

# Exhibition of the "Past" and Historical Recognition in the Unified Germany -- Concerning the Holocaust --

SHOJI Jun'ichiro

## Introduction

Today, in the post-Cold-War age, and 50 years since the end of WWII, the issue of the "historical recognition" of WWII is the focus of attention worldwide. While the "reappraisal of history" proceeds, heated arguments are developing on the facts and interpretation at the same time. In Japan, it is symbolically indicated in the textbook dispute concerning the description of the so-called "comfort women" and successive establishments of "Peace Museums".

In Germany, another nation defeated in WWII, heated arguments have continued since unification concerning the exhibition of the "Past," of the Holocaust, in particular, and the exhibits are being changed accordingly.

At the Kosovo conflict, Germany dispatched active forces to outside the NATO region for the first time since WWII, attracting attentions of the world to its conversion from the refraining stance at the Gulf War that had invited similar criticisms as those given to Japan. The reason, namely the changes in the historical recognition that have been progressing since the unification, is overlooked, but cannot be ignored.

A number of studies have been conducted on the historical recognition of Germany, especially on the "Confronting the Past", and the opinions vary<sup>1</sup>, but it cannot be denied that those studies themselves contain problems. First, they are targeted only to the movement in the former West Germany. What was the historical recognition in the former East Germany? In the Eastern Europe and Russia, democratization after the end of the Cold War and collapse of socialistic regimes and the consequent "reappraisal of history" are progressing, and the former East Germany is no exception.

Second, they have only argued about the crimes committed by the Nazis. Germany has consistently insisted that the blame lay in the Nazis, not in the ordinary German

---

<sup>1</sup> For the history of studies on the "Mastering the Past" in Germany, see Takeo Sato, "Doitsu no kako no kokufuku (Mastering the Past in Germany)," *Kikan • Senso Sekinin Kenkyu (War Responsibility Studies Quarterly)*, No. 6, December 1994, pp. 56-58.

people, and taken the stance of the "negative view of collective crimes"<sup>2</sup>, but is the problem as simple as that? Heated arguments have recently started on the involvement in the Holocaust of the German Army, which had been honored as the symbol of some good, "innocent" existence in Germany during the Nazis period as evidenced by their attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler, as well as on the possibilities of positive involvement of ordinary Germans in the crimes and on its cause namely the national characteristics of Germans.

Third, there have been subtle changes in the "Confronting the Past" concerning the Holocaust since the unification in the former West Germany, which is said to have been consistently taking sincere atonement measures since the end of WWII.

This paper shall discuss the above points with the subjects of the War (Peace) Museums, memorial halls, traveling exhibition and monuments.

## 1 War (Peace) Museums and memorial halls in former East Germany

In the former West Germany, there were memorial halls, monuments and other memorial places (Gedenkstätten) devoted to the victims of the Nazism nationwide, and a guidebook that lists the related facilities has over 800 pages.<sup>3</sup> In former East Germany, such facilities of course existed but the contents and intentions were considerably different from those in the West Germany<sup>4</sup>, and therefore they have been forced to reform them after the unification.

### (1) Characteristics of the East German days

After WWII, memorial monuments were built for the victims of the Nazism at the sites of the concentration camps and prisons even in the areas occupied by the Soviet Union, but the objectives were a warning from pure heart never to allow fascism, while paying tribute to the honorable deaths of the victims. Inscribed on the monument in the plaza in front of Adlershof Station in Berlin, for instance, is "For the victims of Fascism (Den Odf)".

Such monuments have been built in excess since then, and the phenomenon was criticized as the "monument inflation". The criticism was aroused by the apprehension that it might give the people the impression that they had completed the duty since they had paid sufficient respect to the victims (self-satisfaction).

The East German Government held negative opinions about treating all victims equally

---

<sup>2</sup> For details on the "denial of collective crimes", see Masamori Sase, "Doitsu ni-okeru Senso Sekinin · Sengo Shori (War Responsibility and Post-War Processing: Its Difficulty to Understand)," *Kokusai Koryu (International Exchange)*, No. 68, July 1995, pp. 70-79.

<sup>3</sup> Ulrike Puvogel/Martin Stankowski (Hrsg.), *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus - Eine Dokumentation I* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> For the difference, see Jürgen Danyel (Hrsg.), *Die geteilte Vergangenheit: Zum Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995).

after national foundation because they deemed that the exhibits lack the insight into the economic, social ground of fascism and the recognition that only anti-fascists had made it possible to create the ultimate national foundation. Kurt Grossman, who left East Germany to the United States later, had lamented at such an attitude that, "it is sentimentalism to pay tribute to the dead only when their deaths were significant in strengthening the control of the Kremlin. The interest of the Communists does not lie in historical studies, but in warping the history."

In the 1950s, the management of the memorial sites was up-ranked to the (dictator) Politburo of Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), and all memorial sites were placed under direct control of the Government.<sup>5</sup> The management committee was established in 1955, and it was decided to build national memorial facilities with the emphasis on three concentration camps in Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück. They decided the target that it is a national mission not to allow the youths to forget fascism by exhibiting the evidences of regrettable deeds in the past, and demanded the three agencies to maintain integrity based on the fundamental principles on exhibits as given below.

- 1) Criticism on the fascistic tendency of West Germany, especially on large enterprises: They returned to and is dominating the economic sphere after the War even though they had forced cruel labor on the prisoners in the concentration camps during the War.
- 2) Record of persecution in the concentration camps and resistance movements, with a special focus on the victims of the Communist Party of Germany.
- 3) Lesson learned from history: To lead the victory over fascism to construction of a socialist state of East Germany.

At the Congress session in 1958, the Government announced to take an active hand in history as the "tool for the campaign of the Party" and decided to focus on the labor movement in education and studies. It was defined as an urgent issue to give socialistic outlook on the world to the young generation.<sup>6</sup>

There were straitened circumstances in East Germany behind this decision. There was exodus of 150,000 to 200,000 people a year that led to construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, economic failure and instability, as well as diplomatic isolation seen in the failure to acquire recognition as a sovereign while the West Germany led by the Social Democratic Party was admitted to NATO.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> For the process up to foundation of East Germany, see Olaf Gröhler "Policy on Monuments in Soviet Occupied Areas and East Germany, and the Tackling of the "Crystal Night", " Werner Bergmann and Reiner Erb ,eds, *Funo Isan tono Torikumui* (Original title : *Schwieriges Erbe*) trans. Kohei Okada, Sangensha, 1999, pp. 299-303.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Sonnet, "Gedenkstätten für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in der DDR," *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus - Eine Dokumentation*, Ulrike Puvoge. (Hrsg.) (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1987), pp. 769 - 773.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (London, Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 181.

Thus the Government decided to implant patriotism for the foundation of a socialist state German Democratic Republic together with a strong ideology, and attack West Germany with the propaganda that it was an heir of the Nazis. It was the "anti-fascism" ideology of East Germany rooted in the Past that had formed the basis for those movements.

Interpretation of the Past focused on the Nazis by the Socialist Unity Party had derived from the definition at the 7th World Convention of Comintern. It was defined that the capitalist class led by the financial capitals of Germany facing the threat of a proletarian revolution had generated patriotic, racially discriminating fascism to suppress the laborers and started a war, but they were defeated by the counteroffensive of the Soviet Union and the resistance by the Communist Party of Germany. It was also decided that although fascism had revived in West Germany and the capitalist states were engaged in the Cold War, East Germany must learn the lessons from the past and fight for the ideal of foundation of "the Other Better Germany", namely a socialist state.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, East Germany refused to confront history with sincerity, but utilized it in simple justification of the Socialist Unity Party.

There are various examples of such political appropriation of history other than the Nazis' in the modern history. One example is the German Farmers' War led by Thomas Münzer in the 16th century. The Farmers' War Memorial Hall in Mühlhausen remodeled in 1975 was constructed with the interpretation that it was a war of the laborer class against the capitalists, and it exhibited the symbols of the Communist flag, a hammer and sickle.

