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Photography, Politics, and the Holocaust 1920-1950

Several photographs have saturated the public's understanding of the Holocaust. While the pictures still provide the most chilling accounts of concentration camps, broken families, and stripped identities, we have seen these pictures so often that the details do not appear important. What seems vital is that they "show" or "seem to show" what occurred. As historian Barbie Zelizer explains, we "are no longer aware of any difficulty in imagining and mentally picturing an event that has been so successfully packaged and depicted…" by the media.[1] We are so accustomed to the idea that the pictures enable us to successfully conceptualize the Holocaust that the overabundance of cliché photos leaves the viewer with the incapacity to "respond either critically or with empathy."[2] Although there exists more than two million photos in the public archives of more than twenty nations, the content of these images is extremely repetitive.[3] The atrocity photographs have "deadened our conscience as much as aroused it." [4] Many photographs have lost their linkage to the events that they first depicted and this has ironically aided in our ability to actually forget the atrocities rather than remember them.[5]

Holocaust photographs both seemingly eradicate the space between the photographs and the viewer providing supposed authentic representations of what really happened. There doesn't appear to be any interpretation; the actual photographer's eyes

[1] Zelizer, Barbie, Remembering to Forget (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 181.
[2] Baer,Ulrich, "To Give Memory a Place: Holocaust Photography and the Landscape Tradition," Representations, (University of California Press, 2000) 45.
[3] Hirsch, Marianne, Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) 8.
[4] Zelizer 202.
[5] Zelizer 8.

are simply replaced by the viewer's ability to see the exact same image even if he/she wasn't there. The photos seem to create a narrative story-line that supposedly anyone can understand. Holocaust photographs in particular seemingly show collective and authentic descriptions.[6] For example in figure I, we see the emaciated, half-clothed prisoners as they stood at the gates of Ebensee in May 1945. In figure II, the male prisoners are grabbing the barbed wire fence of Buchenwald. These two photographs became two collective images that are so often portrayed in Holocaust studies that we seem to be no longer shocked at the actual, horrifying pictures.[7] They show the suffering, malnourished Holocaust victims as the camps were liberated by American troops in 1945 and without historical analysis, the victims appear to be under a generalized designation as Jews terrorized in German concentration camps. Yet do we really know their history? By just looking at them, do we know the identities of these people? Were they posing for the camera? Did they want to be pictured? What had they experienced at the concentration camps before liberation? Were they professionally taken by the German Reich, the British, or by the Americans?

Figure I Jewish Virtual Library (May 7, 1945) Ebensee 1945

Figure II *Life Magazine* (April 1945) Buchenwald

[6] Zelizer 6
[7] Zelizer 181

Both of these pictures were taken at the time of American liberation. The prisoners at Ebensee shown in the first photograph resisted their deaths shortly before the arrival of the American troops when the guards planned to kill all remaining prisoners. They planned to fake an air-raid, guide the prisoners into tunnel 9 of Plant B and blow up the tunnel. But the rumor became known in the camp and the camp prisoners refused to enter the tunnel. The next day the SS men fled knowing that the Allies were coming to the camps and the Volkssturm, civilians doing guard duty, took over. A couple days later the Allied troops entered with food to save the remaining prisoners at Ebensee.[8] Also, statistically there were a larger number of political dissenters against the Nazi regime at the camp than Jews.[9] So we may not be looking at Jews but men of many different backgrounds but that historical detail becomes forgotten in the Holocaust narrative's association with the genocide of the Jews. At the time of the second picture, Americans were liberating Buchenwald and had found that the prisoners had already taken over the camp to force its surrender and most of the SS guards had already fled, yet without the knowledge of the prisoners' heroic efforts, they are often seen merely as victims.[10]

The historical details and contexts surrounding Holocaust photographs are crucial to our understanding. To interpret the events correctly and respect the dead honorably, viewers must recognize the nuances and distinctions of each photograph or event of the Holocaust. In the book The Lost: A Search For Six in Six Million, author Daniel Mendolsohn writes about the search for six of his Jewish family members who had

[8] Salat, Solomon J., "Final Days before Liberation," 10 March 1998, 10 December 2007, http://bob.swe.uni-linz.ac.at/Ebensee/Betrifft/66/salat.php
[9] Walden, Geoff, "Third Reich in Ruins," 20 November 2007, 10 December 2007, http://www.thirdreichruins.com/ebensee.htm
[10] "Buchenwald Photo Archive," 10 December 2007, http://www.buchenwald.de/media_en/index_ct.php?i=fotoarchiv

disappeared in the Holocaust. He describes how he traveled to the Ukraine and Poland and how the events and photographs he found of his family changed meanings once he knew their context more fully. A woman named Olga related details that made him think of these events much differently. She told Mendolsohn that Jews were herded into a Catholic community center at the northern edge of the town and the Germans had forced the captive Jews to stand on each other's shoulders; they placed the old rabbi on top and then they would knock him down. This would continue for hours. Olga didn't explain the mundane, accessible details. She described the sound of the machine gun fire coming from the cemetery and how her mother would run the sewing machine to drown out the sound. The photographs and facts about the Holocaust retain an emptiness and insularity without adding these details, "the kinds of details you would know about only if you'd been inside" or really wished to find out. [11]

Ultimately I want to address the political details involved with each Holocaust photograph that are often rarely discussed. The political and historical context of when the pictures were taken and also who and when they were viewed has had an impact on how the Pre-War and Holocaust history is both remembered and forgotten. Photographs, although at times perceived as the "truth," were always framed by the perceptions and political motivations of the people disseminating and viewing them. Especially in commemoration, photographs were altered so that particular viewers were allowed to see what they wanted to.[12] For example, because the Werhmacht were a distinct group from the SS, being just the German army and not necessarily those who ran the concentration camps, in commemoration they were often separated from the war crimes that they had

[11]Mendolsohn, Daniel. The Lost: A Search for Six in Six Million, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006) 25.
[12] Zelizer 9

also taken part in. In one commemorative exhibit about the Wehrmacht, the exhibit explained the existence of Auschwitz and the concentration camps but failed to connect the Wehrmacht to these camps because of their guilt. Specifics about the Wehrmacht such as who they were or what they did to victims were never discussed to protect their identity and to create a disconnect between the actual perpetrators and their crimes. Historian Harold Kaplan argues that "some have said that the view of general suffering blurs the crime and diminishes the fate of the actual victims."[13] So because the exhibit focused on the general suffering, it also took the onus off of some of the perpetrators. Moreover, the actual victim is no longer looked at as an individual person but under a blanket of sufferers who supposedly all endured the same crimes. This German "exhibit" aimed to open a discussion about the general suffering for those in the concentration camps to create a German openness about its past yet did not want to specifically blame the Wehrmacht. To determine who in the Wehrmacht was responsible for what crimes and to uncover the truth of mass genocide remains very difficult.[14] Kaplan argues that leaving out important information about the Wehrmacht and how they treated prisoners created a necessary myth saving Germany's self image showing that the crimes committed were unavoidable and for a worthy cause.[15]

