

HAS THE THIRD REICH BECOME HISTORY?

Martin Broszat as historian and pedagogue

The life of the German historian Martin Broszat (1929-1989) cannot be said to have been free of paradoxical touches. Although much of his oeuvre was intended to counter the 'monumentalization' of German history, his very work helped to erect a monument in the German historiographic landscape. And although he simultaneously opposed the 'pedagogization' of the German past, he nevertheless – albeit unintentionally – remained an educator. For this reason, in order to understand the historian Martin Broszat, it might sometimes be better not to listen to the man himself.

The monument erected by Broszat does not only include his scientific oeuvre, but also the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* in Munich which he helped to make famous. He started his work at the Institute in 1955, and from his appointment as director in 1972 until his death in 1989 he would remain there. Under Broszat's direction the Institute, whose sole task initially was to document and record the history of National Socialism, evolved into one of the foremost centers of German contemporary historiography. In this development Broszat performed the dual role of scientific as well as financial and organizational manager. During his tenure the number of researchers increased from fifteen to thirty, whereas the Institute's budget grew five-fold to DM 5 million per year. The number of publications increased accordingly: in addition to the well-known *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* the Institute now publishes six autonomous series instead of the three in 1970, and the overall number of publications has more or less tripled.¹ Broszat also was appointed Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Munich, in addition to which he intervened in numerous public discussions about World War II.

Broszat's monumental status is also due to his own scientific contributions to the history of the Third Reich. These, as so often is the case with historians, are clearly imprinted by his personal history. In May 1945 he was eighteen years old, and therefore old enough to have

experienced some of the war as a 'Flak Helper' (carrying munitions for anti-aircraft guns) in Leipzig. His colleague Henke has called Broszat's experiences during the war the 'seedbed of his life-long preoccupation with the history of the Third Reich'; he himself has expressed himself in a similar vein.²

Soon after the war he began to study history at Cologne, where in 1952 he received his doctorate under Theodor Schieder on a dissertation about the at that time hardly popular subject of indigenous anti-Semitism in Germany during the reign of the Emperor Wilhelm II. Following this Schieder secured him employment on the project *Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa*, until in 1955 he was appointed at the Institute in Munich. From this moment onwards he would be mainly engaged upon the study of numerous aspects of the history of the Third Reich.³ In so doing he often opposed the predominant historiographical currents, and his approach to the Third Reich can only be understood in this light. It is in this antithetical character that, as of 1996, the main problems and limitations of his work will be found.

Thematically we can distinguish the following highlights in his work: 1. The role of the National-Socialist world-view and ideology; 2. The structure of the 'Hitlerian State' and the rationale of the 'Final Solution'; 3. The manner in which 'ordinary people' understood the Third Reich and resisted it; and finally – and in consequence of the former aspects – 4. The manner in which particularly German historians have dealt with the Third Reich.

1. THE ROLE OF NATIONAL-SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF HITLER

Broszat's approach to National Socialism during the late 1950s and the 1960s can best be understood as a reaction to the two then existing predominant historiographical views. The first, which might be characterized as 'Hitlerian', and which was represented by among others Gerhard Ritter, mainly reduced National Socialism and its ideology to the person of

Hitler. The second view, known as 'Totalitarian', preferred to see National Socialism as a form of totalitarian dictatorship, a twin-brother, in fact, of Communism. As seen from the prevailing Cold War point of view these 'brown' and 'red' forms of Fascism showed many structural similarities, such as the all-pervading role of The Party, The Leader and the Secret Police – besides a systematic ideology that justified 'total' control of society and the State. Notable representatives of this view in the Federal Republic were Karl-Dieter Bracher and Ernst Nolte. In, for example, *Der Nazional-sozialismus: Weltanschauung, Programm und Wirklichkeit* (1960) Broszat dissected the National-Socialist ideology into three pivotal ideo-logical segments, namely anti-Semitism, anti-Bolshevism and *Lebensraum*.⁴ However, in the process he emphasized that these ideas did not constitute a 'system' as such, and that the successful National-Socialist rise to power in 1933 did not represent the realization of a political pro-gram, as the customary Hitlerian and totalitarian interpretations would have it. Broszat regarded National-Socialist ideology as a collection of relatively vague notions, all of which – besides blind racial hatred and a longing for change – shared a radical longing for a national and social 'rebirth' of Germany. Hitler played a vital role in the concretization of these ideological contents through his identification of irreconcilable enemies of the German nation, that would have to be fought with every means at the country's disposal. In this, anti-Semitism served as an ideological passe-partout for identifying internal enemies, whereas Bolshevism fulfilled the same purpose with regard to external adversaries. The *Lebensraum* utopia, finally, represented a kind of national salvation doctrine, holding out a promise of eventual elite status to every person who according to this Nazi-definition formed a part of the German nation.

