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# Time for inspiration

Lecture by

**Dr. Thomas Lutz**

**Head of the Memorial Museums Department,  
Topography of Terror Foundation, Berlin**

# Content:

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- Does it make sense to deal with and compare the history of dictatorial regimes?  
Example: Nazi-Regime: Gestapo – DDR: Stasi
- For whom is it possible and helpful to compare
  - ◆ Different dictatorships
  - ◆ Developments today with committed state crimes in the past
- New concept of culture of remembrance:  
Dealing with perpetrators
- Conclusions



# Example: Comparison Gestapo - Stasi

## ■ **GESTAPO**

- Founded 1933 (-1945): Central agency to implement to Nazi-policy
- At the beginning unclear if it could fulfill its tasks
- Very dynamic and powerful development (with SS and SD until 1936), 1939 RSHA, Commander of the security police, armed SS
- Self-observing denunciation society
- Employees: Central RSHA: 3.300, staff members: about 50.000,
- Until 1939: experts, 25 % members of the NSDAP

## ■ **STASI**

- Founded 1950 (-1989)
- Soviet occupation force had executed the new system
- Formalized observation by informal personal (IM)
- Employees: 70/80ies:
  - ~ 90.000 staff members
  - IM: 200.000
- Proletarian birth
- All staff members had been party members

# Example: Comparison Gestapo - Stasi

## ■ GESTAPO

- Political opponents and Jews
- 1933/34: CC: 35.000, several hundred dead persons
- 1936: new CC under the command of the SS
- Since 1938/39: CC: 30.000 Jews, deprivation
- **Explosion of violence during WW II**
- Jews, political opponents and resistance, Roma, PoW, Forced Laborers, „Euthanasia“:
- 6 million humans died because of the crimes committed by the Gestapo

## ■ STASI

- Political opponents
- Inadequate way of live
- Prosecution 200.000, 900 dead persons

# Example: Comparison Gestapo - Stasi

- **GESTAPO**

- **STASI**

- in common:

- No separation from police and security service
- Observation, imprisonment, investigation for criminal cases, pre-trial custody in one hand
- No control and revision from outside
- Power of control about every single person

# Example: Comparison Gestapo - Stasi

- Does it makes sense to compare these two different dictatorships?
- What can you learn form it?
- The different importance for the actual political and societal discussion in Germany
- West Germany: Holocaust remembrance
- East Germany: GDR dictatorship is much more important, very high financial support, use of the history in actual political disputes

# For whom is it possible and helpful to compare?

## - Dictatorships

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- For **school kids** or **average visitors** of a class or museum it does **not** make sense to **compare** two or more **dictatorships**:
  - Overwhelming, Confusing, simple but wrong explanations.
- There is no easy and simple model how to explain and prevent state crimes
- **Easy explanations** like with mass violence nowadays as do not explain how someone became a murderer in a criminal government – instead of historical enlightenment such explanations lead to **moralized condemnations**.
- From historical learning and awareness of history can arise a sensitivity against state crimes today.
- Dealing with the most horrible human doings does not need to bear better humans.



# For whom is it possible and helpful to compare ?

## - Today with past state crimes

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- Dealing with history is always thought from today.
- **Dialectic implications:** the **picture of history** and **actual policies, cultural debates and curricula** in education
- **(West-)Germany** during the last 25 and more years is linked with a self-critical reflection:
- Acknowledgment of **all victims groups** is connected with a **civil rights movement**
- **Warning** for developments to state sponsored inhumanity
- intensive **research** with and **education about** different levels of perpetrators!

# New concept of culture of remembrance: Dealing with perpetrators

- Most important and most difficult for a state, political party or society: to come to grips with the own responsibility for crimes!
- Open discussion about historical facts, acknowledgement
- Criminal conviction
  - ◆ Undisputable: crimes
  - ◆ Important for victims: acknowledgement, restitution, justice, support to start a new live
  - ◆ Reconciliation?
  - ◆ Prevention
  - ◆ Resocialisation

# New concept of culture of remembrance: Dealing with perpetrators

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- Dealing with the perpetrators is the litmus-test how the transition of a state or society – or a part of it - is functional
- It is necessary to have an open and pluralistic debate about this issues, freedom of research and multi-perspective education
- International comparisons – among experts – are necessary. Precondition: debates are comparable
- Holocaust is an exception:
  - Historically: European History
  - Not so easy to use it for nationalistic interpretations

# New concept of culture of remembrance: Dealing with perpetrators

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- Challenge for nationalistic states, societies and partys:
- Commemoration of perpetrators or suppression to deal with the criminal structures and state criminals in the previous societies – create myths and lies
- Offends the victims
- Harms not only the process of transition but also an development of an open, liberal society and the education of the new generation: caused problems in international diplomacy but also within the own society
- Leads to continual suppression of marginalized groups in the own country and to conflicts with other states

# New concept of culture of remembrance: Dealing with perpetrators

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- **Disturbing developments in Europe:**
- States in Middle-East-Europe
- Parts of the Society in Europe
- Possibility the right to research and educate about previous state crimes will become more restricted
- **Two – not the only – examples:**
- Poland: plans to forbid by law to speak about Polish Gojms persons involved in the killing of Polish Jews
- Ukraine: demands a commemoration plaque for Stephan Bandera (leading person of the OUN) in the Memorial Museum of Sachsenhausen

# Conclusions

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- **Academic cooperation between historians and jurists is necessary and important**
- To understand the development of conviction of state and public crimes (starting debate: state violence against the Armenian people, Nuremberg Trials, U.N., ICC)
- Evidence of the responsibility in a chain of command
- Understanding of the historical developments derives criteria and laws of international validness to try to prevent and intervene in crimes against humanity, war crimes and dictatorships



# Conclusions

- The historical situations in which people became perpetrators as accomplice of state or public terror differs very much.
- A simple and easy equalization with other situations in history or current situation can lead to false interpretations and learning targets.
- For the historical classification and for the search for possibilities to prevent public crimes in the future comparisons – on an expert level – are necessary.
- Especially the cooperation between lawyers and historians needs to be much more intensive and widespread
- An international cooperation is necessary for prevention of nationalistic and admiring interpretations of state criminals for political reasons nowadays.

