahokas and Chard-Hutchinson, pp. 10f. Shandler, pp. 164-170 and 174f. Mintz, pp. 24-26.

factor behind the success of the book was its treatment in the mass media, American mass media in particular.<sup>64</sup>

The above-mentioned Peter Novick is a constructivist as he explains the prominence of the Holocaust not with the event itself but with political and cultural needs and interests. He rejects the notion that the Holocaust is unique and argues instead that like other historical events it possesses both unique features and characteristics that it shares with others.<sup>65</sup>

An even more radical attack on the place of the Holocaust in historical culture is delivered by political scientist Norman Finkelstein in *The Holocaust Industry* (2000). Finkelstein asserts the existence of an organised »Holocaust industry«, led by the Jewish-American elite. The primary object of this industry is to secure US support of Israel. In addition, Jews are able to make use of the Holocaust as an instrument to stigmatise their critics as anti-Semites. The Holocaust is also a means to »blackmail« Swiss banks, German companies and East European governments for money in compensation for alleged thefts of Jewish property and the use of Jewish slave labour during World War II. To the United States the Holocaust offers a means to divert attention from its own crimes against blacks and Native Americans and against the peoples of other countries.<sup>66</sup>

Novick's and Finkelstein's disapproval of the manner in which, to their minds, the Holocaust is treated in American life has provoked controversies around their books. Novick's book was accused of conspiracy thinking by some reviewers, but others defended him on this point. Still, far from all found his thesis of the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish-American identity formation convincing.<sup>67</sup> A recurrent comment was that he ignored what Holocaust memory can in fact teach us about human wickedness and the value of tolerance. For instance, Alan Steinweis has later remarked that the pressure of American Jews on the government to intervene in Kosovo could be interpreted, contrary to

64 Ash, pp. 401 and 403.

65 Novick, pp. 196f, 239f, 244 and 278.

66 Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, New York: Verso 2000, pp. 3, 21-30, 37, 42-44, 83-88, 106-108, 120-123, 130-135 and 144-148.

67 Lawrence L. Langer, »A Sacred Evil: A Historian Reconsiders Traditional Views of the Holocaust«, in *New York Times Book Review* 1999:26, p. 24. Elliot Abrams, »Genocide on Main Street«, in *National Review* 1999:12, p. 24. Lawrence Douglas, »Too Vivid a Memory«, in *Commonweal* 1999:14, p. 25. Whitfield. Jeremy D. Popkin, »Holocaust Memory: Bad for the Jews?«, in *Judaism* 1/1 2001.

Novick, as a sign that their humanitarian commitment in fact has been strengthened, not weakened, by Holocaust consciousness.<sup>68</sup>

Whilst Novick was treated seriously, Finkelstein's work was dismissed altogether by most. Reviews pointed to exaggerations and self-contradictions in his argumentation. »Like any conspiracy theory, it contains several grains of truth; and like any such theory, it is both irrational and insidious«, wrote historian Omer Bartov.<sup>69</sup> Finkelstein has met with approval above all in Islamist circles hostile to Israel. His theses have also received some support from radical leftists who share Finkelstein's criticism of US support of Israel.<sup>70</sup> The connection between Holocaust memory and support of Israel in the American context is evident here.

### *American Holocaust Memory and Europe*

American scholars have often led the way in European dealings with the Holocaust. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and its impact on the German public is one example, Finkelstein's book another. The latter also gave rise to a heated debate in Germany. This may express a German yearning to be relieved of some of the guilt for the Holocaust, but most German commentators distanced themselves from the Finkelstein theses.<sup>71</sup> Finkelstein was also paid considerably more attention in Europe than he received in the United States; his book also attracted more much more attention in America after it had become a subject of discussion in Europe.

