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Part 7: A sensitive topic of shared history?
World War II

When the first volume of the Franco-German History Textbook appeared early in 2006, most journalists were primarily interested in the question as to whether or not it had been possible to find a common denominator for the porFtrayal of post-1945 history. Once the authors and others responsible for the project had repeatedly emphasised that they had mostly been able to reach agreements regarding the difficult issues without difficulty, journalists turned their attention to the second volume, which – it was said – was more 'delicate' due to the heightened conflict between the two countries during this period, as the Mannheimer Morgen newspaper insisted: 'The ten historians […] will require diplomatic expertise to gingerly negotiate the more delicate pitfalls'[1]. The French weekly newspaper Marianne also speculated that it would be more difficult to reach a consensus on the issues of guilt and responsibility and the consequences of the war[2]. Two years later, we hold the result in our hands, and turn without delay to Part Seven on the Second World War, which spans four chapters[3]. The portrayal in the Franco-German History Textbook will be compared with the French textbook, Histoire. Le Monde, l'Europe, la France (1850–1945) 1er L–ES–S (hereafter: Histoire), published by Nathan, and the German textbook, Geschichte und Geschehen (hereafter GuG), published by Klett[4].
The beginning of Part Seven features observations on the principal phases of the Second World War from 1939 to 1945 (Chapter 16)[5]. While GuG considers the prehistory of the outbreak of the war from a purely German perspective, thus apportioning blame for the Second World War to Germany alone, the Franco-German History Textbook places Germany and Japan onto the same level as early as in the short introductory text: 'Entire peoples were cast into slavery and annihilated under German and Japanese rule' (p. 298). Histoire even includes formerly fascist Italy in the first sentence of the chapter: 'Since the beginning of the 1930s, Japan, Germany and Italy had been expanding their battle troops' (p. 293). Without misappropriating the specific role of National Socialist Germany, Histoire particularly emphasises the aggravation of the international situation since the beginning of the 1930s, with the result that the Spanish Civil War is also understood in this context, while the Franco-German History Textbook allocates this confrontation to the chapter entitled 'The Crisis of the Democratic Constitutional States 1918–1939'. It is also noteworthy that the Franco-German History Textbook begins its section on 'The Path to War (1931–1939)' with the subject of Japanese expansion policy in Asia, only retracing the basic aspects of the annexation-orientated NS foreign policy previous to 1939 in Part Two. German history teachers and historians may well be alarmed; the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 thus marks the beginning of the path to war. Certainly the question must be raised as to whether the 'military expansion policy' (p. 302) of Japan, which is not to be ignored, really did make the same contribution to the outbreak of World War II as the battle of world views pursued by Hitler. It

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would have been more appropriate to differentiate with greater clarity here. It would also be advisable to reconsider the teleological approach of this chapter, which suggests that the outbreak of war was the inevitable terminus of a linear development.
The depiction in Histoire, however, follows a much more open approach, speaking with reservation of the growing dangers ('La montée des périls') and apportions not a small amount of blame for the fact that Hitler must have felt supported in his war-hungry foreign policy to the appeasement politics of the Western-European democracies. Generally we should remember here that Histoire as well as the Franco-German History Textbook – more so than GuG – project multiple perspectives onto the depiction, particularly with regard to the Pacific War, which GuG mentions in passing at best, while the Franco-German History Textbook dedicates an entire dossier to the topic of 'Japan at War 1937–1945' (p. 316f.). The overpowering weight given to National Socialism and its crimes seems in this case too to hinder the authors of GuG in focusing further on the international character of the war, with the result that it remains more 'national' in its conception compared to the other two textbooks under comparison here.
In Chapter 17, the Franco-German History Textbook deals with the topic of 'Europe under German Rule' with a focus on the restructuring plans of the NS regime. Here, the key question concerns the differentiation between German rule in Europe, which culminated in a war of extermination against communism and the 'Slavic race' or a 'battle of two world-views' in the East, and the classical form of military occupation. The chapter suggests an interpretation template for the pupils, who are advised to explore the matter via two 'Questions and Proposals' ('Explain why the treatment of the Soviet prisoners of war was unprecedented', p. 325; 'Discuss why it can be said that the National Socialist crimes were unprecedented in the course of history', p. 335). The authors thus implicitly give their response to the German 'Historians' Dispute' of 1986/87, at the outset of which historian Ernst Nolte had posed the question as to whether the Bolscheviks' assassination of class might have been the logical and factual precedent for the racial murder committed by the National Socialists. This interpretation can equally be read as a reaction to Schwarzbuch des Kommunismus (A Black Book of Communism), edited by Stéphane Courtois et al. in 1997[6], in which the latter speaks of the 'Red Holocaust' in the hope of reinforcing this judgement of communism by placing it on a level with National Socialism. The Franco-German History Textbook claims, 'The gas chambers lent the Holocaust the unique character of genocide carried out in industrial proportions' (p. 334). GuG contains neither implicit nor explicit references to the 'Historians' Dispute'[7]; rather, the book details the debate on the Wehrmacht exhibition (p. 299) and provides a variety of perspectives on the implications of the armed forces of the Third Reich, who had long been considered 'free of guilt' in the war of extermination, under the rubric 'Viewpoints' (p. 304f.). It equally refers to the participation of the 101st division of the Hamburg Police Reserves in the murder of the Jews, as Christopher Browning has demonstrated[8], (fortunately) without, however, being led into the subsequent 'Goldhagen Debate'. Rather, GuG as well as Histoire (p. 326) intends to present pupils with the question as to whether or not the Holocaust can be explained and whether it is a phenomenon that might repeat itself under certain circum-stances (p.