In 1961, they enacted the following "rules on memorial halls" with the objective to define a more moralistic concept and make the people thoroughly aware of it.

- 1) Visual representation of laborers' struggle against the threat of fascism
- 2) Communist Party of Germany as the leader for anti-fascism
- 3) Visual representation of terrorism and other inhuman deeds by the Schutzstaffel (SS) and Gestapo
- 4) Fight against the Nazis by Soviet prisoners of war
- 5) West Germany where fascism and militarism have revived.

The emphasis was unification of memorial halls dedicated to the above principles.<sup>9</sup> A memorial hall was completed in Buchenwald in 1958. Chancellor Otto Grotewohl, who was responsible for the construction, stated as follows at the opening ceremony.

"Militaristic, fascistic West Germany has not rooted out the remnants of the Nazis, and is armed with nuclear weapons and threatening the peace loving people of Europe under the

---

<sup>8</sup> Kozo Hayashi, "Doitsu ni okeru Kako no Kokufuku (Mastering the Past in Germany)," *Senso to Heiwa (War and Peace)*, No. 3, 1994, pp.17-18.

<sup>9</sup> Sonnet, Gedenkstätten für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in der DDR, pp. 770 - 771.

name of the Cold War. East Germany has the heritage of anti-fascism resistance, and must bravely confront the rearmament and threat of West Germany."

In other words, the word "fascism" was not used for the past with the Nazis but for West Germany, and mastering the Past with the Nazis was converted to support of the diplomatic policies of the Soviet Union. Through the reform of foundation of a socialist state, East Germany generalized the Nazism as the "fascism", not its own history, and accused the continuity of Nazism in West Germany by utilizing it in the propaganda during the Cold War.

Secretary General Walter Ulbricht lauded the past fighters and announced succession of the heritage at the opening ceremony of the Sachsenhausen Memorial Hall in April 1961, 4 months before he himself ordered construction of the Berlin Wall, and made a speech as follows.<sup>10</sup>

"No tortures nor fears can crush the fighters' spirit. The history of resistance in the inhuman environment of Sachsenhausen is a painful and yet glorious chapter of the heroic history of anti-fascism by the Communist Party...In West Germany, generals of Hitler have acquired nuclear weapons and are proceeding with rearmament. We must pursue the will of the comrades and friends who were killed here, and complete their work for freedom, democracy and peace for humanity."

Thomas Mann had already stated as follows in a noted speech titled "Germany and the Germans" made in the United States in May, immediately after the defeat in WWII.

"There were not two Germanys, Bad Germany and Good Germany. There was only one Germany, and its best had turned to evil by the scheme of the Devil. Therefore, it is impossible to state that, ' I am a good, noble, honest and innocent German, I will leave it to you to annihilate bad Germany ' ."<sup>11</sup>

East Germany, however, did exactly that. The example of East Germany is an explicit indication of how the burden of the past in the national level had been replaced with a universal theory such as liberation of the world by a totalitarian concept of "anti-fascism".

The speech by Ulbricht clearly indicated that the entire East Germany was indemnified and the existence and responsibilities of many Germans who had supported Hitler vanished in smoke with the name of sacrificing struggle of anti-fascism, and it was indispensable to use the memories of the past victims in justification of the current East German policies. Therefore, victims who do not serve the current political purposes were ignored. Neither speech mentioned the greatest victims, the Jews. This is because massacres of the Jews in the Holocaust had been caused simply by their being the Jews, not by martyrdom from their political activities or beliefs.

---

<sup>10</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, pp. 175 - 181. Guter Morsch (Hrsg.), *Von der Erinnerung zum Monument: Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Nationalen Mahn - und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen* (Oranienburg: Edition Hentrich, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Mann, *Koenshu Doitsu to Doitsuujin* (Original title : *Sorge um Deutschland Sechs Essays*) trans. Junzo Aoki, Iwanami Shoten, 1990, p.36.

On the other hand, the highest status was awarded to the resistance movement of the Communists, and its symbol was Ernst Thälman, leader of the Communist Party who had been executed by shooting at Buchenwald. There is a memorial altar dedicated to him. Resistance movements tend to be "mystified" and overestimated, as seen also in Japan. On the other hand, the attempted assassination of Hitler by the German Army was denied as a "reactionary uprising intended to maintain the power of the German imperialism by joining the imperialistic West and anti-Soviet Union alliance."

Also ignored were the many political prisoners who had been detained and killed by the Soviet Union after the war. The concept of "anti-fascism" was the means for domestic administration with the suppressing function against resistance and complaint within the country.

It is the newly built stone statues everywhere around the memorial sites that express the struggles in the resistance movements and deaths for victory. The huge statues of communists, laborers and farmers standing in unity were built to appeal political messages, which are also common sights in China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

It was the dead soldiers of the Soviet Army (Red Army) who were given the first class heroic position, although they were also foreigners as most of the Jews were. Tribute to the Soviet victims of the war and monuments to praise the victory of the Soviet Army are common sight in the Eastern Europe (there are some in Vienna, Austria, and they are intended to emphasize that Austria was a victim of the Nazis), and they are especially apparent in East Germany.<sup>12</sup> This was because it was necessary to exaggerate the role of the Soviet Army which had defeated the Nazis on May 8, 1945 in order to cover up the taboo of alliance between the Soviet Union and the West during the war as well as to justify the Marxism theory.<sup>13</sup>

The typical examples in Berlin are the Karlshorst Liberation Museum where the unconditional surrender was signed, and the Soviet Army Victory Monument in Treptow. The former exhibited portraits of Stalin and Lenin, tanks and other weapons to praise the heroic fighting of the Soviet Army that won the Great patriotic war. The exhibits were reviewed after unification. The praising features were removed, and the entire museum was reformed to offer comprehensive understanding with the theme of "surrender".<sup>14</sup> The latter is a huge stone statue of a Soviet soldier holding a child and trampling the hakenkreuz. The epitaph read, "The Soviet people saved the European civilization from the invasion of the fascists by self-sacrificing struggles. This is the most distinguished deed of the Soviet Union to the history of mankind."

---

<sup>12</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 213 - 214.

<sup>13</sup> Herf, *Divided Memory*, p. 382.

<sup>14</sup> Stefanie Endlich/Thomas Lutz, *Gedenken und Lernen an Historischen Orten* (Berlin: Edition Heinrich, 1995), pp. 57 - 59.

When Erich Honecker succeeded to Ulbricht and assumed the position of Secretary General in the 1970s, it became the most important issue to teach the development of the socialism in the global viewpoint to the laborers and youths at the memorial halls as well. As a result, the narrow-minded, dogmatic color in the Ulbricht era was thinned, and the number of memorial facilities increased partially due to the relaxing of the approval standard, but the change was not essential. The existence of the memorial halls that had been "ritualized" and as a result "reduced to mere skeleton" never changed until the collapse of the Berlin Wall.<sup>15</sup>

## (2) Changes since unification

After the collapse of the socialist government, drastic reviews have been in progress from the citizen's level of renaming the Marx Street, Sorge Street and other streets to the university curricula and professors (90% of the cultural sociology instructors were dismissed) along with the review on the Katyn Forest massacre (massacre of the Polish officers by the Soviet Union during the war. It had been internationally campaigned as the deed of the Nazis) in the former East Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Such trend naturally has reached the memorial facilities of former East Germany in the condition described earlier.<sup>17</sup> First, as the instructors at universities were dismissed, there were fundamental changes in the personnel including the directors. They had been assigned by the Socialist Unity Party before, but now they are former West Germans by public subscription (most of them are history teachers).