In the USA and in most European countries the bulk of what support Finkelstein received emanated from radical leftists, acting to remove what they regard as an obstacle to criticism of Israel. The exception was Germany, where his advocates instead belonged to the Right. This was

68 Abrams, p. 24. Douglas, p. 25. Popkin. Jon Wiener, »Holocaust Creationism«, *The Nation* 12/7 1999, p. 30. Tony Judt, »The Morbid Truth«, *The New Republic* 19/7 1999, p. 39. Eva Hoffman, »The Holocaust in American Life by Peter Novick«, *The New York Review of Books* 2000:4, p. 22f. Mintz, s. 187. Steinweis, 2005, p. 279.

69 Omer Bartov, »A Tale of Two Holocausts«, in *New York Times Book Review* 6/8 2000, p. 8 (quote). Alan E. Steinweis, »The Holocaust and American Culture: An Assessment of Recent Scholarship«, in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 2001:2, p. 304. Paul Bogdanor, »The Finkelstein Phenomenon: Reflections on the Exploitation of Anti-Jewish Bigotry«, *Judaism* 22/9 2002, pp. 504-507.

70 Neve Gordon, »Cloud after Auschwitz«, *The Nation* 13/11 2000, pp. 28-34. Christopher Hitchens, »Dead Souls«, *The Nation* 18/9 2000, p. 9.

71 Ash, pp. 404-407. Ernst Piper and Usha Swamy (eds.), *Gibt es wirklich eine Holocaust-Industrie? Zur Auseinandersetzung um Norman Finkelstein*, Zürich: Pendo 2001. Petra Steinberger (ed.), *Die Finkelstein-Debatte*, München: Piper Verlag 2001.

due to political conditions in Germany, where parts of the Right worked to »normalise« the national self-image, whereas the Left opposed any effort in this direction.<sup>72</sup>

There are several other examples of American scholarship influencing Europe. The destruction of the French myth of the role of the Vichy regime during the Second World War and hence the breaking of the silence surrounding this war in France began with two American scholars, Robert Paxton and Michael Marrus.<sup>73</sup>

Also concerning Holocaust memory in Eastern Europe the United States has played a role. The European Union demands of prospective members that they attend to their Holocaust history, but the attitude of the USA is probably not inconsequential either. Several East European countries have sought an alliance with America on international matters.<sup>74</sup> Romania in 2003 appointed a »Wiesel International Commission for the Study of the Romanian Holocaust« that included American members and was chaired by the Transylvanian-born American resident Elie Wiesel.<sup>75</sup> American Jews frequently visit memorial sights in Eastern Europe.

Courses on the Holocaust on different levels of the educational system, and professorships and research institutes specialising in Holocaust Studies, appeared earlier in the USA and have been more common there than in Europe. They have then been a model to others. The research and education on the Holocaust might hence be seen as an »Americanised« field.

Many organisations and foundations working for compensation to survivors and for documentation of testimonies to the Holocaust, such as the World Jewish Congress, are based in the United States. This

72 Pär Frohnert, »Tyska reaktioner på Norman Finkelsteins *The Holocaust Industry*«, in *Historisk Tidskrift* 2002:2, pp. 342-344.

73 Karlsson, 2006, p. 24. Johannes Heuman, »Conflicting Memories: The French Jews and Vichy France«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *The Holocaust – Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag 2006, p. 61.

74 An example of the use of Holocaust memory in this context might be a letter from Polish Foreign secretary Cimoszewicz to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell where he pledged his country's support of the United States in case of a military intervention in Iraq in 2003: »In this fight 'for your freedom and ours', Poland will stand by your side,« thereby quoting the battle-cry of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1944. Colin Powell, »Keynote Address at the National Civic Commemoration of the Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust«, 30/4 2003, [http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/years/view\\_speech.php?content=2003&speech=powell](http://www.ushmm.org/remembrance/dor/years/view_speech.php?content=2003&speech=powell), retrieved 22/1 2011.