According to Broszat, the point that required explanation by historians was not so much the question of why Hitler had regarded these ideas as fundamental truths, but rather why they had found such a resonance in so many Germans, and how, during the subsequent war, they could have led to such catastrophic mass exterminations. Broszat in any case considered National-Socialist ideology an unsuitable point of departure for analyzing the Third Reich, given the chasm between ideology and reality. According to Broszat, historians who nevertheless insisted on doing so, ran the major risk of reproducing

the stereotypes and images of National Socialism into their historiography.⁵ He saw the pull of the National-Socialist ideology mainly in its promise of radical change, a promise that appealed particularly to the crisis-ridden German middle classes – which indeed were to constitute the Party's electoral backbone. The dynamic and mobile character of National-Socialist politics – the urge towards mobilization and the longing for permanent change – were directly connected with this. However, from the moment that the Nazi movement had taken over the reins of state, most of its revolutionary concepts, including the replacement of the *Reichswehr* by an army of 'Brownshirts', the reorganization of society on a professional and estate basis, or the replacement of the current legislation by 'German laws', would prove to be not only ill-defined, but even more so unpractical. In fact, it proved impossible to introduce a single radical change without browbeating assorted established power groups, such as the army, the bureaucracy and the employers. As a result the Nazi regime was forced to take recourse to ever-changing alliances with one or more of these groups. It was this revolutionary rhetorics needed by the Nazi's in order to muster a mass following, combined with the necessity to cooperate with the 'functional elites', that according to Broszat determined the direction of Nazi politics. This combination considerably restricted the freedom of action of the Nazi's, and in effect forced them to introduce the promised new order only in those spheres where it would not encounter organized resistance. In practice this meant the persecution and elimination of powerless minorities such as carriers of genetic deficiencies, mentally retarded persons, homosexuals, gypsies and Jews. In Broszat's eyes the Nazi policy was therefore far more the product of a process of negative selection than the step-by-step implementation of a specific world-view and political program (as propounded by Hitlerian historians such as Andreas Hillgruber, Klaus Hildebrand and Eberhard Jäckel).

2. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NAZI STATE AND THE EXPLANATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Much like Hans Mommsen, Broszat greatly relativized the guiding role of Nazi ideology and Hitler's intentions by presenting Nazi policies primarily as the unintended result of a process of cumulative radicalization, that in the course of the subsequent 'total war' crashed through every previously imagined barrier.⁶ According to Broszat this even applies to Hitler himself, as shown by the vagueness of his initial ideas ('transfer' of the Jews to 'the East', the Madagascar Plan, etc.), and the particularly twisted road leading to the 'Final Solution'. The fact that following the *Wannsee* Conference these ideas were turned into deeds, could according to Broszat be explained by the particular structure of the Hitlerian state, in combination with the rapid German advance into the Soviet Union. This became the subject of his book *Der Staat Hitlers: Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Vefassung* (1969). In it, Broszat reasoned that following the transfer of power to the Nazi's the State was transformed into a twofold institutional structure including, besides all the previously existing institutions and hierarchies, new Nazi organizations and chains of command that were directly responsible to the *Führer* and that functioned in his name. This completely nebulous division of responsibilities between the old and the new organs of state resulted in an administratively chaotic situation in which no rational or hierarchic government was discernable. This in turn produced a fierce competitive struggle, in which all the various institutions did their utmost to expand their own respective spheres of influence. It was, according to Broszat, this 'structural' situation that enabled vague ideological slogans such as 'the solution of the Jewish problem' and 'capture of the *Ostraum*' to evolve, from mere metaphores and legitimations for blind activism, via political planning into – ultimately – reality. In this institutional struggle for survival the most extreme radical elements, i.e. those who kept Hitler to his word, proved in fact to be the fittest. Broszat therefore does not regard the competition and struggle between the Nazi institutions and the constitutional organs as the outcome of a sly divide-and-rule policy by Hitler, as posited in the totalitarian interpretation, but as an unintentional consequence of the dual structure of the Nazi state. In this view of the Nazi state as a polycracy, rather than a – totalitarian – monarchy Broszat was preceded by Franz Neumann and Ernst Fränkel. In contrast to the Hitler biographies of, among others, Joachim Fest during the 1970s, as well as the 'personalist'

interpretations, in which almost all aspects of Nazi policies were reduced to the *Führer's* conscious intent, Broszat believed that the explanation had to be found in the structure of the Nazi state and, within it, the function of the *Führer*, who's freedom of action was in turn determined by this structure. This explains why his interpretation, together with those of Hans Mommsen and Peter Lüttenberger, has become known as the structuralist or functionalist antipode of the intentionalist or Hitlerian modes of interpretation.

