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English summaries

Moritz Csáky:

Ambiguity of Memory and Remembrance

Current scientific discourse has been dominated by memory and recollection of memory for some time now. Hence, recent scientific concepts of memory have tried to reconstruct specific sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) which were held to be relevant for the construction of (national) collective identity. However, these concepts seem to disregard the basic equivocalness and ambiguity which are inherent to such sites of memory; here a static view on memory and recollection towers above the flowing aspects: by reconstructing sites of memory along the lines of national identity however, such views on memory are subsequently shifting towards the construction of new national identities. Following this, we define the elements and codes in sites of memory as fundamental transnational and rather see the possibility of using them in the context of the construction of “nationality”. We therefore emphasize the importance of deconstructing sites of memory rather than reconstructing them. Semiotics and theories of text and performance are useful tools for analysing the ambiguity and “polyphone” aspects of sites of memory.

Urs Altermatt:

Delayed reception of the holocaust in Switzerland

In most Western European countries, perception of the holocaust underwent four different stages. In the aftermath of World War II, memories of war and resistance were at the center of public remembrance. It was not until the 1960s that the holocaust became a more prominent aspect of public remembrance of the period from 1933 to 1945. In the 1980s, academic discussion of the Shoah intensified, and by the 1990s the holocaust had come to play a central role in a globalized collective memory.

These stages up to the 1970s were more or less followed by public debates in Switzerland on the prewar and wartime periods. In the 1980s, the gap between European and Swiss memory widened. Whereas in most European countries the holocaust had become an integral part of the collective memory, in Switzerland in 1989 it was the anniversary of military mobilization at the beginning of the war which was commemorated. It was only in the 1990s that debates on unclaimed Jewish assets in Swiss banks began to allow for a more victim-centered view of the Nazi period, finally establishing the holocaust in the collective memory. This article examines the different stages of holocaust remembrance in both European

and Swiss historiography and presents reasons for the significant change in the perception of the holocaust in Switzerland in the 1990s.

Thomas Maissen:

Our regular lack of leadership

Switzerland has become the victim of its own success-story during the 1990ies. The secular, particularistic and “pessimistic” interpretation of its past clashed with the religious, universal and optimistic tradition of the United States, since the dissolution of the Soviet Empire had made it possible to look for a new world order. One of its fundamentals was the Holocaust, no longer only in its Jewish interpretation as the genocide of one particular people, but as a moral lesson and warning that different ethnic groups – all of them minorities in a globalized world – must peacefully live together. Through reaching a settlement with class-action-plaintiffs, the Swiss banks symbolically became part of the new moral economy of restitution on a universal level. Although it was possible for the Swiss to spend a lot of money to save their business in the USA, they were not able to apologize for misdeeds during the war (e.g. politics towards refugees). Swiss national memory and internal politics did not allow what would have been considered a capitulation. The Swiss government defended this position by behaving passively almost throughout the whole debate. This lack of leadership was annoying to those who were looking for a solution to the crisis, but it belonged to a historical tradition which had made a virtue of necessity: weakness prevents Swiss governments from taking responsibility and thus allows very flexible responses to external pressure.

Ursula Amrein:

Double location. The German-language literature in Switzerland between 1880 and 1950

The Swiss cultural élite drew an emphatic line of demarcation between themselves and the “Third Reich” after 1945, thus rejecting any involvement in the history of national socialism. This stands in marked contrast with the cultural self-perception of multi-lingual Switzerland, which since the 19th century had always defined itself in part through its links with the neighbouring linguistic cultures. German-language literature in Switzerland was brought problematically close to national socialist Germany because of the writers’ double allegiance first to Switzerland, and then to the cultural area as a whole. The logic followed in dealing with this double location in the period between 1933 and 1945 can be traced by considering how discourse about Switzerland and its literature emerged in the European context of nation-building and Modernism. Another question to be raised is what premises and

conditions made it possible to evade critical reflection about the past until well into the nineteen-sixties.

Christian Koller:

The exposed «Volkskörper» (people's body): Sports at the Swiss national exhibition of 1939

The article analyzes the functions and contents of sports (sport pavilion and sport meetings) at the Swiss national exhibition of 1939 and provides a nuanced view for both fields of analysis. Essentially, sports organizations and functionaries were able to use the exhibition as a stage for self-production. Occasionally though, sports served an auxiliary role in patriotic displays, as in the case of the opening relay race. Though all federations appealed to the “spiritual national defense” the sport events revealed a variety of approaches, ranging from the national-conservative, the integrationist to a cosmopolitan version of national defense. Also the general slogan, “unity in diversity”, was taken up in the sports meetings. Besides, functionaries stressed the importance of sports for public health, military prowess and as an economic factor. Mirroring developments in the political sphere, the ideological rifts and rivalries that beset the Swiss sports community as late as the 1930s were replaced by a national truce. Altogether sports presented itself at the national exhibition in a completely different condition than still in the first half of the 1930s.

Georg Kreis:

Between shortage and abundance. Food-supply in 1939–1942 seen and presented by “Der Nebelspalter”

The article is based on a systematic review of all the issues of the satirical weekly *Der Nebelspalter* published during a four-year period (1939–1942). There are also selective observations concerning the remaining two and a half years of the war. The focus is on 1942, when bread and milk rationing was introduced and the border was closed to Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. What do the cartoons tell us about how well provided the population actually was? Our examination of the material in the magazine does not aim to discover the “true” food-supply situation. But it is a way of shedding light on a little-considered reality of everyday life with regard, not to primary reality, but to people’s perceptions, which constitute a no less important, second-hand reality. Records show that, under the aspect of shortages and surpluses, food was a major preoccupation, that self-criticism was highly developed and that the population was aware of Switzerland’s comparatively good supply situation. This is in marked contrast to the often self-pitying accounts of the time advanced during the debates following the events of 1996.

Anne Yammine:

A humanitarian propaganda offensive at the aftermath of the Second World War: The Swiss Aid for the European Victims of the War (1944–1948)

At the end of 1944 the Swiss government creates the *Swiss Aid for the European Victims of the War* (SA) by voting an initial credit of 100 million Swiss Francs (SFr.) for the Swiss humanitarian aid in the aftermath of the Second World War. This credit is conditional on an equivalent contribution of the Swiss population. In order to achieve this goal, the SA Head Office in Bern creates a fund-raising office in Zurich.

This paper focuses on the resulting propaganda offensive lead to promote the humanitarian aid and the fund-raising campaigns of the SA. Three types of propaganda can be assorted: the verbal, the visual and the symbolic. This humanitarian propaganda appears to perpetuate the national spiritual defence effort adopted during the war by gathering the Swiss behind a humanitarian mission. The SA aims to culminate the national humanitarian tradition in a generous donation which is conceived as a moral and civic duty. However the results of the fund-raising can't meet the initial expectations of 100 million SFr.: the donations amount to 46 million SFr. The letters of Swiss people to the SA indicate that some offence is taken at the propaganda, sensed as coercing and therefore not corresponding to Swiss understanding of charity. But moreover, the population seems preoccupied by its own sorrows and shows a general lassitude towards appeals for funds which were already quite present during the war.