Second, the exhibits were replaced. The political intentions had been obvious, as evidenced by the protest by young men from West Germany who visited the memorial sites of the former East Germany immediately after unification that "it was not just the Communist Party members who were persecuted by and resisted the Nazis." After unification, some of the memorial halls, cenotaphs, stone monuments, carvings and memorial streets were removed, and innovated. The remaining ones are also urged to review the contents. Although they have formed review commissions and are discussing the new concept, there are various opinions and they have not yet reached conclusion, which is likely to take several more years.

---

<sup>15</sup> Gröhler, Policy on Monuments in Soviet Occupied Areas and East Germany, and the Tackling of the "Crystal Night," pp. 305-306, Sonnet, Gedenkstätten für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus in der DDR, pp. 774 - 775.

<sup>16</sup> For "Review on History" in various fields in East Germany, see Jun Yamana, "Berlin Humboldt Daigaku no Seisan," Eiichi Kido, ed. *Berlin Kako · Genzai · Mirai* (Sanichi Shobo, 1998), Tsutomu Kitani, "German Reunification and History in the former GDR: Dissolution and Reconstruction of the History Department at Humboldt University, Berlin," *OIU Journal of International Studies* (Osaka International University), Vol. 9, No. 1 (February, 1999), Eiichi Kido, "History of Berlin through Street Names," Kido, ed. *Berlin, Kako · Genzai · Mirai*, etc.

<sup>17</sup> For the detailed outline of changes in the exhibits, see Kunio Adachi, *Doitsu : Kizutsuita Fukei (Germany : Injured Scenery)* Kodansha, 1992, pp. 275-180.

At any rate, there is a consensus that the political dramatization should be removed and part of the existing exhibits should be respected as a general rule. It is a fact that they are reforming into historical museums from the site of propaganda of the Socialist Unity Party. It would be simple to dedicate only to political interpretation as performed in the former East Germany, but today the focus is not a mere historical interpretation issue but what kind of exhibits would be most appropriate in view of passing the messages to the future, which makes the matter more complicated.<sup>18</sup> Heated arguments exist in Japan concerning the Peace Museum, which is also another example that this type of exhibits is difficult.

The third issue is addition of new exhibits, relevant to the second issue.<sup>19</sup> The older exhibits ended with the panel that showed the "Red Army" entering the concentration camp with red flags in hot welcome (in reality, however, the concentration camps in East Germany were liberated by the US troops and delivered up to the Soviet Army after an accord).

After unification, however, the history of the political prisoners' concentration camps after the war has gradually begun to be exhibited. In Sachsenhausen, for instance, there is a signboard at the entrance to the exhibit hall for the post-war history that reads "The end of the communist control and unification of peaceful and free homeland have made it possible to recall those who dedicated themselves to the resistance movements against the Soviet occupation force and unlawful state, German Democratic Republic since 1945." It also has a remark, however, that says "We must know about the massacres by the Nazis in order to understand the innocent people who were killed even after 1945. This is because the victims were killed as a result of the invasion to the Soviet people." It is certainly the description with due consideration to the "historians dispute" made heatedly on the "relative concept" of the Nazis' crimes, especially with Stalin, in the mid 80s.

The political system of East Germany in the post-war period is beginning to be liquidated as "Stalinism" at the same time. Its symbol is the secret police Stasi Memorial Hall in Berlin. This Hall reserves the site of the headquarters as it was, and exhibits tortures, wiretapping and

---

<sup>18</sup> Puvogel/Stankowski, *Gedenkstätten für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus - Eine Dokumentation I*, pp. 9 - 10, Günter Morsch, "Sachsenhausen - auf dem Weg zur Neugestaltung und Neukonzeption der Gedenkstätte," *Gedenkstätten im vereinten Deutschland*, Jürgen Dittberner/Antje Meer (Hrsg.) (Oranienburg: Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, 1994), pp. 46-60, Rikola-Günter Lüttgenau, "Eine Schwebende Gedenkstätten? Die Gedenkstätten Buchewald im Wandel," *Reaktionäre Modernität und Völkermord. Problem des Umgangs mit der NS-Zeit in Museen, Ausstellungen und Gedenkstätten*, Bernd Faulenbach/Franz-Josef Jelich (Hrsg.) (Essen: Kalrtext, 1994), pp. 113-129.

<sup>19</sup> Many of the concentration camps of the Nazis were transformed to political prisoners' camps under direct control of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the Soviet Union. The prisoners included those regarded as enemies of the Stalinism, presidents, ranch owners, church leaders, police officers and other "dangerous elements", and later adolescents suspected of sabotage to the Soviet Army, none of whom received legal judicial proceedings. The concentration camps continued to exist from the end of the war to 1950. A total of 160,000 Germans were held prisoners, among whom 65,000 died and 36,000 were detained in the Soviet Union.

other activities of the Stasi.<sup>20</sup>

The "Confronting the Past" in Germany has entered a new phase after unification. It is the rediscovery of the Germans as "victims". They include the victims in the political prisoners' concentration camps, persecuted German refugees from the East at the final period of the war, German POWs in the eastern front most of whom were killed under cruel treatment, and German women who fell victims to the Soviet soldiers' assaults. It had been a taboo and impossible to publicize and investigate those cases and criticize the Soviet Union for East Germany because of its alliance, and for West Germany because it was Germany that had started the war and killed a large number of Soviets, both officials and civilians in the Soviet Union territory. The recent investigation revealed the discovery of remains of German soldiers, and that 2 million German women had been assaulted.<sup>21</sup>

## 2 Traveling exhibition "Involvement of the German Army in Holocaust"

### (1) Traditional recognition of the German Army

In Germany immediately after the defeat in the war, the image of the German Army was not so poor partly because the Nuremberg Trial did not condemn and convict it as the "criminal organization" as the SS although the war crimes committed by the German Army were recognized.

When the Cold War began, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer rebuilt it as the Federal Forces of West Germany, and the "myth" of the "glorious German Army" was established out of necessity in joining NATO. Among the general public, the image created by Adenauer strengthened through the memoirs of Manstein and other high rank officers, publishing of war stories that described heroic sacrificing battles and releasing of war movies.<sup>22</sup>

Some years later, those involved in the attempted assassination of Hitler developed a campaign to recall the incident. After the decision of the Berlin Congress, the "German Resistance Movement Memorial Hall" opened in 1989. This event added the "glorious German Army" with the "good and innocent existence" during the Nazi period.

---

<sup>20</sup> For the review on the exhibits including the change in the number of the victims at Auschwitz Concentration Camp (which was the largest annihilation center of the Jews in Europe) in Poland within the former socialist bloc, see Jun'ichiro Shoji, "Kokuritsu Auschwitz Hakubutsukan (National Auschwitz Museum)," *Gunji Shigaku (The Journal of Military History)*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (March 1995). For comparative studies on similar facilities, see James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> For critical studies on the "review of history" in Germany, see Minika Zorn (Hrsg.), *Hitlers zweimal getötete Opfer: Westdeutsche Endlösung des Antifaschismus auf dem Gebiet der DDR* (Freiburg: AHRIMAN-Verlag, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Omer Bartov, "German soldiers and the Holocaust: historiography, research, and implications," *The Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*, Omer Bartov, eds. (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 164-166.

The memorial hall was built at the site of the former General Headquarters of Army in Berlin, the place of duty for the mastermind Colonel Stauffenberg. Unlike in East Germany, it comprehensively exhibits the resistance movements of all classes, including the churches, laborers and communists in addition to the soldiers, and is a place to pay tribute to the victims. It, however, placed overwhelmingly large emphasis on the attempted assassination of Hitler by the officers, and it even outshined the Scholl brother and sister who were noted for the "White Rose Movement". The public poll also indicated that 81% highly estimate them as patriots (14%: traitors).<sup>23</sup>

In the academia, the studies on Nazism up to the 60s mainly concerned the theories as the "totalitarianism", rather than the pursuit of the facts, partially due to the emerging social history, and therefore they paid little attention to the military affairs. Few "pure military historians" were committed to the studies on the "professional military" with focuses on the tactics, strategies, abilities to command and logistics particularly in the western front relying on the memoirs of the German officers, instead of studying the ideology and crimes.