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309f.), or – to put it another way – how 'perfectly normal men' were transformed into murderers and hangmen. To this end, the pupils are called upon in GuG to search for historical tracks of the persecution of the Jews in their own local area (p. 315). Histoire formulates the issue as one of two core questions at the beginning of the chapter as to the lessons that may be drawn today from the extermination of the Jews (p. 319).
Alongside the topic of the Holocaust, the Franco-German History Textbook allocates a large space to the development of German society during the Second World War. In doing so, it correctly points to the fact that the Germans were able to lead a 'more-or-less normal life', despite all bombing raids, until only a few weeks before the end of the war, not least due to the systematic exploitation of the occupied territories. The chapter does briefly mention the public discussion of recent years surrounding the question of the Germans as victims of the Second World War (p. 326). Emphasis must also be drawn to the indepth portrayal of the German resistance in all its variations (p. 328f.), which in Histoire is only dealt with by a few lines (p. 322).
The Franco-German History Textbook thus provides French pupils with the opportunity to gain insight into the particular situation of the German resistance, who – as did the 'conspirators' of the 20th July 1944 – sometimes needed some time to realise that their actions were deeds of patriotism. GuG deals with the various resistance groups across four pages, without initially misappropriating that it was a matter of a 'resistance without the people' (Hans Mommsen). Further, it points the pupils towards the academic debate (Detlev Peukert, Ian Kershaw) surrounding the various forms of resistance (From Non-Conformity to Resistance). Once again, the pupils are encouraged by the exercises to familiarise themselves with the history of their town or region and, in this case, to search for further examples of 'resistance'. These tasks, which are orientated towards taking action, should make it clear to the pupils that history is also a part of their everyday surroundings, familiarising them with autonomous and independent learning via a more liberal approach. Additionally, the pupils gain experience of learning through research; this is also a phenomenon to be found in the Franco-German History Textbook in the methodological section entitled 'Interviewing Witnesses' (p. 338f.), which, amongst other exercises, calls upon the pupils to conduct 'oral history' by talking to their friends and family members.
Although Histoire sensitises the pupils to dealing with statements made by witnesses, the methodological section merely presents textual témoignages (p. 237). After all, French history teaching has had no tradition of learning through research and taking action up until now. Nor can this didactic approach be confused with the emotionalised personalisation of history as prescribed by the French heads of state[9], which no longer features facts, but rather individual lives and paths of suffering[10], as the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung recently commented: 'At best memory and at worst mythology are preferred to history as an academic subject. Memory culture should serve the process of nation-building. As Nicolas Sarkozy detests "the remorse that forbids us to be proud of France […]", the focus is not on analysing history and recognising past mistakes. For Sarkozy, it is a case of prescribing one official version of history'[11].
Chapter 18 provides a wealth of material for German pupils on the subject of France in the Second World War (1939–1945), with an indepth analysis of the