In Susan Sontag's Regarding the Pain of Others, she argues that collective memory "is not a remembering but a stipulating: that THIS is important and this is the story about how it happened", with pictures that lock the story in our minds.[16] There remains an "endless supply of competing, verifiable accounts, the significance of which

[13] Kaplan, Harold, Conscience and Memory, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) 8.
[14] Bartov, Nolan, Grossman, Atina, Nolan, Mary, Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial of the Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 150.
[15] Kaplan 10.
[16] Sontag, Susan, Regarding the Pain of Others, (New York: Picador, Farrar, Sraus, and Giroux, 2003) 86.

is always in question…" not only in commemorating the Werhmacht but in remembering most details about the Holocaust which is what I want to explore in this essay by looking through Holocaust photographs and discussing how they were remembered differently throughout time.[17] The political context and uses of photography of each decade from 1920 to 1950 reshaped the meaning of the photographs. Each group, the Soviets, the Poles, the Jews, the British, the Americans, and the Germans represented themselves as either victims or unknowing bystanders at many points.

During the 1920's, photographs in Europe and in the United States were used as documentary evidence and preferred to the written narrative because it was assumed that pictures showed what was "real".[18] They were thought to establish clear, distinct accounts that blamed the perpetrator and martyred the victim. By the 1930's, these events and histories were much more complicated, much more nuanced and specific. News writers, in particular, began to realize that photos were politically and emotionally framed and a particular version of the truth. Throughout the war and liberation, photographs became much more generalized showing a "broadened, general Holocaust story" so a genocide like this would never happen again. By the 1950's, Allied propaganda no longer focused on Nazi atrocities, but rather on anti-Communist sentiment and increased anti-Semitism.[19] In essence, the politics surrounding Holocaust pictures has both generalized and changed the reality by showing the truth of only a certain group of people whether it was the truth from the German perspective, from the Jewish perspective or the Allied perspective. With this superficial "understanding" of the broader

[17] Kellner, Hans, "Never Again is 'Now,'" History and Theory, (Hofstra University, JSTOR, May 1994, 13 November 2006) 127.
[18] Struk, Janina, Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence. (New York: L.B. Tauris & Co.Ltd., 2001) 18.
[19] Struk 160.

Holocaust symbolic story, it allowed those viewing the pictures to naively believe they understood the Holocaust story and to forget the millions that died in the genocide.[20]

Photography in the 1920's

With the introduction of the thirty-five millimeter camera for common use in 1923, photography seemingly offered "real" representations of life during the 1920's.[21] Extensive wire connections, the flashbulb, and better lenses made the camera easier for everyday use.[22] In a growing consumer society with a burgeoning advertising business, the invention of the 35 mm camera became a new way of visualizing the world, a way of documenting life in great detail. Therefore, when the National Socialists came to power in Germany in 1933, ordinary people as well as painters, poets, sculptors, political activists, and workers turned to photography as a means of expression, as a "how to" to rebuild their society. Monthly newspapers, such as the Warsaw Jewish Newspaper, books, and photograph exhibits were produced so that anyone could understand the seemingly "objective truth" of the problems in Germany and how to fix them.

As the visual became a source for "news", its objective strengths as a universally understandable medium, compared to the written word, gave a power to images that many Germans associated with fact.[23] Conservative German photographers, such as August Sander, took advantage of this to share his ideas of rebuilding society; the camera could necessarily see to reveal the inner truth of groups of people just by taking a picture

[20] Zelizer 163.
[21] Brennan, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt (Eds). Picturing the Past: Media, History and Photography, (Chicago: The University of Illinois Press, 1999) 11.
[22] Zelizer 17.
[23] Brennan, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt (eds). 3.

of an individual.[24]

Figure III from The Racial Elements of German History (1922)

Hans Gunther

Fig. 169 – Jew from Germany

Fig. 170 – Jew from France; Saint-Saëns, composer

Since many thought the photographs were without "human meddling", the camera could be used to gather empirical evidence and as a "vessel of accuracy" of group sentiments based on the faces of individuals. In an exhibition called 'Film and Foto' in 1929 in Stuggart, 'criminal photos' showed scientific physiognomies symbolizing a whole generation or a whole nation.[25] This kind of photography showed up in books and magazines during the 1920's.

German photographer August Sander took pictures to study German social groups including workers, peasants, Jews, National Socialists, soldiers, students, the disabled. He published a type of "training manual" in book form. It became popular throughout Europe and the Nazis later used it to condemn any supposed physical differences from Aryan "stock". Another book published in 1922 by Hans F. K. Gunther produced photographs, shown above, depicting Nordic superiority over "inferior" races particularly, the Jews, who in these pictures lacked much individual difference from one another. The image of "discredited Jews" depicted a whole group of people as one person, a "parasite on the Aryan race" who must be exposed for their lack of morality.[26] The photographs were usually frontal poses, emphasizing facial expressions, features,

[24] Struk 16.
[25] Struk 17.
[26] Struk 19

and gestures meant to show a person's substance. The pictures shown , in figure III, are part of Gunther's book, The Racial Elements of German History, under the subtitle "Jews", in which rows of pictures are separated based on more specific types. For example, the Jews pictured here are part of the Hither Asiatic or Predominantly Hither Asiatic race.[27] Treating people with this "seeing is believing" attitude and thinking that photograph's display everything about a person reflect the Social Darwinist context that spread throughout both Europe and the United States during this time. The actual people in these pictures become lost under subtitles merely based on psygonomies, because of this Social Darwinist reasoning that scientifically classifies physical traits and character in the same categories, a product of the study of eugenics during the early twentieth century.

Even into the beginning of the 1930's, the Social Darwinist sentiment helped to segregate the Jews from non-Jews. The pictures below show their increasing isolation in European communities. For example, a store front, shown in figure IV, advertised a device to measure the size of human heads; Aryans were supposed to have long, thin skulls and they could use this instrument to prove their racial purity however the store used to be owned by Jews.[28] Figure V shows the Nazis measuring a man's nose in 1933 to determine who was an Aryan and who wasn't again showing how the Nazis felt their physical appearance also portrayed their inner substance.