In the 70s, the elucidation of the "ideological military" started to study the involvement in the crimes of Nazis. It included the discovery that the involvement of the German Army at the annihilation in the battles against the Soviet Union and other battles in the eastern front was an indication that they were tools of the Nazis in implementing their policies because the entire German Army, from the high rank officers who were devoted to the Nazis to the common soldiers who had gone thorough ideological education, was influenced by the Nazis ideology.

The above studies did not cover the role of the German Army in the Holocaust, but the recent studies have proven that they had participated in the Holocaust in a grand scale.<sup>24</sup> There remain some unresolved parts in the mechanism, and arguments are divided into whether they had formed a pure, systematic crime group ("genocidal military") concerning the massacres of the Jews or not.

## (2) Content of traveling exhibition and the process

Despite the studies on the involvement of the German Army in the cruel deeds, the "myth" of the German Army among the general public of Germany was unchanged, and the gap had never narrowed. The "Myth of the German Army", however, was confronted with a great challenge 50 years after the war.

It was triggered by the traveling exhibition titled "Annihilation: Crimes of the German

---

<sup>23</sup> *Der Spiegel*, 10.4.1989.

<sup>24</sup> For changes of the studies on the German Army after the war, see Bartov, *The Holocaust*, pp. 162-184.

Army 1941 - 1944" started by the civilian Hamburg Institute of Social Studies in March 1995.<sup>25</sup> This traveling exhibition was planned as part of the project to recollect the history of violence in the 20th century commemorating 50 years since the end of the war and 5 years remaining in the century. The objective was to prove the systematic, active involvement of the German Army in the annihilation and Holocaust. The structure (subjects) was, 1) mopping-up of the partisans and massacre of the civilians in the Balkan Peninsula, 2) tactic operations and occupation administration in the Ukraine region by the 6th Regiment under the control of the Southern Army Group who were engaged in the conquest of Stalingrad, and 3) tactic operations and occupation administration of the Central Army in Belarus.<sup>26</sup>

The exhibits included over 800 photographs, and official documents, military post and soldiers' letters of the German Army collected from all over the world, some disclosed for the first time. Particularly shocking were the photographs of executions of a large number of partisans, corpses lying in heaps on the battleground, and the German soldiers who were cheerfully engaged in the cruel deeds.

It caused a grand repercussion because although the end of the "Myth of the German Army" had been a well-known fact in the academia as described earlier, the general public had not been aware of it. Although systematic genocide of the Jews by gas and other means at the exterminating concentration camps was widely known as symbolized with the TV program "Holocaust" that created a sensation in the 70s and the recent Spielberg's film "Schindler's List", other deeds such as massacres by executions by shooting and hanging, violence and other common means by the SS, secret police and the German Army had been overlooked and forgotten.<sup>27</sup>

This traveling exhibition attracted 860,000 visitors in 33 cities (Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Bremen, Vienna, etc.) by autumn of 1999, and became the most successful exhibition among those concerned with the modern history in recent years. It won an award from the International Human Rights Association in 1997. Its characteristic is the fact that among the young visitors, there were a large number of the elderly with military experience.<sup>28</sup>

The most remarkable point on this exhibition is the development of the arguments on the

---

<sup>25</sup> For the Japanese texts on the traveling exhibition, see Eiichi Kido, "Doitsu niokeru Kokubogun Ronso (German Army Arguments in Germany)," *Kikan · Senso Sekinin Kenkyu*, No. 18, December 1997, Jun Nakata, "Doitsu Kokubogun to Yudayajin Mondai" *Rekishu Hyoron (History Review)*, No. 581, September 1998, and Kimiko Murakami, Futatsu no Sengo, Futatsu no Jigyaku-Tokyo Saiban Shikan Hihan no Ugoki to Kokubogunten," *Doitsu Kenyu* (Deutschstudien) No. 25, February 1998.

<sup>26</sup> The official guidebook is, Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hrsg.), *Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944 - Ausstellungskatalog* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996). The catalog, however, is being modified and studied as the review on the exhibition continues now.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Philipp Reemtsma, "Afterward: On the Reception of the Exhibition in Germany and Austria," *The German Army and Genocide*, The Hamburg Institute for Social Research, eds. (New York: The New Press, 1999), p.211.

<sup>28</sup> For analysis on the visitors, see Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung (Hrsg.), *Besucher einer Ausstellung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998).

exhibition into political controversy from the cities to the national level.<sup>29</sup> This tendency strengthened at the exhibition in notably conservative Munich where the left- and right-wingers as well as the Neo-Nazis were heatedly confronted with one another, and peaked at the Federal Congress on March 13, 1997. It started with conventional arguments on the different opinions, but it gradually developed into an unusual disclosure of the true feelings accompanied with personal experiences.

The Federal Congress deliberated the involvement of the German Army and passed the bill proposed by the coalition government of the Christian Democratic Union, Christian Social Union and Liberal Democratic Party to "strongly oppose to one-sided, generalizing accusation of the soldiers of the German Army" by majority. On the other hand, they rejected the bill proposed by the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party which stated that "the German Army was involved in the crimes of the Nazis". As a result, it was decided that the exhibition scheduled in Bonn should not be held at the Hall of the Federal Congress.

On the other hand, Volker Rühle denied the "collective liabilities of the accused" with the ground that while removing the hero-worship and accusation and recognizing the existence of some of the German Army that were involved in crimes, it was not the tradition of the Federal Forces and thus the Federal Forces bore no liabilities.<sup>30</sup>

Former President Weizsäcker who has the experience of fighting in the eastern front throughout WWII said as follows.

"There can never be an uninjured, courteous and perfect German Army as a whole among the evil powers. However, I must add two remarks. One is that although there were certainly crimes committed by the German Army, the "criminal German Army" is a totally different issue and is wrong, which must be distinguished. Otherwise, judgment on the liabilities of the accused that should be personal would be given collectively. The other is that correct recognition of the exhibition can be made only when each individual is determined to directly look into the unbelievable events brought on by the war (under specific situations).<sup>31</sup>

Former Chancellor Schmidt with a similar experience criticized the exhibition as follows.

"We were finally able to join into the only courteous body in the Third Reich...We knew nothing about and never heard of the massacres of the Jews... Regarding 19 million soldiers as members of a criminal organization will only bring on two dangerous reactions. First, it might give wrong impression of the German history on the young people. Second, it might drive the general public to harshly resist to such exhibitions, which is more dangerous. This is because the nationalism has not died out... I agree to disclosure of the truth and judgment with

---

<sup>29</sup> For the summary of the repercussion of the traveling exhibition, see Hamburger Institut für Sozial-forschung (Hrsg.), *Eine Ausstellung und ihre Folgen* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999), Hans-Günter Thile (Hrsg.) *Die Wehrmachtausstellung: Dokumentationen einer Kontroverse* (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 1997), etc.

<sup>30</sup> Kido, Doitsu niokeru Kokubogun Ronso, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> Richard von Weizsäcker, *Weizäcker Kaisouroku* (Original title: *Vier Zeiten*) trans. Kiyohiko Nagai, Iwanami Shoten, 1998, p.55.

the moralistic view. But the original objective of the exhibition can never be achieved if you are to collectively slander the entire 19 million people or if you make their children believe their parents are guilty".<sup>32</sup>

The statements by both truly express the apprehensions on generalization of the crimes to the German Army and the consequent total collapse of the myth of the "innocent German Army."

