



- Es gilt das gesprochene Wort -

**Welcome Adress Thomas Krüger, President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education
Conference Perpetrator Research in a Global Context
January 27th 2009, Berlin**

Dear Minister Schäuble,
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Around two years ago in December of 2006, the German Federal Agency for Civic Education invited experts to Berlin to take part in its first international conference on Holocaust research. One unforgettable contribution for everyone who attended that event was the address given by Raul Hilberg, a pioneer in the field of Holocaust research. His talk was emotional and moving, and his analysis was both insightful and impressive. That was Raul Hilberg's last major public appearance in Europe before his death in August of 2007. One aspect of his presentation that left a particular impression was his assessment that, despite several decades of highly specialised research, we still know very little about the Holocaust. Hilberg's remarks are both a summons and a legacy for the fields of Holocaust research and civic education; a call for us to continue to grapple with and explore the greatest break with civilization in history.

At the last conference, many people expressed the wish that the Federal Agency for Civic Education hold a regular event focused on Holocaust research for academics and professionals in the field of civic education. Until then, there had been no forums of this nature in Germany. We have acted on those requests, and will from now on organise this forum at regular intervals. For those of us here today in Berlin, this year's International Holocaust Remembrance Day also marks the start of the second International Conference on Holocaust Research – this time with a focus on the perpetrators.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Holloway, University of London and the Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities in Essen – represented here by Prof. Katie Normington and Prof. Claus Leggewie – for helping to realise this conference in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education. A very special thank-you also goes to the two recognized experts in the field who initiated the event and have been involved with the project from the very beginning: Prof. Harald Welzer and Prof. Peter Longerich.

I'm also very happy that we were able to enlist the support of so many renowned experts from the US, Israel, Sweden Poland, Ukraine and Germany. In the next two days, ladies and gentlemen, they will share with you the latest findings and insights in the area of

Pressekontakt:
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Stabsstelle Kommunikation
Adenauerallee 86
53113 Bonn

Tel +49 (0)228 99515-200
Fax +49 (0)228 99515-293
presse@bpb.de
www.bpb.de/presse

**Welcome Adress Thomas Krüger, President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education
Conference Perpetrator Research in a Global Context
January 27th, 2009, Berlin**

perpetrator research, as well as tell you more about how that knowledge is being employed in civic education practices.

I would therefore also like to express my thanks to each and every speaker who has travelled a great distance to take part in this important event.

The international aspect of this conference is a clear reminder to us that there are no longer any pure national cultures of remembrance, and there haven't been for some time. Increasingly we will have to understand remembrance in European or global terms, without however forgetting specific national perspectives and their attendant responsibilities.

You might be asking yourself why – from among all the alternatives – we chose to make perpetrators the central subject of this conference. Allow me to answer in the words of Raul Hilberg. When asked during an interview a few years ago why he had made perpetrators just as much an aspect of his research as victims, he responded by saying: "...because only the perpetrator knew what was going to happen the next day, not the victim. The perpetrators were crucial. You cannot begin with the reaction."

This means that in civic education activities, seeking to understand the perpetrators is an inescapable aspect of any comprehensive analysis of the Holocaust. Only by simultaneously examining victim and perpetrator can one begin to approach the question of "Why?", and communicate the lessons of history to the generations that follow.

Subjects that merit our particular attention are the processes and structures that, within a very short period of time, allowed human beings to be segregated, defined as a minority, deprived of their rights, persecuted, and finally destroyed. We must learn to know and understand what political, social, economic and moral coordinates promote such processes and turn people into perpetrators. Only then will we be able to recognize ostracism and marginalization in the present world, and acquire the ability to thwart attempts to redefine our moral value system and the erosion of democratic principles. Civic education has to succeed at communicating to people an important realisation; that even in repressive situation, there are other possible courses of action than either silently watching events from the sidelines or playing an active role in the repression.

For me, this train of thought always brings to mind the "Street of the Righteous" at Israel's national Holocaust Memorial Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, which bears witness to the fact that even during the Nazi era, there were people who helped Jewish fellow citizens, and in many cases saved their lives.

Ladies and gentlemen, in the upcoming two days you will have the chance to learn about extremely varied aspects of Holocaust perpetrator research. You will hear about it from an

Pressekontakt:
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Stabsstelle Kommunikation
Adenauerallee 86
53113 Bonn

Tel +49 (0)18 88 515-284
Fax +49 (0)18 88 515-293
presse@bpb.de
www.bpb.de/presse

**Welcome Adress Thomas Krüger, President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education
Conference Perpetrator Research in a Global Context
January 27th, 2009, Berlin**

interdisciplinary viewpoint – as well as from viewpoints from historiography to social psychology to philosophy. In order to analyse what perpetrator profiles have in common and where they differ, we thought it important to include two comparative examinations of other genocides as illustrative examples: from Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia.

In diverse workshops that will also include presentations on concrete examples of implemented projects, we will be discussing how to successfully transfer theory into practice for civic education. Among other topics, the workshops look at the current situation in schools and non-formal civic education activities.

Within this context, we need to pay particular attention to the special challenges facing civic education in immigration societies. There we have to pursue new paths and try out new ideas that will also speak to people with a migration background, while finding adequate ways of mediating work in religious, national or ethnically mixed groups.

In the last several years, there have been repeated attempts to come to terms with the Holocaust in film and the other arts – many of them bold, and not a few hotly debated. In a panel discussion at the end of the conference, we want to discuss the access that art can provide to the topic by treading the fine line between moral responsibility and artistic freedom. I would like to invite all of you to attend, and I urge all of you in the meantime to make full use of the opportunities for dialogue here. Take advantage of this tremendous chance for ‘networking’ between academia and civic education, and make it bear fruit in your own activities.

Finally I would like to thank our tried-and-tested media partner Spiegel Online for their support in monitoring this conference.

I wish all of you exciting and productive discussions in the coming days!

Thomas Krüger
President of the Federal Agency for Civic Education

Pressekontakt:
Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung
Stabsstelle Kommunikation
Adenauerallee 86
53113 Bonn

Tel +49 (0)18 88 515-284
Fax +49 (0)18 88 515-293
presse@bpb.de
www.bpb.de/presse