It would seem that Broszat's far-reaching interpretative rebuttal of the dominant personalist interpretations of National Socialism might be partly explained by pedagogic motives, given the fact that the 'demonization' of Hitler had been the predominant repressive and rejection strategy of post-war (West) Germany. This, combined with the story that Germany had been 'captured' by the Nazi's in a 'surprise attack' had represented the most effective way of avoiding unpleasant questions with respect to the social groupings and institutions that had allowed the 'Hitler dictatorship' to be established. Therefore, in his capacity as a contemporary historian he saw it as his responsibility to conduct some *kritische Aufklärungsarbeit* with respect to this repressed past.⁷

The willingness in post-war West-Germany to ask difficult questions about the Nazi past was until the end of the 1960s mitigated even more by the fact that (Communist) East-Germany had already provided a ready answer. However, Broszat rejected all Marxist explanations of National Socialism, given the fact that he failed to detect any 'agents of World Capitalism' in the Nazi's, nor any capitalist rationale behind their policies. Even so it was his intention, just as with the Marxist interpretation, to discover the social determinants of the Nazi system and Nazi policy.⁸ This will explain the for his interpretation model typical reduction of Hitler's political world of ideas to a collection of political slogans, and the replacement of the 'non-person' Hitler by the social production of the Hitler-cult and the Hitler-myth. Ultimately he intended to analyse Hitler not in terms of an individual, but as 'a structural type' – in other words, as a position onto which all kinds of social groups had projected their own wishes, expectations and hopes. This explains why Broszat called Hitler in a sense the victim of the Hitler-myth imputed to him by the German nation and German propaganda, rather than, as customary, the reverse.⁹

3. THE HISTORY OF THE 'COMMON MAN' IN THE THIRD REICH – 'RESISTENCY' AND 'RESISTANCE'.

From the second half of the 1970s a clear shift became discernable in Broszat's focus. Once the ideology behind, and the political structure of the Third Reich had emerged with sufficient clarity, the history of the 'common man' – also called the *Alltagsgeschichte* – of the period began to attract his attention. After the state-focused *Geschichte von oben*, it was now the turn of the *Geschichte von unten*. Also at this stage his approach may be said to be somewhat antithetical in nature, given the fact that he consciously opposed the at the time dominant structural social historical opinions of historians such as H-U. Wehler and J. Kocka.¹⁰ By not closely investigating (or causing to be investigated) a state, but a region (Bavaria), he also could once again draw a bead on the totalitarian interpretation. At the local level it was simpler to prove that not all classes and spheres of the society had been penetrated by the Nazi state. This intention resulted in a large-scale collective project by his Institute: *Bayern in der NS-Zeit* (1977-'83), which he inspired and for which he acted as co-editor.

Behind this development, too, a pedagogic as well as interpretative motive can be discerned about the way Germany had come to grips with its Nazi past. Admittedly, given the enormous production of historical material on this subject from the second half of the 1960s onwards, there could no longer be a purposeful repression of this past, but the way in which it was approached, was in Broszat's view scientifically hardly satisfactory. The personalistic Hitler interpretations which had led to the absolution of Germany, were complemented by a 'heroization' and 'monumentalizing' of the Resistance under the Hitler regime. This happened both in the German Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. In the Federal Republic, the hero celebration revolved in particular around those (conservative) circles which had initiated the assault on Hitler on July 20, 1944, whereas in the Democratic Republic the Communists had obviously always been a shining example.

According to Broszat these aspects of the German (resistance) history were elevated to myths, and as such ‘moralized’ and ‘pedagogized’. From a historical point of view this mythologization was even more suspect in Western Germany than in the East, due to the fact that in the Federal Republic virtually any personal continuity between the post-war political leadership and wartime resistance was missing.

In order to put an end to the undesirable separation of Nazi history into a demonic (‘guilty’) part and a mythical (‘good’) part, Broszat decided that it was essential to tackle both the demonization of Hitler and the mythologization of ‘The Resistance’. The first part he had already accomplished in his above-referred previous work, so that all that remained for him was the second task. For this purpose he introduced into his *Bayern*-project, in addition to the (positive) concept of ‘resistance’, the for him neutral concept of ‘resistency’ (*Resistenz*).¹¹ By this he meant the practical measures aimed towards the defense against, as well as the delimitation and restraining of the National-Socialist claim to power, and as such a reference to the continued existence during the Nazi-period of relatively independent institutions and their values, such as Church, Bureaucracy and Army. Broszat’s interest did not extend to the motives for their ‘resist-ency’. His only purpose for the use of this ‘neutral’ concept was to break through the dichotomy and ‘moralizing’ black-and-white representation that according to him existed in the terms ‘collaboration’ versus ‘resistance’, and thus chart the grey zone of partial accommodation and partial resistance. Its Dutch parallel can be seen in Blom’s effort in 1983 to demolish the black-and-white representations of ‘good’ and ‘wrong’ in Dutch historiography by introducing a distinction between collaboration and accommodation.