### (3) Problems and reviews of the exhibition

The traveling exhibition triggered many arguments as described above. The following is the problems of the exhibition that became apparent in the criticisms.<sup>33</sup> The first criticism was on the credibility of the exhibited photographs, and many of the criticizing arguments were focused on this point. It was pointed out that they might be forged by the Soviet Union, the locations of shooting were unidentified, and the captions were inexact (photographs of the same site had different captions, for instance.)

Secondly, it was criticized that involvement by a very small part was generalized to the entire German Army, as obvious in the subtitle of the "Crimes by the German Army". When it is generalized, focusing on the crimes of the German Army would potentially propagate to the crimes of ordinary German citizens although they might have belonged to the German Army with no intentions for such. During WWII, some 20 million were in the service under the general military service duty system in the German Army. Therefore arguments on the German Army have public characteristics and would closely concern the "collective liabilities of the accused".

The third criticism is the argument that they were not war crimes but retaliation against the attacks by the partisans and legal actions in view of the "Wartime Laws" in the International Law.

The fourth criticism is the arguments that most of the exhibited scenes were the deeds of the SS and Gestapo, not the German Army, which relates to the issue of credibility of the photographs. Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Jewish Council of Germany, refuted that "what is important is not the type of the uniform the German criminals were wearing, but the fact that they were Germans."

The fifth criticism is the arguments that the exhibits were descriptions of the events of any war, and that war involves killing of each other en masse under abnormal circumstances. It was counter-argued that the annihilation to extinguish a people to establish the "survival zone" for Germany developed in the eastern front was not a mere war as fought in the western and

---

<sup>32</sup> *Die Zeit* 3.3.1995, p.16.

<sup>33</sup> Compiled with reference to Reemtsma, "Afterward," pp. 209-213.

northern front. It is interesting here that those engaged in WWII have different memories. Some accuse that the exhibits are untrue slanders and talk of their own miserable experiences in the war against the partisans, while some insisted that the exhibits are all correct and they themselves had actually witnessed them.

The arguments on the crimes of the German Army automatically extended to the arguments of whether fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers and other relatives might have been involved in the crimes as a large number of the German citizens belonged to the German Army. They visited the exhibition to look for photographs of their relatives, and in fact one woman found a photograph of her father watching an execution of partisans with a smile on his face. In the post-war Germany, the young people who learned about the Nazis in the school education began to feel distrust for their parents' generation who plead ignorance as an excuse, which created frequent conflicts at home.<sup>34</sup>

The traveling exhibition met a significant turning point by the criticizing thesis on the credibility of the exhibited photographs by three researchers including two foreigners in October 1999.<sup>35</sup>

First, Bogdan Musial, a researcher at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw indicated that 9 photographs were not of the Germans, and one of them is a photograph of the massacre of 700 people committed by the Soviet People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs before withdrawal from Ukraine based on the testimonies of the witnesses. The massacre was committed in accordance with a confidential order to liquidate the "anti-revolutionary elements" among the 200,000 political prisoners (some of them were liberated by the Germans) which Beriia, the member of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs issued immediately after the war between Germany and the Soviet Union had broken out. The number of those killed by this order was at least thousands, and the Soviet Army also committed massacres in the unit of tens of thousands (this became an excuse for massive slaughters of the Soviets by the Germans). The photograph taken by the German Army had reached the hand of the "Special National Committee of Investigation of Crimes at Invasion of the Fascists", and was used as a convenient evidence in the campaigns to expose cruelty of the Nazis. Similar cases occurred in the massacre of the Polish POWs. In conclusion, Musial criticized the attitude of the sponsors who predicated that it was a photograph of the Germans without studying the details.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Arguments continue on the treatment of the Nazis period at museums and exhibitions because there are problems on the historical interpretation and implication to the present as well as the question whether extraordinary exhibits on holocaust will suit the exhibition or not. For instance, see Bernd Faulenbach, "Der Nationalsozialismus in historischen Museen und Ausstellung. Zum Thema der Tagung, "Bernd Faulenbach/Franz-Josef Jelich, *Reaktionäre Modernität und Völkermord*, pp. 7 - 13.

<sup>35</sup> Articles on comprehensive critical theses include, "Fotos der Wehrmachtausstellung falsch zugeordnet," *FAZ*, 20.10.1999, "Historiker: Unwissenschaftlicher Umgang mit Bildquellen," *FAZ*, 22.10.1999.

<sup>36</sup> Bogdan Musial, "Bilder einer Ausstellung - Kritische Anmerkungen zur Wanderausstellung," *Vierteljahresschäfte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (10.1999), pp. 563 - 591.

Krisztián Ungváry, a Hungarian historian, analyzed that half of the 801 exhibited photographs did not show the scenes of crimes, and 63 showed mere battle actions. And among the remaining 333 photographs of corpses or scenes of crimes, the assailants could not be identified in 85, there were mistakes in the captions in 62, and 71 were apparently not of the crimes of the German Army (by SS, Soviet Army or foreign allies), and concluded that it was mere 10% that were obviously the scenes of crimes by the German Army.

For instance, executions by treason pronounced by the Hungarian court in a city in Hungary where the German Army was not stationed were indicated as the deeds of the German Army, and 11 photographs taken from different angles on one scene were treated as different scenes.

Ungváry also criticized the inadequacy of the studies on the sources of the photographs, lack of consideration on the credibility and incorrect captions that invited misunderstanding.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, a German historian Dieter Neuhaus pointed out that three out of four photographs of the criminal scenes of the 6th Regiment in the outskirts of Tarnopol were actually those of the Soviet Army (the 6th Regiment had only reached to the point 100km west of the site at that time), and the photograph of Minsk had been a touched-up of an image of a German fugitive soldier.<sup>38</sup>

The Hamburg Institute of Social Studies first ignored those criticisms as groundless, and even made slandering remarks to Musial. When, however, these three theses were published in an authoritative academic magazine, they cancelled the exhibition scheduled to be held in the United States and other places, and decided to restudy all photographs for 3 months on November 4.<sup>39</sup>

An academic committee was formed with the first class specialists in the particular field to investigate all materials used in the exhibition in addition to the photographs in question. The committee meetings were held 5 times so far, and invited Musial and Ungváry as well as the researchers of the Institute responsible for the exhibition to exchange opinions. The work did not complete in 3 months as scheduled at first, and resumption of the exhibition was re-scheduled to be in the second half of 2000. They have decided that they would distinctively define the assailants and accessories, and the responsibilities in accordance with the International Law that had not been clearly distinguished, judge and distinguish whether individual actions had been criminal deeds or not, and install a section to deal with the arguments on the exhibition.<sup>40</sup>

The Military History Research Institute of the German Defense Ministry (Militär-

---

<sup>37</sup> Krisztián Ungváry, "Echte Blider-problematische Aussagen," *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, Vol. 50, No. 10, 10.1999, pp. 584 - 595.

<sup>38</sup> Dieter Schmidt-Neuhaus, "Die Tarnopol - Stellwand der Wanderausstellung," *Ibid.*, pp. 596 - 603.

<sup>39</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun (Yomiuri Newspaper)*, November 6, 1999, (morning issue).

<sup>40</sup> The details on the review are announced in the homepage of the Hamburg Institute of Social Studies ([www.his-online.de](http://www.his-online.de)).

geschichtliche Forschungsamt), an official war history center of Germany, immediately responded to the traveling exhibition. The official war history "*The German Empire and the Second World War (Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg)*" published by the Institute had not contained even a chapter concerning the description of the involvement of the German Army in the Holocaust, but they published a voluminous work with 1,300 pages "*The German Army, Myths and Reality (Die Wehrmacht, Mythos und Realität)*"<sup>41</sup> immediately after the arguments on the exhibition, and re-investigated the criticism on the German Army that had gone too far with academic viewpoints. The chief editor Dieter Müller commented on the traveling exhibition that although the Military History Institute had taken critical views on the German Army and possesses adequate accumulation of academic evidences in this field, the exhibition had been too eager to display cruelty of the German Army, appealed only emotionally, and neglected historical investigation and explanation. He also expressed that the reason they had refrained from criticizing at first was because they had feared that they might be entangled in troubles with the "extreme rightists" or be conversely identified as such by third parties.<sup>42</sup>

#### (4) Significance and impact of the exhibition

After WWII, it was impossible to rebuild the nation and the society of Germany unless they defined the Nazis and its followers within an extremely narrow margin because the entire German society had been incorporated into the Nazis during the War, and therefore the German Army was excluded since too many citizens had been involved.