75 Kristian Gerner, »Hungary, Romania, the Holocaust and Historical Culture«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (red.), *The Holocaust – Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Malmö: Sekel Bokförlag 2006, p. 239.

is the basis of Finkelstein's talk of the machinations of an American-based »Holocaust industry«. The Survivors of the Shoah Visual History foundation, founded by Steven Spielberg, and Yale University have participated in the documentation of survivor testimonies in Slovakia and other countries.<sup>76</sup>

Clearly the USA and agents based there have been using their economic and political leverage to make the Holocaust an issue. The legal settlements of Holocaust cases have mainly taken place in American fora. Demands for compensation were raised in the mid-1990s and were brought to trial by American lawyers and organisations in American courts. This was partly a result of the American legal system: it allows citizens of foreign countries to file suits for crimes committed outside American borders; it maintains jurisdiction over foreign nationals doing business in the United States, even when dealing with legal claims originating abroad; and the courts have a strong independence of the other branches of government. The actions of American courts, along with pressure from Jewish groups and a need to forestall political adversaries, also forced the Clinton administration to take action.<sup>77</sup>

In 1996 Swiss banks were sued for appropriating money deposited in Jewish accounts before and during the war. The suits were filed in American courts, and the main part of the judicial and political process set in motion took place in the USA. The case featured prominently in American media, a report on the actions of Swiss banks during the war was published by the US government in 1997, and the Swiss bank guard Christoph Meili, who had exposed an attempt by his employer to destroy records pertinent to the case, was granted a residence permit in the USA. Senate hearings were held on the Swiss banks. Furthermore, economic sanctions were introduced or threatened on a state and local level, independently of the federal government. A campaign in American mass media and threats of local sanctions put pressure on German companies during a lawsuit concerning compensation to Jews for slave labour during the war. American political pressure was exerted on French banks to negotiate compensation settlements. In the French

<sup>76</sup> Ivan Kamenec, »Reflections of the Holocaust in Slovak Society and Literature«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Holocaust Heritage: Inquiries into European Historical Cultures*, Sekel: Malmö 2004, p. 164.

<sup>77</sup> Michael J. Bazylar, *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in America's Courts*, New York: New York University Press 2003, pp. xi-xiii. Stuart E. Eizenstat, *Imperfect Justice: Looted Assets, Slave Labor, and the Unfinished Business of World War II*, paperback edition, New York: Public Affairs 2004, pp. 4f and 108.

and German cases the American government also entered as a third party guaranteeing the settlements negotiated. The movement for compensation to survivors has had its base in the United States and has enjoyed strong political support there: Senator Alfonse D'Amato took the initiative in creating a Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States in 1998. Thousands of federal, state and local officials took part in the work on compensation issues. In 1998, California adopted a Holocaust Victim Insurance Act to take measures in cases regarding survivors who had missed life insurances and other insurances after their relatives. Former American Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger took the chair of the private International Commission on Holocaust-era Insurance Claims in 2001.<sup>78</sup>

American Undersecretary of State Stuart Eizenstadt was also an important supporter of the compensation movement. In 1998, the American government demanded that all governments seek to identify art looted in the Nazi era and return it to its rightful owners. An international conference on this matter was summoned in Washington.<sup>79</sup> Eizenstadt himself takes great pride in the US involvement: »The United States was the only country that cared enough to take an interest at this late date and had the influence to make a difference«. <sup>80</sup> He feels that the USA succeeded in compensating in some part for its refusal to accept Jewish fugitives before and during the war. America was also able to help countries such as Switzerland, Austria and France deal with their own past.<sup>81</sup> Albeit the moral responsibility of the USA is certainly not forgotten, he and others more often than not present America as the morally superior party; it is possible that a sense of moral righteousness has facilitated American involvement.

