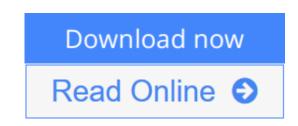


Holocaust Angst: The Federal Republic of Germany and American Holocaust Memory since the 1970s

By Jacob S. Eder



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In the face of an outpouring of research on Holocaust history, *Holocaust Angst* takes an innovative approach. It explores how Germans perceived and reacted to how Americans publicly commemorated the Holocaust. It argues that a network of mostly conservative West German officials and their associates in private organizations and foundations, with Chancellor Kohl located at its center, perceived themselves as the "victims" of the afterlife of the Holocaust in America. They were concerned that public manifestations of Holocaust memory, such as museums, monuments, and movies, could severely damage the Federal Republic's reputation and even cause Americans to question the Federal Republic's status as an ally. From their perspective, American Holocaust memorial culture constituted a stumbling block for (West) German-American relations since the late 1970s.

Providing the first comprehensive, archival study of German efforts to cope with the Nazi past vis-à-vis the United States up to the 1990s, this book uncovers the fears of German officials-some of whom were former Nazis or World War II veterans-about the impact of Holocaust memory on the reputation of the Federal Republic and reveals their at times negative perceptions of American Jews. Focusing on a variety of fields of interaction, ranging from the diplomatic to the scholarly and public spheres, the book unearths the complicated and often contradictory process of managing the legacies of genocide on an international stage. West German decision makers realized that American Holocaust memory was not an "anti-German plot" by American Jews and acknowledged that they could not significantly change American Holocaust discourse. In the end, German confrontation with American Holocaust memory contributed to a more open engagement on the part of the West German government with this memory and eventually rendered it a "positive resource" for German self-representation abroad.

Holocaust Angst offers new perspectives on postwar Germany's place in the world system as well as the Holocaust culture in the United States and the role of transnational organizations.

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- Rank: #1323213 in Books
- Published on: 2016-08-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.30" h x 1.20" w x 9.40" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 320 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"This fascinating book shows how Holocaust memory in Germany was transformed from a burden to a special responsibility. Engagement with America, stereotypes about Jews, Cold War calculations, and scholarly integrity emerge as key factors in Eder's provocative analysis. Insightful, original, and meticulously researched, this is contemporary, transnational history at its best."-Doris L. Bergen, author of *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust*

"Eder is the first historian to have exploited a wide variety of archival sources, most notably documentation of the Helmut Kohl government regarding its 'politics of history' and the internal records of the body that was responsible for planning the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington. What emerges from this research is a picture of a German leadership that was obsessed by fears that the emergence of Holocaust memory culture in the United States would threaten Germany's interests and reputation. Eder has produced an excellent and thoroughly original work of scholarship that should be read by anyone who wants to understand post-1945 German efforts to 'come to terms with the past."'-Alan E. Steinweis, University of Vermont

"In *Holocaust Angst* Jacob Eder ably examines the confrontation of the West German government led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl with American Jewish organizations in the 1980s and 1990s. He draws on published and archival sources to shed light on the Bitburg controversy, West German policy toward Israel and the Middle East, efforts to influence themes in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and policy toward the nature of memorials to the Holocaust in West Germany. Part of Eder's distinctive and important contribution is to underscore the trans-Atlantic dimensions of what is often told as a strictly internal, West German history."'-Jeffrey Herf, University of Maryland

"Sheds an unusual and intriguing light on the hidden politics of history under West German Chancellor Kohl, and reveals continuing sensitivities among the German political elite concerning the 'Americanization' of the Holocaust in the 1980s and 1990s. An important book which illuminates the significance of behind the scenes German-American relations at this time."-Mary Fulbrook, author of *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships*

About the Author

Jacob S. Eder is a research fellow and lecturer at the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. His dissertation received the Fraenkel Prize in Contemporary History of the Wiener Library, the Marko Feingold Dissertation Prize in Jewish Studies of the University of Salzburg, and the Betty M. Unterberger Dissertation Prize of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

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