consequences of German occupation policies. It also provides the opportunity to address a central chapter of French history, one which has shaped the French selfimage and identity up until the present day, as Max Gallo, historian and politician who has shifted from the left to the right wing, recently emphasised, not for the first time: 'The Second World War remains the point to which all political debates [in France] inevitably return […]. It is a past that will not pass'[12]. In the meantime, it is not only in Germany that the French are accused of veiling the unpleasant aspects of these années noires in a shroud of silence or placing a great deal of emphasis on the significance of the Résistance in order to distract from the collaboration of the Vichy Regime. Such was the immediate reaction of the German press when the new state president Nicolas Sarkozy had the letter of farewell written by Guy Môquet, a 17 year-old communist resistance fighter, read aloud as soon as he had been elected, at the same time giving the order for teachers to read this letter on the anniversary of Môquet's death (22nd October 1941) in all French schools as an example of courage and sacrifice.
The majority of French teachers and historians ignored this attempt to prescribe history writing from above[13], not least because, as the FAZ commented, 'this kind of remembrance is not longer appropriate in the age of the Franco-German History Textbook'[14]. Ultimately the plan failed, ridiculed by the French teachers' unions as a 'pathetic staging'. Sarkozy, however, was determined to continue interfering in the history lessons of his country, as he demonstrated a few months later, when suggested that French pupils in year 5 should 'mentor' deported Jewish children. Here too, the reaction of historians and psychologists was immediate and virulent, who feared – alongside state interference into education – the trauma of 10 and 11 year-old pupils who would not yet be able to bear such an emotional burden or develop a sense of guilt or responsibility for something they had absolutely nothing to do with. The same conclusion was reached by the historians' union founded in 2005, Comité de vigilance face aux usages publics de l'Histoire (http://cvuh.free.fr), which further ascertained that history in France was increasingly being employed as a political instrument since the election of Sarkozy. Not least as a result of the protests from a wide French public, this initiative to distort history also failed[15].

The Franco-German History Textbook can be read in multiple ways as a reaction to these debates on the politics of history. The map in Chapter 16 (p. 319), written by a French author, denotes via colour-coding the 'free' section of France ruled by Vichy an 'État allié à l'Allemagne, par exemple collaboration d'États (France)', thus placing it on a level with countries such as Italy, Romania and Croatia[16]. We may further read that Pétain used the French defeat of 1940 to abolish the Republic and install a 'real' or 'reactionary dictatorship' (pp. 342, 344), which did no damage to his popularity. Rather, he denoted himself a 'keen helper of the occupying forces' (p. 344), who were also able to rely on him during the persecution of the Jews, including the Jewish statues declared independently by the Vichy Regime in October 1940 and June 1941. This topic is also returned to in the rubric 'Questions and Proposals': 'Explain the role of the Vichy regime in the persecution of French Jews during the occupation' (p. 347). Nor is it forgotten, however, that a large number of French Jews were able to count on the support of the French population, thus escaping deportation. The French Résistance and the

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liberation of France are presented with nuance and accuracy in accordance with contemporary research, as indeed they are in Histoire. To summarise it in one sentence, we can maintain that the attempted exploitation of history by politicians has not (yet) found its way into French textbooks. Another advantage of the Franco-German History Textbook is that it also presents in this chapter a second dossier on the situation specific to the annexed Alsace-Lorraine, indicating the torn nature of this border region.
An analysis of the portrayal of the Second World War in the Franco-German History Textbook leads us to the conclusion that such an apparently sensitive topic for German and French historians is an obstacle that may be overcome today via a shared presentation, and which need no longer be condemned to failure on account of national viewpoints and prejudices. Rather, a comparison of these three textbooks indicates that it is possible to place varying methodological, thematic and conceptual points of focus and that – especially in the depiction of history – different approaches exist in France and Germany, approaches which the Franco-German History Textbook seeks to unify. It thus appeals to the teachers to familiarise themselves with the didactic concepts of the 'other' and to investigate their value for use in the classroom. Not only is the Franco-German History Textbook honoured as the epitome of Franco-German reconciliation from a political point of view, thus constituting a further stepping stone towards the development of transnational memory cultures; it also demonstrates that the discussion and adaptation of teaching methods and didactic concepts demand further cooperation. Nevertheless, Germany and France have undertaken a long journey together in this respect, as is demonstrated by events in Eastern Europe in particular, which indicate that the history of the Second World War has been abused in order to provide nations with self-justification and governments with legitimacy.