By using the concept of ‘Resistency’ it could be shown that the hold of the Nazi’s on the everyday lives of many Germans had remained limited, and that even during the regime the continuity of numerous traditional values had remained intact. Because of this, Broszat’s *Bayern* Project made an important contribution to lifting the ‘quarantine’ that according to him surrounded the Nazi period, thus preventing the ‘normalization’ of this part of German history. In fact, a remarkable (and once again antithetical) aspect of his interpretation is that he was more appreciative of resistant behavior than of the heroic deeds

of the Resistance, which he believed to be a hopeless and by its very nature impossible venture, besides being unrealistic in terms of an evaluation of the cost-benefit relation.

The many problematic aspects of Broszat's advocacies of the 'historicization' of the Nazi period would soon become evident. After 1981 his advocacy was adopted on the basis of virtually the same diagnosis and arguments by Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber, thus preparing the arena for the incredibly fierce *Historikerstreit* of 1986-'87. For Nolte this 'historicization' of the Third Reich primarily meant a reduction of National Socialism to Bolshevism, including the reduction of 'Auschwitz' to the Gulag Archipelago. For Hillgruber the 'historicization' of the Third Reich mainly implied a recommendation to German historians to view the era from the perspective of the *Wehrmacht*, and to show a greater tolerance towards the German army than had thus far been the case.¹² Just like 'resistancy', 'historicization' turned out to be a notion giving historians leeway for countless other interpretations – none of which had been foreseen by Broszat. In the course of the *Historikerstreit* this was pointed out to him particularly by Saul Friedländer and Dan Diner.

4. THE 'HISTORICIZATION' OF THE THIRD REICH

Broszat's advocacy during the 1980s of a 'historicization' of the Nazi period meshed seamlessly with several important objectives of this *Bayern* Project – to wit his attempt to detach the view of this period from the all-pervading, central perspective of the Hitler regime, including its atrocities. He rejected the predominance of the 'Auschwitz' perspective, however understandable this might thought to be, by means of scientific as well as pedagogic arguments. This perspective was regarded as scientifically undesirable for German historians, since it meant that the Third Reich would be analyzed only from the point of view of its disastrous ending. This approach, in turn, violated the methodical rule of historiography, according to which every era had to be primarily judged by itself, rather than as a foreshadowing of later events. According to the most current historicistic ideas about the science of history, the historian should move with the flow of time rather than

against it – meaning that historians had to view the past primarily through the eyes of their contemporaries, rather than from the ‘facile’ point of view of ‘knowledge after the fact’.

The application of this methodical procedure to the Third Reich inevitably resulted, according to Broszat, in a far-reaching relativization of the place and meaning of ‘Auschwitz’. The pivotal meaning that had retroactively been accorded to ‘Auschwitz’, namely stood in shrill contrast to its negligible importance for the contemporary Germans. One of the paradoxical characteristics of the mass murder of the Jews was, after all, that these exterminations had not been practised openly, but in secret, as a result of which they never occupied a prominent place in the consciousness of the majority of the Germans.¹³ Only by taking the Third Reich out of its ‘quarantine’ and liberating it from its image as ‘an island’ within German history, would it be possible to merge these events with the continuity of German history.¹⁴ Only then – and this was Broszat's pedagogic motivation – would it be possible to rid the history of the Third Reich of both its demonic and its mythical characteristics, changing it from a ‘monument’ into ‘real’ history. And only then would the Nazi past be enabled to become history for and about the Germans.

Broszat was by no means blind to the risk that his advocacies of more ‘historization’ and a deeper ‘historical understanding’ of the Nazi era would give rise to opposition.¹⁵ This is why he tried to emphasize that his conception should not be confused with the classical historicistic striving towards identification, as propagated by, for instance, Hillgruber, nor with an amoral relativization in the spirit of ‘understanding is forgiving’.¹⁶ In addition, he allowed especially the surviving victims of the Nazi's and their relatives a ‘mythical reworking of Auschwitz’, in order to enable them to rationalize the irrational. Nevertheless he continued to insist that ‘the Auschwitz perspective’ of the Nazi past interfered with the scientific way of coming to grips with this subject.¹⁷

5. BROSZAT'S PROBLEMS AND PROBLEMS WITH BROSZAT

Given their purposely controversial character, it is not really surprising that Broszat's views and explanations have in the course of the years provoked a great deal of criticism. By now the predominant impression with regard to his efforts to 'depersonalize' Hitler, to relativize the Nazi ideology, and to explain the dynamics of the Nazi state primarily from the dynamics of the system, is that he has gone somewhat too far. Even a kindred spirit and erstwhile partner like Ian Kershaw now defends the view that in certain political spheres, particularly in his foreign policy, Hitler went far beyond merely reacting to and legitimizing radical impulses that had originated elsewhere in the system.¹⁸ With regard to the significance of the antisemitic ideology, Christopher Browning has pointed out that the mass executions in the East might somehow be interpreted as the result of an unintentional radicalization process, but that gas chambers cannot be 'improvised'. In other words, behind it all a great deal of intellectual effort must have been invested in the total elimination of the Jews before this plan could be put into practical effect. In the case of Himmler there in fact is documentary evidence to this effect.¹⁹ It would therefore appear that the fact that no direct *Führerbefehl* has ever been found, has been somewhat 'over-interpreted' by Broszat, and that in his reaction to all other contemporary apologetical explanations (in the spirit of '*Befehl ist Befehl*', and the 'all-powerful Gestapo') he has simply overshot the mark.²⁰

