

KREISKY
FORUM



2008 – EUROPE'S HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

COMING TO TERMS WITH EUROPE'S TRAUMATIC PAST – AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

curated by Ruth Wodak

PROGRAM

Breaking Silence or Making a Clean Break. Sites and Modes of Commemoration

26, 27, 28 June 2008

Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue
1190 Vienna, Armbrustergasse 15

Please indicate on which days you will be attending:

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All societies have experienced traumatic events in their past, be it war and war crimes, revolution, torture, mass killings, rape etc. Sometimes, taboos surround such events in the public sphere; frequently, narratives are constructed which mystify the participation in war crimes or other crimes, and reformulate the interpretation of historical facts and events according to the interests of specific political actors or groups. Such narratives are (re)produced through films, documentaries, political speeches and schoolbooks; moreover, they are also transferred into the private spheres of families and peer-groups. Various groups in the respective society compete for THE ONE and ONLY narrative which should be hegemonic. The latter then also have a strong impact on the discursive construction of national identities and draw on a whole range of collective and individual memories. Collective memory, thus, cannot be equated with history, but is linked to it and has multiple effects on the future. Pennebaker and Banasik summarise these processes succinctly: *'History defines us just as we define history. As our identities and cultures evolve over time, we tacitly reconstruct our histories. By the same token, these new collectively defined historical memories help to provide identities for succeeding generations.'*

The founding myths and the imaginaries on which every day recollections as well as collective experiences draw, form a part of the official past of every nation state. The construction of national identities always necessarily draws on narratives which relate the past, present and future in specific ways.

The symposium *'Breaking Silence or Making a Clean Break? Sites and Modes of Commemoration'* assembles prominent international scholars from multiple disciplines (History, Political Sciences, Sociology, Rhetoric, Discourse Studies, German Studies, Media Studies, and Literary Studies) who are all concerned with investigating 'the Politics of the Past' in European nation states (*Vergangenheitspolitik*) from various perspectives and by applying different theoretical and methodological approaches. More specifically, all participants attempt to provide first answers to the overarching questions, such as: how should one deal with 'traumatic' pasts which are prevalent in every society? How should one deal with perpetrators and victims? Should one focus on a common future and 'forget the past'? Can a 'clean break' be achieved? And which are the functions of such a 'clean break'? Can we learn from the experiences from other cultures and non-European countries? And if silence occurs, what are the consequences, for perpetrators, victims, and the entire society? We are aware that these difficult and complex questions will not be answered once and for all; but we do hope that this symposium will contribute to future debates.

Ruth Wodak, Vienna/Lancaster, sociolinguist and discourse analyst.
<http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/profiles/Ruth-Wodak>

Thursday, June 26

- 19.00 Welcome **Ruth Wodak**, Lancaster University, United Kingdom
19.15 On Individual Initiative
Keynote by **Gitta Sereny**, journalist and writer, United Kingdom
20.00 Reception (drinks)

Friday, June 27

- 09.30 A Battleground of Memory and Justice. Chile since the 1973 Coup
Keynote by **David Sugarman**, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

Panel 1: SILENCE/SILENCING AND CENSORSHIP: MEMORY AND MEDIA

- 10.30 Historical Scholarship, Politics of the Public Past, and (Semi-) Private Memory
Mitchell Ash, University of Vienna, Austria
10.50 Considering the Violence of Voicelessness: Censorship and Self-Censorship Related to the South African TRC Process
Christine Anthonissen, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
11.10 Discussion
11.40 Coffee break
12.00 Creating Acceptable Meanings for the Present: Some Discourse Analytic Reflections on Verbal Commemorative Practices
Titus Ensink, University of Groningen, Netherlands
12.20 Transforming the Holocaust. Remarks after the Beginning of the 21st Century
Dirk Rupnow, University of Vienna, Austria
12.40 Discussion

Panel 2: THE POLITICS OF A 'CLEAN' BREAK?

- 15.00 Justice, Truth, or Internal Peace: Advantages and Disadvantages of Three Different Options
Anton Pelinka, Central European University, Hungary
15.20 Clean Break and Usable History. The Hungarian Debate of the Historians
Andras Kovács, Central European University, Hungary
15.40 The Trauma of Perpetrators
Bernhard Giesen, University of Konstanz, Germany
16.00 Discussion
16.30 Coffee break
17.00 Israel's Prenatal Memory: Born in 1948 – Traumatized in 1938
Moshe Zimmermann, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel
17.20 Spoken Silence – Bridging Breaks. The Discursive Construction of Historical Continuities and Turning Points in Austrian Commemorative Speeches
Martin Reisigl, University of Vienna, Austria
17.40 Discussion

Saturday, June 28

Panel 3: COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL TRAUMA: CONFRONTING WAR CRIMES

- 09.30 Constructing Memories of War. The Case of Poland
Jan Gross, Columbia University, USA
09.50 Spain between Amnesia and Political Instrumentalization of the Recent Past
Walther Bernecker, University of Erlangen, Germany
10.10 The Legacy of the Holocaust and Scandinavian Small-State Foreign Policy
Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark
10.30 Discussion
11.10 Coffee Break
11.30 Confronting War Crimes of the "Wehrmacht"
Walter Manoschek, University of Vienna, Austria
11.50 Images of the "Other" and Danish Politics of the Past: Antisemitism, Xenophobia, and the Dream of Cultural and Ethnic Homogeneity
Thorsten Wagner, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany
12.10 From Collective Violence to a Common Future: Four Models of Dealing with a Traumatic Past
Aleida Assmann, University of Konstanz, Germany
12.30 Discussion