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[1] Joachim Rogge, 'Die sensibelsten Klippen warten noch', in: Mannheimer Morgen, 4.5.2006.
[2] Cf. Dominique Jamet, 'Le premier manuel franco-allemand. Un événement historiquement correct', in: Marianne, 13-19 May 2006.
[3] Chapter 19 is not addressed in this essay, as its topic is closely linked to Part One, and is therefore analysed by Reiner Marcowitz in his article.
[4] Histoire. Le Monde, l'Europe, la France (1850–1945) 1er L–ES–S. Édition 2007, directed by Jacques Marseille, Nathan, Paris 2007; Geschichte und Geschehen. Neuzeit, Sekundarstufe II, Ernst Klett, Leipzig 2006. Alternative textbooks by the same two publishing houses responsible for the Franco-German History Textbook were intentionally chosen for the comparison. In both cases, however, the authors and other responsible individuals differ.
[5] Cf. Cornelia Frenkel, 'VichyWaschi. Der Zweite Weltkrieg im binationalen Geschichts-buch', in: Dokumente 64 (2008) 4, pp. 25–28.
[6] Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné et al. (eds), Le livre noir du communisme. Crimes, terreur, répression, Paris 1997.
[7] On the debate, cf. Ulrich Herbert, 'Der Historikerstreit. Politische, wissenschaftliche, biographische Aspekte', in: Martin Sabrow et al. (eds) Zeitgeschichte als Streitgeschichte. Große Kontroversen nach 1945, München 2003, pp. 94–113; Steffen Kailitz (ed), Die Gegenwart der Vergangenheit. Der ›Historikerstreit‹ und die deutsche Geschichtspolitik, Wiesbaden 2008; Volker Kronenberg (ed), Zeitgeschichte, Wissenschaft und Politik. Der ›Historikerstreit‹ – 20 Jahre danach, Wiesbaden 2008.
[8] Christopher Browning, Ganz normale Männer. Das Reserve-Polizeibataillont 101 und die »Endlösung« in Polen, Hamburg 1999.
[9] Cf. Barbara Lefebvre, Shmuel Trigano, 'L'émotion contre l'Histoire', in: Libération, 26.2.2008.
[10] Cf. for a highly illuminating account on the subject: Henry Rousso, 'Un marketing mémoriel', in: Libération, 15.2.2008.

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[11] Elise Cannuel, 'Geschichtsunterricht zum Besten der Republik. Sarkozys Schulpolitik', in: FAZ, 21.6.2008.
[12] 'Sarkozy Makes up for Lost Time after Phase of Remorse'. Interview with historian Gallo in: FAZ, 21.10.2007. Using the wellknown saying of the 'past that will not pass', Gallo refers to the wellknown book by Henry Rousso, Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas, Paris, 1994.
[13] Cf. the article of protest written by 13 French historians: 'Guy Môquet: l'effacement de l'histoire et culte mémoriel', in: Libération, 19.10.2007.
[14] 'A History Lesson for Sarkozy', in: FAZ, 22.10.2007. In the same article, the FAZ describes with rich irony how Bernard Laporte, then trainer of the French national rugby team and today state secretary for sport, read out Môquet's letter of farewell to his team before the opening match of the Rugby World Championship against Argentina: 'It was obvious that the men were almost crippled by the shock. The World Championship began with the fiasco of an unexpected defeat'.
[15] Cf. Véronique Soulé, 'Le parrainage des enfants déportés n'aura pas lieu', in: Libération, 19.6.2008.
[16] There appears to be no good reason for the inaccurate translation in the German version: 'Mit dem Reich verbündete oder von ihm unterworfene Staaten (z.B. staatliche Kollaboration)'.

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