These highly profiled international litigations and negotiations have at least to some degree contributed to a new prominence of the

78 Bazylar, pp. 3, 17f, 21, 66-69, 73, 78, 125f, 132, 153, 182, 191f, 286 and 301. Eizenstat, pp. 144 and 160f.

79 William Z. Slany, »The State Department, Nazi Gold, and the Search for Holocaust Assets«, in Michael Bazylar and Roger P. Alford (eds.), *Holocaust Restitution: Perspectives on the Litigation and Its Legacy*, New York: New York University Press 2006, pp. 30-32. Howard N. Spiegler, »Portrait of Wally: The U.S. Government's Role in Recovering Holocaust Looted Art«, in Michael Bazylar and Roger P. Alford (eds.), *Holocaust Restitution: Perspectives on the Litigation and Its Legacy*, New York: New York University Press 2006, pp. 284 and 286. Philip T. Reeker, »U.S. Welcomes Holocaust Insurance Agreement September 19, 2002«, <http://germany.usembassy.gov/germany/img/assets/8497/wf091902.pdf>, retrieved 22/1 2011. Eizenstat, pp. 190-198.

80 Eizenstat, p. 4.

81 Eizenstat, pp. 59f, 193f, 260, 277, 282, 315, 319, 328, 340, 344 and 346.



Holocaust in many countries. The cases have sparked debates on the actions of the country and its industry in the wartime in places like Sweden. They may have led to former conceptions of guilt or innocence in the war being questioned and promoted a new view of the responsibility of »the bystanders«.

Another influence on Holocaust consciousness springs from American popular culture in Europe. The TV series *Holocaust* had a certified impact on West Germany when it was broadcast there in early 1979, bringing the Holocaust to the fore of public debate. This debate lived on in the 1980s, fuelled by President Reagan's sharply criticised visit to the Bitburg war cemetery in 1985 and the German *Historikerstreit* in the late 1980's. *Holocaust* provoked responses such as Edgar Reiz's television series *Heimat* (1984) and *Die zweite Heimat* (1992), where an effort was made to modify the image of the Germans given in American productions. *Schindler's List* was also a major success in Germany.<sup>82</sup>

American television programmes, films and books seem to play a central role for the Germans as mediators of motifs, moral lessons and themes in this field. Mitchell Ash speculates that a dearth of domestic moral authorities in working out a relationship with the past have induced the Germans to turn to American Jews for Holocaust education.<sup>83</sup> Evidently, there is a susceptibility to American viewpoints in Germany. It is possible that the guilt and the silence that long surrounded the Holocaust have impaired Germany's confidence in its own ability to deal with its past. The USA, on the other hand, can emerge as a moral authority by virtue of its innocence of the Holocaust and its being the home of many Jewish debaters. Thus, the sense of an American moral superiority in this matter may not be found exclusively on the American side.

*Holocaust* was shown not only in West Germany but all over Western Europe in 1978-79 and was everywhere an important mediator of knowledge of the Holocaust, as well as of the very term »Holocaust« itself. Polls in West Germany, Austria, Denmark and Sweden showed that between half and two thirds of the populations watched the series

82 Avisar, pp. 44-47 and 56. Michael L. Morgan, »To Seize Memory: History and Identity in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought«, in Alvin H. Rosenfeld (ed.), *Thinking about the Holocaust after Half a Century*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1997, p. 154. Pär Frohnert, »The Presence of the Holocaust: *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in West Germany, East Germany and Austria«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, p. 101.

83 Ash, p. 408.

and that most viewers reacted favourably to it. In several countries the broadcasting of the series was both preceded and superseded by lively debates. In Sweden critics called it a superficial commercial product. Danish television at first declined to purchase the series but reconsidered after a heated debate. In general, critics held that the Holocaust was being trivialised by being portrayed in a soap opera and that art is incompatible with commercial interests. In many respects the debates resembled the debate on the series in America. But in Europe critics also pointed out that the series was American. It was understood that American popular culture as such was superficial, and consequently worthless. This theme has recurred in the criticism of *Schindler's List* and other popular American representations of the Holocaust as well.<sup>84</sup>

In this manner, anti-American attitudes come into play. Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism can sometimes unite; historically, references to Jewish dominance of the American film industry have not been wanting. In our day, too, the USA and Israel are sometimes a common target of a criticism that may bear anti-Semitic traits.<sup>85</sup> Finkelstein and his supporters have been accused of exploiting classical anti-Semitic arguments. But the vast majority of those criticising American Holocaust representations probably do not belong to this camp. To them the heart of the matter is a suspicion that the commercial mass media commonly associated with America are incapable of doing justice to a sensitive topic like the Holocaust.