In light of the present views and circumstances we could say, somewhat maliciously, that interpretations such as Broszat's, with their emphasis on the absence of purposeful planning and the unintentional aspects of the Nazi crimes, helped to pave the way for interpretations such as those by Goldhagen. The customary motives used in power struggles and competitive battles are insufficient to explain the after all rather extraordinary Nazi crimes. This, in turn, makes it so much more tempting once again to ascribe to 'the Germans' collective radical antisemitic motives.²¹

Broszat's advocacy of the 'historization' of the Third Reich has proven to be no less problematic. However praiseworthy his attempts to prevent a black-and-white historiography might be considered, the way in which this was put into practice has often been criticised. For one thing, Broszat's attempt at rediscovering spheres of normal life in

an ‘abnormal’ Third Reich by means of the notion of ‘resistency’ is, given the close inter-relationship between ‘normality’ and criminality during this period, by no means as innocent as it appears. When, for example, he mentions the *Wehrmacht* as one of the institutions that was to some extent ‘resistant’ to the Nazi regime, this problem becomes crystal-clear: the German army was, after all, one of the prime pillars of the Nazi state. According to Friedländer and Diner, institutions such as the army and the national bureaucratic apparatus assisted more than anything in the ‘stabilization of the system’.²² According to them any contemporary writer of Nazi history who fails to take this criminal dimension into account – i.e. who fails simultaneously to place it within the context of ‘Auschwitz’ – consciously or otherwise reproduces the dichotomy the Nazis themselves created in the reality of the time: the historian ‘doubles’ the history of National Socialism, turning it into one history of the perpetrators, and one of the victims. Hillgruber's booklet *Zweierlei Untergang. Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums*, that played such an important role in the *Historikerstreit*, clearly exemplifies this ‘doubling’. Rather than combining the German and Jewish ‘catastrophies’, he simply placed them side by side in two separate essays.²³ How Broszat intended to prevent the balance between ‘historical understanding’ and ‘moral judgement’ from sliding towards Nolte's and Hillgruber's conceptions, has never become clear to Friedländer – or, for that matter, to me. Neither, due to his failure to indicate a normative foundation for his position, did his appeal to a ‘critical point of view’ offer any guarantee. As the distance in time between the Third Reich and the present increases, with progressively fewer Germans remaining who have experienced this history as their own, this risk can only increase.

Ultimately the problem of Broszat's *Alltagsgeschichte* is bound to remain the problem of the central focus of the historiography. It is simply impossible to detach this problem from the practical perspective of the observer of the Third Reich. Broszat's attempt to ‘normalize’ the Third Reich was ultimately informed by a German historical perspective – specifically his desire to re-integrate this history into the ‘prior’ and ‘sub-sequent’ events of ‘before’ and after, in order to reenable the Germans to recognize this episode as their own.²⁴ This will explain his attempts to restore the continuity of German history – continuity being a

precondition for the creation of a collective German identity.²⁵ However, although requiring that the history be written from the perspective of the ‘ordinary German’, it was a fundamentally different project than writing this same history from the perspective of the victims of the Nazi’s. For in any historiography that is guided by the experiences of the ‘ordinary’ Germans, the victims can at most be marginal actors, since their destruction was committed at the geographic margin of the Third Reich. As a result the history of the *Endlösung* is not the same as the history of the Holocaust, as Broszat himself stated in 1979.²⁶ His thesis, developed during the 1980s, according to which the lethal experiences of the Jews in the extermination camps required a ‘mythical’ coming to terms with ‘Auschwitz’, whereas the experiences outside these camps would provide a guideline for the ‘scientific’ assimilation of ‘Auschwitz’, must in light of his earlier shown sensitivity to the problem of the historical perspective be considered both paradoxical and problematic.²⁷ Since history does not impose binding rules as regards the perspective from which it shall be written, the choice of the primary focus must be made by the historian. This choice cannot be detached from the problem of a normative evaluation of the Third Reich, particularly with respect to the place of the Nazi crimes within the characterization of the Third Reich.²⁸

Ultimately, therefore, Broszat, guided by a pedagogic motive ‘to return their history to the Germans’, chose the perspective of ‘normality’ as viewed by the contemporary ‘ordinary’ German as his point of departure of the historiography of the Third Reich. In so doing, the legitimization for his choice – by invoking the ‘historical method’ – was primarily scientific. As a result his work too fails to offer a solution to the problem of how this perspective should be related to the criminality of the Third Reich, and how the perspectives of the perpetrators and the victims were to be integrated into one overarching historiography. Although no other historians have so far succeeded in solving this problem, and in so doing guide the history of the Third Reich beyond the simplifications of ‘good’ and ‘evil’, this does not detract from the fact that Martin Broszat did at least ask the right questions.²⁹

The author wishes to thank the *Von Humboldt Stiftung*, whose grant of a Von Humboldt *Research Prize* greatly facilitated the writing of this article.