[27] The Racial Elements of European History., 08 December 2007, http://www.white-history.com/earlson/hfk/reoehcover.htm

[28] "Eugenics Archives", http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/html/eugenics/static/images/1589.html

Figure IV Nazi Propaganda in Berlin Storefront

Anthropometric Device for measuring differences between Aryan and Non-Aryan Skulls

Roman Vishniac 1933

Figure V **Who Is an Aryan?**, 1933

Unknown Artist, German School

The Drama of the 1930's

By the end of the 1920's and into the 1930's, the use of photographs fundamentally shifted from being viewed as "scientific evidence" to revealing the "social consequences of economic hardship" from the Depression.[29] In part this shift came because of the destabilized economies and politics of much of Europe during the Depression, but also because critics recognized photos were also forms of propaganda. Photographs seemed to hold a new meaning; "documentary" photographs displayed a dramatic, emotional approach to convey hard economic and social times.[30] Because of this changed approach, the camera no longer seemed to render an objective reality, but a willfully chosen subjective reality. Importantly, the media in Germany became controlled by the Reich Press Chamber by the end of 1933. As a result, Nazi pictures depicted glorified images of the party's platform and its supporters proliferated. In fact,

[29] Struk 19
[30] Struk 25.

Heinrich Hoffman, Hitler's personal photographer, set up a photographic agency in Berlin where all photographs were authorized before being disseminated to the public.[31]

Still, innovative improvements in the camera during the early 1930's led to the proliferation of pictures. In 1934-1935, color film was introduced. Color images were seen as more "real" and more appealing than those in black and white. In fact, the first known color negative was the swastika. Other improvements such as long-range airplanes, extensive and faster wire connections, additional new bureaus, faster film, smaller cameras, and better lenses allowed people to "transmit images as quickly as words."[32] The handheld miniature Speed Graphic, a smaller camera, offered sturdiness and portability; the pictures had a new sort of professionalism and detail that they didn't have before. The everyday world could now much more easily be "recreated" in snapshots by amateurs with a camera.[33]

As photography became more popular in the 1930's, both amateur German and Eastern European Jewish photographers began taking pictures of their families and making home movies to document their families and cultures. For the Nazis, the pictures of Jewish families reinforced Jewish life as "exotic" and "other" compared to the authentic and healthy Nazi State. German families were encouraged to take pictures of their families and to produce "racially impeccable" photo albums.[34] Jewish families also created photo albums depicting their lives just as the Nazis constantly created photo albums to prove their Aryan superiority and the glories of the German State.

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[31] Struk 23.
[32] Zelizer 17.
[33] Brennan, Bonnie and Hanno Hardt (Eds) 24.
[34] Struk 24.

The Reich encouraged ordinary Germans to take pictures of their "perfect" families. They also circulated many pictures showing a clean, orderly environment as a way to underscore their political and economic successes. Importantly, images of the new found prison camps for thousands of unionists, communists, socialists, and political opponents were portrayed as holiday destinations on a beautiful countryside when in fact, they were already being killed and tortured.[35] In one photograph in the *German Illustrated Press* in 1933, prisoners were seen as they "marched in clean, scrubbed uniforms and accommodations, appeared comfortable and tidy".[36] No photographs were displayed of the beatings and deaths that were already becoming camp routine[37]. The National Socialists portrayed prison camps during the 1930's as places of tranquility and reform created to "fix" the impurities in society concealing the real conditions which included physical brutality.

Professional Jewish photographers documented Eastern European Jewish life, particularly in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Carpathia-Ruthenia, and Lithania, primarily to show their increasing destitution.[38] Hardly a coincidence, Jewish photographers wanted to show the hardships of Eastern European Jews at the same time the Germans were creating laws to separate the Jews from non-Jews. In September 1935, the Nuremberg Laws declared that 'Jews were to be allowed no further part in German life; no equality under the law; no further citizenship.'[39] The Jews were becoming increasingly outcasted and stripped of their fundamental human rights. Poland in 1936,

[35] Zelizer 43.
[36] Zelizer 43.
[37] Zelizer 43.
[38] Struk 27.
[39] Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Image Before My Eyes- APhotographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864-1939, (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1977) 147.

ordered all shops to display their owners so that people would not buy from Jewish stores. Some posters threatened people saying that they would be photographed if they bought goods from a Jewish-owned business. One German poster read "Jewish Business. If you buy here, you will be photographed", convincing a broad audience to discriminate against the Jews as well and showing the wide spread use of photography.[40] In 1938, the German army invaded Vienna and as a result 183,000 Jews lost their civil rights. Later that year, Jewish property was destroyed and Jews were murdered throughout Germany, in an event known as Kristallnacht.

Through photography Jews held onto some of their memories as they saw their towns, temples, friends, and family being destroyed. For example, Josef Kielsznia of Lublin and Mojzesz Worobiejcszk of Vilno documented their local Jewish communities in Poland and Lithuania respectively and in 1939 the Goskind Brothers were commissioned by a New York Yiddish film company to document Jewish communities in five different Polish cities.[41] Russian photographer Dr. Roman Vishniac was also asked by the American Joint Distribution Committee representatives in Berlin to document the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. Many of his pictures were taken with a hidden camera because of questionable motivations of being a spy. Also, many of the Eastern European Jews that he photographed did not want their picture taken because of the Jewish prohibition against making "graven images." Because of the unrelenting eyes of Reich, photographers, including Vishniac, were forced to hide their photographs.[42] Vishniac described that everyone who had a camera was suspected of being a spy because the Germans were extremely careful about which pictures were

[40] Struk 22.
[41] Struk 26.
[42] Struck 27.

published making sure their brutality remained unseen. Vishniac's photograph below, in figure VI, shows a Jewish man in Austria after the Anschluss, Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria, in 1938. He is softening his bread with water, a routine activity, but does not seem to be aware that Vishniac is even taking his photograph.

Figure VI by Dr. Roman Vishniac 1934-1939

Another photograph by Roman Vishniac shown in figure VII in 1938 does not only show a picture of two peddlers; it shows their poverty after the German boycott of Jewish goods. They were turned into peddlers and instead of facing squarely towards the camera, like a typical portrait from the 1920's, it includes their surroundings and depicts their difficult times.[43] They look extremely poor "indigenous" and old compared to the "modern" photographs of the Nazi state.

FigureVII by Roman Vishniac 1938

[43] Struk 18.

Figure VIII- Jews working in a factory producing Products from Leather

By1939 Germans put severe restrictions curtailing unofficial photography and the ownership of cameras and equipment and made sure that the pictures that were disseminated defended the Nazi state. As part of their propaganda Nazis used high-quality photographs. In the beginning of the war, the prisoner camps were pictured as testing grounds. The prison camp photographs showed medical experiments, visits by Nazi dignitaries, and identity photographs. Few showed any forms of physical brutality, rather they documented "works in progress."[44] For example the picture in figure VIII shows Jewish men working in a factory that produced products from leather around 1941. These kinds of jobs were sought after because unemployment was so high and because they seemed somewhat better when compared to other forms of Nazi slave labor. The Nazis continuously took pictures of these scenes to show the efficiency of the ghettos. Also, groups such as the Judenrat, the Jewish council, from the Lodz ghetto produced a photo album showing the Germans how hard the Jews worked and provided the Germans with reasons against their eviction.[45] They created their own propaganda geared to the Reich in an attempt to save their living quarters.