An example of the impact American products like *Schindler's List* have had on Europe is a statement by the former Swiss bank guard Christoph Meili, mentioned above, who handed over sensitive bank documents due for destruction to a Jewish organisation and then fled to the United States. In a Congress hearing in May, 1997, he declared that his decision to take the documents was made after having seen this film.<sup>86</sup>

84 Ulf Zander, »Holocaust at the Limits: Historical Culture and the Nazi Genocide in the Television Era«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, pp. 256, 258f and 277-281.

85 Mats Björkin, *Amerikanism, bolsjevism och korta kjolar. Filmen och dess publik i Sverige under 1920-talet*, Stockholm: Aura 1998, p. 122. Günter Bischof, »Two Sides of the Coin: The Americanization of Austria and Austrian Anti-Americanism«, in Alexander Stephan (ed.), *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945*, New York: Berghahn Books 2006, pp. 169f.

86 Daniel Kurtzman, »Former Swiss bank guard is closer to getting asylum«, 1997, <http://www.jweekly.com/article/full/6167/former-swiss-bank-guard-is-closer-to-getting>

American Holocaust memory has carried weight in Eastern Europe as well. In Ukraine Holocaust memory competes, as it were, with the memory of the great famine of 1932-33, the »Holodomor«. But these collective memories have not been constructed independently of each other. When the Ukrainian diaspora in North America first tried in the 1980s to attract attention to the Ukrainian disaster, they drew close parallels to the Holocaust, knowing that the Holocaust was already well-known to the American public - a political-pedagogical use of history.<sup>87</sup> In the Czech Republic, the première of *Schindler's List* in 1994 sparked a debate, on account of Oskar Schindler's Sudeten German roots, on the Czech relationship with its World War II history and with its own identity.<sup>88</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Not having done thorough empirical research on American influences in different European countries, I shall limit myself to a few general remarks. It is clear that American cultural products have had an impact on European Holocaust consciousness. Historian Tony Judt poses the rhetorical question whether for example the German debate of the 1980s was due solely to the showing of *Holocaust* on German television.<sup>89</sup> This is of course hardly the case. Nevertheless, from the studies that have been made it can be concluded that American products, *Holocaust* and *Schindler's List* in particular, triggered discussions in many countries on the Holocaust and the Second World War. The wide distribution of American film and television means that topics addressed by these media will have some effect on European minds. But debates would scarcely have reached the scope they did unless Europeans felt that the topic was relevant to them. In the cases of Italy and especially Germany, where this topic is particularly sensitive, some prompting from outside may have been required. But other countries, too, have been stimulated to reflect on their history.

asylum/, retrieved 22/1 2011.

87 Johan Öhman (Dietsch), »From Famine to Forgotten Holocaust: The 1932-1933 Famine in Ukrainian Historical Cultures«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *Echoes of the Holocaust: Historical Cultures in Contemporary Europe*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2003, pp. 229-235. Johan Dietsch, *Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture*, Lund: Lund University, Department of History 2006.

88 Tomas Sniegón, »*Schindler's List* Comes to Schindler's Homeland: Oskar Schindler as a Problem of Czech Historical Culture«, in Klas-Göran Karlsson and Ulf Zander (eds.), *The Holocaust – Post-War Battlefields: Genocide as Historical Culture*, Sekel: Malmö 2006, pp. 161f, 167-169, 174f and 187.