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- ¹ See: K-D Henke, 'Das Institut für Zeitgeschichte unter der Aegide von Martin Broszat 1972-1989', in: K-D Henke and Cl. Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit: Martin Broszat, das Institut für Zeitgeschichte und die Erforschung des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt o/t Main, 1991), 40-41
- ² Henke, 'Martin Broszat' 56; S. Friedländer / M. Broszat, 'Um die "Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus" Eine Briefwechsel', in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 36 (1988), 361.
- ³ A useful summary of Broszat's writings is contained in: H. Mommsen, 'Die Geschichte als Gegenwart. Zeitgeschichte als "Kritische Aufklärungsarbeit". Zur Erinnerung an Martin Broszat', in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 17 (1991), 141-157. Broszat's major publications include: *Der Nationalsozialismus: Weltanschauung, Programm und Wirklichkeit* (Stuttgart, 1960); 'Nationalsozialistische Konzentrationslager 1933-1945', in: H. Buchheim *et.al.*, *Anatomie des SS-Staates*. Vol. 1, Munich 1967, 11-137; *Der Staat Hitlers: Grundlegung und Entwicklung seiner inneren Verfassung*, Munich, 1969; (ed., *et.al.*), *Bayern in der SS-Zeit* (Munich 1977-1983); (ed.) *Das Dritte Reich. Herrschaftsstruktur und Geschichte* (Munich, 1983); *Alltagsgeschichte der NS-Zeit. Neue Perspektive oder Trivialisierung?* (Munich, 1984). His most important articles were collected in 1986 in: *Nach Hitler. Der schwierige Umgang mit unsere Geschichte* (Munich, 1986, and – revised – Munich, 1987).
- ⁴ See also: Broszat, 'Soziale Motivation und Führer-Bindung des National-sozialismus', in: *Nach Hitler*, 11-34.
- ⁵ See Broszat, 'Grenzen der Wertneutralität in der Zeitgeschichtsschreibung: Der Historiker und der Nationalsozialismus' in: *Nach Hitler*, 176. Ernst Nolte goes further by purposely restricting the 'phenomenological method' to a reproduction of the contemporary perspective. See: M. Schneider, "'Volkspädagogik" von rechts. Ernst Nolte, die Bemühungen um die "Historisierung" des Nationalsozialismus und die selbstbewußte Nation', in: *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 35 (1995), 532-582.
- ⁶ For Mommsen's attitude, see: H. Mommsen, *Der Nationalsozialismus und die deutsche Gesellschaft. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*. (Hamburg, 1991).
- ⁷ The clearest exposition of these ideas is to be found in his articles: 'Grenzen der Wertneutralität in der Zeitgeschichtsforschung: Der Historiker und der National-sozialismus' (1981), and: 'Eine Insel in der Geschichte? Der Historiker in der Spannung zwischen Bewerten und Verstehen der Hitler-Zeit' (1983), both published in: *Nach Hitler*, 162-185 and 208-216. For his last definitions, see: 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?' in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 247 (1988), 1-14.
- ⁸ Similar to the social interpretation of the French Revolution or that of the German Empire, the social interpretation of National Socialism as a brand of deterministic way of thought has during the recent post-modernistic decade been roundly criticized. See, for example: P. Baldwin, 'Social interpretations of Nazism: renewing a tradition', in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 25 (1990), 5, 37.
- ⁹ Broszat, 'Probleme der Hitler-Forschung', in: *Nach Hitler*, 129.
- ¹⁰ See: Broszat, 'Plädoyer für Alltagsgeschichte: Eine Replik auf Jürgen Kocka', in: *Nach Hitler*, 194-201.
- ¹¹ Broszat, 'Resistenz und Widerstand: eine Zwischenbilanz des Forschungsprojek-tes "Widerstand und Verfolgung in Bayern 1933-1945"', in: *Nach Hitler*, 136-162.