In fact, an astounding amount of German propaganda was produced in the 1930's. The quality of German pictures and their quick release to both the United States and Britain provided 'immediate', 'alive' representations showing German soldiers in

[44] Struk 86.
[45] "Photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto" (2004) http://yadvashem.org.il/exhibitions/warsaw_ghetto/workshops/workshops_1.html

action.[46] In September 1939, *Life* magazine reported that propaganda wise, the Germans had definitely won the first week of the war because of how many pictures flooded the USA and Britain compared to the French and British who didn't publish many propaganda pictures at all. The USA claimed they did not understand the war because in the pictures, there did not seem to be any fighting on the Western front according to the pictures that they received.[47]

Germany also often staged photographs to justify their invasion of Poland. Many pictures depicted Poles killing Germans. Photographs were widely distributed by the Germans showing a one-sided story. For example, when German troops occupied Bydogoscz, Poland in 1939, Poles were executed and arrested yet the photographs shown to foreign nations showed German corpses with their eyes and tongues torn out. Germany also released a picture in *Life* showing German women killed and on top it was labeled, "a Polish atrocity", yet no one really knows who killed these people; it did not matter who they were as long as they could be used as a side of the story. Author and military historian, Andrew Mollo, argues that some of the dead were actually taken from German concentration camps and dressed up in Polish uniforms to be photographed. [48]

At the same time, the Poles took pictures of the German invasion. The Poles also decided to sneak out pictures of the worsening Nazi treatment towards Poles and Jews. The objective was to smuggle these pictures to the allied governments and to the Polish government in exile. Therefore, photography became a crucial source for the resistance movement because the pictures captured the devastating impact of Nazi occupation.

[46] Struk 30.
[47] Struk 31.
[48] Struk 33.

Many of the pictures did enter London through Polish underground bases in Europe.[49] Photos from Poland, from the escapees of occupied territories, and from Jews were distributed but not easily. The technical quality was not as good as German photographs and often, the microfilm was so thin (so the pictures could be transported easily) that it was difficult to see what was in the pictures. They were touched up and the details of the photographs were often outlined with thick pencil making the photographs look like drawings. Sections of pictures were often blown up to display Germans killing Poles.[50]

Also, some of the same photographs that were distributed by many agencies had different interpretations of the same pictures. For example, one photograph, shown in figure IX, by Julien Bryan in Warsaw 1939 depicted many different stories. In the center of the photograph are two elderly Jewish men hunched over shovels. In the far left is a hand holding a gun and on the right is a civilian with a pick. In Bryan's book Siege, the caption says, "Everybody's helping: Orthodox Jews, Like Others, Dig Trenches Under the Direction of Soldiers." But in 1942, it was published again in The German New Order in Poland published for the Polish Ministry and this time the man with the pick was cropped out. The caption now read, "Two elderly Jews forced to dig earth under the supervision of a German solder.' In 1943 the same picture was published in The Black Book of Polish Jewry and captioned "Aged Jews at Forced Labour." The photograph was used for everyone; for Bryan, the photograph showed an example of bravery of the people of Warsaw who helped defend their city, for the Nazis it proved their supremacy

[49] Struk 37.
[50] Struk 35.

over the Jews and for those who opposed the Nazi regime, it was an example of Nazi persecution of the Jews.[51]

Figure IX Photographer Julien Bryan "Everybody Helping: Orthodox Jews, Like Others, Dig Trenches Under the Direction of Soldiers' (Wiener Library, London)

Editors or caption writers would often write their own descriptions of the pictures. There were no rules; the only importance of these pictures were that they seemed to render a reality of what was happening in Eastern Europe, but the pictures told different stories depending on who disseminated them.

Overall, the United States and Britain did not react to these photographs until their troops entered the war and could take pictures of what was happening inside Nazi Germany. With the fear of a repetition of propaganda that circulated false information during World War I, the United States and Britain did not publish many of the Nazi pictures sent to them. [52]

World War II (1939-1944) Pre-Liberation

[51] Stuck 38.
[52] Struk 31.

As the war progressed, the deluge of photographs entering Britain and the United States demanded a Western response. The prisoner camps were turned into ghettos and concentration camps beginning in the winter of 1939-1940; the change was extensively photographed by the Reich. They photographed newly arrived prisoners from 1940-41, mainly Poles, but as more people came into the camps, only political prisoners were given prison numbers and photographed. Gypsies and Jews were not photographed unless on special orders by the political department. This photograph process lasted until 1943 when it stopped due to the lack of photographic materials. On February 2, 1943, Rudolf Hoss stated that no unofficial photography was allowed in the camps, however one Polish political prisoner, Bronislaw Jureczek said that SS men frequently visited the dark rooms and documented camp life.[53] The Wehrmacht took pictures of the ghettos, not as representations of the Nazi regime but as the natural habitats of Jews, out of pure fascination and curiosity.[54] Also the camp resistance movement, smuggled out pictures from the camps to the outside world. Alfred Woycicki, arrested in 1943 for his participation in the resistance movement in Krakow was in charge of the photographic archives and regularly gave prints to the camp resistance. He found that a Sergeant photographer from the RSHA (the Nazi Secret Police) in Berlin took photographs of scenes at Birkenau including SS guards standing on top of corpses laughing. Surprised that a German Sergeant would take such pictures, Woycicki took the film and was able to make one print of each photograph and smuggle them out of the camp in 1944.[55]

Importantly, those pictures taken by Germans of starving people in the ghettos from Warsaw to Lodz were different from those taken by residents of the ghettos. All

[53] Struk 104.
[54] Struk 77.
[55] Struk 110.

photographers in the ghetto were forced to work for the Judenrat to photograph the efficiency of the ghettos and its workforce, but other photographers such as Hirsh Kadushin took pictures to document the conditions of the ghettos. Kadushin portrayed gentle pictures. Historian and writer Edward Linenthal calls Kadushin's photographs a "loving glimpse of doomed people." [56] He focuses on individual faces, unlike the perpetrators' pictures that concentrated on emaciated bodies. Kadushin took these everyday pictures through a buttonhole on his coat. The picture in Figure X shows Jewish children in the Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania between 1941-1943. Viewers actually met the faces of the victims and entered the world of "ghettoization, deportation, and extermination."[57]

Figure X United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Mendel Grossman also took many pictures of the Lodz ghetto that were found after his death. Jews were not allowed to take pictures in the ghetto but he worked for the ghetto's statistical department so he was allowed to have a camera. He also hid it in his clothing to illegally take more than 10,000 pictures from early 1940 to the camp's liquidation in 1944. Figure XI shows the deportation of the Jews of Lodz to the Lodz ghetto in February 1940. Figure XII portrays the last farewell that people had to their children

[56] Linenthal, Edward T. Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995)174
[57] Zelizer 168.

before they were deported and would face immediate death under the Allgemeine Gehsperre in September 1942, a system in which the Germans conducted roundups of people to be deported to their deaths for various reasons, usually because they weren't working and were of no use to the Nazis.