Furthermore, West Germany was driven by necessity to rapidly build the nation and rearm under the drastic changes in the international situations namely the Cold War, and established the Federal Forces. The Federal Forces had to be organized so urgently that it resulted in employment of a large number of officers of the former German Army as seen in Japan, and hence confrontation of the "Past" of the German Army became a taboo.

Therefore, the exhibition not only collapsed the "Myth of the German Army" and cast doubt on the historic authenticity of the Federal Forces, but propagated into criminal involvement of 20 million ordinary Germans in the German Army as well.

The Holocaust had been a "symbol of evil" and the responsibility had only been attributed to the Nazis excluding most of the populace after the war. For this reason, involvement of the German Army in the Holocaust has removed such distinction and indicated that all Germans had been involved in some kind of crimes. Taking up this issue created fear among the Germans since the war generation had contributed to recovery of Germany in the post-war period. The fear of generalization that had been frequently expressed was generated in this

---

<sup>41</sup> Rolf-Dieter Müller/Hans-Erich Volkmann (Hrsg.), *Die Wehrmacht: Mythos und Realität* (München: Ordenbourg Verlag, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> "Gegen Kritik immune," *Der Spiegel*, 7.6.1999, pp. 60 - 62.

context.

In other words, while Germany had consistently regarded that the sin lay in the Nazis, not in the general public of Germany and taken the interpretation of the "denial of collective crime", the exhibition cast doubt on that.

This movement was developed further by the "Goldhagen argument" that arose around the same time of the exhibition.<sup>43</sup> It was a dispute caused by the work "*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*" written by Goldhagen of the Harvard University, which revealed the fact that many "ordinary Germans" had actively participated in the Holocaust and concluded that the factor was the discriminating anti-Semitism that had traditionally existed in the German society. Although his analysis was criticized in the academia as employing the method that was not objective but arbitrary, his sensational contention invited large repercussion, mostly criticism in Germany.

A survivor of the Holocaust, Jewish writer Victor Klemperer wrote in his recently published diary that "the Nazis was malignant tumor engendered by the German society," and linked the anti-Semitism commonly entertained by the Germans with the Holocaust. Such studies on close relations between the Germans and the Holocaust have recently become extensive.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, there are some studies on more human factors such as the mass psychology, obedience to the authority, indifference and motivation for promotion, rather than the national characteristics of the Germans.<sup>45</sup>

In any case, the exhibit revealed the problems in the "Mastering the Past", and indicated that the Germans (German society) that had consistently adhered to the "denial of collective crimes" are now under the situation where they must directly confront the "Past" as the problem for their own society at the long last of 50 years since the end of the war. It truly tells how difficult it is for the Germans to confront the fact that many actual "murderers" were involved in the Holocaust which had been regarded as deeds by the Nazis and certain unspecified soldiers.

---

<sup>43</sup> For the Goldhagen arguments, see "Goldhagen Ronso to Gendai Doitsu no Seiji Bunka (Goldhagen Arguments and Present German Political Culture)," *Doitsu Kenkyu*, No. 24, June 1997, pp. 77-118, Takeo Sato, "Holocaust to Futsu no Doitsujin (Holocaust and Ordinary Germans)," *Shiso*, No. 877, July 1997, pp. 54-70, Fritz Stern, "Goldhagen Ronso (Goldhagen Arguments)," *Chuo Koron*, February 1997, pp. 387-402.

<sup>44</sup> "Holocaust Ronso ha Yamazu (Holocaust Arguments never End)," *Newsweek Japanese Edition*, March 15, 2000, pp. 62-63. The records of arguments in the US and UK include Julius H. Schoers (Hrsg.), *Ein Volk von Mördern?: Die Dokumentation zur Goldhagen - Kontroverse um die Rolle der Deutschen im Holocaust* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Eric A. Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), Christopher Browning, *Futsu no Hitobito - Holocaust to Dai 101 Keisatsu Yobidaitai*, (Original title: Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the solution in Poland), trans. Takao Tani, Chikuma Shobo, 1997. A recently released popular movie that presented the trial of Eichmann "Specialist," and its guidebook, Rony Brauman/Eyal Sivan, *Fufukuju wo Tataete - "Specialist" Eichmann to Gendai* (Original title: *Eloge de Désobéissance*), trans. Tetsuya Takahashi and Hiroyuki Hori, 2000 emphasized the points of obedience as a bureaucrat and completion of duties to "generalize" as an issue for the present society.

Now, how has the exhibition affected the evaluation of the Federal Forces that is actively expanding its role today? At the opinion poll in the year when the exhibition started, to the question "did the German Army simply fought the war as the military forces of other countries, or was it involved in the cruel deeds of the Nazis?", 46% chose the latter (41%, the former). The ratio was higher among the young people (the latter, 65%), and lower among the aged (the latter, 26%).<sup>46</sup>

The opinions were divided on the exhibition, but when it comes to the issue of the present Federal Forces involved in the Kosovo conflict, the Germans showed extremely interesting cool response even though the conflict broke out in the same Balkan Peninsula. Sixty-three percent supported the air-raids by NATO, and 69% (former West Germany regions) and 41% (former East Germany regions) approve of the participation of the German Air Force. The most remarkable point compared to the traditional views is the changes in the opinions of the young people. Ninety percent of the youths approve of the participation of Germany in NATO and resulting dispatch of the Federal Forces, which is 20 points higher than the approval ratio of the aged.<sup>47</sup> This is a contrasting result from the opinions on the German Army roused by the exhibition, in particular, and shows that historical recognition is not linked to the present political recognition.

Some voice that since the Balkan Peninsula is outside the NATO's region, the exhibition was intended to express the criticism from a historical viewpoint and to generate distrust on the Federal Forces, but it is evident that such intentions proved ineffective.

### 3 Changes in "Mastering the Past": Have We Heard Enough about the Holocaust !?

#### (1) Arguments on the Holocaust Monument (Berlin)

The origin of the arguments on the Berlin Holocaust Monument<sup>48</sup> dates back to 1988, before unification. It started in August when a civilian group supporting the Social Democratic Party called "Perspektive Berlin" led by Lea Rosh, a German journalist, began the promotion activities to build a monument of the Jews who fell victims to the Holocaust in the capital city of Berlin at the opportunity of redevelopment of West Berlin. Former Chancellor of FRG Willy Brandt and a writer Günter Grass approved of it, and in November 1989, a researcher of the Holocaust Eberhard Jäckel and the president of Benz joined in the project

---

<sup>46</sup> *Der Spiegel*, 8.5.1995.

<sup>47</sup> *Der Spiegel*, 29.3.1999 and *Die Welt*, 16.3.1999.

<sup>48</sup> Arguments on the holocaust include, Yuji Ishida, "Gendai Doitsu Rekishi Ronso (Historical Arguments in Present Germany)," *Doitsu Kenkyu*, No. 29, December 1999, pp. 41 - 43 and "Chikyu Gekijo-Doitsu Holocaust Irei Monument (Monument for Holocaust in Germany)," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 9, 1999 (evening issue). Records of arguments in Germany include, Michael S. Cullen (Hrsg.), *Das Holocaust - Mahnmahl: Dokumentation einer Debatte* (Zurich: Pendo Verlag,) 1999.

and established the "Promotion circle for erecting monuments for murders of the Jews in Europe (Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas)".