89 Judt, p. 39.

American television and film bring out the Holocaust as a pivotal event in modern history. This is likely to have impressed European audiences and contributed to the standing of the Holocaust here. The images of both victims and perpetrators that are familiar to many Europeans are probably strongly affected by those usually given in American films and TV programmes: assimilated Jews, particularly German Jews, as victims and Germans, rather than, say, Poles or Ukrainians, as perpetrators. Notions and motifs promoted in the USA have become powerful in Europe as well, for example the focus on the Nazi persecution of the Jews rather than of a multiplicity of groups.

When explaining the success of American film in Europe, a factor sometimes considered is the need of catering to a heterogeneous American public. Themes and devices adapting it to a multi-cultural audience at home would then have made American film successful in multi-national Europe too. A number of »American« traits are likely to be found in an international audience as well, even though the degree may vary. Americans may hold a more optimistic view of human nature than do Europeans, but this does not necessarily mean that many Europeans are willing to submit themselves to great traumas on film either. Happy or hopeful endings may well be nearly as congenial to a European audience struggling to take in a ghastly event like the Holocaust. The American approach to illustrate history through individuals and families rather than through larger social categories probably holds a universal appeal. In the same way as the universalisation of Holocaust memory, the striving to apply its lessons to contemporary phenomena, has been important in the USA, it has likely facilitated its rise to prominence in Europe as well. American Holocaust representations have their greatest impact in their most universal form.

This is not to say that Europe has taken over an American image of the Holocaust in an unaltered form. There is good reason to separate the European reception from the American in accordance with the third model of Americanisation outlined above. As has been stated, Germans have offered some resistance to the image of themselves delivered to them by the Americans. The treatment of for instance Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* has also varied between European countries depending on political and cultural conditions.

There are several examples of American impulses being transformed in European national settings. *Schindler's List* brought up the memory of Oskar Schindler in the Czech Republic, but the debate there came to focus on the Sudeten Germans and Czech identity, a subject not even

touched upon in the film. Domestic film-makers in different countries have treated the Holocaust from a more European or, rather, more national perspective. Aspects of American Holocaust memory that are more narrowly relevant to America have not caught on in Europe, and nor have Europeans always derived the same lessons as the Americans from the Holocaust when dealing with international conflicts, e.g. in Iraq. In the same manner as, according to Alan Steinweis, popular culture influences Americans to adopt similar ways of thinking, whilst at the same time their group identities and ideological beliefs point them in different directions, American popular culture provides Europeans with a common frame of reference at the same time as their different national contexts guide their interpretations and uses of the Holocaust in different directions. Perhaps there is more truth than one would expect at first glance to the assertion that American culture is the only culture that Europeans have in common.

The »progressive« narrative which poses the United States and American values as the antithesis of the Holocaust and Nazism is not adopted in any straightforward manner by the Europeans, who cannot externalise the event in the same way as the Americans. In Europe, the Holocaust serves to a higher degree as a warning against racist or aggressively nationalist tendencies in society. But as was explicated in the beginning of this article, it can also be used as a confirmation of the good values of which the European Union considers itself to be the mediator. In this case Holocaust memory is used to keep the EU and its member states on the »right« path.

Nor do the influences always move in just one direction. Sometimes impulses are mediated from Europe to America. The featuring of *Holocaust* in other countries caused a rekindling of the American debate on the series in 1979, and the attention paid to Norman Finkelstein in Europe gave him more attention in the United States than before.

Often, American influence has perhaps rather served as the spark that ignites the fire. Once set, the fire has continued burning, out of American control. This may be a kind of »glocalisation« of Holocaust memory. Different countries and societies have their own identities and needs, leading to different treatments of Holocaust memory. European debates on the Holocaust have not been directed from America, but their points of departure have often been given by American products and messages. More than anything else, this confirms the assertion above that popular culture might not determine how people think but is of great importance to what they think about.