- ¹² For the original contributions to this debate, see: *'Historikerstreit'. Die Dokumentation der Kontroverse um die Einzigartigkeit der Nationalsozialistischen Judenvernichtung*, Munich, 1987. The *Historikerstreit*, to which Broszat himself also made a modest contribution, has meanwhile spawned a vast body of commentaries. The historiographical background was analyzed by me in: 'De Sonderweg in de Duitse historiografie. Posities, problemen en discussies', in: H. Beliën en G.-J. van Setten (eds.), *Geschiedschrijving in de twintigste eeuw. Discussie zonder eind* (Amsterdam, 1991), 141-181. The theoretical historical aspects were covered in: 'Historical knowledge and historical reality: a plea for "internal realism"', in: *History and Theory* 33 (1994), 297-328. It is rather remarkable how much understanding certain Dutch historians, including A. Gerrits and G. Zondergeld, have shown for Nolte's ideas – see: G. Zondergeld, 'De historici en de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Een Nederlands pleidooi voor Nolte', *In de marge* 4 (1995), pp. 3,12-18; A. Gerrits, 'Interview met Ernst Nolte', *NRC-Handelsblad*, 21 oktober 1995.
- ¹³ See Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?', 13: 'Der Zentralität von Auschwitz aus der Retrospektive steht als historisches Faktum gegenüber, das die Judenvernichtung in der Zeit, in der sie tatsächlich geschah, nur möglich war, weil sie gerade nicht im Rampenlicht stand, sondern weitgehend verborgen gehalten werden könnte, weil sie eine Minderkeit betraf, die schon Jahre vorher durch soziale Ghettoisierung systematisch aus dem Blickfeld der nicht-jüdischen Umwelt herausgerückt worden war.' 'Es ist evident: Der Stellenwert von Auschwitz im ursprünglichen Handlungskontext ist ein extrem anderer als seine Bedeutung in der nachträglichen historischen Sicht.' Comp. p. 9.
- ¹⁴ See also Broszat: 'Eine Insel in der Geschichte? Der Historiker in der Spannung zwischen Bewerten und Verstehen der Hitler-Zeit' (1983), both published in: *Nach Hitler*, 208-216.
- ¹⁵ For the complex place of the Holocaust in the history and politics of Israel, see: T. Segev, *The seventh million. The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York, 1993).
- ¹⁶ See: Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?' 2, and his claim that the crux of his 'historical understanding' is 'die Scharfe Spannung zwischen den beiden Elementen des Einsehens, des Verstehen-Wollens, und der kritischen Distanzierung, auszuhalten und sich weder in eine auch moralisch allzu einfache Pauschal-Distanzierung, noch in ein amoralisches Nur-Verstehen zu flüchten'.
- ¹⁷ Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?' 12: 'Dieses Potential der Holocaust-Erinnerung tendiert aber auch dazu, rückwirkend eine neue Hierarchie und Anordnung der geschichtsbestimmenden Faktoren zu schaffen, d.h. von Auschwitz her die ganze Geschichte des Dritten Reiches von rückwärts her aufzurollen, anstatt sie, wie das der historischen Methode entspricht, nach vorwärts zu entfalten.'
- ¹⁸ I. Kershaw, 'Die Erforschung des Hitler-Staates: Der Beitrag Martin Broszat's in: Henke and Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit*, 71-85. See also: I. Kershaw, *The Nazi-dictatorship. Problems and perspectives of interpretation* (London, 1993), 216: '[–] in their anxiety to combat over-personalized interpretations, "structuralist" approaches have at times appeared almost to write Hitler out of the script.'
- ¹⁹ Chr. Browning, 'Beyond "intentionalism" and "functionalism": the decision for the Final Solution reconsidered', in: *The path to genocide. Essays on the launching of the Final Solution* (Cambridge, 1993), 86-125.
- ²⁰ This, of course, should not be taken to mean that Broszat tries to absolve Hitler from his responsibility for the mass murders, the way this was done by, for example, David Irving. In Broszat's view the importance of Hitler as a person was 'secondary' compared to the explanatory factors mentioned by him. See: Broszat, 'Hitler und die Genesis der "Endlösung". Auf der Anlaß der Thesen von David Irving', in: *Nach Hitler*, 45-92. For a discussion of Hitler's power, see: Kershaw, *The Nazi-dictatorship*, 61-82.
- ²¹ This problem is inherent in all explanatory strategies that fail to connect the 'Holocaust' to Nazi-Germany, but instead link it to some more abstract entity (such as previously 'capitalism' and these days 'modernity'). For this problem, see: M. Marrus, 'Reflections on the historiography of the Holocaust', in: *Journal of Modern History* 66 (1994), 92-116.
- ²² S. Friedländer, 'Überlegungen zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus', in: D. Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zur Historisierung und Historikerstreit* (Frankfurt a/d Main, 1987), 34-50; Friedländer, 'Briefwechsel', 41-42: 'Die historische Bedeutung dieser Institutionen

im Rahmen des National-sozialismus ist zuerst und vor allem ihre systemstabilisierende Rolle. Wenn man Institutionen in solcher Weise beurteilt, dann können nur wenige vom Regime unabhängig oder an seiner immer radikaleren Entwicklung völlig unbeteiligt gewesen sein. In einem System, dessen inneren Kern von Anfang an Verbrecher-isch war, ist sogar Nichtbeteiligung, Passivität als solche systemstabilisierend'; D. Diner, 'Zwischen Aporie und Apologie', in Diner (ed.), *Ist der National-sozialismus Geschichte?*, 6-7. Friedländer also points out that the majority of Nazi-collaborators in the occupied countries legitimized their action by invoking notions similar to 'resistancy'.