After a dramatic event of unification of Germany at sudden destruction of the Berlin Wall, the Kohl Administration expressed approval, and offered the vast vacant site created by the removal of the Wall, a state-owned land of 20,000 sq.m. between the Brandenburg Gate and the Potsdam Plaza, in September 1993. At the open invitation for the design plans sponsored by the citizens' group, the Federal Government and the City of Berlin, applications amounted to 528, and the selection procedure started. At the final decision stage in March 1995, however, Chancellor Kohl suddenly declared shelving the plan, and the construction project was baffled. The reason was the following.

First, it was pointed out that there were already a large number of memorial sites for the Holocaust throughout West Germany, for instance the building where the meeting that decided the annihilation project of the Jews had been held in 1942 was reformed as the "Wannsee Memorial Hall" in Berlin, and another Jewish Museum was constructed after unification, thus there were already an adequate number of such facilities.

At the opinion poll conducted in August 1998 when the arguments were most heated, the following result was revealed.<sup>49</sup>

Q. Do you approve of the construction of the Holocaust Monument for the Jewish victims?

Approve: 44%      Disapprove: 46%

Q. When should the Holocaust Monument be constructed (\* Specifically before or after the general election)

As soon as possible: 17%      Should not hurry: 72%

Q. Is it significant to construct the Holocaust Monument?

Yes: 43%    No: 49% (There are already many monuments in Berlin.)

The result clearly indicated negative opinions. The tendency was stronger among the supporters of the Christian Democratic Union, the elderly and in the former West Berlin area.

Secondly, the final design plan included carving of the names of 4 million victims of the Holocaust on a gigantic monolith of 100 meters square. The budget was as much as 1.4 billion yen, and thus, a question was cast whether it might be too huge. Chancellor Kohl's opposition was for this very reason.

There was interesting reaction to this point. It was the Germans who had drawn and

---

<sup>49</sup> Opinion poll conducted by the poll agency "forsa" in August 1998. The materials were furnished by Norihide Miyoshi at Berlin Branch of the Yomiuri Shimbun.

actually promoted the monument project, and some of them insisted that this monument should be different from other similar facilities in Germany but must be a large-scale structure that would arouse the "feeling of shame" for the mistakes in the past.

On the other hand, the Jews argued that the principal significance lay in the individual Jews to be mourned, and it must have the environment that enables the relatives to recollect the dead, in other words the silent environment where they can entertain the feeling of reverential mourning for the dead. There lay the reason why some of the promoters broke away as described later.<sup>50</sup>

Thirdly, there was a question whether it was appropriate or not to devote it solely to the Jews. The question was posed that there had not been sufficient recognition on the gypsies, homosexuals, mentally handicapped persons and communists who had also been persecuted by the Nazis, and they should be mourned as well. The gypsy organization strongly protested to the monument partly due to the confrontation between the gypsies and the Jews in Germany at that time. The German side led by the Kohl Administration consistently insisted on limiting it only for the Jews, and tried to compromise by offering another site for the gypsies. This attitude is also an indication of the special "consideration" of the Germans to the Jews.

There were other arguments on the location being at the center of Berlin and the style of the monument (expression method<sup>51</sup>).

New invitation for the design plan was announced in November 1997, and they selected the plan by an American architect Peter Eisenman. His plan, however, was also in a large scale, consisting of erection of some 4000 stone pillars bearing the carving of the names of the victims. The final decision was handed down to the Schröder Administration of the Social Democratic Party that took the power in the autumn of 1998.

During those arguments, Grass who had been actively promoting the project, a literary man Walter Jens and others announced doubt in the significance of the proposed design plan, and the arguments became confused to the extreme.

Minister of Culture Michael Naumann in the new administration proposed an amended plan to shrink the scale (an area equivalent to 4 soccer fields with 2,700 stone pillars) of Eisenman's plan and construct a memorial hall that collects books and other materials concerning genocide from the belief that "it is impossible to express the Holocaust, the largest crime in the human history, with Art," in January 1999. The amended plan was approved with overwhelming majority without restriction of the party decision at the Federal Congress (Lower House) on June 25, 1999, which put an end to the 10-year long dispute. It was decided to appropriate 950 million yen in the budget and the Lower House also passed the bill

---

<sup>50</sup> Ishida, "Gendai Doitsu no Rekishi Ronso" p. 42, and Hiroshi Fujino, "Hyogen Fukano na Monono Kioku - Holocaust kinen hi wo meguru ronso (Memories of Inexpressible)," *Takasaki Keizai Daigaku Ronsyu (Takasaki Keizai Daigaku Anthology)*, Vol. 41, No. 1, September 1998, p. 98.

<sup>51</sup> For esthetical views on express:bility, Fujino, "Hyogen fukano na monono kioku", pp. 93 - 101.

to limit the subject of mourning only to the Jews and excluded the gypsies and other victims.<sup>52</sup>

This decision, however, must be a product of the special circumstances where the dispute could not be forwarded further with intensified international attention. It is another question whether many Germans accepted and approved of it. "*Der Spiegel*," known for progressive arguments commented as follows.

"If such coldhearted disgrace is forced on the Germans, it would cause revival of the anti-Semitism out of the blue. The design plan of the monument makes a laughingstock of us with shuddering disgust and denies the sovereign which the Germans managed to obtain again in gradual steps. We should not be instructed by the foreigners how we will build our new capital in the context of remembering the past."<sup>53</sup>

As regard to further remembering the Holocaust, to the question in the opinion poll "should we continue to tell the massacre of the Jews, or should we end the "Mastering the Past"?", 62% answered "we should end it" ("we should continue": 20%) in actuality.<sup>54</sup>

The frustration and complains of the Germans are causing apprehension among third parties that the Germans will have finalized the "Mastering the Past" against the Holocaust by constructing the monument, and they would believe it is sufficient and the end of it all when they construct it after the disputes on the Holocaust monument.

In any case, the arguments clearly indicates that the "Mastering the Past" is not simple as it is commonly believed but difficult, and that the Germans still have the problem of frustration as to how far they must go before the final settlement.

## (2) Walser-Bubis debate

It is the Walser-Bubis debate in the recent years that symbolically expressed the difficulty of "Mastering the Past".<sup>55</sup> The debate started when Martin Walser, a laureate of the "Peace Prize" of the German publishing industry for his autobiographic novel in the Nazis days, made a commemorative lecture in Frankfurt in October 1998.

Walser is a German writer born in 1927, and a typical conservative man of intellect who had criticized the hypersensitivity of the Germans to the political correctness in the past issues, actively supported unification of Germany from early days which was rare for a man of

---

<sup>52</sup> *Asahi Shimbun (Asahi Newspaper)*, June 26, 1999 (morning issue), *Mainichi Shimbun (Mainichi Newspaper)* (ditto), and *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 27 (morning issue).

<sup>53</sup> Rudolf Augstein, "Wir sind alle verletzbar," *Der Spiegel*, 30.11.1998, pp. 32 - 33.

<sup>54</sup> *Der Spiegel*, 13.1. 1992.

<sup>55</sup> For Walser - Bubis debates, Ishida, "Gendai Doitsu no Rekishi Ronso," pp. 39 - 41, Ishida., "Sengo Doitsu no Kako no Kokufuku," Katsuichi Honda, Taichi Kajimura, eds *Journalism to Rekishi Ninsiki-Holocoust wo do Tsutaeruka (Journalism and Historical Recognition)*, Gaifu-sha, 1999, pp. 289 - 309. Records of Arguments in Germany include, Frank Schirrmacher, *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: Eine Dokumentation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1999).

intellect, and made statements that the rise of the extreme rightists was caused by the total elimination of nationalism by excessive regret for the Nazism in the post-war German society along with his literary efforts.