Figure XI (February 1940) Mendel Grossman found at http://www.zwoje-scrolls.com/shoah/lodz.html

Figure XII (September 1942) found at http://www.zwoje-scrolls.com/shoah/lodz.html

The troops fighting also took pictures on the front. Almost every US troop fighting on land, sea, or air had its own photographic team by 1942. Many soldiers would carry their own cameras; the Signal Corps shot fifty percent of all images published in the US by 1944.[58] Britain however, had a more difficult time publishing war photography because of its strict censorship. All of the pictures had to be approved by representatives of the armed services, the government, and the Ministry of Information

[58] Zelizer 22.

delaying the publication. In fact, most British pictures show American soldiers instead of British soldiers because many British photos were thrown out by the War Office. By April 1945, fifty-five thousand still photos had been taken on the European front by British and US soldiers.[59]

Naturally the perpetrators did not want to personalize photographs or play to the emotions of the viewers. Actually very few images were taken by victims themselves because the victims weren't allowed to have cameras. Germans systematically recorded the procedures of ghetto life and the pictures mirrored this empirical analysis. Nothing was personalized; Germans just took photographs to show the "facts" of their daily procedures.

Burnings and executions were also recorded by members of the resistance at Auschwitz and German, anti-Nazi photographer Joe Heydecker took pictures of the Warsaw ghetto at his own risk. [60] One of Heydecker's colleagues took photographs of corpses in the ghetto cemetery and enlarged them, but the negatives and prints were confiscated because German authorities feared these pictures entering enemy hands that would know their atrocity stories.[61]

By the 1940's, photography was becoming equally important as journalism in the news because of the increased proliferation of war imagery and because of worsening German barbarity. Amateur photographers took many pictures beginning in 1941, showing executions and SS men standing next to corpses smiling. But reporters were denied access to the camps prior to the liberation, so the public could not depend on a

[59] Zelizer 23.
[60] Hirsch 7.
[61] Struk 79.

reliable news source to comprehend the concentration camps.[62] In many cases details were missing, the number of victims was either exaggerated or underestimated, and specifics about these concentration camps did not leak to the public until later.[63] The photographer's identity and the circumstances of each particular photo were often left out.[64] The magnitude of brutality was easier to dismiss as untrue than to believe in what was actually occurring. Although, some newspapers and official reports did overwhelmingly show the intent of the concentration camps, the disbelief continued to dominate public opinion. Nine out of ten people in the United States viewed the Nazis' crimes as propagandistic lies in 1944.[65] Photographic "hints" of what was actually happening existed and there was an increasing need to tell the stories of worsening conditions for the victims yet the lack of information and the discrediting of verbal reports caused the public to regularly dismiss the Nazi crimes.

Each photographer had a different story to tell. As viewers, we cannot understand the motivations of the photographers. In many instances, the Jewish photographs don't differ much from the German photographs. Willy Georg, a German soldier, photographed the Warsaw ghetto but his pictures are very emotional and touching. How do we know the real story of these photographers? Why were some sympathetic or were they just doing their job? Did they have a Jewish relative causing them to be sympathetic? Was their conscience uneasy? This problem symbolizes the paradox of photography as a source of representation. On the one hand, photography can grip people immediately forcing them to understand the brutal conditions from the vivid, true pictures

[62] Dobroszycki and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 147
[63] Zelizer 40.
[64] Zelizer 44.
[65] Zelizer 41.

but at the same time, the lack of context surrounding these pictures distances us as viewers from knowing the truth of what really occurred like Mendelsohn explained after speaking with those who lived through the events.[66] Once the liberators were allowed inside the camps, photographs would try to reconcile these concerns.

1945 - Camp Liberations

At the camp liberations in 1945, a proliferation of pictures finally became available to the public. According to Marianne Hirsch, "the Nazis were masterful at recording visually their own rise to power as well as the atrocities they committed, immortalizing both victims and perpetrators."[67]Guards would photograph inmates at the time they were imprisoned and even individual soldiers would travel with cameras documenting what they saw in the ghettos. The Allies photographed and filmed the opening of the camps.[68] In fact, eighty-one percent of the British population believed the Holocaust stories in April 1945, up from thirty seven percent that believed them only six months prior.[69] Pictures provided the fastest route, a kind of immediacy that allowed someone to understand Nazi brutality.[70] They alarmed and shocked people emotionally; when pictures were used as exhibition pieces, the "faces of the Holocaust victims in the exhibition were shattering in their power."[71] On May 1, 1945, the Daily Express organized an exhibition called 'Seeing is Believing' in London; on the first day, a mass-observation survey reported that the visitors looked at the atrocity photographs in 'shocked silence'. The *Times* stated that it was the public's duty to see these pictures and

[66] Struk 98.
[67] Hirsch 7.
[68] Hirsch 7.
[69]Zelizer 138.
[70] Zelizer 139.
[71] Linenthal 174.

was critical of those who ever thought the brutality was exaggerated or faked. [72] Some survivors such as literary critic Ruth Kluger felt that there could not be any language that could describe what happened. She felt that words did not do the Holocaust justice. The audience just cannot understand because "if you were not there, you cannot imagine what it was like". [73] Because she was there, she felt that using a generous use of silence and minimalism that pictures contain apparently said more.

According to Kluger, whereas words provide order and connection, pictures can also function to explain the "rash of emotions"; the camera is a "powerful interpretive tool that derives strength from both its mechanical aura and the verisimilitude that it conveys." [74] Critic Barbie Zelizer explains that images "stabilize" and "anchor" collective memory and become the "event's primary markers."[75] They have the capacity to freeze a moment in time, to replay, and store memories for large groups of people.[76] The pre-liberation and post-liberation photographs framed events of the Holocaust so that everyone could "bear witness" to the atrocities and pretend like they were really there.[77] The photographic evidence "turned collective disbelief into shock and horror of recognition"…they made it so that the "'atrocities of the camps could not be denied…Buchenwald, Belsen, Dachau-their memories were etched in memory forever.'"[78] As more camps were liberated, more and more photographs were disseminated. The American Army Signal Corps made over one million prints.[79]

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[72] Struk 126.
[73] Kellner 130.
[74] Zelizer 6.
[75] Zelizer 6.
[76] Zelizer 7.
[77] Zelizer 126.
[78] Zelizer 138.
[79] Struk 128.