Comp. D. Peukert, 'Alltag und Barbarei. Zur Normalität der Dritten Reiches', in: Diner (ed.), *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte?*, 51-58.

23 See: A. Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang. Die Zerstörung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums* (Berlin, 1986); Friedländer, 'Überlegungen zur Historisierung', 69-70; Diner, 'Zwischen Aporie und Apologie', 66: 'Bei der Massenvernichtung handelte es sich um eine auf gesellschaftlicher Arbeitsteilung beruhende und durch institutionellen Vernebelungen totaler politischer Herrschaft ermöglichte bürokratisch-industrielle kollektive Tathandlung.'

24 See Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?', 6, where he claims that his 'historization' is intended to achieve 'das auch dieses zutiefst verderbte Kapitel der deutschen Geschichte wieder als ein Stück der eigenen Geschichte greifbar wird.'

25 S. Friedländer, *Martin Broszat und die Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus*, in: K-D Henke and Cl. Natoli (eds.), *Mit dem Pathos der Nüchternheit*. 164-165. Broszat's efforts ever since the 1980s at integrating the Third Reich into its history 'before and after' – as well as to expand the functions of his Institute to include the periods prior to 1933 and beyond 1945 – must also be seen within the context of his efforts towards restoring continuity.

This motive is totally absent in Christopher Browning's version of the *Alltags-geschichte*, from which follows that the *Alltag*-approach need not necessarily be linked to the objective of identity-formation. See: Chr. Browning, 'German memory, judicial interrogation and historical reconstruction: writing perpetrator history from postwar testimony', in: S. Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the limits of representation, Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 22-37.

26 Broszat, "'Holocaust' in die Geschichtswissenschaft", in: *Nach Hitler*, 117: 'Die einschlägige deutsche Zeitgeschichtsschreibung, auch die Bild- und Filmdokumentationen, stellte in der Regel nicht die jüdische Erlebnis- und Verhaltensgeschichte, sondern fast ausschließlich die deutsche Aktionsgeschichte der Judenverfolgung in den Mittelpunkt. Basierend vor allem auf amtlichen deutschen Quellen aus der NS-Zeit, blieb der Verfolger-Perspektive dieser Quellengrundlage auch für die Darstellung des Themas weitgehend maßgeblich. Die jüdischen Opfer kommen meist nur schemenhaft vor, als Objekte der Verfolgung. Nicht die Geschichte des Holocaust, sondern der "Endlösung" wurde geschrieben, auch in den Schulbüchern.'

For a recent discussion of this issue of the choice of a perspective in the historiography of the Third Reich, see: Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the limits of representation*.

27 Equally notable is his view that non-German perspectives of the Third Reich were both necessary and legitimate. See: Broszat, 'Was heißt Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus?', 11: 'Zur Besonderheit dieser Periode gehört vielmehr gerade, dass infolge der Verfolgung von Millionen von Menschen nicht-deutscher Nationalität auch jeglicher exklusiver Anspruch auf deutsche Geschichtsdeutung in Bezug auf diese Periode verspielt wurde. Jeder deutsche Historiker tut gut daran, sich dies mit allen Konsequenzen bewußt zu halten.'

Similarly significant is the fact that Hans Mommsen, who almost everywhere defended identical positions and viewpoints as Broszat, disassociated himself from Broszat on this point. See Mommsen: 'Zeitgeschichte als "kritische Aufklärungsarbeit"', 155-156: 'Mir scheint es unmöglich, der Geschichtsschreibung Authentizität im Sinne der Darstellung der Dinge von ihren inneren Voraussetzungen her abfordern zu wollen. Der historiographischen Integration des Geschehens dieser Jahre wird notwendigerweise nur von klaren richtungspolitischen Aussagen her möglich sein. Die Suche nach der historischen 'Normalität' entspricht einem Trugschluß. Die partikularen Erfahrungen der Zeitgenossen selbst, in ihrer ganzen Widersprüchlichkeit, decken sich nicht mit dem Zurückschauenden in seiner vielfältigen Dimension erschließenden Geschehen.'

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- ²⁸ That the choice of a perspective ultimately is a function of value judgments about the 'essence' of the Third Reich is emphasized by Broszat as well as Friedländer. In Friedländer's view the 'Auschwitz perspective' should continue to occupy a central place, given the fact that 'Auschwitz' was the most notable feature of the Third Reich. See: Broszat-Friedländer, 'Briefwechsel', 341, 342, 351. For a general treatment of the issue of the choice of a perspective, see my 'Historical knowledge and historical reality', 318 ff.
- ²⁹ Comp. Kershaw, *The Nazi-dictatorship*, 209-217.