He admitted that Auschwitz was "our shame", but criticized the current conditions saying that he "will never watch" the miserable scenes of unbearable sights of the concentration camps that were much too often broadcast, and indicated that they were not pure recollection or facing the past but there was a motive of "making it a tool for the present objective" in the background of strengthening trend in the past 10 years. He made an accusation that such treatment of Auschwitz had become a daily routine of the threats to the Germans, in other words "incorporated threatening", "moral cudgel" or a simple "obligatory acting", which were not at all preferable. He also expressed his apprehension that what one could achieve from such "ritualization" was not only superficial prayers but generating of doubts in the fact that the Germans are normal people and the German society is sound as well. The "present objective" was the compensation issue by the German enterprises for the forced Jewish laborers that had been deadlocked (solved later). He also commented on the issue of the Holocaust Monument described earlier that it was concreting the center of the capital with "a nightmare with a size of a soccer field", a mere "monumentalizing of shame" and "negative nationalism", and went as far as condemning the Germans who were promoting the project with the expression "corny goodwill".<sup>56</sup>

President Helzok, Chancellor Schröder and other important guests from all corners attended the lecture, but there was a great roar of applause when the lecture finished. No one made adverse comments on Walser. On the next day, Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Jewish Central Council in Germany accused Walser saying that his expressions, such as "making a tool out of Auschwitz", "moral cudgel" and "a nightmare with the size of a soccer field" and others which Bubis criticized as sensational comments similar to those of the Neo Nazis, were truly dreadful and "spiritual arson" to encourage the Neo Nazis, and that his lecture was aimed to oppress the history and eradicate the past, and insisted that his lecture reversed the assailant-victim relations between the Germans and the Jews.<sup>57</sup> Bubis was born in Schlesien region in the former German territory in 1927, lost all family members in the Holocaust, and somehow managed to survive.

The media actively covered the debates and the opinions of the Germans were divided. Neither of them showed any indication of compromise, but when Bubis withdrew the "abusive expression" of "spiritual arson" in December, the debate came to an end for the time being. Walser's statement, however, stimulated the Neo Nazis as Bubis had feared. They often quoted every word of his statement, and Bubis was ridiculed by them as a "Jewish pig".

Bubis died of a cancer in August 1999, but was buried in Israel according to his will that

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 11 - 13.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 34 - 35, and Ishida "Gendai Doitsu no Rekishi Ronso," p. 40.

"my grave might be ravaged if it was in Germany". It is true that anti-Semitic deeds including ravaging the graves exist in part of Germany, but as it concerned Bubis, who had been known as the "symbol of reconciliation between the Germans and the Jews", this event gave a strong impact on the Germans. Bubis recollected in his later days that "during my term (as chairman of the Jewish Council), I could not narrow the gap between the Germans and non-Germans."<sup>58</sup>

Although it cannot be denied that Walser's lecture was not appropriate for a commemorative lecture and contained aggressive expressions, his indications of "ritualization" and "making a tool" represent another aspect of the "Mastering the Past" of Germany mostly concerning the Holocaust which is said to have won positive recognition, as well as the current conditions and problems. It is also true that the Germans now regard the Holocaust and Auschwitz as effective measures of pressure for foreign countries, not as sincere regret and atonement, and thus the efforts have become mere rituals to live safely as Germans.

## Conclusion

The author has discussed war (peace) museums and memorial halls in three different fields in Germany with the viewpoint of historical recognition, all of which are problems closely linked to the current conditions of Japan.

First, the changes in the memorial halls in East Germany tell the story of the history trifled with by the socialist ideology. The same tendency is seen not only in Japan but in the neighboring East Asian countries as well. While former East Germany conducted "reappraisal of history" after collapse of the socialism and unification and exhibits are drastically modified, what will the future of the similar facilities in East Asia be?

Criticism by the Polish and Hungarian researchers on the photographs of the German Army in the traveling exhibition came from the victimized countries, not from Germany, which makes us strongly feel independence and maturity of the "science of history" in Europe. Bilateral textbook agreement and compilation of "unified European textbooks" can only be made when such background exists. The author hopes that similar environment will be created in East Asia in the near future.

Second, the issue of the traveling exhibition that revealed the involvement of the German Army in the Holocaust clearly represents the difference between Germany, which attributed the total responsibility to the Nazis, tackled with "Mastering the Past" within that purview, made the German Army "innocent" and thus indemnified, and Japan where the "war crimes" by the former Imperial Army continue to be the agony in the post-war period. For this reason, Germany had less difficult time in "Mastering the Past" than Japan because there was a distinctive existence of the Nazis to which all responsibilities can be attributed. There was no

---

<sup>58</sup> *Sankei Shimbun (Sankei Newspaper)*, August 19, 1999 (morning issue).

such existence in Japan, and the entire populace was involved in the military, which is similar to the phenomena at the arguments on the German Army in Germany, and investigation on the responsibility must be extremely complicated. In that sense, the problems of Japan are similar to the cases concerning the German Army which Germany has to face at the long last.

Furthermore, the psychological backgrounds differed between Germany that actively supported the Nazis and plunged into the war and Japan that was involved in the war without distinctive awareness, which may be the reason why the arguments on the responsibilities of the war has been ambiguous in Japan in the post-war period.

It is an extremely delicate and difficult problem for any nation to decide how to exhibit cruel deeds in wartime, those by their own nations, in particular, and it is not possible to simply say they should directly confront them. In Japan, the arguments continue over the exhibits in the Peace Museum as "masochistic" or exhibiting "forged photographs".

Thirdly, the arguments on the Holocaust monument in Germany clearly indicate the difficulty of this problem and frustration of the Germans as to how far, until when they must continue the "Mastering the Past" with international attention and orders. In former West Germany, which has been making efforts on the "Mastering the Past" unlike East Germany, the people in a wide range of classes are beginning to feel frustrated, and there is some apprehension on their possible reaction, aside from the extreme rightists. A Dutch journalist Ian Buruma said, "But using the past as a stick with which to beat nations in the present may cause new resentments to grow.... the offspring of former aggressors will end up feeling like victims."<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, the Jews who were the victims still hold strong distrust against the Germans even today. Will the "reconciliation" day ever come? Or will it be possible?

At the concentration camp memorial meeting this year, a Jewish representative expressed his apprehension that, "what we cannot overlook is the fact that the number of the intellectuals and youths who try to cover up or deny the history in Germany is increasing because their sense of guilt has thinned too much."<sup>60</sup>

As discussed above, Germany has become an ordinary country after unification, transfer of the capital to Berlin and dispatching of the actual fighting troops to outside the NATO region at the Kosovo conflict. Although there is an impression that they have put an end to the "post-war", they still have not solved many difficult problems in the "Mastering the Past" for WWII as yet.

Ian Buruma quoted earlier indicated the close relations of the present national security issue and the "Mastering the Past" in Japan and Germany in his work that compared the efforts to correct the past.<sup>61</sup> As expectations for Japanese participation in PKO and other

---

<sup>59</sup> Ian Buruma, "The Ghosts of War" *Newsweek*, February 26, 1997, pp. 28-29.

<sup>60</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, April 17, 2000 (evening issue).

<sup>61</sup> Ian Buruma, *Senso no Kioku: Nihonjin to Doitsujin* (Original title: *Wages of Guilt*), trans. Shinpei Ishii, TBS Britanica, 1994, pp. 388 -390.

similar international activities increase, examples of Germany's efforts to deal with its history, in addition to Germany's post-WWII experiences with its constitution, international politics and military affairs, will provide many interesting lessons for Japan. This is all the more true since Germany has participated in military operations in Kosovo.

Comparison of Japan and Germany in the "Mastering the Past" is often conducted, and it is frequently mentioned that Japan should follow the the example of Germany in and out of Japan. It is, however, necessary to consider the prerequisite, "past = history" itself, the environment in the post-war period and differences in the national characteristics. It would be in the complexity and difficulties of this problem that Japan should "follow the example " of Germany.