The British News Chronicle explained that they decided to proliferate the liberation pictures to show Nazi guilt and because "it is right that the world should see the close quarters indisputable proof of Germany's crimes against the human race."[80] The real pictures of piles of bones stir feelings of grief, confusion and anger towards what happened to the poor victims but at the same time they do not necessarily tell the whole story. The photos of atrocities push us to investigate further instead of stopping at any fulfilled feeling of understanding about the Holocaust. Kaplan argues, that instead of judging fallibility or contemplating how this evil actually took place, or the "unreachable depth of motive in irrational violence," we should instead look to the more routine issues, the political structures, the "moral indoctrination of Germany, the themes of warning before the Holocaust" the fact that these were actual people dying instead of just symbols of an atrocious genocide.[81] Zelizer validly points out that even if we do study the overall moral abstractions of the Holocaust, genocide sill keeps happening. There is something missing from our understanding, something inaccessible. The Holocaust has now become a "desirable icon and a contested brand name."[82]The lessons and actual events are simplified into lessons and symbols for the future forgetting the statistical lists as people who lost their lives and were brutally murdered for no reason.

The specific stories of what happened became lost from the lack of context that accompanied the pictures; most of the pictures lacked any captions or information to describe what the viewer was seeing. The Allied press had used "uneven standards" to use the photographs as proof. For example, the work of Margaret Bourke-White who

[80] Zelizer 96.
[81] Kaplan 10.
[82] Cole, Tim, Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler, How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold. (New York: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd.,1999) 177.

took the picture of the men at the gates at Buchenwald used large-format quality pictures with flashlights adding drama and almost made the pictures look like paintings. Consequently the picture of the male prisoners standing at the Buchenwald gate depicts this chiaroscuro effect which did not articulate the specifics of the photos, aiding in the viewer's misinterpretation of the pictures. British photographers were not given any guidelines, but just told to photograph what they saw at the time. During an American exhibition on June 30, 1945 called 'Lest We Forget' camp photographs were shown at the Library of Congress in Washington DC dramatizing the horrors of the camps. A photograph of an emaciated man was enlarged to double life-size reinforcing Nazi barbarity and the victimization of the Jews. [83] Moreover, there was a "lack of accreditation and wrong or misleading captions alongside the atrocity photos" from the propaganda before and during the war.[84] There was also misunderstanding over the nationality of the prisoners and the purpose of the camps. Prisoners in photographs were generalized as 'European nationalities'. In a British book compiled by the Daily Mail, called Lest We Forget, it mentioned that prisoners were political internees and Jews. It described Auschwitz as being the worst camp of all where people were put in circumstances of 'peculiar horror' but it does not describe what this horror was. The American version of Lest We Forget does not mention Auschwitz at all.[85] The details simply did not matter to the U.S. or British presses at the time. Most of the information on who had suffered and died or the extermination of the Jews by the Nazis was not known and without this information, the numbers of how many died didn't even make sense. For example, in August 1944, there was an article about the liberation of Warsaw

[83] Struk 132.
[84] Zelizer 149.
[85] Struk 133.

in the Picture Post. It congratulated the Poles for their heroic efforts during the war. The article did mention the "Battle of the Ghetto" however it did not mention the deportations of the inhabitants to extermination camps or even the camps at all for that matter. The article leads people to believe that the Poles and the Jews could return to a normal life after embellished with pictures of church spires and children playing in a street. Warsaw however was completely destroyed but the West did not understand the real plight of the Jewish or Polish people.[86] The fact that the majority of those liberated at Bergen-Belsen were Jewish was not reported in Britain or the USA. Margaret Bourke-White didn't mention Jews when she wrote about Buchenwald either because there was still an anti-Semitism that photographers and writers did not want to address. What did matter was the message of Allied victory and Nazi brutality.

The liberators' pictures seemed more believable to the Allies than the actual pictures from the camps because they weren't professional photographers taking the pictures. The personal, mission of nonprofessionals taking snapshots were proof of the camps. [87] Their pictures validated the Germans as brutal perpetrators and the Jews, as victims. For example, German perpetrators were often shown "at odd angles to the camera, which showed large uniform bodies- angry stares, colorless prison garb, and, in the case of women, tightly bound hair."[88] German civilians were depicted as witnesses forced to stare at heaps of corpses. In figure XIII, the picture shows the women and the young boys from Weimar forced to look at bodies from Buchenwald. The actual bodies, however are not shown in the pictures; they show the horror and disbelief of the German

[86] Struk 137.
[87] Zelizer 143.
[88] Zelizer 103.

people faced with these atrocities but do not connect them with the actual event.[89] The pictures showed their confusion and reflected the overall discomfort of Germany in figuring out how to respond to the aftermath. The photograph showed this act of "bearing witness" that the Germans were now confronted with.[90] As a result, the representations of the Holocaust did not show the "bureaucratically organized, industrial mass murder of the camps, about which so many Germans claimed not to have known at the time and from which they could more easily distance themselves later." [91]

Figure XIII

From the Film and Photo Archive, Yad Vashem

The Germans wanted to be the victims as well that were forced to kill innocent civilians. In the Illustrated London News, some of the photographs in a five-page picture report showed Weimar citizens looking at a truckload of murdered prisoners. The Daily Express also published a front-page photograph of Germans, 'Forced to Bury Their Murdered Victims' at Nordhausen on April 19th. Pictures of death and destruction were hung all over Germany with the headline underneath "Who is Guilty?". Were the Germans who watched these atrocities occur also culpable? Whether or not the whole

[89] Zelizer 103.
[90] Zelizer 104.
[91] Zelizer 105.

German population was responsible for these crimes remained a contentious issue in Germany and in the allied countries.[92]

The pictures of the Jews, on the other hand, focused mainly on dead corpses piled up with witnesses staring at bodies and the "acts of barbarism" that occurred.[93] Emotionally, the pictures focused on the gaze of near-dead survivors 'incapable of coherent thought'. The survivors' eyes were directed towards the camera with "hollowed cheekbones and vacant eyes".[94] They showed starving people lying helplessly on the ground.

This victimization and grouping together of Jews into one category as helpless victims, causes their individuality to become lost and this becomes especially problematic when remembering the resistance movements. Historian Raul Hillberg writes "if heroism is an attribute that should be assigned to every member of the European Jewish community, it will diminish the accomplishment of the few who took action." By labeling every Jewish victim in the Holocaust photographs as heroes, then the people who joined the resistance movement remain undistinguished.[95] He describes the Jewish Underground movement and how this small group of people inflicted many casualties on the Germans and their collaborators but unfortunately most people do not know about them. The problems the Jews faced in organizing some kind of resistance, and the communities' "reasoning and survival strategies" have become lost.[96] Ultimately the individual lives of the Jews have become lost and that remains a fundamental issue in Holocaust representation that we do not see in the photos.

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[92] Struk 135.
[93] Zelizer 117,118.
[94] Zelizer 115.
[95] Hillberg 136.
[96] Hillberg 137.

Because the proliferation of the pictures were by the allied troops, individual information about the specific people in the photos was often left out for it was not important to the overall, generalized message of blaming the Germans and victimizing the Jews. It didn't matter what each person was doing in the pictures, if the poor, starving man in the ghetto was taking other people's clothes, washing his own clothes, or picking lice off his clothes, the pictures added to a universal Holocaust story. Instead of the details mattering, the Holocaust moved into the contemporary agenda, to never let it happen again and to begin to forget the specifics that were so difficult to remember. [97] The broader Holocaust story and the movement to a more collective memory as time progressed did allow the Germans to gloss over their own memories in the 1950's choosing to forget their past.

The 1950's

After the Nuremberg Trials ended in 1949, the images that pervaded the public's view of the Holocaust slowly disappeared. The trials never delved into the complexities of why the Germans fought the war. The specifics of Nazi barbarism were deemed too "dangerous to discuss."[98] As the Western Democracies understood that Western Germany was a powerful ally against the Soviet bloc, it was no longer useful for them to focus on Nazi barbarity, bur rather on the failures of communism. On the other hand, Eastern Europeans chose to remember Nazi crimes and used the pictures to defend their Cold War political ideology of being pro-Communist. Both the Western democratic countries that joined NATO and the Communist Eastern Bloc countries used Holocaust

[97] Zelizer 175.
[98] Struk 157.

photographs during the 1950's to defend a political agenda instead of to specifically remember the victims.

Right after the war in the late 1940's, Britain and the United States worked together producing war photo albums to depict allied victory instead of Nazi atrocities. For instance, in The War in Pictures (six volumes), four pages have images from Belsen and the rest focus on Allied victories. Photographs were proliferated of the army, navy and Allied soldiers at war; some camp photographs were included but they were not important to the overall war story at this time. The Allied photographs stressed that the West Germans were now on their side being re-educated to learn democracy, the Nazi criminals would be punished, and that Britain and the United States needed to continue to fight communism.[99]

The Soviets were also forming their own evidence on Nazism. In a photo album, called Photo Album of Atrocities and Crimes Committed by Nazi German Aggressors in Drogobych Province During the Period 1941-44, images of atrocities showed a Nazi official surrounded by ghosts reaching to him. Other photo albums certified by the Extraordinary State Commission showed evidence of Nazi atrocities in black and white. The album referred to Janovska camp as the 'Factory of Death' with pictures taken by the Nazis and images of murder sites taken by The Commission. Photographs show public hangings and corpses murdered as well as forensic teams at the sites of mass killings. One picture shows the Janovska concentration camp orchestra.[100] The text explains that the musicians at the Janovska Camp were forced to play the 'Tango of Death'. The album refers to the mass killings as the murdering of a 'people', of 'Soviet POWS', or 'local

[99] Struk 152.
[100] Struk 153.

inhabitants', not specifically as Jews. The primary purpose of these photographs was for the Soviet Union's political agenda to indict the Nazi regime and illustrate the atrocities, not to support the Jewish victims.

But as time continued into the 1950's, the thousands of photographs taken by resistors, Jews, Nazis, and camp liberators stayed in public archives untouched for the next fifty years. An exhibition of Nazi photographs in America at the end of the war was taken down in 1955 because it was "damaging to international relations." Jews entering American society during the 1950's reluctantly identified themselves. In Norman J. Finkelstein's book, The Holocaust Industry, he argues that the silence of Jewish victimization was because of the United State's Cold War policy. According to Finkelstein, 'remembrance of the Nazi Holocaust was tagged as a Communist cause' because in the USA the majority of communists were also Jewish and because most communist writing invoked the Holocaust and Nazi crimes. Moreover, Pro-Soviet platforms often showed pictures of the Holocaust. For example, Henry A. Wallace, presidential candidate for the Progressive Party, attacked the Marshall Plan by showing pictures of corpses at Buchenwald and argued that the United States was helping to rebuild Nazi Germany.[101]

In addition, in the early 1950's at Auschwitz-Birkenau the Polish authorities displayed photographs that promoted communism and anti-Western sentiment instead of describing the camp itself. The displays showed pictures of British concentration camps in South Africa during the Boer War to show British hypocrisy and to discredit imperialism.[102] Also, 'Impoverished Black districts' in New York were labeled as the

[101] Struk 160.
[102] Struk 162.

first ghettos and portrayed the faults of capitalism. They too wanted to focus on their communist political ideology instead of the facts that occurred at Auschwitz.

Moreover the Holocaust simply did not exist in the East German history. Since, East Germans as well as West Germans, were very close to the event, they were anxious to forget about it; especially in the East, "their government (with the people's assistance) had after all elevated them to the 'victors of history,' because they were communists and absolved them of guilt by pushing it westward.[103] East German roles in "German capitalism, in Hitler's rise to power, the economic uses of the camps with their slave labor, or the effects of millions of foreign workers in the German war economy" were not discussed. [104] The Germans were not ready to confront any of the issues for the survival of pride and legitimization of their state. Thus, "East German historiography was 'defined through political encrustation and instrumentalization and unconventional research ideas were nipped in the bud or stifled." [105] The uniqueness of the Holocaust was never recognized and hence trivialized to a more generalized history convenient for that specific Cold War decade. The individuals that went through the horrific crimes turned into defenders or supporters of politics instead of individual victims with personal stories. Not until the demise of the Soviet Union were books allowed to break the East German taboo on Nazi Crimes.[106]

Generalization of Holocaust Pictures

So individuals commemorating the Holocaust are faced with many problems when looking at photographs and relying on them to understand the history. Firstly,

[103] Fox, Thomas C., Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust. (Rochester: Camden house, 1999) 22.
[104] Fox 36.
[105] Fox 36.
[106] Fox 23.

individuals are left with photographs and use them as evidence to try to reach the past often forgetting that there is a "measure of 'transference'" between the photo and the viewer.[107] Holocaust photographs are so provocative and emotional because they push viewers into a realm physically that they never lived but they also block them from ever entering the world of the photograph. The pictures spark emotions but often the viewer feels so disconnected from the photographs that they actually begin to dehumanize victims. Importantly, the pictures are trying to do the opposite and bring an immediacy as though they are really in the concentration camps themselves. In Susan Sontag's, On Photography, she argues that the camera acts as another mode of consciousness for the viewer putting them into a foreign place to receive a "sense of the unattainable." She writes that photographs create a magical sentimental feeling for the viewer who tries to "contact or lay claim to another reality."[108] Surely they do transport the viewer to another time and place and we do experience sympathy and shock from seeing the photos yet how much do we really understand them? Sontag addresses this issue in her next book Regarding the Pain of Others in which she focuses on our inability to comprehend war photography as outsiders. If we weren't actually there, the viewer can never transcend that gap between the reality of war and the picture.[109] Pictures do bring us an immediacy and portray a "picture" of a scene that a painting or narrative cannot bring but also these pictures do not necessarily mean they are evidence by themselves or evidence for what the viewer thinks they represent. With these inherent problems in Holocaust photographs,

[107] Young, James E. The Texture of Memory: Holocaust, Memorials, and Meaning. (New Haven: Yale University Press) 60.
[108] Sontag, Susan. On Photography (New York: Picador, 1973) 16.
[109] Sontag, Susan. Regarding the Pain of Others (New York: Picador, 2003) 66.

we have often become indifferent to the atrocities and naively believe in "photographic truth."

Additionally, the politics surrounding Holocaust pictures during different decades hinders the viewer's understanding even more. Author Hans Kellner describes in his article "'Never Again' is Now" how the passage of time always brings new contributions to the discourse of an event and loses the parts that do not make sense anymore.[110] The meanings of the Holocaust changed depending on the agenda of the specific decade. During the 1950s, the pictures represented Cold War political ideologies, but in the 1940s the pictures displayed Nazi brutality. The revised history became the new narrative, the new history depending on the time period and place in which the photographs were viewed.[111] The Holocaust and World War II in general just like any war, has been invaded by the oppressive capacity of memory used by all groups to selectively legitimize and victimize themselves. The German people were to learn one side of the Holocaust story or no information about what happened and the English side learned something very different, but the photographs could legitimize both sides.

Figure XIV

Imperial War Museum Archives

[110] Kellner 128.
[111] Cole 113.

As the decades have passed since the Holocaust, pictures were no longer analyzed for specific detail but just used to display Nazism, as "lessons for the world" to never let a genocide like this happen again. Thus photographs were generalized in the decades after the liberation to create an easy narrative that anyone could understand. Unfortunately, creating this simple narrative has oversimplified the events that really occurred and has aided in the loss of individuality of those in the pictures and a loss in understanding of how or why the atrocities happened.[112] For example the liberation of the camps from the pictures simplistically turned into the end of anti-Semitism and as the end of the Holocaust. It provided everyone with a closure that in fact never happened. One image in XIV, that originally appeared in the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times in 1945 showed prisoners lying in their bunks at Buchenwald. The picture changed from signifying the Buchenwald liberation to the liberation in general and later readers were told they were looking at freed slave laborers in an unidentified camp.[113] By following the broader Holocaust story and learning about the event by a distinctive narrative, individuals fail to question that this is only one frame of vision. One scholar commented about Auschwitz and said, "ever since the first photos of Auschwitz, the meaning imputed to it has been encompassed in the symbolic framework of the barbed wire, the ramp, or the famous entrance gate."[114] These things are of course important parts of the camp, yet they are not the camp but only how we wish to keep seeing it."[115]

[112] Zelizer 174.
[113] Zelizer 183.
[114] Zelizer 158.
[115] Zelizer 158.

The victims also turned into "eternal victims, as metaphors of dying".[116] Despite the centuries of pogroms and anti-semitism in Europe, Jews enjoyed rich and diverse traditions of their own. To merely focus on them in the midst of war and terror presents them only as eternal victims rather than as a people who enjoyed a vibrant culture and their own lives. Because of this focus on victimization, we fail to understand their different cultures and traditions around the world. Jews fought to hold onto their heritage and tradition that has often been forgotten and overlooked because of this obsession with viewing them as war victims.[117]

Overall, the specific images of misery and personal stories of World War II seemed to fade but the "image of the concentration camp still exists." When photography becomes a representation, all other memory fades because we rely and give photos so much credit.[118] Richard Lictheim wrote "'Nobody will ever tell the story-a story of five million personal tragedies every one of which would fill a volume.'"[119] We associate people together in order to make sense of history to organize answers of "exactly" what happened. We expect an impossible, general narrative where "perpetrators and victims are differentiated, atrocities linked together, concepts defined and exemplified."[120] However by creating an easy, narrative to understand does not mean that it reflects the reality.

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[116] Zelizer 159.
[117] "Museum of Jewish Heritage; A living Memorial to the Holocaust." 5 May 2008 http://www.mjhnyc.org/exhibitions_collection.htm 2003.
[118] Zelizer 155.
[119] Friedlander, Saul. Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 4.
[120] Kellner 40.

Figure XV Jewish Virtual Library (April 16, 1945)

Also, the more we contextualize the photos, the more painful the memories will become. So author Barbie Zelizer explains, "it is moral ease to slide from the particular to the abstract."[121] When the blurs of war and the culpability of such a large atrocity become too painful, we begin to gloss over the details and create a new picture. For example, the images were no longer used after the 1940's for people to bear witness, for everyone to see the suffering but rather the images told the larger atrocity story of Nazi brutality. The open ovens with human remains inside symbolically show the "industrial nature of mass death." [122] By looking at the broader Holocaust story, people could now "understand" Nazi brutality without a full understanding of its context such as how or why it happened; it just did happen and that's all that seems important.[123] Kaplan argues that the memory of the Holocaust has not really been about the details of its history or about explaining whatever we view as a great crime and its punishment but instead about the "true universality of the Holocaust and how it lies in its legacy to conscience."[124] The photographs become the aids in simplifying history, in comforting people that everything is understood and we can move on.

[121] Zelizer 157.
[122] Zelizer 162.
[123] Zelizer 174.
[124] Kaplan 14.

Consequently, current history is "open to the demands of the present" because as time passes, "the event is generalized, ritualized, and lost."[125] Overall, the passage of time has hindered the process in understanding because the "shock of the event loses its impact as the details of the event blur and disappear in the flux of other events, thus losing its distinct identity.[126] Time has assisted in the misrepresentation of what actually took place, and thus we have even seen an overuse and "debasement" of the word 'holocaust' through various misapplications of the word.[127] Like the survivors who are slowly and unfortunately fading away, the "relics and ruins of the past will fade away, and then all we are left with is a memory of the 'Holocaust' that was created for us, rather than one formed by ourselves."[128] Just like memory, photographs are ephemeral and change according to whom the memory belongs. Yet photographs are also evidence that what is pictured really did exist. Thus, the images have become the total of what most people know about the Holocaust and we use photographs as commemorative tools to remember. Ironically the same pictures helping us to remember are also allowing us to forget crucial parts of a deeply complex history and therefore genocide keeps occurring.[129] The seemingly impervious difficulties entangled in Holocaust photographs can become untangled by our probing, by our remembering, and our questioning of the photograph's limited power to resemble the reality beyond the Auschwitz gates.

[125] Cole 129.
[126] Braham, Randolph, ed. Perspectives on the Holocaust. (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff Publishing, 1983) 4.
[127] Braham 4
[128] Braham 4
[129] Zelizer 205.

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